Participatory Research with Looked After Children: Factors which Support Meaningful Engagement

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SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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Abstract

The focus of this thesis was to explore effective ways to increase the participation of looked after children in research and to examine methodological and ethical issues that may arise. The findings are presented in three sections with the first two papers prepared in accordance with the author guidelines of the journals proposed for submission (Appendix 1).

The first paper is a systematic review of research involving looked after children in the UK over the last ten years. The purpose was to explore what methodologies have been used and to examine any reflections and evaluations regarding their effectiveness. Some common themes were found regarding looked after children's involvement in the research process, relationship factors and ethical considerations. However, this review also highlighted variation in the amount of detail offered regarding the reporting of methodology with some offering limited information. Additionally, there was little evaluation of methodology and a prominent finding was that looked after children’s involvement in research tended to be passive.

The first paper provided a rationale for the second, calling for research which includes looked after children in the research process as a whole, with methodologies made explicit and evaluated. This second paper then presents a description and evaluation of a participatory research project within an English high school concerning five looked after children’s perspectives on ‘What makes a good school?’, using Appreciative Inquiry (AI). An account of the researcher’s journey is offered, as well as the participants’ evaluation of the process. The paper found a flexible approach including a variety of methods was motivating and engaging for a group of looked after children. AI was also effective in enabling meaningful participation. Additionally, the paper offers a critical reflection of the role of adults and the impact of ethical issues on participatory research.

The third paper appraises the role that educational psychology can have in disseminating findings. The dissemination process had two purposes in this project: firstly, promoting the perspectives of looked after children on what makes a good
school to influence good practice. Secondly, to encourage further dialogue regarding the research process when involving looked after children to support better more meaningful participation in research.
Introduction

The voice of the child has received increased attention over the last few decades, yet the nature and extent of looked after children’s involvement in both practice and research continues to vary (Christensen & Prout, 2002; McLeod, 2007). The reasons for this are multifaceted and can include apprehensions on the part of the young people as they may have difficulties trusting adults due to some of their past experiences and ongoing inconsistencies in their lives (Golding, Dent, Nissin & Stott, 2006; Hepinstall, 2000). There is also research suggesting many looked after children feel they are not listened to and their views not taken into account regarding decisions which will impact them (Munro, 2001), which could leave them feeling disengaged and disaffected. Additionally, the views adults hold on both child development and how they conceptualise participation will impact upon how they interact with young people in professional practice and research. The focus of this thesis then was to explore effective ways to support looked after children’s participation in research and examine methodological and ethical issues that arise.

The thesis is comprised of three parts: a systematic literature review; a description and evaluation of an AI; and the final paper considers effective methods of dissemination and implementation, and the implications of this for the current research.

Aims and Research Questions

The first paper is a systematic literature review of qualitative research completed with looked after children in the UK in the last 10 years. The aim of the review was to explore what methodological processes are commonly used by researchers and what attempts are made to support the participation of looked after children in research, the following research questions were developed with these aims in mind:

- What qualitative methods have researchers used in research with looked after children?
- What reflections and evaluations have researchers offered regarding the effectiveness of these methods in supporting participation?
This systematic literature review revealed there are some common themes of methodological processes used to increase the participation of looked after youngsters, such as the use of several child friendly techniques, including participants in the different stages of the research and paying attention to relationship factors and ethical considerations. However, the reporting of this was varied, with some offering very limited information. The review also highlighted that there continues to be a paucity of studies which include looked after children across all levels of research such as planning, data gathering, analysis, dissemination and evaluation, and so involvement tends to be limited.

The findings from the literature review helped to shape the empirical study reported in the second paper as they emphasised the need to increase looked after children’s inclusion in research and provide more detail, honesty and reflexivity about what is effective, and any difficulties encountered, so as to improve research practice and support more meaningful participation. Therefore, the aims of the second paper were to describe and evaluate a participatory piece of research that was conducted with five looked after children with the intention of contributing to this underdeveloped area by providing answers to the following research questions:

- What factors were helpful in supporting looked after children’s participation in research?
- What factors acted as barriers to looked after children’s participation in research?

The final paper considered concepts of evidence-based practice (EBP), and its relevance to the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP). Common dissemination frameworks were also explored, before considering research implications for practice at the research site and organisation and professional levels. Finally, a dissemination strategy for the research findings was developed and described.

*Researcher’s Professional Background and Axiological Position*

The focus and methodology chosen for the research described in paper two was influenced by the researcher’s background and previous experiences. She has previously worked within a social care setting, which involved working with looked
after children on a daily basis. The researcher was often struck by how vulnerable they were to placement breakdowns and changes in education settings, often with little notice and against the child’s wishes. Additionally, it was felt that several of the bureaucratic procedures and time constraints that existed within the social care setting made it difficult to gain the child’s voice effectively and meaningfully. Finally, the researcher was aware that often the narrative surrounding looked after children was from a deficit perspective and involved a relative focus on negative aspects of their past experiences, and she often wondered what impact this may have on their identity and emotional wellbeing. However, the researcher also observed children who, in the right supportive and nurturing environment, thrived and overcame complex needs. She found that school was often an important protective factor for many of these children and was frequently the only consistent aspect of their lives. These experiences shaped the authors axiological position.

Upon reflection, the researcher feels that two strong beliefs have impacted upon the research process. Firstly, that children should be viewed as competent and active social agents who should be involved in decisions that impact their lives and that it is the responsibility of adults to ensure that they create an environment which is conducive to supporting child participation. Secondly, that all children have a right to achieve and reach their potential, and that school settings should provide support and intervention which not only meet children’s learning needs but also support any additional needs which may act as barriers to them being able to reach their potential.

**Ontological and Epistemological Position**

Ontology addresses the nature of reality and considers if there is one single truth or several realities. Within this thesis the ontological positioning is subjectivist as knowledge was being conceptualised from the experiences and realities of those who were the subjects of the study. The researcher’s epistemological stance is that of social constructionist. The social constructionist believes that each individual builds their own ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ through their own subjective experiences and ‘there exists a potentially, infinite number of alternative constructions of events’ (Burr, 1998). Social constructionism provides an alternative perspective to traditional
processes of obtaining truth and knowledge primarily from the positivist paradigm, and suggests that each individual’s construction of reality is equally valid, with no account being held as more accurate than another, and that a greater understanding of events can be gained by exploring these. Social constructionism makes us consider the diversity and difference between individuals and cautions against one group speaking on behalf of another (Burr, 1998). In this study it is accepted that each participant will have experienced their own reality based on their previous experiences. Therefore, this study relied on the story told and language used by each participant.

The AI methodology was chosen by the researcher as it comports with her epistemological and axiological position. AI is derived from a social constructionism framework and aims to focus on, and draw out individual’s thoughts on what is already working well in that context. Narratives are constantly being rewritten and re-structured and exploring and making explicit what is already successful about a situation can promote positive change (Bushe, 2001). Cooperrider (1990) argues that focusing on problems only serves to amplify what is inadequate and can result in resistance to change. He suggests that by positively reframing the process of inquiry, change can be inclusive, empowering and sustainable.

**Positioning of the Data**

The research reported in paper two was conducted within one area within the North West of England. The school in this study volunteered to be involved following a presentation of the research proposal at a meeting for Head Teachers in the Local Authority, where the researcher was on placement during doctorate training in Educational and Child Psychology. A further meeting was held with a group of school staff where they made some recommendations regarding looked after children who they felt would benefit from being involved in the project. The participants were then interviewed within the school setting. These circumstances may have resulted in the young people feeling they had little choice over their involvement and may have viewed it as ‘school work’. Attempts were made to minimise this by differentiating both the sessions and the researcher from typical school work and school staff, by emphasising the choice and control that participants had in the
various stages of the research, and by paying attention to ethical procedures such as consent and the right to withdraw.

The research also presents a very small sample of qualitative data collected from one setting and the participants could not be considered representative due to the size of the sample and as they were all female age between 12 and 15. However, the aim of the research was to support the participants to meaningfully engage with the research and to provide opportunities for their individual constructs to be explored in detail and, therefore, the sample size was necessarily small to meet these aims.
References


Title

A Systematic Literature Review of Qualitative Research Methods used to Support Participation of Looked After Children in Research

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Abstract

Historically, there has been a paucity of research which included the voice of looked after children. More recent reviews exploring their participation in research have found greater inclusion of looked after children, albeit largely limited to the data collection phase of studies, where their contribution is defined and constrained by the researcher’s aims. It can be argued that this constitutes a tokenistic and passive model of participation.

The purpose of this systematic review was to explore what qualitative methodological processes are commonly used by researchers and what attempts are made to support the participation of looked after children in research. Databases such as ASSIA, PsychInfo, ERIC and EBSCO host were searched for relevant studies between January 2017 and May 2017 using the PRISMA guidelines. Ten identified studies were then screened using a trialled evaluation checklist.

The review identified the methods used and processes researchers went through to engage the participants, as well as any reflections and evaluation of the effectiveness of these methods. Key concepts were then grouped together into themes using thematic synthesis. These concepts were then discussed and considered alongside other relevant research to tentatively suggest some views regarding best practice when carrying out research with looked after children. Limitations including a lack of detailed description of data collection and limited evaluations were also identified.

Key words: looked after children, methods, participation, evaluation
Introduction

Voice of the Child
Children having a voice and being involved in decisions which will impact upon their lives is emphasised in the Children Act (1989), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1999). Listening to children and acting on their views can have many benefits, leading to more successful interventions to support them (Archard & Skivenes, 2009) and an improvement of services (Carr, 2004), as well as direct benefits such as promoting positive sense of identity and social inclusion (Eide & Winger, 2005; Spicer & Evans, 2006), increasing confidence and assertiveness (Kinney, 2005; Vis et al., 2011) and increasing feelings of mastery and control (Leeson, 2007; McLeod, 2007).

In practice, however, there appears to be varying definitions and levels of child participation (McLeod, 2007), influenced by a range of factors including how adults perceive the child’s level of maturity, emotional stability and ability to understand and contribute in meaningful ways (Smith, 2002; Winter, 2006). Leeson (2007) argued that assumptions are often made about children and only those who are perceived as competent are entitled to have their views heard, limiting genuine and effective participation.

Looked after children are a particularly vulnerable and often socially excluded group (Axford, 2008; Sempik et al., 2008). They are in a unique position where agents of the state are making decisions about their lives (Lesson, 2007), and as such they can often feel disregarded with a lack of control and choice over decisions (Munro, 2001; Axford, 2008). The impact of this can be considerable and can result in emotional damage, anxiety and inability to make decisions in the future (Thomas, 2000). This is particularly concerning given looked after children are already more likely to have difficulties in areas such as mental health and emotional wellbeing (Department of Education, 2014). It is therefore imperative that adults working with looked after children carefully consider ways in which they can support meaningful participation.
Historically, the voice of looked after children has been lacking in research (Davies & Wright, 2008). In recent years the number of studies that include looked after children has grown, in a review of the participation of fostered and adopted children in research, Murray (2005) found that 38 of 72 studies published between 1991 and 2004 incorporated the child’s view. However, the young people tended to be involved only in data collection and rarely involved at other stages of research, such as framing research questions or as an advisory group member. Additionally, gaining access to participants was an issue as gatekeepers, including foster and adoptive parents, birth parents, social workers and the local authority, were sometimes unwilling for the children to participate.

Winter’s (2006) review concerning the education and health of looked after children explored how the model of childhood development, which underpins the assessment and action framework used by social care in the UK, impacted on participation in research. This review found that while looked after children were beginning to be included in a higher number of studies, detailed accounts of their views were missing and, when their views were sought, they were often constrained, defined and measured by structured data gathering methods. It was suggested that further research should be based on a sociological model of childhood, where children are viewed as active agents who are able to manage and direct their lives through their interactions and relationships with others (John, 2003; Walkerdine, 2004).

A more recent review exploring approaches used to gain looked after children’s views (Holland, 2009), looked at 44 studies published between 2003 and 2008, and concluded that a rich body of research was developing from an extensive range of methodological and theoretical frameworks. Gaps in the research were also identified including limited reporting of ethical considerations, an important factor given the vulnerability of these young people and the often highly personal nature of the research.

Both Holland (2009) and Winter (2006) called for a greater range of qualitative opportunities to allow greater leeway for the young person’s individual constructs, and to facilitate engagement. However, currently there is limited published research
detailing the most effective ways of supporting looked after children’s participation and research tends to detail the findings of the research rather than the effectiveness of methodologies used. Therefore, this review is concerned with how looked after young people have been involved in qualitative research studies.

**Rationale and Research Questions**

There is an encouraging emergence of diverse research that includes the views of looked after children (Holland, 2009). However, there is not an up to date, systematic review which explores both what qualitative methods are commonly used with looked after children and any reflections or evaluations in the papers regarding the effectiveness of these methods in encouraging participation.

This paper focuses on studies undertaken in the UK in the last decade with looked after children over the age of 10. This age range was chosen as marginalized teenagers are less likely to be represented in research (Cairns & Brannen, 2005) and can be difficult to engage with (McLeod, 2007). McLeod (2007) argues that it may be necessary to develop a range of strategies and creative techniques to work effectively with this age range. Therefore, this review aims to consider what methods are used in qualitative research with this group and what are the most effective ways to support their participation, through exploring the following research questions:

- What qualitative methods have researchers used in research with looked after children?
- What reflections and evaluations have researchers offered regarding the effective of these methods in supporting participation?
**Review Process**

This review used an explorative approach to understand the processes used in research with looked after children and how they support participation.

Four databases (Applied Social Science Index and Abstract (ASSIA), Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Elton B. Stephens Co. host (EBSCOhost) and, PsychInfo) were, systematically searched between January 2017 and May 2017 to gather relevant studies in the UK. Terms for ‘participation’, ‘looked after children’, ‘participants’, and ‘experience’ were combined to systematically search for papers (see table 1 below). This stage also involved searching for relevant references from the studies identified through searching the databases (reference harvesting).

Table 1: Literature review search terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms related to participation</th>
<th>Terms related to looked after children</th>
<th>Terms related to participants</th>
<th>Terms related to experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>participat*</td>
<td>looked after child*</td>
<td>student*</td>
<td>experienc*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>view*</td>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>pupil*</td>
<td>evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice</td>
<td>in care</td>
<td>child*</td>
<td>perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>foster*</td>
<td>young person</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>consult*</td>
<td></td>
<td>adolescen*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicat*</td>
<td></td>
<td>teen*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The systematic searching of papers was structured by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA), a 27-item checklist for identifying empirical studies (Moher *et al.*, 2009). Figure 1 outlines each stage of the literature search process.
The database search generated 268 studies while reference harvesting added a further 9 papers, resulting in a total of 277. Duplicate studies were removed which left 253 papers. 221 studies were excluded as they did not focus on looked after children.

The abstracts of the remaining 32 studies were examined which led to a further 11 studies being excluded as they did not include looked after children as participants or were not empirical papers (i.e. opinion pieces or review). This in turn yielded 21 studies to be examined by reading full texts.

These studies were screened using the following inclusion criteria:

1. Published in a peer reviewed academic journal
2. Research completed in the UK
3. Reported primary data
4. Includes qualitative data
5. Published from 2006 onwards
6. Includes at least one looked after child aged between 10-16 years.
A total of 11 studies were excluded as they failed to meet the inclusion criteria. The most common reason for exclusion at this stage was that the studies did not include participants in the 10-16 age range. The remaining 10 studies were assessed for the quality of each study.

Assessment of Quality and Focus
All research is in a sense biased by its assumptions and methods used but research using explicit rigorous methods attempts to minimise bias and therefore provide a basis for assessing quality and relevance of research findings (Gough, 2007).

Methodological quality was assessed using the scoring framework developed by Bond, Wood, Humphrey, Symes and Green (2013) (Appendix 2). This framework is designed to assess each study for the quality of methodology and data analysis employed, as well as how well the implications of results are discussed and ethical considerations. It is based on an integration of the criteria set by two established frameworks for evaluating qualitative studies (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Spencer et al., 2003). The maximum possible score is 14. For each qualitative study, a total point score of 0–4 was considered ‘low quality’ research, 5–9 as ‘medium quality’ research and 10–14 as ‘high quality’ research.

The criteria is open to researcher interpretation and in an attempt to address this 2 out of the 10 studies included in this review were scored independently by both the researcher and her university tutor. An inter-rater reliability score of 89% was achieved. This high inter-rater agreement ensured the researcher could score the remaining 8 papers and met with her tutor regularly to ensure consistency of the coding process.

The included studies were also evaluated for their ‘appropriateness of focus’ in relation to the research questions posed for this review using the following criteria:

1. The extent to which the researchers describe methodological processes
2. The extent to which researchers had considered and evaluated strategies to increase participation
Studies received scores of 2 (indicating full alignment), 1 (indicating partial alignment) and 0 (indicating no alignment) for each criterion. Studies that received a score between 0 – 1 were evaluated as having ‘low methodological appropriateness’ studies receiving a score between 1.5 – 2.5 were evaluated as having ‘medium methodological appropriateness’ and studies with a score between 3-4 as having ‘high methodological appropriateness’. Regular meetings between both authors occurred where discussions were held regarding the interpretation of the criteria.

