

Lockdowns and school closures - an opportunity or a setback?
Exploring why parents have decided to home-educate their child since
the COVID-19 pandemic.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my 'Abba', Masoud Alikhani, who died peacefully at home during the completion of this thesis.

1941-2023

کار شما نیست به دنبال عشق بگردید، بلکه فقط به دنبال پیدا کردن تمام مانع هایی است که در خودتان به آن برخوردارید.

Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it

Rumi

Abstract

Recent data reveals a substantial increase in home education, accompanied by persistently elevated absentee rates compared to pre-pandemic levels with over 124,000 children not resuming schooling since the COVID-19-related lockdowns.

This study examines the experiences of parents who transitioned to home education by deregistering their children from mainstream school since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a mixed-methods approach, the quantitative phase, involving an online survey with 67 participants, revealed that two-thirds of respondents felt compelled to choose home education. The qualitative phase utilised the Free Association Narrative Interview method with four mothers, yielding individual psychosocial analyses and a thematic analysis identifying four key themes: (i) Lockdown as Catalyst, (ii) Shifting Sands of Power, (iii) The Inclusion Illusion, and (iv) Revelations.


Discussion explores the pandemic's impact using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), considering concepts like responsabilisation and economic instability. The findings illuminate the importance of meaningful inclusion in schools and advocate for a progressive, relational approach to child development and learning, especially given mental health concerns, austerity measures, and technological advancements shaping the educational landscape.

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Glossary of Acronyms

ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BPS	British Psychological Society
CA	Content Analysis
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Program
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSJ	Centre for Social Justice
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health and Social Care
EBSNA	Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EHE	Elective Home Education
EOTAS	Education Otherwise Than at School
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FANi	Free Association Narrative interview
GP	General Practitioner
LA	Local Authority
MMAT	Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool
NHS	National Health Service
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
RTA	Reflective Thematic Analysis
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States

1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the background and current landscape of home education (HE) on a global and national scale. It aims to contextualise the impact of the COVID-19 (C-19) pandemic, which led to widespread school closures. The objective is to position the current study within these broader discussions and present a robust rationale. The overarching research topic explores the motivations behind families choosing to deregister their children from mainstream education for homeschooling and examines whether C-19 played a role in this transition. The chapter concludes with a brief researcher's position statement.

1.1 The Right to an Education

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) strongly emphasises that every child, regardless of their background, has a fundamental right to a quality education. This belief is rooted in the idea that a good education can nurture well-rounded individuals across various dimensions: intellectual, moral, physical, social, vocational, aesthetic, spiritual, and civic (Lees & Noddings, 2016). Hence, it guides an international commitment to provide free primary and secondary education for all children, recognising the diversity of families and their choice to align education with their values and cultural background.

While education is typically associated with traditional school settings, it is important to recognise that for many, school is not always a happy or positive experience.

School environments can often induce negative emotions such as fear, boredom, a sense of subjugation and feelings of inadequacy (Lees & Noddings, 2016). Ivan Illich argued that schools serve as instruments of social control, aiming to mould children into economic units. He advocated for 'deschooling,' proposing exploration of alternative approaches beyond traditional education systems (Illich, 1971).

Auld and Morris (2016) suggest that in today's capitalist societies, education focuses on developing human capital for global competition, driven by a neoliberal agenda and emphasising standardised outcomes and performance (Gatto, 2017). HE, though not explicitly mentioned in the CRC, aligns with its principles of educational choices and ensuring children's wellbeing in flexible and inclusive settings.

Ultimately, the CRC emphasises the importance of providing accessible, high-quality, child-centred, inclusive education that not only prepares children for life but also safeguards their rights and wellbeing. However, the challenge persists in ensuring this right for every child. This thesis explores parents' transition to HE either during or after the C-19 lockdowns, aiming to gain a clearer understanding of the educational challenges faced by these families.

1.2 Definitions & Terminology

Home Education (HE) refers to delivery of education in the family's home or a location outside of school (DfE 2019). While HE is often used synonymously with

'homeschooling', a subtle distinction exists. Homeschooling may imply an attempt to replicate 'school at home', though families may view HE as a more flexible approach (Devitt, 2020).

Families adopt diverse educational philosophies, resulting in a spectrum of approaches. Some follow a structured approach resembling formal education, while others reject traditional schooling, prioritising experiential and child-led learning for increased autonomy (Fensham-Smith, 2021), often known as unschooling. Many families will find a point somewhere along the continuum, adopting structured, semi-structured or unstructured approaches based on their child's needs, family's educational philosophy and personal circumstances.

Within the HE framework, families might involve external tutors for specific subjects or engage in group learning within a HE community. Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) is a distinct category from HE, where a child remains enrolled in school but cannot physically attend, receiving home-based tutoring from the Local Authority (LA). 'Flexi-schooling' is another arrangement where a child is registered at a school, but attends part-time while receiving HE for the remainder of their learning time.

The term 'Education Otherwise' appears frequently in HE literature, originating from the 1944 Education Act and reaffirmed in the 1966 Education Act (Section 7) to describe education provided outside school settings. This term encompasses not only HE but also individuals receiving education outside of school due to reasons such as illness or disability and has been adopted by Education Otherwise, the UK's largest HE advocacy charity.

In this thesis, HE is preferred over the official term, 'Elective Home Education' (EHE; DfE, 2019), to avoid assuming that this is always a voluntary choice, as indicated by research findings (e.g., Arora, 2003; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Kendall & Taylor, 2016). While a distinction exists between HE and homeschooling, for coherence, both terms are used interchangeably within this thesis¹. Furthermore, since many countries use the term 'homeschooling', using both terms acknowledges the diversity of the practice. The acronym 'HE' is also used to denote grammatical variations, such as 'home-educate', 'home-educating', 'home-educated', and so on. Lastly, it is important to note that 'homeschooling' during the pandemic is not the same as HE and homeschooling practice referred to in this study.

1.3 HE – a Global Phenomenon

Before the industrial revolution, formal education was limited, and HE was more common (Slater et al., 2022). The growth of industry led to the establishment of legally mandated and institutionalised education systems thereby reducing the practice (Guterman & Neuman, 2017). The modern HE movement gained momentum during the 1960s amid growing criticism of mainstream state education (Knowles et al., 1992). Since then, HE has been on the rise, especially in Western countries where it is a legal option (Rothermel, 2015). Despite scepticism from educators (Badman, 2009), HE has a long history as an alternative for a small group of parents in various countries (Ray, 2013).

¹ HE and homeschooling are used here, given that the primary focus is on HE as an alternative to traditional school education, rather than examining specific pedagogical approaches.

Home educators face varying legislation largely dependent on their geographical location, that dictates the legality of HE and the extent of state monitoring and regulation (Bhopal & Myers, 2018). In the UK, it is officially referred to as EHE (DfE, 2019), implying that parents have the liberty to choose an alternative to traditional school. In other European nations like Spain, Germany and Greece, stricter regulations exist that effectively prohibit or even make HE illegal (Bhopal & Myers, 2016). However, it is permitted in most European countries as well as in Australia, Canada and the United States (US; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). In the US, a decentralised approach is followed where individual states are responsible for regulation, resulting in a wide range of interpretations and practices (De Carvalho, 2022). This global diversity in the regulation of HE may, in part, account for the wide variety of educational approaches embraced within HE communities. Indeed, it is frequently mentioned in the literature that HE families are ‘heterogenous’ and there is no typical home-schooling family (Lees & Nicholson, 2017; Smith & Nelson, 2015).

1.3.1 Rising Numbers of HE Children

In a recent article in *The Washington Post*, the headline reads, ‘*Home Schooling’s rise from fringe to the fastest growing form of education*’ (Jamison et al., 2023), reflecting a shift in public perception of homeschooling. The article presents data from numerous districts nationwide², demonstrating a significant increase in HE since the early stages of the pandemic. Contrary to expectations of a return to traditional schooling, the surge in HE has continued. Ray (2023) asserts that HE, once considered ‘alternative’, is now becoming mainstream in the US and is also on

² The analysis which includes HE registration figures for nearly 7000 school districts, is the most detailed to date, according to authors. The study was undertaken by students from The Washington Post Investigative Reporting Workshop practicum at American University.

the rise globally in countries like Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and the UK.

A May 2023 headline from a British publication reports a similar surge, *'More children than ever are being home-schooled in England, data shows'* (The Guardian; Adams, 2023). The article reports data published by the DfE (2023), indicating 86,200 children in HE, suggesting a 50% increase from pre-pandemic estimates. Annual increases of 20% have been consistent since 2016 (ADCS, 2020, 2021), and homeschooling rose during the pandemic, especially for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND; ADCS, 2020, 2021). Across the 20/21 academic year, the estimate was as high as 115,000 (ADCS, 2021) and other surveys appear to reflect numbers as high as 125,000 (e.g. Educational Freedom, 2023; The Centre for Social Justice, 2022).

Obtaining accurate figures on HE participation is challenging, particularly in countries where registration isn't mandatory. In the UK, there is no single definitive figure for the number of homeschooled children (House of Commons Education Committee; HCEC, 2021). Further, the available numbers are likely to be underreported, given that it is not compulsory to inform LAs of a HE choice.

The issue of underreporting is a growing concern and led to the release of the 'Strengthening Home Education' report (HCEC, 2021). This report highlights inconsistencies in LAs support for homeschooling families and advocates for a mandatory register to address safeguarding uncertainties (HCEC, 2021). It also

raises concerns about ‘ghost children’³ absent from formal education, strengthening the argument for a register. The report’s central argument emphasises that accurate statistics on HE children and their ‘suitable education’, are vital for ensuring effective safeguarding (HCEC, 2021).

While accurate data on HE numbers remains elusive, the global rise in HE is an established phenomenon (Kunzman, 2016), which has likely been amplified by the pandemic and the a-posteriori experience of HE during this time. Nevertheless, Education Otherwise contest claims of rising numbers, asserting that this a politically motivated narrative being spun by government to scrutinise and monitor HE through a register (Charles-Warner, 2021)⁴.

1.4 A Suitable Education – HE in the UK

In England, parents have a legal obligation to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive an education, whether through regular school attendance or homeschooling. The right to homeschool is granted under Section 7 of the Education Act (1996), provided that it is efficient, full-time, and appropriate for the child's age, capabilities, talents and any SEND they may have. Children can receive their entire education without ever attending school, or they can be deregistered from school after a period of school education (DfE, 2019).

³ attributed to the Children’s Commissioner Rachel de Souza

⁴ The debate over homeschooling statistics and the potential implementation of a register remains complex and longstanding, with safeguarding considerations at the forefront. While there is no space here to discuss this further, Appendix A contains some preparatory notes that may be of interest for additional reading.

Parents are not required to seek permission or inform their LA of their decision to homeschool unless they have withdrawn their child from school, in which case they must then register them as being in EHE. There is no imperative to follow the national curriculum and parents do not need any teaching experience, but they must be prepared to assume full financial responsibility, including any public exam costs. Families with children that have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) have the same right to pursue HE under these provisions. Ideally, LAs should allocate funds to support the SEND requirements of HE children, but this can be challenging, as reported by national HE support groups (Williams, 2018).

1.4.1 Rhetoric surrounding HE

Narratives surrounding HE often include the argument that it hinders a child's social skills (Fineman & Shepherd, 2016), perpetuated by media narratives (e.g. Hastings, 1988) and leading to negative perceptions of HE children, such as 'misfits' or 'tree-huggers' (Morton, 2010; Pattison, 2020). However, research contradicts this rhetoric, showing no significant differences in academic or social outcomes compared to schooled children (Belfield, 2005; Guterman & Neuman, 2017b; Merry & Howell, 2009; Murphy, 2014). The tendency to label HE as 'overprotective parenting' contributes to a problematic discourse (Monk, 2004) and overlooks the valuable role of involved parents, in children's attainment (Sylva et al., 2003). It is plausible that negative outcomes associated with HE are less common than suggested by prevailing rhetoric.

A prevalent narrative focuses on concerns about safeguarding and perceived risk, suggesting that HE could potentially serve as a cover for abuse or radicalisation

(Rothermel, 2015). Myers & Bhopal (2018) emphasise the role of class and ethnicity shaping perceptions of HE parents, often categorising them as either 'lifestyle gurus' or 'thought criminals'. Their research reveals how HE discourses may perpetuate racism and biases tied to British identity and values. In contrast to worries about radicalisation, the study by Myers and Bhopal (2018), found that Muslim families may choose HE to protect their children from bullying. This corresponds with Education Otherwise's perspective, which argues that stakeholders commissioning research into HE risks (e.g., Forrester et al., 2017) frequently neglect to involve the concerned community, instead relying more on analysing literature and forming negative conclusions (Education Otherwise, 2020). As a result, discourses around HE often contribute to 'othering,' depicting it as oppositional to the mainstream. HE parents perceive themselves as a distinct community, often practicing self-censorship to avoid anticipated criticism when communicating with those outside this group (Pattison, 2018).

The diversity of narratives surrounding HE may be attributed to widespread confusion about the legal status of 'compulsory' school attendance in the UK, leading to misconceptions and fear of legal consequences (Lees & Nicholson, 2017). The lack of awareness about the option not to attend school, coupled with 'mistaken identity' where different terms for HE are used, contributes to imprecision and confusion in the national discourse. This lack of a common vocabulary complicates discussions, particularly due to differing assumptions between HE advocates and proponents of traditional schooling mentalities. Furthermore, a deeply ingrained school-centric perspective in the British national consciousness, as highlighted by Lees and Nicholson (2017), Myers and Bhopal (2018), and Pattison (2018), makes it

challenging for society to embrace educational differences and alternative approaches.

1.4.2 Why families in the UK Home Educate

Various reasons are cited for home education in the UK, resulting in different classifications of home educators according to their characteristics (e.g., Van Galen, 1991). However, contemporary researchers dispute the notion of rigid 'types' for this diverse group (Forlin et al., 2023). Rothermel's (2002) extensive longitudinal studies involving over 100 families, revealed the dynamic nature of HE families adapting continually for evolving reasons. Morton (2010) noted that parents who initially saw HE as a 'last resort' tended to reframe their decision over time for lifestyle or social reasons.

A valuable theoretical framework for understanding HE motivations is Jackson's (2009) 'push and pull' factors. Push factors incline parents toward HE, driven by positive aspects like fostering family relationships, lifestyle, or faith-based values. Rothermel's (2002) research revealed that parents were primarily motivated by pedagogical reasons, emphasising positive environments, individual attention, absence of peer pressure, and interactive learning.

Push factors often entail concerns about schools, including school culture, testing regimes, or issues centred on the child's experience. Smith and Nelson (2015) found that dissatisfaction with the quality of educational provision, instances of bullying at school, and school refusal by the child were the most prevalent reasons for families

opting for home education. This dissatisfaction often stemmed from the perceived unfair treatment of the child by teachers or the school system in general.

A recent UK study (Mitchell, 2020), highlights that the decision to transition to HE is frequently motivated by schools' inability to meet individual needs, especially for children with SEND. This resonates with similar findings in other studies (e.g., Arora, 2006; Kendall & Taylor, 2016; Maxwell et al., 2018; Morse & Bell, 2018; Parsons & Lewis, 2010). The SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) defines SEND children as those with a learning difficulty requiring special provision. Parents of children with SEND, as documented by Parsons and Lewis (2010) and Kendall and Taylor (2014), have felt pushed to choose HE, perceiving it as the only viable option. In this context, HE for children with learning difficulties may be considered as parents arranging special educational provision (Maxwell et al., 2020), indicating systemic challenges with inclusion.

Ofsted's (2019) examination of the HE transition process cites complex needs as a primary reason, often arising from challenges in traditional school settings. This research describes a lack of collaboration among parents, LAs and schools, resulting in communication issues and relationship breakdowns. Parents transitioned to HE due to school pressure, prosecution avoidance, permanent exclusions, and concerns about 'off-rolling.'⁵ These findings align with international literature, suggesting an increasing trend of parents turning to HE when dissatisfied with the formal schooling system or when their child's needs are inadequately met (Jolly & Matthews, 2020).

⁵ Off-rolling, the informal/illegal removal of students, is a concern as schools navigate the pressure to showcase academic progress through league tables and inspection results, potentially compromising inclusion principles (Weale, 2018).

The 2021 ADCS survey of LA professionals found that parents' motivations for deregistering their children were primarily health-related due to COVID-19, philosophical or lifestyle choices, and general health reasons. School-specific reasons like bullying or SEND were cited less frequently, possibly influenced by the heightened threat of C-19.

Mitchell (2020a) found that parents who never sent their children to school, perceived the state school system as flawed and pressurised to conform to government policy, failing to support curiosity and engagement (pull factors). This sentiment was more prevalent among parents whose children had never attended school compared to those transitioning from school to HE (Mitchell 2020b). This suggests that parents opting for HE at the outset are more likely to perceive the state school system as not meeting the needs of *CYP in general*, while those whose children attended school prior to HE, see it as not meeting their *child's individual needs*.

Common across motivations for HE is parental dissatisfaction with an inflexible school system, particularly for children with SEND (push factors). Negative school experiences, pressures to withdraw children, and philosophical differences with school practices contribute to the decision (Smith et al., 2020), with documented positive benefits like tailored learning, flexibility, and community support.

1.4.3 HE research

HE research has some methodological barriers, from the limitations of cross-sectional designs in capturing HE's fluid nature (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Watson, 2018) to the challenges posed by small, self-selected samples often accessed through homeschooling groups (Hodge et al., 2017; Martin-Chang et al., 2011). Reluctance among UK homeschooling families to participate, driven by a deep-seated mistrust of LAs, further complicates the research landscape (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). The pervasive issue of self-selection bias adds another layer of complexity (Hamlin & Cheng, 2022) and loose regulations make it hard to engage to engage HE families for research, often hindered by privacy concerns and the perception of observation as a potential threat to their autonomy (Dwyer, 2019; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). The resultant reliance on small sample sizes in many empirical studies on HE limits the generalisability of findings, while larger national samples often overlook the diversity and outcomes within the homeschooling spectrum (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020; McShane, 2021).

1.5 C-19 Pandemic and School Closures

In March, 2020, the C-19 pandemic led to a worldwide shutdown, causing the global, extended closure of schools. On 23 March 2020, England implemented its first national lockdown to curb the spread of the severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). Non-key workers were instructed to stay at home, avoid mixing with other households and practice social distancing in public. Schools closed except for vulnerable children and those of key workers. Another national lockdown occurred from January 6 to March 29, 2021, leading to the closure of schools for most pupils and advice to work from home. These lockdowns,

accompanied by travel restrictions, disrupted routines and led to economic challenges and mental health concerns (Meyerowitz-Katz et al., 2021).

Children were particularly impacted by the restrictions, facing numerous disruptions at home and in school (Ashworth et al., 2022; Bray et al., 2021). Changes included disruptions to friendships, sleep, and activity routines, difficulties with home learning and keeping up with schoolwork (e.g., Ashworth, et al., 2022; Morse et al., 2022). Parents reported that their children missed social interactions and friends (Morse et al., 2022). While many children displayed resilience, some faced significant challenges, and there is increasing global evidence of adverse effects on children's mental health (e.g., Waite et al., 2022).

1.5.1 Impact on Education

The shift to home-based learning during school closures, primarily facilitated through online platforms, presented significant challenges for effective teaching and learning (Howard, Khan & Lockyer, 2021). These changes exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic disparities, with private schools outperforming state schools in online teaching (TeacherTapp, 2020). The already existing inequalities and limitations in services for CYP with SEND were further affected by a reduction in support services (Ashworth et al., 2023). This situation both increased learning disparities among disadvantaged students and intensified existing educational inequalities (Howard, Khan & Lockyer, 2021). Unsurprisingly, this impact was particularly pronounced among lower-income families, who lacked access to active learning (Cattan et al., 2021), contributing to the 'post-code lottery' effect. Overall, the most significant

learning losses and greatest impact on education was felt amongst disadvantaged pupils (Howard, Khan & Lockyer, 2021).

The delivery of homeschooling also varied widely among schools, with approximately one-fifth of pupils doing little to no schoolwork, and numerous state schools providing limited or no online lessons (Green, 2020). Parents too, grappled with the unprecedented situation, unanimously expressing the difficulty they faced in supporting their children's learning. They attributed their struggles to a lack of guidance, support, and motivation for home schooling (ONS, 2020).

1.5.2 Impact of Lockdowns on CYP with SEND

Lockdowns during the pandemic significantly affected children with SEND, raising concerns among various professional bodies (Armitage and Nellums, 2020; Couper-Kenney and Riddell, 2022). From a human rights perspective, there were worries about the potential absence of an inclusive humanitarian response (Schiariti, 2020).

While some schools continued for those with EHCPs, safety considerations led many parents to keep their children at home. SEND children without an EHCP faced even more challenges (Bol, 2020). They experienced isolation and had disrupted access to education, health services, and SEMH support (Ashworth et al., 2023). Engaging with online learning proved difficult for many SEND pupils (Skipp et al., 2021), with approximately 30% of families lacking access to IT (Jayanaetti, 2020). Parents of SEND children, perceived an overload of school work, heightened negative emotions, including increased distress among the children (Pisano et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020), along with alterations in eating habits and elevated screen time

(Muscogiuri et al., 2020; Rundle et al., 2020). Many parents identified personal stresses related to supporting their child and for these families, the return to school was seen as helpful due to challenging behaviours at home.

Despite challenges, families found maintaining routines for meals, sleep, and daily activities helpful, although physical activities were limited (Goldschmidt 2020).

Research from the University of Sussex revealed that not all SEND pupils struggled during the lockdown. Based on a survey of hundreds of parents, the study indicates that some thrived in a homeschooling environment away from the pressures of mainstream schooling. Around half of the parents noted reduced anxiety, and one in five reported increased learning. Parents highlighted increased family time, greater flexibility, pursuing personal interests and reduced social pressures as contributing to positive experiences. Researchers from the study concluded that C-19 created an opportunity to revitalise education for SEND children by considering the positive aspects from the home learning experience. Recognising and integrating these aspects into classroom settings may enhance learning and reduce anxieties for some SEND pupils (Vowles, 2020).

1.5.3 Rising Pupil Absenteeism

The return to school, post-pandemic has brought about a significant rise in absenteeism among pupils. According to recent figures (DfE, 2023), the number of persistently absent students has more than doubled compared to pre-pandemic levels. The aftermath of the cost of living crisis following the pandemic, has resulted in many more families struggling. Pupils eligible for free school meals – a key measure – exhibit higher absence rates and may account for some of these figures.

A surprising aspect of this rise however, appears to be linked to SEMH needs, particularly manifested in a surge of EBSNA cases, reflecting a worrying decline in CYP's mental health as a consequence of the pandemic. While much of the world has seemingly moved on from C-19, the significant impact it has had on pupils cannot be ignored. Marked by severe anxiety about attending school⁶, EBSNA is attributed to factors such as adverse school environments, mental health, autism and SEND (Morgan & Costello, 2023). Difficulties, especially for neurodiverse pupils, include accessing the curriculum, bullying, sensory processing issues and staff capacity in schools, especially amidst the ongoing recruitment crisis in the education sector (Wicks, 2023).

The focus of this thesis is on families who deregistered their child from school in order to HE during or shortly after the pandemic, however, rising absenteeism post-Covid, highlights a compelling reality – both education and health systems are struggling to accommodate the needs of CYP. The aim of this thesis is to explore the reasons underpinning parents' decision to deregister their children. Considering this intersecting phenomenon, it is worth considering if there is an overlap between the increase in absenteeism and the rise in homeschooling.

⁶ Signs of EBSNA include the inability to go to school, physical illnesses, excessive worry or crying, panic attacks, hiding in school toilets, sleep disturbances, depression, and low self-esteem.

1.6 Researcher position

My journey toward becoming an EP was significantly shaped by the unique experiences during the C-19 lockdowns. Six months before my training began, I found myself at home with my 12-year-old son, managing the challenges of working from home while supporting his online schooling. While aware of our privileges, such as safe housing, enough food, and internet access, I struggled with anxiety from the social isolation, mirroring the experiences of many. Despite the difficulties, there was a sense of liberation, improved sleep, and improved fitness.

With more time on my hands to reflect on this extraordinary experience, I couldn't shake the feeling that it presented a unique opportunity for research. The extended period of not attending school, unprecedented in a 'lab' setting, created a research scenario that could never have been replicated outside of this context. Uncertain about how to proceed, it wasn't until my second-year placement where I encountered a growing number of cases related to EBSNA alongside media reports indicating a surge in HE since the pandemic, that the focus of my study crystallised.

While I haven't directly participated in homeschooling, my previous training at the Anna Freud Centre followed by my EP training at the Tavistock and Portman NHS has deeply shaped my psychodynamic perspective. Moreover, my journey to the UK as a political refugee in 1978 has instilled in me a sense of being an outsider, fostering a capacity for analysis and observation. These experiences and perspectives undoubtedly influenced my approach to this study, enriching certain aspects while possibly introducing biases. Nevertheless, at the core of my motivations lies a fervent commitment to fostering a more inclusive society, which

undoubtedly informed my research, particularly within the context of the growing phenomenon of homeschooling.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

A literature review (LR) aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on a specific research topic, so that a well-defined research question may be identified (Aveyard, 2019). This chapter aims to explore the literature concerning the rise in home-education and to evaluate the empirical research (and other relevant articles), that have studied families' transitions from mainstream education to HE, since the start of the C-19 pandemic.

2.2 Literature Review Question (LRQ)

The LRQ was intentionally framed with a specific focus on recent literature spanning the past three years. This choice was informed by the initial rapid mapping review (Booth et al., 2022) conducted at the outset of the research and repeated a year later, just before the final systematic LR phase.

The aim of the rapid mapping review was to establish an overview of the existing literature, focusing on the potential impact of the pandemic on the rising prevalence of HE. The intention was to determine whether empirical evidence exists, to substantiate the claims made in the media regarding the surge of HE since the onset of C-19. While direct studies were scarce, the mapping review revealed the emergence of new studies from various parts of the world, which explored the motivations for HE and acknowledged the influence of C-19. It was deemed worthwhile to explore whether the themes and issues raised, had evolved beyond previous findings. The overall aim was to identify any themes within the current, contemporary context.

Consequently, the resulting LRQ, was as follows:

'What does the literature reveal about the motivations for HE since the start of the pandemic?'

2.3 Method for Review

To effectively contextualise the current study, it was useful to grasp the landscape of the existing relevant literature. According to the International Center for Home Education (2023), there is an extensive body of research, with over 2500 journal articles, books and dissertations published to date.

The first documented publication, titled, 'Schooling Without the School' dates back to 1919 in the US. Up until 1972, there were only eight published articles, all originating from the US. This period reflects the emergence of HE as a topic of research interest and the database clearly evidences that the majority of HE research still emanates from the US. In contrast, the first published UK research appears in 1989. Despite having a significant number of HE families, there is limited literature on the subject in the UK and recent empirical data is scant.

This presented a dilemma when deciding whether to include studies from the US or other countries in the review, as systematic literature reviews typically aim to match contextual similarities between studies, to maintain relevance and robustness. Homeschooling trends can be influenced by the cultural and social milieus in which families live (Speigler, 2010), and if the geographical context significantly differs from the study, the findings might not be applicable (Smith, 2018).

Many US studies cite religion as the primary consideration for HE (e.g. Dahlquist et al., 2006), however, more current data shows that this is no longer the case. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the leading motivations for HE in the US are now concerns linked to the school environment and dissatisfaction with the quality of academic instruction (Riley, 2023). Further, the UK has its own representation of religious motivation within the HE literature. Arguably, some faiths may be less open to scrutiny from researchers, as alluded to in the introduction re Muslim HE families. Given the limited UK literature within the specified timeframe, including studies from other countries where HE is also a growing trend, was considered valuable for a holistic understanding of the research.

Finally, the concept of 'glocality' offers compelling justification for broadening the literature search beyond the UK. Glocality emphasises the interconnectedness of global and local aspects in the context of HE (Chinazzi, 2022). This concept becomes particularly relevant when considering the impact of C-19, a global event that significantly affected both local and international educational contexts.

2.3.1 Search Strategy

Several literature reviews were undertaken between October 2022 and October 2023 using the following databases: PsychINFO, PsyArticles, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection and Eric. Whilst this was a good way to keep up to date on new studies, the search terms elicited significantly more studies focused on 'home-school relations', 'homeschooling during C-19' or health studies. Turning to the Web of

Science⁷ as a broader database, elicited more studies pertaining directly to HE. A systematic literature review was thus conducted on the 10th November 2023.

2.3.2 Literature Search

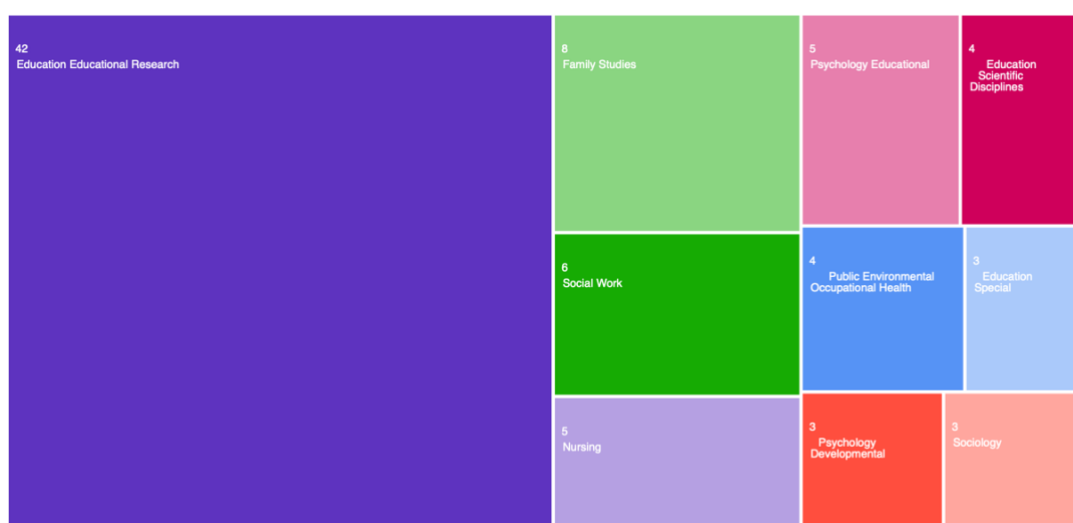
The following search terms and Boolean phrases were used to run the search:

ALL=(home educat* or homschool* or homeschooling or EHE) **AND ALL** =(motiv* or reason* or driver*) **AND TI** =(homeeducat* or homeschool* or EHE or home educat*).

The Web of Science multidisciplinary databases resulted in a total of 87 papers.

The following figure provides a visual representation of the multidisciplinary distribution of these papers. Subsequently, a table provides details on the limiters that were applied, along with the rationale for these, including which papers were excluded and which ones were retained. PRISMA guidelines informed this process.

Figure 1: Visualisation of Publications from Web of Science



⁷ Web of Science includes three large multidisciplinary databases: Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Social Sciences Citation Index and Science Citation Index.

Table 1 – Limiters used in Literature Review

Limitier	Set Limits	Rationale	Papers excluded	Papers left
Published between	2020 - 2023	This date range was chosen to include studies between the time period from the start of the C-19 pandemic, in order to validly answer the LRQ.	7	80
Source types	*Academic Journals	Only academic journals were selected to ensure only peer-reviewed empirical research was included in the studies.	7	73
Language	English	To ensure the researcher was able to thoroughly understand the study, its methods and findings	3	70

* Acknowledging the limitations of relying solely on peer-reviewed articles, this approach was chosen to ensure a high level of quality papers. There is a vaster proportion of 'grey literature' in the field of HE and including these may introduce biases that are more difficult to address. To mitigate publication bias, grey literature has been incorporated in the 'Introduction'.

2.3.3 Eligibility Criteria

70 papers remained, however many were not relevant to the present study as is demonstrated by the visual diagram. Inclusion criteria were set and all remaining papers screened first by title and if deemed relevant, by abstract and then by full text of the article. The following table summarises inclusion criteria.

Table 2 – Inclusion Criteria

Criteria	Set Limits	Rationale
Topic	Papers that focused on why parents are choosing HE at this time.	There are various focal points in HE studies, including the experiences of HE or pedagogical elements. However, these aspects were not deemed central and papers that primarily emphasised these elements, were excluded.
Participant Group	Inclusion of families who have transitioned from mainstream schooling to HE.	The participant groups did not have to exclusively only contain families transitioning to HE, but studies that

		solely focused families that were already homeschooling and did not include those who moved out of traditional schooling, were not deemed appropriate for inclusion.
Definitions	HE as it is formally understood rather than the more general homeschooling experience that many people had during the pandemic.	Many studies explored the impact of C-19 on parents and children who engaged in homeschooling. However, this context is qualitatively distinct from HE as ongoing rather than a period of short-term forced HE experience.

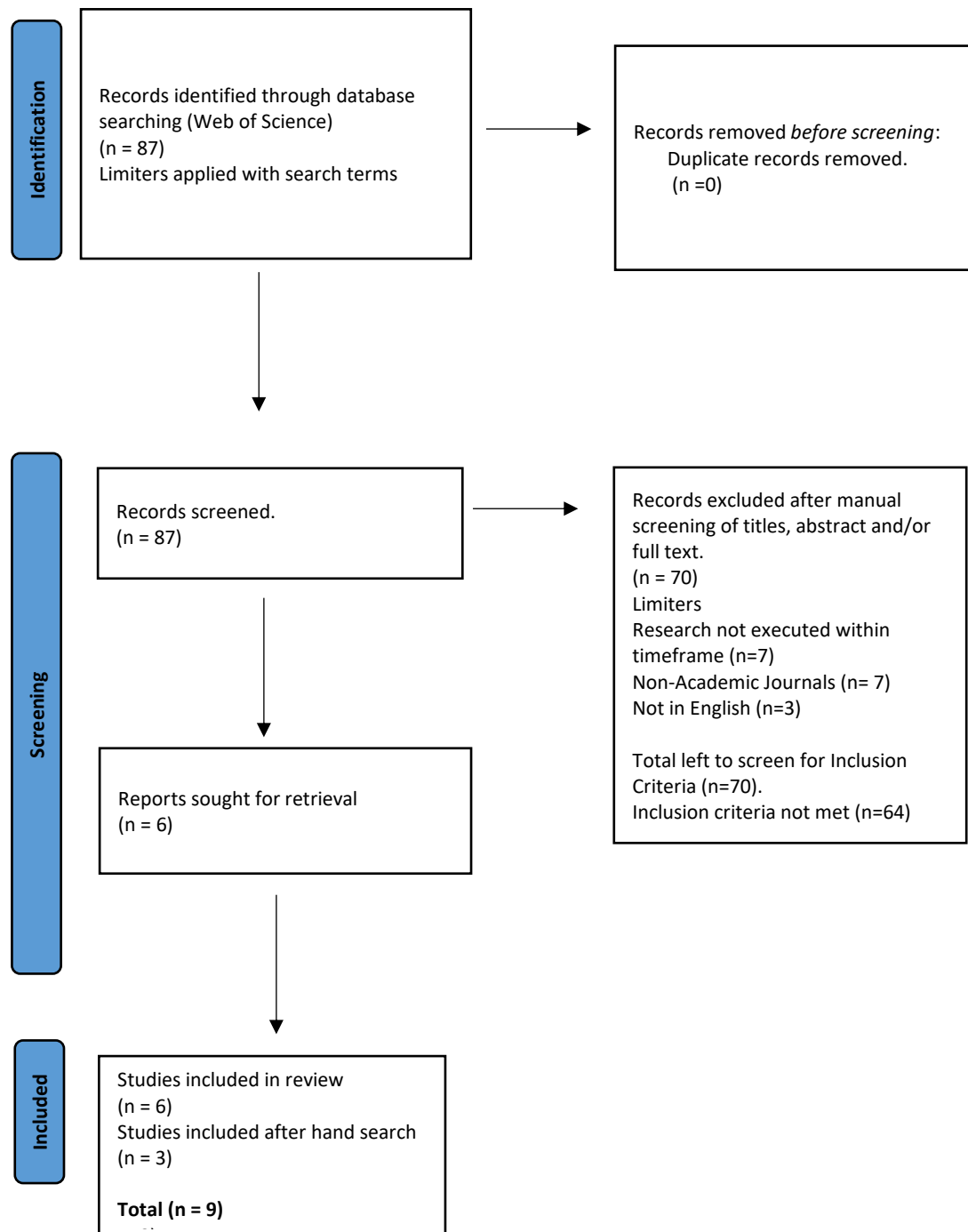
2.3.4 Screening Process

Following screening, six papers remained. A common issue resulting in the exclusion of a number of relevant UK studies, was that while they were published within the timeframe as set by the inclusion/exclusion criteria, on closer inspection, the data collection and interviews had occurred before 2020, which would have not been suitable for answering the LRQ.

More subjective decisions were made on papers that might have alluded to motivations and therefore would be potentially addressing the LRQ, but their overall focus was perhaps framed through a political discourse analysis (e.g. a paper on Muslim HE families using the concept of moral panics), making their discussion and findings valuable, but nuanced and therefore unsuitable for answering the LRQ.

Hand-searches on Google Scholar through snowballing techniques were also used. This method resulted in the identification of three additional studies. Titles and summaries of the included papers are in Appendix B.

Figure 2: PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the search strategy for the systematic literature review (adapted from Moher et al., 2009).



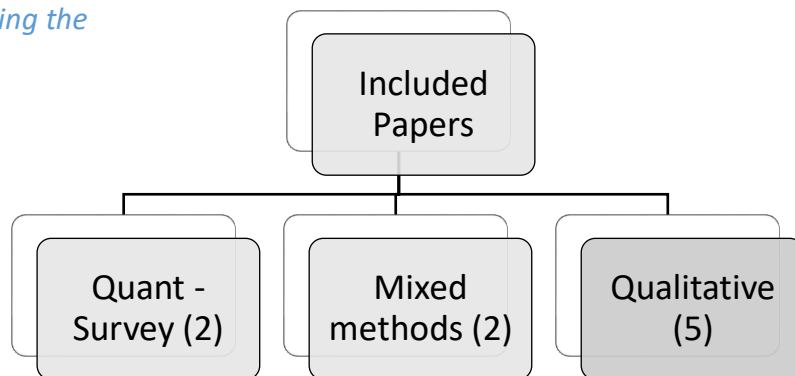
2.4 Critical Appraisal of the Literature

To support a robust and thorough critical appraisal, the papers have been examined and features tabulated in Appendix C. based on the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) – Qualitative Studies Checklist (CASP, 2018), the Critical Appraisal of a Survey tool (Center for Evidence-Based Management, 2014) and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Hong et al., 2018). Considerations about quality of studies are also given in lieu of findings by Kunzman & Gaither (2013;2020), in their reviews on HE literature.

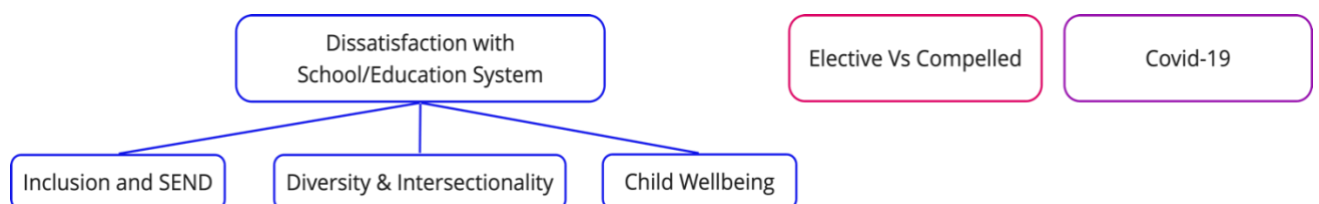
2.4.1 Organising the Literature

Initially, the papers were categorised based on their methodology but through further analysis, six themes were identified, as shown in the diagrams below.

Figure 3: Organising the Literature



THEMES



2.4.2 Review of the literature

The reviewed papers reflected a range of research methodologies, subject areas and varying levels of quality. As is often the case in HE research, the majority of the studies were qualitative, due to this methodology lending itself well for in-depth exploration of 'lived-experience'. However, there are inherent limitations with the purely qualitative approach that warrant consideration when reporting on findings, that can enhance the quality of the research. One observed limitation in a number of the papers was the absence of reflexivity statements and an explanation of the researcher's relationship to participants. While a couple of authors, such as Adamson (2023) and Neuman and Oz (2021) clearly described their constructivist (and therefore subjective) approach, this was not clear across papers.

A lack of researcher positionality in many, complicated assessment of quality as their potential influencing factors are not evident or where political partisanship may be driving the study, an associated limitation of HE studies (Fensham-Smith, 2021; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020).

The tendency to rely on small, convenience samples (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; 2020) may impact the overall quality of findings. Such samples can lead to 'little more than a series of anecdotes embellished by elegant methodology', as Kunzman & Gaither (2020, p.254) suggest. In some of the reviewed papers, the lack of methodological clarity and systematic reporting further reduced the trustworthiness and credibility of findings. However, it is acknowledged that recruiting participant's for HE studies is challenging, often relying on HE bodies and online groups. This self-

selection of participants inherently limits the generalisability of almost all published research in this area.

Interviews and questionnaires emerged as the most popular methods for collecting data. A combined approach, that started with a questionnaire and followed up with interviews, strengthened the data analysis (e.g. Slater et al., 2022). Questionnaires tended to gather demographic information, which was deemed a strength of a study as it clarified the diversity and backgrounds of participants.

The papers include four from the UK, three from Australia, and one each from the US and Israel. Indeed, literature (both empirical and 'grey') seems to have a high concentration emerging out of Australia, likely due to the growing numbers of HE families and the influence of a small group of active researchers like Rebecca English. Likewise, the Israeli study is one of many conducted by a pair of researchers, Neuman & Oz, who are frequently cited in HE literature. Although curricula and pedagogy may vary between countries, the criticisms of the traditional education system and the motivations for HE appear to be similar in many cases.

A notable strength of the larger studies (e.g. Forlin & Chambers, 2023 and Green-Hennessy & Mariotti, 2023) was the diversity of participants. All the studies provided transparent information about participants' backgrounds (ethnicity/religion) where relevant and demonstrated ethical considerations associated with this.

The age range of HE children in the papers spanned from nursery to post-16, reflecting a wide spread, although the highest proportion of participants seemed to have primary

aged-children. Finally, the majority of participants were mothers, reflecting the common trend that mothers often take on the role of home educators.

The following review is organised by the overarching themes identified, whereby each individual paper will be considered.

2.5 Themes

2.5.1 Dissatisfaction with the education system

A common motivating factor across all the studies is a dissatisfaction with parents' experiences within the education system. This dissatisfaction is not only directly stated, but also manifests through other specific elements that amount to an overall 'dissatisfaction' (e.g. children's mental health, bullying, lack of support and provision or adequate teaching for SEND, too much standardised testing). These related aspects have been grouped as sub-themes under the main theme of 'Dissatisfaction with the education system'. However, it is important to recognise that these are neither subordinate nor less significant; they are stand-alone themes that emerged when conducting this review.

Slater, Burton & McKillop's (2022) mixed-methods study, investigated the demographics and motivations of the HE community in Australia via an online survey, the Australian Home Education Questionnaire (AHQ)⁸. Demographic questions were followed by child-specific questions. Written responses were

⁸ The AHQ consists of 35 questions, including both multiple choice and short written response formats and was ethically approved in 2018.

analysed thematically by the authors, combining thematic and content analyses, allowing comments to fall into multiple themes if applicable.

A total of 385 guardians participated in the survey, with 377 being mothers, collectively homeschooling 676 children. Participants were recruited through HE organisations and social media groups. More than half of the participants had achieved a degree-level education or higher. Demographic data was also obtained regarding geolocation, age and gender, number of HE children within the family and the financial costs associated with homeschooling. This information aimed to identify the characteristics of HE families in Australia, addressing one of the research questions. The inclusion of this data is considered a strength of the study, as obtaining information about HE families is often challenging.

The total sample was divided into two sub-samples; those who never intended to enrol in school (n=285), and those that decided to HE having initially attended mainstream school (n=391). This differentiation is another strength, as it supports a more nuanced analysis and insight into the different circumstances motivating Australian families choosing HE.

The authors reported four themes on motivations for HE: *social and emotional wellbeing, developmental differences* (SpLD, specific motor disease, gifted, ASD or ADHD), *curriculum and standards* and *lifestyle choices*.

More than one-third of the sample had developmental differences or mental health diagnoses, with a particularly high prevalence among those who had previously

attended school. Among these, emotional distress and concerns about bullying were common, influencing the decision to homeschool. For parents of children with developmental differences (SEND), two-fifths reported that the decision was influenced by teachers' limited understanding of accommodating SEND and/or the lack of available provision to support their children's needs in mainstream education.

Similar findings around schools inability to support SEN students as a driver towards HE, were reported by Forlin & Chambers (2023), Bower (2021), Paulauskaite et al., (2022) and Green-Hennessy & Mariotti (2023). Paulauskaite et al., (2021) for instance, found that the most frequent reasons for de-registering were additional needs not being met and their child's mental health deteriorating.

Slater et al., (2022) found that nearly one-third of respondents were dissatisfied with the standard of education provided (whether their child had additional needs or not) and that this was regularly reported by parents of gifted children. Among those that had been at school, nearly two-fifths felt that their children were not reaching their academic potential. Forlin & Chambers (2023) found in their study focusing specifically on HE for children with neurodevelopmental conditions, that 70% of parents felt they could provide a better education at home.

The final theme of 'life choices' encompassed various factors, including travel, difficulties accessing schools due to distance or financial constraints, and choices related to religion or lifestyle. Within this theme, it was highlighted that 25% reported that once they had started HE for one child, this positively influenced the decision to HE subsequent children.

The study had several strengths, including a large and diverse sample of participants from various locations across Australia. The data analysis approach, combining qualitative thematic analysis with content analysis, facilitated clear reporting of findings. Unlike some studies that reported interview transcripts without clear links (e.g. Wenham et al., 2021), this study provided descriptive statistics that enhanced the interpretation and analysis of the data.

The study had some limitations. Self-selection bias, common in HE studies, was present. Additionally, the participants' higher-than-average educational levels might have influenced the data responses and potentially skewed the findings. Since this sample may not be representative of all HE families, the generalisability of findings are limited and even more so when generalising to countries with other educational systems and where distance to school is less of a factor. Further, the study does not establish causation, or explore the relationships between the factors and decisions it describes. While the mixed-methods aspect is a strength, the quantitative analysis is merely descriptive.

