

**The perspectives of Educational Psychologists (EPs): What influences the
reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced
Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)?**

Saffron Gallarotti

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Abstract

EBSNA is a term used to describe a phenomena whereby a Child or Young Person (CYP) experiences difficulties in attending school, due to emotional factors (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (WSEPS), 2022). The DfE highlighted high levels of student absence within England. Absence rates were particularly high within specialist settings and for autistic students (DfE, 2024; Munkhaugen et al., 2017). Unsurprisingly, EBSNA has a negative impact on CYP, families and schools (DfE, 2012). Therefore, it is pivotal to explore ways to support students' reintegration.

Previous literature highlighted that EPs' involvement was useful within the reintegration process following periods of EBSNA (Corcoran et al., 2022; Sawyer, 2022). Therefore, the present research study aimed to explore EPs' perspectives about what influences the reintegration process for autistic students by addressing the following research question:

What influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist (EP) perspective?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six EPs who had experience supporting autistic students to reintegrate following a period of EBSNA. These interviews were then analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis identified four main themes, 'Relationships are the

cornerstone', "We're all on the same page...", 'Taking a needs led approach' and 'Challenging the status quo'.

This research provides valuable insight into the key aspects to consider during the reintegration process for autistic students following a period of EBSNA from an EP perspective, and further highlights the unique contribution of the EP. It is hoped that this study provides further guidance for EPs, school professionals and other colleagues when supporting autistic or neurotypical students who are embarking on the journey of reintegration. This study also shines a light on the comprehensive, distinctive, magnificent and often underutilised role of the EP.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, I hope I have made you proud and that this makes the infinite sacrifices worth it.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the landscape of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), with consideration to terminology, presentation, prevalence, causes and impact. The link between EBSNA and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), more specifically autism, will also be considered.

1.2 Terminology

EBSNA is a term used to describe a phenomena whereby a Child or Young Person (CYP)¹ experiences difficulties in attending school due to emotional factors, i.e., anxiety, which results in a range of behaviours from apprehension about attending school, to absence from school for extended periods of time (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (WSEPS), 2022). This is distinctly different from school absence due to illness or truancy, the latter of which is defined as unauthorised absence from school without parental knowledge and consent (Bell et al., 1994).

There are many terms used interchangeably to describe this phenomena including 'school refusal', 'school avoidance' and 'school non-attendance'. These definitions have been debated within the literature for some time, and it has been noted there is a lack of shared definitions (Pellegrini, 2007). This lack of consistency can act as a barrier to understanding EBSNA and thus support mechanisms (Thambirajah et al., 2008). In the 1930s, EBSNA was conceptualised as *psychoneurotic truancy*

¹ Please note that Child or Young Person and Children and Young people (CYP) will be used interchangeably throughout depending on the context of the sentence.

(Broadwin, 1932; Partridge, 1939), this was then followed by *school phobia* in the 1940s (Johnson et al., 1941), later, in the 1970s, Berg et al. (1969) offered the term, *school refusal*. Currently, terms such as Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) (Anna Freud Centre (AFC), 2023) and EBSNA (Surrey County Council, 2023) are most prevalent.

It has been reported that CYP dislike terms such as 'school refusal' and 'school avoidance' as these terms distort their lived experiences of EBSNA, suggesting choice/ownership over attending rather than having extreme difficulties in attending (Callwood & Goodman, 2018). In addition, it could be argued that these terms place blame on CYP and take a 'within-child' lens, with lack of consideration of the external factors which are impacting on a CYP's EBSNA. This is problematic as this impacts on the way in which EBSNA is conceptualised and managed by wider systems around the CYP.

All this considered, the researcher of the current study has chosen to use the term EBSNA as this is more in line with CYP's experiences/views and accurately describes the presentation, i.e., emotionally based non-attendance. It is also aligned with other recent research studies within this field (Higgins, 2022; Sawyer, 2022).

1.3 Presentation

As referenced above, EBSNA encompasses a wide range of behaviours. In 1969, Berg et al. identified criteria for this phenomena which included persistent difficulties in school attendance, severe emotional distress, being at home with parental knowledge and the absence of anti-social behaviours. Whilst overall these criteria

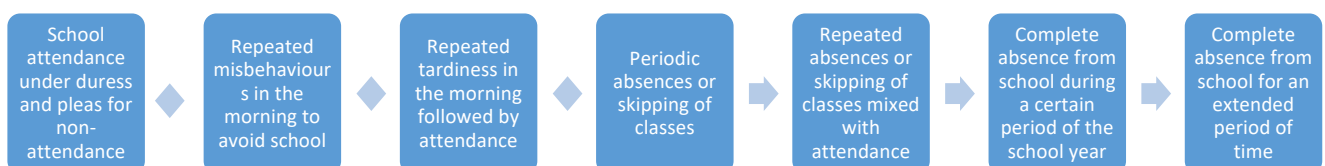
highlight the main aspects of EBSNA, this explanation fails to account for the subtlety of this phenomena, and the potential variety of behaviours involved.

Alternatively, Kearney (2008) outlined a continuum for 'school refusal behaviours' (see figure 1), which emphasises that this phenomena operates on a continuum basis, whereby a range of behaviours from pleading with parents not to attend school to being absent for extended periods of time qualify as EBSNA, thus highlighting the heterogeneity of EBSNA.

Kearney and Silverman (1996) also proposed categories in relation to the duration of EBSNA, including 'self-corrective' which is when EBSNA difficulties occur occasionally in a period of less than 2 weeks, 'acute' which is when the difficulties continue from 2 to 52 weeks, and 'chronic' if the difficulties persist for more than 53 weeks.

Figure 1.

Continuum for 'school refusal behaviours' (Kearney, 2008).



1.4 Context/prevalence

The Education Act (UK Parliament, 1996) states that all CYP should have access to an education and that parents and carers must ensure that their children attend when they are of compulsory school age (5 – 16 years old). If parents do not adhere to this, then they are liable for parental orders, fines and possible prosecution (Department for Education, (DfE), 2015b). There is currently no specific category for schools to

register students as experiencing EBSNA or other mental health needs (DfE, 2023). However, recent guidance denotes that schools should record absences as ‘authorised’ if students are unable to attend due to “illness (both physical and mental health related)” (DfE, 2022b, p. 58).

Unfortunately, parents of children experiencing EBSNA can often find themselves being issued fines and being at risk of criminal prosecution. However, this is often seen as the ‘last resort’, with government guidance advocating for a supportive, graduated approach, starting with having high standards for attendance, closely monitoring attendance and facilitating support for attendance difficulties through collaborative working to remove barriers to attendance and support the underlying causes of EBSNA (DfE, 2022b). Psychological theory suggests that punishment is not an effective means for modifying undesired behaviours (British Psychological Society (BPS), n.d). Comparably, parents of CYP experiencing EBSNA have also reported that punitive measures have been unhelpful in supporting their child’s return to school (Not Fine in School, 2020; Sawyer, 2022).

The DfE categorises ‘persistent absentees’ as CYP who have missed 10% of available sessions within the school year (DfE, 2024). They also have a category for ‘severe absence’ which is when a student has missed 50% or more of available sessions (House of Commons Education Committee, 2023). The most recent available DfE data about pupil absence within schools in England suggested that the rate of ‘persistent absentees’ was 21.2% in autumn and spring of 2022/23 (DfE, 2024). In addition, the rate of ‘severe absentees’ for the same period was 2%. These figures were approximately double the pre-pandemic rates. It is interesting to note that the

prevalence of 'persistent' and 'severe' absentees, was higher within specialist settings, highlighting a link between SEND and EBSNA, this will be explored further later in this chapter. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution, as it needs to be acknowledged that some of this absence may be due to the complex needs of some CYP attending these settings. Similarly, the attendance audit completed by the Children's Commissioner (2022) found that in Autumn 2021, 1 in 4 CYP were persistently absent, this was more than double the 2018/19 (pre-pandemic) figure when it was 1 in 9. During the covid-19 pandemic, there was unavoidable, but necessary, disruption to CYP's education. However, following this period, absence rates have increased significantly. Prior to this period, persistent absence had been decreasing since 2010 (House of Commons Education Committee, 2023).

It is estimated that approximately 5% of school aged CYP experience difficulties in relation to attending school due to emotional factors (Elliot & Place, 2019). However, it has been noted that due to variations in definitions, monitoring and recording of school absences between different settings and local authorities, it is difficult to establish the true prevalence of EBSNA (Kearney, 2008). In addition, when thinking about the continuum of EBSNA, some of the behaviours may not be seen within school e.g., pleas for non-attendance and challenging behaviour in the mornings. Further, to avoid blame/fines, parents may disguise absences being due to physical ailments (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

Interestingly, the literature states that there is no correlation between prevalence of EBSNA and aspects of identity such as gender, socio-economic status or ethnicity (King & Bernstein, 2001; Pellegrini, 2007). However, EBSNA does tend to occur most

frequently around school transitions i.e., primary to secondary (Pellegrini, 2007) and within secondary schools more generally (Berg, 1992).

1.5 Impact of EBSNA

The increasingly high levels of absence highlighted above are a serious cause for concern as, unsurprisingly, it has a significant negative impact on CYP, families and schools (DfE, 2012; Pellegrini, 2007). The short-term issues associated with EBSNA include difficulties with academic progress, social interaction and pressure on family/school systems (Kearney & Bensaheb, 2006; Kearney & Silverman, 1999; Thambirajah et al., 2008). In the long-term, EBSNA can result in low academic achievement, reduced mental health and poor future outcomes (DfE, 2012; Pellegrini, 2007; Thambirajah et al., 2008). Therefore, it is of critical importance to support CYP experiencing EBSNA to ensure they are able to engage with school/education and thus avoid experiencing the negative consequences of EBSNA.

As well as the impact for CYP, there are also effects on other parts of the system, including the family system. Parents may experience stress when supporting their child through EBSNA, which may impact on their sense of wellbeing (Surrey County Council, n.d; Want, 2020). In addition, parents may have to cease employment due to needing to be at home with their child, this can have far reaching impact particularly financially (Browne, 2018). Further, as mentioned previously, parents are at risk of being fined and/or being prosecuted for their child's absence from school (DfE, 2015b).

As well as the detrimental impact for the family system, EBSNA also impacts on school systems. Staff are often part of 'Performance Related Pay' (PRP) structures, this is when a teacher's progression on their pay scale is related to their performance within

their role (National Education Union (NEU), 2023). CYP experiencing EBSNA will evidently miss a great deal of teaching/learning, consequently their academic performance suffers. Thus, this can impact on a teacher's salary progression if student performance is tied into their PRP.

The DfE set out that schools are responsible for managing and improving school attendance and provide guidance on how best to achieve this, with recent guidance specifically in relation to when mental health needs impact on attendance (DfE, 2022b; DfE, 2023). As part of Office for standards in education (Ofsted) inspections, schools are expected to share their attendance data with the inspectors. Thus, it is a factor considered when judging the overall performance of schools (Ofsted, 2022). Consequently, having students with EBSNA on roll, can place a great deal of stress on staff as they will want to maintain high levels of attendance to ensure this is not something which reflects negatively upon the school (DfE, 2022b; Ofsted, 2022).

1.6 Causes

There are numerous factors involved in the causes and maintenance of EBSNA, meaning the phenomena is heterogenous. Kearney and Silverman's (1990) literature review revealed that there were usually four overarching reasons for school avoidance including:

- Avoiding uncomfortable feelings generated by attending school e.g., anxiety.
- Avoiding situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social difficulties and/or the school environment.
- Reducing separation anxiety or to gain attention from parents/family members.
- Pursuing tangible reinforces outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time (WSEPS, 2022).

The risk factors can be divided into three main factors pertaining to the individual CYP, the family and the school, these will be further explored below. EBSNA is often due to a combination of these factors and the interactions between them (Anna Freud Centre, 2023). Further, it is argued that EBSNA occurs when risk factors outweigh resilience factors, and when the 'pull' factors which endorse EBSNA i.e., difficulties with peers overcome the 'push' factors which support school attendance i.e., academic attainment (Thambirajah et al., 2008; WSEPS, 2022).

1.6.1 Child factors

It has been identified that 'within-child' factors, which are depicted as the inner circle of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), contribute to a CYP experiencing EBSNA in varying ways. These factors can include those in relation to social and emotional health needs, including anxiety, low self-esteem and introversion (Anna Freud Centre, 2023; Thambirajah et al., 2008).

In addition, factors related to communication and interaction needs can result in difficulties in relation to being socially isolated and difficulties with friendships and bullying (Anna Freud Centre, 2023; Thambirajah et al., 2008). It is acknowledged that these factors are not purely 'within child' as there is an interactive element to them. Archer et al. (2003) conducted a mixed methods study that involved sending questionnaires to Local Authorities (LAs) and schools and holding interviews with a range of stakeholders involved in supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA (school staff, LA representatives, parents/carers and CYP themselves) to further develop knowledge and understanding about CYP experiencing EBSNA. The findings revealed

that more than half of the LAs felt social anxiety was often a trigger for EBSNA. Likewise, school staff surveyed agreed this was a key factor.

Furthermore, Pellegrini (2007) argued that factors in relation to cognition and learning also contributed to CYP experiencing EBSNA, for instance if a CYP has learning difficulties and they find learning challenging they may be less willing/able to attend school. Moreover, other SEND, namely autism, is thought to be a risk factor for experiencing EBSNA (Munkhaugen et al., 2017).

1.6.2 Family factors

In addition to within CYP factors, there are those associated with the family system that impact on the development of EBSNA. These factors can include loss/bereavement, family transitions (e.g., parental separation or the arrival of a sibling), financial stress/poverty, parental physical and mental health problems. (Thambirajah et al., 2008). It has been postulated that there is a stereotypical 'triangular relationship' which is thought to be observed in many cases of EBSNA, this includes an 'overprotective mother', 'distant father' and an over-dependent CYP (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

Similarly, Berget al. (1969) conducted a mixed methods study, which explored the classification of EBSNA and the role of dependency on the mother within EBSNA cases, through various measures including the use of questionnaires, psychometrics and interviews, with CYP experiencing 'school phobia' within a psychiatric unit and their parents (mostly the mother). The researchers argued that it was already well established that excessive dependency in the mother-child relationship was a key factor in EBSNA as this was established within other studies at the time (Johnson et

al., 1941) but wanted to explore this further. The researchers concluded that mothers of CYP experiencing EBSNA tended to be 'neurotic', i.e., emotionally unstable, as determined by the Eysenck Personality Inventory. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether there is an element of transference and countertransference occurring within these patterns of relating, and in which direction e.g., from parent to child or child to parent. Transference occurs when someone transfers aspects of themselves into an interaction/relationship with someone else. Countertransference occurs when aspects of someone else have been transferred onto someone else, which is then felt as their own feeling (Ellis, 2021; Youell, 2006; Freud, 1910). In reference to the research findings, the researchers suggested that the transference comes from the parents to the children, i.e., having a 'neurotic' parent. However, it could be that parents take up the anxious feelings of their children and enact these feelings on their behalf.

The researcher is mindful that these findings place a great deal of blame on the mother, with little acknowledgement about the role of other family members or wider family dynamics e.g., parental separation. The concept of 'mother blaming' is rife within literature and wider society (Jackson and Mannix, 2004). These standpoints also comprise of some stereotypical assumptions about family systems. For instance, there are family systems within which there is no mother e.g., two fathers, in this case who takes up the different roles 'overprotective mother' and 'distant father' etc. However, it is acknowledged that the Berg et al. (1969) paper is outdated and there is recognition that these are stereotypical views within Thambirajah et al. (2008).

Interestingly, in Archer et al.'s (2003) study, some LA professionals felt that factors outside of school e.g., home factors, were more important than school factors. Correspondingly, school staff voiced that issues within the family system e.g., being

from a 'disadvantaged' background, a traumatic event and/or student illness were triggers for EBSNA. They also noted that parental mental health and parenting difficulties were also key factors. Additionally, school staff have been reported to hold the belief that parents are just not being assertive enough, when their child presents with EBSNA (Thambirajah et al., 2008). It is unsurprising, considering these perspectives, that parents report feelings of 'blame' and 'abandonment' from professionals (Browne, 2018; Sawyer, 2022).

Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) voiced that often families were not aware that their behaviours, which were intended as supportive, often reinforced and further perpetuated the EBSNA. This is aligned with the model of anxiety, which demonstrates that when a feared stimulus is avoided, the individual's anxiety is temporarily relieved, however over time, the anxiety of the feared stimulus increases, as the individual has not had the opportunity to 'face their fears' which eventually helps to lower their anxiety, this is known as the 'vicious cycle of anxiety' (Centre for Clinical Interventions, 2023). In relation to EBSNA, the feared stimulus is often school, or an aspect of school e.g. peer interactions/relationships or academic pressures.

1.6.3 School factors

There are several factors associated with school which contribute to the development and maintenance of EBSNA. These factors can include bullying, poor teacher-student relationships, peer relationship difficulties, academic struggles, the school environment and transitions between key stages, particularly the primary to secondary transition (Anna Freud Centre, 2023; Thambirajah et al., 2008). It is argued that these elements should be taken into account when seeking to understand and support EBSNA, rather than relying solely on 'within child' or familial factors (Pellegrini, 2007).

Similarly, Malcolm et al. (2003) found that families (including children and parents/carers) felt that it was school factors such as lessons, teachers and bullying which impacted on EBSNA as opposed to individual or home factors. This is a direct contrast to some of the professionals views who placed the blame with home/parental factors. In Archer et al.'s (2003) study, there was acknowledgement within the findings that school issues played a role in EBSNA. However, it was generally felt that the origins of the 'problem' were due to home factors.

Within the literature, it appears as though CYP often attribute school factors as contributory to the development and maintenance of their EBSNA. Corcoran and Kelly (2022) found that children found that school factors including difficulties with peers, inconsistent support from adults, negative experiences of learning and the transition process impacted on their EBSNA. Similarly, in Gray et al's (2023) study, participants, including CYP, reported negative experiences of school. Correspondingly, this insightful quote illustrates the issues a child experiencing EBSNA had in relation to the school environment, "Too many people, scary, work is too hard, no friends, can't cope, pains in my stomach...I feel sick with worry, hard to find lessons, too loud" (Morgan and Costello, 2023, p. 12). This further highlights the issues within the school system which can contribute to the development of EBSNA.

1.6.4 Summary

In summary, blame can often be placed on different aspects of the system, whether that be taking a 'within-child' lens or blaming the school and/or the family solely. Discourse about the reasoning behind the non-attendance also varies depending on whom you ask, e.g., school may feel it is due to home/family issues, whereas families/CYP may feel it is due to school issues (Pellegrini, 2007). The experience of

living through/managing EBSNA is highly-stressful, anxiety provoking and complex, for all parties involved, which can cause individuals to enlist their defences.

From a systemic lens, this can include different aspects of the system blaming other parts, in relation to who is responsible for the origin, maintenance and resolution of the 'problem', this is usually when the family blame the school or vice versa. Occasionally, the family and school 'pair up' and place blame on the child (Dowling and Osbourne, 2003). When considering the current laws around school attendance, it is clear to see that a lot of the onus and blame is placed on the family system. This could be viewed through a psychodynamic lens in relation to the concept of splitting, whereby individuals view something as all bad or all good and cannot hold in mind the idea that people, experiences and situations will contain elements of both (Freud, 1936). For instance, a parent may view the school as being incredibly unsupportive of their child's EBSNA, whilst holding the view that the home/family system is completely problem-free. However, this is unlikely to be the case.

These ways of thinking are unhelpful, as in reality the causes of EBSNA are likely to be a combination of factors. There is a requirement for an individual approach when supporting EBSNA, as consideration needs to be given to the specific factors which have led to a CYP experiencing EBSNA, as the causes, maintenance factors and thus treatments will be different (Thambirajah et al., 2008). Place et al. (2000) alternatively propose an understanding of the interaction between factors to create lasting change for CYP experiencing EBSNA.

Nuttall and Woods' (2013) study explored factors involved in reintegration, it was noted that factors involved in supporting the students were not independent, it was the

interaction of factors which was found to be beneficial. Following their research, Nuttall and Woods (2013) established an 'Ecological Model of Successful Reintegration', which was heavily influenced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), it highlights the different systems surrounding a CYP and the interactions between these systems. It also considers factors at different levels, including the individual child, family, professional and contextual. This model highlights the importance of needing to consider multiple factors when supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA: just tackling one factor or part of the system is unlikely to be helpful as EBSNA is a complex, multi-faceted issue caused by several factors associated with the individual child, family and school, and the interaction between these factors.

1.7 SEND, Autism and EBSNA

It has been acknowledged that students with SEND have considerably higher rates of difficulties attending school than their peers, particularly autistic students (Gray et al., 2023; House of Commons Education Committee, 2023; Munkhaugen et al., 2017). The DfE statistics show that the most common primary need amongst those with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) is autism, approximately one in three (DfE, 2022a). The absence rates for CYP with EHCPs is much higher than those with no identified SEND (DfE, 2024). In addition, studies have shown that EBSNA is more prevalent within autistic communities and for extended periods of time, with severity increasing with age (Kurita, 1991; Munkhaugen et al., 2017). Further, Totsika et al., (2020) found that almost 50% of autistic students' school absences were due to difficulties associated with EBSNA. All things considered, there appears to be a strong link between EBSNA and autism.

Autism is defined as a lifelong developmental condition which impacts on how people communicate and interact with the world around them (National Autistic Society, n.d.). The condition is characterised by four main features including differences in communication, social interaction, sensory processing and information processing. Autistic individuals may also present with repetitive behaviours and specific interests. The estimated prevalence rate is about 1% of the population, with males being 2–3 times more likely to have the condition than females (Lai et al., 2015; Munkhaugen et al., 2017). However, the researcher is mindful of the increase in diagnosis in females and the current discourse about the bias within diagnostic practices and instruments (Brickhill et al., 2023; Mandy, 2019).

According to Van Steensel et al. (2011) 40% of autistic children, adolescents and adults are thought to have at least one anxiety disorder. Gaigg et al. (2018) argue that it is important to understand that having an anxiety disorder is not part of autism but an independent coinciding condition that should be attended to in its own right. As EBSNA is broadly associated with emotional factors including anxiety, and anxiety is highly prevalent within the autistic population, it is clear to see how autistic CYP would be more susceptible to EBSNA.

As well as increased levels of anxiety, it is believed that autistic CYP² may have difficulties in relation to the school environment where there is constant sensory input e.g., busy corridors, a requirement for social interaction with teachers and peers and a level of unpredictability e.g., staff changes (Gray et al., 2023; Higgins, 2022;

² Please note, it is recognised that there are differing perspectives surrounding whether identity-first (autistic CYP/student) or person-first (CYP/student with autism) should be used when discussing individuals with an autism diagnosis. A study conducted by Kenny et al. (2016) found that the majority of autistic individuals and family members preferred identity-first language, so that is what will be used within this research project.

WSEPS, 2022). These factors considered alongside the difficulties associated with autism outlined above, highlight how challenging the school environment can be for autistic students.

A theory which might help to explain the prevalence of EBSNA within autistic communities is that of double empathy. The theory of double empathy postulates that individuals with different neurotypes (i.e. neurotypical and neurodivergent) struggle with empathising with each other. This is a contrast to the narratives that autistic individuals are unable to understand others' emotional states and demonstrate empathy, highlighting that they can, and do, however this is not always presented in a way which is understood by neurotypical individuals (Milton, 2012). Interestingly, neurotypical individuals have been found to be unsuccessful at interpreting the behaviour of autistic individuals, highlighting the reciprocal nature of the double empathy problem between the different neurotypes (Sheppard et al., 2016).

This may then also lead to masking/camouflaging which is another concept that might help to further elucidate the prevalence of EBSNA within autistic communities. Masking/camouflaging involves disguising aspects of the self to assimilate to others (Belcher, 2022). Research has shown that masking can have a detrimental impact on autistic individuals leading to poor mental health (Bradley et al., 2021) and autistic burnout. Autistic burnout is a term used to describe a state whereby an autistic individual has become completely overwhelmed and exhausted by chronic life stressors and the lack of adequate support which results in long-term inability to engage in day-to-day life (Raymaker et al., 2020). It is possible that some autistic students experiencing EBSNA may be experiencing autistic burnout.

All these factors considered; it is therefore unsurprising that autistic students are more likely to experience EBSNA.

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the terminology and conceptualisation of EBSNA has evolved over the past century. EBSNA encompasses a wide range of behaviours, illustrated by Kearney's (2008) continuum for 'school refusal behaviours'. The factors involved in the development and maintenance of the phenomena are due to the combination and interaction of factors pertaining to the child, family and school. EBSNA is a widespread issue, particularly among autistic students, which is a concern due to the detrimental impact on CYP, families and schools. The literature review will now explore what knowledge and understanding exists within the current body of research regarding the reintegration of autistic students who have previously experienced EBSNA, in order to discover the influential factors involved in supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA.

2. Systematic Literature Review

2.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this systematic review is to establish what knowledge and understanding exists within the current body of research regarding what influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced EBSNA.

2.2 Literature search method/process

2.2.1 Literature Research Question (LRQ) 1

The LRQ was ‘What factors contribute to the reintegration of autistic CYP who have previously experienced EBSNA?’

2.2.2 Search strategy and terms

Following a scoping review to isolate key terms, a literature search was undertaken in July 2023, using PsychINFO and ERIC via EBSCO host and The Tavistock and Portman online library. In addition, a search of grey literature was also conducted using ETHOS to explore unpublished research which may be of relevance to the literature search. Table 1 shows the search terms used within the literature searches.

Table 1.

Mapping and search terms for LRQ 1.

Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms	Rationale

<p>“Emotionally based school*”</p> <p>AND</p>	<p>OR “School refus*” OR “Extended non- attend*”</p> <p>OR “Persistent non- attend*” OR “Persistent absentee” OR “School non- attend*” OR “School phobia” OR “EBSNA” OR “EBSA” OR “PSNA”</p>	<p>There are several different terms used to conceptualise EBSNA, so the aim was to obtain all papers exploring this phenomena despite differences in terminology.</p>
<p>“Autis*”</p> <p>AND</p>	<p>OR “ASD” OR “ASC” OR “Autistic Spectrum*”</p>	<p>This is the specific participant group the researcher wanted to focus upon when thinking about EBSNA. Autism also has multiple interchangeable terms.</p>
<p>“Reintegration”</p>	<p>OR “return” OR “re- engagement”</p>	<p>There is a plethora of research about EBSNA more generally, however the researcher wanted to focus specifically upon reintegration.</p>

Each of the subject heading search terms were combined with the equivalent key word search terms using ‘OR’ and the subject mapping terms were combined with ‘AND’.

This method led to 3 papers (PsychINFO), 0 papers (ERIC), 876 papers (Tavistock & Portman online library) and 0 papers (ETHOS) which was then refined using the filters of year of publication '2003-2023', source type 'academic journal' and 'dissertation' and language 'English'. This led to a total of 3 papers (PsychINFO), 0 papers (ERIC), 456 papers (Tavistock & Portman online library) and 0 papers (ETHOS).

2.2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion/exclusion criteria were then applied to the titles/abstracts of the articles (see table 2). The titles and abstracts were then read, any not directly addressing the literature research question were then removed. This led to 1 paper (PsychINFO), 0 papers (ERIC), 1 (Tavistock & Portman library) and 0 papers (ETHOS). Once duplicates were removed this resulted in a total of 2 papers for critical review (see appendix 1).

Table 2.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion for LRQ 1.

Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
<p>1. Publication date</p> <p>Papers published between 2003-2023.</p>	<p>Any papers published prior to 2003.</p>	<p>The Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a large-scale, multi-informant research study in England, in 2003, exploring the causes, identification and support systems for CYP</p>

		<p>experiencing EBSNA, due to an increasing awareness of the issues in relation to school attendance difficulties within England, so this year was chosen as it marks a significant piece of literature within this area of research (Archer et al., 2003).</p>
<p>2. Location</p> <p>Studies conducted in the UK.</p>	<p>Any studies conducted outside of the UK.</p>	<p>Studies which related specifically to UK educational contexts were required as this is the context within which the current research will take place.</p>
<p>3. Study type</p> <p>Empirical studies including dissertations.</p>	<p>Any other types of publication e.g., magazine articles.</p>	<p>The researcher hoped to explore credible, primary research rather than other sources of research/information.</p>

<p>4. Study focus</p> <p>Studies which have explored the factors involved in reintegration of autistic CYP who have experienced EBSNA.</p>	<p>Any other focal points within the studies.</p>	<p>The researcher hoped to explore factors involved in reintegration of autistic CYP who have experienced EBSNA, thus any other focus points would not be relevant.</p>
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2.3 Critical Review

2.3.1 Overview/summary

The systematic literature review resulted in two studies which specifically addressed the LRQ and met all the inclusion criteria. The first of which was a study by Preece and Howley (2018) and the second, a study by O'Hagan, Bond and Hebron (2022). These studies will be described, analysed and critically appraised below. All studies were critically appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool (2018) for qualitative research and/or the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for mixed methods research (Hong et al., 2018) (see appendix 2).

2.3.2 Study 1 - Preece and Howley (2018)

The study by Preece and Howley (2018) investigated the way in which a specialist setting, named 'The Centre', supported autistic students who had high levels of anxiety and had experienced difficulties in attending school, to re-engage with education. The study took place in one Local Authority (LA) within the UK.

The researchers used an evaluative case study methodology to explore this, with a mixed methods, convergent approach to data collection, whereby qualitative and quantitative data were collected, analysed and interpreted concurrently. Qualitative data collection methods included a focus group and interviews with a total of twenty-one staff, family members and professionals. Quantitative data collection included questionnaires for a total of five autistic, male students. The researchers also gathered additional information about the students from the school in the form of attendance data, Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and wellbeing scales. The questionnaires and other quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the focus group/ interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, all data gathered was then amalgamated into six main themes. The attendance data, ILPs and wellbeing data were analysed and discussed separately but nevertheless fed into wider themes.

The themes identified included the development of a suitable learning environment, such as class sizes and classroom layout. Focusing on the individual, including an individualised approach to support and developing positive relationships. Using an eclectic approach, with a range of strategies and methods. Finally, using a consistent approach, including effective communication and collaboration, between staff, parents and professionals. The researchers concluded that the specialist setting had a positive impact on the students' wellbeing and was successful in supporting them to re-engage with education.

This study provides encouraging evidence regarding the factors required to support autistic students' to return to school and re-engage with education. In addition, the researchers consulted with a wide range of stakeholders including students, parents and professionals such as autism outreach specialists, this allowed for multiple

perspectives to be considered and allowed for triangulation of information. Furthermore, the findings within the study aligned with previous guidance including the ecological model outlined within Nuttall & Woods' (2013) study and good practice within autism education (Charman et al., 2011). Finally, the CASP and MMAT appraisal tools suggested that the study was robust and reliable (see appendix 2).

However, there are a number of limitations to consider, firstly, the study was based upon a specialist setting that specifically caters for autistic students with high anxiety who have experienced difficulties in attending school, including adapting learning environments and using TEACHH principles (Mesibov et al., 2005). Therefore, the findings give insight into a niche setting, this level of support and adaptation would not be easily achieved within a mainstream setting, thus limiting the applicability of findings to other settings, particularly within mainstream settings. Also, it has been reported that approximately 70% of autistic students attend mainstream settings therefore it is crucial to explore factors which would be applicable to mainstream settings (National Autistic Society, 2021).

In addition, the students were asked to complete questionnaires, whilst adults taking part in the study were interviewed, this did not allow the researcher to further explore their responses. It is not clear why this method was chosen by the researchers within the paper; however, it is acknowledged that this may have been the chosen method by the researchers in response to the students' presumed difficulties with social communication and interaction as a result of their autism diagnosis.

2.3.3 Study 2 - O'Hagan et al. (2022)

The study by O'Hagan et al. (2022) explored the factors involved in the re-engagement of autistic girls within mainstream high schools within the UK, specifically England and

Wales. The participants were three autistic girls who had successfully re-engaged in mainstream education following a period of EBSNA.

The researchers utilised a qualitative, exploratory multiple case study design and gathered data from the students, their parent(s) and a member of school staff via semi-structured interviews (and one questionnaire). These interviews were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, which generated eight main themes.

The themes identified were developing trusting relationships with key adults, developing friendships with peers and feeling a sense of belonging within the school community. The themes also detailed having an individualised and flexible approach to the school curriculum and routines, incorporating the students' voice within support/action plans and parental advocacy. Other themes included the importance of ensuring effective home-school liaison, developing working relationships with outside agencies and the significance of having a diagnosis in supporting re-engagement, as this helped in numerous ways including the students understanding themselves better and being able to access the appropriate support and resources.

This study once again provides promising evidence pertaining to the factors required to support autistic students experiencing EBSNA to reintegrate back into educational settings. In addition, in line with Preece and Howley's study (2018), the researchers triangulated the information gathered by consulting with the students, parents and a member of school staff, providing a comprehensive view about the experiences of reintegration from different parts of the system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This study also addresses some of the issues identified within Preece and Howley's (2018) study, as this research is situated within a mainstream setting, which means

the research findings may be more generalisable to other mainstream settings. The researchers used interviews as their method of data collection, allowing for rich, in-depth data to be obtained and for further exploration of answers if required. However, as noted previously, interviews can be quite demanding for autistic students due to differences in social communication and as a result one participant within this study declined the interview and opted for a questionnaire, this limited the researchers' scope in regard to in-depth exploration of their account of reintegration. Finally, the CASP appraisal tool suggested that the study was robust and thus that the findings are reliable (see appendix 2).

However, there are a number of limitations to consider, firstly, this study focused solely on the experiences of females experiencing EBSNA therefore the voices of autistic males is missing. This is significant as the male-to-female ratio for autism diagnosis is approximately 3:1 (Loomes et al.,2017). However, the researcher acknowledges that the large difference in diagnosis between genders is partially due the underdiagnosis of autistic females due to current identification and assessment procedures (National Autistic Society, n.d) In addition, the researchers noted that autistic males are more likely to experience EBSNA than their neurotypical peers (O'Hagan, Bond & Hebron, 2022) and were in support of further research exploring this phenomena from a male perspective. Finally, the researchers did not consider the role of the EP. EPs are well placed to support with EBSNA, so it would have been interesting to explore what their role was/could be as part of the re-engagement process.

2.4 Themes

2.4.1 The importance of relationships

A key theme found within both papers, was the importance of relationships in supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA in their return to education. Preece and Howley (2018) found that staff prioritised building relationships with the students when they began attending 'The Centre'. Staff members ensured this was done on an individual basis taking into account each student's individual needs, this included using a calm, consistent and low demand approach, having one-to-one conversations and ensuring students had an element of choice and were involved in decision making.

Similarly, O'Hagan et al. (2022) found that relationships were pivotal to reintegration. The students each had a key adult who was their source of support during the reintegration process, it was felt that this provided a safe and trusting relationship for the students. The students also felt that it was important for others to have a good understanding of autism, to be able to understand them and be able to build congruent relationships. The researchers felt that these relationships provided a foundation for other support to be built upon. These ideas are similar to those detailed within attachment theory, which highlights that infants require a secure relationship with a primary caregiver, to be able to develop their capacity for thinking and be able to build relationships with others (Bowlby, 1969; Klein, 1959; Waddell, 2002).

2.4.2 Developing a sense of belonging

Another key theme identified within both papers was the significance of students developing a sense of belonging in order to support their return to school. Preece and

Howley (2018) found that consistency, in terms of both approaches used and staff members supporting students, helped to provide structure and familiarity for students. This supported students to feel contained within the setting, as expectations and roles were clearly defined. Students were also given opportunities for roles of responsibility within school, which helped to develop their self-esteem and sense of belonging. This was also reinforced with the use of reward systems in the form of 'credits' which could be 'spent' on a variety of curriculum experiences aligned with their interests.

Similarly, O'Hagan et al. (2022) also found that students having responsibility helped to develop a sense of self-belief and belonging. The researchers found that friendships were a key motivating factor when supporting students' return to school. School staff made this their priority and supported students with developing the social skills required to navigate building relationships with peers. In addition, some students attended extra-curricular activities, as this helped students make friends with peers with similar interests, in a naturalistic setting,

This theme is analogous with Maslow's hierarchy of needs which highlights the importance of key factors/requirements which need to be met, including love and belonging, before CYP can 'self-actualise', i.e., reach their full potential (1943).

2.4.3 Building knowledge of oneself and developing self-esteem

An interesting theme which arose from both studies was the concept of developing an understanding of the self and building self-esteem. Preece and Howley (2018) found that at 'The Centre' students were given the opportunity to create one-page profiles, these helped to outline their strengths, interests, needs and strategies which they

found helpful (Sanderson, 2014). Through completing these, students were able to reflect on themselves which helped to build knowledge about themselves and focus not solely on their needs, but also their strengths which supports with building self-esteem.

Comparably, O'Hagan et al.'s (2022) study also established that students developing an understanding of themselves, through their autism diagnosis, was a supportive factor in returning to school. Parents also commented that diagnosis helped to obtain further support, through better understanding of their presenting issues but also through processes such as Education Health Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs).

As before, this theme is analogous with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, specifically that of self-esteem, which again is theorised to be necessary before CYP are able to 'self-actualise' (1943). This also links to the previous theme – belonging, as research has shown that there is a reciprocal relationship between relationships and self-esteem (Harris & Orth, 2020).

2.4.4 A person-centred approach

Another key theme which arose from both papers in relation to supporting with reintegration, was adopting a person-centred approach. In both papers, the researchers found that an individualised approach was useful in supporting students to reintegrate, this involved a range of elements including incorporating the views of the students regarding their preferences for their return to school. This is advocated within numerous legislation including the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (CoP) (DfE, 2015a).

Additionally, the researchers found that exploring and utilising students interests and motivations for returning to school was crucial. As well as creating individualised targets, curriculums and timetables to support the learners individual needs, in some cases this included access to alternative provision e.g., gardening, working with animals and in a local café (O'Hagan et al., 2022).

2.4.5 A multi-systemic approach

Another key theme which arose was that of employing a multi-systemic approach to support. Preece and Howley (2018) found that establishing effective communication and collaboration between key stakeholders involved in the student's return e.g., parents, school staff and professionals was critical for success, in terms of the student returning to school. Likewise, O'Hagan et al. (2022) found that building relationships with professionals was crucial.

Both papers also highlighted the importance of valuing and incorporating parental views in reintegration planning and implementation. This again aligns with the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a). O'Hagan et al.'s (2022) study further highlighted the importance of parental advocacy, particularly in relation to the balancing act of supporting their child's needs whilst also trying not to inadvertently perpetuate their EBSNA.

This is akin to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) which highlights the different systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem), and factors within these, which surround a CYP. These systems

interact and have an impact on the CYP; thus, it is important to consider these factors when thinking about how best to support CYP.

2.4.6 Adapting the environment

Another key theme found was adaptation to the school environment. This theme primarily evolved from Preece and Howley's (2018) study, as significant adaptations were made to the environment including smaller class sizes, carefully planned classroom layout and the use of quiet spaces and individual workstations. Adaptations were also made in regard to approaches used by staff, it was recognised that this differed for each student depending on their needs.

Also, O'Hagan et al.'s (2022) study detailed that students had access to calm spaces, flexible timetables and time out cards. Whilst this highlights some adaptation to the environment, substantial adaptation can be difficult within mainstream settings where it is not possible to reduce class sizes for example, nevertheless, schools made reasonable adjustments where/when they were able.

2.4.7 Additional resources

The final theme identified was that of the need for additional resources, whether that be funding, access to specialists including professionals or settings. O'Hagan et al. (2022) discussed this in the context of gaining diagnosis and/or an EHCP as a gateway for further funding and support. This was more implicit in Preece and Howley's (2018) study, as the pupils inadvertently had access to additional resources by attending 'The Centre'.

2.4.8 Summary

In summary, there is limited available literature in relation to reintegration of autistic students following a period of EBSNA. The systematic literature review revealed two relevant studies which highlighted several factors which contribute to successful reintegration, including key themes around relationships, belonging, building self-esteem, a person-centred approach, multiple-systems approach, adaptation of the environment and the need for additional resources. These themes align with key legislation e.g., the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a) and renowned psychological theories including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979).

2.5 Additional literature search method/process

The researcher decided to conduct an additional literature search due to the limited number of papers obtained within the initial search. The hope was to further explore what factors contribute to the reintegration of students who have previously experienced EBSNA, for the wider population.

2.5.1 Literature Research Question (LRQ) 2

The LRQ was 'What factors contribute to the reintegration of CYP who have previously experienced EBSNA?' This is similar to LRQ 1 however 'autism' is omitted.

2.5.2 Search strategy and terms

Following a scoping review to isolate key terms, a literature search was undertaken in August 2023, using PsychINFO and ERIC via EBSCO host and The Tavistock and Portman online library. In addition, a search of grey literature was also conducted

using ETHOS to explore unpublished research which may be of relevance to the literature search. Table 3 shows the search terms used within the literature searches.

Table 3.

Mapping and search terms for LRQ 2.

Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms
“Emotionally based school*” AND	OR “School refus*” OR “Extended non-attend*” OR “Persistent non-attend*” OR “Persistent absentee” OR “School non-attend*” OR “School phobia” OR “EBSNA” OR “EBSA” OR “PSNA”
“Reintegration”	OR “return” OR “re- engagement”

Each of the subject heading search terms were combined with the equivalent key word search terms using ‘OR’ and the subject mapping terms were combined with ‘AND’.

This method led to 54 papers (PsychINFO), 9 papers (ERIC), 5,047 papers (Tavistock & Portman online library) and 0 papers (ETHOS) which was then refined using the filters of year of publication ‘2003-2023’, source type ‘academic journal’ and ‘dissertation’ and language ‘English’. This led to a total of 15 papers (PsychINFO), 1 papers (ERIC), 2,303 papers (Tavistock & Portman online library) and 0 papers (ETHOS).

2.5.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion/exclusion criteria were then applied to the titles/abstracts of the articles (see table 4). The titles and abstracts were then read, any not directly addressing the literature research question were then removed. This led to 1 paper (PsychINFO), 0 papers (ERIC), 18 (Tavistock & Portman library) and 0 papers (ETHOS). Once duplicates were removed this resulted in a total of 9 papers for critical review. Duplicates included theses which had later been published: in these cases, the published research was used within this review instead of the theses. Through reference harvesting, another paper was obtained. There were some papers which explored general experiences of EBSNA, including supportive factors: when these were explored and analysed as separate research questions these were included; in studies where these were amalgamated, these were excluded, as it was difficult to extrapolate data relevant to the LRQ (see appendix 3).

Table 4.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion for LRQ 2.

Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
<p>1. Publication date</p> <p>Papers published between 2003-2023.</p>	<p>Any papers published prior to 2003.</p>	<p>The Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a large-scale, multi-informant research study in England, in 2003, exploring the causes, identification and support systems for CYP</p>

		<p>experiencing EBSNA, due to an increasing awareness of the issues in relation to school attendance difficulties, so this year was chosen as it marks a significant piece of literature within this area of research (Archer, Filmer-Sankey and Fletcher-Campbell, 2003).</p>
<p>2. Location</p> <p>Studies conducted in the UK.</p>	<p>Any studies conducted outside of the UK.</p>	<p>Studies which related specifically to UK educational contexts were required as this is the context within which the current research will take place.</p>
<p>3. Study type</p> <p>Empirical studies including dissertations.</p>	<p>Any other types of publication e.g., magazine articles.</p>	<p>The researcher hoped to explore credible research rather than other types of information.</p>
<p>4. Study focus</p> <p>Studies which have explored the factors</p>	<p>Any other focal points within the studies.</p>	<p>The researcher hoped to explore factors involved in reintegration of CYP who</p>

involved in reintegration of CYP who have experienced EBSNA.		have experienced EBSNA, thus any other focus points would not be relevant.
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2.6 Critical Review

2.6.1 Overview/summary

The systematic literature review resulted in ten studies which specifically addressed LRQ 2 and met all the inclusion criteria, this included 6 published papers and 4 theses. All studies were critically appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool (2018) for qualitative research and/or the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for mixed methods research (2018) (see appendix 4). Once critical appraisal was complete, a total of nine studies remained for review. These studies will be discussed thematically, due to capacity within this chapter. For further details about each study please review appendix 4.