Nine studies were judged as ‘medium methodological quality’ while one was judged as ‘high methodological quality’. One study was evaluated as having ‘low appropriateness of focus’, five were evaluated as ‘medium’, and four were deemed ‘high’ (Appendix 3). All 10 studies were deemed eligible for the review, scoring in the medium range or higher on at least one of the criteria.

Synthesis of Papers
Thematic synthesis (Thomas & Hardin, 2007) was used to analyse common themes discussed in the papers about the methodologies used and any efforts made to increase participation. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is a method which can be used to analyse data in primary qualitative research and has been recognised as a possible technique for research synthesis (Thomas & Hardin, 2007). Relevant sections concerned with methodology and any reflections or evaluations on facilitating participation were extracted from the papers. Line by line coding was completed for each paper and descriptive themes developed across the papers as a whole. Descriptive themes were then pulled together into analytical themes which allowed the researchers to suggest ‘lines of argument’ which went beyond the content of the original studies (Thomas & Hardin, 2007). The descriptive themes and analytical themes are discussed below.
Findings

Overview of the studies
The studies looked to gain the views of looked after children on a range of topics (see Appendix 3) including: children’s rights and advocacy services (Barnes, 2007); peer sexual violence in a residential children’s home (Barter, 2006); transition from primary to secondary school (Brewin & Statham, 2011); kinship care placements (Burgess, Rossvoll, Wallace & Daniels, 2010); experiences of non-participation in decision making process (Leeson, 2007); mental health of young people in care (Mullan et al., 2007; Stanley, 2007); sport and physical activity (Quarmby, 2014); participation in a theatre and music initiative (Salmon & Rickaby, 2014); and going missing from care (Taylor et al., 2014). The authors also came from a wide range of backgrounds including childhood studies (Leeson, 2007; Mullan et al., 2007), criminology (Mullan et al., 2007), education (Brewin & Statham, 2011), health (Barnes, 2007; Salmon & Rickaby, 2014; Taylor et al., 2014), policy studies (Barter, 2006), psychology (Mullan et al., 2007), social care (Barnes, 2007; Stanley 2007; Burgess et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2014) and sport (Quarmby, 2014).

Thematic synthesis generated 7 descriptive themes which in turn were developed into the three analytical themes (Appendix 4).

Figure 2. Thematic Map of Descriptive and Analytical Themes
Young Person Participation in the Research Process

Participation happened in different forms and at various stages across the papers reviewed. In all ten papers, researchers were exploring a set topic, looking to answer predefined research questions which had been decided by them. However, five papers involved young people at the planning stage of the research, although it was not necessarily the participants themselves. Mullan et al. (2007) and Barnes (2007) established young person advisory groups who advised about all research stages such as how to approach the young people and what methods to use. Taylor et al. (2014) recruited two peer researchers who were involved in making revisions to the interview schedule and Brewin and Statham (2011) piloted interviews with children of the same age but who were not looked after. Quarmby (2014) was the only paper that involved participants in the planning stage as they helped decide what artefacts would be used as a form of data collection and interview questions were developed in collaboration with them.

In two papers (Barter, 2006; Burgess et al., 2010) participants were involved only at the data collection phase and were not consulted at the other stages of research. Two papers (Leeson 2007; Quarmby 2014) actively involved participants in the data collection phase and allowed them to make decisions or take the lead. In Leeson’s (2007) paper, the participants developed cue cards or simply drew pictures which were later discussed. Quarmby (2014) gave participants choice regarding how much they participated in data gathering and in what ways. A number of tools were chosen by the youngsters including timelines and a rating system. Interview questions were also developed in collaboration with the participants.

During the analysis stage of the research, two papers attempted to involve the participants. Quarmby (2014) asked participants to comment on transcriptions, which provided an opportunity to modify information and share preliminary findings. Salmon and Rickaby (2012) asked participants if they wanted to read the transcripts to support validation but they declined. Participants were provided with a summary for comment as part of a group discussion instead. The paper provided no further information regarding what feedback participants gave.
Leeson (2007), Mullan et al. (2007), Stanley (2007) and Salmon and Rickaby (2012) involved young people in the feedback stage of the research, informing them of results whilst Salmon and Rickaby (2012) also involved participants in dissemination of the research lobbying decisions around improvements in the care system and increasing access to arts. Leeson (2007) also asked participants to evaluate the methods used. She reflected that participants seemed happy to be regarded as ‘experts’ and it conferred ownership and acknowledged their important role as co-researchers.

**Methods and Tools Used**

The predominant methodology used to collect the views of the young people was semi-structured interviews with eight out of ten papers using interviews as at least part of their data collection methods. The other two papers (Stanley, 2007; Taylor et al., 2014) used focus groups.

Out of the eight which used interviews, two of the papers used additional methods. Mullan et al. (2007) followed up interviews with six mini focus groups and Quarmby (2014) carried out observations and fieldnotes prior to interviews and additionally used the mosaic approach. The mosaic approach involves participants gathering documentation and generating research artefacts (photographs, drawings, etc.), each of which forms a piece of the mosaic which can then be reflected on and interpreted (Clark & Moss, 2001).

Two of the papers provided no further information regarding what tools or techniques they adopted during data collection (Burgess et al. 2010; Salmon & Rickaby, 2012). A number of techniques were mentioned by the other eight papers with varying amounts of description. Three papers stated what techniques they used however did not provide much detail or any examples: Barnes (2007) and Stanley (2007) both advised they used ‘trigger’ materials and scenarios and Brewin and Statham (2011) used open ended questions with prompts.

The remaining five papers provided more detail regarding what data gathering techniques they implemented with some giving specific examples of interview schedules, or tools used. Barter (2006) used vignettes and a range of questions to
explore participants’ views on incidents of peer sexual violence. Lesson (2007) used activities and pictures including decision charts, a mapping exercise and cue cards or drawings which were developed by the participants to help explore their views of non-participation in decision-making process. Mullan et al. (2007) used stimulus materials including projective techniques such as a crystal ball to help them answer questions on how they saw their future or a ‘support prize’ trophy they would award to a person of their choosing. Quarmby (2014) used the mosaic approach whereby participants decided to use tools such as timelines and drawings. Interview questions were also developed in collaboration with the participants to explore their experiences of physical activity and what value they placed on physical activity. Taylor et al. (2014) used the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to explore participant’s experiences of going missing from care. CIT offers a means of focussing on ‘real’ incidents rather than on participants’ accounts of how things should be (Bradbury-Jones & Tranter, 2008). The critical incident technique consists of 3 pieces of information: (1) a description of the situation that led to the incident, (2) the actions or behaviours of the focal person in the incident, and (3) the results or outcome of those actions.

Four papers offered explanations as to why they had chosen the methods they had. For example, interviews were used as they allowed for privacy and confidentiality (Barnes, 2007; Mullan et al., 2007) and questions and prompts could be adjusted to ensure they suited the needs of each individual participant (Barnes, 2007; Brewin & Statham, 2011). Mullan et al. (2007) stated that focus groups were used to follow up interviews as it may encourage discussion if other young people with similar experiences were present.

Five papers gave at least partial motives for identifying the tools and techniques they used during data collection. Barter (2006), Leeson (2007) Mullan et al. (2007), Quarmby (2014), and Stanley (2007) all chose techniques which were felt to increase discussion and participation in the research by, for example, using activities with participants who were less articulate or avoiding clinical language to reduce stigma. Leeson (2007) and Quarmby (2014) also wanted the participants to feel that they were co-researchers or experts.
Leeson (2007) and Quarmby (2014) stated that they were mindful not to patronise
the children by using child-friendly techniques alone. They discussed the importance
of using a combination of traditional ‘adult’ methods and child-centred techniques
and to be guided by each individual. Participants in Leeson’s (2007) study evaluated
the methods used and also identified a need to avoid being patronising when
interviewing looked after children.

Only one paper explicitly evaluated the effectiveness of the methodology used by
asking the participants their views and by providing her own reflections. Leeson
(2007) felt that the combination of methods and skills used in her study enabled
participants to talk about experiences and that the use of picture prompts provided
invaluable support, enabling two participants in particular to access their memories
in ways that were meaningful for them. Leeson (2007) added that she felt the
participant’s involvement in the research allowed them to discuss difficult
experiences, put them into context and move on.

Although not explicit about evaluating methods Quarmby (2014) commented that
using the mosaic approach encouraged the young people to take ownership of the
process and helped produce useful insights that may have otherwise remained
hidden.

*Researcher/Participant Relationships Factors*

Some of the papers considered researcher/participant relationship factors, and they
adapted their methodology to reflect this. Four papers spent increased time with
participants to get to know them, either by meeting them before the research
commenced or meeting them on several occasions during data collection (Barter,
2006; Lesson, 2007; Salmon & Rickaby, 2012; Quarmby, 2014).

Salmon and Rickaby (2012) and Taylor *et al.* (2014) considered the characteristics of
researchers and how they could impact upon young people’s participation. Taylor *et
al.* (2014) recruited two peer researchers as they felt participants may respond better
to individuals with whom they had shared common experiences. Salmon and Rickaby
(2012) were mindful of how researchers should respond to the young people and
focused on showing emotional involvement, answering questions, and expressing feelings to build relationships.

Four papers acknowledged and attempted to minimise power imbalances between researcher and participants: participants in Salmon and Rickaby’s (2012) study were approached on behalf of researchers as they viewed this as less threatening and Quarmby (2014) and Taylor et al. (2014) used peer researchers to try to reduce the potential power imbalance. Leeson (2007) observed that participants tended to put researchers in a role of power and authority and she attempted to address this by frequently revisiting the researcher’s role.

Participant evaluation in Leeson’s (2007) study focused on relationship factors as opposed to any specific methods used, identifying a need for researchers to be sensitive to emotional needs and transparency, honesty and co-construction were the attributes most valued.

**Ethical Considerations**

Specific ethical issues which could support the engagement of participants were considered in some papers, for example ensuring participants felt comfortable and at ease by arranging meetings or interviews in comfortable and familiar locations (Leeson, 2007; Burgess et al., 2010; Salmon & Rickaby, 2012; Taylor et al., 2014), ensuring regular breaks for walks and refreshments (Leeson, 2007) and that a familiar adult was in the vicinity (Taylor et al., 2014).

Four out of the ten papers recognised that access to participants could be an issue. Burgess et al. (2010) and Brewin and Statham (2011) included in their limitations the impact that access may have had on their research. Brewin and Statham (2011) reported that they recruited 14 out of a potential 19 participants and that this was in part due to the gatekeeping processes necessary for interviewing looked after children. Burgess et al. (2010) stated that their sample may not be representative as it is more straightforward gaining access to young people who have had positive experiences and who are in stable placements. Although both these papers acknowledged some difficulty with access to participants, neither considered ways of minimising this barrier.
Leeson (2007) and Quarmby (2014) discussed in more detail the issues regarding access to some looked after children and made attempts to overcome these hurdles. Quarmby (2014) described a ‘hierarchy of gatekeepers’ (virtual head, service delivery manager, children’s home manager) and the necessity to have time consuming and complex conversations with different gatekeepers. Leeson (2007) stated that in practice it proved very difficult to negotiate with gatekeepers if they were not interested or thought it may impact negatively on the youngster’s emotional wellbeing, but that time spent building relationships with gatekeepers, encouraged them to think more widely about young people and provided opportunities to challenge them and to overcome the view that looked after youngsters are incapable or in need of protection. Leeson (2007) also reflected on the impact of staff changes in a residential placement which meant that a final piece of group work planned could not go ahead.

Discussion

The synthesis revealed some commonalities regarding both methods used and steps taken to increase participation. However, the level of detail offered and the degree to which researchers made attempts to support participation varied significantly across the papers.

The involvement of youngsters in different stages of the research was a theme which emerged from the thematic synthesis, with most papers including young people at at least two stages such as planning and data collection, or data collection and analysis. This appears to be a change from Murray’s (2005) review, which found young people tended to be involved only in data collection stage and may be indicative of the trends in children’s rights discourse since the turn of the century, and the greater focus on children’s social agency (Mason & Hood, 2010). Research with non-looked after youngsters indicates that including participants in various stages of research can impact the quality of the data gathered, as the data is more likely to accurately reflect the realities of participants, and therefore lead to practice and services that will meet their needs (Liebenberg et al., 2015a; Liebenberg et al., 2015b). It can also have direct benefits for the participants themselves, including the
development of children’s sense of agency and citizenship, communication skills and empowerment (Warren, 2000; Kellett, 2005).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting, that the young people’s inclusion in the different aspects of the research process was inconsistent across the papers in this review, with none of the studies including the youngsters in all stages. In addition, all papers were exploring topics and answering research questions which had been decided by the researchers. Consequently, they fall short of the kind of scaffolded participation that Hart (1992) proposes are possible, where the highest ‘rung’ of participation is ‘child initiated, shared decision with adults’. However, this review found, that participants tended to be either ‘assigned but informed’ or ‘consulted and informed’, which Hart (1992) describe as the lowest levels of participation. This finding is in keeping with Winter’s (2006) conclusion that the participation of looked after youngsters is typically passive, and there continues to be a need for the development of methodologies which encourage greater engagement and participation of looked after children.

The papers reviewed showed that a number of creative and child friendly techniques were used across most of the papers during the data collection phase of the research. This demonstrates a respect and commitment to using techniques which will be accessible and engaging for the young people. Other researchers have commented on the potential usefulness of using creative techniques to increase the participation of looked after children (Thomas & O’Kane, 1999; McLeod, 2006). However, it has also been recognised that care needs to be taken not to patronise children by automatically assuming that they need different approaches to adults (Punch, 2002a). This was also noted in two of the papers reviewed (Leeson, 2007; Quarmby, 2014). Both Punch (2002a) and Murray (2005) highlight the need to view children as unique with distinct characteristics as opposed to a homogenous group, and Punch (2002a) also recommends combining traditional research methods used with adults, and techniques considered to be more suitable for use with children. Furthermore, Christensen and Prout (2002) emphasise that researchers do not necessarily have to use particular methods when working with children, rather researchers should
familiarise themselves with their experiences, interests, values and everyday routines. This requires building relationships and getting to know children.

Most papers in this review did combine more traditional methods with ‘child-friendly’ techniques and some sought feedback from other groups of children regarding methods via a young person’s advisory group or piloting interviews. However, only two papers reported actively engaging participants regarding what methods to use. Leeson (2007) and Quarmby (2014) offered a choice of techniques and supported the youngsters to create their own data collection tools. Additionally, Leeson (2007) sought feedback from participants regarding how they felt about the methods used.

Relationship factors were deemed important in maximising participation in half of the papers. Steps taken included getting to know participants over time and making efforts to reduce power imbalances. These factors are not just important in research with looked after children but will support greater engagement in research with any participants (Punch, 2002b; Mason & Hood, 2010). However, as some looked after individuals can have difficulties trusting adults, taking time to build a trusting relationship may be particularly important with this group (McLeod, 2007). Furthermore, looked after children often report feeling in a position of powerlessness and as though the adults around them make decisions about their lives (Munro, 2001; Axford, 2008). Therefore, reflecting on how this power imbalance may be replicated and reinforced in the research process, and making attempts to minimise this, is an important ethical consideration.

Most papers in this review made very little comment on ethical considerations, other than some limited description on certain features of the research process such as how the researcher gained access to the setting, recruited participants, obtained consent, or how they managed anonymity and confidentiality. Although procedural ethics such as these can offer support and guidance (Alderson & Morrow, 2011), they contribute to an emphasis on particular ethical moments in research rather than ethics as an ongoing exercise (Lindsay, 2000), and they are often not sufficient to guide decisions about what researchers ought to do in more complex and unexpected situations where ethical issues occur (Graham, Powell & Taylor, 2015).

It has been argued that, in order to enhance best practice, researchers should be
both more reflective regarding ethical issues throughout the research process and be more explicit in their reporting of ethical dilemmas and how they are managed (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Graham et al. 2015).