Neuman & Oz's (2021) study directly addresses dissatisfaction with the education system by examining why 30 mothers in Israel chose HE for their children. Each participant had at least one child in primary school. The study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, identifying reasons through interviews and categorising them into themes. These themes were then grouped into three broader categories (*goals, performance and results*) based on the perceived 'education crisis' described in the introduction. The authors whilst claiming neutrality, situate the study within the

larger debate about the shortcomings and benefits of the education system. They question whether HE represents a unique approach or is part of a broader social discourse. Their findings align with the education crisis in various ways, including issues related to standardisation, neglect of holistic education, school climate (students' increasing alienation as a result of emphasis on discipline), teaching quality, relevance of curriculum to students' lives, and a loss of educational goals motivated by financial rather than educational considerations.

Strengths of the study include rich qualitative data collection using multiple sources. The authors openly acknowledge their role as subjective researchers who interpret subjective perceptions. This transparency enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of their findings. However, their claim of neutrality in the ongoing debate around education might be compromised by their active involvement in HE research, potentially introducing bias into their conclusions. For instance, they mention that mothers also reported other reasons for HE, such as difficulty being separated from their children and the idea of a united family. However, these factors are not explored. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size limited to Israeli mothers, may also not generalise to other contexts. However, the study remains methodologically strong and offers valuable insights into HE as a potential 'solution to the education crisis'.

2.5.2 Inclusion and SEND

Six papers explored inclusion, particularly in relation to SEND. Bower (2021), English et al., (2023), Paulauskaite et al., (2022) and Forlin & Chambers (2023) directly address SEND, while others highlight these factors in their findings. Forlin & Chambers (2023) concentrated on parents of SEND children and found that a key push into HE

was the perceived inadequacy of support and limited academic progress, highlighting a need for better inclusive practices. Bower (2021) and English et al., (2023) investigated children who deregistered from school due to bullying and discrimination, emphasising the need for proactive measures in creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

Paulauskaite et al. (2022) investigated the homeschooling experiences of UK families with children with neurodevelopmental conditions (mainly autism and/or intellectual disability). It was mixed-methods in design, analysing survey data from 158 parents who either chose homeschooling before the COVID-19 pandemic or deregistered their children during the pandemic. The quantitative analysis compared demographic data between the two groups and descriptive statistics for HE and mental health outcomes. Content Analysis was then performed, extrapolating the barriers and facilitators to HE.

Findings showed that there were consistent reasons for deregistration, both before and during C-19, but the pandemic itself was not the primary driver. Rather, it was a perception that mainstream schools were unable to meet the additional learning and mental health needs of their children. Despite the challenges of managing diverse demands and addressing complex needs, both groups of homeschooling parents expressed high satisfaction with their choice. Further, the mental health outcomes of HE children did not significantly differ from those of their school-registered peers. The study concluded that HE can benefit families when mainstream schools do not adequately support children with neurodevelopmental conditions.

Strengths of the study include a large sample and two research groups, enabling comparisons to be made as well as offering insights into the effects of C-19. Acknowledging that C-19 may have accelerated school deregistration rates makes it particularly relevant to the current study, as it has a large number of participants who deregistered their child after the pandemic had started. The focus on neurodivergence and disability is of particular relevance when considering inclusion for SEND and how the study may inform educational professionals, like EPs, to provide support in the context of HE beyond the pandemic.

The study also collected an extensive amount of demographic data, making it one of the largest studies into HE for neurodevelopmental conditions. However, as has been mentioned, the convenience sampling approach used may limit the generalisability of the findings. Another potential source of bias which the authors acknowledged, was the use of parent-reported data for child mental-health outcomes, which may not accurately reflect the actual levels of mental health problems experienced by the children. It may also be that the levels of high satisfaction with HE as reported by participants, indicates a measure of positivity bias within the research scenario. While the study had methodological strengths, it may have benefitted from including academic outcomes which are particularly important children with SEND.

2.5.3 Diversity and Intersectionality

Linked to inclusion are the factors of diversity and intersectionality that HE families may encounter within the mainstream education system. All the papers in the review describe features of diversity (e.g. SEND or complex needs) and intersectionality, but

Bower (2021) presents a detailed case-study centred on the experiences of an autistic, atheist boy attending an Irish Catholic school, whose parents are in a same-sex relationship. This case exposes the complexity and challenges of multiple, non-conforming identities, which, in Toby's case, resulted in severe bullying and neglect by the school due to discrimination, ultimately compelling his parents to opt for HE.

There are many strengths to the case-study that provided rich data presented as vignettes, providing a window into the family's experience. The emotionality of the vignettes adds a psychological element to the reporting of findings and the study's focus on a single, distinctive family contributes to its uniqueness and complexity. However, the absence of a clear description of how the themes were developed, apart from a brief mention of thematic analysis, leaves a gap in understanding the research process. The researcher does not define their own involvement and how the research impacted on them. The findings shed light on how discrimination based on religion and sexuality was influenced by senior leadership, it falls short in offering a more extensive discussion on the broader complexity of diversity and intersectionality. Further, it does not provide any solutions on how schools with traditional values can be supported to overcome prejudice and promote inclusivity.

2.5.4 Child Wellbeing

Bower's (2021) study clearly demonstrates that a child's wellbeing is central for some to the motivation to HE. Toby's parents felt that his mental health was so badly impacted by the negative experiences he had been through in school, that they could not send him to a different school. Many of the study's report similar experiences. Slater et al., (2022) highlighted social and emotional wellbeing as a motivating factor

and Paulauskaite et al., (2022) found that ‘child’s mental health deterioration’ and ‘the child being unhappy at school’ were the second and third most frequent reasons for deregistration prior to the pandemic. Green-Hennessy and Mariotti (2023) found that parents who would soon remove their child from school to HE, reported their child was significantly more likely to be bullied.

English et al.’s (2023) study focuses on parents who have turned to ‘unschooling’ in response to their children’s experiences with bullying in mainstream Australian schools. It explores the narratives of six parents and their use of relaxed HE approaches to help their children heal from the trauma caused by school-based bullying.

The authors acknowledge the spectrum of HE methods, from highly structured (school at home) to unstructured (eclectic and unschooling). They also highlight the ‘accidental’ nature of HE for families that have prior schooling experience before opting for HE. Participants initially attempted to recreate ‘school at home’, but later shifted to more relaxed and child-led approaches, emphasising the necessity of doing so (‘deschooling’), so that their child could adapt to HE.

C-19 school closures were reported to boost parents confidence in HE, especially for children recovering from trauma as a result of the bullying they had suffered.

Unschooling in this way, was viewed as a therapeutic approach.

This study’s strength lie in its specificity – HE as a response to bullying, acknowledging the influence of C-19 enforced lockdowns, as supporting the move to HE. The qualitative methodology offered rich, first-hand perspectives and while

being a small sample, the authors felt that there is potential for these findings to represent a larger population. However, the intrinsic limitations remain for the small sample size and selection bias, as participants were recruited from specific online platforms and newsletters. By not including any quantitative elements and a broader geographical scope, generalisability is limited.

2.5.5 Elective vs Compelled

In the context of reasons for HE, there is a distinction between elective and compelled motivations. Elective HE tends to be defined as a proactive educational choice, often for reasons driven by pre-existing beliefs or philosophies. In contrast, compelled HE is viewed as a response to immediate circumstances, commonly due to factors such as a perceived lack of safety as a result of the school environment or unmet needs. While the studies that fell into the above four themes largely depict motivations that fall into the 'compelled' camp, HE studies often explore these binary conceptualisations. One such study, conducted by Green-Hennessy and Mariotti (2023), explores the potential factors that influence what they call reactive (or 'second choice') reasons in the choice to HE.

This study stands out among the nine reviewed papers for its quantitative approach employing the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class 2010–2011 (ECLS-K:11)⁹ dataset. It examined whether the HE subsample in the ECLS-K:11, displayed characteristics that one might expect to see, where HE is chosen as a

⁹ The ECLS-K:11 was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and tracked 18,174 schoolchildren from kindergarten to 5th Grade. All parents chose to start their children's' education in formal schooling and agreed to participate for the duration, implying that they did not anticipate leaving the system to HE.

reaction to school. It also compared this subsample of HE families via demographic variables to the larger sample.

The study confirmed hypotheses that children transitioning into HE experienced higher rates of bullying and absenteeism, compared to traditionally schooled children. It also found demographic differences; the HE group was significantly more likely to be White and English-speaking and were less likely to have two parents working full time. They were also more likely to have a child with a disability. Some families evidently went back to mainstream school within one year, suggesting that HE is not permanently adopted for some transitioning families.

Strengths of the study include its large sample size, the use of multiple statistical analyses for group comparisons and the comprehensive collection of demographic data. Overall these contributed to the robustness of the findings, suggesting a potential for broader generalisability. However, the results are correlative rather than causative, rendering the conclusions reached speculative as opposed to definitive. Therefore, it would not be without caution were these findings to be applied to a more diverse population.

One significant limitation, acknowledged by the authors, is the study's reliance on a dataset that does not include direct enquiries into the reasons behind parents' decisions to HE. While the chosen methodology effectively analysed a large dataset, the absence of direct communication with HE participants, whether through surveys or qualitative interviews, greatly limited a deeper understanding of their motivations. However, the authors emphasise that the ECLS-K:11 provides a window into the

challenges faced by families just before opting for HE and highlights the possibility of a swift return to mainstream schooling for some, suggesting that HE does not necessarily sever ties with schools. They argue that this insight is relevant in the current context of rising HE, potentially influenced by a sense of efficacy gained during the pandemic. They argue that understanding the factors leading families to leave the school system could inform changes aimed at reducing departures and providing better support through hybrid or flexi-schooling options.

The second quantitative study in focus, conducted by Forlin and Chambers (2023), gathered data from 99 parents in Western Australia, using the recently developed Perceptions of Home Schooling (PPHS) scale—an online questionnaire still under review. The PPHS scale aims to identify key motivations and implementations of homeschooling, categorising motivations into reactive and proactive reasons following the framework proposed by Green-Hennessy and Mariotti (2023). While the study lacks extensive discussion on result reliability and validity, a detailed account of the scale's development can be found in their separate paper, offering clarity and transparency.

Focused on evaluating inclusion, as evident from its title, 'Is a whole-school approach really meeting the needs of all learners? Home-schooling parents' perceptions,' the paper appears to serve as a trial for their new scale. The study's strength lies in the statistical analysis of interactions among demographic factors. If proven reliable, the PPHS could fill a gap in the research base. This is particularly valuable in a field that often relies on regionally specific, small, and heterogeneous qualitative data.

Their findings echo those studies that highlight proactive tendencies to HE and more reactive ones influenced by parents' perceptions of their child's unmet needs, particularly for CYP with SEND. Parents voiced concerns about inadequate academic instruction, rigid school structures, and an unfavourable school environment marked by safety issues and bullying. A gap was highlighted between the expectation of collaboration between parents and schools and the reported lack of acceptance and belonging felt by both child and parent(s). This emphasises the complexity of decision making for HE as well as the implications for schools, urging a re-evaluation of inclusive practices and strengthening collaboration with parents.

Adamson's (2021) longitudinal grounded theory study, spanning 5 years, explored the decision-making process of 21 UK mothers who opted for HE. While not categorising participants by motivation, the study shows that negative perspectives on the education system often compel parents to choose HE. The diverse sample, including non-UK-born participants enhances the study's relevance.

The emergent themes illuminate the decision-making process, drawing attention to the need to 'step out' of the traditional educational system, the role of emotions, the importance of finding emotional refuges, the influence of parental background and beliefs, the flexibility of HE, financial considerations, challenges in finding an inclusive community, and the impact of external factors such as C-19. In essence, the study illustrates the interplay of emotions, individual values and external conditions in shaping HE choices.

While the study effectively explores emotional aspects often overlooked in other studies and acknowledges external factors like the pandemic, its limitations should be noted. The absence of fathers in the sample restricts a holistic view, given their typical involvement in these decisions. Avoiding questions about ethnicity and race may have prevented bias but missed the chance to draw on a culturally diverse sample. Furthermore, conducting interviews over an extended period may introduce social desirability biases in participant responses. Notably, being a small qualitative study, generalisability is limited, and despite recognising subjectivity, potential researcher bias remains.

2.5.6 Covid-19

While a number of papers considered the impact of C-19, only two were centrally concerned with exploring the influence of the pandemic on the decision to HE. Paulauskaite et al.'s (2022) study, previously discussed, provided insights into HE for children with neurodevelopmental conditions, before and during the pandemic. The other and final paper included in this review is Wenham et al.'s (2021) study exploring the experiences of 85 parents in England, who resisted sending their children back to school after lockdown measures were lifted in March 2021.

Published in 2021 during the height of the pandemic, evaluation of the study needs to keep in mind the specific time and context, when the threat of contracting the virus was more imminent. While the authors acknowledge the subjectivity in the qualitative data gathered through 'reflective surveys' and open-ended interview approaches, methodological details are scant. Findings are presented as four themes, with data extracts as supporting evidence.

First, many families, especially those with higher-risk members due to pre-existing health conditions, age, gender, or ethnicity, expressed concerns about the safety of sending their children back to school, fearing virus transmission within their households. Second, families faced difficult decisions regarding whether to send their children to school or keep them at home, considering the health and well-being of vulnerable family members. Third, families of children with SEND, expressed concerns about the safety and well-being of their children in school settings. Some felt that their children's needs were not adequately considered. Lastly, despite challenges, some families found silver linings in home learning, reporting improved wellbeing, behaviour and academic performance, leading them to consider HE permanently.

While fears around covid-related health risks are less prominent now, these findings seem to effectively distil and condense the findings reported across all nine studies. They highlight that during the pandemic, decisions to HE were influenced by health concerns and the unique circumstances created by enforced lockdowns, which essentially led to homeschooling for many families. While C-19-related health risks may be less prominent now, the impact of the pandemic on HE remains relevant. The study suggests that the pandemic served as a catalyst for many families to consider and experience HE which has implications for educational choices and how they may evolve, as more families consider HE as a viable option.

The authors' discussion and conclusions, whilst perhaps justified, tend to include what appear to be politically-motivated statements. For example, 'What positives can be taken from the analysis of these accounts, to improve this fractured, neoliberal

education system?'. While they make a link between the pandemic exposing the need for a more inclusive and flexible education system, their discussion is indeed compelling. However, a major weakness is a lack of methodological transparency and reflexivity. Whilst they acknowledge the subjective and personal nature of the data, they do not acknowledge their own subjectivity and potential biases, which may be seen as a limitation affecting the rigour and credibility of their study. However, the tone of the paper might restrict the dissemination of its findings to a broader audience, where it could have more significant impact.

2.6 Summary

2.6.1 Quality

The quality of the included research varied, with some studies facing common criticisms associated with research on HE. While Wenham et al.'s (2021) paper was perhaps strongly critiqued, its qualitative approach which prioritised parents' perspectives was powerful and warrants further exploration. In contrast, mixed-methods studies such as Paulauskaite et al., (2022) and Slater et al., (2022) were perceived as stronger due to their methodological clarity. However, Paulauskaite et al. focused on a specific neurodiverse population and Slater et al. conducted their study in Australia.

In contrast, the purely qualitative studies tended to lack explanations of their epistemological and ontological positions, relying on content and thematic analysis for descriptive explanations. This is limiting however, as there is minimal discussion about which philosophical research paradigms are drawn on to situate their findings within. One exception was Hennessy-Green & Mariotti's (2023) quantitative study that used

a theoretical framework for exploring parental motivations for HE. Since it was positivist, this did not necessitate an explanation of its research paradigm. Adamson's (2021) grounded theory study stood out for its clarity, methodology and development of themes grounded in data. It also uniquely illuminated the emotional aspect of moving to HE.

2.6.2 Synthesis of themes and findings

In analysing the literature on motivations for HE since the onset of the C-19 pandemic, a few key themes and findings emerge. One recurring theme underpinning parents' motivations stems from negative experiences their children encountered in mainstream schools. These experiences include issues such as bullying, concerns related to mental health, challenges associated with SEND and an overall dissatisfaction with the educational system.

For some parents, the pandemic seems to have created an opportunity to discover positive reasons for continuing to educate their children at home. For example, in the case of English et al., (2023), the unschooling approach served both as a therapeutic solution and an educational choice for their children who had experienced bullying. These parents considered themselves 'accidental' homeschoolers, finding unanticipated benefits in their HE choice. Similarly, parents in the Wenham (2021) study found 'silver linings' in moving to HE, when circumstances left them with no alternative but to keep their children at home to protect vulnerable family members or their own children with SEND and other health issues. They observed improvements in behaviour, wellbeing and learning that they had not anticipated.

Linked to the above points is the motivation to HE driven by parents' overarching concern for their children's wellbeing, that included perceived physical and mental health risks associated with attending school. While only one paper (Wenham et al., 2021) specifically cites concerns related to the risks of C-19 contamination, this finding stands as unique and not widely replicated elsewhere. Other papers largely indicate parents' concern for their child, either due to negative schooling experiences or the belief that the education system is deemed 'not fit for purpose', implying that it may be doing more harm than good to their children. Transitioning to homeschooling may be seen as parents taking the view that they can provide a better educational experience themselves.

Interestingly, there were relatively few mentions of proactive decisions to homeschool or the influence of religious or philosophical ideologies as motivating factors. This may be attributed to the fact that the inclusion criteria that required studies to involve children who had previously attended school, where the decision to move to HE was less likely to be driven by ideological factors. However, the studies did not exclude those who had never attended school, which should help to mitigate potential bias in the findings.

Only a couple of studies highlighted an initial interest in HE followed by a return to mainstream education. In Adamson's (2021) grounded theory exploration of the decision-making process for HE, a few parents reported that after researching HE, they chose not to continue down that path. In Green-Hennessy & Mariotti's (2023) paper, some parents sent their child back to school within a year of withdrawing them

In summary, the literature suggests that C-19 contributed to some families considering homeschooling, and while proactive decisions and ideological motivations played a smaller role, the majority appeared to transition into homeschooling as a reaction to their experiences within mainstream education.

3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the research aims and purposes and provides justification for its methodology by describing the strategy, situated within the researcher's ontological and epistemological framework. The subsequent sections detail the procedures, including recruitment, data collection methods and analysis. Concepts pertaining to the quality of the study are considered, including transferability, transparency and reflexivity that enhance the study's trustworthiness. Finally, ethical issues are explained; obtaining ethical approval, tensions arising in achieving informed consent in psychosocial research, duty of care, anonymity and the appropriate handling of information.

3.2 Research Questions, Aims and Purpose

3.2.1 Research Aims

The study aims to examine the experiences of parents who chose to withdraw their child from school to engage in HE, particularly in relation to the C-19 lockdowns when their child had been at home. It seeks to measure the prevalence of families within this participant group, who felt compelled to choose home-schooling as their only viable option. Furthermore, it aims to explore in depth their unique experiences so that insights are gained into the drivers underpinning their decision. By inviting parents to share individual experiences, the study aims to give voice to these perspectives.

A further goal is to enhance the knowledge of specialist educational professionals working with this who transition to HE. This includes raising awareness of the

circumstances surrounding the decision and providing insight into the benefits/drawbacks of doing so. It is hoped that a better understanding of the challenges families encounter in such contexts, could reduce existing barriers between HE communities and LA EP services. Further, the EP role involves actively promoting the “development, wellbeing, resilience, learning and achievement” for *all* young people across the UK (AEP, 2021).

3.2.2 Research Questions

The research questions are framed in relation to children who were attending a mainstream school before the pandemic but were subsequently de-registered .

This research aimed to address the following questions:

- 1. What is the prevalence of families feeling that they had no option but to de-register their child/children from mainstream education?**
- 2. What were the key drivers underpinning deregistration for those parents who felt that returning to mainstream school was no longer a viable option for their child?**

The first question had two objectives. Firstly, it sought to gather quantitative data to determine the prevalence of families who felt they had *no choice* but to deregister their child from mainstream education. This particular statistic has not been previously explored in existing studies and appeared pertinent for understanding the scope and extent of the issue. Secondly, it also aimed to pinpoint parents who felt compelled to make this decision, as these were potential participants that would be interviewed more extensively.

The second question was designed to explore the experiences of those parents who no longer felt that mainstream education could work for their child. The goal was to facilitate an exploration of the underlying drivers that influenced parents' decision-making processes, incorporating any unconscious elements that might surface through a psychosocial approach. Through this question, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics arising within the research encounter, underpinning the decision to home-school.

3.2.3 Purpose of the research

This research serves a dual purpose by offering both descriptive and exploratory insights into the phenomenon of families deregistering their children from school, during or since C-19. Descriptive research, relying on quantitative methods, aims to answer "what" questions and provides specific quantitative data to understand the extent to which parents felt compelled to deregister their child from school (Fox & Bayat, 2008). Conversely, the study is inherently exploratory, delving into the "why" behind this trend. It focuses on uncovering the underlying motivations and factors influencing the decision to transition to HE. Given the limited existing studies addressing this specific question in this context, qualitative methods are essential for capturing rich and in-depth descriptions of subjective experiences (Hoggett & Clarke, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Moreover, this study embraces an emancipatory approach, aiming to empower and amplify the voices of families who may experience marginalisation due to their choices, stepping outside of the dominant cultural stream (Bhopal & Myers, 2016). Some of

these families may feel socially disadvantaged and somewhat overlooked, given that their decision to homeschool can render them less visible. In certain aspects, such families may encounter limitations compared to those in traditional schooling, such as lack of financial support, restricted access to specialised services like EPs and other special educational supports and extra-curricular activities typically available within school setting. Emancipatory research seeks to empower the subjects of social inquiry by recognising the inherent power dynamics in research relationships (Jupp, 2006).

3.3 Orientation

Research orientation is the guiding approach or perspective that informs the selection of methodology and is inextricably linked to the researcher's perception of reality. This perception, influenced by philosophical constructs and assumptions, shapes the researcher's unique worldview, or 'paradigm' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Crotty, 1998). Outlining this paradigm by defining the study's ontology and epistemology, supports a more meaningful interpretation of both the research design and the subsequent findings (Moon & Blackman, 2017).

3.3.1 Ontology

Ontology deals with questions about the essence of being and the nature of reality and the social world. Within ontology, there are diverse positions reflecting different viewpoints on what constitutes reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). These positions are commonly discussed in binary terms (Bryman, 2004) and are conceptualised as existing along a continuum. Realism at one end, suggests a singular and objective reality that exists independently of the researcher. On the opposite end, interpretivism suggests the potential for multiple realities constructed by the researcher. Quantitative

methodologies, often associated with the scientific method, align with a realist ontology, while qualitative methodologies employing hermeneutics align with an interpretivist ontology.

The simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative methods introduces an ontological paradox, setting up a tension between objectivity and subjectivity (realism vs interpretivism). Pragmatism offers an alternative perspective capable of accommodating this paradox and serves as the ontological orientation for this study. It is important to note that pragmatism does not strictly adhere to a specific ontology (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017).

Pragmatism, adopted as the philosophical framework in this study, prioritises practical solutions to real-world problems, focusing on "what works" (Patton, 1990). It acknowledges the contextual nature of knowledge, recognising that human experience is shaped by personal, cultural, and historical contexts (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatism champions pluralism in research methodologies and originated as a response to dualisms in Western philosophy, with philosophers like Peirce, James, Mead, and Dewey leading the way (Cherryholmes, 1992). It rejects the idea that social science research can access reality solely through one scientific method (Maxcy, 2003) and values different research approaches without getting entangled in philosophical debates (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Pragmatism perceives knowledge as contextual and evolving through practical application, aligning with the notion of science as a tool for generating useful knowledge (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). It highlights the interplay between internal

and external worlds, acknowledging the influence of unconscious impulses and past experiences (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, a pragmatic orientation is adopted to bridge different ontological perspectives and gain insights into participants' experiences.

3.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology pertains to the theory of knowledge, exploring how we acquire, interpret and understand knowledge. This study is grounded in a pragmatic paradigm, prioritising practical effectiveness in addressing research questions. A pragmatic epistemology advocates for a practical and robust empiricism, utilising effective means to determine what works best (Robson & McCartan, 2016). To tackle the research questions, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis was chosen. Proponents of mixed methods argue that it can offer more comprehensive insights than individual approaches alone, recognising that the world is “not exclusively qualitative or quantitative” (Fetters and Freshwater, 2015, p.116). This aligns with a pluralistic pragmatic paradigm that recognises that “no single paradigm, methodology or type of data can do justice to the issue in question” (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.10).

Integrating a pragmatic epistemology with a psychosocial method exemplifies pragmatism's “inclusive integrity” (Dewey, 1895). This study incorporates a psychosocial approach informed by Hollway and Jefferson's (2000; 2013) seminal text, *Doing Qualitative Research Differently*.

Psychosocial research, considered an emergent perspective (Clarke, 2006), can be viewed as an attitude or position towards the subject(s) of study rather than a specific methodology (Hoggett & Clarke 2009). While some may argue that a psychosocial epistemology aligns naturally with psychoanalytically-informed research, for the purpose of contextualising this aspect of the study within a broader framework, it was deemed appropriate to subsume this method within a pragmatic epistemology. The goal was to not to saturate the study with psychoanalytic 'expertise' but to draw on the methods offered by this approach, acknowledging the existence of the unconscious, as a robust way to elicit rich data. It is worth noting that that data analysis was not exclusively psychosocial and in fact, played a minor role in the interpretation of the findings. The researcher avoided a purely psychosocial approach in line with an emancipatory stance, as purely psychosocial methods risk 'top down assertions of expert knowledge' (Frosh & Emerson, 2005: 322). Adopting a psychosocial epistemology alone would be misleading and insufficient to account for the quantitative element of the study, reiterating the value of a pragmatic epistemology.

A pragmatic epistemology views knowledge as context-dependent and shaped through interactions, influenced by personal experiences and social dynamics. This mirrors a psychosocial approach and provides an inclusive framework to understand how individual subjectivities are constructed, negotiated and impacted by social factors. Interestingly, psychoanalysis and pragmatism are roughly contemporaneous movements that challenged established forms of cultural authority (Colapietro, 2006). Colapietro (2006, p.189) suggests that "the earliest representatives of these two traditions are properly seen, in psychoanalytic terms, as acting out their frustration and dissatisfaction with various forms of cultural authority, but as a way of establishing

themselves as reconfigured forms of such authority (...) They are in effect instituting the authority of experience and experimentation as the most reliable form of authority”.

Both movements emphasise that human experience and action cannot be fully explained by conscious, voluntary agency alone. They share the understanding that the human psyche operates on deeper, subtle and unconscious levels. Pierce (1893, 6.301) states that ‘the deeper workings of spirit [or psyche] take place in their own slow way, without our contrivance’ and often beyond our awareness. He adds that direct effort ‘can achieve almost nothing’, but what it accomplishes is all the more valuable because of this (Colapietro, 2006).

Integrating pragmatic epistemology with a psychosocial approach provides researchers with nuanced insights into the intricate relationship between individuals and their social contexts, facilitating a deep understanding of how knowledge is perceived and applied (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

3.4 Design

3.4.1 Mixed-Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods, sequential *and* concurrent exploratory approach, allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The design was sequential, with the survey (quantitative and descriptive) conducted prior to the interviews (qualitative), to identify suitable participants for the interviews. Following the interviews, the survey remained open to maximise responses, indicating a concurrent design.

Crotty (1998) states that in order to ensure the effectiveness of research it is necessary to develop a methodology that meets the specific purposes of the study. Considering the aims and research questions, the study adhered to a pragmatic approach that advocates for a robust and practical empiricism to determine what works (Johnson & Onuegbuzie, 2004). Cresswell and Cresswell (2017) endorse mixed methods to overcome limitations of exclusively quantitative and qualitative research, through a complementary approach that maximises the strength of each. This enabled fulfilment of the research objectives, necessitating two distinct phases to address the research questions effectively.

Phase 1 (Online Survey) of the study involved the collection of quantitative data through a brief and straightforward survey. The purpose of this phase was to provide a descriptive overview of the proportion of participants who have moved to home-schooling from mainstream education, since the on-set of C-19, feeling they had no other choice. The survey also aimed to identify suitable participants for the subsequent interview phase and thus contributed to purposive sampling.

Phase 2 (Free-Association Narrative Interviews) focused on addressing the second research question and employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research in social science focuses on understanding and interpreting individual's experiences through non-numerical data. It involves collecting and analysing rich, descriptive data often obtained through interviews. In this study, The Free Association Narrative Interview (FANi) method (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013) was used.

The primary objective of the study was to explore individual perspectives of participants, while acknowledging that these perspectives may have relevance to a wider population of parents who share experiences of feeling compelled to deregister their child/children, from mainstream education to enter into homeschooling. Consequently, the design of the study has resulted in the qualitative component carrying a greater 'weighting' than the survey. Despite its smaller weighting, the survey was an essential feature of the design, as it both contributed to sampling and provided valuable contextual information that complemented the overall findings of the study.

3.5 A Psychosocial Approach

Phase 2 draws on a range of theoretical constructs and follows the psychosocial framework developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2013). The psychosocial approach integrates insights from psychoanalysis to explore the intricate relationship between subjective experience and social dynamics, recognising the complex interplay between external (social) and internal (psychological) factors (Frosh, 2003).

Psychoanalytic theory at its core, asserts the existence of a *dynamic unconscious* (Freud, 1920). For Freud, the unconscious is more energetic than the conscious mind because it does not pay attention to reality. Rather, it creatively generates dreams and phantasies¹⁰ and elicits defence mechanisms, such as repression, to divert focus away from the 'terrifying' (Bibby, 2011, p.7). Defences are not viewed as a 'pejorative judgement' (Bibby 2011, p.8) but rather as a natural aspect of human behaviour, activated to manage anxieties. Psychosocial research recognises the existence of an

¹⁰ 'Phantasy' is spelled as such, to imply unconscious wishes and desires as opposed to conscious 'fantasy'.

unconscious mind that does not exist in isolation but is affected by others and is shaped by society and culture, making humans 'psychosocial' beings.

3.5.1 The Defended Subject

In social research, Hollway & Jefferson (2013) recognise that both participants and researchers deploy unconscious defences to shield themselves from anxiety, particularly in unfamiliar research settings. Building upon this understanding, the psychosocial approach transcends mere methodology, striving to uncover deeper layers of understanding beyond superficial discourse. Psychosocial methodologies are still emerging and developing (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) but aim to explore potential unconscious communications, dynamics and defence mechanisms present within the research environment. This includes observing interactions, and collaboratively constructing the research setting with active involvement from both researcher and participants.

Integral to this approach is the role of the reflexive researcher, who continually reflects on methods, practices, emotional involvement, and the affective relationship with the researched. This reflexive engagement is essential for navigating the complexities of psychosocial research, where subjective responses from both researchers and participants are influenced by similar defensive blind spots. Fostering self-awareness and engaging in psychosocial supervision are therefore imperative for critically examining the intersubjectivity of the research context while acknowledging inherent subjectivity.

Critics of psychosocial research such as Butler (2005), rightly emphasise concerns related to power dynamics and the ethical implications of researchers making claims about participants. Ideally, interpretations should be co-constructed. However, there is a risk that research encounters then overly-resemble psychoanalytic therapy sessions, with researcher playing the role of psychoanalyst and the participant as the patient.

In Hollway & Jefferson's (2013) FANi method, researchers engage with participants twice, with the second interview serving as an opportunity for researchers to present their ideas and hypotheses. During this phase, participants may challenge, confirm, or expand upon these propositions. While this doesn't validate the final analysis, it promotes transparency in the interpretation process. Additionally, this aspect of the methodology aims to mitigate power imbalances resulting from researchers imposing their interpretations on participants' experiences and encourages participants to contribute actively.

Exploring unconscious material, although initially concealed, may resonate with participants once addressed, whether affirmed or refuted. This process may reveal that participants didn't intentionally omit such information from their narratives but rather hadn't previously incorporated it due to the established narrative framework surrounding their situation.

Numerous psychoanalytic frameworks exist that may be drawn upon for data analysis, however Hollway & Jefferson (2013) refer to Klein's (1946) object relations theory. The researcher, having trained at both the Anna Freud Centre and the Tavistock &

Portman Trust, has knowledge of various psychoanalytic frameworks. Therefore Kleinian interpretations are considered while holding in mind that alternative interpretations are equally legitimate. Further, the data analysis is not exclusively psychoanalytically informed. The researcher used the FANi method to extract rich narratives, providing an opportunity to then conduct an analysis of the entire dataset that is not theory-driven (deductive) but instead arises directly from the data (inductive). The psychosocial approach has clear strengths in situating participants in a social world while acknowledging 'interiority' that is acted upon by an unconscious mind. Rigorous reflexivity is emphasised, respecting the uniqueness of both participants and researcher, thus creating an inclusive and ethical research environment.

3.5.2. Psychoanalytic theory in Psychosocial Research

Psychosocial research methods have faced criticism regarding the application of psychoanalytic concepts from clinical settings to research encounters, including the top-down theoretical approach to interpreting individual experiences (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). However, EPs are trained as applied psychologists and they often rely on the application of theory to make sense of the complexities they encounter in their professional practice. To address the potential criticism regarding the use of psychosocial epistemologies, transparency is crucial (Ross-Lonergan, 2019). By openly acknowledging the theories that have informed interpretation of data, researchers can ensure the trustworthiness of their analysis.

3.5.3 Psychoanalytic concepts

3.5.3.1 *Splitting*

Klein (1946) proposed that the 'self' involves the unconscious use of defence mechanisms to cope with anxiety. Splitting is one such early defence mechanism relied upon by infants to cope with their utterly dependent position, involving two distinct states of mind. The first is the paranoid-schizoid state, characterised by a fear of persecution and the splitting of people or objects into good or bad parts. Splitting helps the infant preserve the image of the mother as 'good' by separating her from the negative feelings associated with unmet needs (Klein, 1952). The second state is the depressive position, where the infant's ego begins to develop the capacity to hold both the good and bad aspects of objects simultaneously. This allows them to perceive caregivers as whole individuals, rather than fragmented 'good' or 'bad' objects. In this position, the child experiences ambivalence, holding feelings of both love and hate towards the same person or object. The depressive position lays the groundwork for emotional and psychic development. Psychoanalysis holds that adults continue to move between these two positions throughout life due to ongoing emotional experiences. Early developmental patterns established in childhood can persist into adulthood, shaping how individuals perceive and relate to the world.

3.5.3.2 *Projection and Projective Identification*

Projection (Freud, 1911/1958) is a defence mechanism where an individual attributes their own unacceptable feelings, thoughts or characteristics to others, in order to avoid experiencing themselves. Projective identification (Klein, 1946) expands on this and involves splitting, in that unwanted aspects are split off and got rid of, through projection onto others (external objects). Unlike projection where one simply disowns

their feelings, projective identification evokes corresponding feelings or behaviour in the recipient of the projection. Bion (1959) theorized that projective identification also serves a communicative function, where others take in the projected feelings and links to his ideas on containment.

3.5.3.3 Containment

The concept of containment, rooted in Bion's (1962) psychoanalytic theory differs somewhat in its application in psychosocial research. Bott Spillius et al., (2011) observe that the term has become diluted as it has been extended beyond traditional scenarios like analyst/patient or mother/infant dyads. Container-contained dynamics in psychoanalytic theory, refer to the exchange of emotions, anxieties and thoughts between individuals, often discussed in terms of the infant and caregiver or patient and psychoanalyst. Bion (1962) referred to this ability as 'reverie', involving the capacity to hold and make sense of unconsciously projected material and transforming of the sensory-somatic qualities of affect and projections into meaningful experiences.

3.5.3.4 Transference and countertransference

Transference originally referred to the patient's unconscious redirection of feelings and attitudes a person has towards significant others from their past, onto the analyst (Freud, 1912; 1915). Countertransference refers to the analyst's response to the patient's transference. It occurs when the analyst's unresolved or nonconscious material is triggered by the patient's projections. It provides the analyst with important information about the patient's unconscious and may serve as a containing function when the analyst can recognise and manage their reactions.

3.5.3.5 Application of concepts in psychosocial research

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) utilise the concept of containment to emphasise the role of the researcher in creating a safe and supportive environment for participants. This involves providing a non-judgemental atmosphere where participants feel heard, understood and validated. They emphasise the importance of the researcher staying engaged and attuned to anxiety provoking topics; using language that reflects the participants' reality and emotional experiences. This approach fosters open and interviewee-centred conversations (Frosh, 2003). Additionally, the concept of containment extends to the researcher's ability to manage their own emotions, thoughts, and reactions throughout the research process.

In the research encounter, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) suggest that researchers use their own emotions as evidence of transference and counter-transference. These concepts are useful tools for understanding intersubjective dynamics and unconscious processes. Recognising and reflecting on these dynamics can provide insights into deeper meanings and influences within the research process, contributing to a more empathic or 'containing' approach.

3.6 Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity plays a vital role in psychosocial research, as emphasised by Hollway and Jefferson (2013). They discuss the significance of self-analysis in research, warning about the potential influence of unexamined biases on study outcomes. The method of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), used in this study to analyse the data from the FANis, incorporates reflexivity as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). They define reflexivity as engaging in critical self-reflection regarding one's role as a researcher

throughout the research process. Without such self-analysis, Finlay (2003), contends that there is a risk of letting unelucidated prejudices steer the study's direction.

In the context of psychosocial research, where subjectivity is often inherent (Gough & Madill, 2012), Hollway and Jefferson (2013) argue that subjectivity should be viewed as a valuable resource rather than a threat. They propose that genuine reflexivity can mitigate research bias, enhance transparency, and, consequently, improve the rigor and trustworthiness of findings. Braun and Clarke (2022) echo this perspective, highlighting that researchers should leverage their own perspectives and experiences as tools to deepen understanding, considering them as strengths within a qualitative approach. This stands in contrast to quantitative methods, which typically aim to control subjectivity.

In this study, reflexivity involved acknowledging emotional reactions as a significant source of insight. Hollway & Jefferson (2013) argue that emotional awareness provides insights beyond cognitive approaches alone. They recommend maintaining a research diary and seeking psychosocial supervision to manage any transference or counter-transference dynamics. Furthermore, reflexivity in psychosocial research holds a profound ethical dimension. When approached with honesty and rigor, it fosters an intersubjective experience that can help participants feel understood and potentially lead to further insights for them.

Reflexivity played a central and continuous role throughout the research process. The researcher actively maintained a research diary, openly disclosed biases during supervision, and remained receptive to any assumptions or blind spots brought to their

attention. This commitment to reflexivity aims to enhance the transparency and reliability of the study and served as an anchor for the researcher to reflect on and relate experiences within the process.

3.7 Research strategy

3.7.1 Recruitment and Participants

The inclusion criteria for accepting participants to take part in this research project was:

- Parents who had the experience of home-schooling their child during the C-19 lockdowns and subsequently made the decision not to send them back to school.

OR

- Their child had initially returned to school after school closures but was then withdrawn and deregistered due to the realisation that mainstream schooling was no longer a viable option.

The key inclusion criteria was therefore that the child had been deregistered from their setting *after* March 2020 in order to home-educate.

Phase 1 (Online Survey): The researcher initiated contact through email with various individuals and organisations across England that were connected to Elective-Home-Educating (EHE) communities. This included home-education officers at seven local authorities, the Education Otherwise charity, a clinical psychologist specialising in EHE families and Facebook HE groups. Given that social media groups are a popular way for connecting HE families (Fensham-Smith, 2019), the researcher shared a

recruitment flyer (see Appendix D), a participant information sheet (see Appendix E) explaining the study and informed consent, along with a survey link (see Appendix F for dates and responses). The goal was to reach a wide range of parents and maximise response rate. While it was not possible to determine the exact number of people exposed to the recruitment flyer, the study received responses from beyond the UK, including Malta. However, only UK based participants were considered.

Upon completion of the survey, participants had the option to express their interest in participating in interviews, understanding that opting in didn't guarantee selection. A total of 67 participants from across the UK met the inclusion criteria and completed the survey. The research design allowed ongoing access to the survey during and after the interviewing phase to maximise participation.

The study employed opportunity sampling to select parents engaged in HE, meeting the criteria and willing to participate. It's important to note that this sampling method may introduce bias, potentially leading to a sample that may not accurately represent the broader population of interest. Such implications could affect the study's findings and generalisability. Nonetheless, the use of incidental sampling techniques like opportunity sampling offers a convenient way to recruit participants from populations that may be reluctant to engage in research (Etikan et al., 2016). This aspect makes it a preferred choice for researchers in the field of HE studies, particularly given the challenges associated with recruiting HE participants, as highlighted in existing research literature (Adamson, 2021).

Phase 2 (FANi): In this phase, purposive sampling was used as a method of selecting participants whom would provide valuable insights for the research (Coolican, 2017). Parents who met the specified inclusion/exclusion criteria (refer to Table 3) and had expressed a willingness to be interviewed during Phase 1 were contacted via email. The researcher worked through the list based on the earliest responses and eligibility for interviews. This approach was chosen for its practicality and fairness, as well as its semblance to a random selection given the time-sensitive nature of the study. These participants received an additional consent form (see Appendix G) and were given the option to choose between a face-to-face interview or an online interview via the Zoom platform. Ultimately, four participants agreed to participate and their interviews were conducted in two sessions spaced between four to six weeks apart. Three participants opted for online interviews, while one preferred an initial face-to-face meeting.

Table 3 - Inclusion/Exclusion criteria for participants being interviewed

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Had been sending their child/children to school, prior to March 2020 and the first COVID-19 lockdown	Were already home-educating prior to March 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic

Ticked statement 3 of the survey:

- Mainstream schooling doesn't work for my child/family so I feel we had no option but to deregister

Ticked statement 1 or 2 of the survey:

- Neither mainstream schooling or deregistering are good options for my child/family, deregistering was the better of two options

- Mainstream schooling could work for my child/family, deregistering was a preferred/better option

Lived in the UK

Lived outside the UK

3.7.2 Participants

A total of 67 participants who had deregistered their child from school since the onset of the C-19 responded to the survey and consented to participate in the research. Among these participants, fifteen met the inclusion criteria (i.e. had ticked statement 3) and indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Initially six respondents were identified as eligible and were contacted simultaneously. Four of these six replied and agreed to proceed with interviews. All four participants were mothers, with three preferring online interviews via Zoom and one expressing a preference for a face-to-face meeting in London. Therefore, the final sample size consisted of four participants. It is important to note that during the second interview with one of the mothers (Steph), it transpired that she had never deregistered her son as initially thought. She clarified that the school had informed her that her son could not return, and they then let the LA know that he was now EHE. While this initially raised questions about using her data due to the inclusion criteria, her story is not uncommon and represents a scenario where a child is left without a school to attend and is effectively home-educated. Consequently, Steph's story and data have been included in the final analysis.

While the sample size may appear small, it is a common characteristic in psychosocial research, due to the need for an in-depth analysis (Hollway, 2004). It is worth noting

that the sample was not intended to be representative of the entire population. The researcher's aim was not to generalise findings but to provide a rich understanding of the specific context in which parents transitioned from school to HE. In line with Lincoln & Guba (1985), contextual information is valuable for enhancing transferability and interpretation of meaning. Therefore, the analysis section provides further demographic and contextual information about the participants.

3.8 Methods

3.8.1 Data collection

Phase 1 (Online Survey):

An online survey was designed to encourage participation from home educators, a group found to be relatively difficult to access in research (Nelson, 2014; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2003). The objective was to reach a large number of participants with minimal intrusion. Surveys are commonly used in social research due to their efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ability to maintain participant anonymity (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This data collection approach aligned with the researcher's aim of swiftly engaging with a somewhat hard-to-reach community. It was deemed the least intrusive way to approach potential participants and explicitly stated that the study would not scrutinise the practise of HE. Further, the online platform allowed participants to complete the survey at their convenience, which was important considering the time constraints often faced by HE as parents.

Limitations of this approach include the inability to monitor the survey's distribution and the low response rate. Self-selection by participants who respond can introduce bias and include motivations that are not possible to infer from survey responses

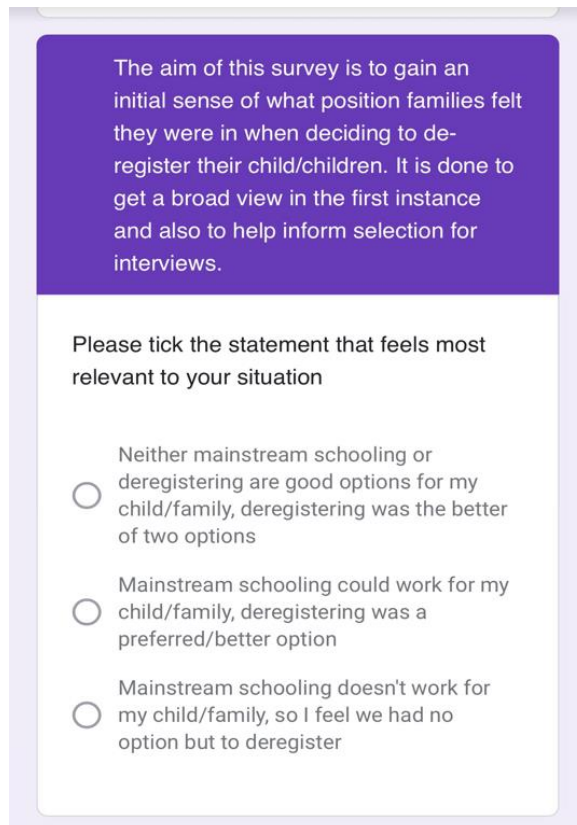
(Andrade, 2020). This implies that findings are less likely to be generalisable to the entire population of parents who have deregistered their children for HE since March 2020. Further, the sample was restricted to individuals proficient in English, with easy internet access. Considering that the primary body of data analysis is qualitative, which intrinsically does not aim to reduce bias or achieve generalisability, an online survey was deemed the most suitable data collection method.

The survey was developed following the BRUSO model (Peterson, 2000) to ensure it was brief, relevant, unambiguous, specific, and objective. It consisted of one question with multiple-choice responses and was created using Google Forms, known for its security through password access, simplicity, unlimited response capacity and being cost-free. Prior to public access, the survey was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor. The survey was disseminated via email to HE officers at LAs and on Twitter and Facebook groups (with permission granted), ensuring potential participants had the opportunity to understand the study's aims and provide informed consent. All of the online content was hosted on a single page, organised into a total of five sections.

The first section required participants to confirm their consent and comprehension of the study. It specifically required participants to acknowledge the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any point. Eight consent-related statements were included (see Appendix H) and agreement or acknowledgement of all statements was necessary for a participant's response to be included in the sample.

The subsequent section provided a concise statement outlining the survey's purpose. It then asked participants to select the option that best described their situation concerning their decision to deregister their child from school (see below).

Figure 3 – Survey Questions



The aim of this survey is to gain an initial sense of what position families felt they were in when deciding to deregister their child/children. It is done to get a broad view in the first instance and also to help inform selection for interviews.