2.7 Themes

2.7.1 Relationships

As in the literature identified within the first literature review, the criticality of relationships arose as key theme. Tobias (2019) argued for the importance of having a 'secure base' at home and highlighted the role this had in the reintegration process, as it allowed children to be safe in the knowledge that they had a secure base they

could return to after school, similar to ideas within attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Salter-Ainsworth et al., 2015; Klein, 1959; Waddell, 2002).

Similarly, Barron-Williams (2021), Finning et al. (2018) and Sawyer (2022) advocated for the importance of having a key adult in school, to act as a secure base within school to provide ongoing, consistent support to CYP. Other studies further emphasised that these relationships need to be positive and nurturing in nature (Corcoran et al., 2022; Halligan & Cryer, 2022; Nuttall & Woods, 2013).

Mortimer (2018) also stressed the role of peers within the reintegration process and the need for CYP to develop friendships within the school environment, likely due to the impact this then had on their sense of belonging (Harris & Orth, 2020; Maslow, 1943).

The only paper which did not allude explicitly to the role of relationships was Grandison (2011), perhaps due to the researcher identifying thirteen factors which participants found supportive as part of the reintegration process, but only reporting on the five most predominant factors.

2.7.2 CYP factors

Feeling heard, valued and understood

Again, as in the first literature review, the importance of taking a person-centred approach, and ensuring CYP felt heard, valued and understood was a key aspect of the integration process.

Halligan and Cryer (2022), Corcoran et al. (2022), Nuttall and Woods (2013) and Tobias (2019) all highlighted the need to seek out and listen to the views of CYP, to gain a further understanding of their experiences. In addition, Barron-Williams (2021), Grandison (2011) and Mortimer (2018), emphasised the need for time and space to explore the CYP's unique experience of EBSNA, considering the heterogeneity of the phenomena, and using this to then create a personalised approach to reintegration whereby CYP having some control over what this looks like, parallel with the phrase 'no decision about me, without me' (Department of Health, 2012).

Emotional wellbeing

Another theme which arose in relation to CYP factors, was that of emotional wellbeing and the recognition of this being a precursor for CYP to be able to re-engage with education. Grandison (2011) and Finning et al. (2018) discussed CYP being supported to develop an understanding of their emotions and how to manage these more effectively. Similarly, Sawyer (2022) spoke to CYP needing to feel safe in school and being taught coping strategies to manage their emotions e.g. anxiety. Further, Mortimer (2018), thought about CYP's specific worries in relation to their return to school including missed schoolwork and friendships and how these worries needed to be appropriately managed.

Individual factors

The individual factors a CYP possesses are also thought to have an impact on the reintegration process. Grandison (2011) found that a 'positive attitude' and a CYP's motivation to reintegrate was an important factor. This is in line with The

Transtheoretical Model of Change which emphasises the role of the individual in engaging with change and the requirement for there to be an element of motivation and desire for change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983).

Barron-Williams (2021) found a number of individual factors including CYP needing to know the value and purpose of education, in relation to their future lives in regard to obtaining qualifications, jobs and being able to “enjoy life”. Likewise, the need for ambition and being optimistic about the future was required too. Participants also spoke about the need to be resilient in the face of the challenges they faced within the school environment. It must be noted that this study only had CYP as participants as opposed to a triangulated approach involving others within the system, which resulted in the generation of lots of individual factors with an absence of the role/impact of other factors.

As in LRQ 1, the importance of self-esteem arose as part of individual factors. Finning et al. (2018) and Sawyer (2022) both raised the importance of building confidence and self-esteem, in the process of reintegration. Further, Barron-Williams (2021) noted that all the participants in their study who had reintegrated demonstrated positive self-esteem.

2.7.3 Family factors

Containing and supporting parents

The experiences of parents arose within a number of studies, in relation to the emotional, physical and practical impact of having a child who is experiencing EBSNA.

Mortimer (2018) emphasised the importance of understanding each parent's unique experiences of EBSNA and the impact that this had on them and the family system. It was interesting to note that parents reported disliking punitive approaches used within schools while in turn used punitive approaches within the home environment. This perhaps indicates that despite not feeling aligned with punitive approaches it may feel like the only option during desperate situations in which there seems no other option or way forward. This is likely one of the reasons why schools and wider systems look to punitive approaches e.g., fines.

Tobias (2019) also spoke about the importance of supporting parents, so that they are then able to support their children; this is known as containment. Containment is a process whereby a caregiver receives a projection from their infant, the caregiver then takes it in and processes the projection, therefore acting as a 'container'. The parent then returns the projection back to the infant in much more tolerable way which soothes and calms the infant's anxieties, this results in them being/feeling 'contained' (Bion, 1962). Similar patterns of relating can occur in other relationships e.g., between practitioners and parents.

Similarly, Sawyer (2022) endorsed the need for emotional support and reassurance for parents during the challenging period of EBSNA. She also noted that parents found it helpful liaising with other parents who had been through similar challenges with their children, as a means of sharing stories and advice.

Parental involvement

As well as supporting parents, an important part of the reintegration process was parental involvement. Nuttall and Woods (2013) recommended liaison between home and school and noted it was important to meet the family where they were, listening to and valuing their views. Similarly, Corcoran et al. (2022) and Grandison (2011), spoke about effective home-school communication and the importance of working together. Further, Sawyer (2022) emphasised the need for parental views to be incorporated into actions plans for the CYP's reintegration. Moreover, Grandison (2011) found there was a sense of wanting to 'get parents onside' from schools, which is interesting as you would assume parents are already 'on-side' with regard to wanting to support their children with returning to education.

Whilst home-school liaison is often endorsed, parents in Mortimer's study (2018) mentioned preferring to have had a specific link person rather than liaising with multiple staff members, which refers to the first theme around the importance of relationships.

2.7.4 School factors

Developing awareness and understanding of EBSNA

Sawyer's (2022) study highlighted the importance professional knowledge and understanding of EBSNA, for them to be able to support CYP effectively. It was felt that it was often not viewed as a SEN due to the punitive measures taken. Similarly, Halligan and Cryer (2022) raised the significance of psychological safety, regarding CYP being understood by the adults supporting them.

Gradual reintegration

Grandison (2011) and Mortimer's (2018) studies stressed the significance of a phased return to school for CYP following EBSNA. This usually takes the form of reduced/part-time timetables and students being able to attend preferred lessons.

Adapting the environment

As in the first review, most studies referred to some form of adaptation of environment. This included access to safe spaces/quiet rooms (Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Tobias, 2019), opportunities to learn/socialise in small groups (Nuttall & Woods, 2013), adapted curriculums (Nuttall & Woods, 2013), time out/break cards (Grandison, 2011), exploration and use of preferred support strategies (Corcoran et al., 2022), support for building peer relationships (Corcoran et al., 2022), support for academic work/engaging lessons (Halligan & Cryer, 2022) and offering virtual access to some aspects of school and access to offsite specialist provision (Finning et al., 2018).

2.7.5 Professional involvement

Another theme which emerged within the literature was the role of professionals within the reintegration process. Nuttall and Woods (2013) found that specialist involvement helped to identify children who may be struggling with attending school in the early stages, early intervention is a widely endorsed, as it ensures problems are tackled before they escalate and become entrenched (Early Intervention Foundation, 2021). Similarly, Mortimer (2018) found that professionals were able to take a holistic view of the CYP, which can help to widen the narrative about a CYP's experiences and provide advice and support (Barron-Williams, 2021). EPs were also mentioned as

being potentially useful with this (Finning et al., 2018). Further, Corcoran et al. (2022) found that the role of the EP and their use of consultation was valuable within the reintegration process. Interestingly, Sawyer (2022) found that there was a lack of EP involvement (less than 50% of cases), in comparison to other professionals, however EP input was perceived as more useful than school-based or health-focused support.

It was noted that navigating systems and accessing professionals was not always a straightforward process for families and that often parents felt they had to 'fight' to access support which was demanding (Mortimer, 2018; Sawyer, 2022).

2.7.6 A multi-systemic approach

As in the findings from LRQ1, and a culmination of the previous themes in this review, the usefulness of a multi-systemic approach was endorsed within the majority of studies. Finning et al. (2018) endorsed that attendance difficulties were a shared responsibility for all those involved, from the CYP, the family, schools and external services. In addition, Barron-Williams (2021) and Tobias (2019) promoted the importance of exploring wider environmental factors, including family and school factors, when thinking about supporting the reintegration process, rather than focusing solely on the individual. Building on this, Corcoran et al. (2022), Nuttall and Woods (2013) and Sawyer (2022) advocated for the need for these systems to work collaboratively towards their shared aims. As part of their research, Nuttall and Woods (2013) established an 'Ecological Model of Successful Reintegration', which was heavily influenced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). The model illustrates the factors involved in successful reintegration, considering factors at different levels, including the individual child, family, professional and contextual, and

emphasises the interactions within and between these systems. The model highlights the importance of needing to consider multiple factors when supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA, as just tackling one factor or part of the system is unlikely to be helpful as the EBSNA is multi-faceted.

2.7.7 COVID-19

Sawyer's (2022) study was the only study within the review which explicitly mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the reintegration process. Overall, participants felt that there were many useful outcomes during and following the pandemic including the use of online learning, regular check-ins with families and the gradual transition back to school. It was interesting to note that parents within the study felt that the lockdowns provided safety/respice from sensory and social demands of school for their children. Whilst this research was not intended to focus on the experiences of autistic students, 4/5 CYP were autistic. This further highlights the prevalence of EBSNA within this population.

2.8 Conclusion

In summary, this additional systematic literature review revealed nine relevant studies which highlighted several factors which contribute to successful reintegration, including key themes around relationships, CYP factors (feeling heard, valued and understood, emotional wellbeing and individual factors), family factors (containing parents and parental involvement), school factors (developing awareness and understanding of EBSNA, gradual reintegration and adapting the environment), the role of professionals, a multi-systemic approach and COVID-19. There appears to be a high degree of crossover between literature review 1 and 2 suggesting that the core

principles for supporting EBSNA are the same, whether or not CYP are autistic, however there are some differences in relation to the explicit mention of the role of autism specific support mentioned within the first review pertaining to the role of diagnosis, understanding of autism, differences in relationship building, and the support required in respect of social communication and interaction needs.

Please note both literature searches (LRQ 1 and LRQ 2) were repeated in May 2024. LRQ 1 did not result in any additional papers for consider within this research. However, LRQ 2 resulted in one additional paper by McDonald et al. (2023), this paper will be reflected upon within the discussion chapter.

2.9 Rationale for current research

The literature reviews conducted provided some insight into the aspects which support reintegration following EBSNA, however there was limited insight into these experiences for autistic students. To further build on this emerging area of research, the proposed research will explore what influences the reintegration process for autistic students, from the perspective of EPs.

The literature review emphasised the importance of wider systems working together to support the reintegration process. Whilst one study within the EBSNA research, in relation to neurotypical CYP, has considered the role of the EP (Corcoran et al., 2022), this is not the case for EBSNA research focused on autistic CYP. The EP role involves working with CYP aged 0-25 using psychology to support a wide of range of needs, by working with the systems around them e.g., parents and school staff (BPS, 2023;

HCPC, 2023). The 'core functions' of the EP role are consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Farrell et al., 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that EPs would be well placed to support CYP experiencing difficulties in relation to attending school, particularly those with SEND and thus will have useful contributions to make in relation to this area. Further, one study found that EP input was perceived as more useful than school-based or health-focused support with regard to reintegration following EBSNA, reiterating the potential role of EPs (Sawyer, 2022).

3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter overview

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodology within the present research study. This begins with an outline of the research aims, the positioning of the research and the researcher's values. Next, details about the research design in relation to participants, data collection and analysis are explained. Finally, the procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and issues in relation to ethics will be discussed.

3.2 Research aims

The research question for the following study is:

What influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist (EP) perspective?

The aim of this research is to explore EPs' experiences and perspectives about what influences the reintegration process for autistic pupils following a period of EBSNA, taking a 'what works' for EBSNA perspective. It is well-established that autistic CYP are more likely to experience difficulties in attending school than their neurotypical peers (Kurita, 1991; Munkhaugen et al., 2017; Totsika et al., 2020). This can have a detrimental impact on their wellbeing, learning and future outcomes. It is also well established that EPs have a key role in supporting CYP aged 0-25 with a wide of range

of needs, including EBSNA, by working with the systems around them e.g., parents and school staff (BPS, 2023; HCPC, 2023). The 'core functions' of the EP role are consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Farrell et al., 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that EPs would be well placed to support CYP experiencing difficulties in relation to attending school, particularly those with SEND such as autism and thus will have a lot to offer with regard to the influential aspects which support reintegration for these students.

It is hoped that this research study will add to the emerging research within the area of EBSNA, by building upon the existing body of research and contributing a new perspective, through exploring EPs' views on what influences the reintegration process for autistic students. The existing research details information about the reintegration for both neurotypical and autistic students, but with limited consideration of the EP role as outlined within the previous chapter.

The findings from this study will permit education professionals, including school staff and EPs, to develop their knowledge and understanding about the influential aspects of the reintegration process which will enable them to support autistic students experiencing EBSNA more effectively.

The researcher would like to mention that the current project is different from the original project. The original project aimed to explore the factors which support successful reintegration of autistic students, using a multiple case study design, by illuminating the lived experiences of students who have been through this process and the key stakeholders who supported them through this. It was hoped that by doing so,

it would provide the students and key stakeholders with an opportunity to share their voices and in turn for their voices to be heard by others, which would have been useful for all education professionals who are involved in supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA. Unfortunately, due to significant difficulties with recruitment, and the limited timescale for completing this project as part of a professional doctorate, the difficult decision was made to modify the study to the current project in November 2023 to enable the researcher to complete the study by the deadline in May 2024.

3.3 Research positioning

3.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is thought to be the study of existence, seeking to answer the questions, 'What is reality?' and 'What is there to be known about reality?' (Crotty, 1998; Snape & Spencer, 2003). There are several ontological positions which can be taken up, which directly impact on how a researcher conceptualises reality, which in turn has an impact on the way in which a researcher engages with their study.

The ontological position of the current research study is relativist. Relativism is based on the idea that there are many truths, and that reality is socially constructed, meaning that reality is defined by the experiences of individuals and/or groups. Therefore, reality is subjective in nature and the same phenomena can be interpreted in a number of different ways, so there is no shared reality between people. In addition, this philosophical position argues that reality is never fixed and is continually evolving (Al-Saadi, 2014; Harper, 2012).

In relation to the current research, it was hoped to explore what influential aspects were involved in supporting autistic students, who have experienced EBSNA, to reintegrate back into school by exploring the lived experiences of EPs who have been involved in supporting their reintegration. In doing so, there is an acknowledgment that reality is socially constructed and dependent on everyone's unique experience.

3.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is linked to ontology and concerns the question, 'How can we find out about or study phenomena/reality?' (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The epistemological positioning has a direct impact on the way in which a researcher uncovers knowledge, as there are several epistemological stances which can be taken up (Al-Saadi, 2014).

The epistemological position of the current research study is constructivist. A constructivist approach takes an interactive style to studying phenomena, due to a belief that knowledge is obtained through exploring and understanding the views and perceptions of the world from the perspective of individuals. Therefore, this method of studying phenomena is thought to be subjective. Additionally, it recognises that the researcher is not completely impartial within the research process, which will have an impact on the research they are conducting (Harper, 2012; Jupp, 2006). Further, this method of studying phenomena is thought to be inductive as it aims to generate new ideas and ways of thinking about phenomena from the data collected (Al-Saadi, 2014).

In relation to the current research, it was hoped to uncover knowledge about the reintegration of students who have previously experienced EBSNA by exploring this through a key stakeholder within the process, that being an EP. In doing so, there is

an acknowledgment that knowledge about phenomena is obtained through exploring the world views of individuals who have been involved in said phenomena.

3.4 Research purpose

The purpose of the current research study is exploratory, this is in line with the ontological and epistemology stances outlined above. Exploratory research permits the researcher to purely *explore* phenomena, rather than describing or explaining phenomena.

This research investigates the influential aspects of the reintegration process for autistic CYP by exploring the experiences of EPs who have supported CYP through this process. It is hoped that by doing so, this will provide the EPs participating with an opportunity to share good practice, which will permit education professionals to develop their knowledge and understanding about the influential aspects which support the reintegration process. This will then enable them to support autistic students experiencing EBSNA more effectively.

3.5 Research methodology

The research methodology used within this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is thought to be most suited to studies within the social sciences which aim to explore the lived experiences of individuals within social situations (Smith & Nizza, 2022). This is because qualitative research provides rich, in-depth, non-numerical data which is useful when seeking to explore phenomena within social sciences (Robertson & McCartan, 2016).

3.6 Researcher values

It is maintained that our values, beliefs and philosophical assumptions influence the manner in which we approach research (Creswell, 2013). This involves the selection of research topic, methodological decisions and approaches to data collection and analysis (Tracy, 2010). Further, Greenbank (2003) argues that research cannot be free from the researcher's values and that researchers should adopt a reflexive approach, whereby they are transparent about the ways in which their values impact on the research.

It is acknowledged that the values the researcher holds and the experiences they have had have undoubtedly influenced every aspect of the current research, including the research topic, the positioning of the research and the approach to the research. The researcher will outline these below to allow the readers of the research to have some insight into the drivers which have underpinned the research.

Whilst the researcher has not had direct experience of EBSNA, they have experienced anxiety since childhood, this has led them to be particularly interested in topics relating to Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH). As EBSNA is a facet within SEMH and is a current, increasing issue within Educational Psychology it was felt that this would be a pertinent topic to research.

In regard to autism, as part of training to become an EP, the researcher spent part of their first year completing a placement in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), within an autistic diagnostic service. During this placement the researcher developed a great deal of knowledge and understanding about autism by supporting CYP and their families through the assessment process. Interestingly,

some CYP within the process were experiencing EBSNA at the time. The placement was an incredible learning experience which the researcher will hold on to throughout their career. This experience combined with the prevalence of EBSNA within autistic communities, ignited the researcher's desire to explore EBSNA within the autistic community.

As mentioned previously, the researcher had originally intended to explore the factors which support successful reintegration for autistic students, using a multiple case study design, by illuminating the lived experiences of students who had been through this process and the key stakeholders who supported them. This is aligned with their values in relation to advocating for and giving voice to CYP and marginalised communities/groups e.g., those with SEND. This is also supported by legislation including the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a) within which listening to CYP and parental views and including them within decision making is highlighted as imperative.

The research project change challenged the researcher's values, as CYP and their families voices were no longer going to be heard as part of the research. The researcher also felt that they were 'giving voice' to a participant group who already holds a lot of power, which did not sit comfortably. At times, this made engaging with the research extremely difficult. The researcher has had to be pragmatic about the challenges which occur within real world research. Once the researcher began interviewing the participants as part of the current research study, they were able to re-engage with the research process, as it was an equally useful experience in speaking to EPs about their work supporting this vulnerable group.

The researcher also strongly believes in social justice and views education as a means of social mobility, not only on the basis of research evidence, but also from personal experience. Thus, it is incredibly important for CYP, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those from marginalised communities/groups to have access to and be able to engage fully with education. Therefore, researching 'what works' for students experiencing EBSNA seemed a key area of research in relation to ensuring CYP are able to access and engage with their education.

As the researcher is a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), they are an 'insider' to the research, as they belong to the same professional group as the participants (EPs), albeit still in training. This has impacted on the research in numerous ways including easy access to participants, as many were recruited via professional links. In addition, building trust and rapport within the interview was much easier as there were many commonalities between the researcher and the participants. This is a direct contrast to the original project, where the researcher was attempting to obtain participants from an 'outsider' position as some of the participants would have been autistic young people, it is likely that building trust and rapport would have required much more consideration and time (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

As an 'insider' researcher, this also created an interesting power dynamic between the researcher and participants. Power is typically held by the interviewer, however within this research it was unusually skewed towards the interviewees, as they were qualified EPs being interviewed by a TEP. This was noticed in the researcher's anxiety ahead of interviews as the participants were mostly known to the researcher and had their own experiences of conducting research, so the researcher felt pressured to ensure

they were interviewing ‘correctly’. On the other hand, it could also have been a challenging position for the participants too, as they may have wanted to ensure they answered questions ‘correctly’ as they are qualified EPs and thus may have felt as though they should have all the answers.

3.7 Research participants

3.7.1 Participant criteria

The following criteria was applied when seeking participants:

- Participants must be a qualified EP.
- Participants must have had experience supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA.
- Participants may work for an LA or within independent/private practice.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria applied as part of participant recruitment process are detailed in the table below.

Table 5.

Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
Qualification	The participant must have been working as an EP for at least	Any individual who is not a qualified EP including TEPs and those who are in their	The researcher hoped to explore the perspectives of EPs who have a wealth of

	1-year post-qualification.	first year of qualified practice.	experience and knowledge in relation to practicing as an EP.
Experience	The participant is required to have supported an autistic student (with confirmed diagnosis) with the reintegration process following a period of EBSNA (see note below re EBSNA classification).	Any professional experience supporting the reintegration process for other reasons e.g., illness or CYP with different needs e.g., not autistic.	The researcher hoped to explore EP practice in relation to supporting the reintegration of autistic students following a period of EBSNA.
Context	Participants may work in LA or within independent practice.		The researcher was keen to explore practice across both LA and private contexts as the focus was around the work supporting students with EBSNA as

			opposed to working context.
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It must be noted that there is currently no specific criteria in regard to classifying EBSNA: as discussed in the introduction there is a great deal of variation in relation to the conceptualisation of the phenomena as well as the monitoring procedures. The DfE categorises 'persistent absentees' as CYP who have missed 10% of available sessions within the school year (DfE, (2024). They also have a category for 'severe absence' which is when a student has missed 50% or more of available sessions (House of Commons Education Committee, 2023). Thus, it is hard to determine at what point absence becomes EBSNA and when CYP are considered to have reintegrated. Ultimately, there is a requirement for there to be an increase in attendance following a period of decreased attendance as a result of social, emotional factors. The EP being interviewed determined which cases they felt fit the criteria in relation to EBSNA and reintegration following the guidance within the research flyer/information sheet and using their professional judgement (see appendix 5).

3.7.2 Recruitment Process

Purposive/selective sampling was used to select participants, this ensured that the researcher had participants that could provide insight into the specific phenomena being explored i.e., EP involvement as part of the reintegration of autistic students following a period of EBSNA.

The recruitment process for this study was atypical, as the researcher had already attempted to recruit for the original project. This meant that the researcher already had contact with potential participants.

Initially, the researcher added an agenda item to an EP team meeting within their placement, regarding the original study (multiple case study) to outline the objectives of the study and the participants required. The researcher also contacted EPSs within other boroughs to create a wider pool of potential participants. The researcher then requested that individual EPs with suitable previous cases contacted the families and provided them with the information sheet and consent form for the study which outlined the aims/purpose and requirements of the study. This would then have enabled families to make direct contact with the researcher if they were willing to take part within the study.

Subsequently, the research project was altered due to recruitment issues (as mentioned previously), so recruitment was commenced again. However, as the initial study involved contacting EPs to identify suitable previous cases, EPs were then re-contacted to inform them of the change of project i.e., interviewing EPs instead of CYP/families, and asked whether they would like to take part in the new study. This included supplying the new information sheet and consent form (see appendix 5).

3.7.3 Participant sample

Braun and Clarke recommend 6–10 participants for small research projects (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, their latest publication stated that discussion around notions of ‘sample size’ is more aligned with a positivist paradigm thus there is no ‘right’ number of participants within qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Nevertheless, this study involved interviewing 6 participants.

The participant sample included in the study is detailed below in table 6.

Table 6.*Participant sample.*

Participant Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Years of EP practice	Current work arrangements (LA, locum, private, or other)	Specialism e.g., SEMH and/or EBSNA (Yes or No)
1	David	M	10+ years	LA and other.	Yes
2	Rachel	F	8-10 years	LA	No
3	Silvia	F	15+ years	LA and locum.	Yes
4	Jess	F	4-7 years	LA	No
5	Elizabeth	F	8-10 years	LA and private practice.	Yes
6	Katie	F	1-3 years	LA and private practice.	Yes

The gender of the participants was skewed towards females. This is unsurprising considering the EP workforce is majority female (83%) (Lyonette et al., 2019). The experience of the EPs interviewed ranged from 18 months to 18 years as a practising EP. Within this most EPs worked within an LA in some capacity with some additional

locum or private practice work alongside this. Almost 70% of the participants either currently or previously had a specific role in relation to SEMH and/or EBSNA. All participants worked in England with a high number working within London/South of England.

During the interviews, it became apparent that one of the participants had supported with the reintegration process in a slightly different way, as the student they had supported had already reintegrated and thus their role was to support with maintaining his attendance. Initially, the researcher considered redacting their data however during the analysis process it became apparent that their perspective and experiences were aligned with the other participants, so it was decided to retain their data. The research diary excerpt below illustrates the initial reservations about including this participant.

Figure 2.

Reflective diary entry 1

Thursday 11th January 2024

Today I have finally begun data collection!

Unsure whether one the participants meets my criteria, as they were supporting the YP once reintegrated! Perhaps my criteria was not clear enough. Check with research supervisor.

Participants seem to be confused by the co-vid question perhaps I could have piloted the questions and then amended them before proceeding with the study. The question could have perhaps been broader about the role of the pandemic on the processes?

3.8 Data Collection

3.8.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The current research study utilised semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. This method can have a varied structure usually consisting of an introduction, some key questions/prompts and closing (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The researcher felt that using a semi-structured approach gave the interview some structure/scaffolding whilst still allowing for exploration (Nuttall and Woods, 2013; Smith, 1995).

The current research study utilised an interview guide, which consisted of open questions within a particular order to allow participants to give a rich detailed account about what they believe was influential within the reintegration process. It is recommended to have approximately 6-10 questions for an interview lasting up to an hour (Smith & Nizza, 2022). This research utilised 8 core interview questions and the interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes.

The interviews took place virtually and were recorded via zoom software. Participants were informed about the recordings via the information sheet and consent form. This detailed that the recordings will only be kept until the end of the research project (July 2024). Transcription of the interviews was completed manually with support from an AI transcription service, and the method was verbatim, apart from any verbal fillers/pauses.

3.8.2 Data collection procedure

The semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually and recorded using zoom software. The researcher used their secure university zoom account to conduct the interviews. The zoom meeting information was shared with participants via email.

The researcher began the interviews by introducing herself and the study, using an interview schedule (see appendix 5). The researcher then contracted the session by outlining the approximate duration of the interview and number of questions which were going to be asked, including beginning with contextual questions prior to the interview questions. The researcher then summarised the key information from the information sheet and consent form including the confirmation of ethical approval, confidentiality boundaries and the right to withdraw.

Following this, the researcher began recording and asked the three contextual questions, which were as follows:

1. How long have you been working as an EP?
2. Do you work in LA, private practice or other?
3. Do you have a specific role, e.g., SEMH specialism?

The researcher then proceeded to ask the interview questions which were as follows:

1. Is there a particular case that comes to mind when thinking about reintegration following EBSNA?

At this point the EPs were reminded not to mention specific details about CYP they have supported and that if they inadvertently mentioned details about CYP, this would be redacted from the data.

2. When you have supported the reintegration process, what was your role?
3. How did you work with/alongside other professionals/the family/YP?
4. What do you think supported the student(s) return/reintegration to school?
5. Were there any factors which hindered the process?
6. What do you think supports ongoing attendance at school following reintegration?
7. How (if at all) has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the reintegration process?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your work supporting autistic students with the reintegration process?

Please note, depending on the participants' responses, some of these questions were re-phrased, omitted or further prompted. For example, some participants spoke about their work with the family as part of their answer in relation to question 1 so it was then not necessary to ask question 2.

At the end of the interview, the researcher stopped recording and checked in with the participant to explore whether there was anything they wished to ask or discuss further following participating in the interview.

The researcher then reminded the participant of key information including the small sample size and the implications of this, i.e. data may be recognised via the use of quotes, the limits to withdrawing in relation to the commencement of analysis procedures and plans for future dissemination.

Finally, the researcher notified the participant of an online voluntary meeting which would be held in the summer of 2024 to share the research findings with participants

ahead of thesis submission. The participants were also reminded that if they were feeling distressed or worried after the interview, to contact their supervisor in the first instance, if not then they could reach out to the Samaritans. The researcher followed up the interview by sharing a leaflet which had this information on it (see appendix 5).

3.9 Data Analysis

3.9.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method for qualitative analysis which allows the researcher to explore meaning within a dataset. TA is not a singular method. Braun and Clarke (2022) detail three types of TA including RTA, Coding reliability TA and Codebook TA. Coding reliability TA is more aligned with a quantitative/positivist paradigm due to its association with reliability and objective of establishing the 'truth' about phenomena. The Codebook TA method is aligned with a combination of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms, with a focus on taking a more structured approach to the initial coding process.

RTA was used to analyse the data obtained within this study. RTA is a method for analysing and interpreting qualitative data, which involves a systematic process including data coding in order to produce meaningful themes. The reflexive element involves critical reflection on the role of the researcher in relation to the research process. Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that researcher subjectivity is an asset to the data analysis process, which contradicts the aims/approaches within a quantitative paradigm whereby the aim is to be as objective as possible. They also maintain that reflexivity is paramount to good quality analysis. Further, they feel data analysis is not

a science, but an art, as creativity is central to the analysis process, albeit within a rigorous framework.

The researcher followed a 'Big Q' orientation meaning the study was based within a qualitative paradigm and utilised qualitative methods. Further, an inductive approach to coding was taken whereby meaning is generated from the participant data in a bottom-up fashion. These are the optimum conditions for using RTA.

There are six phases within RTA, these are detailed in table 6 below (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Whilst each phase follows on from the previous, analysis is dynamic and non-linear allowing for back-and-forth movement between different steps.

Table 7.

Phases of RTA.

<u>Phase</u>	<u>Content</u>
1	Familiarisation with the data
2	Coding
3	Generating initial themes
4	Developing and reviewing themes
5	Refining, defining and naming themes
<u>6</u>	Writing up the analysis

These steps will be further discussed when detailing the data analysis procedure.

3.9.2 Strengths of RTA

There are several strengths to the RTA approach, firstly, it is considered an accessible method, as it does not require in-depth and complex understanding of underpinning

theoretical knowledge, as in other methods e.g., Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). There is also a wealth of guidance within the literature which is useful to guide students through the process. Further, RTA is a flexible approach as you are able to use this analysis with an extensive range of theoretical orientations and frameworks (Joy et al., 2023).

3.9.3 Limitations of RTA

It has been argued that there is a lack of literature about RTA in comparison to other approaches e.g., Grounded Theory, which can impact on the rigour of the analysis method. In addition, the flexibility of the approach is stated to lead to inconsistency in the analysis process (Holloway & Todres, 2003; Nowell et al., 2017).

3.9.4 Data analysis procedure

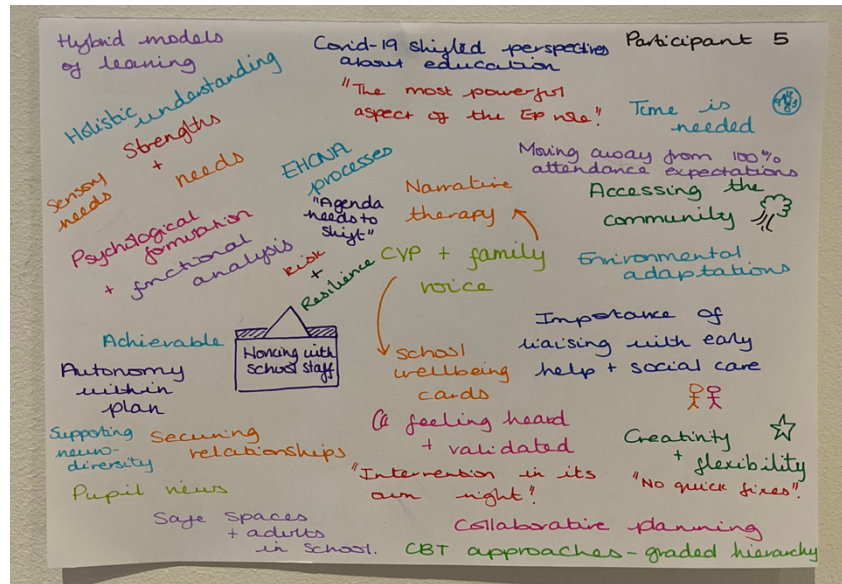
Familiarisation with the data

This phase involves immersing yourself within the data, by listening to recordings, reading and re-reading the data. It is important to keep notes on any observations/thoughts that arise through this process, in relation to both individual transcripts and the dataset within its entirety.

In relation to the present research, following the completion of each interview, the researcher transcribed the recordings using support from an AI transcription service, this allowed for initial familiarisation with the dataset. The researcher then listened to the recordings whilst re-reading the transcripts. In addition, the researcher kept notes of any thoughts arising and produced written and visual summaries, see an example of a visual summary below and both written and visual summaries within appendix 6.

Figure 3.

Visual summary of interview 5.



It was interesting to note that through the familiarisation process, the researcher noticed that they felt more drawn towards participants who aligned with their own positioning for example those who felt that working directly with CYP was a pivotal aspect of the EP role. It was important to take note of this to ensure it did not skew the data analysis process.

Coding

This phase involves working through the dataset in a systematic manner to identify sections of the data which appear to be relevant to the research question, then creating a label to capture these pertinent aspects. These codes can be semantic, which have a more explicit or surface level meaning, or latent, which have a more implicit or conceptual meaning. It is important to note that this section is not just to reduce data but to think about the researcher's analytic perspective of the dataset.

Once the entire dataset has been coded, the code labels are collated and gathered with the relevant sections of data for each code.

In relation to the present research, following the initial immersion process the researcher began coding using Microsoft Word by highlighting relevant parts of the data transcripts and adding a note using the comment function on Microsoft Word. However, quite quickly it became apparent that this was not the most efficient way to manage the coding process, so after discussion with their supervisor, the researcher decided to move to using Excel as it was more efficient due to the ability to search for codes, switch between transcripts and review full dataset on one document (see appendix 6).

In terms of the approach to coding, the researcher used an inductive approach whereby codes were created based on the content within the data transcripts, as opposed to applying set codes to the transcripts. In addition, the researcher utilised a mixture of both latent and semantic coding, meaning exploring meaning at both the perceptual level (semantic) and conceptual level (latent) as detailed previously.

Throughout the coding process, the researcher kept two key pieces of information as a reference point, the first of these being the research question to ensure codes were being generated in relation to the specific aims of the research. Secondly, a key idea suggested by Braun and Clarke (pg. 71, 2022) is “take the data away”, meaning if you were to lose your dataset and be left with just your codes, could you accurately recall and make sense of your dataset on the basis of the codes alone? The researcher found this idea incredibly helpful, as it ensured that they were being specific enough within the coding to have an accurate representation of the data and ‘do justice’ to the participants’ accounts.

Braun and Clarke (2022) advise that researchers should go through the dataset at least twice within the analysis process. The researcher formally went through the data twice; however, further informal adjustments were made to codes throughout the process, highlighting the recursive nature of RTA. The coding process became easier as the researcher went along, and their ability to identify specific meaning in relation to the RQ became more refined. It was noted that transcripts which had been coded earlier on in the process were somewhat less refined than those completed later as the researcher grew in confidence within the process, so these were reviewed 3 times.

The researcher found themselves becoming fairly frustrated during the coding process, due to the time it was taking, particularly due to the requirement to repeat the process a few times. The research diary excerpt below illustrates some of these frustrations, particularly in relation to the feelings around lack of objectivity and the need to become comfortable with the subjective nature of RTA. In hindsight, the researcher appreciates the importance of this process, as it is ultimately laid the foundations for latter stages of the analysis process.

Figure 4.

Reflective diary entry 2.

Thursday 29th February 2024

I'm now into my 3rd week of coding, the process is taking much longer than expected. I'm finding the lack of objectivity difficult, as I don't know whether I'm doing it correctly. This is then leading to procrastination of the task, but I know I need to do this in order to progress to the next stages of data analysis. I have read the chapter on coding within Braun & Clarke's book and reminding myself of their acknowledgement of the process being subjective and trying to feel okay about this. Hoping to move on to thinking about themes tomorrow.

Generating initial themes

This phase involves exploring the codes created in the previous step and trying to find patterns across and within these to generate themes. This begins by assembling groups of codes that share a core idea or concept and which might provide some insight into your research question. These themes are created by the researcher, based on the data, the research question and the researcher's knowledge. The themes describe broad and collective meanings. Once this is complete, the researcher brings together all the coded data relevant to each of the candidate themes.

In relation to the present research, during the coding process the researcher noted down themes which seemed to be occurring within the dataset, these were around facilitators, barriers, COVID, the education system and the EP role. However, on further exploration of the RTA textbook the researcher realised that unfortunately they had fallen into a few RTA traps, the first of which being one-word themes which are not advocated within the method, as well as creating 'topic summaries'. Topic summaries are when a researcher simply summarises everything that a participant has said about a particular topic i.e. COVID. This is an easy trap to fall into as topic summaries are somewhat easily conceived, due to their direct link to questions asked within the interview i.e. How did CO-VID impact on the reintegration process?

Subsequently, the researcher then had to return to the coded data and attempt to begin clustering codes which seemed to be linked by a central organising concept. This was quite a challenging process because the researcher had over 500 codes. After the initial clustering process, this led to approximately 12 candidate themes (see appendix 6).

Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest between 2-6 themes, including sub-themes, for a single chapter within a doctoral thesis, so this was far too many. However, this was not an issue at this stage of the analysis, as there are further phases which support with fine tuning the themes and sub-themes.

Also, during the analysis process, the researcher noted that occasionally their own interests were overriding the consensus within the data. For example, when a limited number of participants spoke about ideas related to the unconscious mind and processes associated with this, the researcher attempted to create a theme around this but later realised it lacked presence across the data set and would have been considered a weak theme. This again highlights the importance of researcher reflexivity.

Developing and reviewing themes

This phase involves checking the original coded data against the initial themes established within the previous step to check that they are aligned. This includes reviewing the coded extracts and the full dataset to ensure that the themes make sense. During this phase you may need to amend themes, by combining or separating them, as well as potentially discarding themes and creating new themes. As part of the reviewing process, you need to consider each individual theme and the core focus of the theme. In addition, it is necessary to think about the relationship between the themes and the existing knowledge within the subject area and wider context.

In relation to the present research following generating initial themes, the researcher began the process of reviewing themes. This involved combining themes and exploring a range of sub-themes within themes.

The researcher compared the coded data against the initial themes during which they noticed that there were multiple codes to one part of the data extract, so when reviewing the themes they selected the most pertinent code for that section of data (see appendix 6 coding extracts – codes in red were discarded).

Upon reflection, the researcher felt they did not wish to 'miss' any meaning within the dataset and wanted to ensure they captured the perspectives of the participants; however, this seems to have led to 'over coding' somewhat. This also likely contributed to the significant amount of time spent coding.

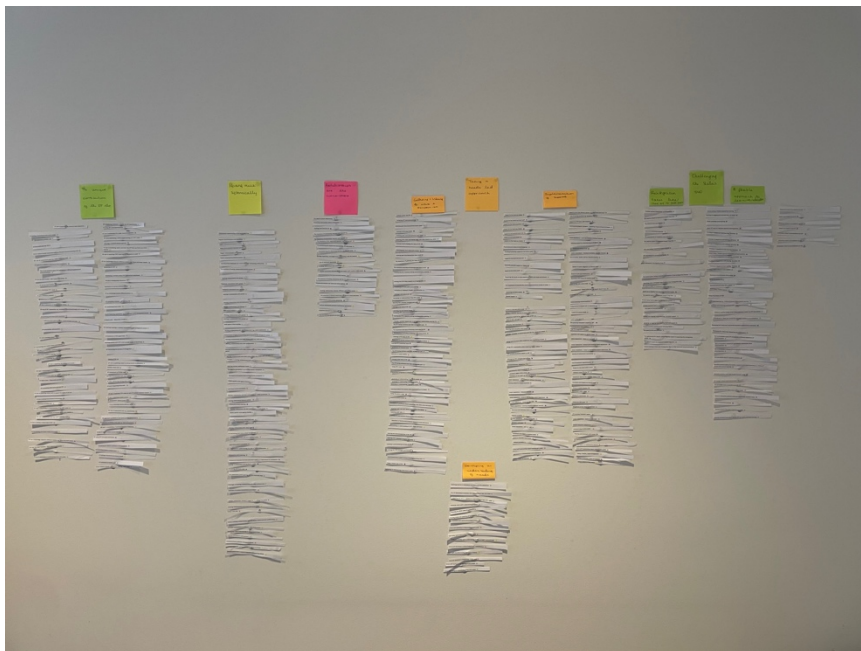
Another issue which arose within this phase was that codes which seemingly matched a particular central idea/concept, once reviewed appeared better aligned with a different theme. For example: "But I just felt actually there needs to be a link between home and education and school. If he's going to get back into school", was coded - 'Collaboration between the home and school system as a requirement for reintegration' and was placed under the theme of 'All on the same page'. However, when reviewing the data extract, it was clear this linked more to the first theme, 'Relationships are the cornerstone', as it felt less about working together and more about ensuring there was a link/relationship between systems.

As mentioned above, Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest between 2-6 themes including sub-themes for a single chapter within a doctoral thesis. They also build on this by suggesting that sub-themes are not necessarily obligatory and that there is actually a danger of having too many which can make the data analysis fairly thin, endorsing that sub-themes should "be used sparingly" (Braun and Clarke, 2019 p.2).

After spending a considerable amount of time re-working the themes and sub-themes, the researcher managed to generate 5 solid themes including 5 sub-themes (see figure 5 below and appendix 6).

Figure 5.

Themes.



These themes were then compared to the full dataset to ensure that the themes made sense in consideration of all participants' accounts.

Refining, defining and naming themes

This involves analysing each theme to further fine-tune themes, with the final outcome of naming the themes. This includes ensuring that themes have a strong core concept and that they all fit together to form a story about the overall dataset. A key aspect of this process is writing a summary of each theme and finalising the name of the theme.

In relation to the present research, following the development of themes the researcher further analysed the themes by creating a table to see all the codes and extracts under each theme/sub-theme. During this process, the researcher observed that 'The unique contribution of the EP role' theme was comprised of central organising concepts across a number of the other themes. Therefore, rather than being a distinct theme, it was noted that the EP role was something which was a golden thread across themes. So, the researcher redistributed the codes/data extracts from this theme across the other themes. This then resulted in four final themes, including five sub-themes, still somewhat higher than the espoused amount however the researcher felt this was appropriate for the present research study.

The researcher then closed analysis by writing a summary of each theme, these are within 4.3 of this thesis.

Writing up the analysis

This involves creating a coherent narrative about the findings of the research including the themes, data extracts and links to existing literature, with the overall aim of addressing the research question.

In relation to the present research, following the finalisation of the themes the researcher proceeded to write the next sections of this thesis including the findings and discussion chapters.

3.10 Ensuring trustworthiness of qualitative research

Yardley (2000) developed a set of criteria for ascertaining the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, these are outlined below.

Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context encapsulates a wide range of issues. Firstly, it is important to begin a research study with a systematic review of the literature including existing empirical research. Additionally, it is important to have a good understanding of the theory behind the method/approach being used within the study. Further, it is important to take note of the socio-economic and cultural factors of the context within which this study will take place in, and how this may or may not impact on the research study. Finally, it is also key to consider how aspect of the researcher's identity might also impact on the research.