Some papers in this review offered more detail regarding ethical issues. A particular dilemma which arose concerned difficulties gaining access to participants due to the role that gatekeepers played in this procedure. Literature exploring the potential reasons for gatekeepers’ unwillingness to allow looked after children to participate in research has found that it is often out of a duty to protect them from harm (Murray, 2005). However, as Leeson (2007) stresses, this can create a situation where their voice is not heard and possibly render them more vulnerable. Tensions between protectionist and participatory standpoints often appear to be at the core of ethical dilemmas and decision making (Powell et al., 2011). Graham et al. (2013) argue that rather than seeing these perspectives as oppositional, they can be viewed such that the competence, dependence and vulnerability of children do not determine whether or not they participate, but instead inform what adjustments can be made to minimise harm and maximise the benefits. As such, it becomes important to engage with the systems around the child. This places responsibilities on researchers to make attempts to address structural issues as well as working directly with children (Mason & Hood, 2011). This review found that building relationships with gatekeepers and attempting to challenge their views could support this process. Other research (Dixon et al., 2004; Heptinstall, 2000) has also highlighted the importance of making attempts to engage with gatekeepers in order to increase the inclusion of looked after children. Graham et al. (2015) recommend that as well as paying attention to the many relationships between people involved in the research context, researchers should also have a good knowledge of children’s rights and be reflective on their own academic and non-academic thoughts, feelings and experiences, and how these will impact the research. The reporting of these matters was mixed in the papers in this review, with some offering information such as their theoretical stance on child development and their views on children’s rights and others providing little information.
Conclusion

This systematic literature review revealed there are some common themes of methodological processes used to increase the participation of looked after youngsters. However, the reporting of these across papers is varied, with some offering very limited information. This not only makes it difficult to replicate studies, but additionally does not contribute to raising awareness regarding how to carry out participatory research with looked after children. Other papers offered a comprehensive account of the research process and were explicit about efforts to increase participation such as including participants in the different stages of the research and paying attention to relationship factors and ethical considerations.

This review also highlighted that there continues to be a paucity of studies which include looked after children at the various levels of research and their involvement still tends to be limited. An important way to ensure that the methodologies used during research with looked after children are effective is to ask the young people what they viewed to be helpful. However, only one paper in this review asked participants to evaluate the methodologies used. I would argue that there is a need to include looked after children further in the different stages of research such as planning and feedback, and that this will help improve the quality and outcomes of studies. Additionally, more detail, honesty and reflexivity about what is effective, and any difficulties overcome, would support better research practice and more meaningful participation from looked after children.
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Participatory Research with Looked After Children: Reflections and Evaluations from Researcher and Participants

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Abstract

The voice of the child in research has received increased attention and priority over the last few decades, including the voices of those in care, however, the nature and extent of looked after children’s involvement in research continues to vary. This paper explores effective ways to support looked after children’s participation in research and examines methodological and ethical issues which arise. It presents a description and an evaluation of a participatory research project, using Appreciative Inquiry (AI), within an English high school concerning a group of school staff and five looked after children, exploring their perspectives on ‘What makes a good school?’. An account of the researcher’s journey is offered, as well as the looked after children’s evaluation of the process, through thematic analysis of the researcher’s diary and interviews with the children. Findings suggest that a flexible approach, including a variety of methods, was motivating and engaging for the children and researcher/participant relationship factors also had a key role in enhancing participation. Additionally, AI was found to be an effective framework to implement positive changes at both individual and organisational levels as well as being motivating and empowering for participants. Finally, this paper provides a critical reflection of the role of adults and the impact of ethical issues on participatory research with looked after children.

Key words: looked after children, participation, appreciative inquiry.
What Is Already Known?

An increased focus on children’s rights to be involved in decisions which impact their lives has inspired a greater focus on the inclusion of looked after children in research and an expansion in the methodological and theoretical frameworks applied. However, overall their involvement tends to remain limited and provide little opportunity for their individual constructs to be represented.

What This Paper Adds?

This paper describes and evaluates a piece of participatory research that was conducted with five looked after children in a high school in the North West of England. The intention was to provide an account of factors which were found to support their participation, as well as offer a critical reflection on methodological and ethical issues which emerged.

Introduction

Voice of the Child
Attention is increasingly being given to the importance of listening to children’s views and to take them into account regarding decisions that will impact their lives. This reflects the children’s rights discourse (the Children Act, 1984; the Children Act 2004; the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child) and theoretical perspectives such as the sociology of childhood (James, Jenks & Prout, 1999; Hill, 2006), which focus on children being social actors who influence and shape their own lives (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

Research with children
This has resulted in a move to more participatory research which is carried out with rather than on children. (Mayall, 2000; Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin & Robinson, 2010).

Potential benefits of the active participation of children and young people in the research process are thought to include more effective and relevant policy, programmes and services being developed for children and young people (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; McLaughlin, 2006). As well as contributing to positive outcomes
for young people themselves in areas such as social and emotional functioning, social relationships, communication skills, sense of agency, confidence and self-esteem (Coombes, Appleton, Allen, & Yerrell, 2013; Hall, 2010; Mitra, 2004; Spicer & Evans, 2006; Vis, Strandbu, Holtan & Thomas, 2011).

In practice it has been argued that the nature and extent of child participation varies considerably (Liebenberg, Sylliboy, Davis-Ward & Vincent, 2017). Christensen and Prout (2002) describe four ways of seeing children in research: as object, as subject, as social actor and as participants and co-researchers. They recognise that although the latter two were more recent developments, this does not signify progression but that the four perspectives coexist influenced by factors such as the researcher’s conceptualisation of participation, stance on child development and their beliefs regarding the child’s level of maturity, emotional stability and ability to understand and contribute to the research (Smith, 2002; Winter, 2006). The researcher’s perspective has a significant impact on research practice, influencing choice of methods and the role of both researcher and participant and resulting in a variety of research being executed (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

It is further argued that children’s competencies should be viewed as being context dependent, influenced by how well prepared and supported they are, how much knowledge and understanding is provided, what options are given, and how the situation is structured (Thomas, 2002). This places a responsibility on the researchers to ensure that they create an environment which is conducive to supporting child participation.

*Research with Looked After Children*

Looked after children are considered to be one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society (Sempik, Ward & Darker, 2008) and it is acknowledged that they are frequently socially excluded (Axford, 2008). As such, implementing research with them can pose additional challenges including a reluctance to discuss personal history (McLeod, 2007); being cautious in trusting adults due to previous life experiences (Golding, Dent, Nissin & Stott, 2006), as well as ongoing difficulties and inconsistencies occurring in care and school placements (Hepinstall, 2000).
Moreover, there can be significant difficulties recruiting looked after children for research due to the number of gatekeepers that must be approached for consent (Leeson, 2007; Quarmby, 2014). The commonly held perception that looked after children are in need of protection from potential adverse effects of research can also mean gatekeepers refuse access (Davies & Wright, 2008; Hepinstall, 2000). However, Leeson (2007) warns that viewing children through the lens of ‘victim in need of protection’ can result in them being unable to express their views, further silencing a group who can already feel excluded regarding decisions that impact their lives (Axford, 2008; Hayward, 2001; Munro, 2001).

Looked after children are increasingly included in research, with a wide-range of methodological and theoretical frameworks (Holland, 2009; Winter, 2006). Participatory research with looked after children has aimed to enable participants to develop research in ways which were both meaningful for them and insightful for others. In these instances, there was a focus on methods which included spending time building relationships with participants, creative and flexible approaches to enable control over aspects of the research process, and paying careful attention to access and ethical considerations (Leeson, 2007; Quarmby, 2014). Furthermore, Leeson (2007) asked participants to comment on the methods used so that research in this area could continue to develop. However, as Holland (2009) and Winter (2006) concluded, most research continues to limit looked after children’s contributions and provides little opportunity for their individual constructs.

In summary, participatory research with looked after children has much potential, however, there are a number of factors which need careful consideration to ensure it is both effective and ethical and has direct benefits for the participants as well as contributing to better understanding and appropriate responses to their perspectives and experiences. A critical drawback is the limited published literature reflecting on the methodologies used in such research. Current literature tends to detail the outcomes of the research questions, rather than describe research processes or evaluate the efficacy of these. It can be argued more transparency, reflexivity and evaluation on methodological and ethical issues can enhance the participants’ experience and research practice. Therefore, this paper aims to describe
and evaluate a participatory piece of research that was conducted with five looked after children in a high school in the North West of England with the intention of contributing to this underdeveloped area by providing answers to the following research questions:

- What factors were helpful in supporting looked after children’s participation in research?
- What factors acted as barriers to looked after children’s participation in research?

**Study One**

I conducted an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) with a group of professionals and five looked after females age 12-15 in an English High School in Spring 2017, exploring their views on ‘What makes a good school?’ AI is a participatory action research method which aims to work collaboratively with participants to bring about change based upon actively exploring the best of what already exists and is working well, and then building upon that success to envisage what could be and encourage action for change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1986). AI is cyclical in nature and has a number stages beginning with discovery (appreciating what is) then dream (imagining what could be), followed by design (determining what should be) and then delivery/destiny (creating what will be).

![Figure 3. Appreciative Inquiry Model](image-url)
The school in this study volunteered to be involved following a presentation of the research proposal at a meeting for Head Teachers in the Local Authority where I was on placement during doctorate training in Educational and Child Psychology. A further meeting was then held with key staff at the school to establish the shape and focus of the research in more detail and for staff to familiarise themselves with the research, understand the purpose and motivation behind it and offer suggestions.

A focus group was then held with six members of staff within the high school to cover the first two stages of the AI cycle (Discover and Dream) to explore their views on ‘What we do well to support looked after children in our school?’ and ‘how could this be even better?’ (see figure. 4). The staff then made some recommendations regarding looked after children who they felt would benefit from being involved in the project.

This started what transpired to be a lengthy process of gaining consent for the young people to participate, which included approaching the Head of Children’s Services, social workers and the children themselves. Further information was also shared with all foster carers and some parents, depending on the young person’s looked after status. On more than one occasion a social worker denied consent as they felt that the children had ‘enough going on’. Spending time building relationships with social workers and providing further information was necessary to build their trust so that they felt more comfortable giving their consent. After consent had been gained from the necessary adults, a key adult shared an information sheet with the potential participants to explore whether they would like to take part. Informed consent depends on the quality of the explanation (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010), therefore efforts were made to ensure the information sheets contained simple language (e.g. short sentences, no jargon or acronyms, the active voice rather than the passive one, requests rather than commands) and the use of drawings.

Once consent had been gained from all participants, one-to-one interviews were arranged. Although, key adults had shared information sheets with the young people, it was often necessary to spend time during the first interview explaining my role as a researcher, the purpose of the research and covering issues such as confidentiality, right to withdraw and consent. The first session was also an opportunity to build
rapport and get to know the participants before data gathering started to support participant comfort and participation.

Following this first session I met with the children a further three times to cover the discovery (what is good about school?), dream (what could be even better?) and delivery (planning feedback of views to school staff) aspects of the AI cycle (see figure. 4). Sessions initially took the form of one to one interviews to offer an environment which was more confidential and arguably more conducive to building rapport (Punch, 2002a). Furthermore, sessions could be individualised to suit specific communication styles and learning needs.

The young people had been precluded from the initial planning stages as a research proposal was necessary to gain university ethical approval and it may have been difficult to gain consent from stakeholders without an initial plan in place. However, once the young people were involved the aim was to give them as much control and choice over the research as possible. I had a tool box of activities for each session prepared to aid discussion, however, whether or not participants chose to use these and how they engaged with them was up to the individuals. A wide range of activities and techniques were drawn on, with the aim of making them fun and interesting, giving children more control, providing more time to reflect and to assist them in talking about more complicated issues (Kay, Cree, Tisdall & Wallace 2003; Punch, 2002b; Sanders & Munford, 2005; Thomas & O’Kane, 1999). Additionally, regular meetings with my university supervisor were held to inform final selection. The tools chosen included a drawing exercise based on Moran’s (2001) ‘Ideal School’. This exercise is based on Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955) and aims to help a professional to understand a child’s view of themselves and to work with them to develop new understandings and possibilities. It was felt that this approach suited AI, as it is described as a collaborative approach, which maintains good attention for both parties. Additionally, it focuses on envisioning an ‘ideal’ situation and how a person might move from their actual state to this more desired option. Another tool used was scaling exercises taken from solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) (De Shazer et al., 2007). SFBT is a future focussed and goal directed approach. Similar to AI it aims to support an individual to explore what is already working within their
current situation and then assist them in thinking about other possible solutions. The scaling questions provide a helpful visual which can assist an individual to focus on small and manageable steps which can move them closer to their desired goal. Further tools bought along included post-it notes to provide a visual of main points the young people made and sentence starters to offer prompts if required. Language which incorporated the ethos of AI was used in the sentence starters, such as ‘in the future I have...’, ‘in the future I can...’ and ‘in the future I am...’ The aim of these different tools was to offer a creative and flexible approach which remained faithful to the AI approach. If participants decided not to use the methods brought along then they were free to chat and encouraged to record key points. If they did not wish to do this, I offered to write on their behalf but was careful to use their language and check back regularly. Appendix 6 provides some examples of data collection.

As well as the use of specific methods to increase participation, I also paid attention to relational factors and how these may impact the participants ability to engage. Psychological concepts such as empathy and attunement are considered to be effective elements of a therapeutic relationship (Cooper, 2008). Empathy can be defined as sensing another person in order to better appreciate their experience. I adopted techniques suggested by Carl Rogers (1957) to demonstrate empathy to an individual, including active listening and summarising and paraphrasing salient points. Attunement is the term used to describe a person’s reactivity to others and is similar to the way an attuned parent, noticing a child’s distress, will take steps to offer comfort. Meeting the young people on a number of occasions and paying careful attention to their explicit and implicit communication enabled me to build up a knowledge of their preferences and needs so that I could respond to these appropriately. This included spending an increased time on rapport building to increase participant comfort or offering additional prompts to stimulate conversations.

At the end of each session participants were encouraged to think about how their key thoughts or ideas might fit together and form themes, they were then asked to label these. As such, they were also involved in the data analysis stage of the research
process. Participatory analysis ensures that the data collected is interpreted in a way that more accurately reflects the realities of participants’ lives and may also support the development of participants’ sense of agency and communication skills, increase their ownership over the project, and minimise power imbalances (Liebenberg, Jamal & Ikeda, 2015a).

Following three sessions with each of the young people, all the individual interviews were pulled together to form a coherent whole through a further layer of cross case analysis. The participants were invited to comment on the final findings and, in a group session, they helped to design a PowerPoint presentation to cover the ‘deliver’ element of the AI cycle. There suggestions were to be disseminated to different groups of professionals including the school staff and other groups of Local Authority professionals. They also chose to present these findings themselves to some of these groups. In this way, the participants became integral to the dissemination of the research findings, which involved an action planning workshop with school staff, to incorporate both the young person’s views and school staff in the ‘design’ and ‘deliver’ aspects of the AI. This resulted in some of the young people’s proposals being implemented in school, such as the use of a ‘worry box’ where pupils could leave a message for staff, a ‘chill-out’ room and whole school training for staff on attachment. Involving young participants in dissemination can be beneficial at both an individual level and organisation level, supporting development of participants’ communication skills, sense of agency, ownership and responsibility in the world, and bringing professional attention to the young people’s views so professionals are better equipped to implement practice and services that will meet their needs (Liebenberg, Jamal & Ikeda, 2015b).

![Figure 4. Overview of AI sessions with school staff and young people](image-url)
Study Two

Methodology

Participants

After the completion of study one, four out of the five participants were interviewed again to explore their views regarding being involved in the piece of research. The fifth participant, Danni no longer attended the school where the research took place and she decided she no longer wanted to participate in the research.

Table 2: Participant Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>Age when became LAC</th>
<th>Number of care placements</th>
<th>Number of school placements (including primary schools)</th>
<th>Amount of time in current school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danni</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data gathering

Interviews were semi-structured with a similar appreciative frame to study one, exploring participants’ thoughts regarding ‘what was good about being involved?’, and ‘how could it be even better?’. It was anticipated that continuing with a format with which they were comfortable would support engagement and participants seemed comfortable to discuss their views without requiring a great deal of structure. It was acknowledged that the participants may not feel able to share any negative perceptions they had regarding the research with me and so I attempted to frame it openly stating that they would be ‘giving advice which could be used to improve research with other young people’. The aim was to create an environment where they had a sense of responsibility and felt comfortable to be honest and constructive. Throughout study one I had observed the young people would correct me during member checking and had felt comfortable offering suggestions regarding dissemination, suggesting they were confident to share their views.
They were encouraged to write down key thoughts on post-it notes or if they preferred I took notes using their language. This again enabled some initial grouping of ideas at the end of each interview. I then transcribed each interview for further analysis.

The Research Diary

I kept a research diary for the duration of the study to encourage self-reflection and to provide additional data in relation to the proposed research questions. Reflexivity is a particularly important concept within qualitative research as the research process is subject to a number of influences and it is important these are identified and efforts are made to understand how they could impact outcomes (Nadin & Cassell, 2006). A research diary provides an opportunity to collate information regarding the researcher experience, actions taken, and the research process and can therefore contribute to the trustworthiness of a research study (Hughes, 2000; Jasper, 2005).

Research diaries are also a tool which enables a researcher to critically evaluate progress, feelings, thoughts, insecurities and insights; they develop ideas and fluency, encourage reflexivity, and enable a researcher to map complex structures and relationships (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006).

Entries were organised chronologically made immediately after each visit if possible (Nadin & Cassell, 2006). If this was not possible reflections were jotted down elsewhere or audio recorded and added to the diary at a later stage. Ongoing reflections which occurred between contact with participants were also recorded as these developments contributed to the progression of the research process. The entries included contextual observations; reflections on my role, on the design of the research and on the data gathering processes; as well as any ethical considerations that arose. Efforts were made to separate descriptive elements and interpretive elements (Altrichter & Holly, 2005) to ensure accuracy at the analysis stage.
Analysis of the data
A thematic analysis of data was conducted which aimed to be thorough, systematic and robust (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach acknowledges and celebrates the flexibility characterised within a thematic analysis strategy whilst stressing the need to be rigorous and methodological to provide trustworthy and insightful findings.