Please tick the statement that feels most relevant to your situation

- Neither mainstream schooling or deregistering are good options for my child/family, deregistering was the better of two options
- Mainstream schooling could work for my child/family, deregistering was a preferred/better option
- Mainstream schooling doesn't work for my child/family, so I feel we had no option but to deregister

Subsequently, an open text box was included to give participants the chance to provide a qualitative summary of the factors that influenced their decision to deregister. This open-ended response aimed to glean initial insights into the general themes underpinning their decisions. The last two sections asked whether participants would be willing to participate in two interviews. If the response was 'YES', they were then prompted to leave their name, email and/or phone number. The survey concluded with

information on how to contact the researcher if they wished to request a copy of the study and its findings.

Phase 2 (FANi): The FANi methodology (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013) was used to explore participants' thoughts about their decision to deregister their child, as identified through the survey. This methodology aimed to capture both conscious and unconscious elements of their experiences. This interview approach framed the researcher/participant interaction.

3.8.2 The Free Association Narrative Interview (FANi)

The FANi operates on the assumption of a defended psychosocial subject, where the surface narrative does not reveal the complete story. The interview narrative is considered psychosocial as it is socially constructed and Hollway & Jefferson (2013) stress the significance of considering individual contexts, both conscious (language-based) expressions and unconscious mental functioning (affect-based). It acknowledges that meaning is constructed within the research context and that the narrative told is not a neutral account of a pre-existing reality. Conventional story structures are arranged to provide coherence and causal sequence but the FANi was designed, 'to steer away from well-worn responses dominated by readily available discourses' (Hollway, 2015, p.43).

The interviewing mode shares some similarities with clinical therapeutic interactions. Initial interviews are minimally structured and participant-led, using open-ended questions and avoiding 'why' questions to prevent intellectualised responses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p.33). Prompts in the interview are often phrased using the

participants own words and narrative order to encourage a free-flowing or 'free association' type of response allowing the emergence of material with unconscious or emotional significance. Follow-up interviews are used to delve deeper into themes from the initial interview. Unlike other semi-structured narrative interviews, where the interviewer sets the agenda and controls the elicited information (potentially suppressing stories, Misher (1986)), the FANi approach positions the interviewer as an active listener, refraining from interjecting or redirecting the narrative as it unfolds. It aims to empower the interviewee by being wholly non-directive.

In data analysis the researcher endeavours to keep the entire account in mind and draw a connection between free association and the elicitation of a *Gestalt*. This allows for a holistic understanding of the participants experiences and avoids fragmentation of the data. It also acknowledges the intersubjectivity of the interview interaction, so that deeper meanings are not lost. Hollway & Jefferson (2013) advocate the use of pen portraits or structured summaries of participants, to anchor the analysis in the material that emerged in interviews, including what was not said, contradictions, digressions and parapraxes.

Hollway & Jefferson's method raises questions about issues of generalisability and how qualitative research findings are extrapolated. Their in-depth approach, with single case- studies or small participant numbers challenges the traditional notions of generalisability. They contend that by drawing into personal and biographical details, this may actually challenge stereotyped assumptions about a particular demographic, as shown in their research on gender differences and fear of crime (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

The FANi methodology presents ethical dilemmas regarding uncovering participants' defences, particularly when findings contradict their self-perceptions, potentially causing distress. The debate over whether to share such analyses has been extensively discussed (Hoggett & Clarke, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Holmes, 2013). Ensuring participants' informed consent in psychosocial studies is crucial, including the option to withdraw at any point. However, there's a paradox: how can one fully consent to examining unconscious drives if not fully conscious of them? Yet, similar questions arise in consenting to any research findings. Despite methodological tensions, participants were informed of the researcher's background in psychoanalytic theory and the purpose of the two interviews. Transparency was maintained regarding the researcher's emotional responses to the data, allowing for a collaborative construction of meanings derived from the research encounters. Lastly, sharing findings should be approached with sensitivity and care.

Hollway and Jefferson propose a set of ethical principles of 'honesty, sympathy, and respect' when dealing with participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, pp. 92-94). Where the interview interaction leads to evoking uncomfortable emotions, they challenge the notion that these emotions necessarily equate to harm. They argue that much like a psychoanalytic session, by approaching participants and the data with a non-judgemental attitude, coupled with theoretical clarity, a more nuanced and deeper understanding may be revealed that may in fact be of benefit to the participant. Their ethical framework emphasises acknowledging the participant independently of any 'defences' that may be presented (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, pp. 92-94).

3.8.2.1 FANi - The first interview

The first interview question served as the starting point of the process inviting participants to share a detailed narrative of the events that led to their choice to deregister and HE their child. This open-ended question encouraged ‘free-association’, allowing participants to recount their stories in their own sequence and with the freedom to include tangential details. The following is the question used to initiate the first interview¹¹:

“ So, this is really an opportunity for you to share your story. You can begin wherever you like, feel free to talk about anything if it does not seem relevant. I am really open to hearing everything and anything that comes to your mind as you go along. So, when you are ready, please can you share with me the journey you went on that ended with you deregistering and home-educating your child?”

Between the first and the second interview, the researcher, transcribed and listened back to the recorded interaction, focusing on identifying the Gestalt, along with inconsistencies and emotions, promoting reflexivity (see Appendix I for an example). This process allowed the researcher to identify questions or areas to explore in more detail in the second interview.

3.8.2.2 FANi - The second interview

The second interview allowed the researcher to build on established rapport and by this point, both the participants and the researcher were more at ease, potentially

¹¹ An interview schedule with some guiding open-ended questions had been submitted for TREC approval and can be found in Appendix V; during the interviews however, it was not needed as the researcher followed the lead of the participants’ narratives.

lessening some defensiveness. This second interview allowed the researcher to validate any emerging hunches, stimulating reflection on the first interview to enable the co-construction of meaning. It allowed the researcher to revisit and discuss what had particularly stood out for them and why (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). In this study, the interview process began with the researcher summarising what they had gathered in the first interview and checking with the participants if this was an accurate representation of their experience. The sequence and phrasing used in the first interview were retained to encourage and elicit more unconscious data. (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

3.8.3 Capturing the Data

Three interviews were conducted via Zoom for the convenience of the HE mothers and for those who lived far from the researcher's location. One participant opted for an in-person meeting, which was arranged by booking a room at the Tavistock & Portman Clinic, in London. To prepare for the research, a pilot interview was also carried out with a friend of the researcher who met the participant inclusion criteria. This allowed the researcher to gain experience with the FANi method through a trial run.

All interviews were recorded electronically using Zoom and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. Both Braun & Clarke (2022) and Hollway and Jefferson (2013) recommend that the researcher immerse themselves in the data which was initially achieved through transcribing the interviews. During the interviews, the researcher made notations of key words and took notes to support the ordering. After each interview, a pre-prepared reflective record sheet was completed to capture immediate

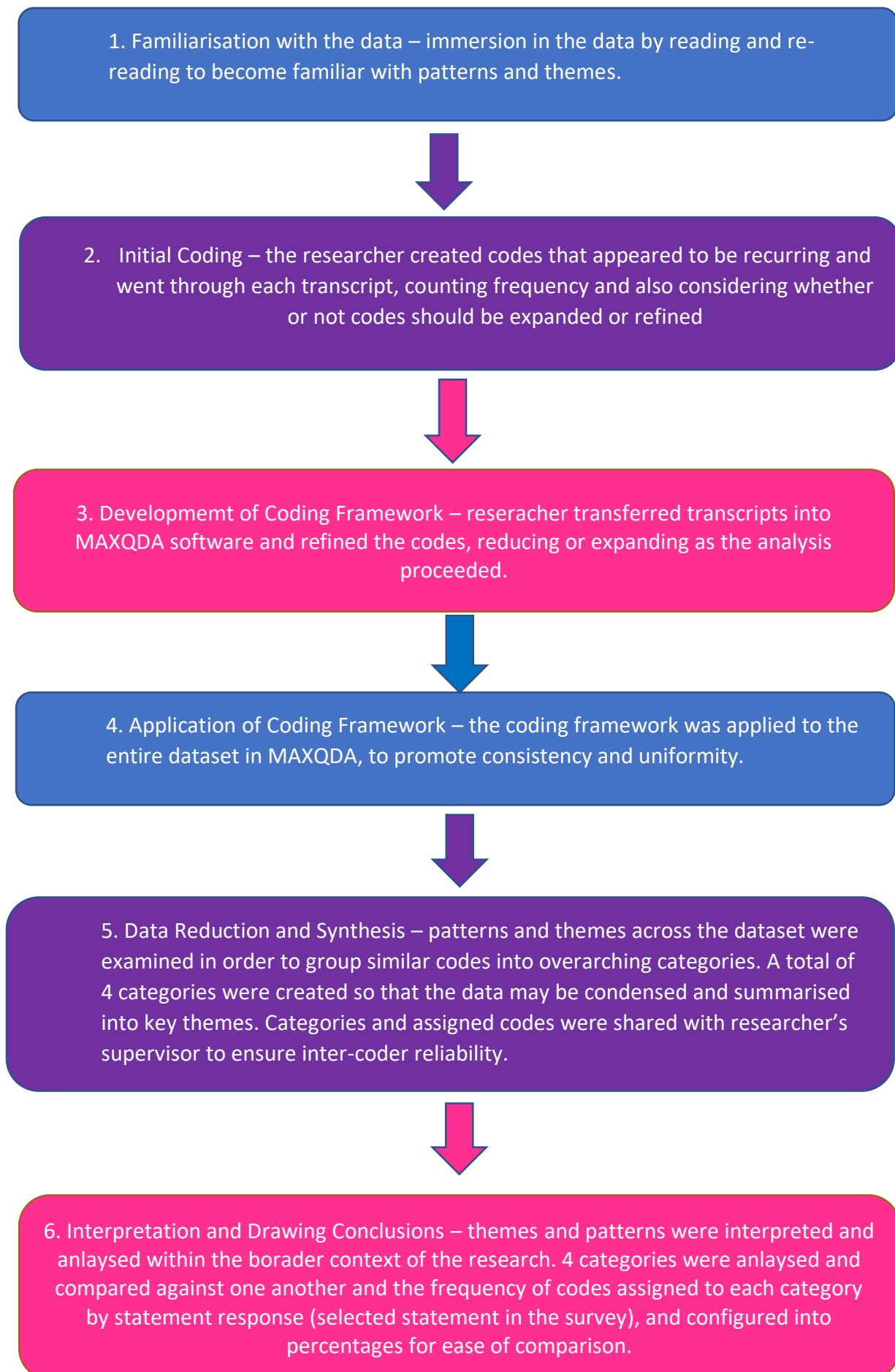
observations and experiences (see Appendix J for template). Reflexive field notes were also kept and reflected upon throughout the analytic process. These field notes contributed to an 'audit trail' of the researcher's evolving thoughts and insights over time. The interview recordings were securely stored until the analysis was finished, at which point they were deleted.

3.9 Data Analysis

3.9.1 Phase 1 (*Online Survey*)

The survey data was examined and cross-checked to verify that all participants had granted their consent. Subsequently, a table was created to transfer the survey data into a more manageable format for analysis, thereby documenting participant responses. The responses to the 'open questions' were also extracted and recorded (see Appendix K).

Descriptive statistics were obtained from the survey by computing the percentages of responses that selected statements 1-3, thereby providing an overview of their distribution of these responses. The open-ended questions were analysed using Content Analysis (CA), following steps outlined by Gillham (2008). This is described as the practical activity of categorising useful and/or necessary qualitative data through a systematic and structured approach. The steps were as follows:



CA is a flexible approach that can be applied either quantitatively or qualitatively. To keep in line with the quantitative nature of Phase 1, the CA findings have been reported quantitatively. Qualitative quotes that help exemplify points are also presented briefly in the findings section while conclusions and discussion of these findings are presented in the discussion section in Chapter 5.

3.9.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two central concepts for quantitative research that are concerned with the quality and accuracy of the data and measurement tools used. However, since descriptive statistics were used to simply summarise the distribution of participant survey responses rather than prove or disprove a hypothesis, these concepts are not applicable to this analysis. Instead the focus is on accurately summarising and presenting the information in a meaningful way.

3.9.3 Phase 2 (*Reflexive Thematic Analysis*)

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2022) was used to analyse the data collected from the eight interviews (two for each mother). RTA, known for its flexibility and adaptability without being bound to a specific theoretical framework, aligns well with a pragmatic approach. While RTA is typically associated with a 'Big Q' (qualitative) approaches, Braun and Clarke note its suitability for integration into mixed-methods studies when the ontology and epistemology are compatible, as seen in the pragmatic perspective adopted in this study.

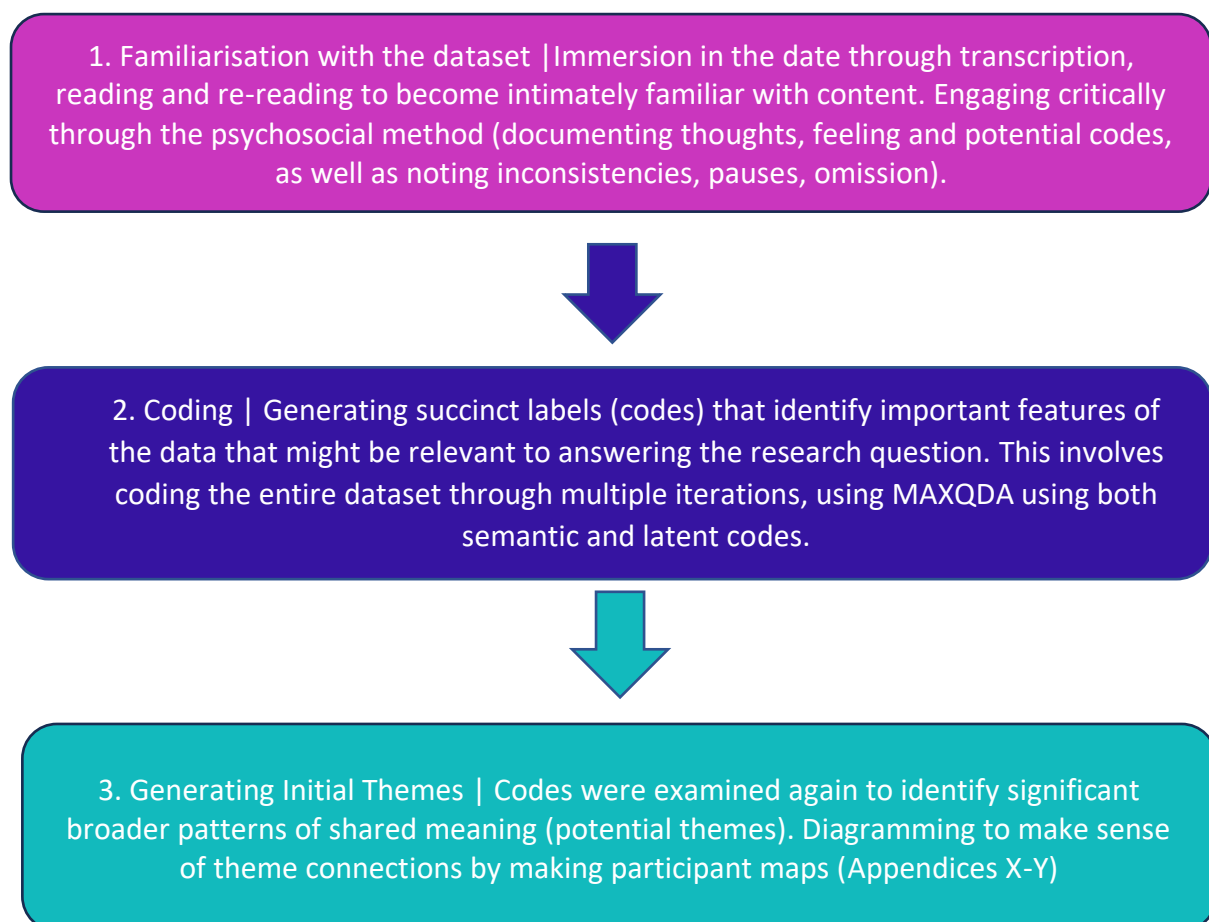
The data, initially organised into 857 codes, underwent grouping into broader codes and candidate themes. Each participant's interview initially underwent its own RTA


along with a psychosocial interpretation through following the FANI approach. This participant-centric approach afforded the possibility to present the *Gestalt* for each of the participant's narrative, allowing for a more holistic view that could include both psychological and social aspects. A final RTA was conducted to identify common themes across all participants' data, to address research question 2.

Although RTA is not the only method for analysis, it was deemed the most effective due to its flexibility and alignment with subjectivity and reflexivity, aligning with the FANI approach.


In line with the guidance on how to conduct RTA, the researcher followed the six phases as identified in Braun and Clarke's (2022) most recent guidance. These are depicted in the figure below:

Figure 6 - Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)






4. Developing and Reviewing Themes | Themes aim to convey a pattern of shared meaning held together by a central organising concept. In this phase, candidate themes are reviewed and refined through an iterative process that involved splitting, combining or discarding themes by checking candidate themes against the dataset.



5. Refining, Defining and Naming Themes | Developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the parameters and focus of each theme and determining that they tell a convincing story of the data. Generating an informative label or title and clear definitions.



6. Writing up | A final chance for analysis. This involves weaving together the analytic narrative and selecting captivating and vivid extracts relating to the literature and research question.

These six phases are considered ‘tools for a process, rather than a purpose of analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2021 b, p.2), supporting a non-linear, recursive process for reflexive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

MAXQDA VERBI Software 2022 supported the RTA process, facilitating coding and analysis. Codes, considered ‘the building blocks for analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.69), were systematically applied, resulting in 857 codes. The recursive process encouraged broadening of codes by splitting, grouping or discarding codes, resulting in a more streamlined dataset with codes that served as the embryonic stage of storytelling and left 484 codes (see Appendix M for evidence of theme development in a recursive process and Appendix N for sample of codes).

In this context, both semantic and latent coding were applied, capturing surface level content and delving into underlying meanings and motivations, respectively. Initial thematic maps were generated for individual participants (see appendices O-R), facilitating an understanding of theme interrelations and connections. Individual results, including theoretical psychosocial reflections, phases 4 and 5, involving a revisit of the entire dataset.

The final RTA produced four overarching themes, emphasising the importance of themes that address the research question and offering a compelling story of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The final themes reflect the culmination of multiple interpretations from the raw data, with an awareness that the researcher's subjectivity played a role in shaping the analysis.

3.10 Trustworthiness

In line with established viewpoints, this study recognises the inadequacy of traditional measures of validity and reliability in evaluating the quality of qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). While not exclusively qualitative, the study was weighted towards an explorative approach, employing the FANi and RTA. Braun and Clarke (2022) deliberately eschew positivist concepts like validity and reliability. Yardley (2000) opposes the application of standardised metrics in evaluating qualitative research, citing inherent subjectivity. In qualitative research, individual interpretations of reality are paramount, and imposing uniform criteria may introduce cultural bias influenced by those establishing such criteria. Nonetheless, addressing research quality persists and Guba and Lincoln (1985) have established a widely

recognised framework for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research using criteria like credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.10.1 Credibility

Enhancing credibility, which focuses on the relationship between analysis and data (Korstijens & Moser, 2018), involves several strategies. While some researchers recommend member-checking, where participants review themes, this study refrained from using them, considering it more aligned with a positivist approach. Instead, a prolonged engagement with the data, as suggested by (Korstijens & Moser, 2018) and endorsed by Braun and Clarke (2022) was carried out, involving eight months of data immersion, code development and theme mapping. The analysis process was deliberate, with the researcher taking breaks when needed, consulting with colleagues and supervisors, and using visual tools to tackle challenges.

Triangulation, as mentioned by Korstijens & Moser (2018), was applied to provide multiple layers of understanding, combining results from the survey, reflexivity, theoretical concepts and supervision. This approach contributed to a rich and multidimensional perspective of the data.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is the concept of whether the findings from a study may be relevant to another context, taking into account both similarities and differences (Mertens, 2015). While qualitative research doesn't assume generalisability of findings, transferability allows for a consideration of applicability. Achieving transferability is facilitated through the use of 'thick description', which

involves providing a rich and detailed explanation of the culture, context, time, and place in which the research was conducted (Geertz, 1973). This approach helps to enhance the understanding of the study's applicability in various contexts.

3.10.3 Transparency and Reflexivity

Transparency in research involves providing a clear and open account of the research process, by including details on research design, data collection methods and analytical techniques (Yardley, 2000). This study has considered and documented various aspects, including the researcher's context and positioning, and how their role may have influenced research dynamics. It also explores how intersubjectivity impacted the researcher and subsequent analyses. Raw data excerpts and reflective notes are included, contributing to the evaluation of research quality. Trustworthiness, referring to the reliability of study findings, is a crucial consideration (Korstijens & Moser, 2018).

Reflexivity play a central role in enhancing transparency throughout this study. A dedicated section elaborates on how reflexivity has been actively integrated, given its intrinsic nature to both RTA and the FANi methods. The researcher kept a journal, along with supporting frameworks, maintained transparency in supervision, and remained receptive to feedback on personal biases as they arose. Therefore, transparency and reflexivity are intertwined, both playing vital roles in establishing a climate of trust and accountability within the research.

3.10.4 Mixed-methods and Quality

Evaluating the quality of a mixed-methods study involves assessing the appropriateness of the research design, ensuring that transparency and rigour has

been demonstrated in both quantitative and qualitative phases. To assess the quality of mixed-methods, O’Cathain proposes frameworks that this study has considered. These include efforts made to obtain adequate sample sizes, the inclusion of detailed explanations of all the procedures and careful selection of data analysis techniques that were deemed appropriate (Stevens, 2023). The rationale behind these choices has been explicitly addressed and can be found in the relevant sections within this chapter.

3.11 Ethics

Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC, see Appendix S) and the research was carried out within the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021) and the Health and Care Professions Council ethical guidelines (2018).

3.11.1. Informed Consent & Right to Withdraw

Participant’s consent was obtained through the use of consent forms (see appendices D and E) that had received prior approval from the university’s independent ethics board. To ensure informed consent, participants were provided with information about the details of the study (approved participant information sheets, Appendix E). When accessing the survey, participants were required to tick six statements, confirming that they understood the nature of the research, including voluntary participation, anonymity, data storage, interview recording and dissemination of the study.

Participants undergoing interviews were provided with an additional consent form (see Appendix G), while the psychosocial approach was verbally communicated to ensure

informed consent during the interview process. Acknowledging the inherent tensions around consenting to the access of one's unconscious material remains a grey area within informed consent, but its mitigation is supported by transparency of the psychosocial approach.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw their participation until the point of data processing. However, withdrawal of data was not feasible for participants who completed the survey anonymously, and this option was therefore excluded from the consent form for that phase of the research.

3.11.2 Duty of Care

This study did not pose a high-risk for participants as they were not considered to be a vulnerable group. However, the researcher was conscious of the time constraints and potential emotional impact on parents involved in home-schooling. As a precaution, the researcher was prepared to provide information about support services if a participant required further assistance, although fortunately this was not necessary. While the participant group may not have been deemed vulnerable, the possibility of emotional distress related to their experiences was acknowledged. The researcher, being a trainee psychologist, was well positioned to respond with sensitivity and recognise signs of discomfort, including the option to terminate the interview if needed. Finally, participant information sheets were designed to adequately prepare participants with these considerations expressed at the beginning of each interview.

3.11.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, where personal information was provided, it was stored in line with Data Protection Act (2018) on a password protected laptop and

de-identified. For participants who responded to the survey, there was no requirement by them to leave any personal information which resulted in many respondents remaining anonymous. To protect anonymity, all names and places have been given pseudonyms to reduce the possibility of participant identification. All video recordings were deleted following completion of the analysis and write up of findings, ensuring that no identifiable data was kept for longer than was necessary.

4. Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the study's findings, beginning with quantitative results from the online survey (Phase 1), comprising of descriptive statistics and a content analysis (CA). Subsequently, qualitative findings from Phase 2 are introduced through individual pen portraits, individual thematic maps and a psychosocial analysis of each participant (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The chapter concludes with results from the RTA across the entire dataset. Following Braun & Clarke's (2022) recommendation, discussions of identified themes are weaved into the narrative of the findings, incorporating participant quotes as well as research reflections for clarity and coherence. Thus, a discursive approach has been adopted and reflexivity notes included (written in the first person), aiming to ensure transparency and acknowledge the researcher's subjectivity.

4.2 PHASE 1 (Online Survey)

Phase 1 of the study sought to answer the question:

What is the prevalence of families feeling that they had no option but to de-register their child/children from mainstream education?

This was investigated through an online-survey that asked participants to select the statement that most closely reflected their position when deregistering their child. A total of 67 responses were given (n=67) and results are reported as percentages, in the table below.

Table 3 - Descriptive statistics showing the percentage of parents selecting statement 1, 2 or 3

Statement	Descriptor	%age and number
1	Neither mainstream schooling nor deregistering are good options for my child/family, deregistering was the better of two options	6.0 (n=4)
2	Mainstream schooling could work for my child/family, deregistering was a preferred/better option	28.3 (n=19)
3	Mainstream schooling doesn't work for my child/family, so I feel we had no choice but to deregister	65.7 (n=44)
Total		n=67

Results found that the majority of participants (65.7%) chose statement 3, indicating that two-thirds of participants believed that mainstream schooling doesn't work for their child, leading them to opt for deregistration.

28.3% of participants believed that mainstream schooling could potentially work, but still preferred to deregister.

Only a small fraction of respondents (6%) expressed that neither option was suitable for their child, but if they had to choose between the two, deregistering was the better alternative.

4.2.1 Content Analysis (CA)

Following the selection of the above statement, participants were invited to list all the factors that influenced their decision. The purpose of this was to gain a more nuanced understanding of the participants' rationales reflected in the descriptive statistics.

CA was performed on the responses provided by 66 participants (excluding 1 participant who left this question unanswered). Consistent with the methodology outlined in the corresponding chapter, the analysis involved systematic and inductive coding, closely following the syntax. The coded data was then entered into MAXQDA and further refined, resulting in a total of 32 distinct codes (see Appendix K for raw data/survey response and Appendix L for code extracts).

The codes were further organised into four categories (see Appendix T for descriptors of categories). *(i) Discovery of advantages to HE as a consequence of lockdowns. (ii) CYP wellbeing prioritised. (iii) (Perceived) Lack of provision/resources/care to meet individual needs in school. (iv) Dissatisfaction with school/education system.*

So that numerical comparisons could be made, percentages were calculated for the codes belonging to each category, under each statement (i.e. 1, 2 or 3 from the survey). Results are presented in Table 4 below and a summary of the frequency of codes assigned to each statement can be found in Appendix U .

These percentages were derived to account for situations where participants expressed multiple codes within the same category, thereby reflecting the weight of the expressions related to each category rather than participant numbers.

Table 4: Percentages of codes by category for each statement.

Category	Statement 1 n=3	Statement 2 n=19	Statement 3 n=44
Discovery of advantages to HE as a consequence of lockdowns n = 23	4%	57%	39%
CYP wellbeing prioritised post-lockdown n = 55	7%	20%	73%
(Perceived) Lack of provision/resources/care to meet individual needs in school n = 37	3%	8%	89%
Dissatisfaction with school/education system n = 40	5%	30%	65%

To calculate percentages, the formula $a/\text{total} \times 100$ was used, where a represents the frequency of codes and total is the total frequency of codes within a category across the entire dataset.

This table shows the percentage of codes that had been assigned to one of the four categories as expressed by participants that had selected either statement 1, 2 or 3. These results are further explained in the section below.

Analysing the data presented in Table 4, it is important to note the discrepancy in the number of respondents choosing from the three statements. Statement 3 was the predominant choice for the majority (n=44), representing a higher proportion of the codes. In contrast, statement 1 had only 3 participants providing a qualitative response, which does not equate to a fair comparison. Despite this, comparing code frequencies across the three groups was considered more robust than within-group comparisons, given the likelihood that variation in codes for statement 1 could be due to chance. Results are qualitatively reported for statements 2 and 3, where within-group differences suggest meaningful insights. However, it is important to acknowledge that these findings are based solely on descriptive data and lack

statistical analysis of variance. Therefore, drawing empirical significance from these findings is not possible.

4.2.2. Findings from CA

Analysing Category 1:

Discovery of advantages to home-education (HE) as a consequence of lockdowns.

The highest proportion of codes in this category came from participants who chose Statement 2 (believing mainstream schooling could work but still choosing to deregister). For this group, the most frequently cited reason for transitioning to homeschooling was the discovery that their child thrived during the lockdowns. Examples included observations that their child was happier, enjoyed learning more, or performed better academically for example;

During his time off school due to the Covid lockdown my son flourished mentally and physically and it became clear that he's better off at home than at school.

This group accounted for 57% of the codes in this category, which was also the highest proportion among the four categories for this group of participants. This suggests that these families, through their experiences during the lockdowns, discovered new aspects of home education that they may not have realised had the pandemic not occurred. They recognised that mainstream schooling could be a viable educational option, but they still decided to remove their child from the traditional school setting due to the positive experiences they observed during the lockdowns.

Participants selecting Statement 1 (neither mainstream schooling nor deregistering are good options for my child/family, deregistering was the better of two options), had the lowest number of codes across all categories, including this one. This outcome is unsurprising, given the small number of participants in this group and this has naturally resulted in a lower frequency of codes assigned to the various categories.

Participants who opted for Statement 3 (mainstream school does not work for my child, and I felt I had no option but to deregister) comprised 39% of the codes assigned to this category. This observation indicates that, although a substantial proportion of codes originated from this group, they were less inclined to deregister due to a positive experience of home schooling during the lockdowns. This is unsurprising given that they chose to deregister their child because they perceived mainstream schooling as unsuitable, suggesting that their motivation might be influenced by other factors.

In summary, this category yields insights and nuanced perspectives beyond the three-point binary statements selected by participants. Despite nearly a third of participants believing that mainstream school could still work, their revelation during the lockdowns reveals insights into the motivations behind choosing that particular statement.

Analysing Category 2:

CYP wellbeing prioritised had a considerably higher percentage of codes (73%) from participants under statement 3 compared to statement 2 (20%) and statement 1 (7%). A recurring theme within these codes revolves around SEMH difficulties experienced by CYP, including anxiety, the negative impact of bullying on wellbeing, and subsequent challenges that some CYP faced with school attendance upon reopening.

These factors played a substantial role in prioritising the wellbeing of the participants' children, particularly for those who selected statement 3, as parents considered the potential risks or costs to their children's mental health in returning to school, for example;

My son's mental health hit crisis point. The stress of getting to school daily was affecting our whole family, most significantly my son. School said they could no longer meet need. The online provision they offered him was not suitable. There was no other school that would work for him.

Within this category, a specific code associated with ongoing concerns about the perceived risks of COVID-19 showed a higher percentage of codes for participants who selected statement 2. This implies that for this group (believing mainstream school could work), the decision may have been influenced, among other concerns, by the perception that schools were not yet safe due to the ongoing transmission of the virus. Several responses mentioned family members or their own child being highly vulnerable, for example;

No Covid protections for in-person schooling (vulnerable family), no remote option without threat of fines or court.

Analysing Category 3:

(Perceived) Lack of provision/resources/care to meet individual needs in school

The highest percentage of responses within this category were among participants who selected statement 3 (89%). This indicates that those who no longer considered mainstream schooling a viable option, had stronger perceptions of insufficient support in meeting their child's individual needs within the school setting. In contrast, only 3% of statement 1 participants and 8% of statement 2 participants attributed these factors to their decision to deregister. The higher percentage of responses from statement 3 participants suggests heightened concern or dissatisfaction with the support available in mainstream schooling. Examining the raw data reveals that these participants had the highest proportion of codes associated with SEN, physical health concerns, and the perception of a negative school environment for their child. This category seems to be highlighting a perception that schools are unable to meet the individual needs of their children, especially considering the high responses indicating that their child has SEMH needs.

Analysing Category 4:

Dissatisfaction with school education system.

Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the school education system, and there is a noticeable pattern in the distribution of responses among the participant groups. Participants who selected statement 3 accounted for a higher proportion, with 65% of the responses in this category, while those who chose statement 2 represented 30% of responses. This aligns with the expectation that those in statement 2 still perceived school as a possible option but preferred to remove their child as a result of the positive gains witnessed during the lockdowns.

4.3 PHASE 2 (Qualitative)

Phase 2 sought to address the question: *What were the key drivers underpinning deregistration for those parents who felt that returning to mainstream school was no longer a viable option for their child?*

The qualitative component of this mixed-methods study utilises Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) FANi method for the four participant interviews. Pen-portraits introduce and contextualise participants and their children. Following this, individual thematic maps provide a framework to organise individual participant findings, representing an aspect of the iterative coding and analytical process of the RTA. It should be noted that in organising narrative data into themes, there can be a tendency for highly specific and poignant details to be lost. Participant maps, in line with Hollway & Jefferson's (2013) recommendation for providing a *Gestalt*, are thus followed by a psychosocial exploration that provides a depth to the contextually embedded analysis, as per Braun & Clarke's (2022) approach. The section concludes with a final RTA that consolidates themes from all participants' data, providing a holistic view of the entire dataset. The confluence of the various findings aims to offer a comprehensive response to the research question.

Pseudonyms are used for participants, and location names are anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

4.3.1. Keren

4.3.1.1 *Pen portrait for Keren*

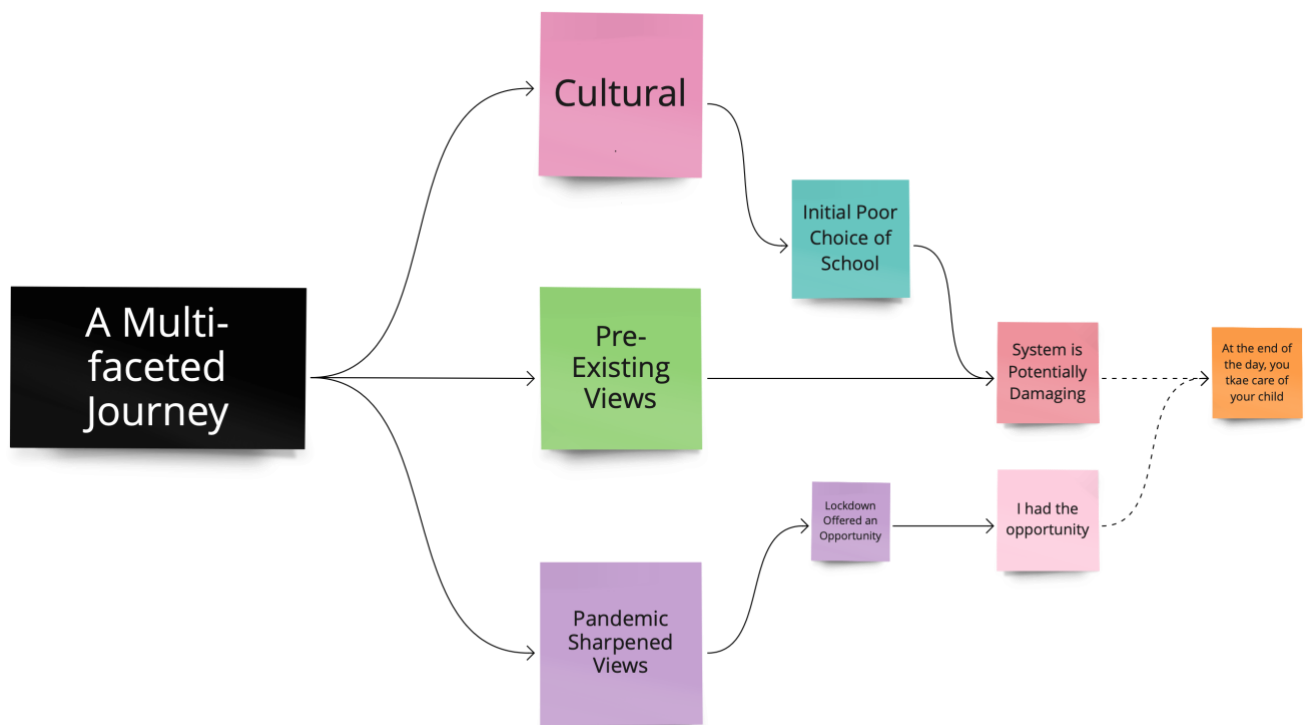
Keren is an Israeli woman in her forties, who has been living in London for a little over ten years. She is married with two sons, the eldest attending a progressive independent school. He had previously attended a Jewish state secondary school which Keren felt was overly-authoritarian. Early in her interview, Keren recounts her initial experience of '*shock*' on arriving in the UK, being told by a parent that not sending your children to private school would essentially ruin their lives. Despite being happy with her eldest son's current school, Keren grapples with the idea that private education is the solution and this internal struggle seems to create some cognitive dissonance within her narrative.

Noam (aged 9), was de-registered from his local state mainstream primary a few months after returning to school after the pandemic lockdowns. Keren details in her interview how moving to a neighbourhood where many Israelis live (seeking community), influenced the choice of school. However, Keren had already become interested in and was researching the 'future of education', inspired by educators like Ken Robinson. She had become increasingly disillusioned with the education Noam was getting. This was confirmed during the first lockdown when the school's offering was minimal and she was then able to follow her own ideas around learning (such as developing critical thinking and asking him open-ended questions). Noam thrived in learning with his mother and found returning to school very difficult, enhancing Keren's dissonance. She had stopped working just prior to the pandemic so was able to make this decision with the support of her husband. However, throughout her narrative she emphasises her awareness of her privileged position in this regard.

4.3.1.2 Findings for Keren

A thematic map for Keren can be found in appendix O. A flow chart summary of this thematic map is depicted below.

Figure 7: Flow chart of Keren's Themes and Sub-themes.



A Multi-faceted Journey: This was the main overarching theme as Keren described her journey to home-educating, which *'goes back five, six years ago and maybe even much more'*.

Her narrative encompassed various experiences that led to her decision to deregister Noam and it was evident that this started long before the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²

¹² It should be acknowledged that the question that launched the narrative interview contained the phrase, 'Please can you share with me the *journey* you went on that ended with deregistering and home educating your child'. It is therefore unsurprising that her narrative elicited the gestalt of a journey. Nonetheless, the open-ended nature of the question allowed for any interpretation of the word 'journey', and for Keren, this really was something that started long before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Theme: Cultural

In Keren's narrative, she frequently discusses her cultural background and how it influenced her experiences when migrating to the UK, especially within the British education system. Early in the interview, she vividly recalls a moment when first arriving in the UK of being asked which school she was sending her 1 ½ year old to. She realized the stark contrast between education in the UK and her native Israel, where, *'you just go to that school next door, right?'*

Keren also sought to establish a sense of community by moving to a neighbourhood and enrolling Noam in a school with many Israelis. Previously he was attending a local Christian school which she felt was a good education but did not align culturally with the family and the small classes, *'had their disadvantage because the population was very different from what we thought is our potential friends for him.'*

Furthermore, Keren points out cultural disparities when discussing her perception of the British education system; *'The system need (sic) to change (...) the train has left the station in some countries, they're not going to look back (...) and education in so many countries is still in the station (...) and even the famous UK Britain, they will have to do it.'*

Keren also reflects on how she may have found it easier to deregister and step away from the system, by virtue of not originating from the UK as well as culturally being predisposed to action:

'In the way we think, is like if something is broken let's fix it. (...) we don't take anything for granted' which she feels is at odds with *'schools that are stuck in the 1800s'*.

Subtheme: Initial poor choice of school

Unpicking with Keren why she found the school to be *'not a good school'*, she reflected that she observed Noam beginning to conform and not feeling able to speak up in school, in situations he found upsetting; *'you start seeing things that you don't want him to adapt'*. She wishes for him to be an independent thinker and capable of discerning right from wrong, rather than sitting silently, *'because discipline is very strict in this country'*.

Keren expressed her view that the curriculum was limited and teaching methods were poor (such as using outdated videos and extensive worksheets for one topic that took a whole term to teach) and that essentially the school was not teaching *'him skills for life'*.

Theme: Pre-existing views on education

This theme captures how Keren's strong views on the education system emerged before the pandemic; *'I started looking at things more critically and not taking everything for granted and doing everything the way the British education system teaches you to do'*. She concludes that a *'revolution'* in education is needed.

Subtheme: The system is potentially damaging

Keren conveyed a concern about the potential damage caused by an overly-authoritarian system and feels that the system does not adequately prepare students for *'life'*. Keren also suggests that the UK lags behind many countries and characterises the system as *'numbing'*. She emphasises that learning to read and write is not the sole objective of a good education.

Theme: Pandemic sharpened views

This theme captures the idea that the pandemic presented Keren with an opportunity to apply the educational approach she had been researching. This reinforced her commitment to imparting skills and knowledge aligned with her values, resulting in Noam thriving at home. A further subtheme within this theme was **I had the opportunity** that situates the decision to de-register as a very specific response to the pandemic as a catalyst for de-registering to home-educate.

Keren vividly remembers a day when Noam asked her, '*Lama at sholechet oti sham?*'; '*Why are you sending me to that place?*'. She couldn't continue sending him with a clear conscience, believing she could provide a better education herself. She saw this as the right time and seized the opportunity. A final sub-theme arises from her statement, **At the end of the day, you take care of your child**, encapsulating Keren's ultimate perspective on the matter.

RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

It came as a surprise that the first participant lived very near me.

Identifications did not end there.

My parents met as students in Israel in the 1960s and later moved to Tehran, where my father is from, and where I was born. Although my mother is South African, Israel played a significant role in my upbringing. In 1978, during the start of the Revolution, we briefly considered emigrating to Israel. However, my parents, not wanting us to be conscripted, ultimately decided against it, and we settled in London. Hebrew was our family language initially, as it was my parents' shared tongue.

Given this background, it was challenging for me to separate my familiarity with Keren's background, as elements of Israeli culture also influenced my upbringing. While another researcher may have noted Keren's Israeli identity, certain aspects of her narrative were particularly poignant for me.

Similar to Keren's experience, when my family moved to London from Tehran, I attended a local church school, which was unfamiliar territory for me coming from a Jewish background in Iran. While my family isn't religious, Judaism holds cultural significance. Like Keren's description of Noam, this transition shaped my identity differently from my parents'. Such elements of her story therefore had an impact on me. It is likely that I was more sensitive to aspects that another researcher may not have perceived as significant, which will have impacted on my findings.

4.3.1.3 Findings from psychosocial thinking

From the outset, I felt a strong connection with Keren, resonating deeply with her progressive views on education and the impact of Ken Robinson¹³ on us both. However, I sensed what I perceived as some ambivalence from Keren regarding her involvement. Prior to our initial interview she seemed genuinely enthusiastic, however, as the realities of managing her time, particularly with homeschooling commitments, it seemed that she was less enthusiastic about involvement during the first interview. This was understandable, given that the meeting encroached upon her homeschooling schedule.

My initial experience with Keren was a rising excitement about her discovery of the benefits of HE and her rationalisations based on her feeling that her son had not been receiving an education that she felt reflected our current times. However, I was struck by a feeling of being kept at arm's length and I was unsure about her response to meeting me. This was at odds with my own enthusiasm about meeting her.

I interpreted this as possible evidence of defences that Hollway & Jefferson (2013) describe in the research encounter and wondered what *my* feelings of wanting to be liked by her, represented. Considering that a countertransference may have been activated, it occurred to me that perhaps Keren herself was seeking some validation for her HE efforts, as it can indeed be an isolating experience.

¹³ Ken Robinson, an esteemed education advisor, challenged traditional education, advocating for a radical reevaluation of how our school systems foster creativity and recognise multiple forms of intelligence.

This being my first interview, my own defences as a 'defended researcher' were likely amplified. I may have over-identified with Keren, as I observed myself drawn in to her narrative and intrigued by her insights into the British education system. Maintaining objectivity proved challenging, especially as her beliefs closely aligned with my own. As a result, I found it difficult to detach from her perspectives, preventing a deeper exploration beyond surface-level discussions.

Between the first and second interviews, I sought supervision for support. I realised that Keren had stirred feelings of nostalgia, rekindling a connection with my identity centred around Israel, where my parents met. The outcome was a noticeable lingering tension, situated somewhere between conflict and freedom. Following Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) guidance, I saw the significance of sharing these insights with Keren in our next meeting.

I shared with Keren my observation of a theme of 'conflict and freedom' in her story, suggesting that despite her confidence in her decision, there may be underlying conflicts. Initially, she interpreted this as referring to a political context, possibly reflecting the Arab/Israeli conflict. However, it prompted her to reflect on the inherent conflicts faced by immigrants, acknowledging the complexities of adapting to a new country while retaining a sense of freedom.

It is possible that not being raised in the UK freed Keren from conforming pressures, empowering her to make her decision. These perceived tensions may indicate ambivalence within her, a concept central to Klein's (1975) theory of depression, where internal conflicts arise as a defence mechanism against depressive anxiety.

While Keren passionately spoke about homeschooling Noam and was committed to providing him with enriching learning experiences, it was evident that this required significant effort and time. She humorously recounted moments when she joked with her husband about sending Noam back to school. Additionally, she shared her tendency towards self-criticism, suggestive of a demanding internal superego (Freud, 1923). These internal dynamics may contribute to ambivalence by imposing high standards and expectations, leading to internal conflicts.

While Keren was positive and passionate about her decision to remove Noam from school and take charge of his education, there appeared to be a personal sacrifice emerging through the *Gestalt* of her narrative.