In relation to this research project, the researcher began the research study with a systematic review of the literature as well as doing some broader reading around the topic, this enabled the researcher to develop sensitivity to the contextual and historical context of the research area. Aspects of the researcher's identity and the impact of this were also explored within researcher values in 3.6.

Commitment and rigour

Commitment refers to ensuring that the researcher remains engaged and invested within the project throughout and develops their skills and understanding of the method used. As well as ensuring that they immerse themselves within the data collected.

Rigour refers to the comprehensiveness of the data collection and analysis component of the research study. It is important to ensure that the research question is aligned with the method of data collection and analysis. Additionally, it is critical that the researcher goes beyond basic level description of the data and seeks to interpret reality through the participants' perspectives.

In relation to this research project, the researcher remained engaged with the research project by working on different aspects of the project, little and often. To develop a good understanding of the methodology, the researcher read the seminal text on the method i.e., Braun and Clarke (2022). To ensure rigour in relation to data collection, the researcher utilised an interview schedule to allow for a consistent approach to the interviews (see appendix 5). Further, to maintain rigour in relation to the analysis, the researcher used a systematic process with support from Braun and Clarke (2022) as noted above and within appendix 5.

Transparency and coherence

In regard to transparency, it is pivotal to keep detailed information throughout the research process especially within the data collection and data analysis phases. Within the current research, the interviews were recorded to allow for review within the data analysis phase. As the analysis phase was in process, the researcher sought guidance from their research tutor to avoid any potential bias or blind spots within the process, particularly in relation to the themes and patterns arising. Further, it is imperative to be reflexive within the process to ensure that the researcher is aware of how their own world view may have impacted on the research study, again this was considered within researcher values in 3.6.

Coherence refers to how the research flows from start to finish, starting with the fit between the research question and ontological/epistemological positioning, then on to the methodology/methods used and finally the conclusions obtained. In relation to this research project, during the planning phase the researcher ensured that the research question, positioning and methodology all aligned prior to proceeding. In the analysis

phase the researcher also considered the relationship between the themes/conclusions drawn in relation to the original conceptualisation of the study.

Impact and importance

It is argued that the quality of a research project comes down to the impact it makes. As the current study aimed to address a gap with the literature, in relation to the EP perspective of the reintegration for autistic students following a period of EBSNA, it is hoped that the research will provide useful information which will have an impact locally and possibly nationally, considering the high rates EBSNA and large autistic population. Further discussion around implications for practice can be found in 5.4 and the dissemination strategy in 5.7.

3.11 Ethics

The British Psychological Society (BPS) published both the Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018) and the Code of Human Research Ethics (2021). These documents outline the key principles that need to be adhered to when practising psychology and conducting psychological research involving human participants. The main aims are to ensure that that participants are protected, and that researchers are conducting their study in a safe and appropriate manner.

The key ethical considerations the researcher will adhere to are summarised below.

Respect

Respect is one of the most fundamental ethical principles. All participants within the current study were treated with respect throughout the process, from participant selection to data analysis and write-up.

Competence

As a TEP, the researcher is still developing their competence in relation to research. To ensure the safety of participants in this respect, the researcher made good use of supervision and ensured participants were aware of their trainee status. As mentioned previously I also read widely about the topic area to ensure competence in regard to autism and EBSNA, as well as the method I utilised to ensure competence within the analysis process.

Informed Consent

All the participants within the study were informed about the purpose and rationale behind the research study, they were given an opportunity to ask questions and reminded of their right to withdraw. Also, all the EPs were familiar with carrying out their own research projects so understood the process well.

Confidentiality

The researcher kept hold of personal information e.g., recordings of interviews, only for as long as was required for the purpose of the research study, as per General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines. Whilst this personal information was within the researcher's possession it was stored on a locked/password protected device. In addition, within the write-up, pseudonyms are used throughout to ensure anonymity of the participants. Finally, as with all work with CYP, a safeguarding statement was made at the start of the interviews to ensure that they are aware that there are some limits to confidentiality in order to keep them safe. It is understood that there will be limits to confidentiality, in that information will be shared during research supervision

and the researcher will be writing a thesis and hopefully eventually publishing the study. This was made clear to participants via the information and consent form.

Participant's Wellbeing

Participant wellbeing is always a crucial factor within research. The following precautions were taken to ensure the wellbeing of the participants. Within the interviews, the researcher created a safe, non-judgemental space, by demonstrating empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951). The participants also had the opportunity to ask questions at the stage of gaining consent and were offered a debrief following the interview to ensure they were okay and where to go if they required further support.

Power dynamics

It is important to hold in mind power dynamics, as often within the nature of the helping relationship, the 'helpee' finds themselves in the one-down position. Additionally, aspects of identity can also contribute to the perceived power held by individuals. In this study however, the power dynamics were somewhat reversed, as the researcher conducting the research was in the one-down position by simple virtue of being a TEP whereas the participants were fully qualified EPs, many of whom had been practising for a number of years. In addition, the researcher's other aspects of identity may also place them in the one-down position when thinking about broader society, thus this was also a factor to consider within the dynamic, particularly then when thinking about intersectionality.

Relevance and Impact of the Research

The current research study hoped to add to the emerging research within the area of EBSNA. In addition, it builds on the existing body of research and contributes a new perspective, by exploring the influences involved in the reintegration process for autistic students, following a period of EBSNA, from an EP perspective. This will permit education professionals, including school staff and EPs, to develop their knowledge and understanding within this area, which will enable them to support autistic students experiencing EBSNA more effectively.

To disseminate the findings from this study, the researcher plans to share the research as part of the LA Continuous Professional Development (CPD) day within the LA the researcher will be working within once qualified and possibly at the annual DECP TEP conference and publication within an EP journal. Further discussion around implications for practice can be found in 5.4 and the dissemination strategy in 5.7.

Feasibility and Resources

Originally, it was hoped that the current research study would take place within the researcher's placement LA. However, due to recruitment difficulties, the recruitment pool was widened to ensure feasibility of the study, particularly in relation to timeframes. As a small sample size was utilised and limited resources were required within the study, this supported with feasibility of the project. Initially, a Gantt chart was used to support with the planning and delivery of the research project, though this unfortunately did not go to plan due to the numerous issues encountered throughout the research study, ultimately a more flexible and pragmatic approach was required.

3.12. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has detailed the aims of the present research study, including the ontological and epistemological stances framing the study. As well as considering the central role of the researcher's values and the impact this has had on the entire process. Further, details about the research design and analysis process were outlined in preparation for the following chapter within which the findings of the present study will be discussed and analysed.

4. Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the present research study following the RTA process to address the following research question: What influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced EBSNA from an EP perspective? Within this chapter, a brief overview of each theme will be provided, followed by a detailed exploration of each theme including the sub-themes, exemplified by the use of data extracts from the participant interviews. Please note, pseudonyms have been used throughout this section. Also, this chapter will include some discursive moments for contextual purposes, further in-depth discussion will be within the succeeding chapter.

4.2 Overview of themes

There were four main themes identified through the analysis process:

1. Relationships are the cornerstone.
2. "We're all on the same page...".
3. Taking a needs led approach.
4. Challenging the status quo.

The thematic map below illustrates the themes and subthemes identified through the analysis process.

Figure 6.*Thematic map.*

4.3 Summary of themes

Table 8.*Summary of themes.*

Theme	Summary
Relationships are the cornerstone.	This theme captures the importance of relationships, at both the individual CYP level but also between systems. In relation to the individual CYP, the importance of relationships prior to/at the start of the reintegration process was key, as well as the requirement for CYP to build trust with key adults within school and the need for these relationships to be sustained long-term.

“We're all on the same page...”.	This theme summarises the requirement for different systems to work collaboratively, with regard to understanding the presenting issues, and being aware of their individual contributions to supporting with the reintegration process, whilst also remaining “on the same page” and working towards the same goals.
Taking a needs led approach.	This theme encapsulates the significance of the individualistic approach required within the reintegration process, from gathering views from key stakeholders e.g. CYP and families, to developing a deeper, holistic understanding of the presenting issues contributing to the EBSNA and then utilising this information within action planning/next steps in relation to reintegration.
Challenging the status quo.	This theme highlights the necessity to challenge the status quo in relation to the education system, school and learning. In addition, there was a requirement to challenge the status quo in relation to the reintegration process itself, in terms of the process requiring time, effort and a flexible approach in order to be successful.

4.4 Theme 1 – Relationships are the cornerstone.

The importance of relationships within the reintegration process was a key message identified across the dataset.

The significance of relationships prior to the more 'formal' aspects of the reintegration process e.g. stepped reintegration plans, was clearly indicated by participant 5.

“And I think a lot of that comes down to establishing the relationships of the adults first. So, I often feel like we need a relational intervention before we have the kind of reintegration intervention and really kind of laying those foundational relationships and security in school with the young person in order to aid reintegration. And that's where I kind of feel like I've had the most success with young people...” (Participant 5)

This was then further built upon, with consideration that the CYP needs to build secure, trusting relationships with adults within school, and that this relational support needs to be maintained in the long-term.

“...I think it's about relationships in school being key...” (Participant 2)

“Also, I think the availability of adults to kind of support that reintegration plan over time.” (Participant 5)

As a separate branch within this, participants discussed the importance of relationship building between systems, firstly between the family and school systems.

“But I just felt actually there needs to be a link between home and education and school. If he's going to get back into school.” (Participant 3)

In addition, the significance of the professionals building relationships with the family system was mentioned too.

“...building relationships...between me and the parent...it's been the relationship building with mum, because there are times when it gets more tricky, ... I think being able to like, really know that we've got a relationship we can come back to, will be supportive and trying to get over the more challenging times.” (Participant 1)

Further, the relationship between professionals and the school system was also noted as imperative.

“I think we have a really important role in kind of supporting staff, and kind of highlighting what's going well, as well as strengths, because I think, it's really emotional situations for family and staff. And I think we can feel quite de-skilled, and that we're trying a lot, and we don't know what to do. Because we've tried everything we thought of, so I think our role as well is really important in that emotional support for staff and having a very solution focused approach, because you want to kind of build on the strengths.” (Participant 4)

This also highlights the distinct contribution of the EP, in providing not only that practical support, but also in providing containment for school staff during the challenging process of supporting a student through the reintegration process.

In summary, relationships were felt to be the essential building block for the reintegration process, both in terms of the individual CYP and between different systems as a precursor for working together, which will be discussed in further detail within the next theme.

4.5 Theme 2 – “We're all on the same page...”.

The cruciality of taking a multi-systemic approach to the reintegration process was another fundamental idea identified within the dataset.

The requirement for working collaboratively between systems, including the family, school and wider professionals, was highlighted as being an important aspect of the reintegration process.

“...the value and importance of joint working with the school, family, external professionals...” (Participant 1).

“So, we started off by having a TAC meeting, so Team Around the Child, and had sort of everyone from the network really come along to that meeting.” (Participant 6)

“...and working with parents. And so, they, they feel listened to, and they feel involved in working out what the support will be.” (Participant 2)

“But in my local authority, we've also tried really hard to build those wider links with our colleagues in early help and social care, where there is social care or early help involvement, particularly for children who experienced more entrenched school avoidance behaviours...” (Participant 5)

The idea that there would need to be ‘true’ collaboration, where you are working as a team with the same starting point, in terms of understanding the presenting issue, as well as how you plan to work together to ‘solve’ the ‘problem’ was put forward. Participant 4 highlights that this goes far beyond a simple report writing exercise.

“You kind of need to create that team. It's not kind of a go in and write your report exercise.” (Participant 4)

Another aspect which arose within this theme was the need for regular communication between systems throughout the reintegration process, to ensure that everyone is able to remain up to date about the progression of the reintegration process.

“Because generally things work better when there's that regular and open communication.” (Participant 4)

As well as perhaps an element of containment, in terms of being held in mind and feeling supported throughout the reintegration process, whether that was via phone calls or regular school visits.

*“I think maybe mum's anxieties and things, meant that there's been sort of a fair amount of checking in with phone consultations with parent in between these bits.”
(Participant 1)*

“And I needed to work with the school staff predominantly. And that involved quite a lot of visits. I mean, I remember being at that school, every couple of weeks. So I'd pop in and just sort of have a conversation with, there was a lady there who she was the inclusion support assistant.” (Participant 3)

In working together, participants felt this was a useful way of ensuring that all key stakeholders involved in the CYP's life, e.g. family and school staff, were able to contribute to the understanding and meaning making of the presenting issues as an initial starting point. Participants 5 and 6 describe triangulation and the need for different perspectives to be considered as part of this process, rather than hearing a single narrative.

“So school, parents, there was a social worker involved, I can't think who else came to that original meeting, I think there's a speech and language therapist involved as

well, actually. So, they came along, and it was quite a useful way of bringing everyone together, understanding a little bit more about what was happening.”

(Participant 6)

“So, working in very close partnership with school staff, school staff so that you're building that holistic picture but also triangulating that information across the child, the home and the school context. And making sure that it's the kind of right people that you're talking to in school in terms of those that know the child really well, but who are also going to be your captive audience, in terms of finding the members of staff that are going to be most supportive and open to supporting that reintegration back into school.” (Participant 5)

This then feeds into a “joint positioning” of the ‘problem’ which enables a secure starting point when thinking about next steps/action planning.

“So, there's something around like, the joint working with what the different parts that system can offer, and the joint positioning of things that's important.” (Participant 1)

When thinking about action planning, participants felt it was important to have a clear and collaborative plan.

“And I think, just having everyone talking and reviewing things regularly, and just having a clear plan. We all knew what our role was what we were doing.” (Participant

4)

“Yeah, I think it was having that several people involved all working to some kind of collaborative plan.” (Participant 3)

Within this, participants then thought about the importance of the specific roles that each stakeholder had within the reintegration process, whether that is low demand

parenting at home, schools making adaptations or CAMHS teaching skills in relation to anxiety management.

“...a large role in terms of supporting the family to think about what that young person needs right now, in order to support them to either stabilise their school placement or return to school. ... exploring with family to things around low demand parenting, thinking about those rest and recovery, sort of phases of emotionally based school avoidance and thinking about what they can do to prioritise their child's social emotional mental health, and rebuild their child's mental health to kind of support them to build up to that return to school.” (Participant 5)

“...then also work with the school to think about how they could make adaptations, think about how we could kind of build up the time and increase the sort of amount of time that they were going into school really.” (Participant 6)

*“So, we're all on the same page. So, I'll give an example like, social care identified that the family weren't really spending quality time together and the young person didn't really go for trips in their local community. And they were getting to kind of approaching Year 9, when we think about adulthood outcomes, so something that social care worked with the family around, was thinking about, okay, let's plan some visits to go into the local community. Where would this young person like to visit? Let's go together and then CAMHS helped by kind of helping to work through in therapy, okay, what are some scripts we can use? So if we go to the cinema, you know, how are we going to ask for a ticket? How are we going to do this? So I think without that multi-professional element, it wouldn't have been kind of joined up.”
(Participant 4)*

Within the multi-disciplinary element of this theme, a recurrent discussion around the distinctive aspect of the EP role arose, with thoughts around the facilitative role of the EP within the reintegration process, often via the means of a consultation process/cycle.

“So I held an initial consultation, that was the SENCo, the teacher, the parent, to kind of gather the information.” (Participant 2)

“So, it was a little consultation with parent over the phone, then took the form of a shared school parent consultation. Follow up consultations with select staff around like the kind of professional networks that was both internally and externally so included like an autism specialist teacher, who works for the local authority, class teacher, and SENCO.” (Participant 1)

Linked to this idea of EP as facilitator, the EP was often described as having a bridging or link function between systems when working collaboratively and participants alluded to their knowledge of child development and school systems, in being of aid when working between systems particularly those not education based e.g. CAMHS.

“And so I tried to, I think, was just create a bit of a link between parent, Jonathan (CYP), school staff, and the wider education kind of context of the local authority....” (Participant 3)

“So I liaised with them (CAMHS) in terms of, we had kind of an action planning feedback meeting after my involvement as well...to kind of provide that bridge because I guess I have knowledge of the school system. I'm familiar with the school as their link EP. And also, I have my kind of knowledge of the procedures, SEN procedures and also, you know, research about how children learn and how we can support them in school.” (Participant 4)

“So one of my roles was supporting that, again, acting as a bridge to think, okay, how can we be reinforcing that because it's going to be more helpful if what we're learning in therapy is in place, in everyday situations, to support that generalisation, and it was actually focusing on, for example, developing scripts for social situations at school...” (Participant 4)

Finally, the EPs role in bringing positivity and a strength/solution focused stance to the work was also apparent within the participants' accounts. Many EPs feel that this is a key aspect of the role more generally, with EPs being described as "hope catchers" (Educational Psychology Today, 2017).

“And often it's, there's a lot that's been focused on the difficulties, but actually, there's usually, or always those little sparkles and things that are going well. So, I think going in with that view of solution focused, hope. There's always hope.” (Participant 3)

In summary, participants felt that there was a requirement for all key stakeholders to work collaboratively towards the same aims, whilst maintaining their own, distinctive roles within the reintegration process, this is in line with the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a) which advocates that there should be collaborative working between all professionals supporting CYP's needs.

4.6 Theme 3 – Taking a needs led approach

The necessity to take a needs led approach to the reintegration process was another key idea identified within the dataset. This theme is comprised of three sub-themes, 1. Gathering and listening to views, 2. Developing an awareness and understanding of needs and 3. Implementation of support.

4.6.1 Sub-theme 1 - Gathering and listening to views.

This sub-theme focuses upon the importance of not only gathering views, but truly listening to the information which has been communicated.

As identified within key legislation, participants felt it was critical to provide opportunities for the parental voice to be shared and heard within the reintegration process (UK Parliament, 2014; DfE, 2015a).

“...it was really important for me to kind of give family a space to communicate how the current situation was impacting on them. Because I think it's a very emotional experience, not just for the young person, but the people around them.” (Participant 4)

As well as parental voice, participants felt it was pivotal to hear the voice of the CYP as part of the reintegration process, in order for them to have the opportunity to share their views/ perspectives about their experiences of EBSNA. Participant 5 felt this was “the most powerful aspect of the psychologist’s role”.

*“Then I met with the young person did some work with him, got his views.”
(Participant 2)*

*“And I think we have so many wonderful skills and resources, particularly X’s school wellbeing cards, which I will frequently use with young people to really support them to have that platform to share their views and to have that experience of feeling listened to, feeling heard, and having those experiences of school validated.”
(Participant 5)*

Participants discussed using a range of tools to support with exploring views/perspectives, for instance participant 2 utilised the ‘Myself as a Learner’ questionnaire (Burden, 1998), whilst participant 3 spoke about the use of CBT based questioning.

“He completed ‘myself as a learner’... generally, his view of himself as a learner was quite negative. So he, he kind of feels he can’t do the work in class that everyone

else can. But actually, he can, he has got the ability to kind of, more his perception of it..." (Participant 2)

"I did some work with him drawing on some sort of CBT type approaches, trying to think about, you know, what thoughts does he have about school? ... what's the evidence for some of those thoughts about school? Is there any way of challenging those a little bit?..." (Participant 3)

Some participants also mentioned using pupil views tools which are more suitable for students with social communication needs i.e. The Ideal School (Williams and Hanke, 2007).

"So like personal construct psychology tasks, things like drawing your ideal school, your non ideal school to elicit their views, particularly for this pupil who had a diagnosis of autism, just kind of reflecting on some of the difficulties that they may have in accessing some of the assessment materials and maybe sharing their views in a conversation...And just having kind of a task as a bridge and something very visual." (Participant 4)

Interestingly, participant 5 spoke about the duality of gathering views, in that it was also an intervention due to having their experiences "listened to and validated...".

"It's about supporting them to express and articulate their views to feed into that functional analysis of the kind of emotionally based school avoidance also is I see it as an intervention in its own right in terms of supporting that young person to reflect on their experiences, to have that experience of feeling heard, listened to and validated and supporting them to just kind of make sense of it and think about where they want to go next." (Participant 5)

Participant 2 also raised a noteworthy point in relation to the need to regularly review CYP's views as their experiences and preferences will change over time, particularly when considering the extensive evolution of the self during adolescence.

"So I guess, keeping them involved on an ongoing basis, not just when it's a problem at the start, or a problem. A big problem. But, you know, even after that. And I think checking in with the people and getting ideas from them. Quite often, they can think of things that might work for them, or they can tell you what won't work for them."

(Participant 2)

Another interesting aspect was the need to listen to CYP's views and perspectives even if they were perhaps different to the views of other key stakeholders or professionals and really taking onboard what was being communicated.

"I think, to begin with, it was telling, like, validating that it was really difficult, and that there were things that he, you know, with all the reassurance in the world, he was kind of telling us, I'm scared, I'm frightened, and really kind of listening to that."

(Participant 3)

"...we were, we were like, wouldn't be nice for him to have some friends, it'd be nice for him to be in his peer group. And actually, he was telling us no, that isn't nice. I don't enjoy that. I don't really like them. And I don't want to hang around with them. And again, it took, it took a while. And I include myself in this as well. It took a while for us all to actually listen to him." (Participant 3)

"I find it really frustrating and satisfying in equal measure, I think, but I've, I've learned huge amounts from just really listening to what young people say."

(Participant 3)

Participants felt using CYP's views was helpful within the formulation of the presenting issues and also that it was important to share these views with key stakeholders in order to offer an alternative narrative surrounding the EBSNA behaviours.

“So, providing that sort of overarching psychological formulation and functional analysis, and really using the child and young person's voice and the voice of the families to kind of centralise their experiences and guide that formulation.”

(Participant 5)

“...and making sure that we're kind of gathering their views in advance of having those consultations with schools so that we can go into those consultations really informed by the young person's perspective and really able to kind of advocate for their needs.” (Participant 5)

“Because I can really kind of get their voice and share that with the school as well. So you know, being able to share with the school, actually, they do really want to come like, they're motivated to come it's not just that they don't want to come into school, can sometimes make a real difference to schools perception of the situation.”

(Participant 6)

As a branch within pupil views, participants also mentioned the importance of utilising pupil views within action planning to allow the CYP to feel autonomy over the next steps of their reintegration.

“And that kind of then led into what we call like the stepped plan. So, you know, if he's not really going to school at all, then can it be, you know, going in and or going to stand outside, one morning or something like that. So, we started to create that together really gradually.” (Participant 6)

“And that information coming directly from the young person in terms of giving them control over the little steps that they feel they need in order to achieve that return and

giving them control over ranking them in terms of the least and most anxiety provoking, and that giving them that format to really see that broken down into those small little steps so that it feels really achievable for the young person.” (Participant 5)

“The young person that I spoke to had a really good insight into what they found tricky, and how they're feeling, which really helped...But I think it was really important to give an avenue for that and to involve them in kind of the next steps, you know, what do you want to happen? What's worked, what hasn't worked, you know, what would help you to meet the next step?” (Participant 4)

4.6.2 Sub-theme 2 - Developing an awareness and understanding of needs.

This sub-theme focuses on the necessity to develop an understanding of the CYP's needs as part of the reintegration process, this builds on the previous sub-theme whereby views were gathered, by further deepening the understanding of presenting needs in order to aid the planning/next steps of the process.

Participants felt there was a need to place the EBSNA behaviours within the wider context of the CYPs' lives, thus avoiding taking a 'within-child' view of the presenting issues and further exploring aspects in relation to early life experiences and the home/family environment. This is very much in line with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) which highlights the different systems which surround CYP, the interaction between these and the potential impact of these systems.

“...a sort of narrative therapy style approach, I would say in terms of supporting that family to kind of explore their child's developmental history, look back on the educational journey, and those significant events and things that have happened and taken place that have contributed to the emotionally based school avoidance, and really supporting that family to shift their perspective and have that more holistic

understanding of the child's needs, so that they can then in turn support their child holistically as well.” (Participant 5)

*“So it helped me to understand kind of the background, and contextual kind of, the context of the EBSA. In terms of we know it's not just kind of within pupil factors, it's often kind of lots of things going around the child and not necessarily all school.”
(Participant 4)*

“So, again, my part of it was really to try and get to know the family get to know the wider sort of system, Jonathan's family system, try and understand. Are there other barriers that might be about the relationship between home and school?” (Participant 3)

Alongside consultation, a key aspect of the EP role is assessment, pupil views is an integral part of this as discussed within the previous theme. However, additional assessment often builds upon this to further explore and clarify needs, with the aim of aiding the formulation of the presenting issues i.e. EBSNA behaviours. Participants discussed using a range of assessments and techniques to support with this including observations, use of questionnaires, sensory profiles and Projective Assessment (PA). PA is based on psychodynamic theory, which is based on the idea that individuals have an unconscious aspect to the mind which impacts on the way in which they experience and interact with the world (Curtis, 2015; Freud, 1915). PA methods ‘allow free-flowing responses to the presentation of a stimulus’ (Kennedy et al., 2017, p.25). It is thought that PA elicits a response which evokes thoughts and feelings from the CYP’s unconscious, providing the EP with insight into the things beyond conscious awareness (Kennedy et al., 2020).

“And some observations of the young person when they're in school...” (Participant 1)

“I did some questionnaire assessments just to further explore whether there might be any barriers to learning. So there were quite a few concerns around executive functioning needs...” (Participant 4)

“...then we did a bit more exploration around school and his sensory profile, what makes school so difficult...” (Participant 6)

“But then I also did some projective work with him...using talking stones, trying to get an understanding of this anxiety he talked about, he was very articulate, he was a really, you know, able young person, and communicated verbally, really well. So, he could describe what his anxiety felt like he could describe where it was in his body. And I think that, to me, the talking stones really helped me understand what goes on, in, you know, in his world....” (Participant 3)

Participants also noted resources which specifically enabled them to further ‘unpick’ the underlying causes and maintenance factors, sometimes referred to as push/pull factors or risk and resilience factors, contributing to the EBSNA behaviours, including the use of ‘The School Wellbeing Cards’ (Holder, n.d).

“...we would kind of think about the different factors that were contributing to the school avoidance. So, try to try and think about that from like, a school, home and child perspective. (Participant 6)

“I used the school wellbeing risk and resilience cards...So, you know, in that it looks at what his resiliency factors are, and then what the most like him are out of those, and then what his risk factors are and what he would like to change.” (Participant 2)

“...really focusing my assessment on providing that functional analysis of the emotionally based school avoidance behaviours, and providing that description of the overarching barriers to school attendance and wellbeing, but also exploring those strength/protective factors.” (Participant 5)

Following on from the completion of assessments, and further exploration of presenting issues contributing to the EBSNA behaviours, participants also felt that was a requirement to develop an understanding of needs from multiple perspectives, including the self, family and school.

In relation to developing an understanding of the self, participants spoke about supporting students to explore their autistic identity, with acknowledgment that an autism diagnosis is not homogenous and as with neurotypical peers, autistic students come with their own unique set of strengths and differences.

“...so the young person wanted to, like complete a project in to, you know, a topic that they wanted to do, and they wanted to kind of explore their autistic identity and that kind of thing. So opportunities for that as well. Which just helped them to develop, I guess, their sense of self.” (Participant 4)

In relation to developing an awareness/understanding amongst parents, it was felt that the process allowed them to develop alternative narratives about their child and their presenting needs.

“Yeah, so for some families, it's working with them as part of the education health care needs assessment and supporting them to have that kind of reformulated understanding of their child's needs.” (Participant 5)

In relation to developing awareness and understanding of needs amongst school staff, participants felt it was often useful to develop their knowledge and understanding of different needs, particularly in relation to an autistic profile, whilst acknowledging the earlier point made around the diagnosis not being homogenous.

“Yeah, I mean, I think understanding from staff and staff, you know, having awareness of different needs, and making sure that they, you know, make those adaptations for young people with additional needs is, is something that supports their attendance...” (Participant 6)

“I went and did some training with wider school staff to try and help them understand the needs of young people with autism.” (Participant 4)

4.6.3 Sub-theme 3 - Implementation of support.

This sub-theme builds upon the previous sub-theme whereby an understanding of needs was established and focuses upon taking a needs led approach to the implementation of support as part of the reintegration process.

Participants stated that CYP needed to be supported within both the home and wider community as an integral part of their reintegration to school.

“So really kind of exploring with family to things around low demand parenting, thinking about those rest and recovery, sort of phases of emotionally based school avoidance...” (Participant 5)

“...because often, it's those aspects of accessing the community and widening the child's experiences within the home and community as a prerequisite to them working on those return to school goals. So, trying to really think about different multi agency partners that we can link up with and involve in those consultations as much as possible.” (Participant 5)

Nevertheless, participants felt that adjustments within the school environment were pivotal within the reintegration process in order to achieve success.

“...it kind of needs to start with school in some ways, because I think the, the times where, you know, we've just tried to build a stepped plan, or kind of start that reintegration, and things haven't been put in place at school. It's really not been effective. So I think, yeah, kind of helping schools to recognise that thing, you know, adjustments need to be in place before we can start to build that attendance up is, is something that, yeah, I really try and keep in mind in my work, because otherwise, I feel like we're, you know, we're just trying to get autistic young people to go back into an environment which is, it's, you know, it's not right for them. So if the sensory environment isn't right or, you know, socially, they're struggling.” (Participant 6)

In line with the above statement regarding change/adjustments being required within the school environment and linked to the first theme around the importance of relationships, participants felt the requirement for a key adult within the reintegration process was fundamental. In addition to this idea, there was also a need to have a secure base within school.

“And often young people, as part of that reintegration plan will kind of name the importance of needing those safe, secure adults and spaces in school.” (Participant 5)

“And a key person, because I think it's really important on those days, that they're feeling quite overwhelmed that they can check in with somebody that they can say, I'm feeling overwhelmed, because, and they can jointly problem solve with them. So having that kind of emotional support as well in school is really, really important, I guess, the safe space and the key person are key to that.” (Participant 4)

“I think the need for school to have that sort of provision available for him in the learning support department.” (Participant 3)

“The main things for the pupils that I found, continues to get them into school is having that safe space somewhere to go, when they're feeling overwhelmed.” (Participant 4)

As well as the need for secure adults and spaces, participants argued that there needed to be adaptations to the wider learning environment and teaching practices including adjustments to the timetable, teaching approach and content e.g. learning based on the individual interests of CYP.

“They needed kind of opportunities for more of a tutorial approach to learning in a smaller environment.” (Participant 4)

“So, he would go in, go up to the learning support department meet Mary and he would be able to sit with his headphones on and do some work that had been, like, organised for him around things that he wanted to learn.” (Participant 3)

“And then things like she's been she's had an adapted timetable that has been done collaboratively with her, her mum and class teacher. They've colour coded, what are the more challenging lessons? What are the ones that feel easier? What changes are happening in the different lessons to make them more accessible? They've even done things like moved the timing of specific interventions just for her and kind of stuff.” (Participant 1)

Additionally, adjustments in relation to the associated differences experienced by CYP with social communication needs was also discussed, for instance support for sensory needs, transition support, fostering a sense of belonging and minimising opportunities for social misunderstandings.

“And when working with autistic children and with schools, it's really having to be extra sensitive and aware of those sensory discomforts that can come as part of the neurodiversity. So I think that's something that we have to kind of be really mindful of in terms of that there might be more environmental barriers or adaptations that we need to be thinking about and making sure that we're kind of putting those in place.” (Participant 5)

“So things like being able to leave a lesson slightly earlier, where the corridors weren't so busy was really important. Having like a time, I don't think they called it a timeout card, but a card where he could sort of remove himself from the lesson if he needed to, also kind of really helped, I think, knowing that there was a bit of an escape, he called it, was, was really helpful.” (Participant 6)

“..he would go to breakfast club in the morning before school, because actually, that helped that the initial coming into school was what was difficult. So that helped with that, because he knew he was, he was going to something that was a bit smaller, a bit quieter, a bit more relaxed, a bit more fun.” (Participant 2)

“He liked, he quite liked responsibilities, so they made him a prefect, and they got him to help the parents evening, which I guess is then seeing a different side of school for him, it was not just about going in the classroom and not really liking, learning.” (Participant 2)

*“I think, oh something that he got into that helped, he got into playing football. And I think that helped him at break times, because you're not having to chat. And there's maybe less chance for social misunderstandings if you're just playing football.”
(Participant 2)*

As well as the adjustments within the school environment, there was recognition of the support provided by wider professionals e.g. EPs and CAMHS practitioners, particularly around that emotional wellbeing support.

“And that we're thinking about the coping strategies with the young person, things that they can do, things that others can do to help them as they progress through the kind of avoidance hierarchy in the different laddering stages, so very much using that systematic desensitisation rather than a flooding approach or forced approach to school attendance.” (Participant 5)

“And I think I do think him having some understanding of anxiety was also helpful. So, I do think that kind of psychoeducation part and the opportunity to sort of identify like, what his profile of strengths and differences are.” (Participant 6)

“But I think also massive massively what helped was that he was having these kind of additional sessions of CBT. (Participant 3)

“The other thing that helped was obviously identifying what their emotional needs are, and having people like CAMHS on board, who can provide that support, and kind of they were focusing on, like I said, positive coping strategies for dealing with certain things.” (Participant 4)

Finally, in addition to support for the CYP directly, participants also felt there needed to be support provided to different aspects of the system who were involved in supporting the CYP through the reintegration process, akin to ‘Containing the container’ (Bion, 1962).

“So, I wouldn't say it was just one thing, if it had to be as part of all of the systems as support for the young person, support for the family, support for school staff.” (Participant 4)

“The parent had also accessed what we have in our local authority which is like a parent advice line so you can it's a sort of accessible to any parents who are resident in XXX to call the EP service for advice and she called the advice line maybe like three times she was quite a regular user of that advice line.” (Participant 1)

“...and social care were also involved. So, in terms of working with them, it was really important because they were involved in working with the family.” (Participant 4)

“So, I kind of felt like some somebody needs to be supporting the parents and working with the parents. And she was getting, you know, they, they were having some input from CAMHS at the time.” (Participant 3)

This is also a concept which is prevalent within other themes, particularly in relation to the containment provided through relationships (as detailed in theme 1) and the support for staff around developing their awareness and understanding through opportunities such as training etc (as detailed in theme 3 – sub theme 2).

In summary, identifying CYP's needs through the use of pupil voice and other assessment materials, as well as gathering the views of other key stakeholders within the process i.e. parents, was a necessary component of the reintegration process in developing a coherent and holistic understanding of needs which then fed into the support which was implemented as part of the reintegration process.

4.7 Theme 4 – Challenging the status quo.

The notion of challenging the status quo, was another significant theme identified within the dataset. This theme is comprised of two sub-themes: 1. "There are no quick fixes..." and 2. A flexible approach to learning and education.

4.7.1 Sub-theme 1 - "There are no quick fixes..."

This sub-theme encapsulates participants' views surrounding the need for a gradual approach to reintegration, emphasising that it is a long process requiring continued time and effort which can often be a contrast to what is hoped for/expected by key stakeholders, particularly schools.

Participants felt that the reintegration process should be gradual, with acknowledgment that the transition back into school should be over a long period of time.

“But my role there was to try and support a very gradual transition in getting him to return to school.” (Participant 3)

“And I think in with the young people that I've worked with, the biggest thing that they probably report back to me is that often things start off quite well. And they start off small steps. And then all of a sudden, their return to school plans, suddenly, just the demands increase quite rapidly and the pace suddenly picks up quite quickly. So all the although plans start very well intentioned, there's often not enough attention given towards the time to gently and gradually reintegrate the child back into school. And I think that lack of attention towards time, and that lack of commitment to time, can really undermine even very good return to school plans that start off quite well intentioned. So I think that time and just people having maybe unrealistic expectations, or too high expectations of how quickly a child can realistically return to school is one of the biggest factors that undermines progress, in my opinion.”

(Participant 5)

As part of this gradual process, participants discussed the requirement for continued effort and involvement from all key stakeholders, including school staff and professionals as *“there no quick fixes or simple solutions to emotionally based school avoidance” (Participant 5).*

“...the SEN team, were great, and put a huge amount of time and energy and commitment into trying to support Jonathan.” (Participant 3)

“And I would just pop in for an hour and have a quick kind of update meeting with them to see how things were going. And then we'd arrange. Well, should we go and see Jonathan in a couple of weeks' time and see how he's getting on?” (Participant

3)

“So, things like that continuing after they've built up their attendance, you know, staff not assuming like, oh, they're here now, and the support kind of reducing.”

(Participant 6)

“Also, I think the availability of adults to kind of support that reintegration plan over time, obviously, time itself... but also the longer-term stages and I think that shift in understanding that actually, there are no quick fixes or simple solutions to emotionally based school avoidance and actually, that time commitment.”

(Participant 5)

4.7.2 Sub-theme 2 - A flexible approach to learning and education

This sub-theme summarises participants' views about the need for a more flexible approach within the educational system and thus school/learning, participants ultimately felt that there needed to be an overhaul in the way in which we think about education, school and learning.

Participants felt there needed to be a high degree of flexibility from different systems including the home and school systems when thinking about the reintegration process.

“And I also think, in terms of parents and family, they...were also flexible...it's a difficult balance, I think, but they weren't kind of, you know, really forcing him to go in on days where he was really struggling. And they weren't kind of, yeah, being punitive about it. They were very understanding. So, I think their approach probably supported him to be able to gradually build up his time.” (Participant 6)

“I think, I think it was a few things, I think it was the school being on board and being flexible around attendance. So, you know, they weren't expecting that he was going to suddenly be able to start attending again. And I think their flexibility kind of reduced some of that pressure and some of the demands that he was feeling.”

(Participant 6)

Participants discussed numerous ways in which schools had demonstrated flexibility within their approach to education including reducing academic demands e.g. dropping a GCSE and allowing opportunities for home learning and completing examinations from home, all with the aim of “taking the pressure off” (Participant 3), which is a contrast to what is generally expected within the education system.

“And in a way, paradoxically, what helped was not putting pressure on him to go. So, to try and find things that he could be doing at home.” (Participant 3)

“And maybe, sometimes having to be flexible learning. So, I know with other students that I've worked with, they would do things like maybe drop a GCSE so that they have more time to focus on core subjects. Just maybe because of missed curriculum at some point or, you know, ongoing anxiety or whatever it is that or, it just takes the pressure off a bit as well.” (Participant 2)

“...she would go and invigilate his exams at home. And the JCQ, like the school, got in contact with the assessment organisation the JCQ and they agreed that he could take his exams at home..” (Participant 3)

It was interesting to note that participants felt that the CO-VID-19 pandemic offered CYP and families a different experience of schooling, with access to smaller classes and/or online provision. This ‘challenged the status quo’ about how school and learning is conceptualised which presented some CYP and families with a more positive experience of school/learning and altered their views/perspectives about what school and learning can look like.

“I think one of the biggest impacts that I am sort of grappling with as a psychologist and really trying to integrate these reflections into my practice is about how the COVID 19 pandemic shifted children and families perspectives of education. And those different experiences of education such as those periods of home learning has

kind of given children and families a different experience of education and a different experience of education that perhaps suited particular children with particular needs, such as autistic children, for example. That actually some of these alternate or hybrid formats, more flexible formats of learning, actually met their needs much more than traditional education systems. So, I think it's kind of changed family's experiences of education, but also I think, changed their expectations of education, and what maybe they can come to expect of education for their children, young people.” (Participant

5)

Participants felt that a shift was needed within the education system with acknowledgement that mainstream schooling does not work for everyone, and that specialist provision was often more able to cater to the needs of some CYP, particularly those who may be experiencing EBSNA.

“I think just that, you know saying about trying to fit children into school because that's what most children do. I think over the course of my career, at beginning of my career as an EP, I would have also have thought, oh no absolutely school's the best place, children have to go to school. That's what we all do. And over time and working with young people...I don't think school is right for every child. And you know, they're not, they're not these little cardboard cut-outs that we can just go, yep lovely. This is what everybody does. So this is what you're going to do. It needs something much more thoughtful and bespoke than that for some young people.”

(Participant 3)

“And that actually, that shift in thinking of moving away from this culture of expecting 100% attendance, that actually, for some children who experience EBSA, the way that we maintain momentum and maintain attendance over time, and in the long term, is by having a realistic long term plan that might include very high degree of creativity and flexibility and even hybrid models of education, which might include a mixture of on site and off site learning, and being very much led by the needs of the child in the short term, and in the long term, and really being the schools being

willing to be creative and flexible in that long term. And that long term commitment is really pivotal.” (Participant 5)

“I think, to be honest, there's been many more cases where the student has ended up going to a specialist provision than we've been able to keep in mainstream school. You know provision where it's smaller classrooms. There's a blend of online learning and being face to face learning...” (Participant 2)

In summary, challenging the status quo around the educational system and thus school/learning, in relation to the system's rigidity and unsuitability for some students was felt to be a key aspect of this work.

4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has described the key findings of the present research study in relation to the research question: What influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced EBSNA from an EP perspective? The findings revealed four main themes surrounding the importance of relationships, collaborative working between systems, the need to establish and support the needs of CYP and the requirement to 'challenge the status quo' in relation to education, school and learning.

5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the findings of the present research study in relation to key legislation, the existing literature and psychological theories, in order to address the research question. The implications for EP practice, strengths and limitations of the study, ideas for future research and the dissemination strategy will also be discussed.

5.2 Summary of findings

The aim of this research study was to explore EP perspectives about what influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced EBSNA, by addressing the following research question:

What influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist (EP) perspective?

The RTA process generated four main themes:

1. Relationships are the cornerstone.
2. "We're all on the same page...".
3. Taking a needs led approach.
4. Challenging the status quo.

Overall, the findings within the present research study align with previous literature concerning the reintegration process following EBSNA for both autistic and neurotypical students. In addition, the present research also aligns with key legislation i.e. the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a) and key psychological theories i.e. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (1979) and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). This research adds to the existing literature by offering an additional lens, from the perspectives of EPs and considers their unique role within the reintegration process. Further discussion of each theme in relation to the existing literature and relevant psychological theory will be addressed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

5.3. Discussion of themes

5.3.1 Theme 1 – Relationships are the cornerstone.

This theme summarised the importance of relationships at the individual level. This was in relation to the requirement for CYP to build trusting relationships with key adults within school as a prerequisite within the reintegration process. In addition, the importance of relationship building between systems was also key, e.g. between the family and the school, in order to build the foundations required for collaborative working (further discussed within the next theme).

This aligns with the two key studies identified within the initial literature review, O'Hagan et al. (2022) and Preece and Howley (2018), which both found relationships to be pivotal to the reintegration process. Similarly, studies identified within the

broader literature review found that CYP needed to build relationships with key adults within the school setting in order for them to feel secure and adequately supported within the environment (Barron-Williams, 2021; Corcoran, Bond and Knox, 2022; Finning et al., 2018; Halligan and Cryer, 2022; Nuttall and Woods, 2013; Sawyer, 2022).

These findings can be interpreted through an attachment lens. Attachment theory was developed by Bowlby, he described attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). The theory postulates that infants require a secure relationship with a primary caregiver, which develops when their needs are met. At the broadest level this supports their survival, but also develops their ability to build relationships with others and their capacity for thinking (Bowlby, 1969; Salter-Ainsworth et al., 2015; Klein, 1959; Waddell, 2002). Infants are also able to explore the world with the knowledge that they will have a 'secure base' to return to, as identified within the ground-breaking 'Strange Situation' study (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). However, if a secure attachment is not formed, CYP may develop an insecure attachment, which negatively impacts on both their psychological and physical development (Newman, 2015).

These original ideas primarily relate to the relationships between the child and their primary caregiver i.e. parent, though also seem to translate across settings i.e. relationships with school staff. Interestingly, there was no mention of the importance of secure relationships within the home environment within the present study, nor in the initial literature review. However, it was highlighted as an important factor within the second, broader literature review. Tobias (2019) stated that CYP needed a 'secure

base' at home, as part of the reintegration process as it allows CYP to feel secure in the knowledge that they had this to return to after school. In light of attachment theory, this concept is plausible, so the researcher was curious as to why this was not discussed in the current or other similar studies. It is hypothesised that this may be due to this being an emotive topic area, which could feel slightly blaming towards parents and thus it is avoided altogether.