The data sets (participant evaluation interviews and researcher diary) were analysed inductively to provide a rich description of the predominant themes raised from the participants and my points of view respectively (Patton, 1990). However, it is not possible for a researcher to be completely free of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and so there will inevitably be some level of subjective interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis started with the reading and rereading of data, searching for meanings and patterns. Some initial notes were made with ideas for coding. This next phase involved the production of initial codes, I worked systemically through the entirety of both data sets, coding each data item. Codes are the most basic element of the raw data. This is the first stage of interpretation where data will start to be organised into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). I coded the data manually, by initially writing notes on the texts. After all data had been coded and collated together within each code a long list of the different codes was produced on post its. This involved sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes, including both sub-themes and main-themes. Sub-themes are essentially themes-within-a theme. They can be useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. This led to a number of stages of reviewing and refining themes until they formed a comprehensible pattern (see Appendix A). Finally, these themes were used to create a thematic map which encompassed both mine and the participant views as whole. At this level, I considered whether the thematic map accurately reflected the entire data set and final adjustments were made (see Fig 2.).
In order to yield results which are both meaningful and useful it is imperative that qualitative research is conducted in a rigorous and methodical manner (Attired-Stirling, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced criteria - credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability - to refine the concept of trustworthiness and offer a parallel to validity and reliability criteria found in quantitative research (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Credibility is achieved when there is a good fit between participants’ views and the researcher’s representations. Suggested techniques to address credibility include as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, data collection triangulation and researcher triangulation. To meet the criteria of transferability and dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that researchers should provide both thick descriptions of what they did and an audit trail, so readers can clearly follow the researcher’s decisions. This information allows readers to then judge both the transferability of the findings to their own site and the reliability of the research. According to Lincoln and Guba the final criteria of confirmability is established once credibility, transferability and dependability are all achieved. In study one I had prolonged engagement with participants meeting several times over a number of months previous to this data collection, the research diary formed supplementary data to the youngster’s interviews, and preliminary findings and interpretations were checked by a fellow doctorate student and a university tutor. Furthermore, I have been explicit about the research process and have provided an audit trail to show how findings have derived from the data.

Findings

Analysis of the young people’s views revealed eight sub-themes, and analysis of the research diary revealed ten sub themes. Overall there were many similarities between participant and researcher views which allowed for the data sets to be encompassed under the same three main themes. However, there were also subtle differences which are represented by sub-themes.
The Research Process

The participants provided some insightful comments about aspects of the research process. They also offered views regarding ways in which they thought young people’s involvement in research could be improved in the future.

All participants made remarks on how they felt the variety of activities used in the interviews helped them to engage, with specific tools favoured by some participants for example one preferred drawing and one preferred using post-it notes. Participants also provided differing reasons as to why they found the use of activities beneficial, including them being fun and engaging, helping to formulate ideas or enabling reflection on feelings.

‘I liked the activity where we could have our own school or run a school, what would it be like. I liked doing that cause, like, you can see like different ideas then.’ (Clare)

In a similar way, to the young people, I reflected on how the use of tools and techniques to support the sharing of views seemed helpful in increasing their participation. Participants tended to have better focus, share more and grow in confidence, particularly during the ‘Ideal School’ drawing exercise. I also found that
participants seemed more comfortable taking control of sessions when there was an activity as opposed to when they were just talking.

‘I noticed today that drawing seemed to help both Jen and Anna to discuss things more. They went into a lot more detail regarding their views than when we just did more basic open-ended questions. Perhaps the activity (Ideal School Drawing) provided more time and space to reflect’ (Research Diary).

None of the participants shared any negative views regarding the tools used but Anna provided further suggestions of activities such as the use of a board game to help explore feelings, and the use of more drawing activities to ensure that sessions were as interactive as possible.

Clare stated that she would have preferred a group setting over interviews as it would provide opportunities for participants to ‘get different ideas from each other’.

Anna and Jen acknowledged that it was important to consider individual characteristics and their perceptions of themselves as this may impact how a participant engages with activities.

‘... like, I didn’t get bored, but some people would get bored quite easily.’ (Anna)

‘I would say it depends though on the type of person as to whether they’d like drawing or talking. It just depends. Like I think I’m a rubbish drawer, but it turned out pretty well and I was relaxed so I was OK about doing it. (Jen)

I also reflected on participants’ individual differences in attention span, confidence levels and communication styles. I responded to this by being flexible in my approach offering levels of choice and more or less structure to sessions depending on need.

I also felt it was helpful to have had an opportunity to get to know participants over a number of sessions as this allowed for my own learning and development in how to effectively plan for further sessions. For example, Sarah required more structure and prompts to participate and Anna seemed to benefit from more time spent on rapport building.
‘I feel like having a number of session helps me to get to know them a little bit and so I’m more aware of how much time to spend rapport building at the beginning of a session for example or whether they are likely to need more or less structure.’ (Research Diary)

Although having a sense of participants needs and tastes seemed to support participation, further adaptations were still necessary depending on participants’ moods or engagement from week to week. These changes seemed to result from factors such as feeling tired, presenting as bored or being upset about something outside of the research. A flexible approach where by tactics such as offering a break, providing snacks, opportunities for informal conversation and in one instance finishing a session early were all used during these times.

These views from both participants and myself suggest a need for researchers’ plans to be adapted to suit individual differences and preferences. However, there is also an argument to be made for creating an environment where participants feel comfortable and are therefore willing to challenge themselves and try activities they feel hesitant about, which could potentially lead to them learning new skills and gaining confidence.

The participants discussed how being involved in the research helped them to reflect on what was already going well in school and how things could be even better, and also enabled them to reflect on other aspects of their lives and reframe them more positively. These views seem to reflect the spirit of the AI framework used.

‘Well, I’m not sure, really. I think talking with you and thinking about the good things about my life and school just helped me be a bit more positive, or like think more about friendships, which just helped it get a bit better.’ (Sarah)

The possibility of change, either in their school or for other children, was important to Clare and Anna.

‘Because it made me, like, think about school and about how important it is, but like that it can change as well if you, like, get the teachers to listen to you.’ (Clare)
I also noticed that some participants were beginning to be more positive about school and wondered if this was related to using AI.

‘...despite Anna having a very difficult time in school of late and having often said she hated it she made a really positive comment about the school today and in particular one member of staff – I wondered if it is the AI structure that helped her to reflect in this way.’ (Research Diary)

All participants discussed their feelings about being involved in the research which included feelings of enjoyment, excitement and importance

‘I felt important, because erm, I was being involved in something and I actually enjoyed it.’ (Jen)

A further comment made by Jen summed up the ethos the researcher had been trying to establish throughout the project when she said:

‘We were doing about rights of children in assembly and the different rights they have, and this [participation in research] is one of them isn’t it?’ Jen

All four participants mentioned other incentives for taking part in the study including, getting out of some lessons, enjoying the snacks provided and getting a voucher on the completion of the research. In some instances there also seemed to be more intrinsic motivations linked to these such as feelings of comfort and appreciation.

Researcher/Participant Relationship Factors
The impact of the researcher/participant relationship on participation was a further theme. All the participants discussed researcher qualities that they felt had helped them to engage in the research.

‘Is there anything I could’ve done to have made you more comfortable?’
(Researcher)

‘just be nice, which you always are.’ (Anna)

All the participants talked about how the interactions with me made them feel with some describing feelings relating to being comfortable and relaxed and others to feelings of being valued.
‘It was good to feel like people are listening. I felt like I was respected.’ (Sarah)

Sarah in particular shared that the opportunity to talk to someone was the aspect she appreciated most about the research.

Analysis of the research diary found that I had felt time spent ‘rapport building’ had a positive impact on the participants’ engagement and reflected that the use of humour, using informal conversation and using the children’s language all helped to create an environment whereby participants felt comfortable. Once again, individual differences were noticed to impact upon this, with some participants seeming to benefit from more time spent on rapport building than others.

‘Dannie seemed to respond well to humour and general chatting – she appeared relaxed and motivated telling me she thought she would have a lot of helpful things to tell me as she had been to three different schools and so had a lot of experiences.’ (Research Diary)

There were several entries in the diary whereby I commented on participants’ non-verbal communication and what this might mean. In some instances, it seemed to me to be more straightforward where a simple adjustment in my response or to the structure of a session was sufficient. For example, providing a break to a participant who presented as ‘fed-up’ or offering reassurance to one who seemed insecure about her drawing skills. However, at times it led me to question more complex ethical issues such as consent and right to withdraw and whether the young people would feel comfortable exercising this right if they wished to. These reflections resulted in me being attentive towards their behaviour and responses towards me at all times, and revisiting consent regularly, not taking consent for granted from start to finish.

‘Sarah seems quite reticent at times and I have been wondering whether it’s just shyness or whether she would rather not be taking part but feels unable to raise this with me. In our session today, I spent time going over how people can change their minds about things and that’s OK and how did she feel about remaining involved. She said she was enjoying them and wanted to continue but I still felt that she seemed a bit uncomfortable. I catered for this by using
more prompts, this helped her open up, and she seems to respond well to hypothetical questions.’ (Research Diary)

**Ethical Considerations**

Anna and Jen discussed ethical issues, although they had seen the information sheets and signed the consent forms they didn’t feel clear on the researcher’s role and were not always updated with essential information, such as when the researcher would be coming in. Anna described feeling ‘weird’ about this and Jen stated her first impression was ‘oh no, not another person, again’. Jen then talked about the number of professionals in her life and how this could feel overwhelming and Anna shared information on an incident in the past, whereby an adult came to see her a few times and then left and she had felt confused over their role and purpose of this. This raises important questions regarding the ethics of a researcher becoming involved and managing any potential adverse effects of this. Anna and Jen felt that further conversations regarding my role and the purpose of the research helped to minimise any negative feelings.

‘As soon as you explained who you were and what we were doing. I was, like excited to do it.’ (Jen)

Therefore, revisiting informed consent was an important factor in ensuring participants were happy to engage. However, I am aware that it may have been much more difficult for them to decline to participate once face to face with me.

Ethical issues were raised frequently in the research diary. Entries showed that different adults impacted upon the research and potentially the children’s participation in various ways. Firstly, I reflected on a number of issues I had had engaging with adults during the research process which included difficulties getting in contact with social workers to gain consent and issues keeping in contact with school staff. There appeared to be different reasons for this including staff being busy, a lack of understanding regarding the purpose of the research and a lack of motivation to be involved. At times the impact of this on the research was considerable, with delays to data collection due to issues gaining consent and two members of school staff disengaging from the latter stages of the AI cycle. I made
attempts to improve relationships with the key adults by taking steps such as sharing information, gaining their views and making efforts to keep in touch regularly. I reflected that the AI model seemed helpful in reducing any anxieties regarding the research and improving motivation. In one example a social worker changed her mind about consenting to Anna and Jen participating once she understood the ethos behind AI. It also seemed to relieve tensions with school staff, perhaps because they felt under less scrutiny.

‘I emailed the social worker outlining the project in more detail, highlighting the use of the AI framework and its positive focus. I added in some information about the positive impact being involved in this type of research can have on participants too, and today she emailed back agreeing that Anna and Jen can take part. I’m wondering how much it was to do with this email, but possibly AI is helpful in getting adults on board.’ (Research Diary)

An additional sub-theme in the data was a need for me to be aware of my own agenda and how this may impact upon participation. I reflected on how sometimes I had anticipated areas the young people might want to discuss, and I had to be conscious not to lead them with any questions or comments. Also, there were occasions when I was asked quite specific questions by school staff regarding the nature of my discussions with the young people. This bought about a conflict in me regarding how to maintain both confidentiality and my relationship with the adults.

There was a possibility that the young people may feel they had little choice over their involvement and may have viewed it as ‘school work’ as it was school staff that chose the participants for the study which then took place in school. Attempts were made to minimise this by differentiating both the sessions and the researcher from typical school work and school staff. A room was used in school with comfortable chairs and art work on the walls and snacks were provided. I wore informal clothes and advised the participants they could call me by my first name. Most importantly I emphasised the choice and control that participants had in the different stages of the research.
Confidentiality was another sub-theme found in the data. School staff on occasion questioned me on the nature of my discussions with the young people. Answering such questions would have been a breach of participant confidentiality. I found talking more generally about answers the young people had given and using humour helped to diffuse these situations.

‘Today I found myself being questioned by the deputy head about what Dannie had been sharing in her meetings, I felt quite conflicted, with a need to please her but also maintain Dannie’s confidentiality. I skirted around the issue and made some general comments about how the research is going - hopefully this will suffice.’ (Research Diary)

Safeguarding disclosures was a further sub-theme. Anna and Danni shared information of a safeguarding nature which I had felt must be shared to keep them safe, however I was mindful that this should be managed carefully to try to maintain the rapport built and the young person’s sense of agency. In both instances I had a conversation with the young person about their concerns and offered some choice about how to proceed. In one instance this worked well, and the young person choose a member of school staff she was happy to talk to and this was arranged following the session. In the second example although the participant said she would like me to pass on the information to her foster carer her presentation changed somewhat, and she seemed reticent the following session. Although the limits of confidentiality had been explained in both the information sheet and during the first session, I reflected that it would have been better practice to revisit this more regularly with participants.

**Discussion**

This section discusses the key findings; consideration is given to the methodologies used, identifying factors which influenced participation as identified by participants and researcher. The impact of relationship factors and the context where a piece of research takes place are also discussed before reflecting on ethical implications.
The range of techniques was felt to help promote engagement in this study, supporting motivation, reflexivity and providing participants with increased agency over sessions. Data from the research diary also suggested that activities, in particular the drawing tended to stimulate conversations more than using straightforward questioning alone. Harden, Scotts, Backett-Milburn, and Jackson (2000) also found that young people tend not to give as long answers to open ended questions as adults and McLeod (2007) suggested that open-ended questions can be ineffective when working with looked after children and suggested more creative ways of engaging them, such as using artwork. However, Punch (2002a) found in interviews with 13-14 year olds they had no preference over questions or activities and most looked after children in Hallett, Murray and Punch's (2003) study indicated a preference for straightforward questioning rather than any other techniques.

Looked after children are not a homogenous group and there will not be a universal method to account for their differences in preferences and competences. To address this issue Punch (2002a) recommended combining traditional research methods used with adults and techniques considered to be more suitable for use with children. A key finding in this study was the need to be flexible and responsive to the participants' mood and level of engagement and offer some choice to participants regarding which methods they engaged with. Additionally, keeping a research diary which encouraged ongoing reflection was supportive of ensuring methods were motivating.

Building a relationship and getting to know participants over time also helped me to prepare and adapt sessions to suit individual differences, and seemed to help the young people feel comfortable to participate meaningfully, resulting in a greater understanding of their views and experiences beyond a one-off interview (Punch, 2002b). McLeod (2006) and Bell (2002) stress that spending time developing supportive relationships and researchers having the necessary skills to effectively do this, are important when working with marginalised or disaffected young people. However, this raises the issue of what happens when this relationship ends when the research is over? This consideration is of particular importance when taking into account that looked after children often have a number of professionals involved in
their lives and changes in placement, school and social worker are not uncommon (Trout, Hagaman, Casey, Rei & Epstein, 2008; Dent & Cameron, 2003). It is therefore important that researchers consider carefully the ethics of becoming involved and building a trusting relationship which will be short term and cease when the research is completed. Two participants, Anna and Jen, mentioned this issue in their evaluation. For them it was important to have a clear understanding of my role and the purpose of the research, as well as what it involved, to relieve their uncertainties.

Ensuring the research has benefits to the participants which outweigh any potential negative impact is also important. Findings in this study suggest that AI may be an effective methodology for this. Participant evaluations revealed that being involved in the research helped them to frame aspects of their lives more positively. Additionally, the idea of participating in something which could lead to change both in their school and in other settings was motivating and empowering for participants. AI has been found to inspire participants to experience positive emotions (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, 2000; Calabrese, Hummel, & San 2007) and participatory action research can lead to reduced stress, increased self-confidence, improved wellbeing and enhanced performance (Punch, 2002b; Sekerka & McCratty, 2004). It may be that the positive emotion experienced also contributes to longer term positive outcomes. Frederickson’s broaden and build theory (2001) posits that experiences of positive emotions broaden individuals’ thought processes and actions in the moment and over time and these effects accumulate and compound building psychological resilience and enhancing emotional wellbeing.

However, using AI was not without its challenges, I felt it placed a duty on me to manage both the young people’s expectations and advocate for them when adult stakeholders were less committed due to time constraints or not feeling the research was of interest or relevance. It has been acknowledged that involving children in participatory research can be complex as the context the research takes place in can limit the researcher’s facilitation of children’s agency (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Mason & Hood, 2011). In this study, challenges occurred at the gaining consent and dissemination phases as well as when trying to implement the action element of the AI methodology with school staff. Willumsen, Hugaas and Studsrød, (2014) argue
that although children may have interesting and alternative proposals for actions their proposals are seldom carried out. They questioned whether the empowerment element of participatory research with children is genuine, or merely a slogan which justifies the involvement of children in otherwise contentious research.