4.3.2. Grace

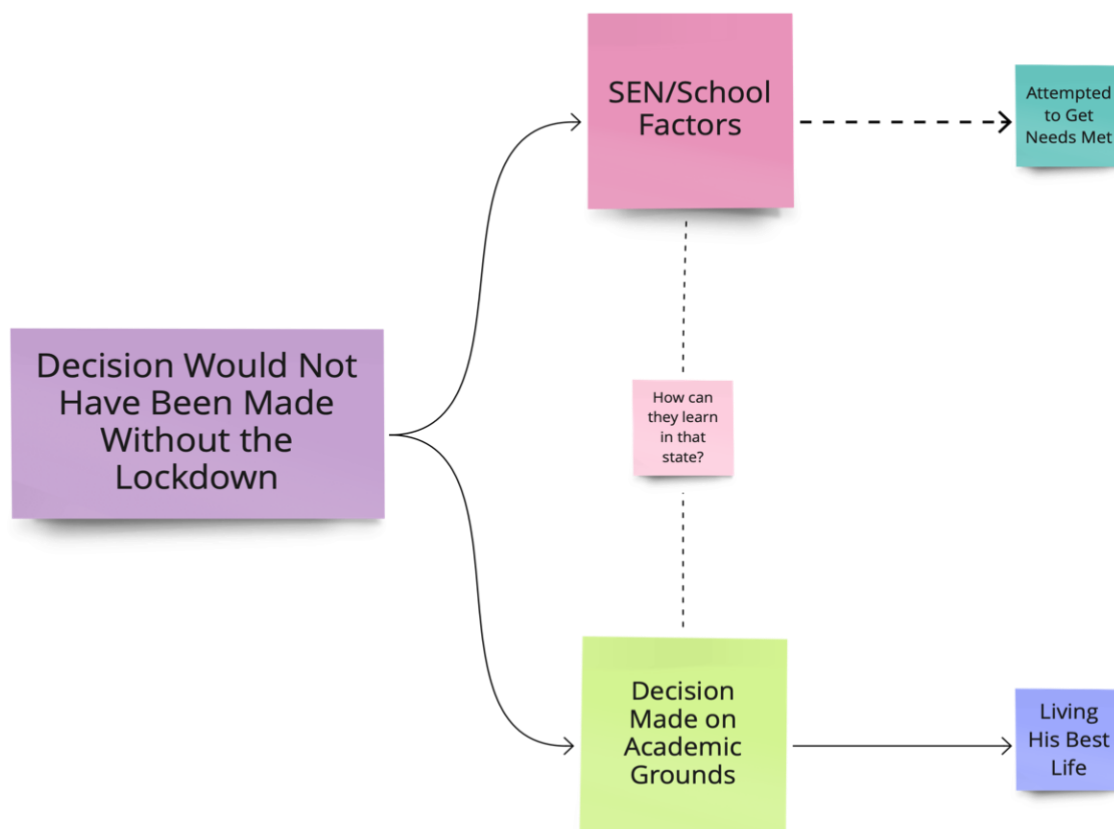
4.3.2.1. *Pen portrait for Grace*

Grace lives in Glasgow with her husband and two children. Her son, Tommy, aged 8, had been struggling at school and by the time the pandemic happened, she had already started the process to get him assessed for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Initially, they had sent him to Gaelic school, which Grace feels in hind sight was perhaps the wrong decision as he struggled to learn to read and write and this was an additional demand. During the lockdowns, Grace shared that the school was not very effective, which freed her up to do what she wanted, with regards to home-schooling. Grace emphasised that her neurotypical daughter did not thrive in the same way that Tommy did. Tommy learned to read and write during the lockdowns and did so quickly. Grace discovered that unlike perceptions of him at school, where he had remained behind his peer group, he is a capable and highly intelligent child. However, it was only through personalised instruction and presenting learning to him at a pace that both suited and was accessible for him, that Grace really started to understand his needs. In so doing, she perceived that mainstream school would never be able to offer him the bespoke attention that he needed and that she could provide. Prior to home-education, Grace worked in welfare and advocacy which since she has begun home-educating, has helped her with applying for disability allowance, as she had to stop working full-time, in order to stay at home with Tommy.

4.3.2.2 Findings for Grace

A thematic map for Grace can be found in appendix P. A flow chart summary of this thematic map is depicted below.

Figure 8: Flow chart of Grace's Themes and Sub-themes.



Decision Would Not Have Been Made Without the Lockdown reflects Grace's opinion that without the experience of home-schooling during the pandemic, the decision to de-register was unlikely to have been made at this stage; *'It definitely wouldn't have happened like without the lockdown'*.

The lockdown served as a pivotal event that directly influenced Grace's decision to move to HE. During the lockdowns Grace shared that the school sent work that was, *'just beyond him (...) at that point I was like, "Oh, he can't actually make himself concentrate on a task that was like somebody else's idea." (...) he really can't focus on things'*.

These insights were gained purely as a result of life being brought to a standstill during the lockdowns, forcing her to work alongside Tommy and see for herself how he learns best.

'I didn't properly understand how he was doing at school until I went through the process of teaching him myself and then I understood what he needed and I understood why he couldn't get it from school'.

Subtheme: Decision made on academic grounds defines how Grace's first-hand experience of engaging with Tommy's learning, enabled her to understand Tommy's learning needs. Tommy had started the lockdowns unable to read or write and within a few months was doing so; *'He just did brilliantly and I was like, "Oh, look at this, he can- he can learn, that's great. (...)I took the decision on academic grounds, because his academic performance had improved'*.

Grace also highlights that the self-directed learning suited Tommy well, leading to rapid progress once he had the space to focus; *'His general knowledge of things like history (...) philosophy is just...just through the roof, because he obsessively watches YouTube videos about it (...) and gets really into his own kind of interests'*.

According to Grace, Tommy was **living his best life**, during the lockdowns and *'He was just like, obviously, having like a really good time'*.

Subtheme: SEN/School Factors defines how Grace had always *'believed in school'* but that through his autism assessment that happened once he was already deregistered, the school shared that Tommy, *'used to have meltdowns and he used to say he wished he was dead'*. This level of Tommy's emotional dysregulation was never conveyed to Grace, leaving her not realising what had been happening for him at school: *'And that's why I guess, for a long time I didn't understand why he was behind. I didn't understand that he was in a state of burnout and couldn't process information. (...) ..the way they presented it to me is he has some problems focusing his attention'*.

Attempted to get his needs met exemplifies Grace's experience of navigating Tommy's education in the context of his SEN struggles, such as receiving confusing messages from school staff. Whilst encouraging her to have him assessed, they also ignored a letter outlining his needs. They conveyed to Grace that Tommy did not need any statements for him to receive accommodations; *'We just do meet their needs. We don't need a bit of paper to meet their needs'*. This left Grace in a difficult position and she went along with it as, *'I did defer to them as the experts'*.

4.3.2.3 Findings from psychosocial thinking

Grace's narrative was open and clear presenting rational and robust reasons for deregistration primarily based on academic considerations. After both interviews, I was left with a sense of lightness and positivity. Grace had engaged my curiosity throughout. Initially it was thought that there may not be a great deal of unconscious material to be metabolised. However, analysing the text, there were subtle indications of a 'defended subject' through Grace's instances of laughter, which were regular. Nevertheless, these too felt natural and easy and not necessarily suppressing deeper emotions. Further, Grace conveyed an ability to express the sadness she had experienced when it was brought to light that Tommy had been experiencing 'meltdowns' at school, that she had not been made aware of.

One possibility is that Grace has sublimated much of her story-telling, resulting in a narrative that appears clean and socially acceptable while being well-rationalised. Sublimation is a defence mechanism where the individual channels unconscious impulses into more socially acceptable behaviours (Anna Freud, 1936). Joke-telling and self-deprecating humour can serve as outlets for this sublimation.

For instance, when Grace's husband expressed reservations about full-time homeschooling and said, *'I've seen home-schooled kids, they're all weird'*, Grace responded with humour (and laughed as she re-told this), *'Oh John, like he's already weird...'*

Perhaps then, humour serves as a mechanism for Grace to maintain her natural positivity and enthusiasm in supporting Tommy's needs. The activation of a defensive sublimation may well be unconsciously shielding Grace's ego from anxiety, particularly

considering that taking full responsibility for a child's SEN and education may sometimes feel like an enormous task. While on the surface, Grace expressed that she had found it an enlightening, positive and productive endeavour, this defensive coping mechanism might come into play to divert from the more challenging aspects.

Overall, Grace came across as empowered and able to enjoy the journey she has been on with Tommy, empowered by a better understanding of his needs and her ability to effect positive change. A supportive and attuned relationship to Tommy, evident through my interaction with Grace, offered insight into his HE experience. Ultimately, Grace perceived HE as the only option for her autistic son, given the inadequacies of mainstream education for his specific needs. While it is probable that a degree of psychological 'splitting' influenced her decision (enabling a coherent rationale), her evaluation of the current system and recognition that true inclusivity would require a complete overhaul, indicated a thoughtful and realistic consideration of the systemic barriers in meeting Tommy's needs - similar to the depressive position.

RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

I really liked Grace and found my interactions with her to be seamless and unambiguous. I noticed that during these interviews, it became more challenging for me to maintain my role as a researcher and not take on the perspective as a trainee EP, particularly when hearing about Tommy's autism.

As a 'defended researcher', there's a possibility that I unconsciously aligned with Grace's rationalisations, (which are themselves defence mechanisms). I found myself resonating with her narrative from a 'psychologist' perspective. I do not feel this hindered my ability to analyse her data, considering my role as a trainee psychologist, but it could be an indication of my own defences at play. Engaging with her from the position of a TEP, rather than researcher, felt more natural and this drew attention to me, about how my responses influenced my interpretations. It is thus conceivable that my emotional reactions to Grace, influenced the way I constructed meaning, potentially introducing a bias towards a more positive interpretation of her narrative. Moreover, my own frustrations with the current system and its evident challenges in achieving genuine inclusivity, might have limited my capacity to notice aspects of Grace's story from alternative perspectives.

4.3.3. Kelly

4.3.3.1 *Pen Portrait for Kelly*

Kelly lives in the West Midlands and is a mother of three: two older sons and Emily, aged ten. Emily was in Year 3 when the pandemic struck, but had struggled with significant separation anxiety ever since she had started nursery. Emily was adopted as a baby and lives with Kelly (and her partner), who has been separated from Emily's adoptive father for some time. Emily has complex needs, including brittle-bone disease, developmental language disorder, sensory processing disorder and other developmental delays, possibly compounded by early trauma.

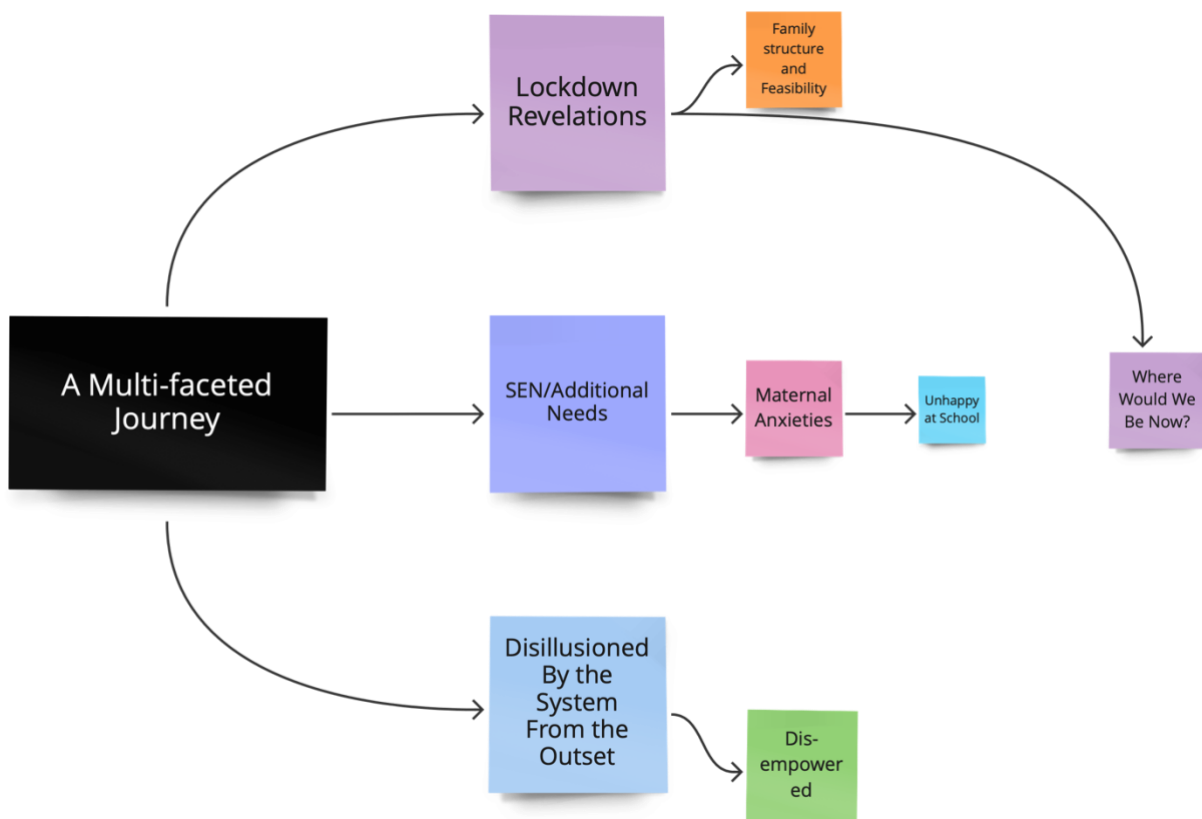
Kelly shared that her older sons had challenging educational experiences. To date, Kelly has attended eight tribunals for all three children. Kelly shared that she attended three tribunals in order to secure Emily's EHCP, despite what she feels were clear and evident needs.

From the beginning of Emily's schooling, Kelly was unwavering in her determination to advocate for the support her daughter needed. Past experiences dealing with her sons' challenges had left Kelly disillusioned with the system's support for SEN pupils; thus she spent time finding a supportive setting for Emily. While Kelly recognised the efforts of school staff to address Emily's needs, the considerable improvement in both their wellbeing during the lockdowns, led her to conclude that school might not be in Emily's ultimate best interests.

4.3.3.2 Findings for Kelly

A thematic map for Kelly can be found in appendix Q. A flow chart summary of this thematic map is depicted below.

Figure 9: Flow chart of Kelly's Themes and Sub-themes



A Multi-faceted Journey: This theme highlights that transitioning Emily from mainstream to HE as a result of the lockdowns, wasn't as simple as just changing the location of learning. The subsequent sub-themes serve to unpick this complexity.

Disillusioned by the system from the outset reflects Kelly's loss of faith in the wider system, even prior to Emily starting school; *'I think that (...) it's just not getting their*

needs met' whilst also requiring that parents fight for whatever they do manage to secure for their child.

Kelly's narrative reflected frustration stemming from a perceived power imbalance, where professionals within the system often have more power than parents. She regales, *'not being listened to as a parent'* even though they have insights and expertise regarding their child's needs. Kelly described the LA's behaviours during her multiple attempts at securing support for all of her children as, *'extremely nasty'*. She articulated her thoughts, saying, *'there's a child at the centre of this and it's my son and (...) you're treating me with such contempt.'*

The subtheme of **disempowered** becomes apparent by Kelly's following statement; *'I think that's it's because of how parents are made to feel. You are not equals in this system at all.'*

SEN/Additional Needs. Kelly described how Emily initially struggled at nursery with *'lots of extreme behaviours'*, delayed language development and difficulty with transitions; *'Her language was quite delayed (...) and she just couldn't cope with transitions'*. She also mentioned separation anxiety and *'every single day, from reception until she left in Year 3, she cried'*, illustrating the SEMH aspects of her needs.

Codes subsumed under the theme of SEN describe the symbiotic impact of Emily's distress on Kelly and how **unhappy at school** gave rise to persistent **maternal anxieties**. Emily would *'cry intermittently up until bedtime (...) waking up in the night (...) saying, "I don't want to go to school and leave you". (...) So most of the day was*

just spent sad'. These reflect the collective emotional strain on both Emily and Kelly, emphasising the significant impact of Emily's school-related distress on their lives.

Lockdown Revelations signifies transformative realisations. This theme encompasses the positive impact the lockdown had on Emily, and how she *'just started to relax (...) she'd become just curious about life. (...) she just changed, she started sleeping better, she started communicating better'*. Kelly shared that the schoolwork that was sent home was undifferentiated and too difficult for Emily, freeing them to follow a more personalised approach, which was beneficial for Emily's wellbeing and learning; *'we just did our own thing and that just really worked'*. This shift prompted Kelly to realise the positive impact of HE and also reduced Kelly's own stress levels; *'I think a big thing was that my stress levels started to go down as well'*. This period also allowed Kelly to process her own *'trauma'* from years of leaving her distressed daughter at school.

The subtheme **family structure and feasibility**, highlights adjustments made when transitioning to HE. Kelly mentioned changes in work schedules but emphasised the *'benefits to us as a family'*.

Finally, Kelly posed a rhetorical question of **Where would we be now?** if they had not transitioned to HE. She wondered about the potential long-lasting trauma of traditional schooling and the fear of continuing down that path. She says, *'it's not a nice thought to think we could have still been stuck in there because I was maybe too scared to get out of it'*.

RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

During my initial interview with Kelly, I perceived a barrier despite her openness. Through reflections and supervision, I realised that these barriers originated in me and not Kelly. I think that my sense of distance arose from Kelly meeting with me online, from a location I have never visited and thus a self-consciousness on my behalf. I was not born in England and sometimes I carry, perhaps a more hidden insecurity about my place and rights in the UK (even though I am a British citizen and have been for over four decades). The online meeting platform limited non-verbal communication cues, like body language and facial expression, which may have otherwise bridged the cultural gap. I feel all of these elements contributed to an initial sense of emotional distance.

I also worried about potentially coming across as a self-motivated and privileged researcher, due to my education, triggering anxieties related to British class distinctions. I've never comfortably aligned myself with a particular class, and these anxieties likely influenced my defensive response, where I adopted a more assertive identity as 'psychologist researcher'.

One specific example of this bias emerged in my response to Kelly's opening narrative, where she talks about Emily's additional needs, but does not name them. I found myself curious about these needs and towards the end of the interview, asked her what they were. In hindsight, it was my pressure to conform to societal expectations that was introduced to the research encounter, as perhaps Kelly had not felt the need to describe Emily by a set of medical diagnostic labels. Again, in hindsight, I felt relieved that Kelly didn't feel compelled to provide a list of these difficulties, indicating her comfort in the interview without the need for justification; possibly a contrast to her experiences in the numerous tribunals against the LA.

4.3.3.3. Findings from psychosocial thinking

As described above, I initially struggled to emotionally connect with Kelly. Kelly had questioned sending Emily to school, by sharing at the start of the interview, '*Did I even want her to go into this system?*' but also acknowledged the appeal of gaining some time for herself.

Kelly then detailed the daily separation anxiety that Emily suffered from day one starting at nursery, that just did not seem to abate over time. While I was intellectually interested in this narrative, I also felt somehow, emotionally numb. However, my feelings dramatically shifted at the point that Kelly described the transformation in Emily during the lockdown period. I experienced a surge of energy and a sense of awakening, as if I had been asleep while listening to Kelly's story, and something had suddenly ignited. Considering that a parallel process might have been at play, it is

possible that my experience mirrored what had occurred for Emily during the lockdown.

After the first interview, I was left with a strong impression of how positive the lockdown experience had been for both Kelly and Emily. The absence of daily painful separations led to improved wellbeing for both of them. In the subsequent interview, I delved into Kelly's own school experiences as this struck me as potentially relevant given the difficulties she had encountered over the years with the LA and her sons. Interestingly, she shared her own struggles with separation anxiety at primary school and a subsequent loss of interest and respect for teachers during secondary school.

Considering the dynamics between Kelly and Emily (evidenced by Kelly's explanations of Emily's separation-anxiety), it seems plausible that some splitting was at play within their relationship. In this dynamic, Emily may have needed to split Kelly off as the 'good object' and keep her separate from the 'bad object' that was school, to prevent psychic disintegration. This mechanism, also referred to as the paranoid-schizoid position emerges in early infancy but may remain active during threatening moments of loss and separation. Expressing her anger directly at Kelly for leaving her at school would have been too risky in light of her early separation from her birth mother. Instead, Emily's rage at being left may have more safely been split and projected onto 'school', which then inadvertently, unconsciously became experienced as persecutory place that was not emotionally safe.

My sense was that Kelly remained 'fused' with Emily, akin to what Winnicott described as the infant's 'holding phase' (Winnicott, 1986). According to Winnicott, this phase is crucial for ego development when an infant receives, 'good enough' maternal care. Through such consistent care emerges 'the dawn of intelligence and the beginning of the mind as something distinct from the psyche' (p. 241).

While I didn't enquire further about Emily's infancy experiences, it is possible that she missed out on some of this crucial care, given that she was adopted at a very young age. In contrast, the lockdown periods allowed for Emily to access the consistency in care from Kelly that she was craving, embodying this 'holding' phase and meeting her core needs. As a result, Emily opened up, became curious and enjoyed learning with Kelly to guide her. This experience seemed to facilitate the development of secondary processes, crucial for development of the mind and self as a separate entity, as Emily was no longer constantly triggered into a fight/flight response activated by school. From this perspective, it seems crystal clear how HE became the only viable option for this close-knit mother-child dyad.

4.3.4. Steph

4.3.4.1 *Pen Portrait for Steph*

Steph is a mother living in Sussex with her partner and her son Julian, aged 10. Julian's birth father is not in the picture, as she met him while living abroad. Steph mentioned that Julian stands out in their predominantly white village due to a darker complexion, which reflects a part of his heritage.

For many years, Steph grappled with understanding Julian's unique situation. He displayed exceptional brightness and enthusiasm for learning (he loved going to school and the structure it offered), but also faced significant challenges. It wasn't until the pandemic, after many years of struggling with emotional regulation both at home and school, as well as separation anxiety going to school, that Steph had him privately assessed. This revealed that he is autistic with a Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) profile.

Initially, Steph's narrative was not going to be included as it transpired during the interviews that she had never officially deregistered Julian from school. Instead, he was effectively 'off-rolled' by more than one school, claiming that they could not accommodate his needs. Steph had never considered homeschooling because she needed to work. Indeed, the lockdowns disrupted her Social Work Master's degree and placements. However, Julian's mental health significantly declined during C-19, making it impossible for her to continue her studies while caring for him.

Including Steph's story became important, because it sheds light on a situation where parents, like her, are pushed into HE when mainstream schools prove unable or

unwilling to address a child's needs. Indeed, when the LA phoned Steph to enquire about Julian's homeschooling progress (the school had informed them that they were EHE), she felt the need to clarify that HE was not her elective choice.

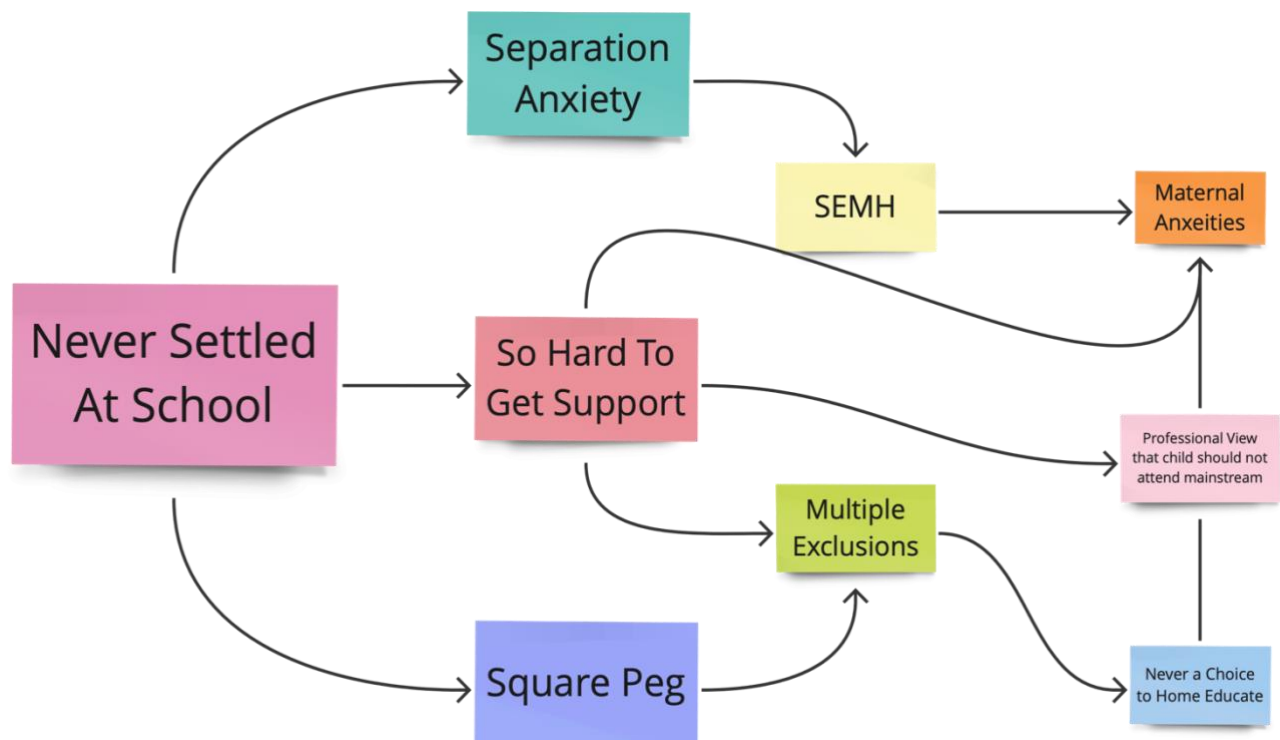
Julian had faced multiple exclusions while attending different schools, for behaviours that Steph felt were attempts at emotional self-regulation. Steph tirelessly searched to find the right setting, inadvertently fulfilling evidence required for the EHCP application, which Julian was awarded. Still, during our meetings, Steph was waiting for a tribunal decision to determine if Julian would qualify for EOTAS, a provision she believed would be most beneficial for him. Financial constraints prevented Julian from being enrolled in HE clubs and classes that could enhance his learning and well-being. Steph's savings had been entirely depleted to fund Julian's assessments and private schooling, which they had tried after observing that he was not thriving at their local state primary school.

My initial meeting with Steph occurred at the Tavistock & Portman NHS centre in London. Steph had travelled there for the interview, as she explained that it would have been difficult to discuss things with Julian at home. It also meant that she would get some rare and much-needed time to herself. The second interview was conducted via Zoom.

4.3.4.2 Findings for Steph

A thematic map for Steph can be found in appendix R. A flow chart summary of this thematic map is depicted below.

Figure 10: Flow chart of Steph's Themes and Sub-themes



Never Settled At School is the overarching theme for Steph's narrative. According to Steph, Julian, '*never settled. I mean, school drop offs....every morning, would be almost dragging him along the road*'. The following sub-themes outline the challenges that Steph faced in navigating Julian's education and needs, including the challenges she experienced in seeking support, both external professional help as well as help from school staff.

Separation Anxiety was the first presentation of Julian struggling to settle;

'He always had this awful separation anxiety'. Steph reflected that, 'I was more of an auxiliary aid, I'm the thing that made him feel safe in what's quite a scary world'.

As Julian's difficulties became more pronounced as he got older, Steph described many incidents where it becomes evident that he has **SEMH** needs, e.g., *'Julian's got his coat zipped over his head and is spinning around saying he can't do it' (go into school).*

Julian then moved to another setting and on the second day there Steph was called in, *'He'd shut down (...) he started dribbling, his head was on the table, so like really extreme dissociation'.*

Describing the impact of school closures on Julian, *'all his thinking just got a bit screwed up'. He would say, 'it's not how school is meant to be. And Julian's world is full of 'meant to bes'...that's when the not being actually able to get into the school building at all, started'.*

So Hard To Get Support.

Steph's narrative conveyed how hard it can be to find the right kind of help when your child presents with complex needs.

e.g., *'And that's the thing, as a parent, you're just left. You don't know what to do, and that's the hardest thing as you're just left floundering'.* Steph made multiple references of attempts to get help; e.g., a GP when Julian was two years old refuting the suggestion of autism, *'Look, he's looking me right in the eye'.*

This continued when she *'kept flagging things with school'* but due to Julian's high achievements, Steph felt they were not motivated to see his differences, e.g., *'You know, he's top of everything. For his year two SATs, he got 99% in maths'*, leaving Steph feeling, *'I always got brushed off'*.

A referral to CAMHS by another GP who was, *'somebody recognising it because for years school had brushed off (...) wasn't accepted because the school says there's no problems'*.

Steph then resorted to *'going privately'* which was expensive and during the pandemic, *'I wasn't working and we can't afford it'*. When Julian got an EHCP, *'they didn't name a school in it. They didn't even name a type of school. So it's a completely unlawful EHCP anyway'*.

The sub-theme **Maternal Anxieties** refers to the many iterations of internal and external conflicts that Steph expressed. *'It was so stressful to manage and contain and it's just thinking this isn't working....and the disappointment'*. Of particular significance was the number of times that Steph blamed herself, *'I kept thinking, "Oh, it must be me"'*, often questioning herself, as *'just being a neurotic mother'*.

Underlying some of the anxiety was the entrenched belief that, *'kids have to go to school'*. This became a 'mantra' for both Steph and Julian who had *'always been told how important school was and how it's the law'*.

Square Peg refers to Julian as someone with a PDA profile of autism. This term was used by a psychologist telling Julian that, *'if you keep hitting that square peg (...) the square peg breaks'*. This analogy emphasises how constant pressure and attempts to fit him into mainstream settings were not only ineffective but also detrimental.

Multiple Exclusions refers to the consequences of Julian's profile and difficulties with self-regulation, e.g., *'he doesn't even know how he's feeling (...) it was through his behaviour'*. Julian experienced numerous exclusions, culminating in the final school stating that, *'they couldn't meet need (...) it was really hard to receive that email on the first day of half term with no opportunity for any sort of discussion'*. The school did not allow him to return and, *'since October half-term, he's not been registered at any school'*.

Finally, it was **Never A Choice To Home-educate** is heavily emphasised by Steph.

'I never wanted to homeschool (...) it pissed me off that X had informed the LA that we'd withdrawn Julian to electively home-educate'.

RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

My encounter with Steph had a significant impact on me. Meeting her in person for the first interview, added depth to our interaction, that contrasted with the limitations of online interviews with other participants. Arguably, this in-person connection may have skewed my responses, aligning more closely with a psychosocial approach in that there was a stronger dynamic impacting my experience when compared with the online FAN interviews.

Steph's long journey to the Tavistock, left me feeling some guilt and indebtedness. Such emotions seem to have influenced my response to Steph during the interview, as the interview extended to two and a half hours (as I didn't want to interrupt her or cut her short). She spoke without pauses, conveying the value of providing an open-ended space for her to share her story. This aspect of our interaction closely resembled Freud's concept of 'free association', as encouraged by Hollway and Jefferson (2013). The first interview with Steph affected me quite profoundly, as that night I had an intense and sorrowful dream centred around my father's Alzheimer's which might have been linked to Steph's narrative.

While my dream reflected my own unconscious material related to loss and grief, the emotional intensity of the dream, combined with the experience of meeting Steph, made me consider that I might also be tuning into the intense feelings of loss within her story. Parents receiving an ASD diagnosis are known to need time to grieve the perceived loss of the neurotypical child they envisioned, and Steph might still be processing this. Upon reflection, I acknowledge that my attunement to Steph, possibly due to shared experiences (similar educational backgrounds, Middle Eastern cultural affinity, both single-mothers to a boy), left me less guarded or defended against her material. My subsequent responses, including the dream and our in-person meeting, may reflect a more embodied reaction to the data.

4.3.4.3. Findings from psychosocial thinking

Making sense of Steph's narrative was complicated both by the volume of information and also the initial lack of clarity regarding the reasons for homeschooling. It transpired during the second interview, that HE for Julian at the time, really meant no formal learning happening, but a period of 'unschooling' aimed at helping him to recover from the trauma he had experienced from school, exacerbated by COVID-19.

Steph's seamless narrative appeared unconsciously aimed at avoiding interruptions that might disrupt her story-telling. Although it lacked the conventional structure of a coherent story and was filled with diversions, it was moving and purposeful. It seemed as though Steph was unburdening herself by sharing her complex story. Despite evidence of strong defence mechanisms, such as splitting and projective identification (evidenced by my emotions as well as diversions throughout the narrative), the *Gestalt* conveyed Steph's need to be heard without judgement.

Steph's ongoing struggle to support Julian, who had long been misunderstood was evident. The quasi-therapeutic space appeared to be valuable¹⁴ for Steph and during the second interview, she voiced how therapeutic the first meeting had been. She was grateful for the chance to share her story, hoping it may help others in similar situations. This reassured me that my strong emotional response, perhaps stemming from a transference of loss and grief as revealed in my dream, may have indicated a

¹⁴ In fact, Keren and Kelly both expressed similar feelings about how the first interview had felt therapeutic, and Kelly shared that she was glad to have the space to be heard without judgement.

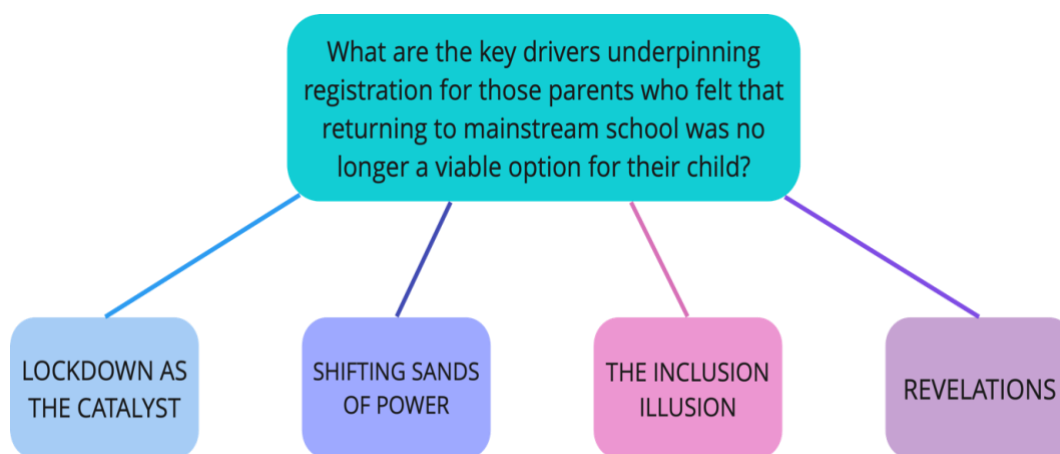
successful intersubjective research encounter, achieving the containment Bion describes.

4.4 Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

4.4.1 Overview

This section offers a pulling together of all of the data utilising RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) across the whole dataset. A total of four themes were developed, from a set of 484 codes. These are depicted in the figure below.

Figure 11: Research Question and Final Themes



4.4.2 Findings from RTA

4.4.2.1 Theme 1 – *LOCKDOWN AS THE CATALYST*

All participants expressed the experience of the lockdowns as being key to the decision to de-register their child and continue to homeschool. The lockdown periods led to situations where, when schools reopened (even if they initially attempted to send

their child back), it was no longer deemed viable for their child to return to school. In some ways, the lockdowns served as a 'risk free trial'.

We had that, you know, trial I suppose. (Kelly)

For Keren, Kelly and Grace, this decision stemmed from their children thriving at home during the lockdowns, with both their wellbeing and learning significantly improving. The following extracts demonstrate the ways in which the lockdowns had been key to the decision to home-educate.

So then September came, they went back to school. December, there was another lockdown. And for the little one, it was a bit difficult to do back and forth home and school because he was just having a great time at home. He was thriving. He was really, really enjoying himself. And then back to school, it was just too hard for him. (Keren)

And I really do wonder, if we hadn't had that lockdown break, I wonder if I would ever have had the guts to do it. But it was a huge positive for us, because it just gave us that trial and it gave me the strength to be able to do it'.
(Kelly)

It definitely wouldn't have happened without the lockdown (...) I think if it wasn't for the lockdown I would have let the situation drift. (Grace)

In Steph's case, the lockdowns had a negative impact on Julian with his mental health deteriorating to the extent that when he returned to school, he found it difficult to cope.

It (...) disrupted and shook his life so much, he then wasn't able to go in and do school anymore.

Finally, Julian's school (and not the first time this had happened) informed Steph by email that Julian was no longer allowed to continue attending.

Another variable within this theme, directly linked to this unprecedented scenario, was the clarity and insight that parents gained from witnessing first-hand, both the quality, content and difficulty levels of education their child received and also how their child responded. This direct experience, which is typically concealed or not readily accessible to parents, provided insights that they had not fully realised. Not only with regards to what and how was being taught (or indeed not being taught), but also their child's learning style and response to schooling. This new understanding provided clarity for parents who had been grappling with how best to support their child prior to the lockdowns.

For Kelly, Emily was immediately happy not to have to go to school.

But even so Emily was really, really happy (...) and then she just, she just changed. ...She just started to um just relax (...) And I mean we got sent work from school which was not suitable for her at all. (Kelly)

Steph was keenly aware that school wasn't working for Julian but did not feel clear on what she should do. Further, Julian was unable to concentrate with online learning, adding a new dimension to his struggles. Even though he had key worker status, the strangeness of school when he tried school at this time, added to his distress.

They had a full timetable on Teams, maybe two lessons less every day.. so they could engage rather than sending worksheets....but Julian really, really struggled to engage with that. He had no motivation to engage with it at all.

Grace knew that Tommy was falling behind but,

Because I didn't properly understand what his educational needs were, and I didn't properly understand how he was doing at school until I went through the process of teaching him myself and then I understood what he needed and I understood why he couldn't get it from school.

Keren had already doubted the quality and the educational values being taught at Noam's school, but her dissatisfaction was cemented when she saw what he was learning.

I think one of the big shocks was during Corona where there was a whole term about ancient Egypt and (...) And if you ask him today, he doesn't remember anything (...) a lot of parents were shocked to see how things work while they had to deal with the stuff coming from school during COVID...

Ultimately, participants ended up disregarding the schoolwork that was being sent home, realising that it was not suitable for their child. This freed them up to go 'off-piste' and personalise their child's learning. This created an opportunity to tailor their child's learning in line with their needs and interests.

It [school] sent home like this really daft kind of like list of things you might do if you wanted to, which we ignored, and that was absolutely fine because it meant that we could just do what we wanted to do. (Grace)

4.4.2.2 Theme 2 – *SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER: ‘to what extent are you going to tell him to shut your mouth because discipline is very strict in this country?’.*

This theme encompasses the power dynamics and struggles voiced by participants in the context of their child’s experience of school. The metaphor of ‘shifting sands’ symbolises the transformation in power dynamics that occurred, as parents and children transitioned from mainstream schooling to HE; moving from a seemingly disempowered position to a more empowered one. It conjures up an image of instability or a lack of security, that parents/children may feel when their school experience is less than positive. This theme also allows for the disempowerment of teachers in the current system, as all participants acknowledged and empathised with the limitations teachers face (especially during the pandemic).

However, the predominant theme that emerged was a pervasive sense of ‘powerlessness’, as repeatedly voiced by participants that impacted both parents and children. It describes an overall shift during the lockdowns, as parents took back their power, by taking charge of their child’s learning and reaping the benefits of doing so.

Although the shift did not come for Steph and Julian during the lockdowns, it happened for them once they stopped ‘forcing’ school.

“Julian, just so you know, I am never going to force you back to school. If it’s not right for you, you never have to go back to school in your life.” I said, “But, if you do want to, I will support you and you don’t have to do it forever.” And from the moment we had that conversation, he was like a different child. It was really, really black and white, like how different he was.

The theme therefore explores subtleties of power before and during the lockdowns, leading to the process of deregistration.

Participants also shared the perception of struggling to be heard and listened to, leading to challenges with getting the right support when attempting to advocate for their child's needs (or in Keren's case, the sense that her son **'just wasn't seen'**).

This dimension of power dynamics became apparent when participants referred to hierarchies or an 'authoritarian approach'. Steph described how Julian, on wondering why he had to wear a uniform, says:

Like why do you have to wear a tie? How does that help you learn anything by wearing a tie?" And he said, "I think it's just the teachers want to make themselves be able to have power." (Steph)

A striking observation was the perception of school staff being positioned as the 'experts,' which seemingly created a barrier for parents in effectively raising their concerns. This was particularly poignant when analysing the data, as all the mothers were clearly experts on their own children and all shared some skillset related to advocacy or social justice. For example, Grace who shared that she had spent her professional career advocating for others, said:

I wasn't like the most assertive with the school and (...) you know, I did defer to them as experts like quite a lot.

And yet she also felt that:

I think they were fobbing me off. (Grace)

Steph expressed similar difficulties in asserting herself:

I had this weird thing with Julian's teachers (...) I can't assert myself. And I start panicking. It's like I've been caught smoking in the bushes at school.

More detrimentally for Steph, such power imbalances led her to blaming herself for Julian's difficulties:

So I always got brushed off... and then I thought, "Oh, I must just be imagining it." It must be me almost in our relationship. (Steph)

Steph's reflections highlight that part of the struggle was how bright and academically able Julian was, with school emphasising this over addressing his specific needs. Disempowerment for Julian was therefore most extreme when school did not support a CAMHS referral. Steph believed they were blindsided by Julian's academic strengths.

The following extract depicts a time during the lockdowns when Steph attempted to secure some support from Julian's English teacher.

I emailed her and I said that Julian's really struggling, he feels like he can't do this. Could you set aside five minutes to chat him through and break it down? And then she responded with, "I'm afraid it's won't, not can't," which really pissed me off.

Kelly's concerns seemed more systemically-focused on how the system 'treats children':

I don't feel anger I suppose, to any particular person or like the school (...)I'm angry as a whole for what they put my family through, but for me it's, I'm angry at the system. How it treats children and young people, full stop. Not only those with SEN.

She also feels that the system is ill-equipped to manage SEND needs.

I was already very disillusioned by the system and how it caters for children with additional needs. I think (...) it's not getting their needs met ...and not being listened to as a parent.

She goes on to describe an unequal footing when dealing with the education system.

I think that's it's because of how parents are made to feel. You are not equals in this system at all. (...) I know I've got a lot of knowledge about a lot of stuff around the system as well, but I still felt like a naughty little schoolgirl who was being rude to someone, you know. I felt like I was going to be told off and it was bizarre you know?

In conclusion, a shift from disempowerment to empowerment becomes apparent as participants recount the positive changes they witnessed in their children during the lockdowns. The decision to discard the shackles of mainstream education and instead follow their child's interests and needs, denoted a pivotal turning point in the dynamics of power.

Grace's excerpt offers a window into the progress Tommy has made since she has taken ownership of his learning, signifying this empowerment for both of them. At the start of the lockdowns, he was unable to read or write.

He reads as well as I do in English, he chooses books from the adult section at the library. Maths is not great and he really, really struggles to concentrate on maths so I try and keep it to just like a few minutes a day (...) he's not great at writing, um, with a pen and paper but he types (...) and his general knowledge of things like history and mythology and stuff like that, philosophy is just...just through the roof because he obsessively watches YouTube videos about it and reads about it, and gets really into his own kind of interests.

4.4.2.3 Theme 3 – *THE INCLUSION ILLUSION: 'Now everything's about inclusion'*

This theme centres on the experiences of parents who described instances where inclusion for their child was either not working or in vain. It reflects systemic barriers to providing meaningful inclusion, both in terms of neurodiversity and cultural inclusivity and how schools can fall short in adequately supporting diverse needs. Further, the flip side of the inclusion is, inevitably, exclusion

For Noam, returning to school after the first lockdown, Keren felt that he was almost invisible.

Nobody saw him. The gaps in the class were just too immense, and the teachers had to look after those that were really left behind. And that was not his case. So he felt, you know, he just felt miserable, and he wasn't liking it....

Falling through the cracks in a mainstream class, demonstrates how a system can appear as if it is accommodating diversity, but may potentially be failing to provide genuine inclusion. This situation creates an illusion of inclusion.

Initially, Keren believed that a flexi-schooling arrangement would be the ideal fit. This would allow her to have some influence over the skills and content Noam could learn while still enabling him to attend school. However, this option was not available.

Similar constraints were described by both Steph and Grace.

I was looking for a flexi solution to begin with, but I couldn't find any around London...

I also asked his school to do flexi, that was a big no.

Unable to access a flexi-schooling option, Keren ultimately felt compelled to deregister Noam. In a sense, Keren was 'forced' to home-educate as other choices that she was seeking in the system were not available to her. This is seen even more powerfully in the case of Kelly, Steph and Grace who all have children with SEND. The frequent inadequacy of schools in addressing the special educational needs of students, is a common factor cited as a reason for homeschooling (e.g. Slater, Burton & McKillop., 2020).

Kelly reflects on the essential role of children's happiness and safety for successful learning, noting that interventions may fall short of achieving their aim, without emotional wellbeing. This highlights the illusion of inclusion, revealing a potential gap between superficial academic improvements and the genuine need for inclusive and nurturing educational environments.

I believe if children aren't happy and if they don't feel safe, they're not going to learn full stop (...) I think you can add all the interventions in the world, you know, to move them on academically but ultimately, yeah, it won't work if they're not happy.

In Grace's experience, Tommy may have been sitting in lessons every day and appearing to be getting an education by going to school, but year on year, the gap between him and his peers was widening. As a result, Tommy was effectively 'excluded' from making academic progress even though Grace demonstrated that he was hugely capable of learning. Further, rather than 'drill down' to understand his needs better, he was allowed to drift along without targeted support.

They did recognise that something else was going on and they were like, "Okay, you could- should get him kind of tested," but I don't think they ever

had like an accurate view of where he was at academically, or what he was capable of academically (Grace).

Grace's opinion is that the current inclusion model is a response to past injustices (she refers to the historical mistreatment of children and racism) and she is unsure of an ultimate solution for true inclusion.

Now everything's about inclusion (...) and unless you are literally throwing chairs, you will be included in the same classroom as everybody else. But like in the past, it was the other way around, right. (...) And what we have now with the inclusion model is a reaction to that situation which was wrong. And then now it's going the other way so (...) How do you design a system that's humane to everybody, I don't know.

However, this reflects a thoughtful understanding of the complexity of inclusion.

Were it not for the COVID-19 lockdowns, Grace herself stated that she would have *'let the situation drift'* and

Tommy would have been one of those kids like you hear about, where they did fine in primary school and then they had a breakdown in secondary school and everybody wonders like why it happens.

Grace described how Tommy's (undiagnosed) sensory needs led to 'shut down' at school that was likely linked to being in an environment designed for neurotypical students. This challenges the idea of inclusion based solely on a child's presence in a school, without accommodating the environment to adapt to his clear needs.

Julian faced exclusions described as due to his emotional dysregulation, underpinned by anxiety and sensory needs. This led to behaviours that the school was unwilling to support.

Julian had been asked, “, when you’re in the church, what do you focus on?” ... Bless Julian, obviously taking his mother’s very sage advice said, “Getting out,” which anyone else would think was quite amusing, any good teacher even if they didn’t like it.. would’ve said, “That’s really interesting..” She didn’t take it that way and bollocked him in front of the whole class, told him he was stupid, disrespectful (...) and Julian apparently had got up and started spinning round and round and round doing a high-pitched squeal, and they’d had to remove the class. Um, and this was the incident and they excluded him for three days. (Steph)

In summary, the "Inclusion Illusion" theme highlights the challenges of genuine inclusion. It reflects the difficulties in implementing more flexible and inclusive approaches within mainstream education, impacting participants and their children. This theme reveals the gaps between the ideal of inclusive education and the practical challenges of modernising and adapting education to serve diverse students effectively.