As mentioned within 2.8, following a re-run of the literatures searches a new study by McDonald et al. (2023) was identified. This study explored the development of School Attendance Problems (SAPs) and also, most pertinent to this research, the effective intervention required to support those with SAPs. The researchers used a mixed-method design utilising questionnaires in the first phase and interviews in the second, with various stakeholders including parents and professionals which included 2 EPs in phase 1 and 1 EP in phase 2. In line with the present study and previous literature, the researchers concluded that one of the key features identified as being supportive of the reintegration process was having an effective home-school relationship.

Peer relationships arose as being an important aspect within the theme of relationships in other studies (Mortimer, 2018; O'Hagan et al., 2022). However, this did not arise in the present study, other than in the context of listening to views surrounding the dislike of spending time with peers and the provision implemented to support the avoidance of social misunderstandings, both covered within theme 3 (Taking a needs led approach), sub-theme 1 (Gathering and listening to views) and sub-theme 3 (Implementation of support). It is hypothesised that this may be due to the participant group interviewed, i.e. EPs, as peer relationships may not have been

at the forefront of their minds. However, this may have been different had another participant group been interviewed, i.e. CYP. Also, it could be due to peer relationships seemingly not being an important aspect of the reintegration process due to assumptions surrounding social communication needs, or perhaps was not imperative for the specific students that the EPs worked with within this study.

Psychological theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) highlight that a sense of belonging is a key aspect of human motivation and an essential building block for CYP to be able to develop their self-esteem, engage with learning and 'self-actualise', i.e., reach their full potential and achieve success. Whilst the importance of relationships with key adults arose as a key aspect within the present study in line with this, it is interesting that this did not arise in relation to peers, as peer relationships have a significant impact on a sense of belonging (Anna Freud Centre, n.d).

As mentioned within the introduction, autistic individuals experience differences in their social communication and thus may have needs in relation to building relationships with others (National Autistic Society, n.d.). Bearing in mind that the need to build relationships with others is a fundamental aspect within the reintegration process, as identified within the present research and in previous literature, this may be a cause for concern as autistic students might find this challenging, particularly considering the theory of double empathy and related issues around masking and autistic burnout. Therefore, this process should involve careful planning and appropriate support mechanisms in order to foster these relationships. It has been argued that there are three key aspects in developing supportive relationships with

autistic students, including building trust, establishing unity, and providing support (Robledo & Donnellan, 2016).

The importance of relationships between systems appeared within other studies but more so in relation to collaborative working, whereas within this study, it was seen as a key aspect within its own right, as a precursor to working together. Previous studies have noted that parents report feeling blamed and unsupported by professionals when their CYP is experiencing EBSNA/during the reintegration process (Browne, 2018; Sawyer, 2022). Therefore, building containing relationships with parents/family systems, as discussed within the present study, appears to be a beneficial aspect of the reintegration process. This was also endorsed within other studies (Mortimer, 2018; Tobias, 2019). As noted within the findings it was important that these secure, supportive relationships were built so that this could be returned to during “*challenging times*.” (Participant 1) akin to attachment theory and linked concepts i.e. containment.

5.3.2 Theme 2 – “We're all on the same page...”.

This theme summarised the requirement for collaborative, multi-disciplinary working between systems. This builds upon the previous theme of the importance of relationships, by having strong communication, a joint understanding of the presenting issues, working towards the same aims and remaining “on the same page” throughout the reintegration process. However, there was also recognition of the individual roles of different parts of the system within the process.

This aligns with legislation including the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a). which both highlight the need for different

agencies to work collaboratively to support the needs of CYP with SEND. This also links to the government guidance titled 'Working together to improve school attendance' which is aimed at LAs and schools (DfE, 2022b). This guidance emphasises the need for collaboration between systems in tackling school attendance difficulties, similar to the findings within Finning et al's. (2018) study whereby it was emphasised that there should be shared responsibility between different systems in relation to school attendance difficulties. Further, research has indicated that interventions which aim to improve parent-school collaboration can improve school attendance and other academic outcomes (Smith et al., 2020).

This is also related to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory which highlights the different systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem) which surround a CYP and considers the multidirectional impact that they have on the CYP. Further, in Nuttall and Woods' (2013) seminal paper, they established the 'Ecological Model of Successful Reintegration', based upon Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The model illustrates the factors involved in successful reintegration, considering factors at different levels, including the individual child, family, professional and contextual, and emphasises the interactions within and between these systems. This model highlights the importance of needing to work with all the systems involved in CYP lives, echoing the findings in the present study surrounding the necessity of taking a multi-systems approach.

A key aspect of working together identified within the present study was the need for "regular and open communication" between key stakeholders. In relation to the literature, working collaboratively was recommended within numerous studies

including Corcoran et al. (2022), Grandison (2011), McDonald et al. (2023), O'Hagan et al. (2022) and Preece and Howley (2018), with studies noting that communication and liaison between systems was pivotal to the reintegration process.

It was found that this communication between the EP and different systems i.e. family and school, also provided a sense of containment for key stakeholders through the complex process of reintegration, in terms of being held in mind via varying methods i.e. phone calls or regular school visits.

Further, this communication between systems allowed for a "joint positioning" of the 'problem' which supported the subsequent stages of the process including having a "clear and collaborative plan". Corcoran et al. (2022), Nuttall and Woods (2013) and Sawyer (2022) also promoted the requirement for different systems to work collaboratively towards their shared goals. In the present study, participants also noted that each individual stakeholder had a specific role within the reintegration process. For example, particular approaches to parenting within the home environment, schools making the required adaptations within school, CAMHS practitioners teaching specific skills to support with the management of anxiety and the EP in their facilitative role.

It is apparent that working collaboratively across systems is a fundamental factor within the reintegration process, however this is not always straightforward to achieve. It was stated that families found navigating the system and accessing professionals challenging (Mortimer, 2018; Sawyer, 2022). There are also dominant narratives within the literature surrounding the difficulties in working collaboratively, often due to

working within different systems and having different ways of working (Birch et al., 2023; Warwick, 2021). Therefore, the way in which families, schools and professionals establish an effective working relationship should be carefully considered as part of this work.

5.3.3 Theme 3 – Taking a needs led approach.

This theme summarised the need to take an individual approach to the reintegration process, including gathering views from key stakeholders e.g. CYP and families, establishing a holistic awareness and understanding of the presenting needs underpinning the EBSNA behaviours and then the implementation of support based on the established needs to enable reintegration.

This again aligns with the Children and Families Act (UK Parliament, 2014) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015a), with regard to obtaining the views of CYP and parents and ensuring that they are involved in decision making processes, akin to ‘no decision about me, without me’ (Department of Health, 2012). In addition, this is supported by the government’s attendance guidance noted previously, which details the need to remove barriers to attendance and support the underlying causes of EBSNA (DfE, 2022b).

Also, within the wider literature, it was noted that it was imperative to listen to and advocate for parental views (Nuttall & Woods, 2013). In addition, it was felt that these views were required to be incorporated into actions plans for CYP’s reintegration (Sawyer, 2022).

The literature also similarly acknowledges the essential need to obtain and utilise the views of CYP as part of the process, to develop a deeper understanding of their individual experiences of EBSNA and to support with the identification of support strategies/provision (Barron-Williams, 2021; Corcoran et al., 2022; Grandison, 2011; Halligan and Cryer, 2022; Mortimer, 2018; Nuttall & Woods, 2013; Tobias, 2019). Stimulatingly, participant 5 also emphasised that the process of gathering CYP's views was an intervention in itself.

Building on this, participants also interestingly spoke about the need to prioritise the views of CYP even if they are different to other key stakeholder views. For example, participant 3 noted that all the professionals felt that the student would benefit from some peer relationships within school as part of their reintegration plan, however this was in stark contrast to the views of the student. The participant spoke about their internal battle between doing what they and other stakeholders thought was best vs doing what the student had requested. The researcher reflected upon how this is a useful reminder about genuinely listening to the views of CYP and ensuring that neurotypical ideals are not forced upon those with social communication needs (Camarata, 2022).

As discussed within theme 3, sub-theme 2 (Developing an awareness and understanding of needs), participants used a range of methods to support with developing a holistic understanding of CYP's needs including both standardised and non-standardised forms of assessment. This was fed back to key stakeholders within feedback/action planning meetings. Also, specific resources in relation to both Autism

- i.e. The Ideal School and EBSNA - i.e. School Wellbeing Cards were used to support students with exploring their experiences whilst being mindful of potential needs in relation to social communication, as well as being able to 'unpick' the underlying causes and maintenance factors contributing to the EBSNA behaviours. Also, participant 3 spoke about the delivery of training as part of the reintegration process in supporting staff to develop an understanding of autism. In the literature it was felt that it was vital for staff to have an understanding of CYP's presenting needs to support them effectively (Halligan & Cryer, 2022; Sawyer, 2022).

Another important aspect identified by participants was in relation to developing an understanding of the self, specifically in relation to their autistic identity. This aligns with the findings in both O'Hagan et al.'s (2022) and Preece and Howley's (2018) studies as they also found that developing an understanding of the self was supportive, particularly in building self-esteem. This relates back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as self-esteem is another essential building block which needs to be addressed before CYP can 'self-actualise', i.e., reach their full potential (1943).

Further, participants felt there was a need to place the EBSNA behaviours within the wider context of the CYPs' lives, thus avoiding taking a 'within-child' view of the presenting issues and further exploring aspects in relation to early life experiences and the home/family environment. Barron-Williams (2021) and Tobias (2019) also emphasised the importance of exploring wider environmental factors which may have/be contributing to the EBSNA behaviours. This also links to earlier discussions around Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Nuttall and Woods' (2013) Ecological Model of Successful Reintegration.

As discussed in theme 3, sub-theme 3 (Implementation of support), findings highlighted that once an understanding of needs was established via the exploration of views and the completion of further assessment, action planning in relation to the support required as part of the reintegration process was then devised. A range of support strategies and provision were mentioned including the need for secure adults and spaces, adaptations to the wider learning environment and teaching practices including adjustments to the timetable, teaching approach and content e.g. learning based on the individual interests of CYP. Participants felt that these adjustments within the school environment were critical within the reintegration process, as it was felt that otherwise *“...we're just trying to get autistic young people to go back into an environment which is, it's, you know, it's not right for them”* (Participant 3).

This is also in line with the existing literature which endorsed a person-centred approach in relation to support and provision including similar adaptations to the school environment comprising of access to safe spaces, opportunities to learn/socialise in small groups, adapted curriculums time out/break cards and support for academic work/engaging lessons (Corcoran, Bond and Knox, 2022; Grandison, 2011; Halligan and Cryer, 2022; McDonald et al., 2023; Nuttall and Woods, 2013; O'Hagan et al.; 2022; Preece and Howley; 2018; Tobias, 2019).

Also, participant 2 noted that one of the adaptations which was made was allowing the student to have a role of responsibility, i.e. being a prefect. This was also noted within Preece and Howley's (2018) and O'Hagan et al.'s (2022) studies, they felt that CYP

having a responsibility helped students to develop their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

The need to prioritise and support the emotional wellbeing of CYP as part of the support plan was emphasised as integral within reintegration process within the present study, as it allowed CYP to develop their emotional literacy and establish coping mechanisms. This was also noted as a precursor for re-engagement with education within the wider literature (Finning et al., 2018; Grandison, 2011; Mortimer, 2018; Sawyer, 2022).

The researcher observed that overall, the strategies and provision identified within the present study were not strictly 'autism specific', however there were some adaptations that were specifically related to an autistic profile i.e. support for transitions, sensory needs, and minimising opportunities for social misunderstandings.

Finally, as well as adjustments within school, participants noted the importance of adjustments within both the home and wider community, again linking to ideas around the importance of considering aspects across systems, not just in the formulation of the presenting issues but also when thinking about solutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Nuttall and Woods, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the specific role of the EP in relation to this theme will be discussed later within this chapter.

5.3.4 Theme 4 – Challenging the status quo.

This theme summarised the need to challenge the status quo in relation to the education system, school and learning. This was in terms of expectations around the reintegration process, as well as more broadly, in terms of the rigidity within the education system, particularly in relation to mainstream settings and how this is unsuitable for some students.

As noted by participant 5, *“there no quick fixes or simple solutions to emotionally based school avoidance”*, this summarised the views of participants in relation to their views about the reintegration process pertaining to the requirement for a gradual approach, requiring continued time and effort. This is also in line with the existing literature, with the significance of a phased return being highlighted as essential (Grandison, 2011; Mortimer, 2018). Conversely, there is often a disparity between this and what is hoped for/expected by key stakeholders. However, this is understandable considering the pressures on families in relation to the stress, employment issues and risk of being fined and/or being prosecuted due to their child’s absence from school (Browne, 2018; DfE, 2015b). There is also pressure on schools relative to their responsibility for managing and improving school attendance and issues around performance related pay (DfE, 2022b; DfE, 2023; National Education Union, 2023; Ofsted, 2022).

Participants also felt that a paradigm shift was required within the education system as mainstream education does not necessarily work for everyone. They also noted that often specialist provision was more able to cater to the needs of CYP experiencing EBSNA and noted that often reintegration into mainstream settings was difficult due to their limited capacity in relation to adaptations to the environment. These findings

are highlighted within Preece and Howley's (2018) study which explored reintegration for autistic students within a specialist setting. The researchers concluded that the setting had a positive impact on the students' wellbeing and was successful in supporting them to re-engage with education, mostly due to the settings' small class sizes, autism friendly classroom layout and eclectic approach to support. This provides further support that specialist settings are conceivably more able to meet student's individual needs due to their capacity to make extensive adaptations.

Further, it was interesting to note that participants felt that there were many positive outcomes as a result of the CO-VID-19 pandemic, for instance it provided CYP and families with a different experience of schooling, with access to smaller classes and/or online provision. This ultimately 'challenged the status quo' about how school and learning was conceptualised, which offered CYP and families with a different, and in most cases more suitable, experience of school/learning. This has resulted in altered perceptions about what is feasible in relation to school and learning. This is similar to Sawyer's (2022) study whereby participants felt that there were many beneficial outcomes during and following the pandemic including the use of online learning, regular check-ins with families and the gradual transition back to school. In addition, it was noted that the pandemic provided respite from the sensory and social demands of school. Similarly, Oliver et al.'s (2021) study demonstrated that whilst there were some additional pressures placed upon autistic students as a result of the lockdowns e.g. changes to usual routines, some students benefitted from the reduced social pressures and sensory challenges and were able to spend increased amounts of time on their own interests. Further, Ozsivadjian et al. (2023) suggested that CO-VID 19

offered “an opportunity for change” in relation to a more flexible and individualised approach to education.

5.4 The role of the EP

The role of the EP was not a distinctive theme identified as part of the RTA process because rather than being a discrete theme, the researcher felt it was more of a golden thread which was woven within and between themes. Whilst in the earlier stages of analysis the researcher had ‘EP role’ as a theme, according to Braun and Clarke (2022) this would have been more of a ‘topic summary’ where you simply describe a topic area rather than a theme with a central organising concept, as discussed within the methodology chapter. Nevertheless, the EP role was a key feature which arose within each theme within the present study, so it felt pertinent to address within the discussion of this research.

The role of the EP involves working with CYP aged 0-25 using psychology to support a wide of range of needs, by working with the systems around them e.g., parents and school staff (BPS, 2023; HCPC, 2023). The ‘core functions’ of the EP role are consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Farrell et al., 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002). Therefore, it is clear to see how EPs are well placed to support CYP experiencing EBSNA, particularly those with SEND.

Interestingly, previous studies have noted that EPs’ use of consultation was useful within the reintegration process (Corcoran et al., 2022). Also, it was found that EP input was felt to be more valuable than other school-based or health-focused support with regard to reintegration following EBSNA (Sawyer, 2022). Additionally, as

mentioned previously, McDonald et al. (2023) interviewed EPs as part of their study about student reintegration following a period of school non-attendance. By virtue of interviewing EPs, it acknowledges the role of the EP within this process. This provides further support surrounding the role of the EP within the reintegration process. However, it must be noted that the study did not explore or discuss the EP role specifically, as has been done in the present study. Conversely, Sawyer (2022) found that there was a lack of EP involvement (less than 50% of cases within her study), in comparison to other professionals, which is interesting considering the clear alignment of the role with supporting this need. However, this could be due to a lack of access to EPs, lack of knowledge about the EP role or perhaps other pressing priorities e.g. EHCNAs (Lyonette et al., 2019).

Within the first theme, 'Relationships are the cornerstone', the EP role regarding relationship building and providing a source of containment for key stakeholders during the challenging process of reintegration was noted. This is akin to 'containing the container'.

In the second theme, "We're all on the same page...", the EP role within multi-disciplinary working was established as being facilitative, often via the means of the consultation process, with consultation being a non-hierarchical, collaborative, problem-solving process (Newman and Rosenfield, 2019; Wagner, 2000). Participants also felt that within this, the EP had a bridging or link function between systems, mostly due to their knowledge base pertaining to child development, school systems and psychological theory particularly when working with either those not education based e.g. CAMHS or those without psychological training e.g. SENCOs.

In addition, EPs tend to approach their work with a strength/solution-focused stance, with participant 2 noting that they supported others within the reintegration process to identify “*sparkles*” i.e. glimmers of hope. Many EPs feel that this is a key aspect of the role more generally, with EPs being described as “hope catchers” (Educational Psychology Today, 2017).

In the third theme, it was noted that EPs have “*many wonderful skills and resources*” (Participant 5) which enable them to develop a holistic understanding of CYP’s needs to create a psychological formulation about a CYP’s presenting needs, which can then be shared with key stakeholders. It was also felt that this direct work with CYP was “the most powerful aspect of the psychologist’s role” (Participant 5). This was also seen as an intervention in its own right, as it provided CYP with the opportunity to have time and space to discuss, explore and process their experiences.

Also, delivering training is another aspect of the EP role; participants within this study stated that they delivered training about autism with the aim of upskilling school staff, in service of supporting the needs of CYP.

Further, EPs use psychological theory, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence to support with action-planning regarding support strategies. For example, the need for a key adult and reintegration planning e.g. stepped/gradual exposure plans.

In the final theme, 'Challenging the status quo', EPs were advocating for change in relation to the education system, school and learning. This was in reference to reframing expectations around the reintegration process and more broadly discussing the unsuitability of the mainstream education system for some students.

According to the HCPC, EPs have a role in "actively" challenging barriers and "supporting the implementation of change" (HCPC, 2023, p. 10). In terms of positioning and power, EPs tend to hold a lot of power and be in the 'one-up' position in relation to those they support i.e. CYP and families. It is often felt that those in positions of power, should be allies and speak up for those holding less power (HCPC, 2023). The researcher felt that the EPs within the present research study were doing just this, in using their role and their voices to express that there needs to be change in relation to expectations around reintegration and more broadly within the education system.

The Social Change Ecosystem Map is a framework that can help individuals, groups and wider organisations to think about their values and individual roles within change (Iyer, 2017). There are a number of different roles which can be taken up from 'visionaries' who are able to imagine an ideal future, 'builders' who help in implement new practices and 'disruptors' who take precarious and uncomfortable action in order to 'challenge the status quo' and set a path for change. It seems that some of the EPs within this research were being 'disruptors' in challenging expectations around reintegration processes and within the education/school system more broadly.

In summary, the EP role is multi-faceted, incorporating a wide range of functions, all of which are valuable within the reintegration process. Therefore, it would seem

appropriate for EPs to have a role in supporting the reintegration process for CYP who are experiencing EBSNA, particularly those with additional SEND.

5.5 Implications for practice

This research has reiterated the key influential aspects of the reintegration process, including the importance of relationships, working collaboratively and taking a needs led approach. This will be of interest to EPs, school staff e.g. SENCOs and wider professionals involved in supporting EBSNA, e.g. Attendance Officers, as they will be able to use these aspects as a guide when supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA through the reintegration process.

In addition, this research has highlighted the useful role of the EP within the process. This includes: providing a source of containment for key stakeholders, acting as a facilitator of the reintegration process via consultation, acting as a link between systems, taking a solution-focused stance, utilising multiple methods to develop a holistic understanding of CYP's needs, creating a psychological formulation about a CYP's presenting needs, delivering training and utilising psychological theory, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence to support with planning the next steps of the reintegration process. Therefore, schools and/or wider professionals, e.g. Attendance Officers, should consider seeking support from their local EPS or link EP when supporting a student who is experiencing EBSNA.

5.6 Strengths of the research

A key strength of this research is that it has helped to further explore what influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced

EBSNA. Whilst the findings were broadly in line with previous research, it was useful to corroborate this knowledge from an EP perspective.

Uniquely, this research has highlighted the valuable contribution of the EP in relation to the reintegration process, pertaining to providing a source of containment for key stakeholders, acting as a facilitator of the reintegration process via consultation, acting as a link between systems, taking a solution-focused stance, utilising multiple methods to develop a holistic understanding of CYP's needs, creating a psychological formulation about a CYP's presenting needs, delivering training and utilising psychological theory, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence to support with planning the next steps of the reintegration process. Additionally, the EP role in advocating for change was also brought to the forefront.

5.7 Limitations of the research

A key limitation of this research is that only the views of EPs were gathered, which means that the findings are limited to one perspective within the reintegration process, it is widely acknowledged that individuals within systems will have their own views based upon and limited by their own experiences (Osbourne, 2003). Thus, it might be the case that if questioned the family, school staff and students may have reported different influential factors on the reintegration process.

In addition, due to time constraints, only a limited number of EPs were interviewed, again limiting the conclusions which can be drawn due to the small sample size, though it is acknowledged that in RTA notions of sample size are rejected (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

In relation to the participant criteria, the recruitment flyer and information sheet detailed that 'Participants must have had experience supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA'. Upon reflection, this was not clear enough in relation to supporting the reintegration process, which resulted in a participant volunteering even though their work was not strictly about the reintegration process, more so about the maintenance of reintegration. Therefore, in future the researcher would be more specific during the recruitment process.

Also, in relation to the interview questions used, some participants found it difficult to interpret the CO-VID 19 question, 'How (if at all) has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the reintegration process?'. Upon reflection, it may have been useful to conduct a pilot study with a couple of participants to explore asking these questions and to gather feedback ahead of conducting the main interviews. Then these issues could have been addressed.

5.8 Future research

As mentioned within the methodology section, the original aim of the present study was to interview different key stakeholders within the reintegration process, as part of a case study. This would have allowed for multiple perspectives and narratives to be obtained, creating a more holistic and triangulated picture of the reintegration process. This could be considered within further research. Whilst a similar study was conducted by O'Hagan et al. (2022), they focused solely on female voices so it would be pertinent to explore the views of males.

Also, based on the findings surrounding the importance of relationships as part of the reintegration process, and the differences that autistic individuals experience in relation their social communication, it may be useful to explore how best to foster these relationships to ensure successful reintegration.

Further, working collaboratively was also identified as a key aspect within the reintegration process, however working across disciplines is not always straightforward. Therefore, further research exploring how to work effectively between disciplines and systems may be useful.

Finally, findings suggested that specialist settings were more able to cater to the needs of CYP. However, there is a national shortage of specialist schools, so this is not an option in most cases. Also, the large majority of autistic CYP attend mainstream. Therefore, some exploration around how mainstream settings can further adapt to meet the needs of students experiencing EBSNA could be further explored.

5.9 Dissemination strategy

The findings of this research will be shared with the participants of the study via an online zoom meeting. Following this, the research will also be shared within the EPS that the researcher is currently situated within during the annual service day.

As discussed within implications, school and wider professionals involved in supporting EBSNA may not be aware of the potential helpful role of the EP within the reintegration process, so to share this information, the researcher may present the

research findings locally within the SENCO forum, which is a CPD event for all the SENCOs within the LA the researcher will be working within once qualified

Also, there is discussion within the wider LA about how to support EBSNA which currently has limited EP involvement. It is hoped that by sharing this research more broadly within the LA that this will highlight the ways to positively influence the reintegration process, as well as emphasising the valuable role of the EP within this.

In addition, this research will be readily available online via thesis databases including The Tavistock and Portman library and The University of Essex repository. Further, the researcher hopes to present at conferences such as The DECP Trainee Educational Psychologists' Annual Conference and via online webinar series' such as EP Reach Out. Finally, the researcher hopes to submit this research for publication within an EP based journal e.g. 'Educational Psychology in Practice (EPIP)' for publication in the future.

5.10 Researcher reflections

The researcher has previously noted their motivations for the research topic area and discussed their values within the methodology chapter in relation to researcher values (3.6). In addition, the researcher noted their initial resentment towards the present study, as it was not the project they had originally planned. This made engagement with the research extremely challenging, particularly as there seemed to be consistent hurdles to overcome, from ethics to obtaining participants. However, once the researcher began their interviews, they were able to re-engage with the research and begin to appreciate the new direction the research was moving towards. The

participants spoke so passionately and offered great insight into their roles within the reintegration process. Following analysis, the researcher noted how well the present research aligned with previous studies, further reigniting their passion for the project. The researcher is also pleased to have illuminated the role of EPs within the reintegration process, but also conceivably more generally, drawing attention to the scope of the role aside from being EHC advice writers, as is unfortunately becoming the picture nationally.

5.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, DfE data highlighted high levels of student absence within England; absence rates were particularly high within specialist settings, highlighting a link between SEND and EBSNA. Further, EBSNA has been found to be more prevalent within the autistic community (Munkhaugen et al., 2017). Unsurprisingly, EBSNA has a significant negative impact on CYP, families and schools (DfE, 2012; Pellegrini, 2007). Additionally, previous literature highlighted that EPs' use of consultation was useful within the reintegration process following periods of EBSNA (Corcoran, Bond & Knox, 2022) and that EP input was felt to be more valuable than other school-based or health-focused support (Sawyer, 2022). In light of this, the present research study aimed to explore EPs perspectives about what influences the reintegration process for autistic students by addressing the following research question:

What influences the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist (EP) perspective?

In order to address this question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six EPs and a RTA was undertaken, this process generated four main themes:

1. Relationships are the cornerstone.
2. "We're all on the same page...".
3. Taking a needs led approach.
4. Challenging the status quo.

The findings emphasised the importance of building relationships as a prerequisite for reintegration, and the need for all key stakeholders to work collaboratively throughout the process. In addition, the findings indicated that an individual approach should be taken within the reintegration process in relation to both the initial exploration of the EBSNA behaviours and the subsequent support mechanisms. Further, the requirement for challenging the status quo pertaining to expectations around reintegration and the education system more broadly was also noted.

The findings also further highlight the role of the EP within the reintegration process in relation to various aspects of the reintegration process, from facilitating the process to exploring needs and considering support strategies. Therefore, it would seem apt for EPs to have a role in supporting the reintegration process for CYP who have experienced EBSNA, particularly those with additional SEND e.g. autism.

It is hoped that this study provides further guidance for EPs, school professionals and other colleagues when supporting autistic or neurotypical students who are embarking on the journey of reintegration following a period of EBSNA. This study also shines a

light on the comprehensive, distinctive, magnificent and often underutilised role of the EP.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Literature Search 1 - Method/process

Appendix 2 – Literature Search 1 – Critical Review

Appendix 3 – Literature Search 2 – Method/process

Appendix 4 – Literature Search 2 - Critical Review

Appendix 5 – Ethics

Appendix 6 – RTA process

Appendix 1 – Literature Search 1 – Method/process

<p style="text-align: center;">LRQ: ‘What factors contribute to the reintegration of autistic CYP who have previously experienced EBSNA?’</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Conducted: Wednesday 19th July 2023</p>											
				Filtered by			Inclusion/exclusion criteria				Once duplicates removed
No.	Subject mapping terms/Key word search terms	Database	Number	Year of publication ‘2003-2023’	Source type ‘academic journal’ and ‘dissertation’	Language ‘English’	Publication date Papers published between 2002-2023.	Location Studies conducted in the UK.	Study type Empirical studies including dissertations.	Study focus Studies which have explored the factors involved in the reintegration of autistic CYP.	
1	“Emotionally based school*” OR “School	PsychINFO	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1 (See list below)

	OR "return" OR "re- engagement"											
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Papers from search 1 = 1
Papers from search 2 = 0
Papers from search 3 = 1
Papers from search 4 = 0
Total papers for review = 2

Published research

1. Autistic girls and emotionally based school avoidance: supportive factors for successful re- engagement in mainstream high school – Siobhan O’Hagan, Caroline Bond & Judith Hebron (2022).
2. An approach to supporting young people with autism spectrum disorder and high anxiety to re-engage with formal education – the impact on young people and their families. David Preece & Marie Howley (2018).

Appendix 2 – Literature Search 1 – Critical Review

LRQ: ‘What factors contribute to the reintegration of autistic CYP who have previously experienced EBSNA?’							
No.	Title	Author	Date	Location	Study details	Main findings	Critique
1	Autistic girls and emotionally based school avoidance: supportive factors for successful re-engagement in mainstream high school.	Siobhan O’Hagan, Caroline Bond & Judith Hebron	2022	UK (England and Wales)	<p>The study explored factors involved in the re-engagement of autistic girls in mainstream high schools.</p> <p>The participants were three autistic girls who had successfully re-engaged in mainstream education following a period of EBSA.</p> <p>Qualitative, exploratory multiple case study design.</p> <p>Inductive thematic analysis was utilised for data analysis.</p> <p>Data was gathered from the YP, their parent(s) and a member of school staff via semi-structured</p>	<p>The researchers found that factors which contributed to successful reintegration were develop a trusting relationship with a key adult, developing friendships was a motivating factor, belonging within the school community, individualised, flexible approach to the school curriculum and routines, incorporating YP voice within support/action plans, parental advocacy, relationship with outside agencies, diagnosis supporting and additional support girls’ re-engagement.</p>	<p>Strengths See CASP.</p> <p>Triangulated information.</p> <p>Weaknesses This study focused solely on females, so it’s missing voice of other genders. Autism is more prevalent in males.</p> <p>Verbally/cognitively able, may not represent the whole population.</p>

					<p>interviews (and one questionnaire).</p>		<p>Using interviews – social communication needs.</p> <p>Case study design i.e., small sample size. Cross-case analysis are highly context-bound which may limit their generalisability to other contexts.</p> <p>Role/input of professionals, particularly EPs is missing?</p>
2	<p>An approach to supporting young people with autism spectrum disorder and high anxiety to re-engage with formal education – the impact on young people and</p>	<p>David Preece & Marie Howley</p>	<p>2018</p>	<p>UK – One LA</p>	<p>Explored how a specialist setting named ‘The Centre’ helped YP with ASD re-engage with education.</p> <p>An evaluative case study methodology.</p> <p>Mixed methods – Convergent design</p> <p>The Qual and Quant components are concurrent. The purpose is to examine the same phenomenon</p>	<p>The data identifies that the project had a positive impact both with regard to helping young people with ASD and high anxiety to attend school and re-engage with formal education, and upon their overall wellbeing.</p> <p>Analysis identified six main themes within the data.</p> <p>These were:</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Autism outreach specialists as well as school staff were involved as part of the process. (Triangulation).</p> <p>Good autism practice in line with previous research/guidance.</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>The setting specifically caters for Autistic YP</p>

	their families.				<p>by interpreting QUAL and QUAN results (bringing data analysis together at the interpretation stage).</p> <p>Qual – 1 focus group and 21 interviews with staff, family members and professionals analysed using TA.</p> <p>Quant – questionnaires for students. 5 boys aged 14-16 years old.</p> <p>Also, considered data from other sources including attendance data, Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and the General Well-Being Scale.</p> <p>Analysed using descriptive stats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of an appropriate learning environment – class sizes and class layout • a focus on the individual – individualised approach and positive relationships • an eclectic approach – range of strategies and approaches • consistency • effective communication • effective collaboration, between staff, parents and professionals. 	<p>with EBSNA, this level of support would likely not be replicable in a mainstream setting.</p> <p>All participants from the same LA/setting.</p> <p>Case study limits generalisability.</p>
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CASP Tool – Autistic girls and emotionally based school avoidance: supportive factors for successful re-engagement in mainstream high school. Siobhan O’Hagan, Caroline Bond & Judith Hebron (2022).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation of the rationale for the research in relation to autistic girls with EBSA and the aims of the research.

Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the experiences of autistic girls who have successfully reintegrated into school following EBSA.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation of method and was appropriate for aims and research positioning.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation about choices of participants and the method for participant recruitment.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection, including access to interview guide. One participant did not wish to be interviewed so a questionnaire was used instead. Interviews were then transcribed.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	<p>Can't tell – the researcher did not explicitly discuss their own role, bias and influence on the research. However, it was acknowledged that schools contacted were recruited through their own professional contacts within the local authority.</p> <p>The researcher considered the changes made for one participant and the impact this had on the richness of the data obtained.</p> <p>Researcher also aimed to build rapport with the participants prior to the interview.</p>
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	<p>Yes – ethical approval was obtained and the researcher detailed processes including sharing information sheet and consent/assent forms.</p> <p>There wasn't mention of how participants were supported during/post participation.</p>
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – clear and detailed explanation of analysis procedures. Good use of data to support findings. No comments about their own influence/role.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear statement about findings and detailed explanation of themes found within the research. Discussion links back to original research aims/question and makes links to other research findings. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.

Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is very valuable in thinking about how to support autistic girls experiencing EBSA. Findings are discussed in relation to other studies and ideas for future research discussed. Acknowledges limits to generalisability due to case study design.

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Tool/Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) – An approach to supporting young people with autism spectrum disorder and high anxiety to re-engage with formal education – the impact on young people and their families. David Preece & Marie Howley (2018).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – the aims of the research were made apparent and seemed relevant based on the introduction which discusses the relationship between autism and EBSNA.
Is a mixed methods methodology appropriate?	Yes – the researchers hoped this approach would allow for triangulation of data.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research and were the different components effectively integrated?	Yes – clear explanation of method, the researcher used school data/documents, questionnaires, focus groups and interviews to support in addressing the aims of the research, these were considered in an integrated way to establish themes (except for the school data which was discussed separately).
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation of recruitment, which was via attendance at ‘The Centre’ where the research study was based and those involved e.g., parents and professionals.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the paper clearly outlined how data was collected, multiple methods for data collection were used. However, there was no indication about questions used on the questionnaire or in the focus groups/interviews. Nor about the recording/transcription of data.

Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	No – no reference to ontology/epistemology/researcher positioning. Also, the researcher did not explicitly discuss their own role, bias and influence on the research.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained and the researcher detailed processes including sharing information sheet and consent/assent forms. There wasn't mention of how participants were supported during/post participation.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Yes – clear but brief explanation of analysis procedures. Good use of data (both qual/quant) to support findings, outputs from the integration of the data were adequately interpreted. No comments about their own influence/role.
Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – no divergences reported.
Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Qualitative – Yes Quantitative – Yes
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – findings and discussion amalgamated. Detailed explanation of themes found within the research. Discussion links back to original research aims/question and makes links to other research findings. Some limitations acknowledged and some steer for future research.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is very valuable in thinking about how to support autistic students who have previously experienced EBSA. However, the centre is extremely niche, so applicability may be limited. Acknowledges limits to generalisability due to case study design and supports further research.

	<p>Findings are discussed in relation to other research about autism/ecological approaches to supporting autistic students experiencing EBSA.</p>
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1	<p>“Emotionally based school*” OR “School refus*” OR “Extended non-attend*” OR “Persistent non-attend*” OR “Persistent absentee” OR “School non-attend*” OR “School phobia” OR “EBSNA” OR “EBSA” OR “PSNA”</p> <p>AND</p>	PsychINFO	54	21	19	15	15	2	1	1 (Preece and Howley)	0 (Preece and Howley already detailed in literature search 1)
		ERIC	9	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
		The Tavistock and Portman online library	5,047	3,609	2,337	2,303/1,842 <small>(once exact duplicates were removed from the system automatically)</small>					18 that fit all criteria. (before duplicates removed).

	“Reintegration” OR “return” OR “re-engagement”	ETHOS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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Papers from search 1 = 0
 Papers from search 2 = 0
 Papers from search 3 = 9
 Papers from search 4 = 0

Total papers for review = 10*

**Via snowballing, an additional paper/thesis was found (Helen M H Barron Williams, 2021)*

Published research

3. Taking a Line for a Walk: Including School Refusers - Head and Jamieson (2006)
4. Effective intervention for school refusal behaviour - Clare Nuttall and Kevin Woods (2013)
5. Secondary school educational practitioners’ experiences of school attendance problems and interventions to address them: a qualitative study - Katie Finning, Kate Harvey, Darren Moore, Tamsin Ford, Becky Davis and Polly Waite (2018)
6. A grounded theory study of family coach intervention with persistent school non-attenders - Adele Tobias (2019)

7. Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA): Students’ Views of What Works in a Specialist Setting – Cathleen Halligan and Sarah Cryer (2022)
8. Emotionally based school non-attendance: two successful returns to school following lockdown - Shannon Corcoran, Caroline Bond and Louise Knox (2022)

Theses

1. School refusal and reintegration from short stay school to mainstream - Karen Joy Grandison (2011)
2. Going back to school following a period of extended school non-attendance – Eleanor Mortimer (2018)
3. A narrative inquiry into the lived experience of persistent absenteeism among children who have since returned to mainstream school, and the meaning they make of their experiences - Helen M H Barron Williams (2021)
4. Parents’ views on EBSNA: A solution-based exploration into successful reintegration - Rachel Sawyer (2022)

Appendix 4 - Literature Search 2 - Critical Review

<u>LRQ: ‘What factors contribute to the reintegration of CYP who have previously experienced EBSNA?’</u>							
No.	Title	Author	Date	Location	Study details	Main findings	Critique
1	School refusal and reintegration from short stay school to mainstream.	Karen Joy Grandison	2011	One school within the LA within which the	The study explored the reintegration process from alternative provision, known as the ‘Short Stay School’ into mainstream school.	Findings were written in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • The nature of school refusal with a focus on anxiety and emotion 	<u>Strengths</u> Triangulated information by interviewing multiple stakeholders involved in the reintegration process. See CASP.