These issues place responsibilities on researchers to make attempts to address structural issues as well as working directly with children (Mason & Hood, 2011). In this study I found a need to continually attempt to build relationships with adults, reassure them and occasionally challenge their views. Using the AI framework itself seemed to help engagement with adult stakeholders at times by reducing anxieties and scepticism. These efforts did ultimately result in some positive changes suggested by the young people, including the implementation of a ‘worry box’ and the children designed a ‘chillout’ room with the help of some staff. Bragg (2007) argues that it is important to recognise the demands this type of research can place on teachers including challenges to their professional identities and changes in their relations with children and other staff. She added that it is important to recognise and even validate such reservations. In future research I would spend increased time exploring these issues and assessing the motivation and commitment of the adults involved before and during the research. Ultimately, as Christensen & Prout (2002) argue, there may be some circumstances when the effects of completing research with children in a particular context mean researchers should refrain from using a certain methodology or from carrying out the research in that setting at all.

Ensuring participants have a good understanding of the role of the researcher, the purpose of the research and their rights impacted on participation and needed to be continually revisited forming an important part of the ongoing, everyday process of the research (Christensen & Prout, 2002), particularly in relation to confidentiality and consent. Furthermore, although procedural ethics can offer important support and guidance, (Alderson & Morrow, 2011), they are often not sufficient to guide decisions about what researchers ought to do in the more nuanced situations where ethical issues occur in the moment. Little is known or shared about the specific nature of these dilemmas, the decision-making processes involved, the actions taken, and the affective responses to these and this can leave some researchers feeling
uncertain, threatened or isolated (Graham, Powell & Taylor, 2015). There were times in this project where I felt inadequately prepared for issues that arose, for example the impact adults could have on aspects of the research, and how to respond to safeguarding disclosures to ensure the young person’s safety but to do this in a way they were comfortable with and that maintained our relationship. It was important to repeatedly reflect on methodological and ethical developments and to be self-aware regarding the impact my actions were having on those involved. The research diary, ongoing conversations with my university tutor and conversations with the participants and key adults all seemed to support this process. The relationships I had fostered with the young people and some of the adults also allowed for open and frank discussions to take place at these times.

Research with children requires consideration of reflexivity, rights and relationships to minimise ethical issues (Graham et al., 2015). Reflexivity entails a self-awareness regarding the researchers’ academic and non-academic thoughts, feelings and experiences which may impact upon choice and implementation of the research. Rights refers to researchers having a responsibility to respect the rights, wellbeing and human dignity of all children in research. Relationships refers to the many connections between people involved in the research context which requires considerable awareness, respect, skill and creativity to ensure the children’s rights and wellbeing remain a shared, paramount interest throughout (Graham, Powell, Taylor, Anderson & Fitzgerald, 2013). Moreover, researchers should be open and honest in their reporting on methodical processes, ethical dilemmas and how they are managed, so researchers can share experiences and learn from one another further adding to best practice (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Graham et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Participatory methodologies offer opportunities for looked after children to engage in research which is motivating and empowering, as well as having the potential to implement positive changes at both individual and organisational levels. Participatory research also requires researchers to be self-aware and reflective of the research process to maximise the young people’s experiences and to ensure
meaningful data is gathered. This involves ongoing careful and critical consideration of relationship factors (between both the researcher and participants and the researcher and other key stakeholders), the impact context has on the research, and a focus on specific ethical issues. Finally, a willingness to share experiences with other researchers will encourage the development of good practice in this currently emerging area.
References


Thesis Paper Three

The Dissemination of Evidence to Professional Practice

The aim of this paper is to consider the significance of the findings from the systematic literature review and empirical paper and to reflect upon the value of this research for the school and Local Authority where the research took place, and the utility beyond this for the wider practice of professionals and researchers. This paper begins by outlining concepts of evidence-based practice (EPB) and practice-based research, and then reviews different models for dissemination of research. It then concludes with a strategy for promoting and evaluating the dissemination and impact of the research described in this thesis.

Evidence-Based Practice and Practice-Based Evidence

*Evidence-Based Practice*

EBP can be defined as “the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best practice evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients” (Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes & Richardson, 1996, p.71). It originated in the medical sector with the aim of helping professionals to base their practice on the best current available evidence (Department of Health, 1998) and developed as a consequence of wide variations in the health services being offered to patients across Britain (Department of Health, 1998), which were thought to represent a lack of consistency, quality and equality (Fox, 2003). More recently EBP has become established in other areas such as social care and education.

For professionals to demonstrate EBP they need to be able to evaluate research evidence. Therefore, a key element of EBP is the research hierarchy (figure. 5), which can be used to judge the quality of research on which the evidence is based (Fredrickson, 2002). Situated at the top of the hierarchy are systematic reviews of a number of randomised controlled trials (RCTs), and at the bottom, qualitative research, such as case studies, which are viewed as weaker forms of evidence in terms of evaluating efficacy of practice.
However, this hierarchy has been criticised with some arguing that although the benefits of clinical interventions have been demonstrated in controlled settings, small to insignificant effects tend to be found when they are tested in the real world. Individuals can present with complex difficulties and may need a range of integrated services that change over time and require more than good science, and factors such as professional’s characteristics; professional knowledge and relationships with the individual may all be important (Barnes, Stein & Rosenburg, 1999).

Evidence-Based Practice and Educational Psychology

Educational psychologists (EPs) are encouraged to use EBP in the UK and it is a current standard professional requirement of the Health Care and Professions Council (HCPC) (2015). Additionally, Norwich (2005) argues that EPs need to keep up to date with psychological research evidence as this would strengthen their role. However, there has been much deliberation about the use of EBP in educational psychology, with some EPs questioning the validity and practicality of implementing evidence from randomised trials in the educational setting (Fox, 2003; Van Daal, 2015). These views are aligned with what Clarke (2004) defines as ‘Natural Psychology’, which argues psychologists should be prepared to compromise on scientific rigour in the interests of ensuring that research is more suited to the needs of their clients than those of others in research circles. As Fredrickson (2002) stated, whilst randomised trials are seen as ‘gold standard’ in evidence they may not always be the most appropriate to answer certain research questions and a researcher should then work their way through the hierarchy finding the methodology which is fit for purpose.

Figure 6. Traditional Hierarchy of Evidence (Fredrickson, 2002)

1. Several systemic review of randomised controlled trials
2. Systemic review of randomised controlled trials
3. Random controlled trials
4. Quasi-experimental trials
5. Case control and cohort studies
6. Expert consensus opinion
7. Individual opinion
Additionally, an EP’s outlook on EBP will be impacted by the epistemology, or theory of knowledge that underpins their professional practice (Fox, 2003). For example, if their views align with a positivist epistemology, then they will rely more on objective scientific evidence to reveal a true nature of how society operates, as opposed to a constructionist who will believe that there is not one universally agreed upon truth and instead reality is constructed differently by all of us. The stance an EP takes will impact upon both the type of research they conduct and their practice in the field. Some argue that EPs are inevitably constructionists (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008) and so their beliefs and practices will not readily align with a positivist and scientific position.

Lilenfeld, Ammirati and David (2012) suggest that not basing practice on well validated techniques leaves EPs vulnerable to engaging in pseudo-science and questionable practices. They argue that school psychologists should be active, discerning consumers of research who endeavour to base their practice in the best available research evidence. They argue that this is the best safeguard against a host of ‘errors in thinking’. However there are difficulties in embedding EBP into EP practice, for example EPs feeling intimidated by research design and statistical analysis, ambivalent about the scientific basis of their work and pressured by time constraints are not conducive to keeping up to date with research (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen 2009; Fox, 2003; Burnham, 2013). There is also evidence to suggest that EPs tend to rely more on professional experiences and their skills as reflective practitioners than a recognised evidence base (Burnham, 2013; Fox, 2003). Additionally, a study in the United States found 83% of school psychologists reported relying on personal experience to inform their intervention practice, compared to 62% using reference books and only 47% using journal articles (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallington & Hall, 2002). However, it should be noted that there is limited research regarding EPs’ use of EBP and more research in this area is warranted before any overarching assumptions are made (Lilenfeld, Ammirati & David, 2012).
Considering both sides to this debate, perhaps Wolpert et al. (2006) definition of EBP is more apt for EPs: ‘the integration of individual practitioner expertise with the best available evidence from systematic research in order to reach decisions about client care’ (p.5), this takes into account the practitioner’s expertise and recognises that their experience and skills transcend applied research (The British Psychological Society (BPS), 2016).

**Practice-Based Evidence**

Practice-based evidence starts with the assumption that the real world is disorganised and there are many things that cannot be controlled (BPS, 2016). It can be described as ‘use-inspired basic research’ where research is based on a gap identified by policy makers and practitioners, and the findings can contribute to developing policy and practice (Stokes, 1997), and involves the safe trialling of innovative and novel techniques, with the aim of establishing a practitioner-led evidence base (Woods, McArdle & Tabassum, 2014). It has been argued that practice-based research does not lend itself to widely generalisable findings, but does provide new and valuable ideas on which future research can be based (Furlong & Oancea, 2005).

Furlong and Oancea (2005) propose four dimensions to assess the quality of practice-based evidence: epistemic (concerned with methodological and scientific robustness), economic (concerned with marketability, competitiveness and cost effectiveness), technological (contributes to purposivity, accessibility, enabling impact and operationalisability), and capacity (contributes to collective or personal growth of practitioners and policymakers).

The empirical research reported in this thesis had two components, study one was an appreciative inquiry of looked after children’s views on ‘what makes a good school?’, and, throughout, a record of researcher reflections were kept as well as participants evaluating their involvement, this evaluative element is reported here. The research was situated in practice-based evidence and it aimed to fill three main gaps which had been identified:

1) Despite the robust evidence regarding the difficulties many looked after children face within the education setting there is little research into interventions to support
looked after children in schools (Liabo, Gray, & Mulcahy, 2012); or what factors help or hinder the educational progress for these young people (Berridge, Bell, Sebba, & Luke, 2015).

2) Currently most research with looked after children limits their contributions and provides little opportunity for their individual constructs (Holland, 2009; Winter, 2006)

3) There is limited published literature detailing and evaluating methods used when obtaining looked after children’s voice in research.

This type of research falls into the ‘capacity building’ dimension of practice-based evidence described by Furlong & Oancea (2005), which focuses on enhancing ethically, authentic action rather than on the accumulation of theoretical knowledge. They argue that for a piece of research to be capacity building it should include elements of collaboration and self-reflection, and should seek to stimulate personal growth for those involved, which were key features of this research.

**The effective dissemination of research: outcomes and impact**

The development of evidence-based practice has led to recognition that research findings have to be more readily available and understandable (Fox, 2003). The dissemination of research usually happens at the end of a research project using methods such as a final report, journal article, book chapter and/or conference presentation (Keen & Todres, 2007). It has been suggested that researchers tend to pay attention to the scientific concerns of qualitative research but not the communicative ones and that the task of applying the research findings to practice, policy or people is frequently viewed as being beyond the scope of the research process (Keen & Todres, 2007). Wilson, Petticrew, Calnan and Nazareth (2010) argue that dissemination should involve the use of tailored materials that have been altered for targeted audiences, beyond the journal article or conference paper, so discussion of the meaning and application of findings is facilitated. They defined dissemination as “a planned process that involves consideration of target audiences and the settings in which research findings are to be received and, where
appropriate, communicating and interacting with wider policy and health service audiences in ways that will facilitate research uptake in decision-making processes and practice”.

To support this dissemination process, Wilson et al. (2010) completed a systematic review to explore conceptual/organising frameworks that could be used by researchers to guide their dissemination activity. They included twenty frameworks in their review which were based on a number of different theoretical foundations. The most prevalent was the Persuasion Communication Matrix (McGuire, 1969); with thirteen frameworks presenting as being based on this. The Persuasion Communication Matrix suggests that there are five variables that influence the impact of persuasive communications: the source of the communication, the message to be communicated, the channels of communication, the characteristics of the audience and the setting in which the communication is received. Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 1962, 2003) was the second most explicitly cited theory with eight frameworks mentioning it. Diffusion of Innovations offers a theory of how, why, and at what rate practices or innovations spread through defined populations and social systems, suggesting uptake occurs over time via a five-phase innovation-decision process (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation). A further two frameworks made reference to Social Marketing (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971), which focuses on possible applications of marketing and advertising principles in promoting research-based knowledge.

Harmsworth and Turpin’s (2001) framework was selected to guide the dissemination process of the literature review and empirical papers (see Fig 2.). The framework is based on the Persuasion Communication Matrix (McGuire, 1969) and was produced to help educational development projects engage in dissemination and therefore it seemed pertinent as the empirical part of this thesis was completed within an education setting. Harmsworth and Turpin (2001) suggest it is helpful to conceptualise dissemination in three ways: dissemination for awareness (for target audiences that do not require detailed knowledge but it is helpful for them to be aware of the research); dissemination for understanding (for audiences that can benefit from what the project has to offer); and dissemination for action (for
audiences that are in a position to bring about change within their organisations). Hamsworth and Turpin (2001) posit that a project that undertakes all three levels of dissemination will most likely pass through each of the stages in turn, as initially a project requires potential audiences to be aware of aims and objectives which may create intrigue for a more detailed understanding which is required if action or change is to occur.

1. What is dissemination?
2. What do we want to disseminate?
3. Who are our stakeholders and what are we offering them
4. When do we disseminate?
5. What are the most effective ways of dissemination?
6. Who might help us disseminate?
7. How do we prepare our strategy?
8. How do we turn our strategy into an action plan?
9. How do we cost our dissemination activities
10. How do we know if we’ve been successful?

Figure 7. Harmsworth & Turpin’s (2001) ten-step dissemination framework.

**Research Implications of the Current Research**

*Implications of Research for the Research Site.*
The findings from the systematic literature review could have some potential relevance for professionals at the research site, which was a High school in the Local Authority where the researcher was on placement during her doctorate training. The findings were related to ways to support the participation of looked after children in research, however could also be applied to gaining their views in practice. A variety of both child friendly and more traditional methods were found to be commonly used to engage with looked after children, and findings suggested that involving them in
the different levels of the research as well as paying attention to relationship and ethical factors, can support participation. Pupil voice provides opportunities for the active involvement of pupils in decision-making within their schools and it is suggested that it can have a positive impact on pupil behaviour, contribute to the development of emotional wellbeing and improve attainment and teacher’s practice (Davies, Williams & Yamashita 2006; Lodge, 2005; Ofsted, 2006). Therefore, the findings could be useful in supporting the school to consider ways in which to ensure a piece of work on pupil voice was meaningful, particularly when working with the looked after population. Considering research that suggests looked after children can often feel as though they are not listened to and have a lack of control and choice over decisions (Axford, 2008; Munro, 2001), involvement in such a project could offset some of the negative consequences associated with this.

The findings from the evaluation component of paper two were similar to that of paper one with the additional finding that AI was an effective framework to implement positive changes at both individual and organisational levels, as well as being motivating and empowering for participants. This therefore shows a potential methodology which can be utilised by schools (or Local Authorities and Educational Psychology Services) to gain pupil voice on a topic and feedback to school staff to develop school practice. Furthermore, an important aspect of the research was the role of adults and ethical issues on participation. For example, a particular finding was that the views and motivations of the adults involved could have a significant impact on the project, and it is important to address structural issues in an organisation as well as working directly with the young people. Bragg (2007) found that adult support for pupil voice is crucial in ensuring its success and sustainability of any projects within a school. She recommended that it is crucial to recognise the demands it places on teachers, for instance in changing their identities as professionals and their relations both with children and with other staff, and that efforts should be made to support teachers to make this transition more smoothly. These findings would be useful to support schools and other professionals to consider and reflect upon potential issues which may arise when planning and implementing a participatory project.
Study one described in paper two has direct implications for the school as it was an AI into looked after children’s views on what was good about their school and how it could be even better. Key findings from the study were that sensitive and calm staff, help making and keeping friends, support during transition, and help with learning were the things participants valued most about school. During the latter stages of the research, the participants also made suggestions for the future which included a ‘chillout’ room that could be used when children needed a place to go to calm down, a ‘worry box’ where they could leave messages for staff, opportunities for conflict resolution, and more choice regarding the structure of looked after children’s reviews and who attended them. As a result of these suggestions, the staff implemented the ‘worry box’ and a ‘chillout’ room which some of the participants helped to design. They also arranged whole school training for all staff on attachment.