4.4.2.4 Theme 4 – REVELATIONS: ‘How could we go back?’

This theme details the realisations that emerged during the pandemic, leading parents to question the efficacy and values of mainstream education. Lockdowns offered a risk-free trial of homeschooling, empowering parents to explore alternatives without the usual risks associated with opting out of the mainstream system. Their primary concern during these uncertain times was their child’s well-being but what they learned from this individualised approach was that they had perhaps, unquestioningly tolerated the status-quo for too long and that they were able to ‘do it better’. The following excerpts have been selected to highlight the numerous positive

outcomes that accompanied these realisations. While there may be some overlap with the 'Shifting Sands of Power' theme, these positive statements form a distinct aspect within the theme of 'Revelations'.

Yeah, that sadness lifted she'd just be curious about the sky and the trees and animals,(...) she just, she just came alive (...)in so many different ways...It was just, it was just lovely, really, really lovely...it was, she was just like a different child. (Kelly)

You can see his critical thinking and the way he knows what's going on in the world and how he analyses things and now he doesn't take anything for granted, and how he got stronger physically (...) It's how he became an initiator (...) it's just amazing. (Keren)

For Julian, the benefits of being at home became evident after the lockdowns. Nonetheless, Steph has had her own revelations since the battle to make mainstream schooling work has stopped, leading to improvements in Julian's emotional development.

He's getting a bit ...more flexible in his thinking and (...) he's not catastrophising about everything so much. ... he's definitely healing. (Steph)

Another 'revelation' that may not have been explicitly stated but was present throughout participants' experiences, was the role of technology and internet access in their individualised homeschooling approaches. The wealth of available online resources may be part of a driving force behind a choice to pursue homeschooling, even if this was not overtly acknowledged.

We found things like Outschool and we found little kind of like online lessons (Grace)

...there are incredible resources. It takes me ages to find them. I spent (sic) a lot of time on resources, (Keren)

There's this online virtual red arrows and he is reserve red one...and they take it incredibly seriously.. but it's lovely because you hear him chatting and he's chatting away like anyone else. (Steph)

In the context of technology and resources, it's important to recognise the role of privilege in determining the feasibility of homeschooling. Participants like Grace, Keren and Kelly shared their ability to adapt family structures and work arrangements to make homeschooling work.

If we get into financial difficulties I can take more work in the evening so that fits in, I can just give them their tea and then pop out and do an evening shift. (Grace)

However, Steph raised a valid counter-argument, accentuating the difficulty of homeschooling when finances are limited, making mainstream schooling the only viable option. Keren's encounter with other parents who were homeschooling SEND children and faced resource limitations, shed light on how challenging being a homeschooling parent can be. These revelations regarding the role of technology and financial considerations also emerged as drivers influencing participants decisions related to homeschooling.

Part of me if I can afford it would just let him run and properly un-school completely. I mean, that's what he's doing right now because we ran out of resources, so if he now thinks I want to go and do this, we can't fund him. That's the difficult thing. (Steph)

Keren's personal revelation is that ultimately that the system has to change. She powerfully articulates a perception that the system is no longer fit-for-purpose.

The system needs to change, technology and the way people work (...) everything is changing quickly, everybody's learning how to change quickly, not education (...) And even the famous UK, Britain, they will have to do it. would you still put 30 kids in the class (...) and put them on the carpet or in chairs and put a teacher in front of them that tells them everything all day long is just absurd. Who wants that for their child? (Keren)

Finally, within the 'Revelations' theme is a sense of participants 'awakening'. Their newfound insights made it impossible to 'unsee' or 'un-know' what they had observed and understood about their child. This was made apparent when they raised questions about their ability to return to the traditional school model and what might have happened if their child had returned to school.

How could we go back to that every day I knew how unhappy she was.
(Kelly)

The psychiatrist said, you realise school won't work for Julian. He'll need an EOTAS package, and.... she said, I'm really glad you're not the sort of parents who are, like, "How can we get them to mask again?" (Steph)

I'm really grateful that I've had the opportunity to learn how to do it, because I would not have worked all of this out if he had been at school. (Grace)

So right on my conscience, and it's my fault, and why are you sending him there? And that's a question, I need to answer, right? If not to him, then to myself. And that was the moment, that was the moment I think that was...if there was A moment....that was it. (Keren)

5 Discussion

5.1. Review of Aims and Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the prevalence of families feeling that they had no option but to de-register their child/children from mainstream education?
2. What were the key drivers underpinning deregistration for those parents who felt that returning to mainstream school was no longer a viable option for their child?

To address the first question, quantitative data was collected enabling the quantification of the prevalence of parents within the sample, who felt compelled to deregister their child from mainstream school. The majority (65.7%) selected statement 3¹⁵. 4 categories of reasons were identified :

(i) Discovery of advantages to HE as a consequence of lockdowns. (ii) CYP wellbeing prioritised. (iii) (Perceived) Lack of provision/resources/care to meet individual needs in school, (iv) Dissatisfaction with school/education system.

For parents feeling compelled to deregister their child, a perceived lack of provision/resources/care to meet their child's needs was the primary factor, followed by prioritising their child's well-being. Dissatisfaction with the school or education system also played a role in this decision, with the discovery of advantages to home education having the smallest impact for this group.

¹⁵ Respondents selected from one of three responses:

1. Neither mainstream schooling nor deregistering are good options for my child/family, deregistering was the better of two options
2. Mainstream schooling could work for my child/family, deregistering was a preferred/better option
3. Mainstream schooling doesn't work for my child/family, so I feel we had no choice but to deregister

To address the second question, Interviews with four participants led to individual thematic maps And the following themes as key drivers underpinning deregistration for these participants: (i) *Lockdown as the Catalyst*, (ii) *Shifting Sands of Power*, (iii) *The Inclusion Illusion* and (iv) *Revelations*.

5.2 Explanation of Findings

5.2.1. Elective Home Education: How Elective is it?

The use of the adjective 'elective' in government literature fails to recognise that for many families, HE is not necessarily a self-elected or positive choice (Smith et al., 2020). In 2022, The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) analysed HE in England and expressed concerns about the lack of fair choice regarding HE in the current system. Participants in both phases of data collection expressed the lack of choice and forced choice for some. Their comments aligned with the CSJ report findings of families removing their children from school due to concerns about safety, difficulties accessing SEND provision, mental health support, and bullying. The practice of 'off-rolling' was also noted and links to Steph's account of Julian's schooling. In 2019, the then Children's Commissioner expressed concerns about the increasing removal of children from schools due to challenges fitting into the system, calling for scrutiny on schools and a more inclusive educational system. However, the C-19 health situation has added a new dimension to this decision-making process.

Many of the qualitative phase 1 responses, particularly those related to SEND (specifically autism and neurodiversity), highlighted concerns such as schools not adhering to care plans, overlooking individual struggles like social anxiety and challenges associated with overcrowded or noisy classrooms. These issues

appeared to contribute to SEMH difficulties frequently cited within this group, explaining why prioritising their children's wellbeing was the other prominent factor in the decision to deregister. These findings are consistent with multiple studies that identify the inability of schools to adequately address the needs of SEND pupils as the primary reason for families choosing HE (e.g. English, 2021; Kendall & Taylor, 2016; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Slater, Burton & Mckillop, 2022).

CYP wellbeing prioritised post-lockdown

The enforced lockdowns, placed health concerns at the forefront of many people's minds. This period also prompted a re-evaluation of what was important to parents for their children's wellbeing and education. Within this participant group, mental health concerns emerged as a predominant feature influencing the perception that school was no longer a viable option. These mirror findings of the studies reviewed, including Bower (2021), Paulauskaite et al. (2022) and Slater et al. (2022). Tailored learning at a child's own pace was also mentioned as supporting this decision. This aligns with findings by Ludgate et al. (2022), who conducted a small-scale study on families homeschooling children with SEND during the pandemic.

Ludgate et al.'s study reported positive aspects of homeschooling, such as increased family time, the development of new skills and improved relationships. The relaxed pace of education during lockdown allowed for a focus on children's mental health and stronger family bonds, also reflected in Grace, Kelly's and Keren's narratives. Unexpected positive outcomes of homeschooling included reduced stress levels in children, improved mental health and a more relaxed learning environment at home.

Ludgate et al.'s study provides insights that align with comparable findings in the current study. Although not all participants in this study mentioned having children with SEND, the notion that improvements in a child's mental health could be a factor influencing the decision not to return to school, resonates with the findings. This is especially so for participants who selected statement 3, as they reported a high incidence of SEMH issues.

Even for parents who believed school could work but preferred to deregister (statement 2), a more positive experience of learning and family life during lockdown was found to be the primary factor behind the decision to deregister.

Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction with school education system emerged as a recurrent theme among respondents aligning with both statements 2 and 3. This trend is reminiscent of findings in HE studies, such as those by Smith et al. (2020) and Neuman (2019). Neuman's (2019) exploration of parental criticisms of schooling aligns with the identified discontent in teaching quality and stress associated with mainstream schooling within this participant group.

Neuman's conceptual framework, distinguishes between first-order changes (addressing immediate issues like teaching methods and reducing student pressure) among those parents whose children attended school and second-order changes among those opting for HE (calling for deeper shifts in values and curriculum relevance). This framework supports the notion that parents transitioning to home

education may seek a departure from the perceived rigidity and lack of relevance in the current education system, also documented by Smith et al. (2020).

5.2.2 Summary

The C-19 context and lockdowns appear to have possibly intensified pre-existing parental disillusionment with mainstream schooling, prompting the decision to opt for home education and necessitating deregistration from school. However, the perception of choice is questionable, as two-thirds of participants felt compelled to make this decision, making the notion of home education as an elective choice misleading and doubly undermining of these families' experiences.

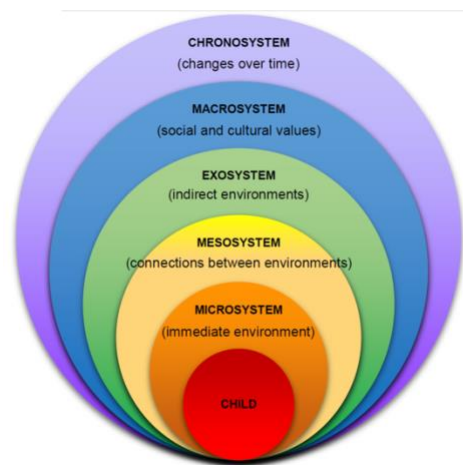
Some families specifically tied their decision to concerns about C-19 threats and fears of prosecution if their child did not return to school. During this unique pandemic-influenced period, factors linked to C-19 primarily align with responses from statement 2 participants, not the primary focus of our research question. To better understand the findings from statement 3 participants, some theoretical considerations follow.

5.2.2.1 An Ecological Systems Perspective

HE families, being a heterogeneous group influenced by various factors, benefit from an ecological perspective, such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979). This framework provides a holistic understanding by emphasising the interactions among systems around a child, including the family (microsystem) and school (mesosystem), while considering broader factors like political, legislative, social, and economic influences (macrosystem). Additionally, it acknowledges the temporal

impact of C-19 on these systems over time (chronosystem). Specifically, the child is seen as both influenced by and influential within the interconnected social systems they are part of.

Figure 12: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Bronfenbrenner's (1979) structural framework helps to observe dynamics between systems, further elucidating these shifts in priorities. During C-19, challenges in both macrosystems (government) and mesosystems (schools, CAMHS, public services) impeded effective services, necessitating parents to re-evaluate and reorient themselves vis-a-vis the mesosystem and the power they have. The dissatisfaction with, or loss of effective support from schools, caused a disruption in the microsystem pushing parents to adjust and attend to their child's fundamental needs. This adaptation likely involved seeking alternative resources like online communities, digital learning platforms and possibly HE communities.

Focusing on the parental microsystem interacting with the child, including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) could provide further insights into how compelled choices to HE, were effected.

Figure 13: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)



Maslow's motivational theory, proposes that individuals must fulfil their basic needs before progressing to safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. This five-stage model distinguishes between deficiency needs and growth needs.

Deficiency needs arise from deprivation, driving motivation when unmet, and the longer they persist unfulfilled, the stronger the motivation to satisfy them becomes. Each individual has the capacity and desire to ascend toward self-actualization, but progress is often hindered by unmet lower-level needs. Life experiences, (like a global pandemic) may cause individuals to fluctuate between hierarchy levels, resulting in non-linear progression.

The pandemic heightened the interconnectedness of needs, emphasising basic physiological needs and intensifying safety concerns, job security, and health worries

(Shoib et al., 2022). Further, the limitations on social interactions magnified the importance of belongingness and love, presenting a scenario where each need's fulfilment depended more than ever on others. The theory indicates a shift in priorities during the pandemic, with many parents primarily focused on ensuring the safety of themselves, their children, and their loved ones.

Maslow's Hierarchy reinforces this decision-making process, where parents prioritised their child's wellbeing (especially around mental health needs, as was commonly reported by participants), rooted in a need for safety and belongingness. The emphasis on family time during lockdown aligns with Maslow's concept of love and belonging, perhaps further influencing parents to choose HE over mainstream schooling. This shift not only met basic needs but may have fostered a sense of autonomy and esteem-building, indicating a progression toward self-actualisation.

A shift in parental priorities, is echoed in findings from a recent Times Education Commission study (2022), reporting that 65% of parents criticised the education system for excessive focus on exams, while 56% expressed concerns about the potential negative impact of intensive testing on children's mental health. These insights suggest a broader societal change in attitudes towards education, moving away from an emphasis on academic attainment to prioritising wellbeing. This shift aligns with phase 1 findings, where a majority of parents perceived mainstream schooling as lacking necessary support and a conducive environment.

Consequently, the decision to HE was perceived as the only viable option to ensure holistic development and better meet individual needs.

5.3. Key Drivers Underpinning Deregistration

This section offers a discussion of the findings from the four themes that were developed from the RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

5.3.1 Theme 1 - *Lockdown as the Catalyst*

The study's findings illuminated that the lockdown periods presented a new experience for parents, where they saw, perhaps for the first time, what their children were doing educationally (Ferguson, 2021). All four participants expressed that without the lockdowns, they would not have ended up where they had. The contemplation of where their children would be now if the lockdowns had not happened, was repeatedly raised. The lockdowns served as a catalyst, playing a pivotal role for all participants. Based on their experiences during lockdowns, participants found it unfeasible for their children to return to school. Essentially, the lockdowns provided a 'risk-free trial,' prompting a more permanent move to HE.

Keren, Kelly, and Grace all shared that their children not only coped well during the lockdowns but thrived, demonstrating improved well-being and learning experiences that significantly contributed to their decision. An Australian study, examining data across the country, has also attributed the lockdowns to a surge in HE (English, 2021) and defined these families as 'accidental home educators.'

Kelly's prior consideration of homeschooling, reminiscent of Adamson's (2021) description of the need to 'step out' of the system, coupled with her interactions with the LA and Emily at school, influenced her decision. Similarly, Keren and Grace were motivated by their sons' enhanced learning and improved happiness during

lockdowns. For Steph, the move to HE was catalysed by Julian's SEMH difficulties, precipitated by the pandemic. All participants can be regarded as somewhat 'accidental home educators,' with their decisions shaped by a-posteriori experiences within mainstream schools and lived experiences of homeschooling during lockdowns.

Another common theme among participants, was the inadequacy of support from schools during the lockdowns. This manifested in various ways, such as a lack of task differentiation for students like Emily, Tommy, or Julian. Keren, Kelly, and Grace all mentioned issues with school-assigned work—either it was irrelevant or pitched at a level beyond their child's capacity to engage with effectively. These experiences resonate with findings from a study by Greenway and Thomas (2020). Their study (conducted through an online survey), revealed widespread discontent among parents of children with SEND during the pandemic, citing resources and support as inappropriate for their child's unique requirements.

English's (2021) non-empirical paper discusses educational choices, including HE. It introduces the concept of *responsibilisation* (e.g. Doherty & Dooley, 2018) to explore how the practical 'risk-free trial' of HE during lockdowns, may have led to a permanent move to HE.

5.3.1.1 Responsibilisation in Education

English's (2021) paper offers a persuasive socio-psychological perspective on the transition to HE, by asserting that Australian families, (somewhat comparable to the UK), are viewed as having educational choices within a neo-liberal-influenced

market. The decision to homeschool is framed as a component of this broader neo-liberal decision-making process.

In the context of state-funded schools, when a parent opts for enrolment, it triggers a zero-sum game: the funding tied to the student moves between schools (in the case of a transfer) or remains unallocated when a family chooses HE (English, 2021). The impact of private tutoring on scholarship opportunities further shapes the educational market¹⁶. English contends that understanding educational choices necessitates an examination of market forces, including alternative options like HE (where market dynamics also come into play, whether through outsourcing of teaching, or the inevitable buying of resources to deliver a suitable education). Recent studies connect the demand for educational alternatives such as private tutoring (and by extension, HE), framing these as a form of responsabilisation (Doherty and Dooley, 2018; English, 2021).

Responsibilisation refers to individuals being held accountable for their success or failure in late neo-liberal societies, where societal risks, traditionally managed by the state, shift to individuals (Rose, 1996; 2007; Keddie, 2016). In these societies, once guaranteed prospects of success and a decent standard of living are diminishing, placing the onus on individuals. Success is now deemed a moral imperative, while failure is often framed as a personal shortcoming, with limited consideration given to the social and cultural factors influencing individual experiences (Peters, 2017). This

¹⁶ This is notable in the UK too, with tutoring accentuated during the C-19 'catch-up,' grammar school, and independent school contexts.

notion of responsabilisation closely aligns with neoliberal political discourses that articulate individual choice, freedom, and responsibility (Peters, 2016).

Educational funding in the UK, has faced its most significant cuts in at least 40 years, with an 8.5% real-terms decline in total school spending per pupil between 2009–10 and 2019–20. This encompasses day-to-day spending per pupil, accompanied by even more pronounced cuts in school capital spending. Additionally, the pupil premium, designated for vulnerable children, has seen a 14% erosion in real terms since 2015. The introduction of a minimum funding guarantee in 2020 has disproportionately benefitted less deprived schools. Looking ahead, schools' spending power is anticipated to be 4% lower in 2024 than in 2010, while sixth forms face a substantial 23% decline below 2010 levels. These cuts, occurring against the backdrop of continuously rising costs, are proving unsustainable. (Sibieta, 2023). With Slater, Burton & McKillop's (2022) Australian study giving an idea of the cost implications where most HE families (84%) receive no financial government support, while the cost is approximately \$3000 per year.

In this challenging context, responsabilisation in education resembles the scenario of 'elective' home education. Parents, navigating a competitive world, are pushed to take charge of their children's educational needs due to the state's shortcomings. The pressure for individual accountability, driven by ideologies emphasising personal responsibility and self-sufficiency, compels parents to actively engage in their children's education. This drive is rooted in the need to secure success and survival within a competitive, market-driven neoliberal environment. Responsibilisation, therefore, offers a compelling explanation for why parents may feel forced to pursue

HE and also highlights how the lockdowns pushed parents to become more personally engaged and invested in their children's learning. Consequently, to some extent, and perhaps driven by unconscious factors in response to societal pressures, they became responsibilised to take the decision to deregister their child, recognising that a return to school may further impede the future success and wellbeing of their child.

5.3.2. Theme 2 - Shifting Sands of Power: 'to what extent are you going to tell him to shut your mouth because discipline is very strict in this country?'

Instances of disempowerment in the participants' experiences expose power dynamics within the education system and describe the perceived imbalance between professionals and parents/teachers and students. On one level, parents express a sense of personal disempowerment, feeling overlooked and undervalued by education professionals. Simultaneously, participants perceive a disempowerment of their children within the system, believing that professionals may not fully see and appreciate their children's individuality and that a top-down hierarchical structure still tends to dominate in schools.

Keren's quote about the discipline being strict may hint at internalised figures from participants' own school days. Trace memories may have been activated for Grace, Kelly, and Steph (all UK-educated), when they found themselves surprised at their irrational fears of deregistering, even while knowing that it was their legal right to do so. If this perspective holds true, it may be that the power dynamics experienced during childhood contribute to a lasting fear of authority figures. As adults engaging with educational professionals, this childhood internalised fear may resurface,

potentially leading to feelings of infantilisation or a re-emergence of suppressed anxieties during discussions with educational professionals. Grace recognises that she '*deferred to them as experts*', spotlighting how some parents might subconsciously submit to the authority and expertise of teachers, addressing power differentials in the traditional school structure. This theme aligns with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, suggesting that the empowerment experienced through homeschooling during lockdowns may have fostered self-esteem, autonomy, and a stronger family sense, providing a lens for understanding the decision to deregister.

The term 'shifting' in this theme refers to the empowerment that surfaced as parents actively engaged in their child's learning during the lockdowns. This increased involvement resulted in a better understanding of their child's needs, revealing insights into the dynamics at school, and facilitating improvements in learning outcomes. As parents took charge by 'stepping out of the system' (Adamson, 2021) during lockdowns, it marked a transformative shift in the power dynamic, representing a movement from disempowerment to empowerment through homeschooling.

The identified fear and power imbalance in mainstream schools for children with SEND align with various studies. Bower's (2021) revealed parental concern about bullying and being unheard by school professionals, echoing Kidd and Kaczmarek's (2010) findings where bullying significantly influenced parents' decisions to homeschool. Kendall and Taylor's research (2014) highlighted a lack of engagement from school professionals, contributing to the breakdown of the parent-professional relationship, a concern reiterated in McDonald & Lopes' (2014) study outlining the

impact of negative interactions on children's mental health. De Carvalho's (2022) study on transitioning into HE highlighted parents perceiving school staff as not making effective use of resources, particularly in terms of auditing their child's provision. This imposed helplessness on parents who are relying on educational settings to carry out statutory duties, led to a loss of trust and emphasised the need for transparency regarding the graduated response to additional needs.

Expanding on this, 'Supporting SEND,' Ofsted (2021) exposes systemic issues, indicating that schools, despite aspiring to a pupil-centred approach, often lack necessary knowledge about their pupils, leading to difficulties in identifying needs and planning proper provisions. This aligns with Daniels' (2017) study, revealing a gap between teachers' understanding of autism and their ability to translate this understanding into practice.

Moreover, the Ofsted (2021) study found inaccuracies in identifying the needs of pupils on SEND support. Here, children's mental health crises prompted homeschooling due to the negative impact of the mainstream environment on their wellbeing. These instances highlight a lack of co-production with parents and early involvement of external experts, contradicting the recommendations in the SEND Code of Practice (Dfe, DoH, 2015). Such experiences are inherently disempowering for children and their parents, especially when faced with diverse needs, emphasising the need for a more collaborative, inclusive, and empowering approach.

Transitioning to HE often positively impacts parents, particularly in the context of children with SEND. Research by Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010), Parsons and Lewis

(2010), and Rothermel (2002) suggests that parents experience increased positivity and empowerment when choosing homeschooling. This shift, observed in the participants of this study during lockdowns, showcases the benefits of intensive one-to-one teaching tailored to the child's unique needs, specific interests and abilities (Ensign, 2000; Gusman, 2006; Reilly et al., 2002). Homeschooling emerges as a response to the perceived disempowerment within traditional education, offering an inclusive and empowering alternative. However, this inadvertently fosters an increased sense of responsabilisation among parents, arising from their perception of the system's inadequacy in fulfilling children's needs.

5.3.4 Theme 3 – *The Inclusion Illusion: 'Now everything's about inclusion'*.

This theme, closely intertwined with the previous one, represents participants' struggles within the educational system to secure full inclusion for their children. It reveals systemic barriers to meaningful inclusion for participants children spanning the intersections of ethnic or cultural difference (Julian and Noam), neurodiversity (Tommy and Julian) or SEND, in the cases of Tommy, Julian and Emily.

Varunek's (2020) concept of false integration, illustrating an illusion of inclusion without genuine interaction, corresponds to observed pitfalls in schools' tick-box practices. This discrepancy persists despite the universal emphasis on inclusion outlined in the CRC (1998), as Grace observed, stating that '*Now everything's about inclusion.*' Varunek contends that achieving true inclusion requires authentic implementation. This sentiment resonates with the findings of Forlin and Chambers' (2023) study, reflecting the challenges faced by participants. They highlight the reactive motivations to homeschooling resulting from systemic barriers, suggesting

the need to address these challenges. Improved collaboration is deemed vital for achieving better alignment between parents and schools. Forlin and Chambers advocate for inclusive education, emphasising the importance of meeting diverse needs within a child-focused approach, referring to Leif et al.'s (2023) five-pillar model aimed at improving acceptance and a sense of belonging schools.¹⁷

Additionally, they stress the fundamental human need for belonging, love, and respect in educational environments, akin to Maslow's (1943) theory.

While these pillars primarily relate to the individual child, the research indicates that acceptance and belonging are not confined to the child alone but are also lacking for the parent(s). The research highlights the stress parents endure when negotiating support for their child, again highlighting systemic issues and suggesting a need to scrutinise whether the suggested support structures are as effective in practise as they are intended. The personal toll vividly described by participants, especially Kelly and Steph, where both their children were visibly distressed attending school, aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory. As discussed, this theory describes the reciprocal impact of the child on the parent and vice versa, illustrating the ripple effects of the meso-system on the microsystem, and in turn, on the child.

English et al.'s (2023) study, which explores parents adopting homeschooling as a relaxed approach to support their children's recovery from trauma induced by school-based bullying, resonates with the broader themes of inclusion difficulties found in the aforementioned studies. This highlights bullying as a significant barrier to inclusion within the school system, a theme reinforced by Bower (2021), Green and

¹⁷ Leif et al. (2023) five-pillar model: 1. Focusing on positive attitudes 2. An individualized approach 3. Identified teacher characteristics 4. Effective teaching and learning techniques and 5. The law.

Mariotti (2023), Paulaskaite et al. (2021), and Slater et al. (2022) in the reviewed literature. The reported experiences underline how parents often feel compelled to choose homeschooling to address their children's safety needs, aligning with the principles outlined in Maslow's (1943) theory.

5.3.5 Theme 4 - Revelations: 'How could we go back?'

Participants recounted various realisations that converged into a single conclusion – the revelation that mainstream schooling was no longer a viable option for their child. The factors that go towards this revelation were communicated both explicitly as well as indirectly (present within the RTA as surface level and latent level codes). The following discussion aims to unpick the various elements that led to the ultimate and final realisation that at the time of interviews, participants could not envision their child returning to school, acknowledging that it remained an unviable option for their family.

5.3.5.1 The ability to tailor a child's education to their own unique temperament

A distinct advantage for participants was the ability to tailor learning to the specific aptitudes, interests and other individual needs of their child, aligning with the concept of 'deschooling' discussed by English et al. (2023). For children that experienced bullying, that study demonstrated how the flexibility, individualisation and child-centric nature of 'unschooling' contributed to the healing process after traumatic school-based incidents. Since 2006, the dedicated journal 'Unschooling and Alternative Learning' has extensively explored the merits of 'unschooling' and underscored themes of student autonomy. These themes closely aligned with the experiences articulated by all participants.

Steph described the importance of a recovery period for Julian, avoiding formal learning to address his mental health crisis. Recognising the crucial nature of the deschooling process for herself as well, Steph was able to disengage from the long-standing mantra that had pressured them both for years: ***Children have to go to school. That is the law.***

Kelly also reflected on the benefits of a child-led, deschooling approach that nurtured connection and enhanced wellbeing for both herself and Emily. By addressing safety and attachment needs, such as feelings of love, safety, and belonging in alignment with Maslow's hierarchy (1943), positive changes in Emily emerged during lockdowns and she became curious. Kelly highlights a fundamental but often challenging aspect that schools can struggle to implement.

Grace's tailored approach, that allowed Tommy to follow his own interests revealed his abilities, unnoticed by the school system. Julian's 'giftedness' unfortunately worked against him in a mainstream school. The focus remained on his academic performance creating a blind spot for teachers. The studies by English et al. (2023), Forlin and Chambers (2023), and Slater et al. (2022) all describe the compelled decision to homeschool gifted children, revealing the paradox of meeting their holistic needs in mainstream environments. This dilemma arises as these children may not meet the threshold for specialist settings, which may also not be appropriate settings to match their academic requirements.

The prevalence of 'twice-exceptional' individuals is high in autistic populations, with a tendency among autistic individuals to engage in masking or camouflaging. This behaviour, where individuals hide their difficulties to fit in, is a common phenomenon within the autistic population and can potentially lead to burnout. Such challenges resonate with the EBSNA population and the PDA profile, increasingly recognised in autism for its distinct features (Clarke, 2016).

Encouraging autonomy in autistic learners is supported by research (Gore Langton and Frederickson, 2018; Christie et al., 2012). The consensus highlights the importance of considering the dynamic interaction between autistic individuals and their environment. This acknowledgment aligns with broader views that demand-related difficulties are influenced not only by within-child factors but also by environmental considerations (Green, 2020; Ozsivadjian, 2020). Autonomy proves beneficial for emotional and behavioural regulation, fostering overall wellbeing among neurodivergent individuals (Green et al., 2018).

Creating an autonomy-supportive environment, in line with the theory of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985), has been shown to benefit youth by promoting engagement, motivation, and achievement, particularly in education and mental health care (Su & Reeve, 2011). Laura Lundy's (2007) model, rooted in Article 12 of the CRC, offers essential insights for increasing a sense of agency through effective participation, particularly pertinent for professionals in the field of SEND education.

Figure 14: Lundy's Model of Participation (2007)



While the ideal of a child-centred approach for encouraging autonomy, encounters challenges within the existing educational system (Gutmann, 1999), Lundy's model provides guidance. It stresses the importance of actively listening to children, treating them as autonomous individuals, and involving them in shaping their educational experiences, even within the constraints of the current system.

In summary, an individualised and flexible approach has been highlighted as preferred by many homeschooling parents who welcome the opportunity to develop their children's areas of strength (O'Hagan et al. 2021; Hurlbutt, 2011; Daniels, 2017), particularly for children with SEND. It is also welcomed by those who feel that certain life skills are lacking in schools, such as Keren, who was able to tailor Noam's learning to topics and skills that she felt were more relevant for today's world. The overarching revelation for these participants was the empowering experience of a flexible and individualised approach that proved beneficial for themselves and their child.

5.3.5.2 *We can do it better*

The conviction that 'we can do it better' is implicitly supported by references to external supports mentioned by participants. While they may not explicitly articulate these as part of their overall 'revelations', these do appear to contribute to the underlying confidence in their ability to provide a better education and support for their children. These external supports encompass financial feasibility, internet accessibility, backing from partners—both financial and emotional—and awareness of or contact with other homeschooling families or communities, which can offer valuable support.

Fensham-Smith (2019) investigated how internet use has influenced the landscape of HE in the UK and highlights the role of online networks and communities in supporting parents who choose to HE. The rise of homeschooling is also partly attributed to the proliferation of internet technologies (English, 2016; Less, 2011; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Fensham-Smith does not directly examine how technologies are used for access to learning resources, however she addresses important concerns about equity and the challenges faced by families lacking internet access or not fitting into certain online communities, implying another form of exclusion. D'Arcy (2014) highlighted disparities within HE families linked to financial and social resources, impacting the provision for their children, especially those with SEND. While HE can address inclusion issues leading to a child's departure from school, achieving true equity for HE families remains elusive, given the absence of financial assistance from governments.

This study demonstrates disparities within this heterogeneous group, as illustrated by Steph's financial challenges, especially exacerbated during the pandemic.

In fact, Steph exemplifies the 'accidental homeschooler', as she didn't personally deregister Julian. Furthermore, she required Julian to be at school for her to work reiterating the lack of elective choice. While Kelly, Grace, and Keren adapted their working patterns to facilitate homeschooling, the new normal of flexible working and increased remote or part-time work resulting from the lockdowns, was perceived as a personal benefit. However, if there were more flexible schooling options, Keren might have considered them. For Julian, flexi-options may have prevented his distressing experiences of exclusions.

Ultimately, the parents in the study had the revelation that, as parents who understood their children's unique needs best, HE was the only viable option. This revelation was akin to having their eyes opened, and they couldn't 'unlearn' or 'unsee' the positive experiences of their children flourishing during the lockdowns. In a way, this revelation symbolises the ultimate form of responsabilisation, where it became impossible to ignore their heightened awareness that mainstream schooling was no longer viable and perhaps even perceived as potentially damaging. To quote Keren, ***at the end of the day you take care of your child.***

5.4 Bringing it all together - A psychosocial reflection

In the Findings Chapter, psychosocial reflections for each participant were derived from the intersubjectivity experienced in the FANIs, complemented by data familiarisation through transcript reading, rereading, and listening to recorded interviews. Pen portraits and thematic maps facilitated creating a Gestalt, allowing interpretation to emerge from the holistic understanding of the data. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) describe the impact of this as reflected by interviewees appearing in dreams, suggesting that insights about them were developed not solely on a conscious level. Psychoanalytic concepts like transference, countertransference, and projective identification describe this unconscious embrace of the other person (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013), resembling the psychoanalytic session's goal of achieving sufficient distance for thinking while maintaining empathic sensitivity and receptivity to countertransference (Alvarez, 1985).

The insights gained through the psychosocial method contributed to a deeper understanding of both the results and the research question. Rather than presenting isolated factorial conceptualisations, common in psychology research, the study embraced dynamic explorations. The researcher's intuitive understanding, grounded in experience and communicated through psychoanalytic concepts for transparency, became integral to the research process. This not only affirmed the diversity within participants, it also highlighted a basic tenet around difference between all humans. Where RTA focuses on identifying patterns that connect data, the FANi approach privileges individual case studies. Considering that a significant driver to move to HE was mothers' realisations that they could address their unique child's needs better, it

seems fitting that the participants themselves, were equally afforded a platform where their individual motivations could be more thoroughly considered.

The psychosocial descriptions align with Adamson's (2022) grounded theory, noting the impact of participants' pasts on attitudes and decision-making. Elements resonating with Adamson's research include the significant role of technology, fostering connections among homeschooling parents and broadening awareness. Similar to Adamson's findings, this study illustrates how discomfort served as a catalyst for change. Additionally, the research reveals how pre-existing attitudes contribute to shaping perspectives on mainstream education. Interestingly, some of Adamson's participants were not entirely against school with some initially exploring alternatives like flexi-schooling. Adamson's theory proves useful in explaining some of the drivers for shifting to HE and may also shed light on the uptick in doing so, post-pandemic.

For Keren, the hypothesis of her grappling with ambivalence held particular significance. It wasn't so much that she appeared ambivalent about her decision; I believe that when she deregistered Noam, she deemed it absolutely the right choice. However, she also acknowledged the personal sacrifices involved and was open to the possibility of a return to school, if they could find the right setting. Gaining a psychosocial understanding of Keren raised a question that warrants further research investigation: whether the surge in homeschooling that followed immediately after C-19 is still on the rise or if there has been a plateau. Furthermore, irrespective of homeschooling numbers, it prompts consideration of how many

families try it for a temporary period to address specific needs, and later seek to re-enter the education system.

During the second interview, delving deeper into personal motives, and drawing on the concepts of transference and countertransference, revealed that Kelly's emotional decision-making was possibly tied to her own childhood separation anxiety. In contrast, Grace, initially focused on academic motivations. Later, she found an opportunity to express the sadness and empathy she felt upon learning, post-event, about Tommy's emotional state at school; information that had been kept from her.

In Steph's case, the interviews revealed a profound sense of grief and loss, despite her outwardly funny, intelligent, and engaging demeanour. These emotions were intricately woven into the narrative of Julian's struggle. The time spent with Steph suggested the potential for integrating her experiences into the process of accepting Julian's diagnosis. The FANi itself, seemed to offer a space for supporting her through the grieving process and acknowledging the loss of the fantasy of the idealised child. This process, ideally, may have contributed to a psychic shift towards the depressive position, indicating a more integrated state of mind around the challenges and experiences that led to Julian being deregistered.

5.5 Significance and Implications of Findings

The significance of these findings align with much that has already been discussed within the literature concerning a sense that for some parents, school is not offering the educational experience that they would wish for their own child. Indeed, the 'risk-

free trial' period of C-19 evidently had a significant impact on their decision to deregister. The findings indicate that a *psychosocial eco-systemic* framework best supports a holistic understanding of individual stories that share commonalities.

With the increasing likelihood that frustrated UK parents will encounter information about HE through various channels like the media and the internet, it seems that the trend of homeschooling children, regardless of whether they have special educational needs or not, is poised to continue growing (Fensham-Smith, 2019; Lees & Nicholson, 2017).

Before exploring the ways in which EPs can support families facing similar circumstances to the participants, it's important to acknowledge some of the strengths of the mainstream school experience. When schools are functioning effectively, they can offer a holistic experience that extends beyond academic instruction and supports personal growth and essential life skills.

Taking a balanced perspective on the safeguarding debate surrounding HE, recognition should be given to the fact that schools play a crucial role in supporting the physical and emotional well-being of students through established protocols and dedicated staff. For children from disadvantaged backgrounds or those considered vulnerable, schools provide a vital source of support, offering a safe environment and addressing fundamental needs such as warmth, safety, and nourishment. Moreover, attending school facilitates socialisation and teamwork, cultivating essential interpersonal skills vital for future work environments. Moreover, schools offer a structured environment enriched by extracurricular activities that cultivate

diverse skills and talents, bolstering self-esteem and promoting enjoyment in learning. Although HE may provide personalised learning experiences, it may face challenges in replicating the extensive support and opportunities offered by effectively functioning schools, especially for children from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds.

5.5.2 The role of the EP with families considering a move to HE

In the context of supporting CYP and their families considering a move to HE, EPs can play a crucial role in influencing systems, transitioning from a focus solely on within-child factors. These contributions should be grounded in psychological knowledge and ethical principles (Lindsay, 2017).

The study indicates that parents turn to HE due to perceived shortcomings in supporting the inclusion of CYP with and without additional needs. This presents an opportunity for stakeholders to explore how EPs can be commissioned to assist such families. The subsequent reflections elaborate on how EP skills may be utilised to bolster inclusion and address communication breakdowns between parents and schools, aligning with Leif et al.'s (2023) five pillars. Further, such skills may be drawn upon to enhance participation rights, as outlined in the CRC (1989), drawing on Lundy's (2007) model of participation. Rooted in Article 12 of the CRC, Lundy's model emphasizes the right of CYP to express their views and ensures consideration of these views in all matters affecting them. This entails giving appropriate weight to a child's perspective based on their age and maturity, necessitating careful consideration. Recognising the importance of fostering relationships with young people to determine their best interests, it is crucial to allocate more time for

educators to invest in these connections. Moreover, integrating trauma-informed practices and revising harsh behavioural policies is essential, benefiting all members of the educational environment. This emphasises the need for adequate support and resources for teachers to dedicate to building meaningful relationships.

Comprising four key elements, the model advocates for meaningful and inclusive participation, recognising the agency of children and young people—a dimension notably absent in the shared stories of all participants.

5.5.2.1 Early Identification for Inclusion

EPs advocate early intervention for inclusion, emphasising collaboration to identify individual needs and improve communication between schools and parents (de Carvalho, 2022). Guiding schools in implementing the Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle, endorsed by legislation, EPs can contribute to eliminating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. However, amidst budget cuts and increased demand for statutory work, providing such early intervention becomes challenging, hindering efforts to enhance support for vulnerable children.

5.5.2.2 Enhancing Support for Inclusion

The study findings highlight the need to enhance awareness of school support expectations and improve access to information about systematic approaches for supporting students. Collaboration with SENCOs in planning meetings and consultations allows EPs to present various support options. Additionally, advocating for direct support to school staff, including supervision and reflective spaces, fosters

professional growth and strengthens the school's overall capacity, particularly in challenging situations like the current under-resourcing.

In the context of whole-school approaches, EPs should actively engage with CYP, families, and school staff. Lundy's (2007) model emphasises the importance of providing a safe space where CYP can express themselves and be listened to, empowering them to have influence and impact on the audience they are addressing through their feedback.

Table 5: Supporting Inclusion Incorporating Lundy's Model of Participation (2007)

Strategies	Implementation	Lundy's Model of Participation
Specialised Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce tailored training like MELSA (Mediated Learning Support Approaches) to enhance cognition and learning, ensuring that staff are equipped with effective strategies for diverse learning needs. • Promote SEMH initiatives such as ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant), Emotion Coaching training, and Trauma-Informed Approaches to provide valuable tools for supporting students with social and emotional difficulties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice/View: Introduce sessions where CYP can share their learning experiences, providing staff with insights into their needs and preferences. • Influence: Encourage staff to consider incorporating feedback from students into the development and refinement of training programs.
Parental Involvement and Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the development of an open-door policy, creating opportunities for parents to actively participate in school activities and decision-making processes. • Facilitate platforms like coffee mornings to improve parent presence, fostering a collaborative relationship between parents, staff and EPs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Space: Create forums or meetings that involve both parents and students, providing a safe space for children to express their views alongside their parents. • Voice/View: Facilitate activities where parents and students can articulate their perspectives on school activities and decision-making processes.
Strengthening Staff Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement regular supervision sessions for teaching staff, offering a reflective space to discuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice/View: Establish mechanisms for students to share their

	<p>challenges, share insights, and promote professional growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise solution circles as a collaborative approach to problem-solving, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility among staff. 	<p>thoughts on teaching approaches and classroom experiences that can be considered in supervision sessions or solution circles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence: Encourage staff to consider student input when discussing solutions and strategies for overcoming challenges.
Person-Centred Planning and Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce person-centred planning tools such as MAPS (Making Action Plans) and PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) to facilitate collaboration and empower individuals. E.g. Implement the Circle of Friends approach to foster positive peer relationships and create a supportive social environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe Space: Incorporate elements into person-centred planning that provide children with a designated space to share their aspirations, preferences, and concerns. Voice/View: Ensure that interventions actively involve students in discussions about fostering positive peer relationships.
Post-C-19 Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the evolving needs of students in the post-COVID landscape by promoting staff upskilling initiatives and fostering a proactive approach to promptly identify and support challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voice/View: Organise forums or focus groups where students can express their experiences and needs in the post-COVID landscape. Influence: Consider incorporating student perspectives into decision-making regarding post-COVID initiatives and adaptations.
Inclusive Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasise the importance of inclusive practices, focusing on creating an environment where all students, regardless of their abilities or challenges, feel welcome and supported. Advocate for the inclusion of neurodiverse perspectives and considerations in curriculum planning and teaching approaches, ensuring cultural competence by incorporating diverse cultural and ethnic perspectives, particularly for EAL (English as an Additional Language) students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voice/View: Actively seek student input in shaping inclusive practices, ensuring that their unique perspectives are considered in curriculum planning and teaching approaches. Influence: Empower students to influence the cultural competence initiatives, particularly those related to diverse cultural and ethnic perspectives.

5.5.2.3 Supporting Psychological Safety at a Systems Level

Psychoanalytic theory explains the roles of schools in ensuring the psychological and physical safety of CYP in schools through concepts such as 'holding' (Winnicott, 1960) and 'containment' (Bion, 1963). Adopting whole-school approaches becomes paramount, entailing clear communication across and between systems, robust review processes, and a focused effort on enhancing staff competence (Chian, 2022).

In situations where families consider transitioning to HE due to signs of EBSNA, EPs can aid schools and families by comprehending the perceived 'push and pull' factors influencing attendance issues. EBSNA often correlates with a diminished sense of school belonging (Chian, 2022), emphasising the need to intervene by bolstering feelings of safety and belonging, aligning with Maslow's theory. In addressing the challenge of poor motivation rooted in a lack of belonging and competence for students (Ryan & Deci, 2017), EPs can emphasise a holistic approach.

The study highlighted the need for collaboration between schools, families, and external agencies, advocating for strengths-based approaches and positive relationships. EPs play a crucial role in promoting the prioritisation of relational approaches and implementing trauma-informed approaches to enhance psychological safety in schools. The support from EPs do not only focus on CYP but are crucial in supporting teaching staff who are currently facing burdensome and unmanageable workloads, contributing to their consideration of leaving the education sector entirely. A recent survey found that nearly three-quarters of school staff (74%) have considered leaving due to such burdens (TES School Wellbeing Report, 2024).

The following table provides suggestions for implementing such strategies, contributing significantly to creating a positive and secure learning atmosphere for students. It also includes recommendations for flexible solutions. A subsequent discussion on flexi-schooling follows the table.

Table 6: Promoting Acceptance and a Sense of Belonging

Strategies	Implementation
Autonomy and Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the importance of promoting autonomy and responsibility among students to strengthen their relationships and foster feelings of safety. • Acknowledge findings that highlight students' need for a sense of control and autonomy to enhance their overall well-being within the school environment (e.g. Halligan & Cryer, 2022)
Building Positive Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for relational approaches; prioritising the development of positive relationships between students and school staff and emphasising the role of trusted adults in creating a supportive atmosphere. • Consider the significance of nurturing relationships accessible to students for discussing concerns, contributing to emotional and academic wellbeing. • Create sessions for students to express their thoughts on relationships.
Creating Safe Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the need for creating safe spaces within the school environment, taking into account factors such as anti-bullying initiatives, timeouts for self-regulation, and smaller class sizes that contribute to an overall sense of safety. • Highlight the importance of physical and emotional safety, as identified in research, to cultivate an environment conducive to learning and wellbeing. • Establish designated spaces for students to share concerns and preferences.
Shifting Narratives around SEND and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage staff to view behaviour as a form of communication and recognise the importance of a nuanced understanding in both students and teachers. • Discourage overly labelling and advocate for open-minded mental health approaches, stressing adult acceptance. • Embrace uniqueness and see difficulties as part of individual identity, while also emphasising the adaptation of the environment to accommodate diverse needs. • Foster an inclusive setting that celebrates individual differences and consider the positive impact of engaging lessons and empathetic mental health approaches for teachers as well. • Cultivate a psychologically safe environment with integrated mental health considerations, actively seeking input from

	students and teachers alike in shaping narratives on SEND and mental health.
Fostering Interconnectivity (Halligan & Cryer, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the importance of interconnectivity in school, emphasising its positive impact on interpersonal and relational benefits. • Highlight the role of relationships in promoting positive academic experiences, contributing to both learning and emotional wellbeing.
Offering Flexible Solutions (e.g. blended learning and flexi-schooling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate blended learning models (a combination of face-to-face and online learning, adapting to individual preferences and needs). • Offer flexible timetabling options and customised learning paths, allowing for progress at an individual pace and focusing on exploring areas of interest. • Use communication and collaboration platforms, such as digital tools, to create a supportive learning community, facilitating communication and collaboration among students, parents, and teachers. • Provide guidance and support structures, along with policies and guidelines, to support flexible learning approaches (Paxman, 2022). • Offer professional development for educators to enhance skills in supporting students who would benefit from flexi-schooling, ensuring teachers are equipped to meet diverse learning needs.
Trauma-Informed Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate trauma-informed practices throughout schools, fostering an environment where teachers and staff as well as students, feel supported and safe. • Acknowledge and address the potential impact of trauma on students' learning experiences, while also recognising its effects on teachers and staff. • Provide comprehensive training for educators on trauma-informed approaches to support both students and themselves. • Establish trauma-informed frameworks for school policies and guidelines, promoting a safe and supportive environment for all members of the school community.
Incorporating Well-being Support for Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement initiatives to support teacher well-being, such as designated safe spaces for staff to decompress and discuss concerns. • Offer training sessions or workshops on stress management and self-care techniques. • Encourage peer support networks among teachers to share experiences and provide mutual support. • Provide access to supervision and mental health resources for teachers experiencing burnout or high levels of stress.