				<p>researcher was located in the UK</p>	<p>Each YP was identified by staff at the ‘Short Stay School’ they were either fully reintegrated or in the process of reintegration, having attended the setting due to issues with attending school/’school refusal behaviour’.</p> <p>Interpretive phenomenological methodology, using a case study design.</p> <p>Data was gathered from the young person, their parent, their mentor from the ‘Short Stay School’ and an adult from the mainstream setting the students were reintegrating to.</p> <p>20 semi-structured interviews conducted, 5 YP aged 12-16 years and the key stakeholders, as described above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators and barriers to reintegration <p>As part of my analysis, I will focus solely upon the facilitators to reintegration, as that part of relevance for this study.</p> <p>Identified 13 factors which participants found supportive, reported on the five most prevalent factors:</p> <p>Personalised approach to reintegration – in regard to knowing their specific needs and the type of support they would need to support with the reintegration process including the use time out/break cards.</p> <p>Phased reintegration – phased return, in the form of reduced/part-time timetables, attending preferred lessons, though it appeared there were</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>The researcher explained that their data analysis method was based upon the interpretive phenomenological methodology, involving the development of a descriptive framework. This did not seem to provide a specific, rigorous method for analysing the data, as such it was felt that only surface level analysis completed.</p> <p>Small sample size – though expected as using case study design.</p>
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					<p>Data analysis was based upon the interpretive phenomenological methodology, involving the development of a descriptive framework.</p>	<p>different views about what this should look like from different stakeholders.</p> <p>Collaboration between parents, school and SSS – highlighted the importance of needing to work together to support reintegration. School felt they needed to ‘get parents onside’.</p> <p>Positive attitude of the young person to reintegration – highlighting the need for motivation in wanting to reintegrate with school, though some YP reintegrated without a positive attitude.</p> <p>Young person helped to understand and cope with his/her emotions.</p>	
2	Going back to school following a period of extended	Eleanor Mortimer	2018	One mains tream secondary	The study aimed to identify what secondary-aged young people (YP), and their parents, perceived was helpful in supporting YP to	The importance of relationships – supportive nature of social interaction/developing friendships, relationships	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Methodology use and rationale and development of framework to support schools/families.</p>

	<p>school non-attendance: What do secondary-aged young people and their parents find supportive? An Appreciative Inquiry.</p>			<p>school within the LA in UK</p>	<p>return to school following a period of extended school non-attendance (ESNA).</p> <p>Recruitment – through EPs, through schools and they selected/contacted families. YP were from same school.</p> <p>Positioning - social constructivist- interpretivist philosophy.</p> <p>Methodology – Appreciative inquiry (AI) – strengths-based approach.</p> <p>Method – Four semi-structured interviews were conducted; two with YP and two with parents (3x parents).</p> <p>Analysis – Thematic analysis.</p>	<p>with other parents, recognition of the impact of their ESNA on others e.g., parental stress and potential legality, taking a holistic view of the YP including relationships with professionals – social worker, (I would have perhaps had this as a separate themes e.g., the role of professionals), availability of support – mostly in regard to family members, parents considered that professional support would have been useful.</p> <p>The control, agency and voices of young people – support and space for making sense of their experiences of ESNA and being involved in their reintegration. EPs mentioned as possibly being useful in unpicking the reasons behind the ESNA.</p>	<p>Opportunity to hear from YP and families.</p> <p>See CASP.</p> <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Smaller sample size than intended, due to difficulties with recruitment.</p> <p>Lack of gathering views from multiple stakeholders, only views of YP and parents.</p> <p>One theme included in the analysis was not relevant to the research question, though the researcher acknowledged this.</p>
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						<p>Understanding parental experiences of ESNA – emotional/physical impact of ESNA – this being very stressful for parents, lack of access to support and feeling unsure of what to do, turning to the police for support, removal of items has a mixed response as to whether or not it was helpful, and desire for a more individualised approach to support, parents felt knowing the family background and situation would be helpful rather than being treated the same, as in ‘equity not equality’. Parents wanted less punitive approach, which was not aligned with their own approaches, what does this tell us about how the system feels in relation to ESNA, are punitive approaches a way of coping?</p>	
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					<p>Practical support – gradual and flexible return to school – part-time timetables and offering students the option of which lessons they would like to attend, home-school communication – would have preferred having a ‘link’ person and being in regular contact, having a space in school – when they arrive/when they are feeling overwhelmed – access to pastoral staff too, access to external agencies – parents feeling they needed to ‘get the ball rolling’ in order to access support, managing worries in relation to reintegrating – in relation to school work and explaining absence to peers – support for this would be helpful.</p> <p>Perceptions about the nature of ESNA – focus on physical return to school – perhaps ignoring</p>	
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						<p>emotional factors, assuming ESNA is ‘easily fixed’ – one specific case and thus one simple answer, though this is not always the case and not supported by existing literature, of the ESNA being heterogenous, and ongoing nature of attendance difficulties, this contrasted to previous sub-themes, indicating the need for continual support as YP were not ‘cured’ as such and still had negative feelings and moments of relapse in relation to attendance difficulties.</p>	
3	A narrative inquiry into the lived experience of persistent absenteeism among children who have since returned to mainstream	Helen M H Barron-Williams	2021	Two LAs within London/UK	<p>Exploring the views of three young people who had previously experienced EBSNA, at mainstream secondary schools in London, across two LAs.</p> <p>Explored YP’s experiences of EBSNA and their return to school as separate research</p>	<p>Theme 1 – Relationships and support from key adults – thinking about support from a range of people including family members, friends and professionals e.g., therapists.</p> <p>Theme 2 - Ambition and a sense of a possible future –</p>	<p><u>Strengths</u> Child-centred, narrative approach.</p> <p>Creation of PEARLS model.</p> <p>See CASP</p> <p><u>Weaknesses</u> Small sample size, difficulties with recruitment due to subject area and pandemic.</p>

	<p>school, and the meaning they make of their experiences.</p>			<p>questions, I will focus upon the reintegration aspects.</p> <p>Methodology – Qualitative - Narrative inquiry approach – e.g., storytelling.</p> <p>Method – Narrative interviews and techniques – unstructured interviews with some narrative prompts. Analysed using a Narrative Oriented Inquiry model.</p> <p>Positioning - Ontological position - subjective and constructivist, it takes an interpretivist epistemological approach.</p> <p>Analysis Narrative analysis using a step-by-step model by Hiles et. al.'s (2009).</p>	<p>each participant had a goal and path to navigate their route.</p> <p>Theme 3 - Perseverance – all participants used language which indicated an element of having to persevere and be resilient.</p> <p>Theme 4 – Agency – participants talked about taking control and having ownership of their experiences.</p> <p>Theme 5 - Self-esteem – all participants demonstrated positive self-esteem.</p> <p>Theme 6 - Understanding a purpose of school – the YP reported understanding the need for an education in relation to their future lives in regard to obtaining qualifications, jobs and being able to “enjoy life”.</p>	<p>Limited viewpoints as only gathered views from YP not wider systems, though this was the aim of the research, however, could have helped to build a fuller picture of the reintegration process. Themes are all based on YP factors.</p> <p>All students were EAL, which seems quite significant, how did this impact/interact with EBSA needs? It felt as though there could have been further exploration of this within the discussion.</p>
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						<p>Created PEARLS model, linking together her findings with existing theory and research in relation to EBSNA.</p> <p>Discusses notion of what ‘successful’ returns look like, as in Grandison (2011) and Nuttall and Woods (2013).</p>	
4	Parents’ views on EBSNA: A solution-based exploration into successful reintegration.	Rachel Sawyer	2022	Various LAs within the UK.	<p>The study explored parental experiences of EBSA, and the support received during this period from a retrospective, solution-focused stance.</p> <p>Positioning – critical realism – this aligns with mixed methods methodology.</p> <p>Purposive sampling through schools, professionals and EPSs.</p> <p>Sequential explanatory mixed methods methodology including the</p>	<p>Quant – highlighted high levels of SEN, lack of EP involvement (less than 50%), though seen as more useful than school-based or health-focused support, which was accessed more frequently.</p> <p><u>Key factors involved were:</u></p> <p>1. Supporting parents – including emotional support/reassurance during the difficult time – highlights impact of EBSNA on parents/family system, communicating with other parents who had</p>	<p>Strengths See CASP/MMAT.</p> <p>SPIRAL framework</p> <p>Highlights potential role of EPs and the need to explore SEN/ASD and EBSNA.</p> <p>Weaknesses Focused solely on parental views, missing CYP and professional views – e.g., EP views.</p> <p>Large age range – Year 1 – Year 8, can the experiences of CYP in primary be examined with those in secondary?</p>

				<p>use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>Phase 1 – N=28 responses to the questionnaire. This helped support phase 2 in relation to context, finding participants and refining questions for the interviews.</p> <p>Phase 2 – N= 5 parents with CYP from Year 1 – Year 8. Male and female, majority with ASD (4/5).</p> <p>Participants were parents of children in Year 1 – Year 8. (aged 14) or below, who had recently experienced EBSNA and had made improvements in relation to their attendance.</p> <p>Descriptive statistics and content analysis – quant data and reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to generate themes – qual data.</p>	<p>experienced similar challenges with their children – sharing stories/advice etc and understanding parents needs in order to provide targeted support -practical support including support from professionals e.g., social workers, wanted more support for understanding ‘the system’ and for attending meetings etc.</p> <p>2. Promoting CYP’s sense of belonging, key part of reintegration and also potential contributor to initial EBSNA, relationship-based approach – building trust and relationship with key adults – provided a secure base available for support e.g., co-regulation, a person-centred approach, based on an individual’s interests – parents likely to be helpful in determining this, part-time timetable –</p>	<p>Whilst the research wasn’t intended to focus on autistic students, 4/5 students were autistic.</p> <p>Theme 1 & 3 are very similar are these distinct themes or could/should they have been combined?</p>
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					<p>mixed success of this. Psychological wellbeing within school – the need to feel safe in school, to enable engagement with learning. Co-vid proving safety/respite from sensory and social demands of school. Importance of self-esteem and being taught coping strategies. The idea of needing to do the “groundwork”.</p> <p>3. Including and informing parents – working alongside parents, collaborative approach to supporting EBSNA – linked to first theme. Clear communication and support. Listening to parents views and incorporating these into action plans, signposting and navigating the system.</p> <p>4. Raising awareness of EBSNA – professional knowledge and</p>	
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					<p>understanding, lack of recognition of EBSNA – not being viewed as a SEN, being sent fine/warnings without exploring the underpinning reasons. Early intervention.</p> <p>5. Accessing external professionals – specialist knowledge in action planning, giving parents a voice/being an advocate. Working alongside parents, listening to their views/ideas, not dismissing these. Difficulty in accessing professionals.</p> <p>6. Lessons learnt through co-vid including the benefits of online learning/transitions etc – Co-vid proving safety/respice from sensory and social demands of school. Some issues about lack of differentiation noted. Regular contact with families e.g., check-in phone calls.</p>	
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						Created SPIRAL framework (based on initial letter from each main theme) for professionals, which has implications for schools and local authorities in providing support to both CYP and parents experiencing EBSNA.	
5	Secondary school educational practitioners' experiences of school attendance problems and interventions to address them: a qualitative study.	Katie Finning, Kate Harvey, Darren Moore, Tamsin Ford, Becky Davis and Polly Waite	2018	South west of England	<p>This study aimed to address two questions, one focusing on secondary school practitioners experiences of working with CYP experiencing attendance difficulties and the other focusing upon experiences of intervention to support those with EBSNA in regard to their return to school.</p> <p>Focus groups using a semi-structured topic guide with practitioners across three different schools with a range of roles including SENCOs, family support workers and head of years.</p>	<p>Results of RQ2 will be focused upon as this is most relevant.</p> <p>Early intervention was deemed as very important too.</p> <p><u>Three themes:</u> 1. Adapting the school context – this relates to the environment e.g., having specific 'calm' places on-site for students, adapting learning e.g., reduced timetables, in-class support and offering virtual access. Similar to what was raised as helpful in Sawyer's research. Home visits to get</p>	<p><u>Strengths</u> See CASP</p> <p>Gathering the views of a variety of practitioners.</p> <p><u>Weaknesses</u> No discussion about research positioning e.g., ontology or epistemology.</p> <p>Only practitioner voices heard.</p> <p>Discussion of packages provided by specialist teams with no context as to what this entails. Three themes encapsulated a wide range of ideas, perhaps sub-themes would have been useful.</p>

					<p>Data analysed using thematic analysis, detailed process.</p>	<p>to know the family and having a key-adult in school for ongoing support. Some mentioned off-site specialist provision where students could access more individualised support. Packages provided by specialist teams.</p> <p>Discussion of punitive approaches had mixed response.</p> <p>2. Providing emotional support – building confidence, resilience and self-esteem of CYP, support for anxiety through psychoeducation, support around transitions and providing nurture.</p> <p>3. Attendance problems are a shared responsibility – the importance of working with families and keeping in contact, supporting them and signposting them to</p>
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						<p>relevant services. Support from mental health services, educational psychologists or other healthcare professionals was considered beneficial. Discussion about the how budgets can impact on resources available.</p> <p>Discussion highlighted difference in how EBSNA support was viewed depending on job role, e.g., pastoral based practitioners viewing punitive approached as futile in comparison to teaching staff.</p>	
6	Taking a Line for a Walk: Including School Refusers	George Head and Sandy Jamieson	2006	UK – Scotland	<p>Semi-structured interviews were carried out with four pupils, two parents and three teachers, one of whom was also a member of the behaviour support team.</p> <p>There were three themes for the interviews, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nature of the support; 	<p>The researchers fed back the findings of their interviews, in the three themes outlined in the guide for the interviews.</p> <p>Pupils felt they had some control over their support/return to school, including access to a</p>	<p>Strengths The paper makes links with other research.</p> <p>Weaknesses No methodology information, other than the fact they used semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>No analysis of the data obtained, they reported back what</p>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effectiveness of the support as perceived by the stakeholders; and • the sustainability of the support. 	<p>support base, whether they went to certain classes and</p> <p>Teachers said they have liked more information about students, links to other studies which have advocated for this.</p>	<p>participants had told them, does this count as research/an empirical study?</p> <p>No details about ethics.</p> <p>No clear that their conceptualisation of school refusal meets the agreed criteria e.g., Berg, they talk about learning being the issue... though I'd argue anxiety would still be the driver here.</p> <p><i>An empirical research study is usually divided into 4 parts which are the introduction, methodology, findings, and discussions.</i></p>
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<p>7 05/10</p>	<p>A grounded theory study of family coach intervention with persistent school non-attenders.</p>	<p>Adele Tobias</p>	<p>2019</p>	<p>UK, England</p>	<p>The aim of the study was to explore the perspective of family coaches in relation to the factors which help and hinder the reintegration of CYP after a period of Persistent school non-attendance (PSNA).</p> <p>Family coaches work intensively with families as part of an intervention called the integrated team for families (ITF). Families meet the criteria for a coach through two or more factors: crime or anti-social behaviour, unemployment and missed education.</p> <p>Participants - 19 volunteered to participate: 14 female and five male.</p> <p>A series (4) of focus groups, grounded theory was developed.</p>	<p>Second research question was: 2a. What do coaches perceive to be the factors influencing the successful reintegration of CYP to school following a period of PSNA?</p> <p>This is most relevant to the LRQ so will be focused upon.</p> <p>Findings highlighted the causal conditions of PSNA – feeling unsafe, poverty, diminished parental capacity, being overlooked by the system. The central phenomenon - PSNA was felt to be a red flag, occurring when a CYP felt unsafe within the home environment. The context of PSNA intervention: systemic resistance to change – school systems/family systems.</p>	<p>Strengths See CASP</p> <p>Weaknesses Niche – ITF intervention and family coaches are not generalisable.</p> <p>Perspectives of the family coaches – limited perspectives of others, very one-sided.</p> <p>Coaching families have multiple issues, which may not be reflective more generally of CYP affected by PSNA.</p>
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						<p>The actions and interventions: how coaches have successfully helped CYP to feel safe enough to go to school – supporting parents helping YP feel safe, making adaptations to school provision for example, providing a “quiet room” for a CYP with social anxiety at lunch times.</p> <p>The consequences of coaching intervention: variable success – Coaches described the outcomes of their involvement as unpredictable and prone to relapse. Focusing on only school factors was futile, home as a secure base was also required.</p>	
8	Emotionally based school non-attendance: two successful returns to	Shannon Corcoran, Caroline Bond and Louise Knox	2022	England, UK.	This study explores the facilitators to successful school returns for two primary-school aged children. The perspectives of parents, school staff, and educational	<p><u>Key facilitators considered to achieve this included:</u></p> <p>Effective home-school communication – parents feel valued and listened to,</p>	<p><u>Strengths</u> Highlights role of the EP e.g., consultation and assessment practice. Focusing on ‘what works’.</p>

	<p>school following lockdown</p>			<p>psychologists were gathered using semi-structured inter-views to identify effective support.</p> <p>A reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to generate themes.</p> <p>An exploratory, multiple case study design.</p>	<p>good communication channels, school are approachable, working together. Early identification.</p> <p>Taking a functional approach to understanding the function of the child’s anxiety – gaining CYP’s views, practical strategies for support.</p> <p>Positive relationships - positive/calm approach, understanding of need importance of relationship with the class teacher, support from parents.</p> <p>Reflective practitioners – reflecting on and evaluating practice, sharing good practice, working flexibility based on needs.</p> <p>Engagement with professionals – valued input and advice from professionals, importance</p>	<p>Triangulation to some extent based on parental and professional viewpoints.</p> <p>Weaknesses This study focused upon parental and staff views, so the voice of the CYP is missing.</p> <p>Case study design so can be difficult to generalise, albeit this is not the aim of case study methodology.</p>
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						of working together, use of consultation.	
9	Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA): Students' Views of What Works in a Specialist Setting.	Cathleen Halligan & Sarah Cryer	2022	England, UK.	<p>Exploratory single-case study undertaken at a specialist GCSE setting (School X) for students experiencing EBSA.</p> <p>The study aimed to explore students' views of protective factors in a setting where they have previously made progress in terms of attendance and achievement.</p> <p>Mixed-methods: Qualitative data were gathered using semi-structured questions with students in a group setting and Q-sort activity (quant). This was analysed using TA.</p> <p>12 students took part in the structured, individual interviews and 7 took part in the semi-structured group interview. Some of them took part in both parts of the</p>	<p>Two over-arching themes:</p> <p>Interconnectivity – adult and peer relationships – nurturing characteristics, being understood/valued, and being seen as young adults with additional responsibilities. <i>As Greenhalgh (1994) argues, capacity for learning and relationship building are closely related, suggesting that relationships are crucial for academic progress.</i></p> <p>Psychological safety – no bullying, access to safe spaces, timeouts, small class sizes, being understood by adults, support for academic work/engaging lessons.</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Triangulation of data via mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis.</p> <p>Unique setting – interesting to learn about their approach to supporting students with EBSA.</p> <p>Values YP voice.</p> <p>See CASP/MMAT.</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>The setting specifically caters for YP with EBSNA, this level of support might not be replicable in a mainstream setting.</p> <p>Very small setting, 19 pupils in total.</p> <p>Participants all YP, missing out on the voice of other key stakeholders. However, staff were invited to make a list of things they</p>

					feedback. Participants were 53% male and 47% female. All were in Year 11 (aged 15 or 16), studying the GCSE curriculum.		thought played a role and these were used in determining the questions asked of students. Very brief qualitative data obtained using Mentimeter.
10	Effective intervention for school refusal behaviour	Clare Nuttall & Kevin Woods	2013	UK, England	<p>The aim of the study was to explore two successful returns for CYP who had experienced “school refusal” previously.</p> <p>Case study methodology (n=2). Neurotypical, one in mainstream and the other in AP.</p> <p>Interviews were held with the CYP, parent, member of school staff, and other professionals including the attendance officers, support workers and health professionals (eight interviews per case). As well as gathering information about each case including attendance data.</p>	<p>Four main themes arose:</p> <p>Psychological factors</p> <p>Developing feelings of safety, security and belonging – consistent teacher, access to small safe spaces in the morning and at lunch. Opportunities to socialise and learn in smaller group settings.</p> <p>Confidence, self-esteem and value”, feeling valued, being praised, responsibility and respect from peers.</p> <p>Aspiration and motivation” – making learning meaningful and thinking about career aspirations.</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Triangulated information by interviewing multiple stakeholders involved in the reintegration process.</p> <p>Established an ‘Ecological Model of Successful Reintegration’.</p> <p>See CASP</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Small sample size – though expected as using case study design.</p>

					<p>It was noted that factors involved in support the students were not independent, it was the interaction of factors which was found to be beneficial.</p>	<p>Support for psychological factors</p> <p>Positive and nurturing approach, developing friendships, more time spent as a family, showing a real interest in the YP, opportunities to make positive contributions, “A flexible and individualised approach to ensure preparation for, and access to, learning”, “Supporting social interaction and communication” CBT (thoughts, feelings and behaviours).</p> <p>Factors supporting the family.</p> <p>Home-school liaison and meeting family’s needs – meeting them where they were.</p> <p>Listening to views and being included in the problem-solving process</p>	
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					<p>(Children & Families Act, 2014/SEND CoP).</p> <p>Role of professionals and systems</p> <p>Early identification/assessment Access to specialist services Working together towards a common goal with regular monitoring Key adult Whole school approach from receptionist, to learning mentor to SENCo/SLT.</p> <p>Child psychological factors included: developing feelings of safety, security and belonging, confidence, self-esteem and value, and aspiration and motivation. How- ever, successful intervention extended beyond child factors to interacting contextual and family variables significant to the effectiveness of</p>	
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						<p>intervention. Developing positive relationships between home and school, and meeting the needs of the families, appeared to be essential in supporting the young people's success, and in both cases, there was a significant role for professionals and systems. This highlights the importance of contextual influences on the effectiveness of intervention.</p>	
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CASP Tool - School refusal and reintegration from 'Short Stay School' to mainstream - Karen Joy Grandison (2011).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation of the rationale for the research in relation to 'school refusal' and the aims of the research.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the experiences of YP who have reintegrated into mainstream school following time at alternative provision due to 'school refusal', as well as key stakeholders involved in the process.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of method (semi-structured interviews) and was appropriate for aims and research positioning. The researcher gave reasons as to why other methods were not chosen.

Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation about choices of participants and the method for participant recruitment, which was via link setting in role as an EP.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection, justified methods chosen, and detailed processes involved e.g., interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher explicitly discussed their own role in relation to the setting which the research was based in and considered how that could potentially bias and influence the research.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and the researcher detailed processes including informed consent and discussed debriefing procedures.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Somewhat – The researcher explained that their data analysis method was based upon the interpretive phenomenological methodology, involving the development of a descriptive framework. This did not seem to provide a specific, rigorous method for analysing the data, as such it was felt that only surface level analysis completed.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear statement about findings and details findings in relation to two broad areas of focus within the research. The researcher also makes links to other research findings. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed, very genuinely in relation to themselves as a ‘novice researcher’.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is somewhat valuable in thinking about ‘school refusal’ and the reintegration process. Analysis appeared to be somewhat surface level and the method of analysis was not clear. Findings are discussed in relation to other studies and ideas for future research discussed. Acknowledges limits to generalisability due to case study design.

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CASP Tool - Going back to school following a period of extended school non-attendance: What do secondary-aged young people and their parents find supportive? An Appreciative Inquiry- Eleanor Mortimer (2018)

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of research aims backed up by explanation of the rationale for this in relation to Extended School Non-Attendance (ESNA).
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the experiences of YP (and their parents) who have reintegrated following a period of ESNA.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of methodology (appreciative inquiry) and method (semi-structured interviews) and was appropriate for research positioning and overall aims.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation about choices of participants and the method for participant recruitment, though researcher reflected on some potential bias which arose from chosen method and the difficulties they experienced with recruitment.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection and justified methods chosen.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher explicitly discussed their own positioning, views and experiences and how this may have impacted on the research project.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and the researcher detailed processes including informed consent and discussed debriefing procedures.

Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	<p>Yes – The researcher explained that their data analysis method was inductive thematic analysis and gave a detailed account of the process they undertook. They also collaborated with their supervisor during analysis phase.</p> <p>Clear themes, and sub-themes, with explanations and excerpts of data.</p>
Is there a clear statement of findings?	<p>Yes – clear statement about findings and clear themes, and sub-themes identified, with explanations and excerpts of data.</p> <p>The researcher also makes links to other research findings. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.</p>
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	<p>The research is very valuable in thinking about supportive factors for the reintegration process following ESNA. The researcher produced an appreciative model to support schools/families with reintegration.</p> <p>Findings were discussed in relation to other studies and ideas for future research discussed.</p> <p>The researcher acknowledged limits to their research e.g., generalisability due to small sample size, which was less than anticipated and lack of gathering views from stakeholders.</p>

CASP Tool - A narrative inquiry into the lived experience of persistent absenteeism among children who have since returned to mainstream school, and the meaning they make of their experiences - Barron-Williams (2021).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of research aims backed up by explanation of the rationale for this in relation to persistent absence and the impact this can have on CYP.

Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the experiences of YP who have reintegrated following a period of persistent absence.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of methodology (narrative inquiry) and method (unstructured interviews based on narrative approached) and was appropriate for research positioning and overall aims.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation about choices of participants and the method for participant recruitment, through colleagues, schools and eventually social media due to difficulties obtaining participants.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection and justified methods chosen.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher explicitly discussed trying to hold a ‘neutral’ position’ and using their reflective diary to support with this. They considered their own positioning, views and experiences and how this impacted on the research project.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and the researcher detailed processes including informed consent, anonymity and keeping the procedures for keeping participants safe. They reflected upon conducting the interviews remotely too – some participants preferred this mode of interviewing.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – The researcher explained that their data analysis method was a narrative analysis using a step-by-step model by Hiles et. al.’s (2009). They also gave a detailed account of the process they undertook. They also collaborated with their supervisor during supervision and kept a research diary. Clear themes with explanations and excerpts of data.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear findings and themes, with explanations and excerpts of data.

	The researcher also makes links to other research findings. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	<p>The research is valuable in thinking about the experiences of EBSNA and the supportive factors for the reintegration process following EBSNA. The researcher produced a model to support EPs/schools with reintegration – albeit the model is not very clear.</p> <p>Findings were discussed in relation to other studies and ideas for future research discussed.</p> <p>The researcher acknowledged limits to their research e.g., generalisability due to small sample size, which was less than anticipated and lack of gathering views from stakeholders.</p>

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Tool/Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) - Parents' views on EBSNA: A solution-based exploration into successful reintegration. Rachel Sawyer (2022).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – the aims of the research were made clear and were relevant based on the introduction which outlined the landscape of EBSNA and the requirement for parental voice.
Is a mixed methods methodology appropriate?	<p>Yes – the researchers hoped this approach would allow for an enhanced, triangulated exploration of the phenomena being studied. In addition, as this was a sequential mixed methods study, meaning the quant data (phase one) was used to help inform the qual phase (phase 2).</p> <p>Mixed methods was also in line with the research positioning (critical realism).</p>

Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research and were the different components effectively integrated?	<p>Yes – clear explanation of method, the researcher used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to support in addressing the aims of the research.</p> <p>These findings for the quant and qual phases were reported separately, though were linked which allowed for integration.</p>
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation of recruitment, for phase one and two of the study. This involved professionals sharing the information sheet with parents. Parents then had the option to participate in phase two by indicating so at the end of phase 1. This was appropriate for research aims.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the paper clearly outlined how data was collected for both the questionnaires (Ms Forms) and interviews (MS Teams). An interview guide was also provided.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – they also detail their ontology/epistemology/researcher positioning. Also, the researcher discussed their own role, the risk of bias and their own influence on the research.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and the researcher detailed processes including informed consent, confidentiality and discussed the need to reduce harm/distress – though it wasn't outlined how the researcher would do this.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	<p>Yes – clear explanation of data analysis procedures.</p> <p>Good use of data (both quant/qual) to support findings, outputs from the integration of the data were adequately interpreted.</p>
Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – no divergences reported.

Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Qualitative – Yes Quantitative – Yes
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear and detailed findings and discussion. Discussion links back to original research aims/question and makes links to other research findings. Some limitations acknowledged and some steer for future research.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is very valuable in thinking about how to support students who have previously experienced EBSA by considering ‘what works’. The researcher produced the SPIRAL framework to support professionals with managing EBSNA.

CASP Tool - Secondary school educational practitioners’ experiences of school attendance problems and interventions to address them: a qualitative study - Katie Finning, Kate Harvey, Darren Moore, Tamsin Ford, Becky Davis and Polly Waite (2018).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of research aims detailing two research questions, backed up by explanation of the rationale for this in relation to persistent absence and the impact this can have on CYP.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the experiences of secondary partitioners who have supporting CYP experiencing EBSNA.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of method (focus groups) and was appropriate for methodology (qualitative).
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation about the recruitment process, schools approached directly by researcher, schools then decided whether or not to take part.

Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection (focus group), and the use of a semi-structured topic guide to support with discussion, based upon research issue.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher explicitly had no relationship with the participants prior to the study.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and the researcher detailed processes including informed consent. No debrief procedures were discussed.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – the researcher used thematic analysis and detailed their processed. They also collaborated with a second researcher.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear results section, for each research questions. Using themes and data excerpts. Discussion makes links to other research findings. Limitations and implications considered. Did not consider future research directions explicitly.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is valuable in thinking about the experiences and supportive factors for EBSNA, from the perspective of secondary school teachers. Findings were discussed in relation to other studies.

CASP Tool - A grounded theory study of family coach intervention with persistent school non-attenders. Adele Tobias (2019).

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of research aims and research questions, backed up by rationale in relation to Persistent school non-attendance (PSNA).

Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the perspectives of family coaches in relation to the factors which help and hinder the reintegration of CYP after a period of Persistent school non-attendance (PSNA).
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of methodology (grounded theory) and method (focus groups) and was appropriate for research positioning (social constructionist) and overall aims.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - participants were family coaches in one local authority as this was the aim of the study.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection (focus groups) which was aligned with a grounded theory approach.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	No – the researcher did not explicitly discuss their own positioning, views and experiences and how this may have impacted on the research project.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, though no details were provided regarding the processes e.g., informed consent.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – The researcher explained that their data analysis process, which was sufficiently rigorous and in line with a grounded theory approach. A grounded theory emerged which was organised into five main elements.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear statement about findings in relation to the grounded theory, with explanations and excerpts of data. The researcher also makes links to other research, legislation and theory. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.

Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	<p>The research is valuable in thinking about supportive factors for the reintegration process following PSNA. The researcher produced grounded theory which can be used to think about support for YP experiencing PSNA, however the YP also had other issues. Also, the theory is based on only one viewpoint e.g., family coaches.</p> <p>The researcher also makes links to other research, legislation and theory.</p> <p>The researcher acknowledged limits to their research e.g., the YP had multiple issues, not just PSNA so it is not strictly looking at PSNA. They also thought about next steps, e.g., other professionals using the GT to check validity.</p>

CASP Tool - Emotionally based school non-attendance: two successful returns to school following lockdown. Corcoran et al., (2022)

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of research aims, backed up by rationale in relation to EBSNA.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the perspectives and life experiences of families and professionals involved in the reintegration process for two CYP.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of methodology (exploratory case study) and method (semi-structured interviews) and was appropriate for overall aims.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - participants were appropriate, and process of recruitment was detailed.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection (semi-structured interviews) which was aligned with a case study approach.

Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher noted that their own views and prior knowledge will have impacted on the data analysis process.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, but no details were provided regarding processes involved.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – The researcher explained that their data analysis process, which was sufficiently rigorous and in line with reflexive thematic analysis. Five main themes were established.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear statement about findings, with explanations and excerpts of data. The researcher also makes links to other research, legislation and theory. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is valuable in thinking about ways to support the reintegration process following a period of EBSNA. The researcher also makes links to other research, legislation and theory. As this was a case study, the researcher suggests further empirical research within the area would be helpful, particularly those that incorporate the voice of the CYP.

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – the aims of the research were made clear and were relevant based on the introduction surrounding the topic area (EBSA)
Is a mixed methods methodology appropriate?	Yes – using a mixed methods approach seems feasible. However, the researchers did not mention their researcher positioning or their reasoning for using a mixed methods approach, so it is hard to ascertain to the extent to which it is approach in relation to these factors.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research and were the different components effectively integrated?	Yes – clear explanation of each method, the researcher used semi-structured interviews (qual) via Mentimeter and a Q-sort activity (quant). These findings for the quant phase was reported separately, and then together with the qual data through use of thematic analysis.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – clear explanation of recruitment, opportunity sampling and on a voluntary basis as the authors link schools in her role as an EP.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the paper clearly outlined how data was collected and how this was relevant to the research aims.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes – the researcher acknowledges her pre-existing relationships with the school and participants and the impact this may have had on the research project.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and the researcher detailed processes including informed consent.

Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	<p>Yes – clear explanation of data analysis procedures.</p> <p>Good use of data (both quant/qual) to support findings, outputs from the integration of the data were adequately interpreted.</p>
Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – no divergences reported.
Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	<p>Qualitative – Yes However, it is not clear why Mentimeter was used, this does not allow for in-depth exploration of answers, it is borderline quantitative in my opinion based on my understanding of qualitative research.</p> <p>Quantitative – Yes</p>
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear and detailed findings and discussion. Discussion links back to original research aims/question and makes links to other research findings. Some limitations acknowledged and ideas future research based on these limitations.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is very valuable in thinking about how to support students who have previously experienced EBSA by considering ‘what works’. However, it is acknowledged that this research was based upon a specialist settings, so it is hard to generalise the findings to other settings.

CASP Tool - Effective intervention for school refusal behaviour. Clare Nuttall & Kevin Woods (2013)

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes – clear statement of research aims and research questions, backed up by rationale in relation to school refusal behaviours.

Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes – exploring the perspectives and life experiences of YP, their families and professionals involved in the reintegration process.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes - clear explanation of methodology (exploratory case study) and method (semi-structured interviews) and was appropriate for research positioning (social constructionist) and overall aims.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes - participants were appropriate, however there was not detail of recruitment strategy.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – clear explanation of methods for data collection (semi-structured interviews) which was aligned with a case study approach.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes– the researcher noted that they had an active role in determining the themes which may have been influenced by previous experiences.
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical approval was obtained, and details were provided regarding the processes e.g., checking with parents about any sensitive areas to avoid during questioning.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – The researcher explained that their data analysis process, which was sufficiently rigorous and in line with thematic analysis. Themes across four broad areas were established.
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear statement about findings, with explanations and excerpts of data. The researcher also makes links to other research, legislation and theory. Limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	

How valuable is the research?	<p>The research is valuable in thinking about supportive factors for the reintegration process following school refusal.</p> <p>The researchers produced an ecological model which is an invaluable tool for practitioners.</p> <p>The researcher also makes links to other research, legislation and theory.</p> <p>As this was a case study, the researcher suggests similar case studies would be helpful to further build the evidence base.</p>
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Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Tool/Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)

McDonald, B., Lester, K. J., & Michelson, D. (2023). 'She didn't know how to go back': School attendance problems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic—A multiple stakeholder qualitative study with parents and professionals. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 93, 386–401.

Section A: Are the results valid?	
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Is a mixed methods methodology appropriate?	Yes
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research and were the different components effectively integrated?	Yes
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes

Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – the paper clearly outlined how data was collected and how this was relevant to the research aims.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Section B: What are the results?	
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Yes – clear explanation of data analysis procedures. Good use of data (both quant/qual) to support findings, outputs from the integration of the data were adequately interpreted.
Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – no divergences reported.
Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Qualitative – Yes Quantitative – Yes
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes – clear and detailed findings and discussion.
Section C: Will the results help locally?	
How valuable is the research?	The research is very valuable in thinking about the origins and support processes for students experiencing EBSNA.

Appendix 5 – Ethics documentation

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)	Yes
Will your project include data collection outside of the UK?	No

SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS

Project title	An exploration into the factors which support the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist (EP) perspective.		
Proposed project start date	November 2023	Anticipated project end date	September 2024
Principle Investigator (normally your Research Supervisor): Dr Richard Lewis			
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	Saffron Gallarotti
Programme of Study and Target Award	Child, Community and Educational Psychology (M4)
Email address	SGallarotti@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk
Contact telephone number	07740560055


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>The proposed research project will aim to take place remotely, participants will be sought within the Educational Psychology (EP) profession, some of whom may work within the Local Authority (LA) within which I am on placement. Colleagues will be given the information form and consent form; it will be their choice whether they participate. As experienced EPs who regularly take part in research, they and the student researcher will be able to manage no conflicts of interest and keep the focus on the research topic without affecting placement or working roles.</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>

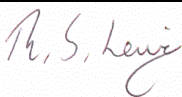
If your project is being undertaken with one or more clinical services or organisations external to the Trust, please provide details of these:	
If you still need to agree these arrangements or if you can only approach organisations after you have ethical approval, please identify the types of organisations (e.g., schools or clinical services) you wish to approach:	
N/a	
Do you have approval from the organisations detailed above? (this includes R&D approval where relevant) 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.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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)	Saffron Gallarotti
Signed	
Date	30.11.23

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name of Supervisor/Principal Investigator	Dr Richard Lewis
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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	30.11.23

COURSE LEAD/RESEARCH LEAD	
Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Signed	Emma NiChinneide
Date	30.11.23

SECTION E: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

<p>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)</p>
<p>The overarching topic of the proposed research study is Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), this is a growing issue nationally and within EP practice in the UK.</p> <p>The specific focus of the study will be upon EPs experiences and perspectives of the factors which support reintegration for autistic pupils following a period of EBSNA. It is well-established that autistic Children and Young People (CYP)/students are more likely to experience difficulties in attending school than their neurotypical peers. This can have a detrimental impact on their learning, wellbeing and future outcomes. It is also well established that EPs have a key role in supporting CYP aged 0-25 with a wide of range of needs, including EBSNA, by working with the systems around them e.g., parents and school staff (BPS, 2022). The 'core functions' of the EP role are consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Farrell et al., 2006; Scottish Executive, 2002). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that EPs would be well placed to support CYP experiencing difficulties in relation to attending school, particularly those with SEND i.e., autism and thus will have a lot to offer with regard to the factors which support reintegration for these students.</p> <p>The research methodology used within this study will be qualitative. Qualitative research is thought to be most suited to studies within the social sciences which aim to explore the lived experiences of individuals within social situations (Smith & Nizza, 2022). This is because qualitative research provides rich, in-depth, non-numerical data which is useful when seeking to explore phenomena within social sciences (Robertson & McCartan, 2016).</p>

The proposed research study will utilise semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection, this method can have a varied structure usually consisting of an introduction, some key questions/prompts and closing (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

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)

EBSNA is an issue of growing concern for many Educational Psychologists in their working practice.. The Department for Education (DfE) categorises 'persistent absentees' as CYP who have missed 10% of available sessions within the school year (DfE, (2022a). The most recent available DfE data about pupil absence within schools in England suggests that the rate of 'persistent absentees' was 12.1% in 2020/21, this is a rise from 10.8% in 2018/19 (DfE, 2022a). In the LA within which this study is located, persistent absence was an average of 18.3% across both state primary and secondary schools in 2018/19 (DfE, n.d). However, it must be noted that this includes a wide-ranging number of issues, including truancy and COVID-19 related absence. Within the literature, it is estimated that approximately 5% of school aged CYP are experiencing difficulties in relation to attending school due to emotional factors (Elliot & Place, 2019). Further, the attendance audit completed by the Children's Commissioner (2022) found that in Autumn 2021, 1 in 4 CYP were persistently absent, this is more than double the 2018/19 figure when it was 1 in 9.

These increasingly high levels of absence are a serious cause for concern, as unsurprisingly, CYP who are persistently absent from school experience low academic achievement, reduced mental health and poor future outcomes (Pellegrini, 2007; DfE, 2012).

It has been recognised that EBSNA is more prevalent amongst students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), particularly autistic students (Munkhaugen et al. 2017). The DfE statistics show that the most common primary need amongst those with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) is autism, approximately one in three (DfE, 2022b). The absence rates for CYP with EHCPs is much higher than those with no identified SEND (DfE, 2022c). Therefore, there appears to be a strong link between EBSNA and autism.

The proposed research study will add to the emerging research within the area of EBSNA. In addition, it will be building on the existing body of research and contributing a new perspective, by exploring EPs perspectives on the factors involved in reintegrating autistic students. The existing research details information about the reintegration of both neurotypical and autistic students, though very few studies consider the voice of the EP. As mentioned previously, considering the EP role, they are well placed to support with this need. Interestingly, one study found that EP input was perceived as more useful than school-based or health-focused support with regard to reintegration following EBSNA (Sawyer, 2022), highlighting again the role of EPs within this area.

The findings from this study will permit education professionals, including school staff and EPs, to develop their knowledge and understanding about the factors which support the reintegration process, which will enable them to support autistic students experiencing EBSNA more effectively.

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 ontological position of the proposed research study is **relativist**. Relativism is based on the idea that there are many truths, and that reality is socially constructed, meaning that reality is defined by the experiences of individuals and/or groups.

The epistemological position of the proposed research study is **constructivist**. A constructivist approach takes an interactive style to studying phenomena, due to a belief that knowledge is obtained through exploring and understanding the views and perceptions of the world from the perspective of individuals.

The research methodology used within this study will be qualitative.

The proposed research study will utilise semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection, this method can have a varied structure usually consisting of an introduction, some key questions/prompts and closing (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The proposed research study will utilise an interview guide, this will consist of open questions within a particular order to allow participants to give a rich detailed account about the factors they believe are influential in the reintegration process for autistic students. It is recommended to have approximately 6-10 questions for an interview lasting up to an hour (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Please note, the aim of the project will not involve exploring individual details about specific cases, the focus will be on the EPs' perspectives and professional views about their work with supporting these students. EPs will be reminded not to mention specific details about CYP they have supported. If an EP inadvertently mentions details about CYP, these will be redacted from the data.

The interviews will take place online, using a Tavistock Zoom account. The interviews will be recorded using Zoom to allow for transcription. Participants will be informed about the recordings via the consent form, this will detail that recordings will only be kept until the end of the research project. Transcription will be completed manually, and the method will be verbatim. However, a transcription service may be used to aid the process, especially as there is a time pressure on completion. A transcription service used to transcribe psychological research, likely: <https://www.sterlingtranscription.co.uk/research/> will be used.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) will be used to analyse the data obtained within the study. RTA is a method for analysing and interpreting qualitative data in order to produce meaningful themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). There are six steps in this process.

It is estimated that the interview process, including transcription and data analysis will take approximately 3 months, beginning in December 2023.

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 following criteria will be applied when seeking participants:

- Participants must be a qualified Educational Psychologist
- Participants must have had experience supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA
- Participants may work for an LA or within independent practice

*It must be noted that there is currently no specific criteria in regard to classifying EBSNA, the information currently provided by the DfE is that of 'persistent absentees', this applies to CYP who have missed 10% of available sessions. Thus, it is hard to determine at what point absence becomes EBSNA and when CYP are considered to have successfully reintegrated. Ultimately, there is a requirement for there to be an increase in attendance following a period of decreased attendance, as a result of emotional factors and will be down to the EP to determine that this has occurred.

The rationale for the criteria

It is hoped to explore the experiences and perspectives of EPs in relation to factors involved in the reintegration process for autistic students. In order to talk to this, participants need to have had experience supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA.

Sample size

This study will be using RTA, Braun and Clarke recommend 6–10 participants for small research projects (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Recruitment strategy

The researcher plans to use purposive sampling to select participants, this ensures that the researcher has participants that can provide insight into the specific phenomena being explored i.e., reintegration process following a period of EBSNA. The researcher will use EP contacts to recruit participants. A flyer (see appendix D) will be used to advertise more widely on an EP network (EPNET) which is a platform regularly used by EPs to post requests for engagement in research and possibly social media e.g. Twitter, as there is a large EP community on the site.

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 research will take place remotely, using zoom, at a convenient time for participants.

Usual safeguarding procedures in place within schools/workplaces will be adhered to.

In-person/home visits will not be offered.

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)

³ Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

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

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

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

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

N/a

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: 6th August 2021

Type of disclosure: Enhanced

Organisation that requested disclosure: Tavistock and Portman NHS FT

DBS certificate number: 001745637396

(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.

N/a

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

Participants will need to be able to speak English to take part in the study. They will also need to be able to understand and use verbal language.

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 (risk assessment attached)
- research overseas (please ensure Section G is complete)

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

YES NO

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

No, as EPs are required to have regular supervision to discuss their cases.

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.

I have conducted Masters level research where breaks/the right to withdraw was offered and the participants' emotional states were attended to throughout the course of the task. A CAMHS and EPS placement have also given the skills to manage reflective spaces and spot the signs of discomfort / distress.

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.

EPs will be contacting me if they wish to participate, so it will be completely voluntary. It will be made clear on the information/consent forms that their participation/or not, will not negatively impact on them.

The interviews will provide EPs with a chance to share good practice with colleagues including EPs and other educational professionals. This will be helpful for other professionals currently supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA.

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)

As this study is focused on the reintegration process from a professional's experience, it is not expected that participants would be negatively impacted, however the researcher acknowledges that the participants may be triggered due to the challenges that may have been experienced in their casework, therefore:

- The expectations of the study will be made clear in the information and consent/assent forms to allow participants to give their **informed consent**.
- To reduce possible distress, participants will be able to **pause the interview and take a break** if/when needed. If the interviewee appears visibly distressed, they will be encouraged to take a break and asked if they wish to terminate the interview.
- The interviews will begin with '**problem-free**' talk to ease participants into the interview, sensitive questions will be asked sensitively, and with forewarning.
- Interviews will be scheduled at a time when they are able to **access support** directly afterwards if needed, e.g., during the day.
- Participants will have an **opportunity to speak with the researcher** pre and post interview to ask any questions and to check-in with them to ensure they are okay (further details about the debrief below question 15).
- Participants will be **signposted to support agencies**, in case they require further support, this will be determined by their presentation e.g., whether they appear visibly distressed and by how they respond to my questions about how they feel post interview. The 'thank you' leaflets highlight the support services that are available for any matter of concern, these will be distributed to all participants following the interview. Please note, if participants disclose matters of concern but do not appear distressed, the steps outlined below will be followed.

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.

During the debrief participants will be:

- Thanked for their participation.
- Asked if how they found the interview and how they are feeling post-interview.
- Asked if they have any questions.
- Informed about the next steps within the study.
- Be encouraged to speak with their supervisor or Samaritans if they have worries. The 'thank you' leaflets (Appendix E) highlight the support services that are available for any matter of concern, these will be distributed to all participants following the interview, regardless of whether or not they appear distressed.

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.

Professionals

<https://www.samaritans.org>

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)

N/a

FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN OUTSIDE THE UK

18. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK?

YES NO

If YES, please confirm:

I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/>

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.

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.

If you have any queries regarding research outside the UK, please contact academicquality@taviport.nhs.uk:

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.

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:

SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

20. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (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:

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/).: <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:

--

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.

N/a

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

N/a

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)

Perhaps guidance documents/training packages about EBSNA.

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)?

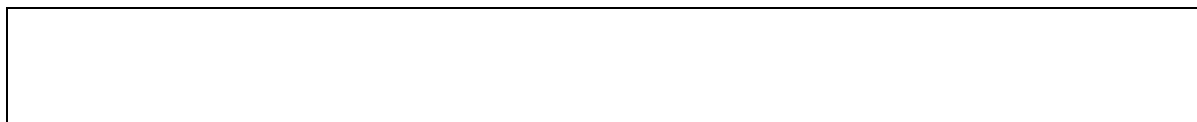
N/a

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 **N/A**
- Interview Schedule or topic guide
- Risk Assessment (where applicable) **N/A**
- Overseas travel approval (where applicable) **N/A**

34. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.



Appendices

Appendix A – Information sheet

Information Sheet

Title

An exploration into the factors which support the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist's perspective.

The Researchers

Main researcher: Saffron Gallarotti - SGallarotti@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Supervisor: Dr Richard Lewis - rlewis@tavi-port.nhs.uk

This study is being undertaken as part of a Professional Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, approved by Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC).

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the information you need to decide whether to participate in this study. Please note participation is voluntary and won't impact on your access to services.

Project Description

Aims

This research will aim to explore the factors which support reintegration of autistic students, by exploring EPs' experiences supporting students through this process. It is hoped that by uncovering this information this may support other professionals supporting this vulnerable group, by further developing understanding about '**what works**' for EBSNA.

Inclusion criteria

- Participants must be a qualified Educational Psychologist
- Participants must have had experience supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA

What will be required of you in this study

In order to explore the factors involved in reintegration, you will be invited to take part in an online 60-minute interview, via Zoom. All interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes, these will be disposed of once transcribed.

Benefits

The study will provide participants with an opportunity to share good practice which in turn will help contribute to the literature on supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA.

Risks

It is not expected that participants would be negatively impacted by this study, due to interviewing professionals. However, participants will have an opportunity to speak with the researcher pre and post interview to ask any questions and to check-in with to ensure they are okay. Participants will also be able to pause the interview and take a break if/when needed. Finally, participants will be signposted to support agencies, if further support is required.

Confidentiality of the Data

All possible steps will be taken to conceal your identity, for example, using pseudonyms and altering details that could identify you throughout the write-up of this study. Just to note, that due to the limited sample size in this study there may be implications for confidentiality/anonymity e.g., you may be identifiable via the use of direct quotes.

Please note that the confidentiality of the information you provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e., the data may be subject to a freedom of information request).

Data generated during this research will be retained in accordance with the Trusts' Data Protection and Handling policies: <https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/>

It will be stored electronically for a period of 10 years, (in accordance with Research Council UK guidance), and will accessible via a password to the research team only. After 10 years, the data will be securely disposed of.