As mentioned by Furlong and Oancea (2005), capacity building research seeks to stimulate personal growth for those involved. Therefore, further implications of the research described in paper two are in relation to any learning or change that occurred for both the participants and school staff involved in the project. During the evaluation component of paper two participants revealed that being involved in the research helped them to frame aspects of their lives more positively, such as school and friendships. This reframing seemed to lead to more positive emotions for some participants and resulted in real change in friendships for one participant. Additionally, the chance of change occurring within their school and in other settings was motivating and empowering for them. Although the school staff were not explicitly asked about any knowledge gained or change in their practice, being involved provided an opportunity for them to reflect and they also received feedback from the participants. This resulted in changes within the setting, (mentioned above), suggesting some shift in their thinking may have occurred. These experiences have been defined by Torbert (1998) as a series of processes within action research, comprising of first-, second- and third-person inquiry/practice, whereby, at each level, practical, relevant knowing is sought that is of value ‘for me’, ‘for us’ and ‘for them’ (Mead & Marshall, 2005). First person inquiry is concerned with both the
inquiry and action for oneself (i.e. the participants as individuals), whereas second person inquiry focuses on inquiry and action for the group (the group of participants and school staff). Third person inquiry looks to dissemination of findings to a wider audience beyond the group of action researchers which is discussed in more detail in the following two subsections.

**Implications at Organisational Level**
Both paper one and two include suggestions regarding how to support looked after children’s participation, and could therefore be relevant to organisations such as Local Authorities seeking to engage with looked after children. Local Authorities have a duty to listen to children’s views and take them into account regarding decisions that will impact their lives as laid out in legislation and government policy (the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the Children Act, 1984; the Children Act 2004). The findings in paper one and two could support the adults and looked after children to meaningfully engage in this process. After becoming aware of the research during a meeting, members of the Local Authority where the research took place have asked the researcher to help them to design and implement some systemic work regarding effective ways of gaining pupil voice with children with special educational needs (SEN). This illustrates the different levels of dissemination described by Harmsworth and Turpin (2001) as initially the project was described to members in the Local Authority to raise awareness but has now resulted in dissemination for understanding with the possibility of dissemination for action as a consequence from this.

Furthermore, the findings from the AI described in paper two, although specific to the research site could also be applicable at an organisational level. Findings such as the need for quality relationships with key staff, an understanding of needs, support around transition, and young people wanting more control in their reviews have also been found to be important in other studies (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Leslie & Mohammed, 2015; Munro, 2001) suggesting that they are not specific to the research setting. A feedback meeting has already taken place where the participants shared their views with the Virtual School Governing Body, and issues felt particularly relevant were discussed in more detail. One possible outcome from the meeting is
to explore the possibility of changing looked after children’s reviews so that they are more participatory and positive.

*Implications at Professional Level*

Paper one and two have implications for EPs who work within the systems and contexts that support looked after children. At a systemic level, EPs are well placed to work at a Local Authority and multi-agency level to communicate the results from the AI, and to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the findings. Additionally, on an individual child level, EPs are able to work with schools to ensure looked after children are receiving the provision they need to engage and progress with their education. This could include work around transition or supporting school to identify a key adult a child can relate to. The findings from paper one and paper two could also provide helpful guidance to EPs for when they are eliciting looked after children’s views during both systemic and individual work.

Paper one and two are particularly relevant to professionals wanting to carry out research with looked after children. The aim of these papers was to be transparent, reflective and evaluative on methodological processes and ethical issues, and it is anticipated that the papers will offer opportunities for other researchers to critically reflect on these factors to support the planning and implementation of research that is effective and ethically mindful. The findings from the literature review helped to inform the empirical study in this way, as the researcher reflecting on factors such as what data gathering tools to include, how to involve the participants and what ethical considerations might be important.

**Promoting and evaluating the dissemination and impact of the research**

To promote the main research findings from paper one and two to stakeholders, a dissemination plan was developed (see table 1) based on the framework provided by Harmsworth and Turpin (2001). The findings from the two papers were viewed as more or less relevant to different audiences, and so there were varying purposes to the dissemination. For example the findings from research paper one and two were only briefly shared with the research site and Local Authority as they do not require a detailed knowledge on completing participatory research with looked after
children, however, it was helpful for them to be aware of the research. The findings from the AI aspect were shared in more depth with these groups, as the aim of dissemination in this case was for action as they are the audiences in a position to bring about change within their organisations. As mentioned above, these dissemination strategies appear to have led to some change at the research site ('chillout room'/ 'worry box'/ staff training) and there are some potential outcomes at the organisational level (possible systematic work around reviews and pupil voice with children with SEN). The Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) (1997) proposes that “Dissemination has been successful when educational practice has changed in response to disseminated excellent practice” (p.2). It is currently unclear whether the strategies adopted by school will be effective and whether the Local Authority will implement any changes discussed, and so the researcher hopes to remain in contact with both the research site and key members in the Local Authority to review and evaluate ongoing practice in these areas.

The findings from both papers and from the AI are to be disseminated to EPs with the aim of increasing understanding as they can benefit from the findings even if it does not result in bringing about direct change. Finally, the findings from paper one and two are to be disseminated to those interested in doing research with looked after children, with the aim of increasing action and promoting new participatory research in the field.

A number of different dissemination methods were selected in order to achieve the aims, such as presentations, attendance at conferences and published journal articles. A presentation was designed by the researcher and pupil participants to feedback the findings from the AI to school staff and the key members in the Local Authority. Liebenberg, Jamal and Ikeda (2015) state that involving participants in the dissemination process can be a powerful way to attract the attention of the people who have the ability to directly impact their wellbeing and bring change to practice and resources. A multi-strand approach was used to achieve the second aim of developing EPs understanding of the research project. A presentation outlining the main research findings will be developed and presented to the Educational Psychology Service within the Local Authority where the researcher is on placement.
In order to reach a wider audience of EPs and other relevant professionals, the research will be submitted to academic journals and be presented at conferences. The literature review is being submitted to The British Journal of Social Work and the second paper will be submitted to The International Journal of Qualitative Methods. The researcher also plans to submit a paper detailing the AI element of the project to a practitioner or action research journal. Conferences have also been selected to further disseminate the research to professionals, for instance, it is hoped that the research will be presented at a number of conferences in 2018, including the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) conference and Manchester University School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED) conference.

Conclusion

EBP has become established within educational psychology over recent years and there are arguments that EPs should be basing their practice on research evidence, alongside other factors such as professional expertise, to safeguard themselves from engaging in questionable practices and to strengthen their role. Therefore, there is a necessity for research findings to be readily available and understandable and there are many frameworks available to support researchers in disseminating their findings. The current paper has outlined the potential implications of a recent research project on participatory research with looked after children and has described a dissemination plan for promoting the findings to a number of stakeholders for different purposes including raising awareness, developing understanding, and promoting action. The impact of the dissemination is ongoing and will be reviewed and evaluated with key stakeholders for effectiveness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissemination Target (stage 1 and 2 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
<th>Stakeholders (stage 3 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
<th>Timing (stage 4 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
<th>Dissemination Method (stage 5, 7 &amp; 8 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Responsibility of (stage 6 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
<th>Costing Considerations (stage 9 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
<th>Success Criteria (stage 10 of Harmsworth &amp; Turpin's framework)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research site – school staff will have an awareness of the findings from paper one and two</td>
<td>School staff at research site</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Discussion before Presentation of AI findings</td>
<td>To raise awareness which may increase curiosity and lead to understanding and/or action</td>
<td>MH (TEP)</td>
<td>Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
<td>School staff will have an awareness of factors that can effect participation with LAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research site – school staff will use the findings from the Appreciative Inquiry to inform their practice with LAC</td>
<td>School staff at research site</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Design and deliver Presentation</td>
<td>To increase action regarding effective support for LAC in school</td>
<td>MH (TEP) Participants</td>
<td>Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
<td>School staff will link support for LAC in school on research findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Authority – Virtual School Governing Body will have an awareness of the findings from paper one and two</td>
<td>Virtual School Governing Body</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Discussion before Presentation of AI findings</td>
<td>To raise awareness which may increase curiosity and lead to understanding and/or action</td>
<td>MH (TEP)</td>
<td>Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
<td>Members of the Virtual School Governing Body will have an awareness of factors that can effect participation with LAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Authority – Virtual School Governing Body will use the findings from the Appreciative Inquiry to inform</td>
<td>Virtual School Governing Body</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Design and deliver Presentation</td>
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<td>MH (TEP) Participants</td>
<td>Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
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<td>Activity</td>
<td>Responsible Parties</td>
<td>Date/Time Frame</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
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<td>EPs within the Local Authority will demonstrate an understanding of the main findings from paper one, paper two and the Appreciative Inquiry</td>
<td>EP team where research took place</td>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>MH (TEP) Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
<td>EPs will be able to describe some ways in which the study findings might influence their future practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPs will demonstrate an understanding of the main findings from paper one and paper two</td>
<td>EPs both nationally and internationally</td>
<td>By December 2018</td>
<td>MH (TEP) Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
<td>EPs will be able to describe some ways in which the study findings might influence their future practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researchers will use the findings from paper one and paper two to plan and implement participatory research with looked after children</td>
<td>Researchers both nationally and internationally</td>
<td>By December 2018</td>
<td>MH (TEP) Equipment, materials, printing, venue, travel costs</td>
<td>Future research with LAC will be linked to the research findings</td>
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References


Ofsted (2006) Improving behaviour: lessons learned from HMI monitoring of secondary schools where behaviour had been judged unsatisfactory. Available online at: www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet_content/Shared_Content/Files/improvbehav.doc


Appendix 1. Journal Guidelines

International Journal of Qualitative Methods

Manuscript Submission Guidelines

This Journal is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics.

This Journal recommends that authors follow the Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals formulated by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).

Please read the guidelines below then visit the journal’s submission site https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijqm to upload your manuscript. Please note that manuscripts not conforming to these guidelines may be returned.

Only manuscripts of sufficient quality that meet the aims and scope of IJQM will be reviewed.

As part of the submission process you will be required to warrant that you are submitting your original work, that you have the rights in the work, that you are submitting the work for first publication in the Journal and that it is not being considered for publication elsewhere and has not already been published elsewhere, and that you have obtained and can supply all necessary permissions for the reproduction of any copyright works not owned by you.

1. Open Access International Journal of Qualitative Methods (IJQM) is an open access, peer-reviewed journal. Each article accepted by peer review is made freely available online immediately upon publication, is published under a Creative Commons license and will be hosted online in perpetuity. Publication costs of the journal are covered by the collection of article processing charges which are paid by the funder, institution or author of each manuscript upon acceptance. There is no charge for submitting a paper to the journal.

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2. Article processing charge (APC) If, after peer review, your manuscript is accepted for publication, a one-time article processing charge (APC) is payable. This APC covers the cost of publication and ensures that your article will be freely available online in perpetuity under a Creative Commons license.

The article processing charge (APC) is $1,000 for regular articles and $1,500 for qualitative study protocols. Students are eligible for a special rate of $375.

3. What do we publish? 3.1 Aims & scope Before submitting your manuscript to IJQM, please ensure you have read the Aims & Scope.

3.2 Article types
3.2.1 Regular Articles: Methodological Insights, Advances and Innovations

These articles must clearly report a methodological insight, advance and/or innovation in qualitative or mixed methods research likely to be of interest, benefit or relevance to the global community of researchers interested in these methods. Papers should be intelligible across disciplines and expertise levels.

Submissions must focus substantially on methodological not substantive results. What the paper adds to existing methodological knowledge must be clearly stated in the manuscript.

Articles should be no longer than is necessary to contextualize and convey methodological insights, advances or innovations. Articles should fall between 3,500 and 7,500 words excluding references and abstract.

Provide an abstract, which effectively summarizes the content of your article, in particular its methodological insight, innovation or advance.

Provide two statements consisting of three points maximum regarding “What is already known?” and “What this paper adds?”

3.2.2 Qualitative Study Protocols

Many journals are now publishing study protocols. To further the development of qualitative methods, IJQM now accepts nationally funded study protocols for qualitative or mixed methods studies for inclusion in the journal.

These types of papers can help researchers:

- Share methodological ideas, insights, and practices
- Develop insights from cutting-edge and highly creative studies
- Contribute to the future advancement of qualitative methods
- Raise the profile of both the study and the researcher(s)

All protocols accepted by IJQM will feature as full indexed papers in the journal.

Focus of protocols Study protocols should not normally exceed 5000 words (excluding references). Protocols should be submitted in English according to the author guidelines of the journal and should include the following sections:

Background / Study justification / Summary of pilot work Give a persuasive overview to justify your study based on past research and theory, followed by details of any pilot work done to date.

Explanation and justification of method Give a clear, comprehensive, and detailed overview of which method you used, what you did, and why.

Sampling / Recruitment Give a clear, comprehensive, and detailed overview of the people involved in the study, what you did to recruit them, and why.

Data Handling / Analysis Give a clear, comprehensive, and detailed overview of how you handled and analysed your data, including how you will handle disagreements and/or team analysis.
Ethics Provide a summary of the main ethical issues raised by the study and how these are to be addressed.

Rigor Discuss the approach to qualitative rigor to be adopted and the steps to be used to maintain rigor.

Full copies of interview schedules/ Focus group schedules / Fieldwork plans Include full schedules if possible.

Criteria for review Protocols must detail empirical qualitative studies or mixed method studies with a substantial qualitative component (e.g., not quantitative studies / reviews) that have received peerreviewed state / provincial / federal / national funding; such studies would not be subject to further peer review prior to publication, but will still undergo review for final approval. Protocols which raise substantial ethical concerns may be subject to full peer review as per normal IJQM procedures.

Student proposals / non-funded / locally-funded studies will not be considered.

3.3 Writing your paper The SAGE Author Gateway has some general advice and on how to get published, plus links to further resources.

3.3.1 Making your article discoverable When writing up your paper, think about how you can make it discoverable. The title, keywords and abstract are key to ensuring readers find your article through search engines such as Google. For information and guidance on how best to title your article, write your abstract and select your keywords, have a look at this page on the Gateway: How to Help Readers Find Your Article Online

4. Editorial policies 4.1 Peer review policy Following a preliminary triage to eliminate submissions unsuitable for IJQM all papers are sent out for review. The covering letter is important. To help the Editor in his preliminary evaluation, please indicate why you think the paper suitable for publication. If your paper should be considered for fast-track publication, please explain why.

The journal’s policy is to have manuscripts reviewed by a minimum of two expert reviewers. IJQM utilizes a double-blind peer review process in which the reviewer and authors’ names and information are withheld from the other. Reviewers may at their own discretion opt to reveal their names to the author in their review but our standard policy practice is for their identities to remain concealed. All manuscripts are reviewed as rapidly as possible, while maintaining rigor. Reviewers make comments to the author and recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief who then makes the final decision.

IJQM is committed to delivering high quality, fast peer-review for your paper, and as such has partnered with Publons. Publons is a third party service that seeks to track, verify and give credit for peer review. Reviewers for IJQM can opt in to Publons in order to claim their reviews or have them automatically verified and added to their reviewer profile. Reviewers claiming credit for their review will be associated with the relevant journal, but the article name, reviewer’s decision and the content of their review is not published on the site. For more information visit the Publons website.
The Editor or members of the Editorial Board may occasionally submit their own manuscripts for possible publication in the journal. In these cases, the peer review process will be managed by alternative members of the Board and the submitting Editor/Board member will have no involvement in the decision-making process.

4.2 Authorship Papers should only be submitted for consideration once consent is given by all contributing authors. Those submitting papers should carefully check that all those whose work contributed to the paper are acknowledged as contributing authors. The list of authors should include all those who can legitimately claim authorship. This is all those who:

(i) Made a substantial contribution to the concept or design of the work; or acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data, (ii) Drafted the article or revised it critically for important intellectual content, (iii) Approved the version to be published, (iv) Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

Authors should meet the conditions of all of the points above. Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. When a large, multicentre group has conducted the work, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript. These individuals should fully meet the criteria for authorship.

Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group alone does not constitute authorship, although all contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in the Acknowledgments section. Please refer to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) authorship guidelines for more information on authorship.

All parties who have made a substantive contribution to the article should be listed as authors. Principal authorship, authorship order, and other publication credits should be based on the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their status. A student is usually listed as principal author on any multiple-authored publication that substantially derives from the student’s dissertation or thesis.

4.3 Acknowledgements All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an Acknowledgements section. Examples of those who might be acknowledged include a person who provided purely technical help, or a department chair who provided only general support.

4.3.1 Writing assistance Individuals who provided writing assistance, e.g. from a specialist communications company, do not qualify as authors and so should be included in the
Acknowledgements section. Authors must disclose any writing assistance – including the individual’s name, company and level of input – and identify the entity that paid for this assistance. It is not necessary to disclose use of language polishing services.

Please supply any personal acknowledgements separately to the main text to facilitate anonymous peer review.

4.4 Funding IJQM requires all authors to acknowledge their funding in a consistent fashion under a separate heading. Please visit the Funding Acknowledgements page on the SAGE Journal Author Gateway to confirm the format of the acknowledgment text in the event of funding, or state that: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

4.5 Declaration of conflicting interests It is the policy of IJQM to require a declaration of conflicting interests from all authors enabling a statement to be carried within the paginated pages of all published articles.