5.5.2.4 Flexi-schooling and EOTAS

Flexi-schooling is an educational arrangement where a child is formally registered at a school but attends only part of the time, with the remaining portion spent in home education. While gaining popularity, it is relatively uncommon due to the absence of a legal right for parents to insist on this arrangement, unlike full-time HE. The DfE's

(2019) guidance primarily focuses on scenarios where home educators seek a formal schooling element, potentially limiting its understanding and acceptance. Similarly, LAs and schools vary in their support adding complexity to its establishment as an alternative educational approach.

EOTAS also holds substantial potential for supporting struggling students with SEND (Estyn, 2016). It provides a second chance for many, improving attendance, motivation, and offering interesting learning experiences. Positive relationships with staff in EOTAS contribute to improved outcomes. However, securing EOTAS and adequate provision through it is challenging, often leading to legal processes, including tribunals. Pupils face delays in accessing provision, restricted curricula, and limited access to subject specialists. The lack of resources, facilities, and limited educational hours hinder the delivery of a comprehensive curriculum. Reintegration into mainstream schools poses difficulties, and LAs struggle with ensuring access to specialist services, maintaining clear referral processes, and monitoring progress and outcomes. Addressing these challenges is crucial for optimising the benefits of EOTAS for SEND students.

5.5.2.5 When it's too late....

In situations where parents are contemplating deregistration, EPs can guide them through options like EOTAS or flexi-schooling. Implementing a team-around-the-family approach, involving education welfare officers can empower families by offering a broader understanding of educational settings. Identifying alternatives and providing insights into the diversity of HE practices is crucial. Many LAs have comprehensive knowledge in this area and can offer guidance, including connections

with visible home educators or LA services like the parent-carer forum. Empowering parents with such knowledge can support increasing confidence in making well-informed decisions about their child's education.

Further, EPs can play a crucial role in counteracting the potential biases and misinformation parents may encounter during their exploration of HE options. In facilitating collaboration with other professionals, EPs can provide support for parents' entitlements for funding (or access to free services), if available, within their LA to support their HE journey. Additionally, EPs can assist in accessing advisory HE teachers if needed, ensuring that parents have comprehensive resources and assistance in their decision-making process. This collaborative effort aims to empower parents with the necessary information and support to navigate the complexities of the educational landscape when considering HE.

A relational approach that fosters a supportive environment, recognising individual family needs, has proven to be the most effective when EPs support families considering a transition to HE (de Carvalho, 2022). Additionally, there is a need to encourage greater engagement with existing HE families. EPs can advocate for increased interaction, seeking support from individuals already experienced in HE. Recognising the valuable insights and peer support within HE communities, EPs may have a role in facilitating connections and exchanges between experienced home educators and those exploring or currently engaged in HE. This collaborative approach aims to create a network of support while tapping into the wealth of knowledge within the HE community.

5.5.2.6 Emphasising positive outcomes

EPs can also play a crucial role in supporting parents by emphasising the positive outcomes that families may experience from deregistering and embracing HE. While families may have described initial challenges in their journey to HE, they unanimously highlighted the positive impact on their children's well-being. EPs can work collaboratively with families to acknowledge and communicate these benefits, fostering confidence in the decision to deregister.

By drawing attention to cases where removing the stressor of school led to significant improvements in a child's physical and mental health, EPs can provide concrete examples of the positive transformations that can occur. EPs may encourage parents to reflect on their child's development, happiness, and confidence. Recognising that the journey into home education, while often initiated by challenges, can evolve into a positive and transformative experience, EPs can empower parents with a more optimistic perspective on their educational choices.

5.5.2.7 Intersectionality; EPs tackling inequality and fostering understanding

Given the diverse and divided times we live in, it becomes a responsibility for EPs to understand and address the opportunities afforded by HE, whether families are considering it or are already engaged. Recognising the potential for oppression, especially for children with SEND, EPs can draw on the concept of intersectionality to understand and address inequality based on intersecting factors like gender, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and disability.

Intersectionality challenges stereotypical categorisations that may contribute to oppressive narratives for HE families, particularly mothers of children with SEND. Despite potential perceptions of privilege, home educators often face sacrifices and lack structural authority and resources, feeling marginalised within the traditional education system. EPs are well placed to advocate and understand the complex politics of empowerment and potential oppression within the HE context. This study found that three of the four participants had felt empowered by their transition to HE following a lengthy period of disempowerment (as a result of the enforced school lockdowns), while Steph had experienced feelings of oppression throughout.

Recognising the need to redress inequality, EPs contribute to both theory and practice by applying intersectionality. They understand the structural and personal contexts that influence HE choices, ensuring that support is shaped by individual experiences. EPs have a duty to avoid oppressive practices and foster new interpretations of learning relationships, presenting an opportunity for the profession to develop expertise beyond traditional educational paradigms. The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) underscores the importance of EPs reflecting on and addressing power differentials, aiming for empowerment rather than oppression.

Finally, a positive psychology approach may be helpful for shifting narratives on HE among educational professionals. In the rapidly changing landscape of post-pandemic living and evolving technologies, maintaining an open mind becomes essential. This openness is crucial for fostering progressive, diverse, and inclusive educational approaches that equip children for the challenges of a swiftly changing world and EPs are well-positioned to reframe negative narratives surrounding HE.

5.6 Strengths and Limitations

This study pioneered the application of a psychosocial approach to explore the motivations of parents who deregistered their child from mainstream school to HE. The research gains added uniqueness from the C-19 context and the consequential lockdowns, creating a distinctive scenario where many parents facilitated their child's schooling at home. This aspect is considered a potential influence on the subsequent decision to deregister a child from school in favour of homeschooling, an element that makes this study stand apart from other HE studies exploring motivations to HE. The originality of the study thus contributes to its overall strength.

Informed by the literature review, the adoption of a mixed-methods design was deemed particularly effective in addressing the complexities of homeschooling research. This approach was considered appropriate due to its proven robustness, in answering the research questions. One of its strengths lies in mitigating the reliance on small, self-selected sample sizes common in homeschooling research (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020), especially with the addition of the initial quantitative phase comprising a larger sample. Incorporating content analysis during the quantitative phase provided additional insights and explanations.

The qualitative phase, utilising FANIs and RTA analysis with a small sample, provided a deep and rich exploration, uncovering multifaceted drivers behind the decision to deregister. Through close examination of individual stories, it contributed to a more nuanced understanding, revealing unconscious factors often overlooked in conventional psychology research. This approach, combined with transparency and

reflexivity in the researcher's stance, added depth while simultaneously enhancing credibility and improving overall robustness and trustworthiness.

Furthermore, the FANi method offered a supportive space for participants to share their narratives without interruption. The active listening employed in interviews enabled participants to recount their stories, fostering an environment for reflection on their experiences. This approach facilitated a sense of autonomy as participants determined the content and sequence of the issues discussed, contributing to a feeling of self-determination. Thus, the study's strength lies in its empowering process and methodology, allowing participants to recognise agency in their decision-making, despite initially selecting statements expressing a perceived lack of choice. The study aligns with its emancipatory research aims, underscoring the empowering impact on participants.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the initial binary categories in the online survey, where participants selected one of three statements reflecting their position, might oversimplify the motivations behind this choice. A more nuanced scale could have allowed for a broader range of expressions. Other limitations associated with online surveys include the fact that the population to which they are distributed cannot be described and respondents select themselves into the sample, with the possibility of introducing bias (Andrade, 2020).

In the qualitative phase, which involved psychoanalytic and reflexive thematic analyses, inherent interpretation challenges and subjectivity persisted despite the researcher's efforts to minimise biases. The nature of psychoanalytic interpretation

introduces power dynamics between the researcher and participants, potentially influencing the final interpretation. Added to this, it is important to note that the research was not conducted by a trained psychoanalyst. It is likely that other interpretations would have emerged. The absence of multiple analysts, a common practice for enhanced robustness was a constraint due to the solitary nature of the research within a doctoral thesis. Time limitations coupled with word count restrictions compelled a focused approach, leaving some potentially rich data unexplored within the confines of the study.

Furthermore, the generalisability of the study's findings may be constrained due to the unique circumstances of the C-19 pandemic and the relatively small sample size, limiting broader applicability. The focus on specific experiences during this period may affect the study's ability to generalise to a broader population.

Adding to these limitations are the absence of children's voices in the study and the lack of fathers participating in the interviews. The one-sided exploration, which hasn't included the views of the teachers or schools where children had previously attended, adds another layer of limitation to the study's scope.

5.7 Directions for Future Research



The above illustration (Duran, 2023), serves as a powerful visual representation of many aspects discussed in this chapter concerning the study's findings. It encapsulates the profound impact of the pandemic and provides forward-looking considerations for a post-pandemic world. The statement 'WE NEED MORE COLLABORATION AROUND LEARNING' prominently featured, emphasises the need for collaborative and holistic approaches, drawing on insights gained from the pandemic to foster inclusive research practices. To support this approach, an emphasis on a participatory action research methodology is ultimately encouraged as a way to follow up on the findings in the current study. Through collaborative reflection and analysis, participants and researchers would be able to collectively identify potential solutions or improvements both in schools and also for HE families. This would possibly lead to actionable recommendations for policymakers,

educators, and parents to address the highlighted issues and enhance the overall educational experience.

Further research, incorporating larger samples is recommended, to ascertain current trends in homeschooling figures. Such a study would help to determine whether the surge has plateaued or slowed down, providing additional clarification on the extent to which the pandemic influenced parents' decisions to transition their children from mainstream education to homeschooling. Additionally, within this context, exploring the relative numbers of families who initially deregister but subsequently return their child back into mainstream education is necessary, as this information is currently missing from the data. Another valuable extension would be to research families whose child had struggled and perhaps suffered at school but felt supported by the school and LA in transitioning into HE, thus not left feeling disempowered and alienated by the system. This would provide insights into families transitioning for elective reasons rather than necessity.

Drawing on findings from this study, there is an opportunity for future research to explore the role of neurodivergence as a significant factor influencing the current trajectory of rising HE numbers (as well as school absenteeism). Additionally, investigating the synergistic impact of technology is warranted, given its potential to offer a personalised learning experience, free from the environmental, sensory, or social stressors that often affect neurodivergent students.

A particularly promising avenue for exploration involves understanding the effectiveness of flexi-schooling options that endorse 'blended learning.' This

approach combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online or technology-assisted learning methods. Examining the utilisation and outcomes of such flexi-schooling models could provide valuable insights into how they contribute to the advancement of educational alternatives. This type of research may play a role in accelerating the diversification of educational options, offering more inclusive solutions for diverse learning needs.

5.8 Dissemination of Findings

The researcher plans to disseminate the findings through various channels. This includes presenting the results to the LA EPS where they are employed, as well as other relevant platforms as opportunities arise. Additionally, the research may be prepared for publication in academic journals. To reach a wider audience, the researcher intends to utilise social media platforms such as blogs, Instagram, and LinkedIn, as well as parenting publications. Furthermore, they have engaged with Richard Adams, the education editor at The Guardian, who has shown interest in the topic and regularly updates his findings. The researcher is also in discussions with organisers of the 'Emotionally Friendly Settings' conference scheduled for May 2024, seeking to share their findings at this event.

5.9 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore why parents chose to formally HE their children instead of sending them back to school after C-19 lockdowns. The initial survey results revealed that a majority of parents felt compelled into HE, challenging the notion of 'elective' home education, while reinforcing the limited state support for homeschooling parents.

The discussion of findings emphasised the heightened need for security during the pandemic, aligning with Maslow's (1943) motivational theory and highlighted the positive impact of alternative learning as well as improved wellbeing overall for both children and families. Examining these aspects through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systemic framework provided additional insights, emphasising that homeschooling, for some, is not a genuinely elective choice. Various factors, including mental health considerations, experiences of bullying, loss of trust in schools/LAs in securing support for pupils with SEND, seeking individualised recognition at schools, and dissatisfaction with the relevance of today's curriculum, contribute to this decision.

Parents expressed dissatisfaction with traditional schools and a lack of viable alternatives, reinforcing a sense of imposed responsabilisation dictated by neoliberal societal values, further compounded by the notion of an 'elective' choice to homeschool. The FANi approach, applied with four mothers, facilitated an in-depth analysis of the drivers leading to the decision to deregister their children from mainstream schools. The resulting themes from the thematic analysis indicated a growing awareness among parents that traditional schooling was no longer suitable for their children, emphasising the need for increased psychological safety at schools and improvements in meeting SEND requirements, thereby challenging the current notion of inclusivity.

Recommendations are proposed for how EPs may enhance support for schools, staff, and families. This involves a focus on early intervention and prevention by offering systemic and individualised support for CYP. Additionally, there is a call for

more flexible solutions and approaches within schools, leveraging developing technologies to broaden the scope of inclusion and address the inequitable gaps faced by far too many. Ultimately, this study has found that is imperative that efforts align with the principles set out in the UN CRC, ensuring that every child has the right to education that respects and fulfils their individual needs and potential.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A – Safeguarding and the role of LAs

In England, the surge in homeschooling has reignited discussions about regulating HE, particularly concerning child welfare and safeguarding. Currently, parents bear the responsibility for their children's education, as outlined in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. However, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 mandates LAs to identify children not receiving suitable education. While LAs can request home visits, parents aren't obligated to respond. In 2018, 92% of LAs lacked sufficient powers to monitor homeschooling, with 28% of families refusing home visits (ADCS, 2018, cited in Children's Commissioner, 2019).

LAs can take action if they suspect a parent is breaching Section 7. They may issue notices to ensure a suitable education or, if necessary, resort to issuing a School Attendance Order. Although such orders are seldom used, they can be employed as a deterrent. Furthermore, LAs have safeguarding responsibilities under the Children Act 2002 and the Children Act 2004. A failure to provide a suitable education can raise child protection concerns.

Children who are under the care of LA children's social services due to welfare issues are more likely to leave traditional school settings. Jay et al.'s (2022) analysis revealed that children supported by children's social care were more prone to become unenrolled, particularly those with SEND. However, once these children are no longer attending school, safeguarding becomes more challenging.

The Department for Education provides non-statutory guidance for both LAs and parents/carers to clarify their roles and rights (DfE, 2019a, DfE 2019b). The 2009 Independent Review of Elective Home Education placed a significant emphasis on safeguarding (Badman, 2009). The House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee observed a range of opinions on the report's recommendations, particularly those related to registration and monitoring (2009:16).

Bhopal & Myers (2018) argue that concerns about HE often focus on perceived risks to children, but their research suggests that many home educators strongly object to such accounts. Instead, they observe that the processes families go through when choosing HE can be seen as narratives where parents actively seek the best outcomes for their children.

Discussions about risk in HE in the UK often revolve around two main concerns; risks related to children's well-being (as highlighted in the Badman Review) and concerns about potential Islamic radicalisation and the promotion of anti-British values (identified by OFSTED). These risks and people's perception of them are not easily quantifiable; they represent potential future outcomes. Home educators often feel uncomfortable with the nature of risk, which involves assessing and managing potential future events in the present. This discomfort arises from the perception that their personal and family decision-making might be scrutinised for potential future issues, leading to concerns about a dystopian clamp-down or the use of pre-crime as an ideological authoritarian tool to restrict personal rights. These objections, while rational, reflect a belief that the state doesn't always act in the best interests of its citizens (Bhopal & Myers, 2018).

7.2 Appendix B - Characteristics of primary included studies

Reference	Country	Research Focus	Participants	CYP Age, Sex, Context	Design	Analytical Approach	Findings	Strengths	Limitations
Adamson, C. (2021)	UK	Explores the decision-making of parents choosing HE	21 mothers Not all born in the UK (wide range of diversity)	3-14 years old; Sex not stated; Flexi-schooling, HE and alternative settings. 6 attended school prior to HE	QUAL: in-depth interviews and theoretical sampling; longitudinal	Constructivist Grounded Theory	Parents' attitudes, emotional experiences and support networks play a significant role in decision-making processes regarding HE options	Comprehensive theory grounded in data Diverse sample (backgrounds and experiences) Longitudinal data collected over 5-years (2016-2021) Emphasises emotional factors Draws on existing lit and theories Quotes adds depth and transparency	Sampling Bias (many highly educated biasing perceptions of education) AND may lead to self-selection bias Reliance on self-reports Generalisability as small UK study. Limited application to other cultural contexts Limited exploration of demographics Scope of data analysis Researcher position

Bower, C. (2021)	UK; Northern Ireland	Case-study of same-sex family who transitioned to HE due to autistic son being bullied and not getting social or academic needs met	Two mother and their son, Toby	8 years old	In-depth Case-Study QUAL Semi-structured interview	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke)	Motivations for HE: Bullying because of religious beliefs Bullying because of parents' sexuality School's failure to address bullying or support academic needs or socialisation Social exclusion Impact on MH HE the answer	In-depth, rich data and analysis Unique perspective – sheds light on the intersection of HE, bullying, autism, religious beliefs and family dynamics Addresses important social issues	Limited generalisability Lack of detail about previous sample and study where the data was extracted Bias (case study) Subjectivity and lack of reflexivity or researcher positionality Limited methodological data Lack of transparency reducing the trustworthiness and lack of reflexivity – feels highly subjective
English, R., Campbell, A. & Moir, L. (2023)	Australia	Examines reports of parents who identify peer bullying as the main reason for HE	6 parents (all had originally chosen state schooling)	Details about children arises through participant narratives. e.g. one daughter, gifted with anxiety and c-	QUAL Telephone, informal interviews	Not stated: But findings are themed and supported with narrative segments	C-19 as a catalyst to HE Deschooling as a healing process Relaxed environment of home and difference from	Unique focus in a relatively unexplored area and took into account experience of C-19 In-depth interviews – rich data	Small sample size – more of a pilot study – generalisability not possible Self-selection bias

				<p>PTSD,ADHD and ASD</p> <p>boy – diagnosis of intussusception</p> <p>ASD boy – ‘lonely boy’ developed tic</p>			<p>school as restorative (e.g. boy developed a facial tic because of bullying)</p> <p>Decision to HE was not desired but happened as response to bullying</p>	<p>Divers participant pool</p>	<p>Retrospective accounts can be subject to recall bias</p> <p>No mention of researcher relationship with participants or reflexivity statement</p> <p>Lack of child’s voice</p>
Forlin, C. & Chambers, D. (2023)	Australia	Parents’ decisions to HE with specific focus on SEN	99 parents (91 mothers)	<p>100 HE children. 39 girls, 51 boys. 29 children had a disability, 17 ALN, 45 selected as being eldest child HE (control). Identification of gifted children.</p> <p>60 had attended mainstream before HE.</p>	<p>Quant; Structured questionnaire (PPHS scale under review). Likert-type scales to gather data on various factors (Proactive and Reactive Scales);</p>	<p>Statistical analyses;</p> <p>Descriptive, Independent t-tests (compared means of different groups), ANOVA, Post hoc tests and Scale scores (use to analyse impact of different factors on decisions</p>	<p>Proactive vs Reactive decision-making; those withdrawing from school often Reactive factors such as dissatisfaction with school system especially for parents of SEND. Gender diffs found to influence Proactive (philosophical) more for girls. Implications for Inclusive education.</p>	<p>Diverse sample, range of backgrounds, family structures and educational settings</p> <p>Relevant topic – to the current study and to current HE research</p> <p>Use of a well-developed scale (still under review) and a well-conducted analysis linking statistical findings to RQ</p> <p>Reports effect sizes which helps assess significance</p>	<p>Small sample size, so Limited Generalisability; focused on specific region in W Australia and small group of HE parents (regional focus may not capture full diversity of motivations)</p> <p>Cross-sectional design (captures data at one single point)</p> <p>Scale is still under review and hasn’t yet</p>

								<p>Comprehensive data collection (wide range of data)</p> <p>Focus on SEN</p> <p>Findings clearly presented</p> <p>Relevance to Education Policy (part in terms of inclusion)</p>	<p>been fully validated</p> <p>Self-reported data; Potential of response bias/social desirability bias</p> <p>Lack of in-depth qual analysis to support quant findings</p> <p>Limited exploration of confounding variables</p> <p>Limited discussion of Policy implications</p> <p>Limited exploration of Inclusion</p>
Green-Hennessy & Mariotti (2023)	USA	Explores first-choice (proactive) vs second choice (reactive) HE	Representative sample, publicly accessed ECLS-K:2011 dataset (part of Early Childhood Longitudinal Study by NCES.	Demographic info was collected during kindergarten year, such as sex, race/ethnicity, age, no of siblings, homes language btu it	<p>QUANT – Longitudinal</p> <p>Not all measures were administered at all data collection points – collected variables at different times during children’s schooling year. Does not saw when</p>	<p>Non-Para Chi-square analyses:</p> <p>To explore whether problems appeared before transitioning to HE</p> <p>Compared those who remained in mainstream compared to</p>	<p>-Higher rates of BULLYING in those about to HE</p> <p>-Higher rates of ABSENTEEISM</p> <p>-higher dissatisfaction with school in first and second grade for those moving to HE compared to those who stayed</p>	<p>Large, representative sample (used data from the Early Childhood Study), nationally representative of students in US</p> <p>Followed from kindergarten to 3rd grade (longitudinal design) to trach changes over time</p>	<p>Limited age range (does not capture full spectrum of HE experiences especially senior school)</p> <p>Does not include specific information about reasons why parents choose HE, which is a missed</p>

			<p>Study had 18,174 students in the dataset.</p> <p>Nearly equal distribution of girls (48.8%) and boys (51.2%) and a diverse racial and ethnic composition</p>	<p>does not provide specifics</p>		<p>those about to leave to begin HE. Additional group where sample size allowed (those HE for longer time), to see if difficulties were specific to that period or ongoing</p> <p>One-Way ANOVA: Examined achievement</p> <p>Comparison of HE group to identify SEND</p> <p>Alpha Level set at .05</p>	<p>-ACADEMIC FUNCTIONING no sig differences between those in HE and at school</p> <p>-Overall sample, HE were more likely to be White and English speaking and less likely to have two parents working full time</p> <p>-DURATION over 1/3 HE for a year or less and 36.3% returned to trad schooling by year 6 (5th grade)</p> <p>-DISABILITIES higher percentage 71.1% vs 53.4%</p> <p>-lacks specificity on data collection methods so its credibility and replicability is not ensured.</p>	<p>Prospective data collection helps to identify factors</p> <p>Multifaceted data Comparison groups</p> <p>Good look at demographics</p> <p>Adds to lit by focusing on transitional phase and socioemotional factors influencing parents decisions</p>	<p>opportunity when looking at 'decisions'</p> <p>Sample of HE in the original sample (1%) compared to national estimates (4%) indicating a possible response bias (HE families less likely to participate in government surveys)</p> <p>Missing data and Attrition: some families were lost in follow-up after starting HE – could introduce selection bias</p> <p>Brevity of some HE may limit GENERALISABILITY</p> <p>Inconsistencies of measures (between parent and teacher reports)</p> <p>GENERALISABILITY limited to other cohorts</p> <p>Binary conceptualisations of reasons for HE</p> <p>Cannot establish causal relations</p>
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Neuman & Oz (2021)	Israel	To understand why some parents opt for HE	30 mothers	No of children ranged 1-7 in the family. 27 married, 3 were single. 28 secular, 2 religious	<p>QUAL Hermeneutic phenomenological To explore experiences</p> <p>Describes social constructionist approach</p> <p>semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Interviews transcribed and analysed with qual data software Atlas.ti.</p> <p>Both inductive and deductive and used peer debriefing</p>	<p>Criticisms of education system Standardisation Neglecting meaningful education over learning School climate Quality of teaching Irrelevance Education system's loss of goals</p>	<p>Rich data through hermeneutic PA.</p> <p>Multiple data sources – uses semi-structured interviews and peer debriefing so triangulation adds to rigour</p> <p>Clear research aims and detailed participant info</p> <p>Thorough data analysis</p>	<p>Homogenous small sample in Israel</p> <p>Subjectivity</p> <p>Potential researcher bias and no reflexivity statements</p> <p>Limited generalisability as specific to context of Israel and findings may not be directly transferred to other cultural or educational settings</p> <p>Does not explore outcomes or longer-term effects of HE</p>
Paulauskaite et al., (2022)	UK	The study aims to understand the experiences and outcomes of children with neurodevelopmental conditions who are educated at home, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.	158 parents; 93 (68 de-registered) participated in HE pre pandemic and 65 de-registered after March 2020	<p>Children aged 5-15 years; majority were boys, approx. Most were ASC; majority lived in England. Higher no of white ethnicity in pre pandemic group.</p> <p>Various demographic</p>	<p>Mixed-Methods</p> <p>Online survey: reasons for deregistration – a list of 11 possible reasons; support for learning and parental satisfaction with EHE, barrier and facilitators.</p> <p>Childs mental health: DBC2 to collect info on</p>	<p>Quant analysis done using STATA version 17, included comparison of demographic data, and descriptive stats for aspects on HE and mental health outcomes.</p> <p>Content Analysis performed for</p>	<p>Consistent reasons for de-registration before and during the pandemic. C-19 not the primary driver.</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with schools' ability to meet additional learning and mental health needs drove de-</p>	<p>Relevance to current study</p> <p>Comparative approach (pre and post covid)</p> <p>Mixed-methods adds to comprehensive understanding and a lot of demographic data</p> <p>Large sample size</p>	<p>Sampling bias (social media and groups recruitment)</p> <p>Parent-reported data</p> <p>Cross-sectional design</p> <p>Mainly in England so may be less applicable elsewhere</p> <p>Does not compare to those attending school</p>

				variable collected.	anxiety symptoms and SDQ	barriers and facilitators to HE, inductive thematic approach	registration in both groups. High EHE satisfaction levels in both groups. No significant mental health differences in children before and during EHE.		Selection bias
Slater, E., Burton, K. & McKillop, D. (2022)	Australia	Reasons for home educating in Australia: who and why?	385 HE parents of which 98% were mothers; 676 children being HE. Three samples: n=676 those who never intended to enrol in school n=285, those who decided to HE after schooling n=391	Mothers aged between 21- 70 (87.7% between 31-50 years) with varying levels of education. Children's ages 3-21 (but mainly up to 17) and had been HE for three years or less on average. Financial costs of HE was explored	Mixed-methods via online questionnaire AHQ – structured with 35 Q's that also gathered demographic data; written responses used thematic analysis.	Although it doesn't explicitly call it as such, it's a Thematic Content Analysis – inductively coded data and then reported descriptive stats Uses quotes to support findings	Four main themes emerged: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING 22% had at least one diagnosed mental health condition; DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES 33% (SpLD or ASD); CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS 28.5% mismatch between expectations and standard of education offered LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES 19.7%, religion, lifestyle, travel as influencing decision to HE	Large and diverse sample (enhances generalisability) Comprehensive questionnaire: various aspects covered In-depth analysis with TA Mixed-methods approach strengthens findings Clear and detailed reporting of findings Addresses compliance with registration	Sampling bias – recruited through HE groups and social media – those who aren't part of these won't have been recruited Self-selection bias (including many being well-educated-motivated to support research) While large sample size, generalisability limited due to recruitment methods and potential biases Self-reported data also subject to biases; e.g. social and emotional wellbeing themes suggest participants may have focused on

							<p>EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES also reported e.g. 77.7% had supplied school with recommendations</p> <p>that were not followed.</p> <p>Also discussed sig financial costs of HE and little support given</p>	Relevant to this study	<p>these aspects, potentially playing down other factors.</p> <p>Does not give detailed info on coding process or steps taken to ensure trustworthiness, researcher position not stated.</p> <p>Does not compare to those IN mainstream education</p> <p>Quant analysis is simple</p> <p>No info om AHQ and how it was developed, validity or reliability – the way q's framed could lead to response bias</p>
Wenham, L., Din, I. & Eaves, L. (2021)	UK	Experiences and perspective of parents in England who are unhappy with their children returning to school during C-19	85 families but does not provide more details on demographics	NA	QUAL through reflective surveys and interviews Open-ended questions used in the surveys	Inductive thematic approach	<p>Who is resisting return to school and why</p> <p>Difficult choices</p> <p>SEND disproportionately impacted</p> <p>Silver linings – positives emerged</p>	<p>In-depth analysis and exploration Diversity as quite a large sample</p> <p>Contemporaneous and has implications for education policy</p>	<p>Sample size not large enough for extensive generalisability and also it's within a very specific context (during C-19)</p> <p>self-selection bias</p>

									<p>lack of methodological details – so rigour cannot be assessed</p> <p>Subjective – although this is acknowledged</p> <p>Limited discussion of alternative explanations (focuses on critical pedagogy) and does not thoroughly explore explanations for this</p> <p>Limited longitudinal perspective – does not offer perspective on long-term effects – a snapshot</p>
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7.3 Appendix C - Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018

Paulauskaite et al., 2022

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?	X			
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	X			
	<i>Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.</i>				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X			<i>Whilst qual, it used content analysis and quant frequency to present results of themes; barriers and facilitators to HE</i>
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	X			
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	X			
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	X			
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	X			
2. Quantitative randomize	2.1. Is randomization appropriately performed?		X		<i>Online survey so not random</i>
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?			X	<i>Some diffs which are clearly stated</i>

d controlled trials	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?			X	<i>Descriptive stats of demographic s</i>
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?				<i>N/A</i>
	2.5 Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?				<i>N/A</i>
3. Quantitativ e non- randomize d	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?			X	
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?				<i>N/A</i>
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?				<i>N/A</i>
	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?	X			
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?				<i>N/A</i>
4. Quantitativ e descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	X			
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?			X	
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	X			
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?			X	<i>No mention</i>
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	X			
5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	X			
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	X			
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	X			
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?			X	<i>No clear divergence</i>

Reasons for HE in Australia: who and why
Slater, E., Burton, K. & McKillop, D. (2022)

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?	X			
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	X			
	<i>Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.</i>				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X			
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	X			
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?			X	<i>No info given about the data or how codes and themes were developed</i>
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	X			
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	X			
2. Quantitative randomized controlled trials	2.1. Is randomization appropriately performed?				NA
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?				NA
	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?				NA
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?				NA
	2.5. Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?				NA

3. Quantitative non-randomized	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?				NA
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?				NA
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?				NA
	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?				NA
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?				NA
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?			X	<i>Unclear what the strategy was</i>
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?			X	
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?			X	<i>More detail needed to qualify the measures</i>
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?			X	
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	X			<i>While it lacks a lot of detail, it may be appropriate for the purpose of the study</i>
5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?		X		<i>Does not explicitly state it is mixed-methods</i>
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	X			<i>Each question requires different analysis</i>

	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?			X	<i>Study does not integrate quant and qual findings at all</i>
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?			X	<i>Doesn't mention</i>
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?			X	<i>Doesn't mention</i>

7.3 Appendix C - Critical Appraisal Skills Programmes (CASP)

Adamson (2022)

Appraisal question	Yes	Can't tell	No	Comments
Section A: Are the results valid?				
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?			X	
2. Is a qualitative method appropriate?	X			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	X			Rationale for the ground theory method is provided.
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	X			Theoretical sampling as endorsed by Glaser & Strauss, 1967
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issues?	X			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	X			Yes, was stated but changed as researcher ended up being on the inside as it were
Section B: What are the results?				
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	X			Information on ethical approval stated.
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	X			Interviews transcribed and open-coded with focussed coding and constant comparative analysis as themes emerged. Relationships between themes developed – no evidence of process as lack of space
9. Is there clear statements of findings?	X			Yes
Section C: Will the results help locally?				
10. How valuable is the research?	Offers valuable insights into the decision making process to HE, explores factors influencing their choice as well as highlighting emotional experiences which are often overlooked in such research; also uses a diverse set of participants and the grounded theory approach is valuable			

Bower, C. (2021)

'Um, I was getting bullied at school because I didn't believe in god': one family's experience of autism, school and home education

Appraisal question	Yes	Can't tell	No	Comments
Section A: Are the results valid?				
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	X			While aim was not explicitly stated, an argument was developed for the rationale for this study that came out of a larger mixed-methods one
2. Is a qualitative method appropriate?	X			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?		X		Can't tell as aim is not clearly stated. Seems to be a case study design but not clearly stated by researcher.
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	X			Purposive sampling used to select families who completed a questionnaire – however, no details given about methods for recruitment – presumably self-selected. Rationale for being invited to interview was included – then as there was little uptake for participation in interviews, so this became a single case study and this is explicitly stated.
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issues?	X			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?			X	The only information about the researcher is given at the end as 'Notes on Contributors'
Section B: What are the results?				
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	X			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	X			No details at all about development of analysis other than Thematic Analysis. Results reported as vignettes and are extremely one-sided, no reflexivity given or alternative considerations as to why schools did as they did – hard to assess trustworthiness, as

				lacks transparency and reflexivity.
9. Is there clear statements of findings?		X		Findings are the 'themes' presented as vignettes of the perceptions of the family and Toby
Section C: Will the results help locally?				
10. How valuable is the research?	Valuable as an account of the unique experience of an autistic pupil in a Christian school in N Ireland, experiences of bullying and attitudes experienced to same-sex parents – offers insight into discrimination and lack of inclusion and resistance of some schools to accommodate exceptional needs. Quite valuable – very subjective and very nuanced in terms of context but certainly important in terms of its message about discrimination and how HE can be a positive experience in light of these subjective challenges. of YP in a specialist setting and what supported them to re-engage with education-from their perspectives.			

English, Campbell & Moir (2023)

Appraisal question	Yes	Can't tell	No	Comments
Section A: Are the results valid?				
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	X			
2. Is a qualitative method appropriate?	X			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	X			
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	X			Subject to usual HE recruitment self-selection bias through approaching on Facebook
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issues?	X			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?			X	No and no reflexivity statement
Section B: What are the results?				
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	X			Anonymity and pseudonyms and relaxed approach
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?		X		No mention at all about how data was analysed – just directly reported

9. Is there clear statements of findings?		X		Excerpts from interviews but no clear concise summary
Section C: Will the results help locally?				
10. How valuable is the research?	provides valuable insights into the experiences of parents who turn to unschooling as an alternative to traditional schooling in response to bullying. Its value lies in its qualitative exploration of this phenomenon and its potential to inform educators, policymakers, and families facing similar challenges. However, the small sample size and context-specific nature of the study should be considered when assessing its broader applicability.			

Neuman & Oz (2021)

Appraisal question	Yes	Can't tell	No	Comments
Section A: Are the results valid?				
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	X			Explores reasons why parents choose homeschooling
2. Is a qualitative method appropriate?	X			
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	X			In-depth interviews
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	X			Researchers v active in the field, met participants through HE meetings
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issues?	X			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?		X		But social constructionist ontology is described
Section B: What are the results?				
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	X			
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	X			Doesn't provide extensive details but outlines methods and evidence of multiple data sources and triangulation/peer debriefing
9. Is there clear statements of findings?		X		Could be more structured and explicit
Section C: Will the results help locally?				
10. How valuable is the research?	Is of value to country specific policymakers and educators			

Wenham, Din & Eaves (2021)

Appraisal question	Yes	Can't tell	No	Comments
Section A: Are the results valid?				
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	X			
2. Is a qualitative method appropriate?	X			Seeks to understand subjective experiences
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	X			But limited details .
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?		X		No mention at all of recruitment strategy
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issues?	X			
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?			X	Does not consider potential impact of researcher which is important for Qual
Section B: What are the results?				
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?			X	Acknowledges that data is deeply personal and subjective but does not mention anything on informed consent or confidentially or participating well-being
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?		X		Mentions TA but does not provide any other details – rigour is hard to assess
9. Is there clear statements of findings?	X			Four clear themes
Section C: Will the results help locally?				
10. How valuable is the research?	Can be valuable for local educational policymakers and highlights experiences of families during C-19, but is hugely limited by lack of detail on methodology			

7.3 Appendix C - Critical Appraisal Checklist for a Questionnaire Study

Forlin & Chambers, 2023. Is a Whole School Approach to Inclusion Meeting the Needs of All Learners?

Research question and study design	
RQ not specifically stated other than in the title, but looked at motivations for HE in Western Australia Cross-sectional, quantitative design	
Was a questionnaire the most appropriate method?	Yes
Validity and reliability	
Have claims for validity been made, and are they justified? (Is there evidence that the instrument measures what it sets out to measure?)	The paper that outlines the development of the scale says more on this – but no specific mention of validity
Have claims for reliability been made, and are they justified? (Is there evidence that the questionnaire provides stable responses over time and between researchers?)	No specific mention of reliability other than Cronbach's alpha which is a measure of internal validity (but they don't report the figure).
Format	
Are example questions provided?	Not in this paper but can see them in their scale development paper
Did the questions make sense, and could the participants in the sample understand them? Were any questions ambiguous or overly complicated?	Yes
Piloting	
Are details given about the piloting undertaken	In the previous paper
Was the questionnaire adequately piloted in terms of the method and means of administration, on people who were representative of the study population?	Seemingly
Sampling	
Was the sampling frame for the definitive study sufficiently large and representative?	99 participants – doesn't discuss size and it is rather small
Distribution, administration and response	
Was the method of distribution and administration reported	No

Were the response rates reported, including details of participants who were unsuitable for the research or refused to take part?	No
Have any potential response biases been discussed?	No
Coding and analysis	
What sort of analysis was carried out and was this appropriate? (e.g. correct statistical tests for quantitative answers, qualitative analysis for open ended questions)	ANOVA and T-tests – seem appropriate indicating some differences IN various factors affecting decisions.

Results	
Were all relevant data reported?	
Are quantitative results definitive (significant), and are relevant non-significant results also reported?	Not all non-significant data was reported (perhaps there wasn't any), but they mention removing a small sub-sample of non-binary students
Have qualitative results been adequately interpreted (e.g. using an explicit theoretical framework), and have any quotes been properly justified and contextualised?	Qual findings discussed to some extent but depth of analysis is not clear
Conclusions and discussion	
Have the researchers drawn an appropriate link between the data and their conclusions?	Briefly discusses the implications of findings and connection between proactive and reactive decision making
Have the findings been placed within the wider body of knowledge in the field (e.g. via a comprehensive literature review), and are any recommendations justified?	Has a long discussion on inclusion in Australia, policy, reasons for HE and current statistics, so it to some extent contextualises it here but mainly focuses on the binary reasons for choosing HE.

7.4 Appendix D – Recruitment Flyer



SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH PROJECT

Elective-Home-Education: parents' reasons for deregistering their child/children from mainstream education during the Covid-19 pandemic

Are you a parent who, since March 2020 has de-registered their child from school, in order to educate them at home?

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist at the Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust.

I am researching parents' responses to Covid and how as a result of a period of enforced lockdown, you might have then made the decision to keep your child at home in order to home-educate.

I am looking for participants whom would like to inform research about what led to their decision to de-register their child or children from mainstream education at this particular time. If you de-registered your child after March 2020 and are willing and able to share your story, I would be very grateful for your input.

To find out more about this, please read the attached participant information sheet, detailing what it means to be involved. At the end of this information sheet is a link that you may click on that will take you to the consent form and then to the survey.

please go to
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15S14tjEZ9fH0oMiyYSouIKTHpkOzLcLuRUQbhp2Z1M/edit>

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tami Alikhani'.

Tami Alikhani

Version used to post on Facebook Home-education pages where permission had been granted



NHS
The Tavistock and Portman
NHS Foundation Trust

Are you a parent that has de-registered their child from school since the start of the pandemic (March 2020), in order to educate them from home?

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist at the Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust.

I am researching parents' responses to Covid and how as a result of a period of enforced lockdown, you might have then made the decision to keep your child at home in order to home-educate.

I am looking for participants whom would like to inform research about what led to their decision to de-register their child or children from mainstream education at this particular time. If you de-registered your child after March 2020 and are willing and able to share your story, I would be very grateful for your input.

To find out more about this, please read the attached participant information sheet, which will tell you more about what the project involves.

You can also email me at

TAlikhani@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk

7.5 Appendix E – Participant Information Sheet

Information for Participants

Title: Elective-Home-Education: Why I didn't send my child back to school during or after the Covid-19 pandemic

Thank you for your interest in my research project. If you are interested in volunteering to be involved, please read the information below.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Tami Alikhani and I am Year 2 trainee Educational Psychologist at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, studying for the professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. I am on placement in Barnet Local Authority and I am carrying out this research as part of my training.

What is the study about?

I am interested in hearing about your experiences leading up to and around the decision to de-register your child/children from mainstream education, in order to home-educate. The study seeks to gain a perspective on what it was about this experience during Covid that may or may not have contributed to the decision to move your child, at this time (I am also interested if it had nothing to do with Covid and the lockdowns).

I am interested in your lived experiences and would like to give you an opportunity to 'tell your story' as it were, the emotions, thoughts and situation that led to this decision. The interview will focus on this experience, and how you make sense of it personally.

I think your views are valuable and will provide important information about the experience of moving from formal education to home-schooling

Research aims

By asking your views, I hope to develop an understanding of what drove you to make this decision and how you felt about it at the time, what the factors were that led you there and how you feel about it now.

This information will be helpful to professionals working in and with schools to better understand and learn from families who have broadened their notions of education, to one that doesn't occur in a formal setting. It will also help to highlight where the education system might not be matching the needs of individuals to better inform for future change. As an Educational Psychologist (EP), this knowledge will help inform EP practice. EPs work with children and young people between the ages of 0 -25 and have a duty of care to all children and young people. However, they are currently quite heavily bound by working in schools. This research may help EPs to reach children who would benefit from their input, outside of mainstream educational settings.

What will taking part involve?

The study has two parts. The first is a simple online survey that shouldn't take more than 5 minutes of your time to complete. If your responses to the survey meet the criteria for further interview and you indicate that you are willing to participate in an interview, you may be invited to meet with me for two interviews (the second phase of the project). I am looking for up to 5 participants. The interviews will each take approximately one hour.

During the first meeting, we will meet to explore your reasons for removing your child/children from school and what this has meant for you. I will then transcribe the interview (confidentiality and data protection is ensured), and approximately 2-4 weeks after the first interview, we will meet again for up to an hour to discuss themes and follow up questions from the first meeting (e.g. clarification of information).

I will make audio recordings of the meetings which will be transcribed for analysis and then deleted. I will keep a reflexive diary of my experiences as a researcher to support analysis.

The interview will be arranged at a time that is convenient to you, either at your home or at an agreed neutral location. Alternatively, you may indicate if you would prefer that it be conducted online. If this is the option you would prefer, Zoom will be used, the meeting will be recorded and once it has been transcribed will immediately be deleted.

Why have I been invited to participate?

I am seeking to gather information from parents who have de-registered their child/children since March 2020. You're being invited to participate because your name is on a register held by the Local Authority as applying to you and they are sending it to you on my behalf. If and when you decide to participate and get in touch with me, this will be the first time I become aware of you and have access to you details.

If I agree to take part, what happens next?

If you would like to take part, please email me directly at TAlikhani@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk to let me know. I will then give you the information you need to participate in the survey that constitutes the first part of this study. The survey will include statements about the specific ethical considerations should you decide to participate in order to ensure that you are partaking with informed consent and are fully aware of the implications of what participation requires. You will also be invited to indicate at this stage, if you would like to participate in the interview stage of the study.

Is this something that I have to do?

Taking part is voluntary, and is not connected to any status your child has on the Local Authority system as de-registered from school. Furthermore, if you only wish to participate in one part of the study, this is also fine. Taking part will bear no impact on your choice to home-educate.

Looking after your personal information

I will be the only person who has access to your identifiable information in this study. Any information collected will be kept following the Data Protection Act (2018) and GDPR guidance.

Your confidentiality

All records related to your participation will be handled and stored securely on an encrypted drive using password protection. Your identity on these records will be indicated by a pseudonym to avoid your identification. The data will be kept for a maximum of 5 years. When writing up the interviews, I will change details so that anyone reading the study will not know who you or your child/children are or which schools they have attended. This will be done to ensure that your experiences do not identify you in my write up.

If we conduct the interviews online, they will be recorded. However, the recordings will be deleted as soon as the interview has been transcribed, this data will not be kept or stored.

If any information is shared which affects anyone's safety, I have a duty of care to share this information under safeguarding procedures. I will tell you if there is information that I need to share.

What happens if I no longer want to take part?

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. Any research data collected before your withdrawal may still be used, unless you request this it is deleted. Your data can be removed from the study up until the point that the analysis has been completed and submitted for review by my supervisor.

What happens to research findings?

When the research is completed, the information will be written up into a thesis, which is held at the Tavistock and Portman library. The general themes from the research will be shared with you (if you would like), professionals in the Local Authority, and with tutors on my course. I hope to publish the general themes from the study in the future. All publications will be anonymised and information may be amended to protect your anonymity further.

Ethical Approval

This study has received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundations Trust (TREC). My supervisor, Judith Mortell, can be contacted relating to any questions about the study via JMortell@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk.

If you have any queries about the ethical approval of this research, or other aspects of this project, please contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk) at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

Further information

If you have any questions after reading this information sheet, please feel free to contact me on my email below:

Email: TAlikhani@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Equally, if you think you would like to take part, I would also be grateful to hear back from you on the above email address.

7.6 Appendix F – Approaching participants; dates and responses

Who I approached	Date	How	Response
Home-Education Advisory teacher on placement (Barnet)	10.07.22	Through email following an initial discussion about my research on... She then sent on my flyer and participant information sheet (PIS) to all families that had de- registered since March 2020, on her database	7 took the survey and of these 5 agreed to be followed up for interview in their survey responses, but only 1 eventually committed to the interview
Barnet and Haringey Facebook group		Moderator posted information and my flyer in the group	It is possible that of the above 7 respondents, some also saw this and this prompted a response
Other Facebook groups -Home Education for All -Home Education UK -Somerset Home Education -Taunton Home Education -Home Education and the Autistic Spectrum -Cheshire Home Education -Home schooling Help and Support -Home Education – North West London -Home Education and Home Schooling HELP and Support UK -Home Education and Support – Educational Freedom	11.08.22	Messenger	Not able to help No response No response No response No response No response Willing and allowed me to post on the Facebook group Not able to help

			No response
Education Otherwise	04.08.22	Email	Shared with groups but was told that groups are quiet in the summer and take up for research tends to be low
	21.10.22	Email	
Naomi Fisher	18.08.22	Email	Posted on her Twitter page and four respondents, 2 of which were secured for interview
Hammersmith and Fulham	23.09.22	Email to Head of ACE (Attendance, Child, Elective Home Educating)	Unable to assist as lack of resources to contact individual families and group emails are a threat to GDPR
Hertfordshire County Council EHE team	23.09.22	Email	No response
Hackney EHE team	23.09.22	Email	No response
Cambridgeshire EHE team	23.09.22	Email	No response
Camden Learning EHE team	23.09.22	Email	Survey agreed to be included in Autumn newsletter
Home-educator (anonymous) who is active in the public sphere as an artist/academic	21.08.22	Email	Responded but did not wish to act as someone promoting the research
Southwark EHE team	20.08.22	Email	Previous supervisor forwarded my research to the EHE team but no response
Haringey EHE team	05.09.22	Email	

7.7 Appendix G – Consent Form (for participants willing to be interviewed)

Consent Form

Name of researcher: Tami Alikhani

Title of study: Elective-Home-Education: parents' reasons for deregistering their child/children from mainstream education during the Covid-19 pandemic

Please initial the statements below if you agree with them:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the study and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I am able to withdraw at any point, up until the data is analysed, without providing a reason.