If any information disclosed causes concern about yours or someone's else's safety, this information would need to be shared in line with safeguarding policies and procedures.

Research findings

Upon completion of this research, you will be invited to a voluntary online meeting where the findings will be shared. These findings will then be written up at part of a doctoral thesis. In addition, the research may be published in a peer reviewed journal, presentation and/or within the media in the future.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time, without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. However, once the interviews have been transcribed and analysed you will not be able to retract your data (approximately 2 weeks after the interview has commenced).

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact: Paru Jeram, Trust Quality Assurance Officer
pjeram@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Appendix B - Consent form

Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants

Adult consent Form

Title of research: *An exploration into the factors which support the reintegration process for autistic students who have previously experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), from an Educational Psychologist perspective.*

The Researchers

Main researcher: Saffron Gallarotti - SGallarotti@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Supervisor: Dr Richard Lewis - rlewis@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Statements:

- I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.
- I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed. I have also been made aware of the legal limitations to data confidentiality.
- I understand that this research is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and has been approved by Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC).
- I understand that, should I take part in the study, the limited sample size and the fact the interviews will be video recorded, will have implications for confidentiality/anonymity. I am also aware that direct quotes may be used in the write up of this research.
- I understand that the findings of this research will be written up within a doctoral thesis and may be published in peer reviewed journals/books and discussed within training/conferences.
- I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study and understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time (up to 2 weeks after the interview) without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Participant's Signature:

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

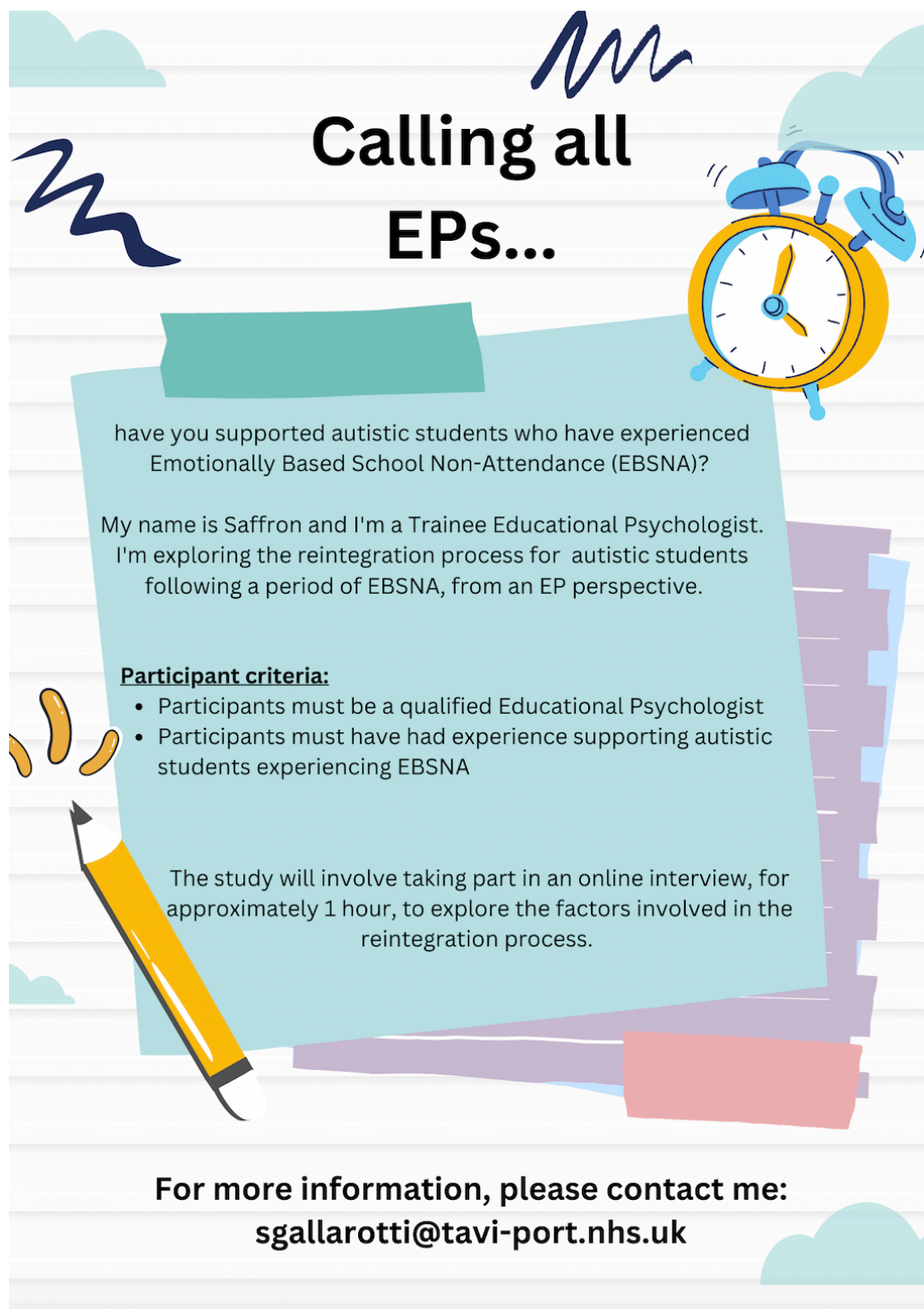
Investigator's Signature:

Date: _____

Appendix C – Draft Interview guide

<u>Interview guide</u>	
<u>Intro</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce myself and study. • Contract the session, including duration, number of questions and breaks/right to withdraw. Reminder about confidentiality limits e.g., safeguarding. • Any questions?
<u>Contextual questions</u>	<p>How long have you been working as an EP? Do you work in LA, private practice or other? Do you have a specific role, e.g., SEMH specialism?</p>
<u>Interview questions</u>	
<u>Q. 1</u>	Is there a particular case that comes to mind when thinking about reintegration following EBSNA? <i>It will be useful to hold this CYP in mind throughout the duration of this interview, however, please do not mention specific details about the individual CYP.</i>
<u>Q. 2</u>	When you have supported the reintegration process, what was your role?
<u>Q. 3</u>	How did you work with/alongside other professionals/the family/YP?
<u>Q. 4</u>	What do you think supported the student(s) return/reintegration to school?
<u>Q. 5</u>	Were there any factors which hindered the process?
<u>Q. 6</u>	What do you think supports ongoing attendance at school following reintegration?
<u>Q. 7</u>	How (if at all) has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the reintegration process?
<u>Q. 8</u>	Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your work supporting autistic students with the reintegration process?
<u>Debrief</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank them for their participation. • How are you feeling/was that okay? • Any questions? • The next steps of the study... • If worried, then to seek support from their supervisor and how further support agencies – Samaritans are available. • Give participant thank you note which details the above.

Appendix D – Recruitment poster/flyer



Calling all EPs...

have you supported autistic students who have experienced Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)?

My name is Saffron and I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I'm exploring the reintegration process for autistic students following a period of EBSNA, from an EP perspective.

Participant criteria:

- Participants must be a qualified Educational Psychologist
- Participants must have had experience supporting autistic students experiencing EBSNA

The study will involve taking part in an online interview, for approximately 1 hour, to explore the factors involved in the reintegration process.

For more information, please contact me:
sgallarotti@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Appendix E – Thank you leaflet post-interview

A thank you leaflet with a light beige background and decorative elements including purple, yellow, and teal circles and leaf patterns. The text is arranged in three callout boxes with purple borders and question mark icons.

Thank you for your participation!

? What do I do if I'm feeling upset or worried after the interview? ?

1. Speak to someone you trust e.g. your supervisor.
2. Reach out to support services e.g. <https://www.samaritans.org>

? What happens after the interview? ?

After the interviews are complete, I will transcribe and analyse the data. Once complete, you will be invited to a voluntary online meeting where the findings will be shared. These findings will then be written up at part of a doctoral thesis.

? What if I have questions after the interview? ?

If you have any questions after the interview please don't hesitate to contact me, please find my details below.

Main researcher: Saffron Gallarotti - SGallarotti@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Dear Saffron

I can confirm that I have received your updated TREC documentation in light of the challenges you have experienced, and I can confirm that the changes have been approved. You may proceed with your research.

Your updated TREC form is attached.

Please note that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc., must be referred to TREC as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.

Kind regards,

Paru

Mrs Paru Jeram

Academic Governance and Quality Officer

Academic Registry

[Doctoral Student Research and Research Ethics](#)

Spelling mistakes are possible – apologies in advance

Appendix 6 – RTA process

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the dataset

Individual transcript summaries

Interview 1

- The participant viewed EBSA as a presentation and a communication. As well as attendance being a “barrier”.
- The participant thought about the double aspect of their role in both the traded work but also in the statutory capacity as part of the Education Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process.
- The participant felt the overarching focus of their work was “getting her (the child) in school more”.
- The participant spoke about the process of their work including phone calls, consultation meetings and an observation of the child.
- The participant spoke about the benefits e.g., each bringing their own skills and challenges e.g., all working differently, of working collaboratively with other agencies and how the involvement of professionals had made the school struggle with “ownership” of the *problem*.
- The participant noted that the family system was just the mother and she often had difficulty in attending the school e.g., for meetings, as well as enforcing structure within the home environment. There was also discussion about the relationship between the mother and the child and a sense of “what’s mine and what’s yours?”.
- The participant felt that visible adaptations made by the school supported the reintegration process e.g., sensory needs catered for and individual timetable. As well as relationships building between key stakeholders e.g., EP and the parent. In maintaining attendance, the participant thought about the need for funding, access to adults, flexibility and support around co-regulation of emotions.
- The participant felt barriers to reintegration were when EBSNA was ingrained and capacity of staff and professionals. The frustration felt by staff was voiced in relation to set-backs within the reintegration process.
- The participant thought about how schools needed guidance around the management of EBSNA, particularly in relation to regulations such as attendance monitoring.
- Impact of co-vid on the development of EBSNA was discussed though it was noted this coincided with other factors e.g., child and family system.

Personal reflections

I noticed myself being drawn to the lack of direct, individual work that my participant had undertaken as part of their work supporting the child experiencing EBSA. I wondered what information had been missed out on in the formulation of the presenting issues and then the subsequent action planning/intervention. I'm aware that EPs take up their role in a variety of ways with some feeling that the most effective way to work is by working systemically with the wider systems around the child, which I agree with mostly, nevertheless, as a practitioner the most pertinent part of my role is to seek and share the voice of the child as noted within my researcher values in 3.6.

In relation to the ideas about responsibility/ownership, who holds the problem and the role of professionals, I also drawn to ideas around Bion's Basic Assumption Theory, particularly that of dependency.

Interview 3

- As in the first interview, this participant spoke about the process of their work in supporting the reintegration process, including meeting, home visits and training to support staff on a systemic level. The EP felt their role was about supporting a "very gradual" transition back into school by unpicking strengths/needs and removing barriers to attendance. As well being a "link/bridge" between the home and school systems. The participant also conducted some direct work including pupil views using CBT approaches and projective techniques, to explore "what goes on in his world", validating these experiences. Suspicion
- Family system was limited and there was a sense of "isolation", feeling suspicious of school, did this feed into the EBSNA?
- The participant also spoke about working in a multi-disciplinary capacity in order to support the CYP and noted both the benefits and challenges of this. There was mention of other services i.e., CAMHS supporting with CBT sessions.
- This issues around responsibly/ownership arose again, with focus on teaching staff, and the difficulties in engaging them with the reintegration process.
- Emphasised the need for time, flexibility and "taking the pressure off", instead of we just need to "get him in the door!". Thinking more about supporting learning, than being in the physical school building, interest based initially. The requirement for a "mind shift".
- Developing the relationships between systems, reducing timetable, adapting processes/routines. Key staff member, access to low demand spaces and needs led.
- Covid made the return to school difficult, following initial reintegration. Exams were sat from home, highlights the need for flexibility, the YP is now in an alternative provision and thriving.

Personal reflections

I found myself feeling very aligned with this participant, they spoke at length about the importance and usefulness of having worked directly with the CYP. There was also a critical perspective on the current education and questioning of notion that “school is the best place to educate all CYP” which again feels quite aligned with my thinking. The participant mentioned needing to “bold”, this made me think about Social Change Eco-system Map and the need for “disruptors” as part of change processes.

Interview 4

- The participant spoke about her role both at SEN support level and at EHCNA level which was similar to the previous participant. She also spoke about processes similar to both previous participants in consultation and action planning with different stakeholders in order to identify needs and “little sparkles” to support with outlining provision.
- The participant also felt their role was to act as a “bridge” between different systems and had a strong views about the importance of gathering pupil views and advocating for them. They also spoke about the “autistic identity” and how spending time to explore this was important.
- Similar ideas around the provision required e.g., safe spaces, key adults and thinking about the adaptation of the learning environment were discussed.
- The role of CAMHS in providing therapeutic support arose, though the generalisability of these skills was provided by opportunities within school. As well as social care, in providing support for the family. Emphasised the role of the home system and the impact of that, highlighting the need for a secure base.
- Limits to mainstream provision – sensory needs, how many adaptations can you make when there’s lots of students, noise, changing lessons etc?
- Student motivation arose in the discussion.
- Differences drawn between primary and secondary school – reminiscent of splitting.
- The EP role in regard to EBSNA is the same as with other needs, considering the research but also an understanding of the school system, and thinking with school staff about how to implement change. Theory – practice. Acknowledged limits to the EP role in terms of capacity, this arose in both previous interviews.
- The YP ended up educated within specialist provision.

Personal reflections

This is the first interview so far which has thought about the role of the home system, whilst not directly carried out by the EP, they spoke about other services work with the family e.g., social care. I loved this participant's sense of hopefulness, one of the particular quotes which stood out to me was "there is always hope".

Interview 5

- The participant felt their role has been to identify strengths and needs, think about the function of the behaviour/formulate. They also spoke about working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders and the importance of this, with particular focus on working directly with the CYP, as it's an "intervention in it's own right".
- As with other participants, the provision was around relationships, safe spaces, environmental adaptations, but also there needs to be time, creativity and flexibility within this as there are "no quick fixes".
- There also discussion around supporting neurodiversity, akin to exploring the autistic profile, as with the last participant.
- Hope came through with regard to future educational provision e.g., hybrid models of learning, following on from the pandemic as it was felt that this had shifted perspectives about education. There was a sense of the "agenda needs to shift" in relation to 100% attendance, very similar to participant 3.

Personal reflections

Interestingly, this participant was quite aligned with the previous, in thinking about the importance of the home system and accessing the community as prerequisite before thinking about school reintegration. Also, they felt that gathering student views was "the most powerful aspect of the EP role", which I strongly agree with.

Interview 6

- The participant had a specific model for supporting EBSNA needs which was similar but also different to the other participants, she spoke of an EBSNA TAC meeting which was multi-professional and included the parents too.
- As part of their specialist role, they had more capacity to work with the YP directly, carrying out work perhaps akin to a CBT therapist. As well as the usual work around exploring the pupil views. The stepped plan which followed the involvement was constructed solely with the YP which was interesting and different to the other participants, I think this highlighted the participant's views about the importance of CYP views/perspectives in decision making.

- As in other interviews, there was a sense of it being impossible to change everything within a school setting, nevertheless, there are things that schools can change. This participant seemed to have a focus on the school's truly understanding the YP's needs and making adjustments as a prerequisite and continual factor in maintaining attendance. Less perhaps about the family system.
- As in other interviews, a lot of support was around key adults, safe spaces and adaptations to the ways of working and the environment.
- This participant thought about the difficult balance between encouraging the YP into school but also accepting days when it's just too difficult – more harm than good?
- There was also discussion about the pressure that schools feel in relation to attendance and that can sometimes impact on their ability to be flexible and give the YP the time they need to reintegrate.
- Ideas around the autistic profile also arose in relation to developing an understanding of the self, and some of the differences which can impact on reintegration e.g., black and white thinking.

Personal reflections

As with the last couple of participants, the importance and value of the child's voice was really strong in this interview. The participant's role enabled them to have increased capacity in supporting the CYP, which was one of barriers some of the other participants spoke about.

Interview 2

- This participant worked with a student who had reintegrated but the focus was on maintaining the reintegration, particularly with the impending transition to secondary school. However, the processes followed as part of the work were the same as in the other cases e.g., consultation, pupil views and feedback meeting.
- The participant felt, "It's much harder to make things work if they don't think it's going to work", in relation to obtaining and utilising pupil views.
- The way the participant describes secondary school is interesting, "so many teachers and transitions are hard...", this seems to be a common theme.
- In contrast to many of the other participant's this participant spoke about the lack of motivation in relation to school for the YP.
- Ideas around schools needing to be flexible arose again and thinking about making adaptations in order to take the pressure off students. Similar ideas around provision which helps, also thinking about the individual needs such as attending breakfast club and playing football at lunch.
- The participant felt we are seeing more EBSNA because of the pandemic, though not relevant to the case discussed.

- The participant felt specialist provision, small classrooms, blend of online learning etc seemed to be more often the outcome than remaining in mainstream.

Personal reflections

I was initially disheartened about the stance this participant had taken, as it had been my intention to think about the initial reintegration process, as per the RQ, though it's a reflection point about my criteria perhaps. However, the interview was still useful and links a lot with the previous interviews. It does not 'stick out' within the dataset as much as I had anticipated, following this immersion process.

There seemed to be less professional involvement in this case, also this was the only case not to go to EHCNA at this stage. Is there a correlation between these factors? I think some of the examples given were really concrete, in terms of the adaptations made for this pupil which was missing in some of the other interviews.

Overall dataset summary

5/6 cases went from SEN support to EHCNA

3/6 have gone on to specialist provision

EP as a link/bridge between home and school systems.

Ideas about responsibility/ownership, who owns the 'problem'? Does having professional support hinder others' capacity to take up their role?

Multi-disciplinary approach to process and support and multi-pronged approach to supporting needs – e.g., teaching skills to CYP, supporting the home system and adapting the school environment. Difficulties in working collaboratively at times.

Processes in providing support and strategies/provision seemed similar across the dataset e.g., safe spaces, key adults and thinking about the adaptation of the learning environment.

Impact of co-vid impacted on the initial presentation of EHCNA as well as maintaining reintegration.

Influence of home systems – limited support networks and involvement from social care.

Education systems – limited ability to adapt mainstream schools, some things can't be changed e.g., the constant transitions in secondary schools. There is then the requirement for CYP to attend alternative provision, and in order to access these provisions, CYP have to go through processes e.g., EHCNA.

Hybrid models of learning

Holistic understanding
Strengths + needs

Sensory needs

Psychological formulation + functional analysis

EHCPA processed

"Agenda needs to shift"

Risk + Resilience

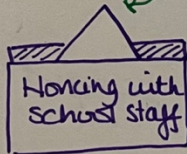
Narrative therapy

CYP + family voice

Environmental adaptations

Achievable

Autonomy within plan



Supporting neuro-diversity

Securing relationships

Pupil views

Safe spaces + adults in school.

Covid-19 shifted perspectives about education

"The most powerful aspect of the EIP use!"

Participant 5

Time is needed



Moving away from 100% attendance expectations

Accessing the community

Importance of liaising with early help + social care



feeling heard + validated

"Intervention in its own right!"


Creativity + flexibility
"No quick fixes!"

Collaborative planning

CBT approaches - graded hierarchy

~~X~~

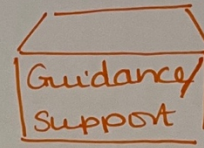
Attendance as a
"barrier"

Co-regulation ^{1,2,3}
Timetabling 


Participant 1
Capacity X

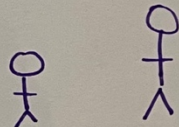
Impact of
Covid-19 ^{of}

Who owns the
'problem'?



Flexibility

Relationships 




SEN support
+
EHCNA

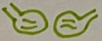


strengths

"What's mine and
what's yours?"
Funding


Frustration

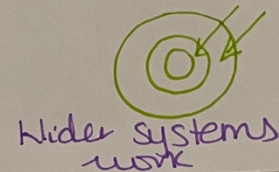
Working
collaboratively
challenges

Phonecalls  Processes

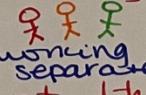
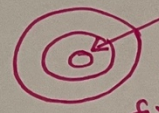
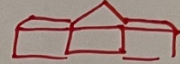
 Consultations  

Entrenched

 Observations



Autistic identity
 Identifying needs +
 Thinking
 SEN Support + "little sparkles"
 Secondary transition + EHCNA
 Outlining provision
 Home School
 Flexibility
 "There is always hope"
 Enjoyable activities at home.
 Safe spaces
 Key person
 Emotional regulation
 Specialist provision
 EP as a "bridge"
 Advocating for CYP
 Limitations of role.
 Risk + Resilience
 FCP - ideal school
 Visual, task as a bridge.
 @ listening/valuing views
 Communication is key.
 Moving away from "within-child" focus.
 Social care support for the family.
 Different roles
 Multi-disciplinary working
 Working together
 Working separately
 Joint home-school consultation solution - focused.
 Relationships + Round-robin
 Key person
 Action-planning meeting
 CAMHS - therapeutic intervention + coping strategies
 How can these skills be reinforced/generalised?
 Consistency
 How can we adapt the environment + teaching?



"perfect storm"

Covid

Secondary transition

Risk X

Resilience ✓

Home School

@ listening/valuing views

Communication is key.

Moving away from "within-child" focus.

Social care support for the family.

Different roles

Multi-disciplinary

Working together

working

Working separately

Action-planning meeting

CAMHS - therapeutic

intervention + coping strategies

How can these skills be reinforced/generalised?

Consistency

How can we adapt the environment + teaching?

Autistic identity
 Identifying needs +

Thinking

SEN Support + "little sparkles"

Flexibility

"There is always hope"

Enjoyable activities at home.

Safe spaces

Key person

Emotional regulation

Specialist provision

EP as a "bridge"

Advocating for CYP

Limitations of role.

Participant 4

FCP - ideal school

Visual, task as a bridge.

Risk X

Resilience ✓

@ listening/valuing views

Communication is key.

Moving away from "within-child" focus.

Social care support for the family.

Different roles

Multi-disciplinary

Working together

working

Working separately

Action-planning meeting

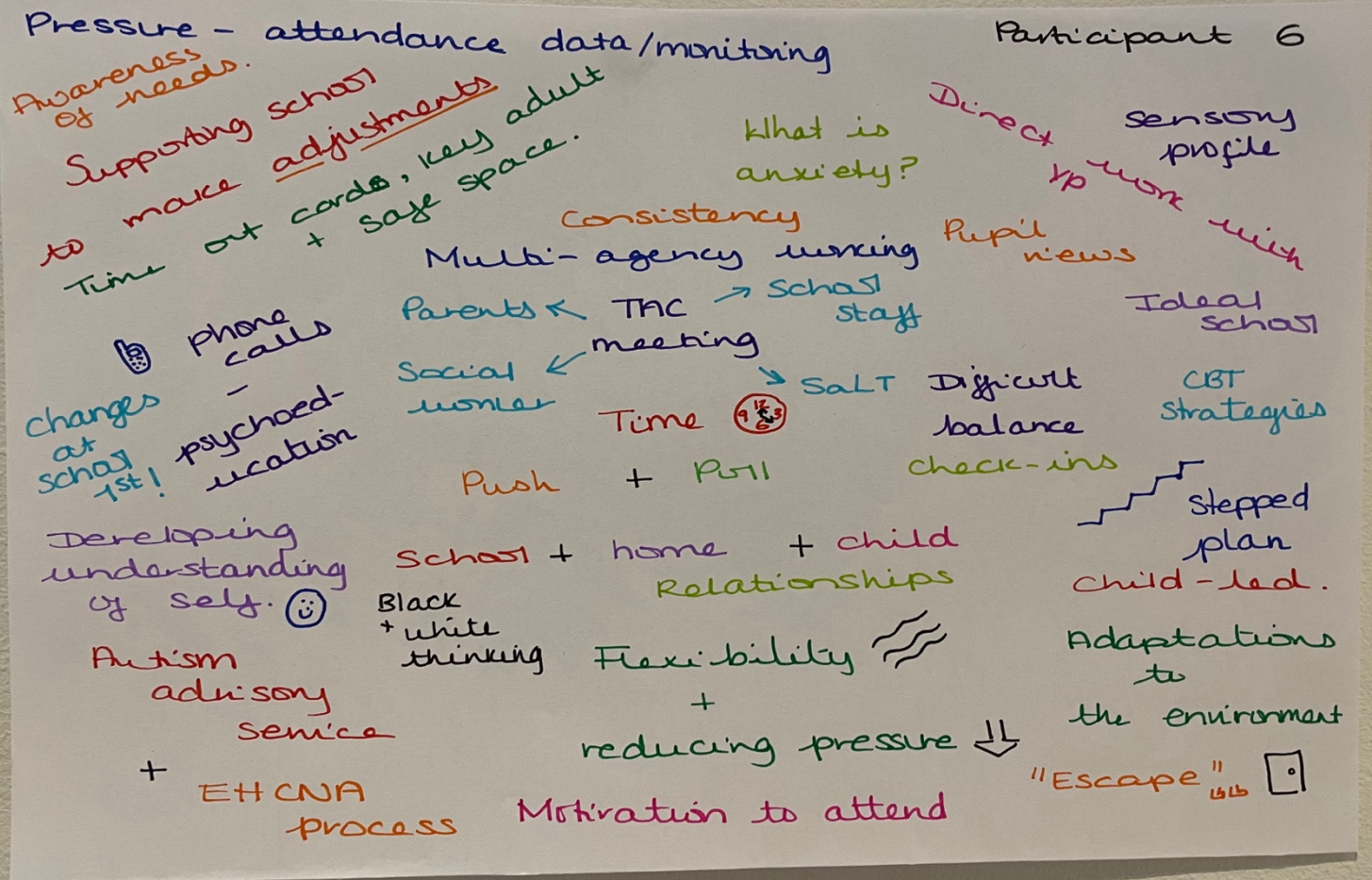
CAMHS - therapeutic

intervention + coping strategies

How can these skills be reinforced/generalised?

Consistency

How can we adapt the environment + teaching?



Lack of motivation
What's the point?

Taking pressure off!

Initial consultation →

Pupil views

Feedback meeting

Flexibility

Reviewing previous reports

Advanced planning for change

Understanding of our needs

Responsibility

Individual needs.

Interests may change.

Teacher + SENCO
Parent

Working with parents
Specialist settings?
Open evenings →

Science experiment →

Participant 2
Pupils tend to have good ideas
Sustaining reintegration

↓ Transition

Secondary school

Perception of self

Risk + X

Resilience ✓

Humour + relationships

Sense of belonging
↳ playing football

Adaptations in school

Breakfast club.

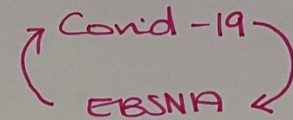
Minimising transition

Participant 3

Alternative provision

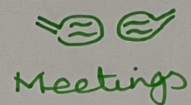
"Pressure off"

Responsibility + ownership



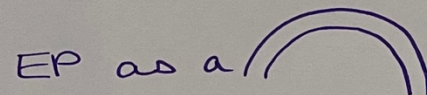
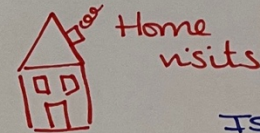
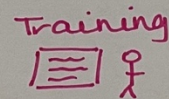
"Gradual transition"

Collaboration

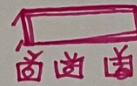


Time

Flexibility



Isolation

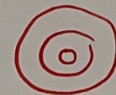
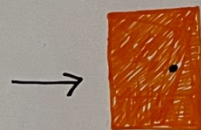


CBT + PT

Social care

CAMHS involvement

"What goes on in his world?"



Relationships between systems

Needs + interests

Phase 2: Coding

Coding using Microsoft Word.

Researcher: Okay. So, when you were involved in supporting that young person's reintegration process, what was your specific role?

Participant: So, initially, my role kind of changed with this pupil. So I'm going to talk about the secondary pupil. So when I first became involved, they were in year eight. And I was asked by the school to become involved in SEN support level. So they shared that the pupil was experiencing EBSA, there were concerns about kind of significant concerns about well-being, self-harm in the school environment. And just generally, kind of they were thinking is mainstream the right kind of environment? So they were kind of like, XXX, can we, you know, have your involvement with this to help us to think we've tried X, Y, and Z, but we're not seeing much progress. And then eventually, as we moved through, I became involved as part of the EHC process as well. So identifying, you know, their needs, what provision needs to be in place to inform that kind of provision for them? So yeah, it kind of progressed. But initially, it was kind of to engage in problem solving, think about how we can be supporting that person. Before it kind of progressing to let's find the right placement mainstream might not be, you know, go through the EHC process.

Researcher: Lovely, thank you. And as part of that process, I guess, for the SEND support and the EHCP. How did you work alongside other professionals, and that can be school staff or other professionals outside of school environments?



The screenshot shows a vertical list of two comment cards. Each card features a purple circular profile picture with the initials 'SG', the name 'Saffron Gallarotti', a three-dot menu, and a thumbs-up icon. The first card contains the text 'EP involvement at different levels - SEN Support' and a 'Reply' button with a right-pointing arrow. The second card contains the text 'Mainstream education/school is not the best place to educate all CYP' and a 'Reply' button with a right-pointing arrow.

Coding using Excel.

Coding extract from participant 1

Participant	<p>So um my this young person where I'm the link Educational Psychologist for the setting their primary school she's in Year 3 at primary school. And I first became involved through a request from the SENCO because of concerns around both her attendance in school and also some difficulties with her sort of presentation and various aspects of like engagement and learning and social interaction in school. So it was that it was sort of commissioned as a piece of with underline traded framework to the school I've also then been involved in sort of writing advice for education and health care needs assessments for her.</p> <p>And sort of in parallel as well as writing advice have been supporting specifically in relation to like getting her in school more and doing work with kind of chaired meetings with the school. So it's been both a piece of sort of statutory work and traded work but statutory work that was obviously included her attendance challenges but has been a bit broader I think.</p>	<p>EP role has dual function - SEN Support and EHCNA CYP with additional learning needs</p> <p>EP chairing meetings in relation to/facilitating the reintegration process</p>
Researcher	<p>And when you were involved in terms of trying to get her back into school, what sort of work did you do and it perhaps it might link across the different bits of work you did in terms of whether it was traded...?</p>	
Participant	<p>Yeah so, it's actually quite erm, it's kind of ongoing, it's quite a live piece of work.</p> <p>I was in a planning meeting, I was in like a multi-agency planning meeting this, like literally have just come in from school now and yeah, the support, supporting her and her attendance is still very much a kind of live piece of work.</p> <p>What it's consisted of, it actually came, so the SENCo requested my involvement but there had already been involvement with my colleague who was the previous link EP for the school.</p> <p>So the school is new to me beginning of last academic year so I've had like a year and a term, so it's relatively new to me so I picked up from a colleague who went on maternity leave she'd had a little bit of involvement with this young person sort of a parent consultation.</p>	<p>EBSNA is an ongoing issue requiring continued support Working collaboratively with other professionals</p> <p>SENCo requesting EP involvement</p> <p>EP consultation with parent/s</p>

Coding extract from participant 2

Participant	<p>Yeah, so I guess, sort of like the resiliency ones that he picked, where he feels safe at home. He knows what he wants to do when he leaves school. So I guess that's something good for the secondary school to know about. So they can, you know, maybe use his interests and think of clubs that he might go, to think about careers and how school will get him there. He had a friend and friends that are there for him so I guess it was about keeping an eye on friendships as well. He feels that his teachers care about him. He does things, fun things outside of school.</p>	Utilising risk and resilience factors during action planning
	<p>But he did say some things like he worries about going into school, he worries that something bad will happen. And he can find it overwhelming, so noise and crowds some of it was about thinking about well, obviously secondary, like kind of gets bigger, doesn't it? The corridors are noisy. There's a lot more transitions. Lunch halls are very busy, usually so so how they could make sure they're thinking about things like that. Yeah. I can't remember what your question was sorry?</p>	School environments can be difficult for autistic students
Researcher	<p>No thank you, that's fine. And, it might link again to this next question. What do you think? And again, with your circumstances might be slightly different, but essentially, it's what do you think supported the student's reintegration to school? Or what's yeah, kind of helping them?</p>	
Participant	<p>I think, let me see if there's anything that had happened before. Some of it might have bits that one of the first things he said to me was I've got autism and ADHD. So I wonder if some of it was about his own understanding of his needs. Although, sometimes he'd blame that like, oh, I can't do that because I'm autistic, but yeah, maybe his understanding of his own needs help.</p>	The CYP developing an awareness and understanding of their own needs
	<p>I think a lot of it is the school...</p>	The school has a pivotal role in the reintegration process

Coding extract from participant 3

Participant	Yeah, I think it was having that several people involved all working to some kind of collaborative plan.	Collaborative action planning
	And I think actually the school, I think they put a lot of time into that.	School taking ownership/active role in the reintegration process
	And they did you know, this, Mary, she was going to school, going to Jonathan's home, I was going to Jonathan's home, you know, they were, they were quite happy for me to prioritise him as one of the, you know, priority pupils that they wanted for me to focus on for my work. I mean, there was other children in the school as well, and fortunately they had quite a bit of time. So we could, we could manage to do both. But there was never any sort of pressure for like, you know, we've got other children, we want you to see. There was there was a way that we negotiated it, which was actually he is one of the most vulnerable pupils in the school at the moment. So we, we need to direct the support there.	The school prioritising supporting EBSNA
	And I think trying to support mum's relationship with the school helped because she never, they never. I mean, she, she's, interestingly when I got back in touch with her, not that long ago about the EHCP. She never felt that the head teacher had been particularly supportive. She never thought that, you know, the wider school system had really understood his needs.	Supporting the home-school relationship Negative parental perception about the school system School's lack of understanding about a CYP's needs
	But he did go back for a period of time, and it was on a very, very reduced timetable.	School adaptations - Reduced timetable
	And it was also having in that particular school, there was a really good learning support department. So, he would go in, go up to the Learning Support Department meet Mary and he would be able to sit with his headphones on and do some work that had been, like, organised for him around things that he wanted to learn.	School adaptations - Access to the learning support department School adaptations - Access to a key adult School adaptations - Learning based on individual interests
	So, we just took the pressure off. You know, well, Key Stage Three are doing this, this, this and this. So you're gonna have to do this, this, this and this.	Removing pressure/demands within school
	It was about trying to adapt things for him because he was telling us this, I would like to learn about this. So for a while, we just said, Well, fine. That's what we'll do.	Listening to the voice of CYP School adaptations - Learning based on individual interests

Coding extract from participant 4

Participant	So I think it's staff having a clear understanding of the pupil's needs, and what support needs to be in place.	School staff developing an understanding of CYP's needs
	And that's generally kind of what the focus of our involvement is, is thinking about, you know, what does the pupil need in school? How are we going to meet that need?	EP role in establishing CYP's needs and suitable provision
	So it's making sure staff understand the need, but also the, the curriculum is adapted or the school day is adapted to meet that need. So it's not that we're just kind of understanding and we know that the child's struggling, we are kind of putting in adaptations and, and different things.	School staff implementing support based on CYP's needs
	The main things for the pupils that I found, continues to get them into school is having that safe space somewhere to go, when they're feeling overwhelmed.	Access to a safe space within school
	And a key person, because I think it's really important on those days, that they're feeling quite overwhelmed that they can check in with somebody that they can say, I'm feeling overwhelmed, because, and they can join me problem solve with them. So having that kind of emotional support as well in school is really, really important, I guess, the safe space and the key person a key to that.	Access to a key adult within school Emotional support within school
	Because again, it's it's kind of, once people understand the behaviour they can put in that support. So to know it's not just a choice, not to go to lesson or to not go to school, or, you know, I'm just going to come out of science today. It's actually we're feeling anxious about this. This is what we need to kind of do.	School staff developing an understanding of CYP's needs
	And I guess the, the generalisation of the strategies, CAMHS have kind of tried, the key person would then be involved in kind of implementing that support as well.	School staff implementing advice/strategies from professionals e.g. CAMHS
	So what helped it ongoing so I think I think as well, that joint working with school and family because obviously we we come in and we don't have that ongoing kind of involvement that we would like like to have. So obviously I check in in planning meetings to see how things are going but I might not necessarily see the pupil again, or speak to family. So I think to keep things working, it's that ongoing family liaison, that good relationship with school.	The importance of working collaboratively between systems Relationship between the home and school systems. Limited capacity of the EP role
	And I guess them (<i>family</i>) having a key adult as well. Because generally things work better when there's that regular and open communication. So I think they're the main things. I'm not sure if I forgotten anything.	Regular communication between systems

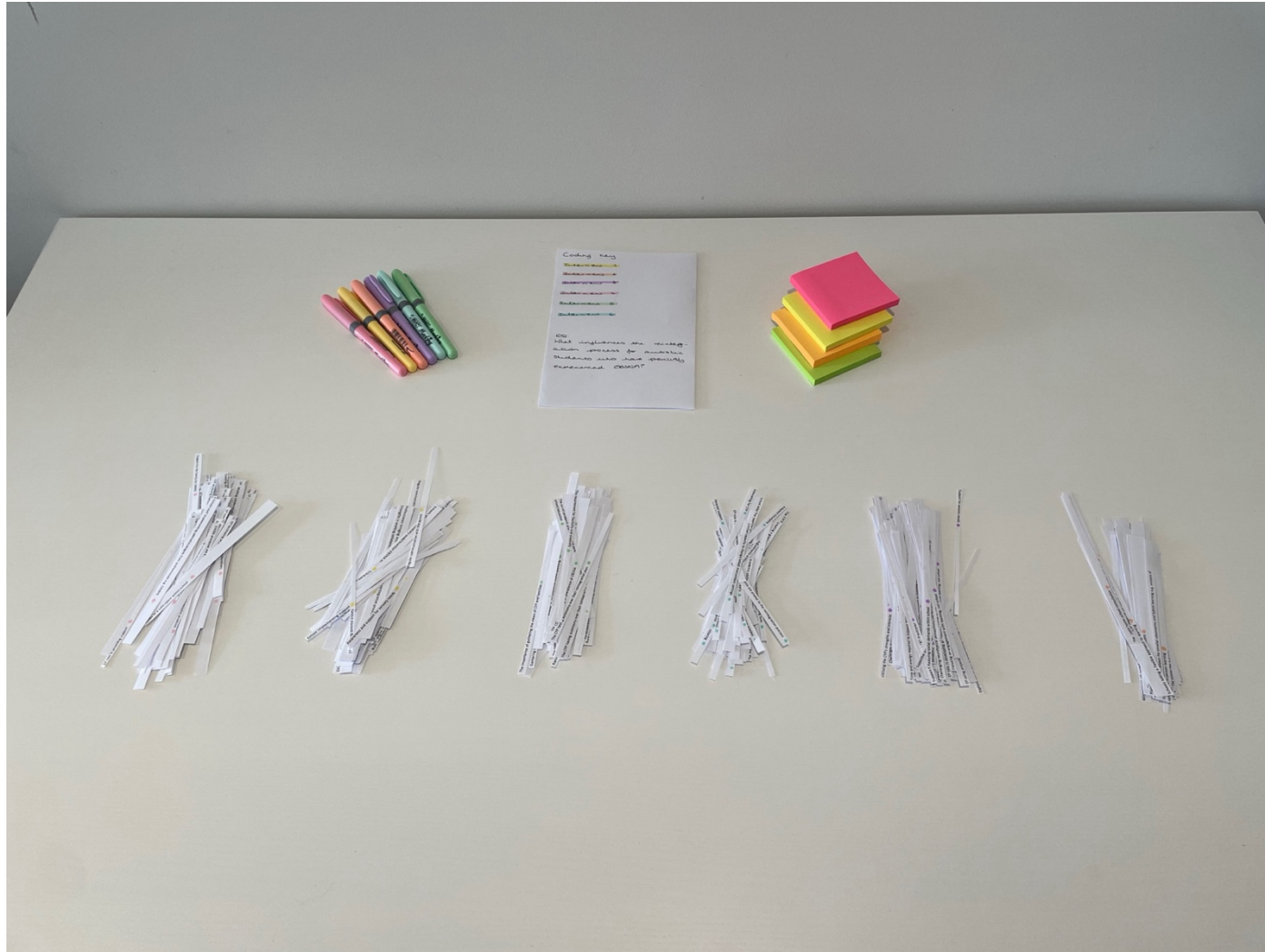
Coding extract from participant 5

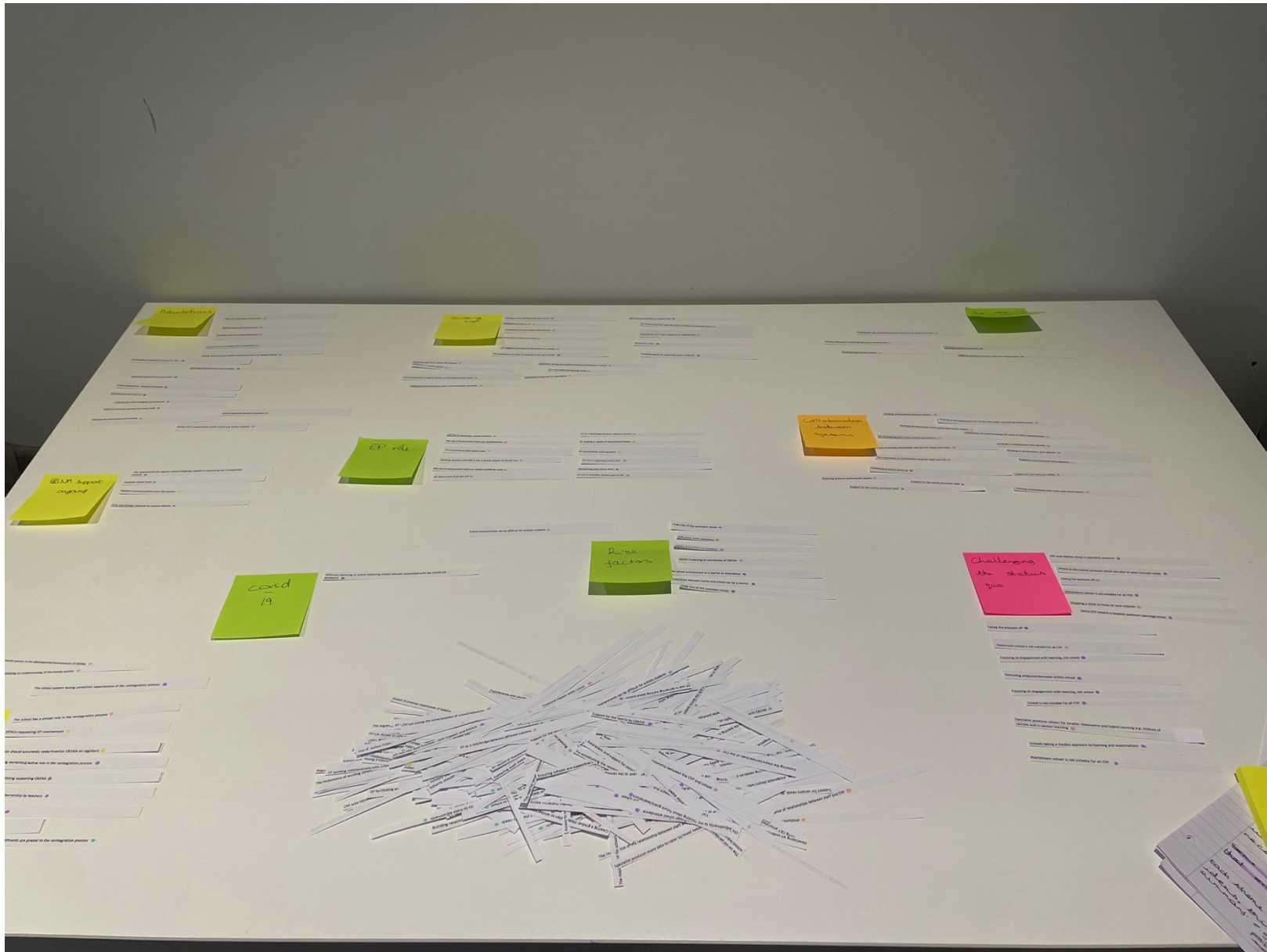
Participant	Yeah, I think using collaborative action planning, and building youth, I do use avoidance hierarchies with young people. So, I use a child and young person friendly version of avoidant hierarchy, which is the ladder of strength and courage tool, which is a child friendly version of an avoidance hierarchy, and really supporting that young person to think about those small steps that they need to return to school.	Collaborative action planning EP use of CBT approaches e.g. avoidance hierarchies/strength and courage tool.
	And that information coming directly from the young person in terms of giving them control over the little steps that they feel they need in order to achieve that return and giving them control over ranking them in terms of the least and most anxiety provoking, and that giving them that format to really see that broken down into those small little steps so that it feels really achievable for the young person.	Identifying small, achievable steps as part of the reintegration plan The CYP having autonomy over their reintegration plan
	But alongside that laddering process, also making sure that we're making space for those environmental adaptations, so that the laddering process is one part of it. But we're also doing that in the context of having a really good understanding of the barriers and addressing those barriers before the return to school.	Identifying barriers to attendance and implementing adaptations
	And that we're thinking about the coping strategies with the young person, things that they can do things that others can do to help them as they progress through the kind of avoidance hierarchy in the different laddering stages, so very much using that systematic desensitisation rather than a flooding approach or forced approach to school attendance.	Use of systematic desensitisation
Researcher	Great, thank you. And then I guess, in contrast to that question, are there any factors that come up that you think hinder the process when you're trying to get young people back into school?	
Participant	Yeah, I think a lack of honouring the young person voice, I think when young people's concerns are dismissed, or misinterpreted, or mis-conceptualised can be really unhelpful.	Listening to and validating the views of CYP Dismissing CYP views as a barrier