Please ensure that a ‘Declaration of Conflicting Interests’ statement is included at the end of your manuscript, after any acknowledgements and prior to the references. If no conflict exists, please state that ‘The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest’.

For guidance on conflict of interest statements, please see the ICMJE recommendations.

4.6 Research ethics and patient consent Medical research involving human subjects must be conducted according to the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki.

Submitted manuscripts should conform to the ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals, and all papers reporting animal and/or human studies must state in the methods section that the relevant Ethics Committee or Institutional Review Board provided (or waived) approval. Please ensure that you have provided the full name and institution of the review committee, in addition to the approval number.

For research articles, authors are also required to state in the methods section whether participants provided informed consent and whether the consent was written or verbal.

Information on informed consent to report individual cases or case series should be included in the manuscript text. A statement is required regarding whether written informed consent for patient information and images to be published was provided by the patient(s) or a legally authorized representative.

Please also refer to the ICMJE Recommendations for the Protection of Research Participants

All research involving animals submitted for publication must be approved by an ethics committee with oversight of the facility in which the studies were conducted. The journal has adopted the Consensus Author Guidelines on Animal Ethics and Welfare for Veterinary Journals published by the International Association of Veterinary Editors.

4.7 Clinical trials IJQM conforms to the ICMJE requirement that clinical trials are registered in a WHO-approved public trials registry at or before the time of first patient enrolment as a
condition of consideration for publication. The trial registry name and URL, and registration number must be included at the end of the abstract.

4.8 Reporting guidelines The relevant EQUATOR Network reporting guidelines should be followed depending on the type of study. For example, all randomized controlled trials submitted for publication should include a completed CONSORT flow chart as a cited figure and the completed CONSORT checklist should be uploaded with your submission as a supplementary file. Systematic reviews and metaanalyses should include the completed PRISMA flow chart as a cited figure and the completed PRISMA checklist should be uploaded with your submission as a supplementary file. The EQUATOR wizard can help you identify the appropriate guideline.

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British Journal of Social Work

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Appendix 2: Review Framework for Qualitative Evaluation/Investigation Research

D.Ed.Ch.Psychol. 2016

Review framework for qualitative evaluation/ investigation research

Author(s):

Title:

Journal Reference:

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<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<th>R2</th>
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<th>R2</th>
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<td><em>e.g. impact of researcher, limitations, data validation</em> (e.g. inter-coder validation)</td>
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<td>Comprehensiveness of documentation</td>
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<td><em>e.g. schedules, transcripts, thematic maps.</em></td>
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References


### Appendix 3. Overview of studies reviewed

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<tr>
<th>Author and year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aim and focus</th>
<th>Sample (who and how many)</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
<th>Quality assessment score</th>
<th>Appropriateness of focus score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barter, 2006</td>
<td>Discourses of blame: deconstructing (hetero)sexuality, peer sexual violence and residential children’s homes</td>
<td>Map children’s experiences of peer violence within residential children’s homes. Explore children’s definitions and meanings; examine professional understandings and evaluations.</td>
<td>71 young people; age between 8-17 years (44 boys, 27 girls) 71 staff including; residential workers, seniors and managers</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews and the use of vignettes</td>
<td>7.75; medium</td>
<td>1.5; medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewin &amp; Statham, 2011</td>
<td>Supporting the transition from primary school to secondary school for children who are Looked After</td>
<td>To elicit factors that stakeholders perceive as supporting or hindering the transition from primary to secondary school for Looked After children. To inform the principles that will underpin the development of a transition package for this group.</td>
<td>19 participants; 6 in year 6 and 13 in year 7 22 foster carer interviews, 19 teacher interviews, three interviews with Looked After Children Education Support officers, and a social work focus group</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>7.25; medium</td>
<td>2; medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgess, Rossvoll, Wallace &amp; Daniel (2010)</td>
<td>‘It’s just like another home, just another family, so it’s nae</td>
<td>To develop understanding of children’s experiences of living with kinship carers by offering them an</td>
<td>12 participants; age 11-17 (5 males, 7 females)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>8.5; medium</td>
<td>1; low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Title</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>different’ Children’s voices in kinship care: a research study about the experiences of children in kinship care in Scotland</td>
<td></td>
<td>opportunity to express their views about any aspects of their living situation that they felt were important.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My life in care: experiences of non-participation in decision-making processes</td>
<td>Lesson, 2007</td>
<td>To explore views of looked after children on: How did it feel to be care? How did it feel to be asked about it by a researcher?</td>
<td>4 boys; age between 12-14</td>
<td>Interviews, games and craft activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Care Just Changes Your Life”: Factors impacting upon the Mental Health of children and young people with experiences of care in Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Mullan, McAlister, Rollock, Fitzsimons, 2007</td>
<td>To identify the emotional, psychological and mental health needs of looked after children, To review and explore how to develop services that support young people with an experience of care through the transition to adult life</td>
<td>51 participants; age 12 plus, (27 female, 24 male)</td>
<td>In depth interviews and focus groups – use of projective techniques</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and physical activity in the lives of looked after children: a ‘hidden group’ in research, policy and practice</td>
<td>Quarmby, 2014</td>
<td>To explore: What are the sport and physical activity experiences of looked-after children? What meanings and values do looked-after children ascribe to their engagement in sport and physical activity?</td>
<td>5 boys; age 12-17 living in residential home</td>
<td>Observation and field notes, Interviews, Peer interviewing Mosaic approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>City of One: A Qualitative Study Examining the Participation of Young People in Care</td>
<td>Salmon &amp; Rickaby, 2012</td>
<td>To explore: The experience of involvement in the City of One production from the perspectives of young people in care, their cares and the professionals who worked with them</td>
<td>10 young people; 7 were female and 3 male, 4 foster carers, 1 residential worker and 2 members of a theatre company</td>
<td>Interviews during and post production</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

112
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stanley, 2007</td>
<td>Young people’s and carers’ perspectives on the mental health needs of looked-after adolescents</td>
<td>To discover what aspects of the looked-after experience they considered might contribute to mental health need and how they thought those needs could be best met. Carers were also surveyed and described which existing services they perceived as effective and what services developments might be relevant to meeting the mental health needs of looked after young people.</td>
<td>14 participants; 12-19 years, (boys and girls, doesn’t specify how many of each)</td>
<td>4 focus groups – separate for boys and girls</td>
<td>6.75; medium</td>
<td>2; medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Jones, Hunter, Sanford, Rahilly &amp; Ibrahim, 2014</td>
<td>Young People’s experiences of going missing from care: A Qualitative Investigation using peer researchers</td>
<td>Investigating young people’s experiences of going missing from care and to identify the issues that contributed to them running away</td>
<td>28 participants; age 12-18 (13 girls and 15 boys)</td>
<td>Peers interviewed participants using critical incident technique – six focus groups between 2-7 participants in each</td>
<td>9; medium</td>
<td>3; high</td>
<td></td>
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### Appendix 4. Table of Codes and Themes from Thematic Synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Descriptive themes</th>
<th>Analytical themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘They (focus groups) also ensured all research themes were adequately explored in recognition of the fact that there may be things that young people find easier to talk about in a group setting among those with similar experiences than in individual interviews’ (Mullan et al., 2007)</td>
<td>Shared experiences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Individual interviews were designed to help young people express their views freely whilst respecting their privacy’ (Barnes, 2007)</td>
<td>Maintaining confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘The flexibility of semi-structured interviews and the prompts ensured questions could be adapted to suit individual needs’ (Brewin and Statham, 2011)</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Methods used were adapted to suit the age and ability if the young people involved’ (Barnes, 2007)</td>
<td>Individualised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Projective techniques were designed to facilitate discussion’ (Mullan et al., 2007)</td>
<td>Facilitate discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Methods and tools used to increase participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…the wider study drew from the mosaic approach and sought to engage with looked-after children through a variety of participatory research methods.’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Engaging/Interesting</td>
<td></td>
<td>The research processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Such terms were considered less stigmatising and more familiar for the group participants.’ (Stanley, 2007)</td>
<td>Familiar language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Such terms were considered less stigmatising and more familiar for the group participants.’ (Stanley, 2007)</td>
<td>Less stigmatising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘…the use of activities and pictures with the two boys who were less articulate.’ (Leeson, 2007)</td>
<td>communication difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The informal nature also encourages participation and reduces anxiety for young people who are anxious’</td>
<td>Reduce anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About their reading or communication skills’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Not patronising children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘That said, it is thought that a combination of traditional ‘adult’ methods and child-centred methods should be used with young people so that they are not patronised by using only child friendly techniques (Quarmby, 2014)’</td>
<td>Not patronising children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘When asked about the suitability of methods used, the boys identified the need to avoid being patronizing...’ (Leeson, 2007)</td>
<td>Not patronising children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Two advisory groups, one made up of professionals and the other made up of 13 young people with experiences of care, were key in directing and informing the research at all stages.’ (Mullan et al, 2007)</td>
<td>Advisory groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Children’s interviews were piloted with children of the same age as those in the study...’ (Brewing &amp; Statham, 2011)</td>
<td>Piloting interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Discussions and revisions of interview schedule with peer researchers’ (Taylor et al., 2014)</td>
<td>Peer researchers involved in planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Discussions of artefacts lead by participants formed the basis of peer interviewing’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Participant lead planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘the interview questions were developed in collaboration with the participants, meaning the language and terminology employed was accessible to all of the boys’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Collaboration with participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘young people’s own research artefacts (photographs, maps, drawings, etc.,) are joined to talk and observations to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and everyday live’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Participants designed artefacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘participatory techniques provide participants with control over the agenda and how information is provided’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Participant control over agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Several meetings were held with the aim of being creative and flexible in each encounter.’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Creative and flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘participants were given as much choice as possible over how they participated in the research’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Participant choice over level of engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Research Process cont.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘participants were asked during the following week to comment on transcriptions, which provided an opportunity to modify information and share preliminary findings with the co-researchers’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Participants asked to read transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Feedback was offered after the completion of the entire research project, so that they might see how their work had been used and developed’ (Leeson, 2007)</td>
<td>Feedback given to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Based on the research findings, the Young People’s Advisory Group also created a poster that summarised the key messages in a format that was accessible to young people’ (Mullan et al., 2007)</td>
<td>Summarised key messages for participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘They themselves became involved in lobbying decision makers around both improvements in the care system and access to arts based project.’ (Salmon &amp; Rickaby, 2014)</td>
<td>Participants involved in lobbying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Through co-construction, the young people would be exploring their own experiences and commenting on the methods used to facilitate that process’ (Leeson, 2007)</td>
<td>Participants evaluating methods used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The researchers also spent 1–2 weeks in each home prior to ‘formal’ fieldwork to enable young people and staff to get to know us and for us to become accustomed to each environment.’ (Barter, 2006)</td>
<td>Meeting participants in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Weekly visits to the children’s home lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours, with observations and field notes recorded in a notebook...’</td>
<td>Meeting participants several times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...ensured the researcher got to know participants and vice versa’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>'Although I felt I had been clear about my role in their lives, this needed constant revisiting, as they tried to situate me within their experiences of adults and were inclined to view me as a professional, with power and authority in their lives.' (Leeson, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ultimately, involving young people through peer interviews can help redress power imbalances between researchers and the researched and maximise opportunities to hear young people’s views and explore their experiences’ (Quarmby, 2014)</td>
<td>Peer researchers to reduce power imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘..one has to encourage the development of relationships based on trust...In this process, researchers are showing their emotional side, occasionally answering questions and expressing feelings’ (Salmon &amp; Rickaby, 2014)</td>
<td>Use of young people with similar backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘An integral part of our study design was to use young people with experience of the care system to interview their peers. Their presence during data collection added an additional layer of support’ (Taylor et al., 2014)</td>
<td>Familiar setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Meetings, training and focus groups were held in familiar buildings’ (Taylor et al., 2014)</td>
<td>Give participants preference of location of data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Young people were interviewed either at home or in an informal room at the CHILDREN 1ST office, according to their preference’ (Burgess et al., 2009)</td>
<td>Convenient setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘One to one interviews took place in a setting convenient to the young people’ (Salmon &amp; Rickaby, 2014)</td>
<td>Breaks and refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘All meetings took place at the boys’ homes, in privacy, with occasional breaks for walks or refreshments.’ (Lesson, 2007)</td>
<td>Gaining permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Fourteen out of the nineteen potential children were interviewed. They were the children whose social workers gave permission for..’ (Brewin and Statham, 2011)</td>
<td>Give participants preference of location of data collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘The sample size was small, because of the size of the local authority and the gate-keeping procedures necessary to gain permission to interview Looked After children’ (Brewin and Statham, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gatekeeping processes</th>
<th>Accessing Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘It was important to encourage gatekeepers to think widely about the children and young people with whom they worked, to challenge, debate and overcome their view of the young people in their charge as incapable or in need of such overprotection.’ (Leeson, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negotiating with gatekeepers</th>
<th>Relationships with gatekeepers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘Once a relationship had been made with individual members of staff, several were inclined to think more inclusively, beginning to identify participants who would benefit from taking part.’ (Leeson, 2007)
Appendix 5: Ethical Approval

Manchester Institute of Education

UREC Approved Template Application Summary  MEDIUM Risk Research Projects

RIC Member Screening: Laura Black

SECTION 1: Student Details /Identification of the person responsible for the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Research Project</th>
<th>Supervisor Name</th>
<th>Yr of Study</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
<th>Research Paper</th>
<th>Pilot Study</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Appreciative Inquiry into the views of Looked After Children and Key Professionals on Belonging in a Secondary School Setting</td>
<td>Catherine Kelly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Match</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1 Student Name
Michelle Harwood

1.2 Programme
Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

1.3. The project is to be conducted by a student within the Manchester Institute of Education

1.4 Start date does not pre date approval

1.5 Student studying a course in MIE
### SECTION 2: PROJECT DETAILS

#### 1. Aims and Objectives of the Project and the main ethical issues which may arise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Principal research question clearly laid out.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>The academic justification for the research has been fully detailed.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2. Methodology

**2.1 Project Design** The proposed design is appropriate for the study.  

**2.2 Data Collection Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Personal Contact with the Participants</th>
<th>Personal Contact with Participants</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1/2.2.2/2.2.3/2.2.4 - 2.2.7/2.2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activities to be undertaken**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities to be undertaken</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 One or more postal questionnaires (or online equivalent) will be sent to potential participants, in an appropriate format.</td>
<td>2.2.1 Attending an interview/ focus group – format appropriate to participant group (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.7 ‘Other’ indirect activity appropriate to participant group</td>
<td>2.2.2 Questionnaire administered by the researcher – format appropriate to participant group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.3 Participating in an activity that is observed by the researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.4 Keeping a diary – format appropriate to participant group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.7 ‘Other’ activity appropriate to participant group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.8 Video or still image data collection – meets MIE guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.9 <strong>Research Experience</strong> in undertaking Interventions/assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA - None required</td>
<td>None other than those taught as part of the students’ <strong>professional training</strong> or forming part of existing <strong>professional role</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Professional role</strong> constitutes evidence of qualification and authorised current practice: For example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BSc Speech and Language Therapy and current membership of professional body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First degree plus PGCE or BA Primary/Secondary Education, and current employment as a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Degree/Diploma in Nursing and current employment in relevant health setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Experience in research methodology</td>
<td>Research Experience in research methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training constitutes successful completion of an EDUC course unit</td>
<td>Training constitutes successful completion of an EDUC course unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 <strong>Sampling</strong> is appropriate for the proposed research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 <strong>Analysis method</strong> is appropriate for the proposed design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 <strong>Ethical issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adults:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clearly identified.</td>
<td>The main ethical issues have been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ethical considerations/ issues reflect the amount of interpersonal contact the student will have with the participants. <em>That is whether the contact is indirect or direct. For example a large quantitative survey which is completed anonymously so the participant cannot be identified, is not going to raise the same ethical considerations as a project which in the main will carry out in-depth interviews with participants.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children/ Young Adults:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clearly identified.</td>
<td>The ethical considerations/ issues have been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect that the study requires that the methodology is not only appropriate for children but that it fully takes consideration of the need to take extra care.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate prepared to be adaptable and have thought through appropriate mechanisms to take account of participants becoming distressed or upset whilst participating in the research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Participants

#### 3.1 Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex and Age - Appropriate for study</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type - Appropriate for study</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research participants are adults able to consent</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research participants are children/young people</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.2 Vulnerable groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerable participant group(s)</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student has Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check/other evidence of background check, where research involves adults with learning difficulties or children/young people, and agrees to inform AEF if status changes.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Recruitment

#### 4.1 Permissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permission for the study to take place has been gained from relevant authority/organisation management.</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>Letter appended??</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional permissions have been gained from persons responsible for activities within sub-settings of organisations [for example College Principal and Course Director].</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Participant Recruitment</td>
<td>Direct Contact with Participants</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Contact with the Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indirect Contact with the Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1/4.2.2/4.2.3 Identification and advertisement of research will be via:</td>
<td>4.2.1/4.2.2/4.2.3 Identification and advertisement of research will be via:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories/ Electoral Register/ Databases in the public domain</td>
<td>Personal letters/ emails/ follow up phone calls</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website/Internet group</td>
<td>Posters / Advertisements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known or named client groups (students, etc) Where group includes pupils, junior colleagues etc, they will be approached by a neutral third party.</td>
<td>Known or named client groups (students, etc) Where group includes pupils, junior colleagues etc, they will be approached by a neutral third party.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person in authority via organisational records</td>
<td>Person in a position of authority via organisational records</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks and recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2.4 Information giving</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.2.4 Information giving</strong></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An information sheet has been prepared which gives participants full details of the project.</td>
<td>An information giving event has been fully described</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A non-reply will not be pursued beyond a single reminder.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other alternative and appropriate information giving procedure is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.4 Informer</th>
<th>Participants will be informed about the research by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student researcher</td>
<td>The student researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.4 Informer</th>
<th>Participants will be informed about the research by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person in authority</td>
<td>Person in authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.5 Accessibility of information</th>
<th>The information giving procedure has been prepared in a format that meets all individuals' communication needs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes Needs to include children. Done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.6 Decision time</th>
<th>The maximum decision time will be determined by the cut off date for return of questionnaires / completion of online questionnaires for the study (no minimum decision time).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2.6 Decision time</td>
<td>A decision period of two weeks should be offered to the participant to decide whether to take part in the study. However, where this is not feasible a shorter decision period, with appropriate justification, can be approved. In no circumstances can a decision period of less than 24 hours be accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.7 Use of incentives – None</td>
<td>4.2.7 Use of incentives – None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.8 Unintended coercion</td>
<td>4.2.8 Unintended coercion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect contact ensures anonymity and therefore no pressure to agree to participate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Record of Consent</td>
<td>4.3 Record of Consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1/4.3.2 Return/submission of completed questionnaire to accepted as ‘implied consent’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Participation</td>
<td>5.1 Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The questionnaires will take no longer than one hour to complete.</td>
<td>Individual/group interview - maximum 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diary – maximum 10 minutes per day over 2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Duration/Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/group interview</td>
<td>maximum 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>maximum 4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>maximum 10 minutes per day over 1 month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2 Benefits

Indirect benefits due to contribution of research to field.