3. I agree to be interviewed and for the interview to be audio-recorded.

4. I understand that my data will be anonymised so that I cannot be linked to the original recordings. I also understand that given the small sample size, despite anonymity, I may still be identifiable.

5. I understand that my data will be used solely for the purpose of this study and will be retained in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection and handling policies.

6. I understand that the findings from this research may be published and available for the public to read.

7. I understand that if I share information that leads the researcher to fear for my safety or the safety

of others, the researcher will share this information in order to try and keep everyone safe.

8. I have read and understood the above and agree to take part in this research

Name of participant:
Signature:
Date:

Name of researcher:
Signature:
Date:

7.8 Appendix H – Consent Form (online survey)

Survey Questions Informing Consent

Please tick the statements below if you agree with them:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the study and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I am able to withdraw at any point, up until the data is analysed, without providing a reason.
3. I agree to participate by answering questions in a short survey.
4. I understand that if interviewed, my data will be anonymised so that I cannot be linked to the original recordings.
5. I understand that my data will be used solely for the purpose of this study and will be retained in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection and handling policies.
6. I understand that the findings from this research may be published and available for the public to read.
7. I understand that if I share information that leads the researcher to fear for my safety or the safety of others, the researcher will share this information in order to try and keep everyone safe.
8. I have read and understood the above and agree to take part in this research

7.9 Appendix I

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE AND POTENTIAL FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR (Kelly)

Structure	Themes/Topics	Hesitations/Avoidances
Going to start at the very beginning	2 older children had a very difficult time in education	Changed course to Rebecca starting nursery, did not mention specifics about other children
Did I even want her going to school – additional needs already known	Early advocacy for Rebecca , ‘was quite firm with schools from the outset, this is what she needs, if you can’t deliver it just say’.	
School were good and did work with me	Positive things about the school	
She hated it – extreme behaviours and aggression – her voice was her aggression		I missed the extreme behaviours in the first listen of the recording
Ask any questions, but a lot of eyes aversion – apart from when she wanted to emphasise how difficult it was for her at nursery	Couldn’t cope with transitions Falling further and further behind	
As she was getting older, love for her was fading a bit	What was that feeling like for her in class?	
Needed to stop being silly and stop crying for her mum	All about emotional wellbeing	How did this feel for mum? I was feeling how attuned mum is and how hard the separations were for her too – follow up Q, how was school for mum?
EHCP and full-time one to one support and then lockdown hit.		
Taken R out two days prior due to question of her being		

7.10 Appendix J - Template for notes and reflections to be made immediately after each interview.

Participant		Interview Number	
Date		Duration	

General

1. Describe the interview briefly

2. Anything particular or unusual you would like to mention?

3. Did you like interviewing the participant?
 - I liked it very much
 - It was okay
 - I'm indifferent
 - I did not like it much
 - I did not like it all

Interview Detail

4. How did the participant respond to the interview questions?

5. Are there any specific words, phrases or experiences that stand out?

6. Did the interview generate any salient thoughts, feelings or images for you?

7. Did the interview experience remind you of any other people or events in your life?

7.11 Appendix K - Survey Responses

Qualitative survey responses and statement number which each participant had selected (1,2, or 3).

PLEASE LIST THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO DE-REGISTER

1	I witnessed the quality of teaching first-hand and saw for the first time how poor it really was. Even when it came to the basics, the teachers had a poor grasp of grammar and were struggling to explain mathematics in an engaging way. The school devoted almost no time to subjects I consider essential: science, modern and ancient languages, history, classics, etc. and still maintained it was the best place for my child to learn music (despite my child being miles ahead of the teacher). In essence, the decision was taken due to the eye-opening experience of being able to hear the lessons.	2
2	My child's needs and preferences as a high-functioning autistic person; the fact that they thrived in lockdowns with a reduced radius and out of the school building; our own changing preferences and expectations when schools resumed after lockdowns; our child's difficulty coping with the return to physical school	2
3	I was more inclined towards home education in the first place. During his time off school due to the Covid lockdown my son flourished mentally and physically, and it became clear that he's better off at home than at school. Since Covid my sons father (we are divorced) started working from home, and I stopped my work as a chef, so we were both able to be at home with him. In November when schools reopened after the lockdown my sons school presented an ultimatum to begin sending him back to school within a couple of weeks or have him be deregistered and I didn't feel ready to send him back, so opted out.	2
4	1) child's safety and child's fear and concern of the illness and effect on CV Family members. 2) lack of mitigations, masks, clean air, smaller groups, less moving about the building. 3) how to get there, the risk of using public transport. 4) the risk of bullying from other children while my child wore a mask. 5) having had a child in Resus/ PICU and left disabled, I did not want the experience again. 6) knowing that government was not taking virus seriously, nonsense of "herd immunity" for example, government not following basic scientific advice.	3
5	All brainwashing measurements including masks hand sanitizers ,distance and many other orders and mental abuse for children	3
6	Level if teaching in school but mainly a feeling that school doesn't prepare kids for life and doesn't see the child and it's needs	3
7	My child was behind at school and was awaiting diagnosis for ASD. During the lockdown his learning improved.	3
8	My own very negative experience of school, coupled with my daughter's very positive experience of home education during lockdowns. We didn't feel safe sending her back in September, she was more than happy to continue at home	2

	and we chose to free up her place at an over-subscribed school for someone that really wanted it.	
9	My son's mental health hit crisis point: The stress of getting to school daily was affecting our whole family, most significantly my son; School said that they could no longer meet need; The online provision they offered him was not suitable; There was no other school that would work for him	3
10	I am a clinically vulnerable (CV) parent with co-morbid condition on a medication that puts me at higher risk than others. I had requested adapted learning provision October 2020 or my child when infection rates started to rise in the classroom. There were no vaccines available at that time. I requested of the head teacher provision of online learning and to participate in outdoor activities with her classmates. The school was originally supportive the first week re online learning, but could not offer outdoor learning activities. The following week the Head Teacher stated she must follow the Department for Education guidance and that my child must return to school face to face as online learning was only to be provided to clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) children but not to the parent themselves who could be CV or CEV , despite knowing there were no protection measures in place, i.e. Masks and Adequate Ventilation measures in place. Air Cleaning Devices to clean the air of covid in accordance with Dept For Education's very own guidance.	2
11	We as parents received in the end three threats of fines and criminal prosecution for lack of attendance, this is a law that applies for truancy, and should not apply to people who are clinically vulnerable and at risk of contracting a lethal virus from a child in a high density poor ventilated learning environment.	2
12	I could not place my child in an unsafe school environment that can easily spread the virus, at risk of my child either losing her own mother to covid, or to long covid	2
13	Pandemic and no mitigations in school (clinically vulnerable family) with no option of proper remote learning without fear of prosecution	3
14	I am clinically extremely vulnerable to catching covid and becoming seriously ill or dying if I catch it. I also do not want my children to catch it (as we don't know the long term consequences for this)	2
15	SEN needs not fully met in mainstream Home education reduced anxiety in my daughter Flexibility of home education works much better for my daughter I dislike the current school system	2
16	Knowledge of how learning occurs Wanting a slower life style Long term well-being for my daughter Covid rules Flexible work Partners support Awareness of alternative provision my daughter could attend so I could work	3
17	Bullying at school	3
18	My child's distress going to school	3
19	No covid protections for in person schooling (vulnerable family), no remote option without threat of fines or court	2
20	Family, more options, quality time, freedom, supporting child's strengths, less stress and better mental health for the whole family.	2

21	The teaching style and content was dry and boring , she was maths phobic because there was no time to go over anything so she always felt and was behind, I could offer her resources and opportunities that school didn't or couldn't, constant testing and SATS freaked her out	3
22	Received harassment from my son school, made up lies to report us to social service base in lies, we have been bullied and lost trust with school and our LA.	3
23	The particular (independent) school was not suitable to continue at. I had no trust in their leadership. There is a lack of other independent schools in the area. The state schools are either good grammar school my child would not be admitted to, or weaker larger state schools I had similar lack of trust to deliver education. Home education was working, effective and by far the best option for my child.	3
24	My child went back initially in September 2020, but I was unhappy about uncontrolled covid spread in schools. I raised my concerns with the school. I was told it wouldn't spread there,, but there was clearly nothing to prevent it from spreading in the school. I removed my child when cases increased. I was threatened with fines and prosecution if I didn't return her by a set date. I didn't know what to do so I deregistered. We are still home educating now. I don't know when it will get better and she will be able to go back. Children are now the most infected demographic and so many thousands with long covid and increasing all the time.	2
25	School was too small so children were tightly packed - class numbers were too huge - the offering during lockdown was shocking and I felt I could do a better job myself - child learned so much more at home compared to at school	1
26	My child contracted Covid-19 at school, he was possibly reinfected numerous times. He became extremely fatigued, skin breakdowns, rashes, risen lymph glands, gastric problems, weight loss, dizziness, brain fog. He was forced take days off sick but tried to keep up with school where he could. But he was constantly getting illnesses, becoming more unwell and run down. He was eventually diagnosed with Post Viral Malaise or Long Covid. At first his school issued absenteeism letters and requested meetings. They couldn't understand why he was so ill all the time. Our family Dr supported our decision to try home schooling but the school wouldn't keep up the supply of work.	3
27	Lack of duty of care, unable to accommodate my child's needs outside of the learning environment and safety	3
28	Child struggling mental health; child struggling with the immense pressure of secondary school; lack of support from secondary school	3
29	Neurodiversity, bullying, loved home learning in lockdown	3
30	Moving from a perfect primary setting to an awful high school setting mid pandemic was a disaster no proper transitions etc made this very very difficult. School then blamed the pandemic for giving my very bright child work far below his capability, 2 years on this didn't change and my child was becoming school avoidant, was willing to try another SEN high school but LA refused our application despite there being suitable places	3
31	School gave up, behaviour unfair discipline didn't listen to my child's needs.	3

32	Sexualisation being taught, teachers abusing kids physical abuse, crimes against humanity there prisons	3
33	Mental health. Physical health. No plans put in place to help The fact they had the nerve to contact safeguarding for poor attendance. School refusal Already affected the elder child didn't want younger one going the same way	3
34	Bullying	3
35	Pandemic Vaccinations Wearing of face masks Track and trace Curriculum Teaching styles Overreach of state	3
36	New diagnoses of SEND, SEMH issues, overcrowded class, poor behaviours	3
37	My children prefer it. They became more confident. More creative. More meaningful friendships were formed. Happier. More curious. Asked more questions. Discovered more interests. Can spend longer on subject they struggle with. Can progress faster in the subjects they understand better. Can pursue a variety of personal interests	2
38	Child was bored with curriculum. Home educating allows my child to spend time working with horses which is their passion.	2
39	Didn't enjoy school, teachers kept swapping so was never a consistent teacher in the class, got named as the naughty child as she didn't understand what was going on so disrupted the class, didn't like the constant changing of teachers so used to run away or put her hands over her ears, wasn't listened to or understood, didn't learn and got told she was behind constantly which made her discouraged and upset.	2
40	ASD son not coping with the social aspects of school. School not caring about problems. School not sticking to his care plan. Awful anxiety, crying before school, after school and at weekends. Not hitting any targets and getting upset about it.	3
41	Child diagnosed with autism and global development delay, he received no help what so ever, in-fact it went the other way and I was getting in trouble for him being late, they know he has bad sleep issues and also he is 6 and still in nappies and they wouldn't change him since he's been there so I have to go back and forth every day	3
42	School being too strict on petty reasons, ie: missing uniform, a few minutes late because of traffic, piercings etc. mental health/bullying from students and teachers, stress of child getting detentions for parents 'faults', can take child on holiday and not worry about getting fined but save £££., school is expensive	3
43	Lack of school support	3
44	Medical, emotional, physical, mental	3
45	My child was extremely un happy whilst in mainstream school, he wasn't interested in participating in lessons whilst in school	3
46	Bullying, safe guarding, teaching	1
47	The school system is based on lies. Children don't learn much about the real world from the system.	3

48	He was learning much at school, he felt over crowded. I don't agree with the new legislation to making sex education/LGBT compulsory as well as what they're teaching inside those lessons	3
49	My child's mental health	3
50	Daughter has autism and there was lack of support. She didn't qualify for an EHCP but her social anxiety was so bad she was missing school and rather than help we were just getting school fines and it wasn't helping her	3
51	Bullying, school refusal, not feeling like the school could meet my child's needs	3
52	Influenced into bad things by peers	3
53	My child's mental health and bullying	1
54	I had already researched EHE, but due to my career I needed school for child care. Even though my children did not struggle with school I wasn't happy with the system and the issues school created. When Covid hit I saw the system in action (the rewards based system, the work level etc) and this further reinforced that I did not want them in school. Once lockdown lifted I was able to meet up with local home edders which answered my questions on how my children could develop friendships without school. This gave me the confidence I needed to quit my career, deregister the children and dedicate myself full time to them.	2
55	Already had to give up work while my other child was transitioning to special school, my child was unhappy at school, I don't like how strict schools are over things like drinking and going to the toilet, do not like how teachers treat children, I get to spend more time with my child	3
56	Neurodivergence. Anxiety. Teachers disputing my explanation for absence, insisting my daughter was "fine when she's in school" Research into long term damage from school related trauma. Relationship with daughter pushed to breaking point during early months of school refusal, her trust in me was compromised due to my blind belief that school was her only option. School kept reinforcing the idea that 'not going to school was not an option' Realisation that mental health was more important than exam results.	3
57	School couldn't adapt to my son's needs, they wanted to send him to a different school which was miles away over hour drive, but it wasn't compatible for his needs due to sensory and anxiety and autism	3
58	Anxiety was stopping my child from attending. No support was offered. We moved areas, school was too far away for him to attend as he gets travel sick	3
59	My son was very unhappy. He'd withdrawn from friends and was disengaged with learning. The school was fine, no major issues, but deep unhappiness	2
60	Bullying, the stress my children were put under, the lack of communication and the school listening. How unhappy my eldest child was and the impact on their mental health	3
61	SEN and MH issues	3

62	Being bullied, social anxiety, behaviour around going to school, suspect ASD but school no help	3
63	Covid restrictions concerns around vaccine my daughter has autism school couldn't at that time provide support for autistic people who are high achievers academically my daughters anxiety was extreme at the time	3
64	Witnessed that school is not an ideal education	2
65	Montessori, Self-directed education, unschooling, decolonising education	2
66	Daughter member of Mensa since age of 11 and high level IQ , already was bored and frustrated at school, all day online school was impossible for her, caused stress and anxiety, so homeschooling/leaving school after her GCSEs the only option that was manageable	3
67	No comment	1

7.12 APPENDIX L – Content Analysis code extracts

I witnessed the quality of teaching first-hand and saw for the first time how poor it really was

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Witnessed poor quality teaching during lockdown

My child's needs and preferences as a high-functioning autistic person;

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

the fact that they thrived in lockdowns with a reduced radius and out of the school building;

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flourishing at home through lockdowns

our own changing preferences and expectations when schools resumed after lockdowns

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Lockdown experience changed priorities

our child's difficulty coping with the return to physical school

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Returning to school after lockdown was difficult for CYP

I was more inclined towards home education in the first place.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE was always a consideration

During his time off school due to the Covid lockdown my son flourished mentally and physically,

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flourishing at home through lockdowns

and it became clear that he's better off at home than at school.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE a far better option

Since Covid my sons father (we are divorced) started working from home, and I stopped my work as a chef, so we were both able to be at home with him.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Working from home since pandemic made it viable

In November when schools reopened after the lockdown my sons school presented an ultimatum to begin sending him back to school within a couple of weeks or have him be deregistered and I didn't feel ready to send him back, so opted out

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Decision was forced by school

- 1) child's safety and child's fear and concern of the illness and effect on CV Family members.
- 2) lack of mitigations, masks, clean air, smaller groups, less moving about the building.
- 3) how to get there, the risk of using public transport. 4) the risk of bullying from other children while my child wore a mask.
- 5) having had a child in Resus/ PICU and left disabled, I did not want the experience again.
- 6) knowing that government was not taking virus seriously, nonsense of "herd immunity" for example, government not following basic scientific advice.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

child's safety and

Code: ● Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19 > Safety

All brainwashing measurements including masks hand sanitizers distance and many other orders and mental abuse for children

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Percieved excessiveness of post-lockdown restrictions

mental abuse for children

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system

Level of teaching in school

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Witnessed poor quality teaching during lockdown

but mainly a feeling that school doesn't prepare kids for life and

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Poor quality curriculum

doesn't see the child and it's needs

Code: ● Lack of school-based support > Poor understanding of individual needs and preferences

My child was behind at school

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Had not been making typically expected progress

and was awaiting diagnosis for ASD.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

During the lockdown his learning improved.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Made better progress at home

My own very negative experience of school,

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Parent's experience of school

coupled with my daughter's very positive experience of home education during lockdowns.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Positive experience of HE during lockdown for CYP

We didn't feel safe sending her back in September,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

My son's mental health hit crisis point:

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

The stress of getting to school daily was affecting our whole family, most significantly my son

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

School said that they could no longer meet need;

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet needs

The online provision they offered him was not suitable; There was no other school that would work for him

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > LA and/or school unable to offer suitable alternative

I am a clinically vulnerable (CV) parent with co-morbid condition on a medication that puts me at higher risk than others. I had requested adapted learning provision October 2020 or my child when infection rates started to rise in the classroom. There were no vaccines available at that time. I requested of the head teacher provision of online learning and to participate in outdoor activities with her classmates. The school was originally supportive the first week re online learning, but could not offer outdoor learning activities. The following week the Head Teacher stated she must follow the Department for Education guidance and that my child must return to school face to face as online learning was only to be provided to clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) children but not to the parent themselves who could be CV or CEV, despite knowing there were no protection measures in place, i.e. Masks and Adequate Ventilation measures in place. Air Cleaning Devices to clean the air of covid in accordance with Dept For Education's very own guidance.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

We as parents received in the end three threats of fines and criminal prosecution for lack of attendance

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Fear of prosecution

this is a law that applies for truancy, and should not apply to people who are clinically vulnerable and at risk of contracting a lethal virus from a child in a high density poor ventilated learning environment.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

I could not place my child in an unsafe

Code: ● Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19 > Safety

I could not place my child in an unsafe school environment

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School environment percieved to be negative for CYP

I could not place my child in an unsafe school environment that can easily spread the virus, at risk of my child either losing her own mother to covid, or to long covid

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

Pandemic and no mitigations in school (clinically vulnerable family) with no option of proper remote learning without fear of prosecution

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

I am clinically extremely vulnerable to catching covid and becoming seriously ill or dying if I catch it. I also do not want my children to catch it (as we don't know the long term consequences for this)

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

SEN

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

SEN needs not fully met in mainstream

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet needs

Home education reduced anxiety in my daughter

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE reduced anxiety

Flexibility of home education

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flexibility of HE

home education works much better for my daughter

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE a far better option

I dislike the current school system

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system

Wanting a slower life style, Long term well-being for my daughter

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Better quality of life for whole family

Wanting a slower life style

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Lockdown experience changed priorities

Covid rules

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Percieved excessiveness of post-lockdown restrictions

Flexible work

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Working from home since pandemic made it viable

Flexible work

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flexibility of HE

Bullying

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

My child's distress going to school

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > CYP unhappy/not enjoying school

No covid protections for in person schooling (vulnerable family),

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/perceived risk/safety of C-19

no remote option

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > LA and/or school unable to offer suitable alternative

without threat of fines or court

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Fear of prosecution

Family, more options, quality time, freedom, supporting child's strengths, less stress and better mental health for the whole family.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Better quality of life for whole family

supporting child's strengths, less stress and better mental health for the whole family.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flourishing at home through lockdowns

The teaching style

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Teaching style

The teaching style and content was dry and boring

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Poor quality curriculum

there was no time to go over anything so she always felt and was behind,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Had not been making typically expected progress

I could offer her resources and opportunities that school didn't or couldn't,

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Opportunities and resources school can't offer

constant testing and SATS freaked her out

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School pressures impacting negatively

Received harassment from my son school, made up lies to report us to social service base in lies, we have been bullied and lost trust with school and our LA.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Lost trust in school and/or LA

The particular (independent) school was not suitable to continue at. I had no trust in their leadership.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Lost trust in school and/or LA

There is a lack of other independent schools in the area. The state schools are either good grammar school my child would not be admitted to, or weaker larger state schools

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > LA and/or school unable to offer suitable alternative

Home education was working, effective and by far the best option for my child.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE a far better option

My child went back initially in September 2020, but I was unhappy about uncontrolled covid spread in schools. I raised my concerns with the school. I was told it wouldn't spread there,, but there was clearly nothing to prevent it from spreading in the school. I removed my child when cases increased.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

I was threatened with fines and prosecution if I didn't return her by a set date.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Fear of prosecution

School was too small so children were tightly packed - class numbers were too huge -

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/percieved risk/safety of C-19

the offering during lockdown was shocking

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Witnessed poor quality teaching during lockdown

and I felt I could do a better job myself -

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE a far better option

child learned so much more at home compared to at school

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Made better progress at home

My child contracted Covid-19 at school, he was possibly reinfected numerous times. He became extremely fatigued, skin breakdowns, rashes, risen lymph glands, gastric problems, weight loss, dizziness, brain fog. He was forced take days off sick but tried to keep up with school where he could. But he was constantly getting illnesses, becoming more unwell and run down. He was eventually diagnosed with Post Viral Malaise or Long Covid.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Physical health concerns

He was forced take days off sick but tried to keep up with school where he could. But he was constantly getting illnesses, becoming more unwell and run down. He was eventually diagnosed with Post Viral Malaise or Long Covid.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

At first his school issued absenteeism letters and requested meetings. They couldn't understand why he was so ill all the time. Our family Dr supported our decision to try home schooling but the school wouldn't keep up the supply of work.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school based support

Lack of duty of care,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of duty of care

Lack of duty of care, unable to accommodate my child's needs outside of the learning environment and safety

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet needs

safety

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Safety

Child struggling mental health;

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

child struggling with the immense pressure of secondary school;

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School pressures impacting negatively

lack of support from secondary school

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

Neurodiversity,

Code: ● Lack of school-based support > Concerns with SEN

bullying,

Code: Bullying

loved home learning in lockdown

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Positive experience of HE during lockdown for CYP

Moving from a perfect primary setting to an awful high school setting mid pandemic was a disaster no proper transitions etc. made this very difficult.

Code: ● SEMH difficulties > Difficult transition to secondary school

School then blamed the pandemic for giving my very bright child work far below his capability, 2 years on this didn't change

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet need

School then blamed the pandemic for giving my very bright child work far below his capability, 2 years on this didn't change and my child was becoming school avoidant,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

was willing to try another SEN high school

Code: ● Lack of school-based support > Concerns with SEN

was willing to try another SEN high school but LA refused our application despite there being suitable places

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > LA and/or school unable to offer suitable alternative

School gave up, behavior unfair discipline didn't listen to my child's needs.

Code: ● Lack of school-based support > Poor understanding of individual needs and preferences
● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Too strict, too many rules

Sexualisation being taught,

Code: ● Ideological views > Disagree with teaching of Sex Ed

Sexualisation being taught, teachers abusing kids physical abuse, crimes against humanity, they're prisons

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Ideological views

Mental health.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

No plans put in place to help The fact they had the nerve to contact safeguarding for poor attendance.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

School refusal Already affected the elder child didn't want younger one going the same way

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

Bullying

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

Pandemic Vaccinations Wearing of face masks Track and trace Curriculum Teaching styles Overreach of state

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Perceived excessiveness of post-lockdown restrictions

- DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Poor quality curriculum
- DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Teaching style

New diagnoses of SEND,

Code: ● Lack of school-based support > Concerns with SEN

SEMH issues,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

overcrowded class, poor behaviours

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School environment perceived to be negative for CYP

My children prefer it.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Child prefers it

My children prefer it. They became more confident. More creative. More meaningful friendships were formed. Happier

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Positive experience of HE during lockdown for CYP

They became more confident. More creative. More meaningful friendships were formed. Happier. More curious. Asked more questions. Discovered more interests

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flourishing at home through lockdowns

More curious. Asked more questions. Discovered more interests. Can spend longer on subject they struggle with. Can progress faster in the subjects they understand better.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Made better progress at home

Can pursue a variety of personal interests

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Opportunities and resources school can't offer

Child was bored with curriculum.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Poor quality curriculum

Home educating allows my child to spend time working with horses which is their passion.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Opportunities and resources school can't offer

Didn't enjoy school

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > CYP unhappy/not enjoying school

Didn't enjoy school, teachers kept swapping so was never a consistent teacher in the class, got named as the naughty child as she didn't understand what was going on so disrupted the class, didn't like the constant changing of teachers so used to run away or put her hands over her ears, wasn't listened to or understood, didn't learn and got told she was behind constantly which made her discouraged and upset.

Code: ● Lack of school-based support > Poor understanding of individual needs and preferences
● Lack of school-based support > School environment perceived to be negative for child

ASD son not coping with the social aspects of school.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

School not caring about problems. School not sticking to his care plan.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

School not caring about problems. School not sticking to his care plan.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

Awful anxiety

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE reduced anxiety

Awful anxiety, crying before school, after school and at weekends.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School pressures impacting negatively

Not hitting any targets and getting upset about it.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Had not been making typically expected progress > school unable to meet need

Child diagnosed with autism and global development delay,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

he received no help what so ever,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > school unable to meet need

in-fact it went the other way and I was getting in trouble for him being late, they know he has bad sleep issues and also he is 6 and still in nappies and they wouldn't change him since he's been there so I have to go back and forth every day

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

School being too strict on petty reasons, i.e.: missing uniform, a few minutes late because of traffic, piercings e

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Too strict, too many rules

School being too strict on petty reasons, i.e.: missing uniform, a few minutes late because of traffic, piercings etc

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system

mental health

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

bullying

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

stress of child getting detentions for parents 'faults',

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School pressures impacting negatively
● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Too strict, too many rules

can take child on holiday and not worry about getting fined but save £££.,

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Flexibility of HE

Lack of school support

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

Medical, emotional, physical,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Physical health concerns

mental

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

My child was extremely un happy whilst in mainstream school, he wasn't interested in participating in lessons whilst in school

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > CYP unhappy/not enjoying school

Bullying,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

safe guarding

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of duty of care

teaching

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Teaching style

The school system is based on lies. Children don't learn much about the real world from the system.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Poor quality curriculum

The school system is based on lies. Children don't learn much about the real world from the system.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system

He wasn't learning much at school,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Had not been making typically expected progress

he felt over crowded. I don't agree with the new legislation to making sex education/lgbt compulsory as well as what they're teaching inside those lessons

Code: ● Ideological views > Disagree with teaching of Sex Ed

My child's mental health

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

and there was lack of support.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

but her social anxiety was so bad she was missing school

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

and rather than help we were just getting school fines and it wasn't helping her

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Fear of prosecution
 ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School environment perceived to be negative for CYP

Bullying,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

school refusal,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

not feeling like the school could meet my child's needs

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet needs

Influenced into bad things by peers

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School environment perceived to be negative for CYP

My child's mental health

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

bullying

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

I had already researched EHE, but due to my career I needed school for child care.

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > HE was always a consideration

Even though my children did not struggle with school I wasn't happy with the system and the issues school created. When Covid hit I saw the system in action (the rewards based system, the work level etc.) and this further reinforced that I did not want them in school.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system

When Covid hit I saw the system in action (the rewards based system, the work level etc.)

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Witnessed poor quality teaching during lockdown

my child was unhappy at school,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > CYP unhappy/not enjoying school

I don't like how strict schools are over things like drinking and going to the toilet, do not like how teachers treat children,

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system > Too strict, too many rules

I get to spend more time with my child

Code: ● DISCOVERY OF BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES TO HE AFTER 'TRIAL PERIOD' > Better quality of life for whole family

Neurodivergence.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

Anxiety.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

Teachers disputing my explanation for absence, insisting my daughter was “fine when she’s in school”

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Lost trust in school and/or LA

Teachers disputing my explanation for absence, insisting my daughter was “fine when she’s in school”
Research into long term damage from school related trauma.

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system
● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

Relationship with daughter pushed to breaking point during early months of school refusal, her trust in me was compromised due to my blind belief that school was her only option. School kept reinforcing the idea that ‘not going to school was not an option’

Code: ● Bullying > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

Realisation that mental health was more important than exam results.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Lockdown experience changed priorities

School couldn't adapt to my son's needs, they wanted to send him to a different school which was miles away over hour drive,

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet needs

they wanted to send him to a different school which was miles away over hour drive, but it wasn't compatible for his needs

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > LA and/or school unable to offer suitable alternative

sensory and anxiety and autism

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN
● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

Anxiety was stopping my child from attending.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

No support was offered.

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

We moved areas, school was too far away for him to attend as he gets travel sick

Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > LA and/or school unable to offer suitable alternative

My son was very unhappy.

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > CYP unhappy/not enjoying school

Bullying,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

the stress my children were put under

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > School pressures impacting negatively

How unhappy my eldest child

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > CYP unhappy/not enjoying school

SEN

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

MH issues

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

Being bullied

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Bullying

social anxiety,

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

behaviour around going to school,

Code: ● Bullying > School attendance impacted by mental/physical health

suspect ASD

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

but school no help

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Lack of school-based support

Covid restrictions concerns around vaccine

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > Continuing health concerns/perceived risk/safety of C-19

my daughter has autism

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > Concerns with SEN

school couldn't at that time provide support for autistic people who are high achievers academically

Code: ● LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES/CARE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS > School unable to meet need

my daughters anxiety was extreme at the time

Code: ● CYP WELLBEING PRIORITISED POST-LOCKDOWN > SEMH difficulties

Witnessed that school is not an ideal education

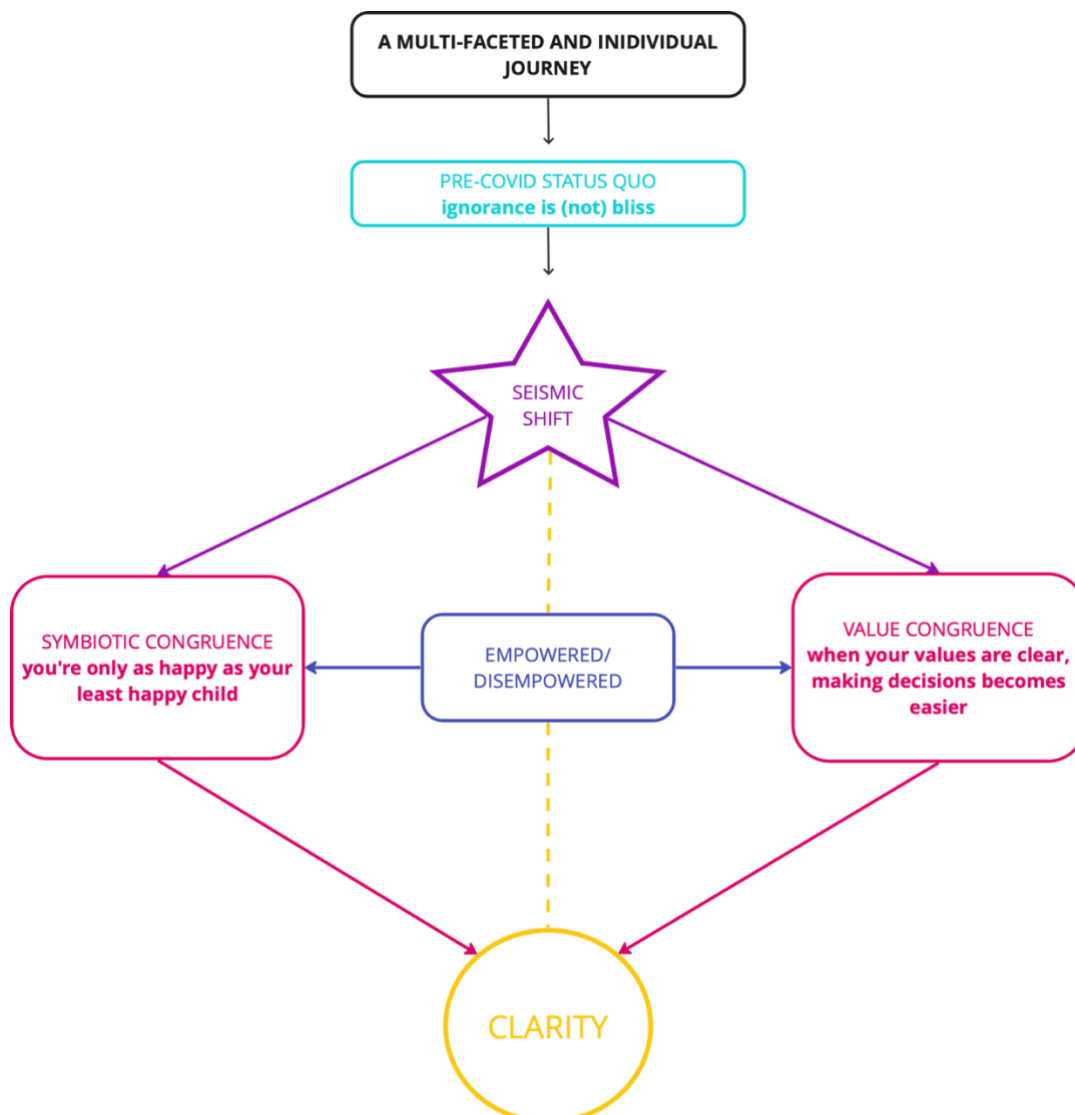
Code: ● DISSATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM > Dislike current school system

Witnessed that school is not an ideal education

Code: ● Teaching style > Witnessed poor quality teaching during lockdown

7.13 Appendix M - Example of iterative process in developing themes (RTA)

This map was created during the initial stages of the iterative process of creating themes for the thematic analysis. Keeping the *Gestalt* for the whole data set was considered a good starting point as participants had rich and unique stories to tell, so this process supported me keeping the different narratives in mind. However, as this developed I could see that the map was perhaps leading towards a grounded theory approach where the themes were interacting to provide an explanation rather than each theme standing alone. But these were initial thoughts around themes, before I had considered doing a pen portrait for each.



7.14 Appendix N – Example of coded extracts

so it was a great opportunity for us to do at home, whatever I was learning about, how to prepare — how to really prepare kids to school, what should be, you know, the content, how to do things, so we just learned at home....um... That was the first — how does it called? The first lockdown

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

Keren transcript 1 with comments

it was a bit difficult to do back and forth home and school because he was just having a great time at home. He was thriving. He was really, really enjoying himself.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

Keren transcript 1 with comments

after there's seven or — yeah, when they move to year three, and you start seeing things that you don't want him to adapt... You don't want him to just sit quietly and not answer if something is really upsetting him...

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

Keren transcript 1 with comments

And to what extent are you going to tell him you need to shut your mouth because discipline is very strict in this country? Or stand out, stand up and say what you think?

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

Keren transcript 1 with comments

But I think we've — it happened many times also that he, like, the other one especially, he'd come home and he said, "Oh, I forgot my notebook today. And this is so sad. Yeah, but —" So, you forgot your notebook? He said, "Yes, but the teacher, she was so upset and I—" Or, on the way to school, we forget something and he wants to go home to grab it, and I said, "So, you forgot your notebook, what's going to happen?" He said, "You don't understand."

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

Keren transcript 1 with comments

That actually makes sense to me because the poor, poor teachers really, nobody taught them, how to deal with problem solving and adjusting to changing circumstances because they never did....You know, they did the UK education system and they don't know how to deal with that. Also, the head teacher, she doesn't know how to deal with that, took her four months to, to go on something else more than worksheets.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KEREN transcript 2

it was just a terrible situation — I'm sure you know what was happening at the Jewish school last year...or the year before....anyway, they got, there was a big..um... storm and change of heads three times and big problem with OFSTED, and was a lot of things and the discipline was there... and I don't know if you've ever been to the Army but it was worse than an army. (S1:Yeah). I was like, literally descriptions of teachers going in the corridors, shitting all over the place...was a line you were not supposed

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KEREN transcript 2

And he spent almost two years at home or a year and a half at home being seen and being, you know, treated as one of two children,..uh... also, in school terms and then he went back to school and was one of 30 and of course he wasn't seen

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

KEREN transcript 2

so when you understand that you will say to yourself, okay, what am I doing about it?

Code: ● REVELATIONS

KEREN transcript 2

I came across the TED talk of Ken Robinson, and I think that was a moment when you ...(pause)...watch it, your jaw drops. You watch it again, watch it again, and then you know that you can't just move on with your life like they are...(pause)... That was a life changer. And that was the moment that I've started looking at things more critically, and not taking for granted everything, and doing everything the other way the British education system teaches you to do. And I've just started delving into all this kind of Future of Education and found a lot of interest in that, and read, and did some online courses and like, learned it

And the more I learned it (laughter) I've realised that it's just — going and not going is quite the same, but is it doing us any damage? I don't know. It's just like, yeah, they learn how to read and write, but — and I think especially the British, and looking at other countries, you know, more advanced, everybody knows Finland is amazing, Holland is doing great, Singapore is interestingly different, all of these countries, but..um...this country is especially backwards (laughter)..um...It's just so sad.... And yes, they're not growing up to be idiots or it's just a way of thinking is so — and the system and the discipline, and the values are just not the right ones, and they're definitely not preparing you for the future.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

KEREN transcript 1

It definitely wouldn't- it definitely wouldn't have happened like without the lockdown

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

And the first lockdown, they were like one of the less together schools, so they didn't really send those like proper schoolwork, beyond sort of like examples of things that you might want to do....um...And so then, we just did our own....we just completely just did our own thing and....

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

GRACE transcript 2

which we ignored, um, and that was... that was absolutely fine because it meant that, um, we could just do what we wanted to do..

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

... And it was like, it was really nice, it was like... it was really nice little routine, um,

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

it's important thing that happened as a result of lockdown

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

GRACE transcript 2

Like when he- when he had like the time and space to just focus on what he's interested in, he's like, it- like he's... it was really fast, like really, really *fast* progress

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

[GRACE transcript 1 with comments](#)

And K found it really, really hard, like she's the younger one that's neurotypical, she was like, "Oh..." She would just like follow me around in the house like, "Play with me, play with me, play with me, play with me," like a lot—obviously, like really missing out on like social interaction and things happening. But Tommy was just like, just really like obviously living his best life (chuckles)

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

[GRACE transcript 1 with comments](#)

Um, and then when we went back to school, I was like, "All right, this is like, now, it's time to like be a bit more assertive with the school," because like up to then, I'd just been like, okay, we'll just sort of leave them to do what they think is best. Um, which was... which wasn't very much really

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

[GRACE transcript 1 with comments](#)

Um, but I was like, okay, so now's the time to like just (audio breaking) be like a little bit more assertive with them. So like I rang them up and I was like, "Look, you know, I know what he needs now, I've worked with him like really closely over the lockdown, um, and I think that he needs either a one-to-one in class or he needs like maybe some kind of like flexi schooling where, um, you know, where he can like maybe do some of the time in the classroom and then I can work with him on the work when he gets home."

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

[GRACE transcript 1 with comments](#)

And up to then, like my husband had been like, you don't... don't just give up, he's like no, they've got an obligation, you don't just give up. Like you don't just give up and do something yourself if somebody hasn't met their obligations, you see, you... you know, you fight them. Um, and I was like, okay, well, we could—yeah, like, we could fight them and what we'd get is what is happening now, and it's like still... it's still not suitable

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

[GRACE transcript 1 with comments](#)

because I wasn't like the most assertive with the school

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

[GRACE transcript 1](#)

I thought that it was going to be a... like I could-... like I... like I could understand the principle..um...and if I was advising somebody else, I could probably say that, I'd probably say like, well, you know, don't just rush to home school, look in to whether there's, you know, help they can get in the system. But I realistically knew that it would be like... quite a long battle that would maybe end up in a tribunal, and that it would probably end up with it being *slightly* better but not *entirely* meeting his needs. Because I've talked to other mums, and that's what usually happen..(laughs). So, like, I knew that I was like, yeah, I was a bit sceptical about it.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

[GRACE transcript 1](#)

and I think they were fobbing me off a little bit because when I spoke to, um, an advice service about it, they did say that you should get—you should be able to get a written statement of needs. And I- I- I did suggest the written statement of needs, and they were just kind of like, "Oh no, no, we don't do that, it's not necessary."

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

[GRACE transcript 1 with comments](#)

and I was like, you didn't tell me like any of that. If I'd have known he was having such a bad time, I wouldn't have sent him, you know? They said that, um... (pause) he... They- they just- they said that he was like really, like basically that he was really withdrawn and zoned out, and then occasionally for no obvious reasons he'd get very upset and say that he was bad and wanted to kill himself, and I was like, oh, that's like rather more extreme than (pause) I was led to believe

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

Oh, no, it's interesting, isn't it, because like, I think, I think to an extent the school, because they've got like, um, (clicks tongue) statutory obligation to keep him there, they can't... I mean they can't... So, they... they- they weren't allowed by law to suggest that you go away, um, I mean they- they came close a couple of times (chuckles) so I weren't allowed to like actually like I would say it. Um, and so I think that maybe just influences them to like continue to put a positive spin on things, I think they're just... Or like maybe they want it to work so they like want to keep you engaged and they want to keep you... And certainly when they're talking to the kid, they want to present everything in positive terms to the kid, and maybe they do that to parents as well to keep you engaged with what they're trying to do, um, (clicks tongue) but yeah, I wish that... (pause) I wish that they had... (pause) I wish that they had told me exactly what was going on. Um, it was weird, and like money's like obviously a thing, and the impre—the strong impression that I got was that if you are to... if you have a kid that kicks off and causes a classroom management problem then you will

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 1

I think it's very much aimed at keeping the child in their seat and not making too much noise, so that the rest of the class can get on with what they're doing,

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 1

I'm not saying that you should have a big old tantrum but I'm saying that you should maybe like go to a teacher and just say I'm having a bad time. And he was like, oh, no, no, that's out of the question, I couldn't possibly... (Pause) I couldn't possibly take the initiative to talk to a teacher. So, you know, that was another reason he didn't know what was going on because he just wasn't prepared to... (Pause) Like he just didn't...he just didn't feel confident to tell anybody.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

Let's see if we can get his needs met *in school*.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 2

And so, at that point, I think I phoned up an advice service in Scotland...um...I don't remember the name of it. But yeah, I followed them up and asked for advice and they said, you need to have a written statement of needs.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 2

So we don't have an ECHP thing...But you can get a written statement of needs..um.. and I think I might have. I think I did mention it to school at some point and they just went, "Oh no, we don't do that. We just do meet their needs. We don't need a bit of paper to meet their needs", and so I think it would have been ..(laughter)...a this is what I'm saying...this is why I am saying, like I don't understand *why* they wanted the assessment. Why they wanted the diagnosis to be done, if they didn't have an intention of like using a free thing....

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 2

It was awful...and this was the sort of stuff that was going on at home (corrected herself)..at school, but I wasn't seeing it at home because he's quite happy at home. (Hmm). So again I think it was... I think it was sort of like maybe like worse than I realised

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 2

Yes, I think you said, "I wish they had told me exactly what was going on".

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 1

I'm so... I feel very, very lucky that it happened, honestly. Because we'd be dealing with something much worse now, I think....because it's almost like.. it's almost like, I would go so far as to say, like not intentionally.....it's almost like a sort of abusive environment,

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

GRACE transcript 2

Yes it was quite extreme. They said that he'd sometimes have like meltdowns and then he'd say like really extreme things, like he wanted to kill himself and I was like that, that's the sort of thing that I would mention (laughter).....

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 2

They just like, they don't have the funding for him but they just like informally making poor old Mrs. Campbell deal with the (chuckles) two special needs kids instead of just the one...(chuckles)...

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1

Um, so for example, if like a kid's needs to play with a fidget toy or needs to wear ear defenders or whatever, they're not going to like, faff around and go, oh, well, are you really—do you really have a diagnosis that means you need to, like then what they're supposed to do is just like go, okay, fine, you... you know, you need this or you need this, so, like, you know, we're here for everybody. Um, and so like all of those like very like small things like that, like oh, you know, you can bring your chew toy in, you can have ear defenders, you know, whatever, and- and, you know, they would be absolutely fine with them, obviously it just it's more complicated where it's something that like involves money.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1

And then so, you know, like... (Pause) You know, then you're like, okay, if you went back in the system, how would you arrange for that to happen? (Pause) And like I don't know, like maybe you can't, maybe you can't arrange for that to happen. (Pause) Like there's lots of...there's lots of like little kind of things that they could tweak that wouldn't be, you know, wouldn't be quite enough. And I think, you know, like when they... (Pause) When they do accommodations, I think it's like I was saying, I think it's very much aimed at keeping the child in their seat and not making too much noise, so that the rest of the class can get on with what they're doing, um, and then that is why Matthew got a one to one and Tommy didn't

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1

Um, and he just couldn't do like these three things every day. Um, and I was like, oh, well, that was what I was going to ask the school for, like this situation that is happening now, this is what I was going to ask the school for.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

they said that he was like really, like basically that he was really withdrawn and zoned out, and then occasionally for no obvious reasons he'd get very upset and say that he was bad and wanted to kill himself,

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

And I- and I- and as I saw him do that, it just kind of clicked, I was like, oh my God, that's what they were seeing in school like all the time. That's what- that make sense now, that's what he was doing where he's... he doesn't do that at home, he only—you know, he only does that when he's in like a situation that's overwhelming. So, he must have just been overwhelmed like that all the time, and they would just like, "Oh, well, that's just Tommy..." Like it's just insane when you think about it that they like tested his reading ability when he was in that state (chuckles), or like tried to teach him to count when he was in that state. It was absolutely like no surprise that he couldn't learn anything. Because like, it's, it really is like quite an extreme kind of like, he's just zoned out and he's not like, not dealing with things.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

No, because I don't think that they understood what they were looking at. So I knew that they... you know, I knew that they... (pause) had very different opinion of him than I did, they certainly had a really different opinion of his abilities.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

is it that he doesn't know the answer and he's not paying- he wasn't paying attention when you asked him, or is it that he wasn't paying attention when you told him the information and therefore, he doesn't know the answer now. And I don't think they ever really drilled down into that.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

Like I read it and I just felt really sad for him,

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

I took that I took the decision on academic grounds, because his academic performance had improved.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

GRACE transcript 2

Because I saw him at home and he was like, you know, he- being his best self and he was like, you know, obsessive about history and constantly talking about special interest and asking interesting questions and being able to do things, you know, and they saw somebody who couldn't do really simple tasks, or answer really simple questions.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

I was like, oh, like he *really* can't, he *really* can't focus on things

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 1

honestly had *no clue* or only like a very small inkling until much later on, that, that ...school was so large a problem for him emotionally.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 2

really didn't understand it. And that's, and that's why, I guess, for a long time, I didn't understand why he was behind.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 2

I didn't understand that he was in, he was in a state of burnout and *couldn't* process information.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 1

I did get him DLA and I sort of rejigged our finances, and then- and like, and I... and I gave up my job, and now I work like one shift a week at Tesco's and then sometimes an evening shift, but if I feel like it there's overtime (chuckles) And I... this is what... like this is what I do now (

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

which is like I hadn't realised up to then like the extent of- of how much he couldn't do

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

And, um, and he can't like... And then I- and I realised actually at that point I was like, "Oh, he can't actually make himself concentrate on a task that was like somebody else's idea."