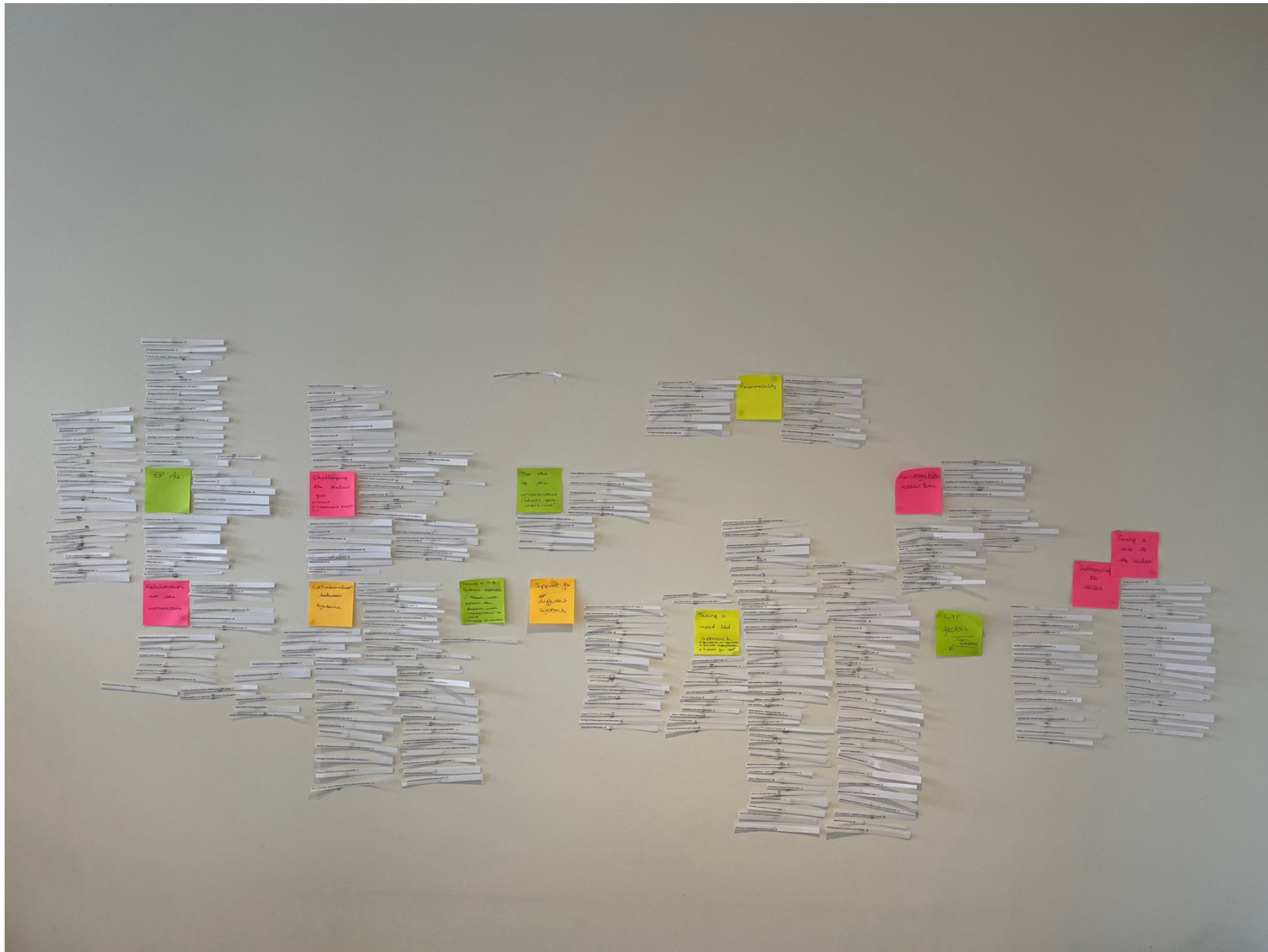
Coding extract from participant 6

Researcher	Oh, interesting, and in terms of this young person, what do you think supported their return or reintegration in school?	
Participant	I think, I think it was a few things, I think it was the school being on board and being flexible around attendance. So, you know, they weren't expecting that he was going to suddenly be able to start attending again. And I think their flexibility kind of reduced some of that pressure and some of the demands that he was feeling.	The requirement for schools to be flexible The requirement for schools to have realistic expectations Reducing pressure for the CYP to attend
	I think the school environment, the adaptations that they made to the school environment were really key. So for him, like his sort of sensory profile was one of the areas that made it quite difficult for him to attend. So things like being able to leave a lesson slightly earlier, where the corridors weren't so busy was really important. Having like a time, I don't think they called it a timeout card, but a card where he could sort of remove himself from the lesson if he needed to, also kind of really helped, I think, knowing that there was a bit of an escape, he called it was, was really helpful.	Adaptations to the school environment Awareness and support for sensory needs Adaptations based on the individual needs of CYP School adaptations - leaving lessons early School adaptations - time out card
	And I also think having kind of key adult who was able to check in with him, you know, notice maybe when he was finding things a bit difficult, offer support when, when he needed it. So kind of go into maybe the SEN department or somewhere similar, but I think knowing that there's like one key adult who can support me with that was, was really helpful. So yeah, I think that I think the key parts of it, were around school, making adjustments being flexible.	School adaptations - Access to a key adult School adaptations - Access to the learning support department The requirement for schools to be flexible The requirement for schools to make adjustments
	And I think I do think him having some understanding of anxiety was also helpful. So I do think that kind of psychoeducation part and the opportunity to sort of identify like, what his profile of strengths and differences are. So like, you know, this is what I do really well. But this is what I find hard doing that, you know, in the sessions, I think was helpful for him to be able to kind of recognise why he was feeling so anxious. And to figure out a little bit like what's going on? Okay, what do I need to happen in order to stay here? Yeah, I think they're the kind of key parts of it, I guess, also.	Psychoeducation about anxiety for CYP Exploration of individual strengths and differences

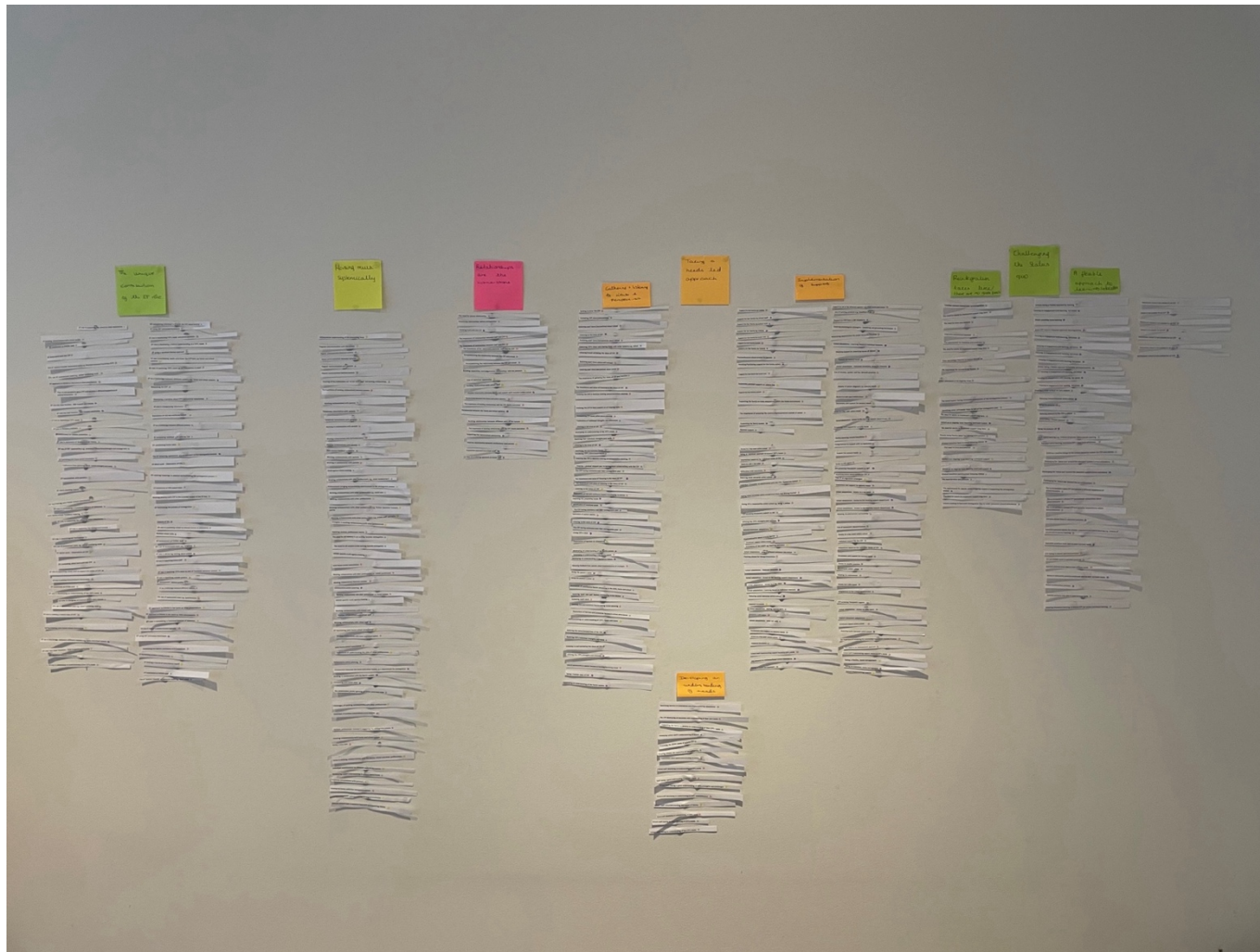
Phase 3: Generating initial themes

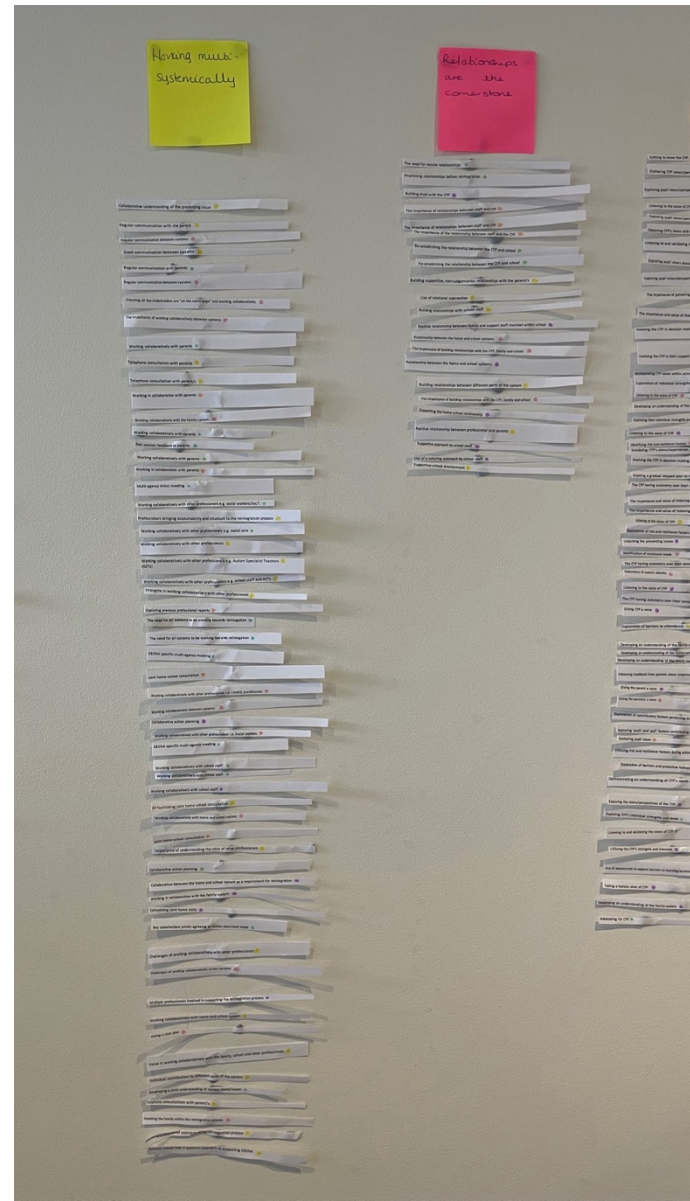
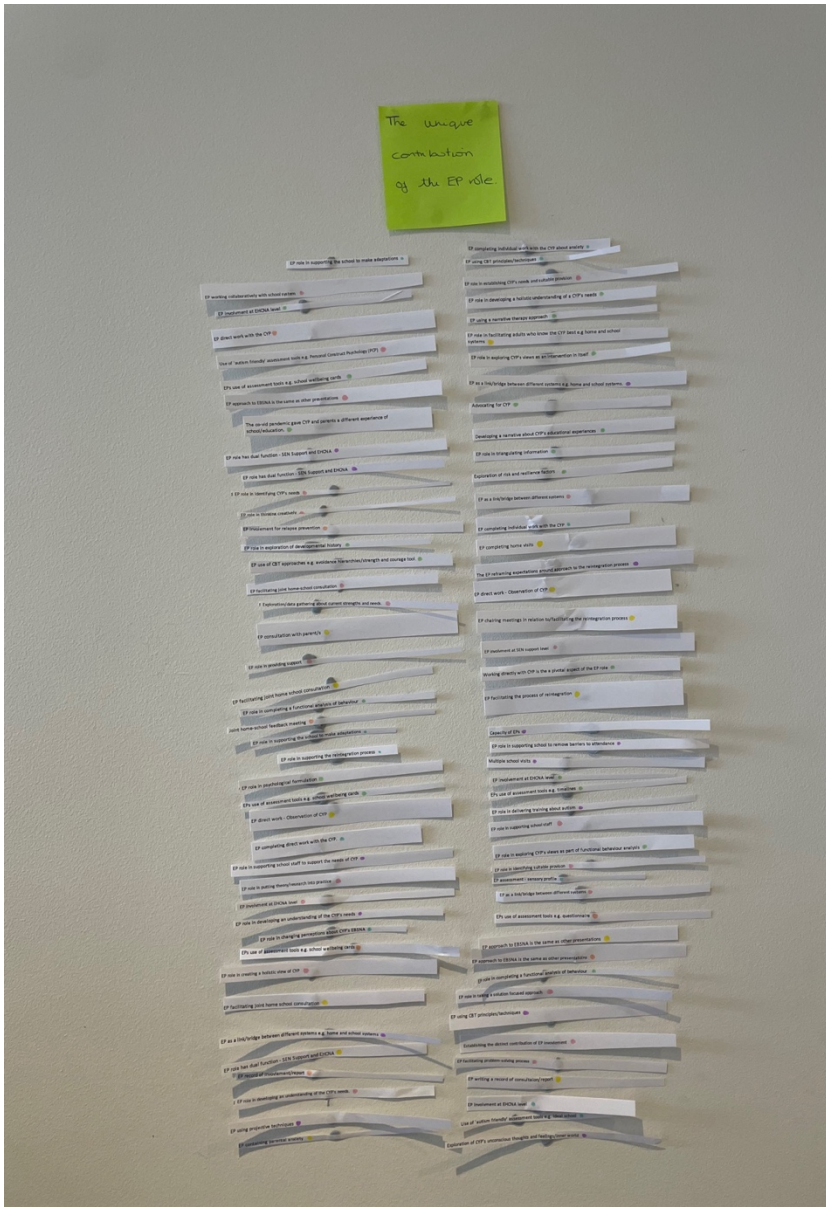


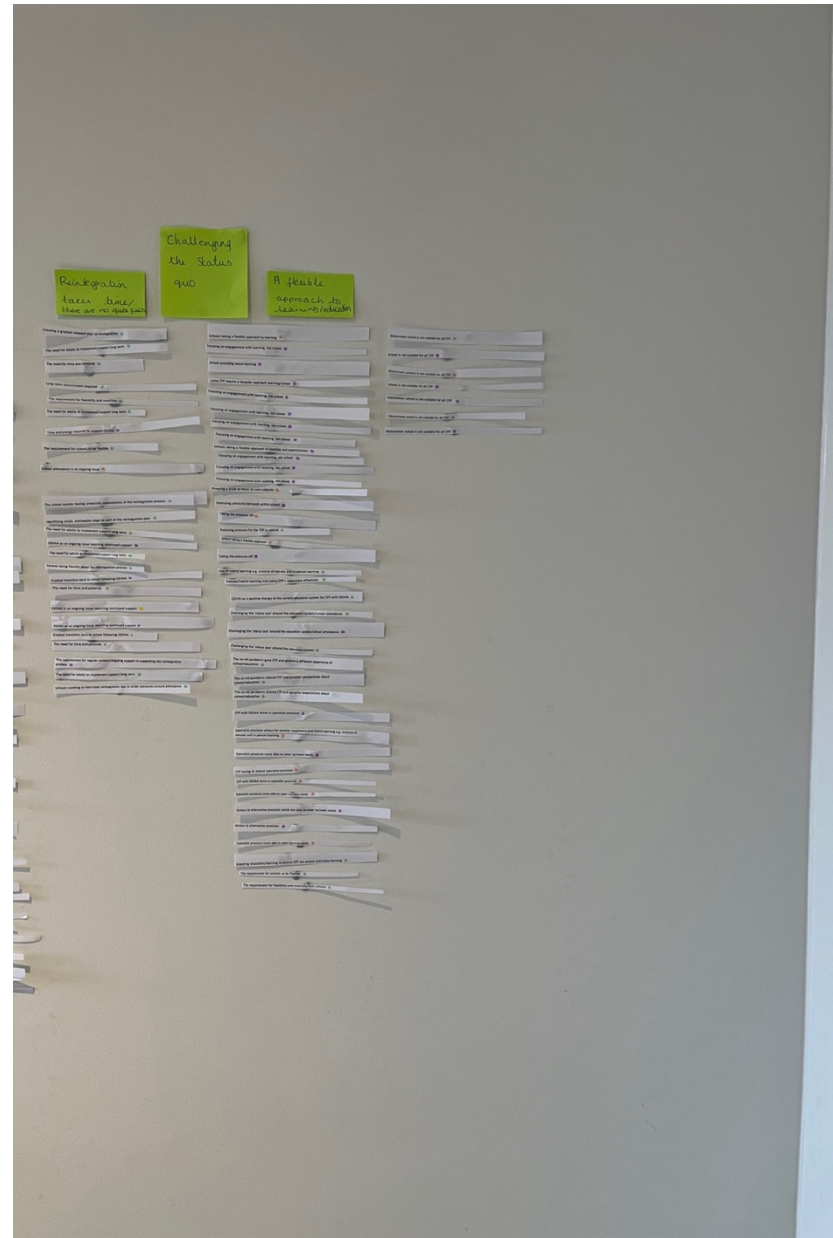
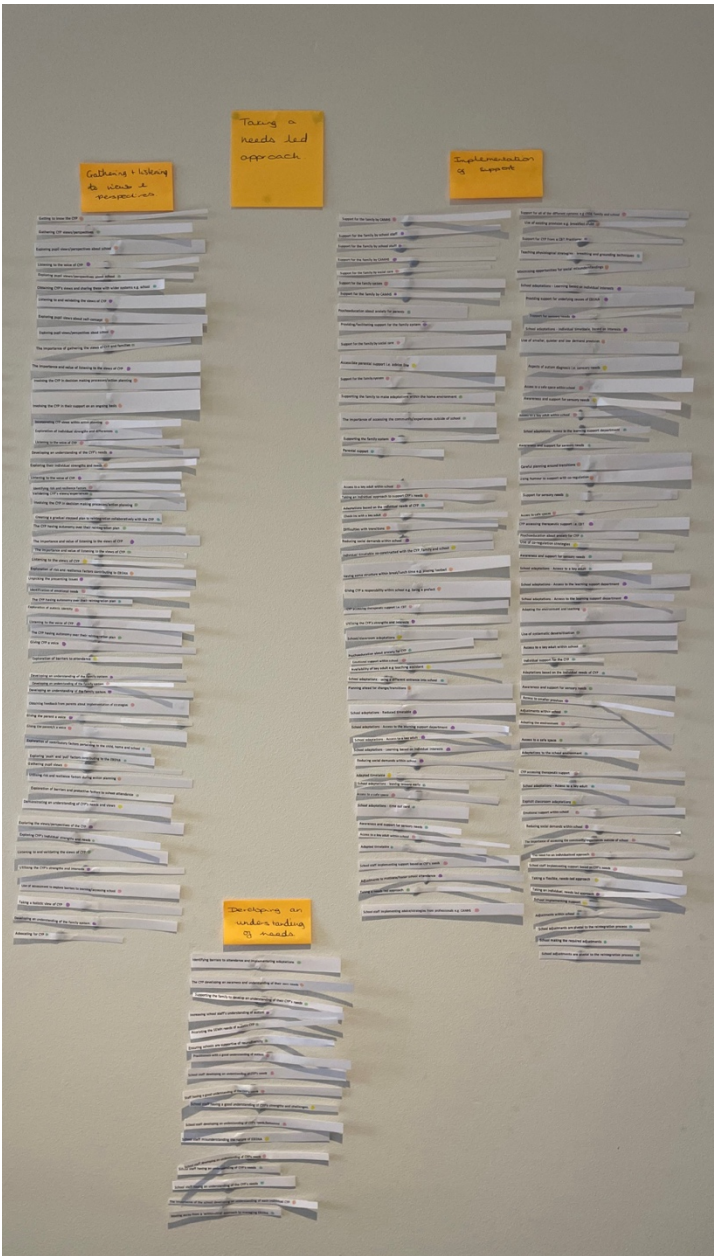




Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes







Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes

Theme 1: Relationships are the cornerstone (of the reintegration process).	
Sub-theme: N/a	
Code	Data extract/s
Prioritising relationships before reintegration	And I think a lot of that comes down to establishing the relationships of the adults first. So, I often feel like we need a relational intervention before we have the kind of reintegration intervention and really kind of laying those foundational relationships and security in school with the young person in order to aid reintegration. And that's where I kind of feel like I've had the most success with young people... (Participant 5)
The need for secure relationships	And I think this comes back to those secure relationships. Also, I think the availability of adults to kind of support that reintegration plan over time. (Participant 5)
Building trust with the CYP	And I think that, that helped him to see that he could trust that we weren't all just trying to get him back through the door. (Participant 3)
The importance of relationships between staff and CYP	I guess relationships with staff, I think that comes out as a key thing. (Participant 2) I think I did already say this, but I think it's about relationships in school, being key... (Participant 2)
Re-establishing the relationship between the CYP and school	Well, I think the cases that I've been involved where there has been the most success whether young person or school, has been where we have been able to re-foster really strong relationships with school... (Participant 5)
Building supportive, non-judgemental relationships with the parent/s	So, they're, like, building relationships... between me and the parent, and I think we have a reasonable kind of relationship...So, I think as long as well as the like, visible stuff for the young person, it's been the relationship building with mum, because there are times when it gets more tricky, for my review this morning...And I think being able to like, really know that we've got a relationship we can come back to, will be supportive and trying to get over the more challenging times. (Participant 1)

Positive relationship between family and support staff member within school	She thought, the inclusion practitioner, I'll call her Mary, she thought Mary was great, and had a really positive relationship with Mary. (Participant 3)
Relationship between the home and school systems.	So I think to keep things working, it's that ongoing family liaison, that good relationship with school. (Participant 4) I think also, if I'm honest, having a member of staff who can work in, in the way that Mary was trying to work with him, and provide a kind of a link between school and home. Because the parent, Jonathan's mum did really trust Mary, and he trusted her. (Participant 3)
The importance of building relationships with the CYP, family and school	And I think without that, and building the relationships that you do with the family, the staff and the student, I think without that, it's not as impactful. (Participant 4) You know, it's it's all about those relationships, providing support and trying to think outside the box for some of these pupils as well. (Participant 4)
Building relationships between different parts of the system	So, they're, like, building relationships between the specialist teacher, and parents, between me and the parent, and I think we have a reasonable kind of relationship. (Participant 1)
EP role in supporting school staff	I think we have a really important role in kind of supporting staff, and kind of highlighting what's going well, as well in strengths, because I think, it's really emotional situations for family and staff. And I think we can feel quite de-skilled, and that we're trying a lot and we don't know what to do. Because we've tried everything we thought of, so I think our role as well is really important in that emotional support for staff and having a very solution focused approach, because you want to kind of build on the strengths. (Participant 4)
Supporting the home-school relationship	And I think trying to support mum's relationship with the school helped... (Participant 3)
Positive relationship between professional and parents	But is super, has brilliant relationships with families, he's very present, and joins in and contributes and has built really good relationships...When I've had my phone calls with the parent. They've said, oh can so and so, can make sure he's there. Like, can he come because of this positive relationship. (Participant 1)

Use of a nurturing approach by school staff	And she was this really wonderful member of the teach/teachers teaching assistant. And she was working really hard to try and, you know, support the family and this young person, I'm going to call him, Jonathan. So, she had already got to know the family quite well. She had sort of, I mean, I think to be honest, taken Jonathan under her wing a little bit, she had that kind of very nurturing approach. So she was really trying to support him. (Participant 3)
Supportive school environment	The school are generally a very supportive environment... (Participant 1)
Collaboration between the home and school system as a requirement for reintegration	But I just felt actually there needs to be a link between home and education and school. If he's going to get back into school. (Participant 3)

Theme 2: Working multi-systemically – “All on the same page”.	
Sub-theme: N/a	
Code	Data extract
Regular communication with the parent	I think maybe mum's anxieties and things meant that there's been sort of a fair amount of checking in with phone consultations with parent in between these bits. (Participant 1)
Regular communication between systems	And I think, just having everyone talking and reviewing things regularly, and just having a clear plan. We all knew what our role was what we were doing. (Participant 4)
Good communication between systems	...as well as obviously, all of the stuff that we'd normally expect around adaptations and school around, like, you know, good communication... (Participant 1)
Regular communication between systems	And I guess them (family) having a key adult as well. Because generally things work better when there's that regular and open communication. (Participant 4)

Post-session feedback to parents	I suppose with the family, I didn't do anything kind of specific or targeted, for the parents. I mean, after the after my individual sessions with the young person, I would sometimes have a telephone consultation with a parent and kind of feedback. And they would often be there at the end of the session, and we would say, look, this is what we've agreed for next week. So, we were communicating a lot, but there wasn't any kind of specific work around, anything that they were doing. (Participant 6)
Collaborative understanding of the presenting issue	So, there's something around like, the joint working with what the different parts that system can offer, and the joint positioning of things that's important. (Participant 1)
Developing a joint understanding of current needs/issues	So school, parents, there was a social worker involved, I can't think who else came to that original meeting, I think there's a speech and language therapist involved as well, actually. So they came along. And it was quite a useful way of bringing everyone together, understanding a little bit more about what was happening. (Participant 6)
The importance of working collaboratively between systems	<p>So what helped it ongoing so I think I think as well, that joint working with school and family because obviously we we come in and we don't have that ongoing kind of involvement... (Participant 4)</p> <p>So I wouldn't say it was just one thing, if it had to be as part of all of the systems as support for the young person, support for the family, support for school staff. Because without that working together, I don't think it would have helped as much as it did. (Participant 4)</p>
Value in working collaboratively with the family, school and other professionals.	Well, that like the things that come to mind are the things around like the value and importance of joint working with the school, family, external professionals... (Participant 1).
Joint home school consultation	... then took the form of a shared school parent consultation. (Participant 1)
Working collaboratively with parents	Yeah, so for some families, it's working with them as part of the education health care needs assessment and supporting them to have that kind of reformulated understanding of their child's needs. (Participant 5)

Working collaboratively with school staff	<p>And I needed to work with the school staff predominantly. And that involved quite a lot of visits. I mean, I remember being at that school, every couple of weeks. So I'd pop in and just sort of have a conversation with, there was a lady there who she was the inclusion support assistant. (Participant 3)</p> <p>But we, the way we generally work is kind of getting feedback from every teacher as part of a round robin. So because again, we can see differences in how they respond in different lessons, depending on the teacher relationship and the interest in the subject and, you know, the peer group and things like that. So that's how I kind of worked with school staff. And that was just really to get an overview of what the pupil's strengths are, what they're finding difficult, what's worked, what hasn't worked. What are we wondering about? What don't we know? (Participant 4)</p>
EP consultation with parent/s	So the school is new to me beginning of last academic year so I've had like a year and a term, so it's relatively new to me so I picked up from a colleague who went on maternity leave she'd had a little bit of involvement with this young person sort of a parent consultation. (Participant 1)
EP chairing meetings in relation to/facilitating the reintegration process	And sort of in parallel as well as writing advice have been supporting specifically in relation to like getting her in school more and doing work with kind of chaired meetings with the school. (Participant 1)
Telephone consultation with parents	<p>So it was a little consultation with parent over the phone, then took the form of a shared school parent consultation. (Participant 1)</p> <p>And then the cause of the difficulties, the nature, the kind of difficulty in school, it's also quite tricky sometimes for mum to come into school to meet. So, it's meant that it's been the, like, kind of reviewed consultations, and discussions have kind of been tended to be over the phone a little bit more. (Participant 1)</p>
Working in collaboration with parents	<p>...working with parents as well. (Participant 2)</p> <p>...and working with parents. And so, they, they feel listened to and they feel involved in working out what the support will be. (Participant 2)</p>
Multi-agency initial meeting	So, we started off by having a TAC meeting, so Team Around the Child, and had sort of everyone from the network really come along to that meeting. (Participant 6)

Strengths in working collaboratively with other professionals	I can think of other young people where attendance has been a barrier, where it's been quite a different experience working, for example, with a social worker who has had a lot more, been able to bring a lot more accountability and structure in terms of report writing and documentation and sort of doing what they said they would when they would. (Participant 1)
Working collaboratively with other professionals e.g. social care	But in my local authority, we've also tried really hard to build those wider links with our colleagues in early help and social care, where there is social care or early help involvement, particularly for children who experienced more entrenched school avoidance behaviours... (Participant 5)
Working collaboratively with other professionals	I was in a planning meeting, I was in like a multi-agency planning meeting this, like literally have just come in from school now (Participant 1)
Working collaboratively with other professionals e.g. Autism Specialist Teachers (ASTs)	So, it was a little consultation with parent over the phone, then took the form of a shared school parent consultation. Follow up consultations with select staff around like the kind of professional networks that was both internally and externally so included like an autism specialist teacher, who works for the local authority, class teacher, and SENCO. (Participant 1)
The need for all systems to be working towards reintegration	<p>So, I think having that support from them (parents), the adjustment from school and some kind of individual support around, you know, what's happening for me, what's happening to my body, what can I do? I think all those things together, kind of helped him to be able to go. (Participant 6)</p> <p>And I think, for me, even though it needs to be, you know, home, school, and the young person kind of being involved... (Participant 6)</p>
EBSNA specific multi-agency meeting	<p>And then within the autism service that I work within as an EP, within that service, we offer what we will call like an EBSA TAC, which is a way to further kind of understand what's happening. (Participant 6)</p> <p>I guess just, yeah, so we kind of started off with the EBSA TAC...(Participant 6)</p>
Joint home-school consultation	<p>So I held an initial consultation, that was the SENCo, the teacher, the parent, to kind of gather the information. (Participant 2)</p> <p>I think it was just that, it was just the consultations. Yeah. Yeah, just a consultation. (Participant 2)</p>

Joint home-school feedback meeting	And then we had a feedback meeting. That was me, the SENCO, the teacher, the parent, and then a report from all of that as well, which then the idea was it would go to the secondary school. (Participant 2)
Working collaboratively between systems	You kind of need to create that team. It's not kind of a go in and write your report exercise. (Participant 4)
Working collaboratively with other professionals i.e. Social workers	So it helped me to understand kind of the background, and contextual kind of, the context of the EBSA. In terms of we know, it's not just kind of within pupil factors, it's often kind of lots of things going around the child and not necessarily all school. (Participant 4)
Working collaboratively with home and school system	<p>So I always have a joint family consultation. So that would have involved the school SENCO, who had a really good overview of the pupil, the pupil also had a key person that they worked with quite regularly. So they were invited to the meeting, just to get that kind of pastoral perspective, in terms of, you know, what kind of support had been in place, what kind of discussions they'd had, what barriers they've identified, what things are working, not working, etc. So that was really helpful because obviously I go in and see a snapshot, but they see everyday. (Participant 4)</p> <p>But then more recently, what I have done is quite a like a structured, home school consultation meeting, where we explicitly did some planning around her attendance and the barriers to attendance. (Participant 1)</p>
Utilising a structured approach to the reintegration process	But most recent is some sort of work that had a written-up kind of consultation record alongside it was a structured sort of home-school consultation that included the autism specialist teacher, class teacher, SENCO, the parent and myself. And that kind of used a particular structure for thinking about school, like non-attendance difficulties, attendance, to facilitate that. (Participant 1)
EP role in taking a solution focused approach	And often it's, there's a lot that's been focused on the difficulties, but actually, there's usually, or always those little sparkles and things that are going well. So I think going in with that view of solution focused, hope. There's always hope. (Participant 3)
EP role in creating a holistic view of CYP	So that, you know, jointly with the pupils views, and exploring their needs a little bit more, we had kind of a better picture of how we could be supporting a little bit more on how we can adapt things and kind of identify why things aren't working. (Participant 4)

<p>EP role in facilitating adults who know the CYP best e.g. home and school systems</p>	<p>So, I haven't really pushed it because actually, it felt to me like facilitating those who know best is more effective way of working regardless. (Participant 1)</p>
<p>EP as a link/bridge between different systems</p>	<p>So I liaised with them (CAMHS) in terms of, we had kind of a action planning feedback meeting after my involvement as well. And I talked with them kind of through the process about, you know, how can I help? What are the questions? What are you seeing? What do you think isn't happening to kind of provide that bridge because I guess I have knowledge of the school system. I'm familiar with the school as their link EP. And also, I have my kind of knowledge of the procedures, SEN procedures and also, you know, research about how children learn and how we can support them in school. (Participant 4)</p> <p>So that was helpful, just because there were things happening outside of school in therapy that school weren't aware of. And it wasn't being reinforced at school. So one of my roles was supporting that, again, acting as a bridge to think, okay, how can we be reinforcing that because it's going to be more helpful if what we're learning in therapy is in place, in everyday situations, to support that generalisation, and it was actually focusing on, for example, developing scripts for social situations at school. So again, they could be practising that in their CAMHS appointment. But if school don't know, and it's not being reinforced in school, then you know, so yeah, acting as a bridge with that was, was one of my roles and how I worked with professionals... (Participant 4)</p> <p>And so I tried to, I think, was just create a bit of a link between parent, Jonathan, school staff, and the wider education kind of context of the local authority.... really, and trying to, you know, help her to find support that she might need in terms of a network because she was quite isolated. (Participant 3)</p>
<p>Having a clear plan</p>	<p>And I think, just having everyone talking and reviewing things regularly, and just having a clear plan. We all knew what our role was what we were doing. (Participant 4)</p>
<p>Working collaboratively with other professionals i.e. CAMHS practitioners</p>	<p>So I liaised with them (CAMHS) in terms of, we had kind of an action planning feedback meeting after my involvement as well. (Participant 4)</p>

Ensuring all key stakeholders are "on the same page" and working collaboratively.	So we're all on the same page. So I'll give an example like, social care identified that the family weren't really spending quality time together and the young person didn't really go for trips in their local community. And they were getting to kind of approaching Year 9, when we think about adulthood outcomes, so something that social care worked with the family around, was thinking about, okay, let's plan some visits to go into the local community. Where would this young person like to visit? Let's go together and then CAMHS helped by kind of helping to work through in therapy, okay, what are some scripts we can use? So if we go to the cinema, you know, how are we going to ask for a ticket? How are we going to do this? So I think without that multi-professional element, it wouldn't have been kind of joined up. (Participant 4)
Working collaboratively with parents	So yes, there's intervention that we put in place in the school, which we talk to a school about, but then there's also I think, a large role in terms of supporting the family to think about what that young person needs right now, in order to support them to either stabilise their school placement or return to school. So really kind of exploring with family to things around low demand parenting, thinking about those rest and recovery, sort of phases of emotionally based school avoidance and thinking about what they can do to prioritise their child's social emotional mental health, and rebuild their child's mental health to kind of support them to build up to that return to school. (Participant 5)
EP role in supporting school to remove barriers to attendance	And also, to try and facilitate them, you know, to remove some of the barriers, and there were a lot of barriers in that particular school... (Participant 3)
EP role in supporting the school to make adaptations	...then also work with the school to think about how they could make adaptations, think about how we could kind of build up the time and increase the sort of amount of time that they were going into school really. (Participant 6) ...supporting the school to be able to make those adjustments.
Collaborative action planning	Yeah, I think it was having that several people involved all working to some kind of collaborative plan. (Participant 3)
EP facilitating problem-solving process	So yeah, it kind of progressed. But initially, it was kind of to engage in problem solving, think about how we can be supporting that person. (Participant 4)
Working collaboratively with school staff	So working in very close partnership with school staff, school staff so that you're building that holistic picture but also triangulating that information across the child, the home and the school context. And making sure that it's the kind of right people that you're talking to in school in terms of those that know the child really well, but who are also going to be

	your captive audience, in terms of finding the members of staff that are going to be most supportive and open to supporting that reintegration back into school. (Participant 5)
Developing a joint understanding of current needs/issues	So school, parents, there was a social worker involved, I can't think who else came to that original meeting, I think there's a speech and language therapist involved as well, actually. So they came along. And it was quite a useful way of bringing everyone together, understanding a little bit more about what was happening. (Participant 6)
Key stakeholders jointly agreeing an action plan/next steps	So yeah, that that was kind of our starting point, really. And then from that, we agreed, you know, these are the next steps. So, you know, whether it was adjustments within the school, which they would put in place, or thinking about, then afterwards, we thought a little bit about, you know, what days he might come in, what times he might come in that, that sort of thing. (Participant 6)
EP facilitating the process of reintegration	So it's been really beneficial to have that positive relationship in the kind of like system, but in terms of, like accountability, and like structure that's more been more challenging to achieve with within that professional sort of network and meant that it's been something that I've had to bring, I think. (Participant 1)
EP working collaboratively with school system	So they were kind of like, XXX, can we, you know, have your involvement with this to help us to think we've tried X, Y, and Z, but we're not seeing much progress. And then eventually, as we moved through, I became involved as part of the EHC process as well. So identifying, you know, their needs, what provision needs to be in place to inform that kind of provision for them?
Multiple professionals involved in supporting the reintegration process	I wasn't the only practitioner involved, he had a, a CBT practitioner involved at the time. And his family had got kind of CAMHS support, also. So, there was a few people involved... (Participant 3)
Completing joint home visits	So I did quite a lot of work with her. We would go and do joint visits to the family home, together. (Participant 3)

Theme 3: Taking a needs led approach.