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 1 with comments

and that he was having a nice time and he was able to like follow his interests.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

GRACE transcript 2

And I really do wonder, if we hadn't had that lockdown break, I wonder if I would ever have had the guts to do it.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

But it was a huge positive for us, because it just gave us that trial and it gave me the strength to be able to, to do it.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

So, you know with the lockdown and so on...Yeah, that sadness lifted, so we weren't in that cycle.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

And, and then I think as the days and the weeks went on it. It just, I think, I think the curiosity was the biggest thing for me

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

You know, we'd go on, it was the only thing we were allowed to do, like go on a short walk and she'd just be curious about the sky and the trees and animals.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

And I don't know, I'd always, you know, I'd always If we ever went out with things like that, always trying to point things out... but just felt this was *her* leading it.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

And, you know, if we'd sit doing work at home, she would listen to me - she'd enjoy it. ..

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

So I knew that it wasn't representative of what Home-Ed would look like, whereas I know a lot of other parents were like, 'Oh my God, I could never Home-Ed, this is awful', because they thought that's what it is like.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 2

So we just did our own thing. And no one was checking on anything anyway so yeah.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

KELLY Transcript 2

Because it's like, actually that's, that's *really* hurting her that she's missing me and to have that dismissed that it's silly, you know? That wasn't good.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

Yeah, I mean it was, I was terrified. I don't know why. I think I felt like I was going to be told off or something ... or you know, where I'd get some sort of backlash.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

And because it is just it ..it just suits Emily's so well, and she has progressed so much from being at home...(P)... that's it in a nutshell.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

Yeah, rather than just having it just dismissed..um...um.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

'Come on, hurry up, you know, you've got to get out ... next class are in', or something. And if she'd get upset.....you know it was 'Stop being silly', just, I think it just became a bit of a phrase for her...

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

I think it just became a bit of a phrase for her...and she'll she still gets a bit upset about that now.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

And actually, she's gone from being upset to, she's actually quite angry about it, now, you know. She'll actually say...if I could see that teacher now, I'd punch them. Because, yeah, 'How dare they call me silly when I was really upset'.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

my professional life..um...I mean prior to Emily, being home educated, you know...um.. I also ran a training and consultancy business. So I would go and speak at conferences around issues you know, to do with special needs and stuff like that, you know. I'd find I've been listened at by all these, you know, 200 people listening to me intently and writing notes because I was respected. My voice was respected and then I would go into a school meeting and I am just mum, who's not being listened to

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1

and, and I think that's it's because of how parents are made to feel. You are not equals in this system at all.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 1

How it treats um... children and young people, fullstop. Not only those with SEN, you know

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 2

She got me, you know, he got the oh, 'she's doing great. Sort of spiel and so then it was a case of, yeah well they say that, they always say that. They always say that in parents' evenings and reports, but the reality is very different.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 2

And I don't know, I just think it was then any requests or any meeting or anything that they would go into it with. Yeah. That it was just me again and trying to get stuff that was nothing more than what they were entitled to...I think I just got a bit of a reputation. Which was unfair, and just a lot of the decisions that were made where completely, just baffling.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

KELLY Transcript 2

But then the opposite side of that is, when you're sat in a meeting with the SENCo and sometimes the head teacher or, and then the case officer from the SEN team, and then they're coming out, with absolute baloney in terms of the law, and I'm saying, 'That is not the law. That is absolutely not the law', and you know I'd got some private reports done. One of them was Speech and Language Therapy. And, you know, the case officers telling me that, that had to go in section A of the EHCP, because I'd got it privately as a parent. I'm like, 'I don't think so. You tell me in the SEN code of practice where it says that, you know, that's not the case'. And so I used to get people's backs up with that. An, and I know that because I...some of it was they were trying to have me on, I know that. They didn't want that private strip to go in right section because then its legally binding. But yes, so it was frustrating at the same time and the SENCo, as lovely as he was...he just hadn't had the training that he needed.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
KELLY Transcript 2

Yeah, I mean it was, I was terrified. I don't know why. I think I felt like I was going to be told off or something ... or you know, where I'd get some sort of backlash.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
KELLY Transcript 1

but I think like I said before school always did try, and you know we had the maximum that I think we could have got in terms of you know she had full time TA support..um... a

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 2

I don't feel anger I suppose, to any particular person or like the school. For example, even the local Authority, I'm angry as a whole for what they put my family through, but for me it's, I'm angry at the system.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 2

because she, she was so, shut down. And I think, I think she had really started to shut down on herself and ..um..that crying was just her biggest form of communication at that point.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 1

I believe if children aren't happy and if they don't feel safe, they're not going to learn full stop.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 1

it's not getting their needs met, I think.. and not being listened to as a parent..

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 1

And sent them out and there was no thought really within that, of differentiating

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 2

And then they, I think when they started putting someone.. and I just flagged up the fact that she can't do these at all, and I think the SENCo's comment was well just look at, I think she was in Year 3 at the time, and just look at the Year 2 stuff and I remember I looked at that and I thought, she can't even do that.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 2

the local authority were extremely nasty about that whole process. And you know, I'm there thinking, you know, this is there's a there's a child at the centre of this and it's my son and you know, you're treating me with such contempt

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION
KELLY Transcript 1 coded

And I don't know, I just think it was then any requests or any meeting or anything that they would go into it with. Yeah. That it was just me again and trying to get stuff that was nothing more than what they were entitled to...I think I just got a bit of a reputation. Which was unfair, and just a lot of the decisions that were made where completely, just baffling.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

But, you know, it's like I say, I wouldn't change what we're doing for the world. I mean we've had to change a lot solike family-wise... like my work has had to adapt and things like that. But you know, it's the benefits to us as a family are just by far...

Code: ● REVELATIONS

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

we just we can't do this. We just ...how can we have put her through all of that? ...Seen the difference and then how can we go back to.... How can we put her back to that knowing how unhappy she was every day?

Code: ● REVELATIONS

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

Yeah, we decided and yes, it was how can we? How could we go back to that every day and that was obviously creating a lot of anxiety in **me** as well doing that, you know.

Code: ● REVELATIONS

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

but then I think within, you know, within a few days it's like ...yeah this just can't happen

Code: ● REVELATIONS

KELLY Transcript 1 coded

I think if regular school worked for Julian, he would've loved it, they had a *full* timetable on Teams, maybe two lessons less every day.. so they could engage rather than sending worksheets. Um, but Julian really, really struggled to engage with that, and I had to basically become like a wonderful TA sitting next to him.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

STEPH transcript 1

He had no motivation to engage with it at all.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

STEPH transcript 1

and he found it very difficult also being sat in front of a screen, I remember to be thinking that can't healthy. I mean, we're told as adults, we shouldn't be sitting in front of a screen all day. What can that do? I mean, at that point, he didn't have any device of his own... I had an iPad that he maybe would be able to go on half an hour, an hour a day.. He wasn't that into TV.

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST

STEPH transcript 1

Um, but then the second lockdown came in the January of year five. That was it, but I didn't...that was the real turning point... Because having...always been told how important school was and how it's the law and children have to go to school and blah, blah, blah because he's [a boy full of contradictions my son because, although school was somewhat incredibly difficult for him. He loved school because it was routine and he knew what was happening when and what was going on, and *that's what you have to do*, you have to be in school, you cant not go to school so his...all his thinking I think just got a bit screwed up by the second lockdown and didn't really engage with home learning at all from school...

Code: ● LOCKDOWN AS CATALYST
STEPH transcript 1

Whereas for me I *think he kept going. He kept doing it. He needs a bloody medal* when you actually read about everything there.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

And, um, the school would go, “No, no, no, it’s fine. You know, he’s top of everything. For his year two SATs he got 99% in maths.”

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

and then I thought, “Oh, I must just be imagining it.” It must be me almost in *our* relationship,

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

And the doctor’s, the GP as well said, “No, don’t be ridiculous. Look, he’s looking me right in the eye.”

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

Um, so then I thought, I ‘m just being a neurotic mother.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

As you can imagine I was feeling pretty shit.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

And I remember raising with her and she said, “I mean, honestly if there was...if I had to take one child from this class, it would be Julian.” Like there was something that’s clicked, they work together, but it also means that she was kind of blinded to where he might be struggling.

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

And it was also somebody recognising it because for years school had brushed off,

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

I just wanted some help for Julian because I thought seven-year-olds should not be wanting to kill himself...

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

and all I’ve ever known since I left the school was kids have to go to school. *That is the law.*

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER
STEPH transcript 1

Um, so I thought kids had to go to school

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

STEPH transcript 1

and apparently she screamed at him without anything, "If you don't stop tapping your pencil, I will radio you with the headmistress."

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

STEPH transcript 1

And I said *I'd be scared* to go to the headmistresses office you know, and I'm fully grown, not a little boy...

Code: ● SHIFTING SANDS OF POWER

STEPH transcript 1

And I was sure at that stage, *if they had just taken the time and let him have that one to one support from a TA at any point*, he might have been settled back in at that school and last until the end of year six.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

like this boy told him he was a big, fat stinker

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

Um, anyway, it just became awful and the school weren't doing anything to help

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

He struggled a lot with friendships (goes quieter)...and he'd always say that he'd sat alone on the friendship bench.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

Um, and then there's this one boy that probably he was kicking him every day.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

Um, I mean, I got the pastoral log from the school and it's really heart breaking,

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

and they seem to locate the problem in Julian rather than in the environment.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

Um, but he's telling me he's bored in maths and I said...he said, "Can you ask Mr. Jones if I can have harder maths?"

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

he was incredibly despondent in the fact that Mr. Jones had said he has to wait for the rest of the class to catch up and then they would do something else.

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

The science teacher didn't like it. And obviously the message about not sending him out hadn't trickled down and she'd heard, you know, what had happened a week before

Code: ● THE INCLUSION ILLUSION

STEPH transcript 1

But it did make me also learn quite a lot about how Julian learns...

Code: ● REVELATIONS

STEPH transcript

It was just living in conflict which isn't very healthy and you only get one childhood...

Code: ● REVELATIONS

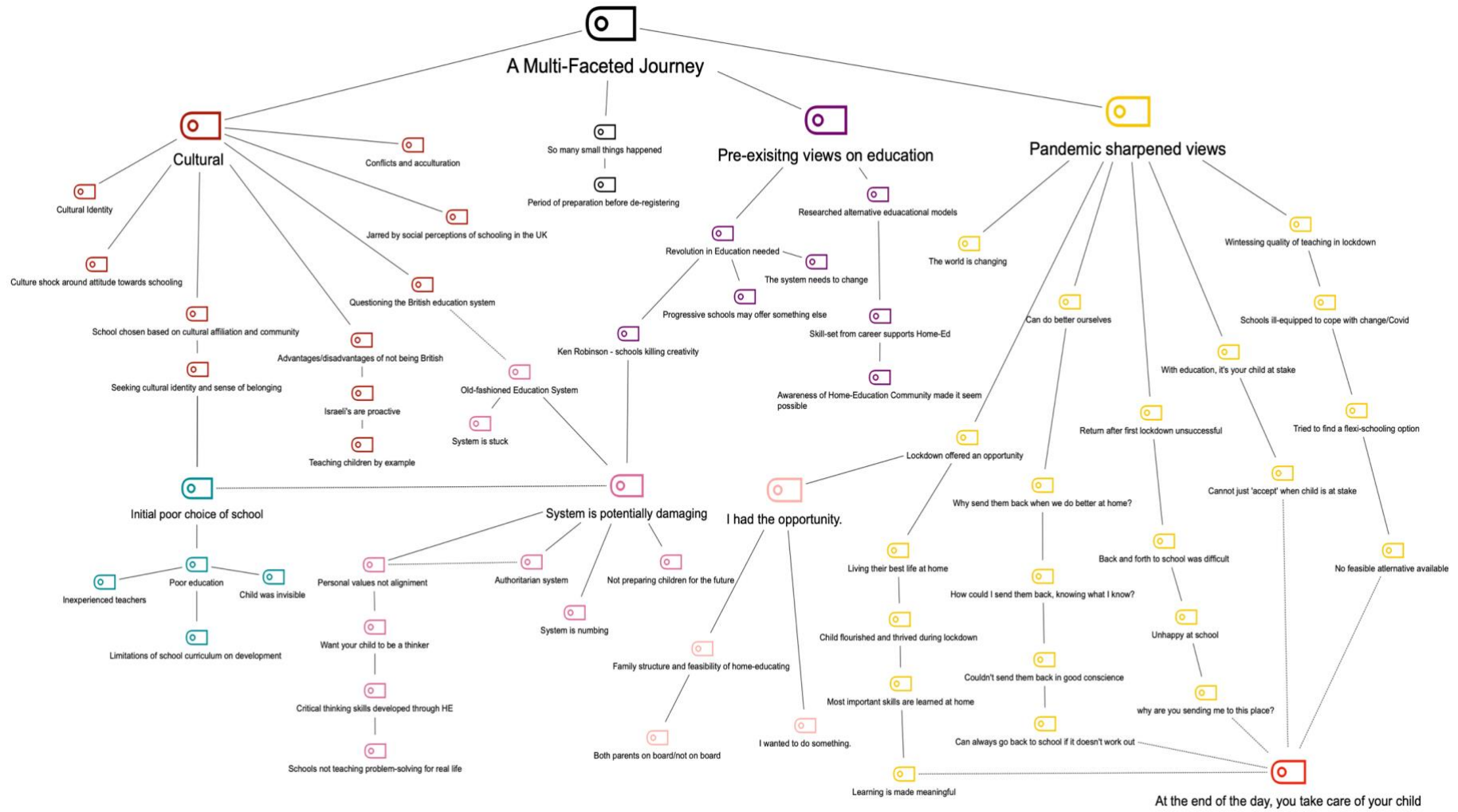
STEPH transcript 1

and I'd learnt a bit more by then and then I just thought, I said, it's fine, if you don't want to go in, we'll go home if you're not up to it today

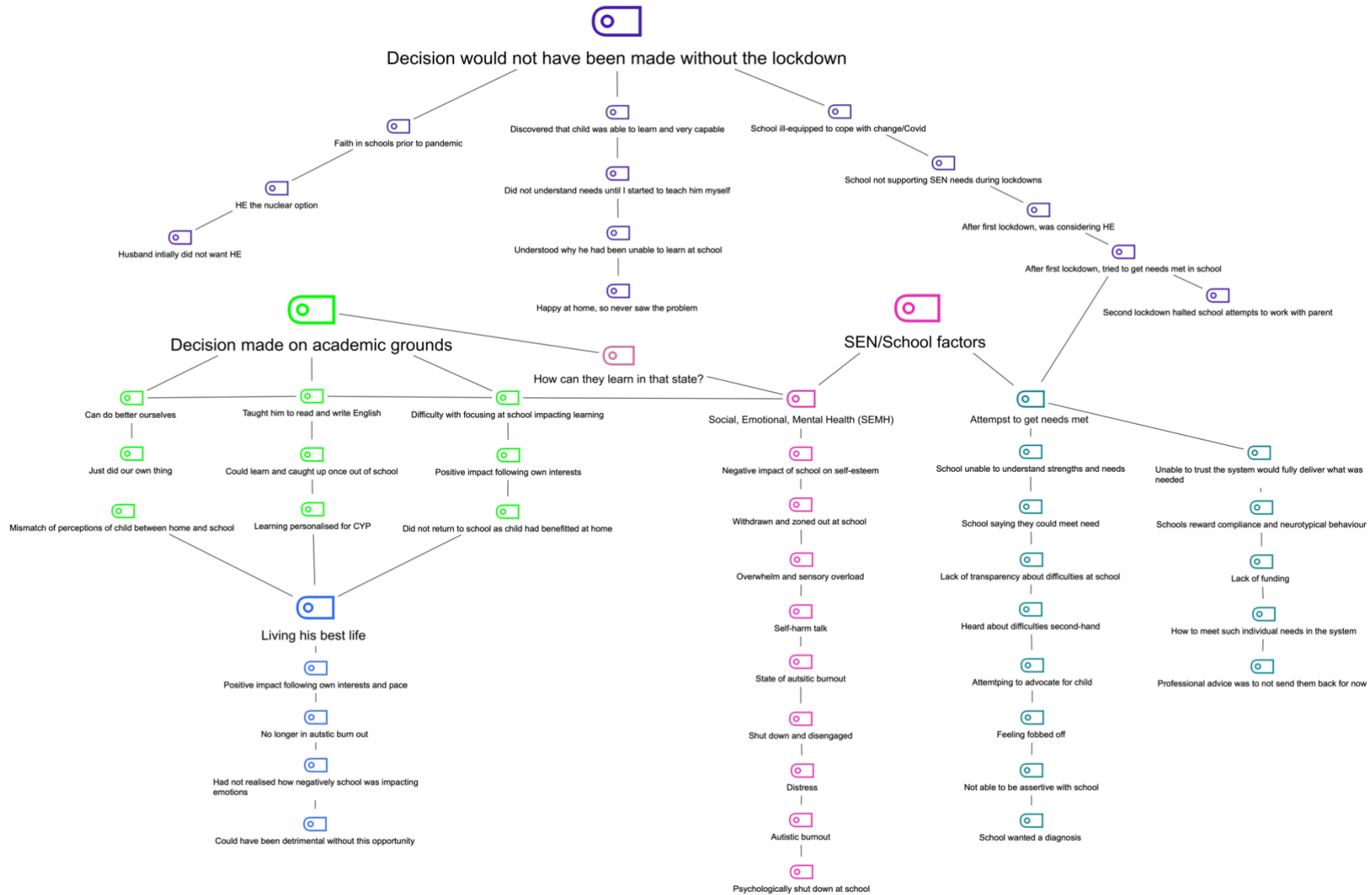
Code: ● REVELATIONS

STEPH transcript 1

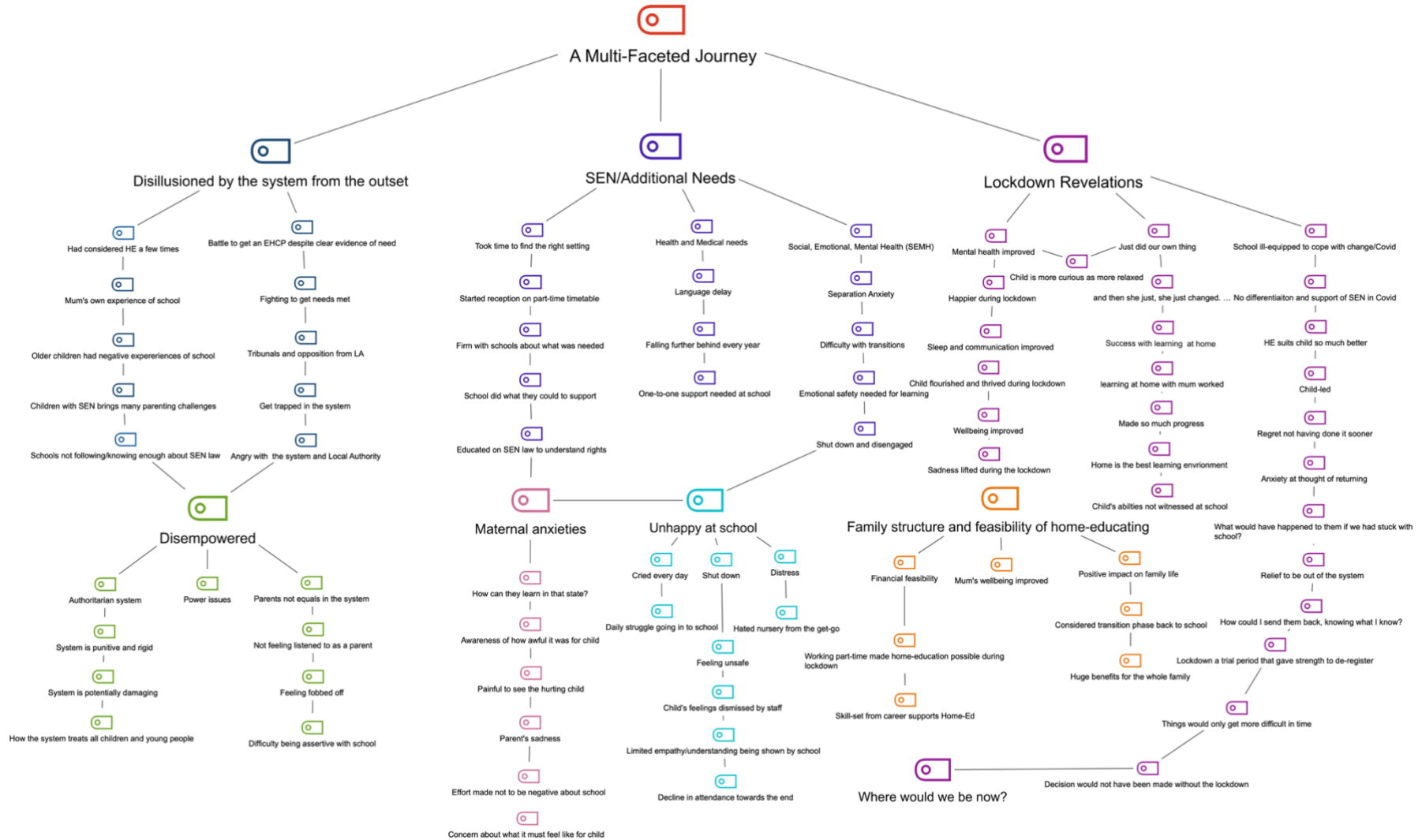
7.15 Appendix O – THEMATIC MAP FOR KEREN



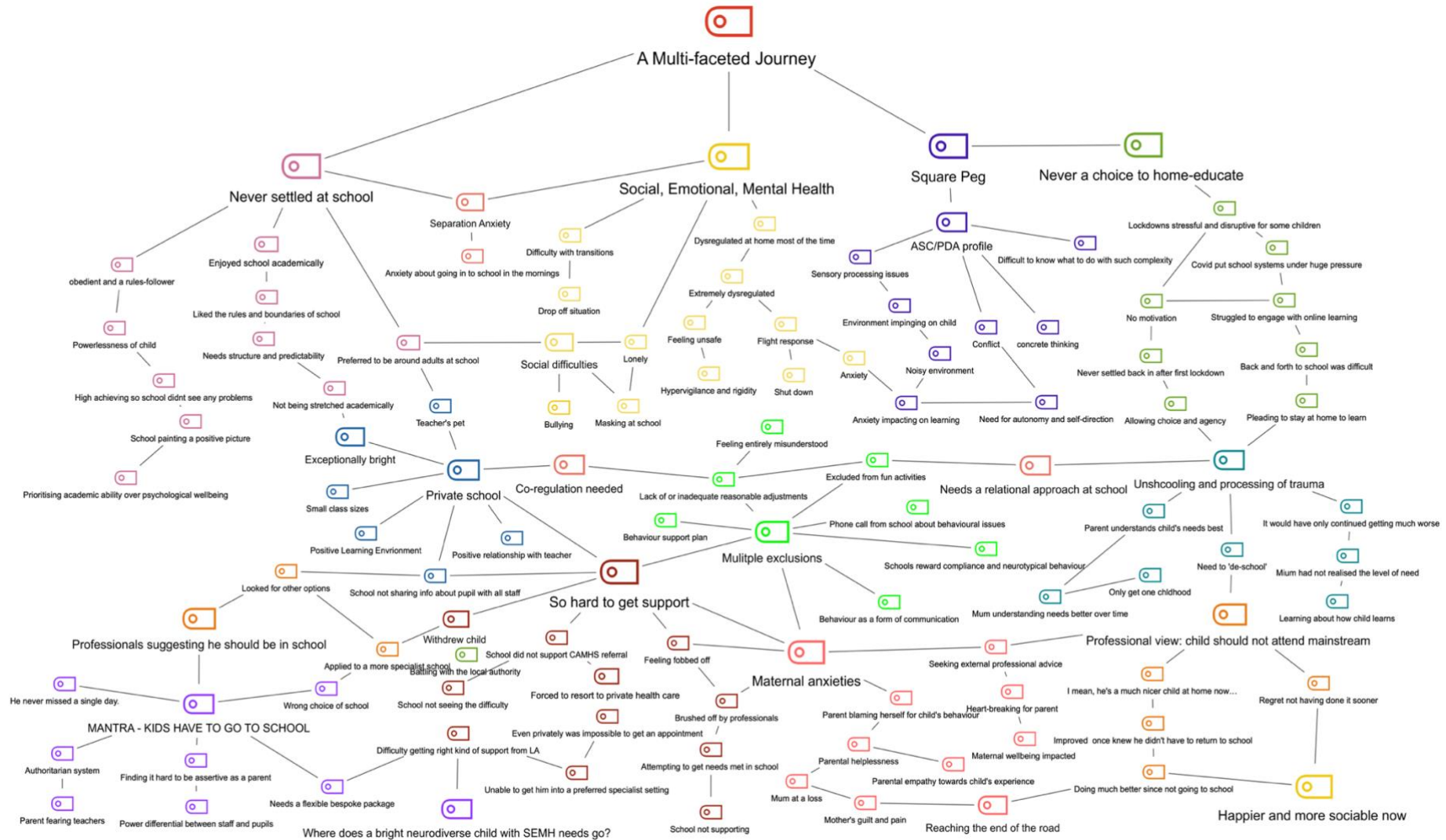
7.16 Appendix P – THEMATIC MAP FOR GRACE



7.17 Appendix Q – THEMATIC MAP FOR KELLY



7.18 Appendix R – THEMATIC MAP FOR STEPH



7.19 Appendix S – Ethical Approval

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)

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? (http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/index.html)	Yes
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

Project title	Elective-Home-Education: Why I didn't send my child back to school during or after the Covid-19 pandemic		
Proposed project start date	July 2022	Anticipated project end date	May 2023
Principle Investigator (normally your Research Supervisor): Jude Mortell			
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			
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)?	YES (NRES approval)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	YES (HRA approval)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters.			

SECTION B: APPLICANT DETAILS


Name of Researcher	Tami Alikhani
Programme of Study and Target Award	Professional Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology (M4)
Email address	TAlikhani@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk
Contact telephone number	07733122335

SECTION C: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

<p>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?</p> <p>YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If YES, please detail below:</p>	
<p>Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Are you proposing to conduct this work in a location where you work or have a placement?</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If YES, please detail below outline how you will avoid issues arising around colleagues being involved in this project:</p> <p>My colleagues are not currently consulting or contracted for work with the home-educating community. There is an Elective Home Education Adviser whom I will be liaising with to approach participants, but this population tend not to qualify for EP support as they are outside of the national education system, with whom LA EPs work.</p>	
<p>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).</p> <p><small>*Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)</small></p> <p>If YES, please add details here:</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Will you be required to get further ethical approval after receiving TREC approval?</p> <p>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):</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>If your project is being undertaken with one or more clinical services or organisations external to the Trust, please provide details of these:</p>	
<p>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:</p>	
<p>Do you have approval from the organisations detailed above? (this includes R&D approval where relevant)</p>	<p>YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></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	
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SECTION D: SIGNATURES AND DECLARATIONS

APPLICANT DECLARATION	
I confirm that:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date. • I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research. • I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding ethical principles and to keep my supervisor updated with the progress of my research • I am aware that for cases of proven misconduct, it may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research. • 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. 	
Applicant (print name)	TAMI ALIKHANI
Signed	
Date	05.04.22

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name of Supervisor/Principal Investigator	Dr Judith Mortell
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Supervisor –	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> 	
Signed	
Date	16.06.22

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

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)**

The proposed research aims to explore the reasons for families de-registering their children from mainstream education and opting to home-educate in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and periods of enforced lock-down/home-schooling. I intend to carry out a mixed-methods study with an initial short online-survey, to be completed by parents who have de-registered their child/children since March 2020. The on-line survey will explore participants' views as to whether they perceive (i) mainstream schooling doesn't work for their child/family so they felt they had no option but to deregister (ii) neither mainstream schooling or deregistering works well for their child/family, deregistering was the better of two problematic options (iii) mainstream schooling would work for their child/family, but deregistering was a better option

Following this, the intention is to interview 3-5 participants on two occasions with 1-2 weeks between each interview. These 'free-association narrative' interviews (FANI) will last approximately 1 hour. Participants will be asked open-ended questions about their experience and reasons for removing their child/children from mainstream education. In the second interview, participants will be asked follow-up questions about themes arising from the first interview. They will also be invited to reflect on the initial analysis of their responses to check how this fits with their understanding and experience. I will be looking at unconscious processes that may arise both in myself and within the interviews and will record my own observations in a reflective diary.

- 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)**

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term given to families who educate their children at home (Department for Education (DfE), 2019). Under UK law, parents bear the responsibility of ensuring that their children are '*suitably educated*' (Education Act, 1996). However, it is not required that they do so in a school-setting. The word 'elective' presupposes that parents choose to own that responsibility. However, the researcher feels that there is a need to better understand why parents are increasingly removing their children out of externally organised education. A recent survey by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ACDS) estimated a 34% increase during the 2020-2021 academic year.

The aim of the current study is to respond to the recent significant increase in children who have not returned to school during and post the Covid-19 lockdowns, and to better understand why families have made the choice to de-register their children after or during a period of imposed 'home-schooling' (distinct from home educating). Thus, the rationale for the research is to better understand the reasons for de-registration and to examine the drivers towards this move during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study will explore this through a mixed-methods psychosocial approach to explore the conscious and unconscious processes driving this phenomenon.

The research questions that this study will aim to answer are:

3. What is the prevalence of families feeling that they had no option but to de-register their child/children from mainstream education?
4. What were the key drivers underpinning deregistration for those parents who felt that returning to mainstream school was no longer a viable option for their child?

The main reasons cited for home education in a pre-pandemic 2018 survey responding to the Duty of Local Authorities Bill [HL] 2017-191 were: dissatisfaction with school provision (41%), philosophical reasons (27%) and unmet SEN needs in schools (16%). 27% reported that their local authority was unhelpful, 16% that it was helpful and 57% did not know.

EPs work with all children between the ages of 0-25, however, the structures in place when working for a local authority suggest that their skills and knowledge often may not reaching CYP who access their education at home.

This is because most of LA based EPs' time is allocated to education settings and CYP access EP services through their schools and colleges.

It is hoped that findings from this research can be used to inform EPs of some of the drivers that are pushing some families away from school so that they can better support vulnerable children. It also hopes to broaden the conversation so that the local authority can build relationships in the future that may be supportive to families.

Sharing the findings should promote more understanding both in schools, local authorities and for the EP profession, encouraging EPs to become more attuned to families for whom mainstream education isn't working. It also offers the profession a chance to hear about how and why education delivered outside of an education setting is working and benefitting individuals and therefore provide an opportunity to learn about alternative ways of thinking about education.

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 study will be a mixed-methods, sequential exploratory design and will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, participants will be invited to answer a short (no more than 10 minutes) online questionnaire to elicit data that will be analysed using descriptive statistics. The questionnaire will be developed according to the BRUSO model (Peterson, 2000¹⁸), which stands for 'brief', 'relevant', 'unambiguous', 'specific' and 'objective'. The first question will offer a choice of three statements to choose from followed by an open-ended item which will be subject to content analysis for further descriptive statistical reporting.

The second phase will involve a more in-depth analysis of responses from approximately 3-5 parents conducted as a Free-Association Narrative Interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2012¹⁹). This methodology includes two interviews occurring within 1-2 weeks of one another, followed by thematic analysis of the data. The first interview will be guided by a small number of open-ended questions – a free association interview, and the second will be semi-structured, based on the narrative offered in the first interview. The interview schedule will be developed nearer the time that interviews will take place. It will explore their child's school experiences prior to and during Lockdown and what it was about these experiences that influenced the decision to de-register and home-school. Interviews will occur face-to-face unless participants state a preference for an online interview. In which case, it will occur online via Zoom. The interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. Before the second interview, as well as transcribing the first interview, I will make a note of pauses, hesitations and changes of topic. This is because fluency in speech tends to occur when people are talking about the things they have thought through and less fluently about things they might not have paid as much attention to. FANIs explore undercurrents and less visible themes as well as surface narratives. The second interview thus offers an opportunity to explore both presentations and co-create a more integrated narrative.

Reflexive notes will be made during the process of revisiting the transcripts to acknowledge researcher bias and to use the researcher as a tool in attending to the data, through the researcher's reactions, thoughts and feelings. This will be used to help contextualise responses during analysis. Demographic data will not be collected as the researcher is not researching this as an additional factor.

An inductive, semantic thematic analysis approach will be used to identify themes, meanings and patterns across the dataset. The dataset will be visited and revisited to define the emerging dominant themes and to create a narrative of the data. This will follow the Braun and Clarke (2006²⁰) method. Coding memos will be extensively recorded while carrying out the thematic analysis. These will include information about situations of tension, avoidances, inconsistencies, contradictions, changes in emotional tone and hesitation. They will also record hypotheses around

¹⁸ Peterson, R.A. (2000). *Constructing effective questionnaires*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

¹⁹ Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2012). *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: A Psychosocial Approach*. London, UK: SAGE.

²⁰ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

defences and anxieties, based on psychoanalytic theory and through triangulation of data sources (reflexive field notes). The analysis will take up to three months to complete.

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 proposed participants are parents from one large Local Authority. All participants need to have had a child or children attending a school or external educational establishment prior to March 2020 and will have since then, de-registered their children in order to home educate them. Permission from the Local Authority will be sought.

The LA's Elective Home Education Advisor will be asked to email a 'flyer' (Appendix 1) briefly describing the research question, as well as the 'Information for Participants' sheet (Appendix 2) to parents who meet the criteria. Phase 1: At the bottom of the Information for Participants sheet is a link that will take participants to the survey, but will first land on the consent form (Appendix 3) for this phase of the study. Once completed (all consent given), the participants will click 'next' and be taken to the survey (Appendix 4 – the precise wording of the survey questions are still being developed but there is a preliminary example. I am not keen to overemphasise that their decision be based on moving '**in order to home educate**' as I wish to stay away from highlighting the motivation, i.e. moving from or towards as the research shows that there are push and pull factors at play. I am looking to further explore this within phase 2. However, the participant information sheet does specify that I am looking for parents who have de-registered in order to home educate.

Ideally, I am seeking at least 50 participants for the first phase. If this number is not reached through the above processes, participants will be approached through organisers of home-educating groups in England. This will be done via online social media groups that the researcher is a member of - by approaching the moderator to request permission to attach the flyer in their 'posting information' platform. This ensures that the moderators, whom in these groups tend to be careful about who they interact with, can vet any possible difficulties they may have with this route to approaching participants.

Phase 2: Participants who have responded to the survey that they felt that they had no choice but to de-register their children, will be taken to a link where they will be allowed to leave an email address to be further contacted for interview. Where they do not choose to do this, their response will remain anonymous as will have been indicated in the consent. However, they may choose to leave their email in order to remain updated about the project.

The intended sample size for the second phase, is 4-6 participants. This number of participants has been used in other studies that utilised the FANI technique (e.g. Boyle, Kernohan & Rush, 2009²¹; Moroney, 2014²²). Small sample sizes are useful for psychosocial research, which Hollway explains is due to the depth of analysis required by the approach (Hollway, 2004²³). Participants will be selected on a 'first come, first served' basis where they have indicated that they would be willing to be interviewed., I will move through the list until I have sufficient data. Those remaining on the list, once all the required data has been collected, will be thanked for offering to participate and informed that they will not be interviewed.

²¹ Boyle, J., Kernohan, W., & Rush, T. (2009). 'When you are tired or terrified your voice slips back into its old first place': the role of feelings in community mental health practice with forensic patients. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 23(3), 291-313.

²² Moroney, E. (2014). A narrative inquiry into the role of advocacy and activism amongst mothers with a child diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Retrieved January 27, 2022 from <http://www.e-space.mmu.ac.uk/e-space/handle/2173/576470#>

²³ Hollway, W. (2004). Special issue on psychosocial research. *International Journal of Critical Psychology*, 10, 5-12.

Where participants and I have agreed to their being interviewed, they will be sent a second consent form (Appendix 5). An interview schedule has not yet been developed but please see examples of questions (Appendix 6).

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.

The intention is to conduct interviews at the homes of participants or at a neutral venue. However, should they prefer to do it online, this will be made possible via the Zoom online platform. Zoom does not automatically generate recordings unless set to do so. Therefore, I will gain consent before setting to record and as indicated in the consent form, all recordings will be deleted once they have been transcribed. In order to ensure both the safety or the researcher and the participants, I will follow the Local Authority's home visiting policy that has been designed to keep employees and residents safe when LA staff members visit their homes (see Appendix 7). A further risk assessment in line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (DfE, 2021) policy has also been attached (see Appendix 8).

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)¹
- 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.
- Adults² 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 research 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 dependent³ 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.

¹If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability³, any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.

²'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)

³Proposed 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)

Correspondence will use simple and accessible language and opportunities will be given for information to be discussed with the researcher if further explanation is wanted or needed.

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 discomfiture, 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
- 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.

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.

During my undergraduate degree, I had experiences of conducting the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) with individuals in their homes across England (UCL, BSc, 1994-1996). I have also worked with families for over 15 years, supporting their SEN children, which has helped me to develop skills in active listening and providing a containing environment for conversations about their children. I have participated in experiential groups which have applied psychoanalytic concepts (e.g. group relations) and facilitated parent-support workshops which apply some of these concepts.

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)

NOTE: 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.

Home-educating families sit outside mainstream education and, as such, can become easily marginalised. This research seeks to bring their voice and experience to the attention of the LA in which their child is being home-educated. Further, discourses around home education have shown to both marginalise and privilege different communities (Myers, 2017). This piece of work hopes to highlight the impact of the current context on local families and intends to give consideration to different groups, in order to make them and their voices more visible. It also aims to offer support through, 'honesty, sympathy and respect' as emphasised by the FANI method (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). It also aims to maintain a neutral attitude to the decision to home-educate; the intention isn't to make schools right for these families but to respect their voices and see what can be learned.

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)

I will monitor the emotional state of participants throughout the interviews and ask whether they would like to stop or take a break if they appear distressed. In the case of distress, I will remind them too of their right to withdraw. I will also check the feelings of the participants at the end of the session. If any distressing thoughts, emotions or memories have been triggered as a result of participating in the interview, I will signpost to additional support and encourage the participant to seek further information on the support that they need. I will also follow up with a call within 24 hours, to check in with the participant.

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.

Participants will be asked about their experience of the research process and whether there are any thoughts or feelings they would like to discuss further with someone. Signposting to a relevant service will be given, as recommended in section 13.

Participants will be asked whether they would like additional information following their involvement in the research with the options of verbal feedback, a written summary of the analysis or access to the full write up of the thesis.

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.

- Barnet Wellbeing Hub
- Mind in Barnet IAPT
- Let's Talk IAPT in Barnet

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For urgent help: BEHMT Crisis Resolution Team
<p>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)</p>
<p>Not applicable</p>

FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN OUTSIDE THE UK

<p>18. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK? <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, please confirm:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/</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 academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk:</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>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:</p>

SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

<p>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.</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>

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

21. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.

YES NO

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

22. The following is a participant information sheet checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

- 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.
- Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.
- A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC or other ethics body.
- If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.
- 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.
- 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.
- Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.
- A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the [Trusts 's Data Protection and handling Policies](https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/).:
- 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 (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
- Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

23. The following is a consent form checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

- Trust letterhead or logo.
- Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.
- Confirmation that the research project is part of a degree
- 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.
- Confirmation of particular requirements 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.
- If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.
- The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.
- Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.
- Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.
- Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

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:

I intend to anonymise all participants

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 5th 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

30. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? (Select all that apply)

- Peer reviewed journal
- Non-peer reviewed journal
- Peer reviewed books
- Publication in media, social media or website (including Podcasts and online videos)
- Conference presentation
- Internal report
- Promotional report and materials
- Reports compiled for or on behalf of external organisations
- Dissertation/Thesis
- Other publication

- Written feedback to research participants
- Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
- Other (Please specify below)

SECTION K: OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

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)?

SECTION L: CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

32. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

- Letters of approval from any external ethical approval bodies (where relevant)
- Recruitment advertisement
- Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant)
- Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant)
- Assent form for children (where relevant)
- Letters of approval from locations for data collection
- Questionnaire
- Interview Schedule or topic guide
- Risk Assessment (where applicable)
- Overseas travel approval (where applicable)

34. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.

7.20 APPENDIX T – Descriptors for Categories from the Content Analysis

1. Discovery of advantages to home-education (HE) as a consequence of lockdowns

This category encompasses codes that highlight how the lockdowns served as a catalyst for parents to recognise the advantages of home education. Examples include observation that their child thrived, experienced increased happiness or demonstrated enhanced academic progress during this period.

2. CYP wellbeing prioritised

This category represents the sentiments expressed by parents who believed it was essential to prioritise their child's wellbeing over attending school, especially when considering factors such as mental health concerns, instances of bullying or ongoing worries about the risks associated with COVID-19 to themselves or their child.

3. (Perceived) Lack of provision/resources/care to meet individual needs in school

This category emerged from codes that conveyed the perception that their child's needs were not adequately addressed within the school system, with a significant number mentioning specific educational requirements, such as Special Educational Needs (SEN).

4. Dissatisfaction with school/education system

This category represents factors listed by parents that indicate their disillusionment with either the school, Local Authority or the education system as a whole. These

factors may include experiences or perceptions that have led to a loss of confidence or trust in these systems.

7.21 Appendix U - Summary of code frequencies: raw data and then summed

Table showing the frequency of codes given by participants grouped according to the statement they had selected in the survey.

Statement 1: Neither mainstream schooling or deregistering are good options for my child/family, deregistering was the better of two options

Statement 2: Mainstream schooling could work for my child/family, deregistering was a preferred/better option

Statement 3: Mainstream schooling doesn't work for my child/family, so I feel we had no choice but to deregister

Reason Provided	Statement 1 N = 4	Statement 2 N = 19	Statement 3 N = 44	Total
DISCOVERY OF ADVANTAGES TO HE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF LOCKDOWNS				
HE was always a consideration	0	2	0	2
Flourishing during lockdowns/positive experience for CYP	0	4	1	5
Improved wellbeing for family and child	0	2	2	4
HE a far better option	1	0	3	4
Flexibility of HE	0	3	0	3
Made better progress at home	0	1	1	2
Working from home since pandemic made it viable	0	1	1	2
Opportunities and resources school can't offer	0	0	1	1
Total	1	13	9	23
CYP WELLBEING PRIORTISED POST-LOCKDOWN				
CYP unhappy/not enjoying school	0	2	3	5
School pressures impacting negatively	0	0	2	2

Continuing health concerns/perceived risk/safety of C-19	1	8	2	11
SEMH difficulties (anxiety/mental health)	1	0	17	18
Child's distress going to school	0	1	9	10
Bullying	2	0	7	9
Total	4	11	40	55
(PERCIEVED) LACK OF PROVISION/RESOURCES TO MEET NEED AT SCHOOL				
Lack of school-based support	0	0	12	12
School environment perceived to be negative for CYP	0	0	4	4
Decision was forced by school	0	1	0	1
Physical health concerns	0	0	3	3
Lack of duty of care	1	0	1	2
Concerns with SEN	0	2	10	12
Had not been making typically expected progress	0	0	3	3
Total	1	3	33	37
DISATISSFACTION WITH SCHOOL/EDUCATION SYSTEM				
Teaching style	1	0	2	3
Witnessed poor quality teaching during lockdown	1	2	0	3
Poor quality curriculum	0	2	1	3
Perceived excessiveness of post-lockdown restrictions	0	0	3	3
Lost trust in school and/or LA	0	0	4	4
Dislike current school system	0	3	1	4
LA and/or school unable to offer suitable provision	0	1	7	8
Fear of prosecution	0	3	2	5
Too strict, too many rules	0	0	4	4
Disagree with Sex Ed being taught	0	0	2	2
Parent's experience of school	0	1	0	1
Total	2	12	26	40

Summary Table of Total codes in each category for each statement

Category	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Total
Discovery of advantages to home-education (HE) as a consequence of lockdowns	1	13	9	23
CYP wellbeing prioritised post-lockdown	4	11	40	55
(Perceived) Lack of provision/resources/c are to meet individual needs in school	1	3	33	37
Dissatisfaction with school/education system	2	12	26	40

7. 22 Appendix V (Interview schedule)

Interview Schedule (as submitted for TREC)

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to meet with me. As you are aware, we are meeting to discuss your experiences and reasons for de-registering your child/children from mainstream school as a result of having had them at home for a period of time during the lockdowns of the pandemic. The interview will last up to one hour and is being recorded so that I may transcribe it. As soon as it is transcribed, the recording will be deleted. Also, your anonymity is ensured and your names will not be written into the thesis, but a pseudonym will be used. If at any point, you wish to withdraw from the research during the interview, or if you would like to terminate the interview, it is entirely your right to do so. Do you have any questions, before we begin?

Please tell me a little about your family. How many children you have and who lives with them and yourself?

Please can you tell me about your child's experience of school before the pandemic.

Moving onto the lockdown period and your child remaining at home from school. How was it for your family?

What do you think are the key factors that pushed you to make the decision to de-register your child and pursue elective-home-education?

How is it going?

Would you consider a return to school?

How do you think your child feels about this decision?

Who has most supported you in this time (thinking about agencies or support groups or the local authority)?

How do you now feel about your decision?