Sub-theme: Gathering and listening to views.	
Code	Data extract
Giving the parent/s a voice	<p>So obviously, parents were invited to the first meeting, it was really important for me to kind of give family a space to communicate how the current situation was impacting on them. Because I think it's a very emotional experience, not just for the young person, but the people around them. And I think a lot of the parents just really like to have the opportunity and know that we were thinking about how to support and just for their voices to be heard. So that meeting kind of provided that opportunity to get their views and get background information. (Participant 4)</p> <p>And so, so I would say it was it was really trying to get to know the parent trying to understand what her concerns about the support from school had been, and try to kind of bridge that a little bit. So that she could, she could feel confident with him going back into school as well... (Participant 3)</p>
Involving the family within the reintegration process	And I think just then maybe being part of the process, as well and feeling listened to and feeling heard. (Participant 4)
Obtaining feedback from parents about implementation of strategies	In terms of kind of working with the parents in terms of implementing support and things, we also had that kind of feedback action planning meeting, we kind of asked how things are going in terms of CAMHS strategies at home, we got feedback about what parents were doing at home, and how they were following kind of the advice. (Participant 4)
Exploring CYP's views as analysis and intervention	So I sort of see my involvement with children young people as twofold. It's about supporting them to express and articulate their views to feed into that functional analysis of the kind emotionally based school avoidance also is I see it as an intervention in its own right in terms of supporting that young person to reflect on their experiences, to have that experience of feeling heard, listened to and validated and supporting them to just kind of make sense of it and think about where they want to go next. (Participant 5)
Gathering CYP views/perspectives	...and making sure that we're kind of gathering their views in advance of having those consultations with schools so that we can go into those consultations really informed by the young person's perspective and really able to kind of advocate for their needs. (Participant 5)

Exploring pupil views/perspectives about school	So I did a school rating scale with him where he, it was zero to 10 and how much he likes different subjects in school. And I mean, straightaway, he said, the whole of school is one, one out of 10, so not good. So, yeah, so he rated all the subjects. And then we talked a little bit about some of the reasons for some of those. (Participant 2)
Listening to the voice of CYP	<p>It was about trying to adapt things for him because he was telling us this, I would like to learn about this. So for a while, we just said, Well, fine. That's what we'll do. (Participant 3)</p> <p>Because again, I think there was a, there was a sense to begin with that we were, we were like, wouldn't be nice for him to have some friends, it'd be nice for him to be in his peer group. And actually, he was telling us no, that isn't nice. I don't enjoy that. I don't really like them. And I don't want to hang around with them. And again, it took, it took a while. And I include myself in this as well. It took a while for us all to actually listen to him. (Participant 3)</p> <p>Yeah, I think using collaborative action planning and building youth, I do use avoidance hierarchies with young people. So, I use a child and young person friendly version of avoidant hierarchy, which is the ladder of strength and courage tool, which is a child friendly version of an avoidance hierarchy, and really supporting that young person to think about those small steps that they need to return to school. (Participant 5)</p>
Exploring pupil views/perspectives about school	And I think we have so many wonderful skills and resources, particularly XXX, school wellbeing cards, which I will frequently use with young people to really support them to have that platform to share their views and to have that experience of feeling listened to, feeling heard, and having those experiences of school validated. (Participant 5)
Obtaining CYP's views and sharing these with wider systems e.g. school	Because I can really kind of get their voice and share that with the school as well. So you know, being able to share with the school, actually, they do really want to come like, they're motivated to come it's not just that they don't want to come into school, can sometimes make a real difference to schools perception of the situation. (Participant 6)
Listening to and validating the views of CYP	I think, to begin with, it was telling, like, validating that it was really difficult, and that there were things that he, you know, with all the reassurance in the world, he was kind of telling us, I'm scared, I'm frightened, and really kind of listening to that. (Participant 3)
Exploring pupil views about self-concept	He completed 'myself as a learner' the questionnaire, have you seen that? and that kind of showed that, generally, his view of himself as a learner was quite negative. So he, he kind of feels he can't do the work in class that everyone else can. But actually, he can, he has got the ability to kind of more his perception of it... (Participant 2)

Exploring pupil views/perspectives about school	So in the first meeting, my main aim was to get the pupil's views about school and how it was because I had the feedback from the adults and the people working with the young person, but actually, I wanted to hear from them kind of and have some activities and structured tasks to do with them to get their views so. So like personal construct psychology tasks, things like drawing your ideal school, your non ideal school to elicit their views, particularly for this pupil who had a diagnosis of autism, just kind of reflecting on some of the difficulties that they may have in accessing some of the assessment materials and maybe sharing their views in a conversation kind of just looking at the research. And I know we've got the drawing ideal school task, which is has been kind of recommended for our pupils with social communication. So that works really well. And just having kind of a task as a bridge and something very visual. (Participant 4)
The importance and value of listening to the views of CYP	I've learned a huge amount from just being able to actually talk to young people and hear what their experiences are like. (Participant 3) I find it really frustrating and satisfying and equal measure, I think, but I've, I've learned huge amounts from just really listening to what young people say. (Participant 3)
Involving the CYP in decision making processes/action planning	I think in this case, it's much harder to make things work if they don't think it's going to work. So yeah, it's quite it's very individual. (Participant 2)
Involving the CYP in their support on an ongoing basis	So I guess, keeping them involved on an ongoing basis, not just when it's a problem at the start, or a problem. A big problem. But, you know, even after that. And I think checking in with the people and getting ideas from them. Quite often, they can think of things that might work for them, or they can tell you what won't work for them. (Participant 2)
Incorporating CYP views within action planning	So that was the main kind of thing just to get them involved in the planning. So my role really was getting their views but advocating for them, and identifying with them kind of risk and resilience factors around kind of, just to think about planning and involve them in the planning, because that was really important, particularly with our high school students. The young person that I spoke to had a really good insight into what they found tricky, and how they're feeling, which really helped. I know, that's not always the case, depending on the student's needs. But I think it was really important to give an avenue for that and to involve them in kind of the next steps, you know, what do you want to happen? What's worked, what hasn't worked, you know, what would help you to meet the next step? (Participant 4)

	Yeah, I think using collaborative action planning and building youth, I do use avoidance hierarchies with young people. So, I use a child and young person friendly version of avoidant hierarchy, which is the ladder of strength and courage tool, which is a child friendly version of an avoidance hierarchy, and really supporting that young person to think about those small steps that they need to return to school. (Participant 5)
Involving the CYP in decision making processes/action planning	And really empowering them (CYP) in that process in terms of putting the solutions within their sort of (inaudible) and within their control that actually we're here to facilitate those solutions and collaborate together to come up with the actions and next steps that they need. (Participant 5)
Creating a gradual stepped plan to reintegration collaboratively with the CYP	And that kind of then led into what we call like the stepped plan. So, you know, if he's not really going to school at all, then can it be, you know, going in and or going to stand outside, one morning or something like that. So, we started to create that together really gradually. The school was the school wasn't involved in, you know, deciding what was on the step plan. The school weren't involved in that part, but they were kind of involved in hearing about what was going to be happening within the stepped plan, and making the adjustments that will be needed, if that makes sense. (Participant 6)
The CYP having autonomy over their reintegration plan	...and that we've been able to put a plan in place that is really led by the child and in which the child has a high level of autonomy over the little steps that build back into that reintegration, but also the pacing of that plan. (Participant 5) And that information coming directly from the young person in terms of giving them control over the little steps that they feel they need in order to achieve that return and giving them control over ranking them in terms of the least and most anxiety provoking, and that giving them that format to really see that broken down into those small little steps so that it feels really achievable for the young person. (Participant 5)
Listening to the views of CYP	We're working to improve it because we know it's difficult because you tell us it's difficult. (Participant 1)
Giving CYP a voice	She was telling me things she said to me, they don't see me as a whole person. They see panic attack girl. And I don't want to be panic attack girl. I want to be a whole person. And so we worked together so so what do you want them to know about you? That was my whole involvement with her what would you like people at school to know about you? (Participant 3)
Gathering pupil views	Then I met with the young person did some work with him got his views. (Participant 2)

EP role in psychological formulation	So, providing that sort of overarching psychological formulation and functional analysis, and really using the child and young person's voice and the voice of the families to kind of centralise their experiences and guide that formulation. (Participant 5)
Exploring the views/perspectives of the CYP	I did some work with him drawing on some sort of CBT type approaches, trying to think about, you know, what thoughts does he have about school? What kind of, you know, what's the evidence for some of those thoughts about school? Is there any way of challenging those a little bit? Has he got any goals about school, you know, is it that is there anything about school that really motivates him that we could look to support. (Participant 3)
Sub-theme: Developing an awareness and understanding of needs.	
Developing a narrative about CYP's educational experiences	Also building again, that narrative for the child, so supporting them through activities like the school wellbeing cards, or timeline and map activities, to support them to reflect on their educational journey and kind of how this situation has arisen. And why things have been so difficult. And I think that sort of coherent understanding of where the anxiety has come from, and how it's built is really important for the child in terms of that being a valuable piece of intervention work as well with that young person, as well as it being an information gathering session, in order to kind of inform that psychological formulation around those overarching barriers and risk and resilience factors. (Participant 5)

Exploring the views/perspectives of the CYP	...then we did a bit more exploration around school and his sensory profile, what makes school so difficult, you know, things like that ideal school to really understand, you know, what it was that was making it difficult for him. (Participant 6)
Exploration of risk and resilience factors contributing to EBSNA	I used the school wellbeing risk and resilience cards, which were developed by an EP. So, you know, in that he looks at what his resiliency factors are, and then what the most like him are out of those, and then what his risk factors are and what he would like to change. (Participant 2)
Exploration of CYP's unconscious thoughts and feelings/inner world	But then I also did some projective work with him. So, I went back, and I did a session with him using talking stones, and trying to get a sense of just again, trying to get an understanding of this anxiety he talked about, he was very articulate, he was a really, you know, able young person, and communicated verbally, really well. So, he could describe what his anxiety felt like he could describe where it was in his body. And I think that, to me, the talking stones really helped me understand what goes on, in, you know, in his world, if you like, that makes this seem like just such a difficult, you know, such a difficult thing, because he would cycle up to school, and sit outside the school, and just like look at the school, and want to go in but not be able to do it. So I wanted to try and unpick that a little bit, he could get himself out, he could go on his bike, he could cycle to school, but you know how, like, what was stopping him being able to set foot in there. And I think the projective work really helped that actually, for me to try and gain an understanding of, you know, what, what the, what the kind of internal sensation of, of it was like for him. (Participant 4)
Getting to know the CYP	That it's about getting to know, that student, and their individual strengths their individual needs, what might work for them? What might not and getting them involved in that in the thinking about that. (Participant 2)
Utilising risk and resilience factors during action planning	Yeah, so I guess, sort of like the resiliency ones that he picked, where he feels safe at home. He knows what he wants to do when he leaves school. So I guess that's something good for the secondary school to know about. So they can, you know, maybe use his interests and think of clubs that he might go, to think about careers and how school will get him there. (Participant 2)
Exploration of contributory factors pertaining to the child, home and school	So we would think about, I think, previously, maybe people referred to them as push and pull factors. I know that maybe isn't, I don't know if that terminology is still being used too much. But we would kind of think about the different factors that were contributing to the school avoidance. So try to try and think about that from like, a school, home and child perspective. And consider like, what are the difficulties that they're having? (Participant 6)

EP role in developing a holistic understanding of a CYP's needs.	But I think really, with families, it's almost a bit of a sort of narrative therapy style approach, I would say in terms of supporting that family to kind of explore their child's developmental history, look back on the educational journey, and those significant events and things that have happened and taken place that have contributed to the emotionally based school avoidance, and really supporting that family to shift their perspective and have that more holistic understanding of the child's needs, so that they can then in turn support their child holistically as well. (Participant 5)
EP direct work - Observation of CYP	And some observations of the young person when they're in school...
Developing an understanding of the family system	So it helped me to understand kind of the background, and contextual kind of, the context of the EBSA. In terms of we know, it's not just kind of within pupil factors, it's often kind of lots of things going around the child and not necessarily all school. (Participant 4)
Use of assessment to explore barriers to learning/accessing school	I did some questionnaire assessments just to further explore whether there might be any barriers to learning. So there were quite a few concerns around executive functioning needs. So the pupil was a high achieving pupil, and the school didn't share concerns about kind of specific difficulties with learning, or concerns about an underlying learning difficulty, but there were concerns about executive functioning. So I explored that a little bit further. (Participant 4)
Developing an understanding of the family system	So, again, my part of it was really to try and get to know the family get to know the wider sort of system, Jonathan's family system, try and understand. Are there other barriers that might be about the relationship between home and school? (Participant 3)
Exploration of individual strengths and differences	And I think I do think him having some understanding of anxiety was also helpful. So I do think that kind of psychoeducation part and the opportunity to sort of identify like, what his profile of strengths and differences are. So like, you know, this is what I do really well. But this is what I find hard doing that, you know, in the sessions, I think was helpful for him to be able to kind of recognise why he was feeling so anxious. And to figure out a little bit like what's going on? Okay, what do I need to happen in order to stay here? Yeah, I think they're the kind of key parts of it, I guess, also. (Participant 6)
Exploration of barriers and protective factors to school attendance	So my role within the local authority, more specifically has been around understanding the overarching strengths and needs as part of an education, health care needs assessment, and really focusing my assessment on providing that functional analysis of the emotionally based school avoidance behaviours, and providing that description of the overarching barriers to school attendance and wellbeing, but also exploring those strength protective factors. (Participant 5)

School staff having an understanding of the CYP's needs	Yeah, I mean, I think understanding from staff and staff, you know, having awareness of different needs, and making sure that they, you know, make those adaptations for young people with additional needs is, is something that supports their attendance... (Participant 6)
Supporting the family to develop an understanding of their CYP's needs	Yeah, so for some families, it's working with them as part of the education health care needs assessment and supporting them to have that kind of reformulated understanding of their child's needs. (Participant 5)
Increasing school staff's understanding of autism	I went and did some training with wider school staff to try and help them understand the needs of young people with autism. (Participant 4)
Exploration of autistic identity	...so the young person wanted to, like complete a project in to, you know, a topic that they wanted to do, and they wanted to kind of explore their autistic identity and that kind of thing. So opportunities for that as well. Which just helped them to develop, I guess, their sense of self. (Participant 4)
School staff developing an understanding of CYP's needs	So I think it's staff having a clear understanding of the pupil's needs, and what support needs to be in place. (Participant 4)
Identification of emotional needs	The other thing that helped was obviously identifying what their emotional needs are... (Participant 4)
Practitioners with a good understanding of autism	They were working with a neurodevelopmental kind of specialist within the autism within the CAMHS team, who had a really good understanding of autism. And, you know, what we know about how children learn best, you know, impact on emotional regulation, how we can teach, meeting their needs. So that was really good, because you know, he had a really good understanding of the pupils individual needs and can tailor the therapy. (Participant 4)
School staff developing an understanding of CYP's needs	I think it really helped, obviously, to, for staff to know what the needs were and to get that support in place...(Participant 4) Because again, it's it's kind of, once people understand the behaviour they can put in that support. So to know it's not just a choice, not to go to lesson or to not go to school, or, you know, I'm just going to come out of science today. It's actually we're feeling anxious about this. This is what we need to kind of do. (Participant 4)

The CYP developing an awareness and understanding of their own needs	...one of the first things he said to me was I've got autism and ADHD. So I wonder if some of it was about his own understanding of his needs. (Participant 2)
School staff having a good understanding of CYP's strengths and challenges	...in terms of the work around engaging her more in and, and the attendance issues specifically class teacher has a really good handle on her, mum, is her mum. And they are really, you know, it's quite, as I said, quite intense, very close relationship. And it felt to me like, I don't know, if I would bring anything my doing individual assessment work, would bring anything to the system, that isn't the knowledge that's already there. Then the learning mentor knows her and has a lot of that data on kind of how well she engages in things and strengths and challenges and stuff. (Participant 1)
Identifying barriers to attendance and implementing adaptations	But we're also doing that in the context of having a really good understanding of the barriers and addressing those barriers before the return to school. (Participant 5)
Working directly with CYP is the a pivotal aspect of the EP role	Yeah, so this is my favourite part of the role is working directly with the young person, because I think that is often the most powerful aspect of the psychologist's role in reframing and shifting the narrative around the child. (Participant 5)
Sub-theme: Supporting needs – Implementation of support.	
Access to a key adult	<p>I think definitely, having a key person and that emotional support in school was undoubtedly, you know, a big factor. (Participant 4)</p> <p>So I think that helped in terms of staff had a better understanding of need, they were more flexible, in terms of providing opportunities to check in with a key adult to be in a smaller environment and to be kind of in a safe space. (Participant 4)</p> <p>But I think in school, probably the major factors were safe space, key person... (Participant 4)</p> <p>And a key person, because I think it's really important on those days, that they're feeling quite overwhelmed that they can check in with somebody that they can say, I'm feeling overwhelmed, because, and they can join me problem solve with them. So having that kind of emotional support as well in school is really, really important, I guess, the safe space and the key person a key to that. (Participant 4)</p>

	<p>And often young people, as part of that reintegration plan will kind of name the importance of needing those safe, secure adults and spaces in school. (Participant 5)</p>
<p>School adaptations - Access to a key adult</p>	<p>I think having, you know, a kind of key adult or a couple of key adults that they can check in with and who are checking in with them, has really kind of helped to support their attendance. So knowing that, you know, there's someone I can go to, if things feel really overwhelming. And that person, you know, being understanding and kind of recognising their difficulties and their needs, I think is, is really key from from what I've seen, so it's really helped to kind of maintain that attendance for them. (Participant 6)</p> <p>And I also think having kind of key adult who was able to check in with him, you know, notice maybe when he was finding things a bit difficult, offer support when, when he needed it. (Participant 6)</p>
<p>School adaptations - Access to the learning support department</p>	<p>So kind of go into maybe the SEN department or somewhere similar, but I think knowing that there's like one key adult who can support me with that was, was really helpful.</p>
<p>Access to a safe space</p>	<p>But I think in school, probably the major factors were safe space... (Participant 4)</p> <p>The main things for the pupils that I found, continues to get them into school is having that safe space somewhere to go, when they're feeling overwhelmed. (Participant 4)</p> <p>So I think that helped in terms of staff had a better understanding of need, they were more flexible, in terms of providing opportunities to check in with key adult to be in a smaller environment and to be kind of in a safe space. (Participant 4)</p> <p>And often young people, as part of that reintegration plan will kind of name the importance of needing those safe, secure adults and spaces in school. (Participant 5)</p>
<p>School adaptations - Access to the learning support department</p>	<p>And it was also having in that particular school, there was a really good learning support department. So, he would go in, go up to the Learning Support Department meet Mary and he would be able to sit with his headphones on and do some work that had been, like, organised for him around things that he wanted to learn. (Participant 3)</p>

	<p>I think the need for school to have that sort of provision available for him in the Learning Support Department, and for him to be able to access that. (Participant 3)</p> <p>But I think having a separate space away from you know, classroom, busy classrooms where he could come you know, he had some sensory needs. So being able to just be in a low demand environment. There was other young people accessing that department, that learning support department, but you know, they were doing their own thing. He was doing his own thing. There was one or two members of staff that he got to know quite well in there plus the SENCo. (Participant 3)</p>
School adaptations - Reduced timetable	But he did go back for a period of time, and it was on a very, very reduced timetable. (Participant 3)
School adaptations - Individual timetable, based on interests	So having a kind of timetable that was adapted to his interests and his needs, that really helped, I think, and for him not to have to interact with the wider school. (Participant 3)
Individual timetable co- constructed with the CYP, family and school	And then things like she's been she's had an adapted timetable that has been done collaboratively with her, her mum and class teacher. They've colour coded, what are the more challenging lessons? What are the ones that feel easier? What changes are happening in the different lessons to make them more accessible. They've even done things like moved the timing of specific interventions just for her and kind of stuff. (Participant 1)
School adaptations - leaving lessons early	So things like being able to leave a lesson slightly earlier, where the corridors weren't so busy was really important. (Participant 6)
School adaptations - using a different entrance into school	So yeah, you know, things like being able to leave slightly earlier or to come in for one of the young people I worked with, they came into a different entrance to the school where it wasn't, you know, where all of the students weren't coming into the same place. . (Participant 6)
School adaptations – time out card	Having like a time, I don't think they called it a timeout card, but a card where he could sort of remove himself from the lesson if he needed to, also kind of really helped, I think, knowing that there was a bit of an escape, he called it was, was really helpful. (Participant 6)

Use of existing provision e.g. breakfast clubs	...the school is quite good at getting to know that child as an individual and what works for them and thinking about what could help and kind of so like one thing, a couple of things that they did that worked for him, were they, he would go to breakfast club in the morning before school, because actually, that helped that the initial coming into school was what was difficult. (Participant 2)
Use of smaller, quieter and low demand provision	...the school is quite good at getting to know that child as an individual and what works for them and thinking about what could help and kind of so like one thing, a couple of things that they did that worked for him, were they, he would go to breakfast club in the morning before school, because actually, that helped that the initial coming into school was what was difficult. So that helped with that, because he knew he was, he was going to something that was a bit smaller, a bit quieter, a bit more relaxed, a bit more fun. So that actually made a massive difference to him. (Participant 2)
Careful planning around transitions	And they also thought about things like, he also found it hard, going from... so at lunchtime, they would go out to play, and then they'd get called in for lunch. And the route that they were using was he'd come in from the playground into his classroom and then go to the lunch hall that was kind of the way they were asked to walk. But that was hard for him, he would almost get stuck in the classroom. And it was like maybe it's because it's a room he knows so well, and he's got obviously a lot of associations with the classroom. It was almost like it was adding a transition. And so they just got him to walk a different way that wasn't through the classroom. And that had a really big impact. (Participant 2)
Using humour to support with co-regulation	And they found that if, so if, he would quite often, if he got very anxious, he would kind of shut down, withdraw. And they found that using humour and distracting him worked for him. Being able to be a bit silly, or cracking a joke or something helped, helped him. (Participant 2)
Giving CYP a responsibility within school e.g. being a prefect	He liked, he quite liked responsibilities, so they made him a prefect, and they got him to help the parents evening, which I guess is then seeing a different side of school for him, it was not just about going in the classroom and not really liking, learning. (Participant 2)
Minimising opportunities for social misunderstandings	I think, oh something that he got into that helped, he got into playing football. And I think that helped him at break times, because you're not having to chat. And there's maybe less chance for social misunderstandings if you're just playing football. (Participant 2)

Reducing social demands within school	<p>And, I mean, it's interesting because the idea of inclusion, you know, sort of, but he didn't want that, he didn't want to be out at lunch. He was frightened about that. He didn't want to be out at lunchtime. He didn't want to be hanging around with a massive group of peers. So, again, we sort of said, well, you don't have to do that. That's, that's okay. Is there? Is there another friend that you could come and meet at lunchtime? And that worked, that helped that the pressure off was taken off the kind of enormous social demand that school held for him. (Participant 3)</p>
Planning ahead for change/transitions	<p>I guess relationships with staff, I think that comes out as a key thing. And so then it's, if that's going to change then planning for that, ahead, like if someone's going to leave who was, I dunno, the head year or pastoral or whatever, then planning for that student and who is it that's going to be there to support them? (Participant 2)</p>
Awareness and support for sensory needs	<p>Yeah, I think I think it is those kind of key, like noticing the sensory differences and making those adjustments and ensuring that they continue that, that has really helped. (Participant 6)</p> <p>Again, I think the kind of sensory adjustment. So those adjustments that you'd hope had been put in place to support the reintegration, obviously need to continue. (Participant 6)</p> <p>I think the school environment, the adaptations that they made to the school environment were really key. So for him, like his sort of sensory profile was one of the areas that made it quite difficult for him to attend. So things like being able to leave a lesson slightly earlier, where the corridors weren't so busy was really important. Having like a time, I don't think they called it a timeout card, but a card where he could sort of remove himself from the lesson if he needed to, also kind of really helped, I think, knowing that there was a bit of an escape, he called it was, was really helpful. (Participant 6)</p> <p>So, she has an autism diagnosis. She has sensory like sensory sensitivities, finds things like being in school, like in the lunch hall finds that really difficult. Finds the noise of peers around her in the classroom, very difficult. Gets very upset, scratching of pencils, moving of chairs, like that sort of stuff. And so really overtly recognising that and saying, these are the things that we're doing about it. And encouraging school to demonstrate that has shown I think we're making, to her, we're making, we're making it easier for you even though it isn't, still isn't super easy. So the very kind of like overt along with like. So that's on the sensory side. (Participant 1)</p>

	<p>I guess well, the biggest thing would be the sensory differences that autistic children experiences. And when working with autistic children and with schools, it's really having to be extra sensitive and aware of those sensory discomforts that can come as part of the neurodiversity. So I think that's something that we have to kind of be really mindful of in terms of that there might be more environmental barriers or adaptations that we need to be thinking about and making sure that we're kind of putting those in place. (Participant 5)</p>
<p>School adaptations - Learning based on individual interests</p>	<p>So, he would go in, go up to the Learning Support Department meet Mary and he would be able to sit with his headphones on and do some work that had been, like, organised for him around things that he wanted to learn. (Participant 3)</p> <p>It was about trying to adapt things for him because he was telling us this, I would like to learn about this. So for a while, we just said, Well, fine. That's what we'll do. (Participant 3)</p>
<p>Psychoeducation about anxiety for CYP</p>	<p>So we did some psychoeducation about anxiety, what's happening in your body, you know, when you feel like this...And then also, as part of those sessions, we thought about, kind of ways of managing the anxiety. So we thought about, I guess, like grounding techniques and breathing to sort of physiological strategies. We did a bit around thoughts and understanding thoughts. So like, the cognitive distortions, and thinking, you know, how are these impacting you? And... trying to think what else we did, and then yeah, we did a piece of work around changing behaviours, and sort of showing that, you know, once we change our behaviour, it can change how we feel. (Participant 6)</p> <p>And I think I do think him having some understanding of anxiety was also helpful. So I do think that kind of psychoeducation part and the opportunity to sort of identify like, what his profile of strengths and differences are. So like, you know, this is what I do really well. But this is what I find hard doing that, you know, in the sessions, I think was helpful for him to be able to kind of recognise why he was feeling so anxious. And to figure out a little bit like what's going on? Okay, what do I need to happen in order to stay here? Yeah, I think they're the kind of key parts of it, I guess, also. (Participant 6)</p>
<p>EP completing individual work with the CYP about anxiety</p>	<p>So yeah, I was sort of doing two parts really, like some individual work with the young person around their anxiety and their school anxiety... (Participant 6)</p>

Use of co-regulation strategies	...she comes in at different times during the day and there is a teaching assistant who is able to do some kind of co-regulation stuff with her before she enters the classroom. (Participant 1)
Use of systematic desensitisation	And that we're thinking about the coping strategies with the young person, things that they can do things that others can do to help them as they progress through the kind of avoidance hierarchy in the different laddering stages, so very much using that systematic desensitisation rather than a flooding approach or forced approach to school attendance. (Participant 5)
Support for CYP from a CBT Practitioner	I wasn't the only practitioner involved, he had a, a CBT practitioner involved at the time. (Participant 3)
Providing support for underlying causes of EBSNA	So that I think, also helped enormously to tackle some of the other sort of difficulties that he was having around some of the bullying about his perception of school. It helped to tackle a lot of that.
Psychoeducation about anxiety for parents	I guess, in like, the first TAC meeting, and maybe my conversations with the parent, after that initial TAC meeting, there was some psycho, I guess, psychoeducation for them around anxiety and avoidance and what happened, but it wasn't formal like, you know, we'll have a parent session, and I'll go through it with you as more through our conversations. (Participant 6)
Support for the family system	<p>It was also thinking about, so with this parent, there were a few kind of risk factors in terms of own mental health and well-being, kind of financial factors as well. So it was kind of making sure that the parents and family felt supported, they were accessing the support that they needed. (Participant 4)</p> <p>I think having then the family be more supported. And you know, having those more pleasurable activities at home, and positive experiences also helped. (Participant 4)</p>
Supporting the family to make adaptations within the home environment	So really kind of exploring with family to things around low demand parenting, thinking about those rest and recovery, sort of phases of emotionally based school avoidance and thinking about what they can do to prioritise their child's social emotional mental health, and rebuild their child's mental health to kind of support them to build up to that return to school. (Participant 5)

Support for the family by CAMHS	<p>So for example, CAMHS were involved, because the young person had experienced suicidal thoughts and, and acted on those, and obviously presented in A&E. And that led to CAMHS referral. So they were heavily involved with the family... (Participant 4)</p> <p>And his family had got kind of CAMHS support, also. (Participant 3)</p> <p>So, I kind of felt like some somebody needs to be supporting the parents and working with the parents. And she was getting, you know, they, they were having some input from CAMHS at the time. (Participant 3)</p>
Support for the family by social care	<p>...and social care were also involved. So in terms of working with them, it was really important because they were involved in working with the family. (Participant 4)</p> <p>So that was really important to see how the family were getting support, us being aware of that. (Participant 4)</p>
Accessible parental support i.e. advice line	<p>The parent had also accessed what we have in our local authority which is like a parent advice line so you can it's a sort of accessible to any parents who are resident in XXX to call the EP service for advice and she called the advice line maybe like three times she was quite a regular user of that advice line. (Participant 1)</p>
Adapting teaching the environment	<p>I think with this young person that I'm thinking about, they were struggling really with the mainstream environment, they were struggling with the amount of subjects and lessons that they had on their timetable. They needed kind of opportunities for more of a tutorial approach to learning in a smaller environment, all of that kind of thing. So it was thinking about how we adapt the environment, how we adapt the teaching. (Participant 4)</p>
Adaptations to the school environment	<p>I think the school environment, the adaptations that they made to the school environment were really key. (Participant 6)</p>
Adaptations to the school environment	<p>So I think that helped in terms of staff had a better understanding of need, they were more flexible, in terms of providing opportunities to check in with key adult to be in a smaller environment and to be kind of in a safe space. So that kind of, I was gonna say editing, but changing the school environment for them, I think helped. (Participant 4)</p>
CYP accessing therapeutic support	<p>The other thing that helped was obviously identifying what their emotional needs are, and having people like CAMHS on board, who can provide that support, and kind of they were focusing on, like I said, positive coping strategies for dealing with certain things and a lot of, because the child had a diagnosis of autism, they were working with a</p>

	<p>neurodevelopmental kind of specialist within the autism within the CAMHS team, who had a really good understanding of autism. (Participant 4)</p> <p>But I think also massive massively what helped was that he was having, in addition to the support, the school was doing the work that I was doing, he was having these kind of additional sessions of CBT. And they were helping, you know he was having weekly sessions of CBT at one point. (Participant 3)</p>
Support for all of the different systems e.g. child, family and school	So I wouldn't say it was just one thing, if it had to be as part of all of the systems as support for the young person, support for the family, support for school staff. (Participant 4)
The need for an individualised approach	I think with this young person that I'm thinking about, they were struggling really with the mainstream environment, they were struggling with the amount of subjects and lessons that they had on their timetable. They needed kind of opportunities for more of a tutorial approach to learning in a smaller environment, all of that kind of thing. (Participant 4)
The importance of accessing the community/experiences outside of school	...because often, it's those aspects of accessing the community and widening the child's experiences within the home and community as a prerequisite to them working on those return to school goals. So, trying to really think about different multi agency partners that we can link up with and involve in those consultations as much as possible. (Participant 5)
School staff implementing advice/strategies from professionals e.g. CAMHS	And I guess the, the generalisation of the strategies, CAMHS have kind of tried, the key person would then be involved in kind of implementing that support as well. (Participant 4)
School staff implementing support based on CYP's needs	So it's making sure staff understand the need, but also the, the curriculum is adapted or the school day is adapted to meet that need. So it's not that we're just kind of understanding and we know that the child's struggling, we are kind of putting in adaptations and, and different things. (Participant 4)
School adjustments are pivotal to the reintegration process	...from what I can, I think from, you know, the young people that I've worked with, it kind of needs to start with school in some ways, because I think the, the times where, you know, we've just tried to build a stepped plan, or kind of start that reintegration, and things haven't been put in place at school. It's really not been effective. So I think, yeah, kind of helping schools to recognise that thing, you know, adjustments need to be in place before we can start to build that attendance up is, is something that, yeah, I really try and keep in mind in my work, because otherwise, I feel like we're,

	<p>you know, we're just trying to get autistic young people to go back into an environment which is, it's, you know, it's not right for them. So it's the sensory environment isn't right or, you know, socially, they're struggling. And I think, yeah, it feels a bit unfair.</p> <p>(Participant 6)</p>
Adjustments to motivate/foster school attendance	This is what we can try and organise for him, you know, so that he can, there's a reason he can come into school.

Theme 4: Challenging the status quo.	
Sub-theme: Reintegration takes time – “There are no quick fixes...”	
Code	Data extract
Gradual transition back to school following EBSNA	But my role there was to try and support a very gradual transition in getting him to return to school. (Participant 3)
Long-term commitment required	And that long term commitment is really pivotal. (Participant 5)

<p>The need for time and patience</p>	<p>And I think in with the young people that I've worked with, the biggest thing that they probably report back to me is that often things start off quite well. And they start off small steps. And then all of a sudden, their return to school plans, suddenly, just the demands increase quite rapidly and the pace suddenly picks up quite quickly. So all the although plans start very well intentioned, there's often not enough attention given towards the time to gently and gradually reintegrate the child back into school. And I think that lack of attention towards time, and that lack of commitment to time, can really undermine even very good return to school plans that start off quite well intentioned. So I think that time and just people having maybe unrealistic expectations, or too high expectations of how quickly a child can realistically return to school is one of the biggest factors that undermines progress, in my opinion. (Participant 5)</p> <p>Also, I think the availability of adults to kind of support that reintegration plan over time, obviously, time itself... but also the longer term stages and I think that shift in understanding that actually, there are no quick fixes or simple solutions to emotionally based school avoidance and actually, that time commitment. (Participant 5)</p>
<p>The need for adults to implement support long term</p>	<p>And that availability of adults needs to be a long-term plan and often for potentially even the rest of that child's educational journey. (Participant 5)</p>
<p>The need for adults to implement support long term</p>	<p>Again, I think the kind of sensory adjustment. So those adjustments that you'd hope had been put in place to support the reintegration, obviously need to continue. (Participant 6)</p> <p>So yeah, you know, things like being able to leave slightly earlier or to come in for one of the young people I worked with, they came into a different entrance to the school where it wasn't, you know, where all of the students weren't coming into the same place. So things like that continuing after they've built up their attendance, you know, staff not assuming like, oh, they're here now, and the support kind of reducing. Yeah, I think. I don't know if, can you remind me the question, was it a specific? What helps? (Participant 6)</p>

	But yeah, I think they're the kind of main things, like keep keeping going with the things that they were doing to get them back in. Yeah, making sure that they're still in place where they need to be. (Participant 6)
The need for time and patience	So yeah, I think they were probably the main main things, and that it takes time. Yeah. (Participant 6)
The requirement for regular contact/ongoing support in supporting the reintegration process	And I would just pop in for an hour and have a quick kind of update meeting with them to see how things were going. And then we'd arrange. Well, should we go and see Jonathan in a couple of weeks' time and see how he's getting on? (Participant 3)
The school system having unrealistic expectations of the reintegration process	I mean, the phrase that's in my mind was getting in the door, they used to say that quite a lot. We need to get him it just need to get him in the door. And then I think we can support him that the school staff would say, and then it became quite clear that getting him in the door wasn't really the issue that we needed to be dealing with. (Participant 3)
Time and energy required to support EBSNA	But that was quite difficult, I to have to say it was, you know, the, the SEN team, were great, and put a huge amount of time and energy and commitment into trying to support Jonathan. (Participant 3)
Sub-theme: A flexible approach to learning and education	
Utilising the CYP's strengths and interests	And I think that helped, in a sense, because he was, he wanted to learn, he was, you know, he was interested in learning, he got lots of things that he, you know, quite independently was learning about at home, he was really, really good with ICT and, you know, really interested in computer programming and that sort of thing. So, we tried to just kind of, support his interests at home through work coming from school to home, to just provide a link with learning rather than school. (Participant 3)
Ensuring schools are supportive of neurodiversity	And I guess that also fits with the neurodiversity movement, and particularly around neurodivergence. I'm thinking more widely in terms of our school systems and, and how we make that a place that is supportive of that neurodiversity and of those kinds of sensory differences. (Participant 6)

The EP reframing expectations around approach to the reintegration process	But that was difficult, because I think it did, it did require quite a significant mind shift with everybody to say, this is a this is an able young person, it he is a young person who could go on to do GCSEs, could go on, you know, he's academic, he wants to be academically successful. So that the motivation to begin with was getting in lessons. And, and it was a little bit of a barrier to say, No, we're not going to get him in lessons for us to accept, we're not going to get him in lessons, we've got to do something else. (Participant 4)
Specialist provision allows for smaller classrooms and hybrid learning e.g. mixture of remote and in-person learning	I think, to be honest, there's been many more cases where the student has ended up going to a specialist provision than we've been able to keep in mainstream school. You know provision where it's smaller classrooms. There's a blend of online learning and being face to face learning, although I've been in provision where the online learning, they still are in the school but sat at a computer doing the online learning. But yeah, I think that, unfortunately, has been more the outcome, than being able to keep them in mainstream. (Participant 2)
Mainstream school is not suitable for all CYP	<p>Lots of different things, I think there wasn't one single thing that got them back into school. I think with this young person that I'm thinking about, they were struggling really with the mainstream environment, they were struggling with the amount of subjects and lessons that they had on their timetable. They needed kind of opportunities for more of a tutorial approach to learning in a smaller environment, all of that kind of thing. So it was thinking about how we adapt the environment, how we adapt the teaching. (Participant 4)</p> <p>And I honestly, I think that a barrier is our education system, just expecting kids to go to school, all the time, and that being the driver, get him back into school, he needs to be in school, and you know, reduced timetables, school needing to really make a case for why he was on an extended reduced timetable for a while. And I think it that kind of just sense of school is the best place to educate children. In his case, genuinely, it wasn't. But we, you know, the pressure was there to try and get him back in because kids go to school. And, and it, it felt controversial, to say, well, we're not going to try and get him back into school, we're going to try and link him up with something that's meaningful at home. (Participant 3)</p> <p>And I think that's still, you know, with other young people I've worked with, again, so that the young person I'm working with more recently, it's the same with her. I, I don't think school is necessarily the best place for her. But the push is that that's where she needs to go. (Participant 3)</p> <p>I think just that, you know saying about trying to fit children into school because that's what most children do. I think over the course of my career, at beginning of my career as an EP, I would have also have thought, oh no absolutely school's the</p>

	<p>best place, children have to go to school. That's what we all do. And over time and working with young people, and particularly, you know, now working with this young person who's in a separate school female pupil. I don't think school is right for every child. And you know, they're not, they're not these little cardboard cut-outs that we can just go, yep lovely. This is what everybody does. So this is what you're going to do. It needs something much more thoughtful and bespoke than that for some young people. (Participant 3)</p> <p>You know, schools are busy schools are noisy, they're full of kids, they're full of demands, they're full of sensory experiences that children can't predict, or, you know, find really difficult. And some young people do need something else. Yeah. (Participant 3)</p>
Specialist provision more able to cater to/meet needs	<p>So subsequently, the pupil ended up getting an education, health and care plan, and is now attending a specialist provision. (Participant 4)</p> <p>And then he went to a provision that's in this local area, which is specifically for young people with autism and other you know, and social, emotional mental health needs. And it's called, or I should probably say what it's called. But the idea is it's a it's a kind of link between young people who are of key stage four age but can't access key stage four in school, and college. And he went there, and he did transition there. And he got on really, really well there. So even though he did his exams at home, he went on to go to this provision and was really, really successful there. And they worked really hard with him as well. (Participant 3)</p>
School taking a flexible approach	<p>So I think that helped in terms of staff had a better understanding of need, they were more flexible, in terms of providing opportunities to check in with key adult to be in a smaller environment and to be kind of in a safe space. (Participant 4)</p>

Schools taking a flexible approach to learning	<p>But by that point, he was applying for kind of college courses and things. So, he did his exams at home. And, and that again, that was the school being really. I mean, Mary, she's bloody brilliant actually, she really was she she would go and invigilate his exams at home. And the JCQ, like the school, got in contact with the assessment organisation the JCQ and they agreed that he could take his exams at home. So she went and invigilated. (Participant 3)</p> <p>And maybe, sometimes having to be flexible learning. So, I know with other students that I've worked with, they would do things like maybe drop a GCSE so that they have more time to focus on core subjects. Just maybe because of missed curriculum at some point or, you know, ongoing anxiety or whatever it is that or, it just takes the pressure off a bit as well. (Participant 2)</p>
Parents being flexible about the reintegration process	<p>And I also think, in terms of parents and family, they, I think, yeah, the parents were, again, quite keen that he would go to school and be able to access school, but they were also flexible. So they weren't and it's a difficult balance, I think, but they weren't kind of, you know, really forcing him to go in on days where he was really struggling. And they weren't kind of, yeah, being punitive about it. They were very understanding. So I think their approach probably supported him to be able to gradually build up his time, but they were really on board with the stepped plan and the gradual approach. You know, they weren't saying, like, no he needs to go back full time tomorrow. (Participant 6)</p>
The requirement for schools to be flexible	<p>I think, I think it was a few things, I think it was the school being on board and being flexible around attendance. So, you know, they weren't expecting that he was going to suddenly be able to start attending again. And I think their flexibility kind of reduced some of that pressure and some of the demands that he was feeling. (Participant 6)</p> <p>So yeah, I think that I think the key parts of it, were around school, making adjustments being flexible. (Participant 6)</p> <p>...I'm thinking about a case recently that I've been involved with is the willingness of the school to be really creative and flexible during the initial stages of the return to school plan, but also the longer term stages and I think that shift in understanding that actually, there are no quick fixes or simple solutions to emotionally based school avoidance and actually, that time commitment. (Participant 5)</p>
Taking a flexible, needs-led approach	<p>...as well as obviously, all of the stuff that we'd normally expect around adaptations and school around, like, you know, good communication and processes that are in place and adequate levels of funding to, so you can adapt timetables, and so you can provide, she comes in it in different times during the day and there is a teaching assistant who is able to do</p>

	<p>some kind of co-regulation stuff with her before she enters the classroom. And that requires funds and flexibility and all those things. (Participant 1)</p>
EP role in supporting school staff to support the needs of CYP	<p>So it was about trying to help the wider teaching staff just understand, even from a bit of a distance, he's not coming into school, but what could they be doing to try and keep a link with him? Or to be thinking about how, you know, he's entitled to an education. So how can they be supporting him from, you know, from school, even though he's not coming in. (Participant 3)</p>
Taking the pressure off	<p>So, we just took the pressure off. You know, well, Key Stage Three are doing this, this, this and this. So you're gonna have to do this, this, this and this. (Participant 3)</p> <p>And in a way, paradoxically, what helped was not putting pressure on him to go. So, to try and find things that he could be doing at home. (Participant 3)</p>
Focusing on engagement with learning, not school	<p>Because we, I felt so that the issue was school and what school represents for him. Learning, he didn't have a problem with, the idea of like, he could talk to you about the things that he was interested in, he could talk really, you know, articulately about his interest in computers, and what he enjoyed about that. And you know, what, in the future he might like to do with that. So we actually took the emphasis off school, and started thinking about this as a child who wants to learn, so how do we support his learning. (Participant 3)</p> <p>And I think that, that helped him to see that he could trust that we weren't all just trying to get him back through the door. And then, you know, the same issues would be there when he when he got there. So we stopped, you know, this, this phrase that was around quite a lot to begin with, which we just need to get them through the door we need to get, we've tried to stop thinking like that. We don't actually need to get him through the door. We need to kind of re familiarise him with learning and things he enjoys, and try and find a way to support that from a distance first, before we then start thinking about, you know, can we get him back into the physical environment of school. (Participant 3)</p> <p>And, and it, it felt controversial, to say, well, we're not going to try and get him back into school, we're going to try and link him up with something that's meaningful at home. (Participant 3)</p> <p>But I think having a separate space away from you know, classroom, busy classrooms where he could come you know, he had some sensory needs. So being able to just be in a low demand environment. There was other young people accessing</p>

	that department, that learning support department, but you know, they were doing their own thing. He was doing his own thing. There was one or two members of staff that he got to know quite well in there plus the SENCo. So again, just like making the provisions small, and needs led, and primarily focused on engaging him with learning, rather than trying to suddenly get him in assembly or, you know, doing dance, you know, because the curriculum says that's what he should be doing. I think it was just trying to continue to support his needs in school in a really contained, I guess, way. (Participant 3)
School providing home learning.	So, his school did start, they haven't been doing this, particularly consistently, but they did start sending work home and doing a bit more sort of meaningful monitoring of his education at home. (Participant 3)
The co-vid pandemic altered CYP and parental perspectives about school/ education.	I think one of the biggest impacts that I am sort of grappling with as a psychologist and really trying to integrate these reflections into my practice is about how the COVID 19 pandemic shifted children and families perspectives of education. And those different experiences of education such as those periods of home learning has kind of given children and families a different experience of education and a different experience of education that perhaps suited particular children with particular needs, such as autistic children, for example. That actually some of these alternate or hybrid formats, more flexible formats of learning, actually met their needs much more than traditional education systems. So, I think it's kind of changed family's experiences of education, but also I think, changed their expectations of education, and what maybe they can come to expect of education for their children, young people. (Participant 5)
COVID as a positive change to the current education system for CYP with EBSNA	I think one of the long-term positives (<i>of the COVID 19 pandemic</i>) is that I think it will eventually change our education system for the better. And I think for lots of these children who experienced EBSA, who would often families would be left to retreat into the home education sphere, are hopefully now able to use those experiences from the pandemic to advocate more flexible educational patterns for themselves and for their children. (Participant 5)
Challenging the 'status quo' around the education system/school attendance	<p>And thinking about how we kind of really reflect on our education systems in terms of how we can make this a space where children can enjoy their education, learn and feel comfortable, and maybe our agendas sometimes need to shift and change in order to kind of prioritise the autistic child's social, emotional mental health needs at that time. (Participant 5)</p> <p>And that actually, that shift in thinking of moving away from this culture of expecting 100% attendance, that actually, for some children who experience EBSA, the way that we maintain momentum and maintain attendance over time, and in the long term, is by having a realistic long term plan that might include very high degree of creativity and flexibility and</p>

even hybrid models of education, which might include a mixture of on site and off site learning, and being very much led by the needs of the child in the short term, and in the long term, and really being the schools being willing to be creative and flexible in that long term. And that long term commitment is really pivotal. (Participant 5)

But I think it does take, you have to be quite bold in a way as a practitioner to actually sort of say, is it right that we're getting him into school? Is it right that we're just harping on about this, even though this is a young person who's very clearly telling us, I'm not going to go. So, it takes, it does take a few of you to try and get that to feel okay about sort of taking the pressure off that relentless, 'all kids must be in school'. And I really believe that, that it's, it's not necessarily the right place for everybody. (Participant 3)