### 5.2 Benefits

Indirect benefits due to contribution of research to field.

Direct benefits as consequence of trial of intervention.

### 5.3 Deficits

Disruption to regular activity

None

Where 'value laden' deficit occurs, such as a pupil unavoidably missing lesson time, measures are in place to provide opportunity to 'catch up'.

**Needs completing. Done**

### 6 Risks and Safeguards

#### 6.1 Physical risks

**6.1.1 Potential adverse effects/risks**

No foreseeable adverse physical effects or risks including potential for pain, discomfort, distress, inconvenience or changes to lifestyle have been identified, at the time of application, for research participants.

No or minimal adverse physical effects, risks or hazards for research participants are anticipated - including potential for pain, discomfort, distress, or changes to lifestyle - at the time of application, for research participants.

**Notes**
### 6.1.2 Precautions/measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If the activity is inconvenient then it will either be cancelled or rearranged for a time that is convenient for the participant.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If participants work in the same organisation where the research is being carried out then due care will be taken to ensure that the research will not interrupt normal organisational procedures.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If participants unavoidably miss out on a service or benefit, by attending a data collection session, arrangements will be made to compensate or reschedule the service for them</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.2 Psychological risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.2.1 Potential adverse effects/risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No individual questionnaires will ask questions on any topics or issues that would be considered by a reasonable person to be sensitive, embarrassing, upsetting, or likely to reveal criminal or other disclosures requiring action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No individual or group interviews/questionnaires will discuss topics or issues that would be considered by a reasonable person to be embarrassing or upsetting, nor likely to result in criminal or other disclosures requiring action. However, it is recognised that some topic may cause unanticipated upset or distress in rare cases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 6.2.2 Precautions/Measures

Where it is considered that there may be a **marginal likelihood** of a topic or issues being sensitive, difficulties are to be averted by a procedure of gaining ongoing consent. This will provide participants an opportunity to decline to answer particular questions or discuss particular topics.

### 6.3 Risks for the researcher

There are no foreseeable potential adverse effects, risks or hazards, pain, discomfort, distress, or inconvenience to the researchers themselves.

There are no or minimal potential adverse effects, risks or hazards, pain, discomfort, distress, or inconvenience to the researchers themselves. **Approved FRA or completed Low Fieldwork Risk Declaration (RREA Section D) provided.**

### 6.4 Early termination of the research

**Criterion**

Any unforeseen harm that cannot be resolved

**Declaration**

The researcher will inform supervisor/RIC of adverse event requiring radical change of method/design.

### 7. Data Protection and Confidentiality

---

Need to know about support available. Done

RREA form section C

yes

yes

yes
### 7.1 Data activities and storage of personal data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities:</th>
<th>Match</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic transfer by magnetic or optical media, email or computer networks</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Should be checked. Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of direct quotations from respondents</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Should be checked. Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of audio/visual recording devices</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing data with other organisations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export of data outside EU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Storage of personal data:**

<p>| Manual files                                                               |       |                                         |
| Home or other personal computers                                          | yes   |                                         |
| Laptop computers                                                           | yes   |                                         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University computers</th>
<th>Private company computers</th>
<th>NHS computers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 7.2 Confidentiality

Anonymity will be preserved by the removal of identifiers and the use of ID numbers or pseudonyms, breaking the link between data and identifiable individuals.  

Where links need to be preserved in order to match data sets in a repeated measures design, coding frames including participant identities are to be kept securely in a locked draw (or other secure location, e.g. encrypted data stick) accessed only by the researcher and separate from the data base.

Photographs or videos of participants will be stored as directed in the MIE policy on Video and Image Research.

### 7.3 Monitoring and auditing

The student’s supervisor will monitor the research

### 7.4 Data Protection

**Data Protection Act**

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes as outlined in the application and only used in the way(s) for which consent has been given.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adequate, relevant and not excessive</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not kept longer than necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed in accordance with the participant’s rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure— <em>on an encrypted storage device</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only transferred to other settings with appropriate protection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**University Data Protection Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will comply with UDPP</th>
<th>yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper/storage devices kept in locked draw/cupboard.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG: Data shredded destroyed when study completed/degree awarded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Privacy during data analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The analysis is to take place in a <strong>private</strong> study area by the student researcher conducting the study.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.6 Custody and control of the data</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student's supervisor <strong>will act as custodian</strong> for the data generated by the study.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student researcher <strong>will have control</strong> of the data</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.7 Access to the data</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student researcher will have access to the data generated by the study. In addition the supervisor of the student researcher may see the data, in order to guide the student in analysis of the data, but only when all links that could identify individual participants have been removed.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.8 Use of data in future studies</th>
<th>Will not be used in future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only with consent of participants.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where applicable has been addressed in information giving and consent taking processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Examples of Data Gathering

Example of Sentence Starters:

In the future: OK

I have attended all my classes (calm, hard work, work, work) students I get along with

* I have not been getting into trouble (listening to why it's going wrong, & punishments are sensible)

* I can come into school without dreading coming in

I can get awards for the things I've done well - motivation (costa + cafe)

I am... improving at everything

handling situations a lot better
calmed...
Example of Ideal school Exercise:

![Diagram of an ideal school layout with various elements labeled, including classrooms, teachers, and students.]

Example of Scaling Exercise:

![Written responses detailing student concerns and preferences, such as wanting more help in lessons, being less strict, and having a better school environment.]

- Teachers: They can be horrible, feel picked on, will back me out, not others (worse)
- Friends: Because of teachers mainly
- My school (new)
- Other friends: Because they get on better with friends

When teachers are in a good mood, easy lessons; when most people get on with each other (best)
Appendix 7: Example of Participant Analysis
Appendix 8: PowerPoint Presentation of Appreciative Inquiry Findings

Slide 1
AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL STAFF’S AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN’S VIEWS ON WHAT MAKES A GOOD SCHOOL

Slide 2
YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS

Slide 3
WHAT WE THINK IS GOOD ABOUT SCHOOL…
Chat about feelings when I need to

After contact with mum, staff know it’s happened and come and talk to me – it helps because I feel understood and listened to.

Stress balls, clicky pens, fidget spinners, mindful colouring books and word searches all help because they are calming.

I like weekly counselling where I can talk about my day.

Teachers who stay calm and don’t shout is important to me.

I like teachers who are calm, gentle, respect your feelings, sit there and listen, try to understand.

I like it when the teachers tell jokes and are sarcastic.

I get on with most of my teachers.

Teachers help you with your problems – like friendships.

The social skills group helped me make friends, sort issues within my friendships and think about my feelings.

The great balance of having fun and being free from argument, the whole focus on learning, the least challenging, for managing enquiries.

They all are really nice and I can talk about my own.
Help with our learning:

There's lots of good lessons and you learn new things. They help you understand the work and help you catch up.

TA explains things step by step and helps with grammar and pronunciation.

Extra lessons in core subjects after school helped. They planned it so I have extra time in tests.

Homework club with peer mentors really helps. They put on revision sessions for me because I couldn't concentrate at home.

In year 7 a mentor approached me and gave me support. When I first started, they put me in a class with friends I already had. They have a Buddy system in year 7 and 8 so pupils are not on their own.

Ms S helped me when I first got here. She helped me to settle and make friends because I found this difficult.

Other stuff we like…

Going on school trips
Work experience
Teachers make sure you've got what you need – shoes, books, food for cookery etc.

Playing sport

The food!
Slide 10

WHAT WOULD MAKE SCHOOL EVEN BETTER...

Reward or recognition for things I've done well in school. Like going to Costa for cake with a member of staff.

If staff are busy when you need to talk to them we could leave a note in a box so they can find us later on.

After an incident with a pupil or teacher opportunities to talk it out and try and sort it instead of going to isolation.

Teachers not shouting, staying calm and listening. Agreements and some choice would really help.

I'd like staff to understand what's wrong and not think it's because I'm looked after because sometimes that's just normal stuff.

Slide 11

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF

Teachers in class understanding why we are acting the way we are.

Staff not leaving when you need to talk to them.

Agreements and some choice would really help.

Teachers not shouting, staying calm and listening.

Slide 12

CHILL OUT ….

A place kids can go when they need it.

A room with bright colours, a sofa and bean bags, colouring books and music.

Calm lessons with music and water.

Work explained slowly and broken down.

Be allowed fidget spinners at break and lunch to help with stress.

A place kids can go when they need it.

A room with bright colours, a sofa and bean bags, colouring books and music.
Group work to help with feelings and how to react

After bullying or an argument with friends, group sessions to try and work it out.

A group to help support friendships where we all write something nice down about each other.

I would like it if there was more group work in lessons.

If there is bullying going on, they could find out what happened quickly and let us know what will happen next.

I would like it if the meetings, like LAC reviews, were more positive or I had more choice over what was shared and with who.

Confidentiality and privacy is important to me. I'd like some choice over who knows what and how they are told.

I'd like it if the meetings, like LAC reviews, were more positive or I had more choice over what was shared and with who.

Thank you for watching our presentation. We hope you enjoyed it.
AND NOW FOR A RECAP…

ADULTS’ VIEWS:

What we’re good at …

- Supporting SEN needs
- Information sharing
- Social support
- Extra sessions in core subjects
- Trips e.g. skiing, science excursions etc
- Peer support
- Buddy system
- Groups to develop emotional literacy
- Small groups to improve social skills
- Identifying a key person
- Signposting to other services

ADULTS’ VIEWS:

How we could be even better…

- Support for staff
- Transition
- Safeguarding
- Information sharing and communication
- Opportunities for staff to talk and reflect
- Training on attachment

How we could be even better…

- Improved relationships with carers when there’s no SEN
- Improved communication with agencies (e.g. CAMHS)
- Keep safe work and support for children at risk of sexual exploitation and going from missing to care
- Updating staff throughout the year RE safeguarding
- Enhanced transition from primary to secondary
- Enhanced transition from secondary to FE

Pupil profile for emotional, behavioural needs

Help to prepare YP for FE
WHAT'S NEXT…

- Thinking about similarities and differences between young people’s and adult’s views
- Focusing in on what you’d like to change
- Prioritising changes
- Action planning
Appendix 9: Extract from the Research Diary

Reflections on second meeting with S an MTAC teacher at Greenpark.

- What are the things that are good about Greenpark?

S needed quite a lot of structure.

She wanted me to ask questions if she'd talk but as time went on she chatted + led the conversation more.

She didn't want to engage in other activities but was happy for me to write notes on post its.

I should/could've asked the YO to have a think about how they would like to share their views with me last time so they didn't feel as on the spot/had more time to reflect?

Chatting in general sometimes + using humour seemed to help her relax.

I asked S if she minded helping me group the things we talked about together + label them. She seemed more confident + responded well to this task - took more control over the task + depended on me less than in main task.

I checked ongoing consent for me to keep coming back - didn't want to assume + felt she might not feel able to...
# Appendix 10: Table of Codes and themes from the Thematic Analysis – Participant Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Basic Theme</th>
<th>Organising theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked the activity where we drew our own school, what it would be like. I liked doing that cause, like, you can see different ideas then.</td>
<td>Use of drawings</td>
<td>Methods and Tools Used</td>
<td>The Research Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I also liked writing bits down on post its, cause I could, like, see it and organise it in my head.</td>
<td>Use of post-its</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the activities when we had to put it in, like, different bits.</td>
<td>Use of grouping ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because it made me think about school and how important it is, but like that I can change as well.</td>
<td>Use of AI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was actually really fun.</td>
<td>Participant enjoyment</td>
<td>Participants Feelings About Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of something made me feel important.</td>
<td>Being involved in something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt important, because erm, I was being involved in something and I actually enjoyed it.</td>
<td>Participant feeling important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would say it depends though, on the type of person as to whether they’d like drawing or talking.</td>
<td>Use of different activities to suit tastes</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the activities would help people to get it a bit more than just talking.</td>
<td>Use of different activities to suit need</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I knew when I saw you that it was going to be fun</td>
<td>Perceiving the researcher as fun</td>
<td>Researcher Qualities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were nice to talk to, we had fun.</td>
<td>Perceiving researcher as nice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You listened and gave good eye contact.</td>
<td>Non-verbal communication of researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just being yourself, which you always are.</td>
<td>Perceiving researcher as authentic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You come across as very relaxed and understanding.</td>
<td>Perceiving researcher as understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It made me feel relaxed and like I could tell you stuff.</td>
<td>Participant feeling relaxed</td>
<td>Participant Feelings on Interactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was good to feel like people are listening. I felt respected.</td>
<td>Participant feeling valued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I’ve got someone to talk to, it was good to feel like people are listening.</td>
<td>Participant feeling listened to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once you explained what you were doing, I was like, alright with it.</td>
<td>Researcher role</td>
<td>Informed Consent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As soon as you like explained who you were and what you were doing I was like, excited to do it.</td>
<td>Purpose of research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, she told me you would be back in today which was good, so I knew you were coming.</td>
<td>Ongoing information sharing</td>
<td>Adults Keeping YP Updated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, the only thing that made it weird was I hadn’t got a clue who you were.</td>
<td>Adults not sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah and I liked the snacks.</td>
<td>Use of snacks</td>
<td>Use of Snacks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I also really liked the bit where I was missing lessons.</td>
<td>Missing lessons</td>
<td>Missing Lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like getting the voucher at the end, like, I wouldn’t have minded much if I didn’t get it but getting it was something to look forward to.</td>
<td>Use of voucher</td>
<td>Use of Voucher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethical considerations**

- Purpose of research
- Informed Consent
- Use of snacks
- Use of Voucher
- Missing lessons
- Missing Lessons
## Appendix 11: Table of Codes and Themes from the Thematic Analysis – Research Diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Quote</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Basic Theme</th>
<th>Organising Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah was very quiet initially, but she opened up more as the session went on – open ended questions seemed to help.</td>
<td>Open ended questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah benefited from more structure than some of the other girls and I was glad I had prepared a number of prompts in case they were required.</td>
<td>Use of prompts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna was keen to participate in drawing as opposed to talking and shared more, requiring less prompts.</td>
<td>Use of drawings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that the use of visuals was helpful in explaining my role and the AI framework.</td>
<td>Use of visuals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Methods and Tools Used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen seemed to find using sentence starters helpful to gather her thoughts on feedback.</td>
<td>Use of sentence starters</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Research Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I asked her if she’d like to organise the post its into groups and she presented as more motivated and confident in this task, taking the lead and sharing her explanations as to why she felt certain themes belonged together.</td>
<td>Use of post-its</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She seemed motivated by this and said she was excited to tell staff about some possible changes.</td>
<td>Possibility of change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite Anna having a very difficult time in school of late and having often said she hated it she made a really positive comment about the school toady and in particular one member of</td>
<td>Reframing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciative Inquiry framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>The Research Process Cont.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wondered if it is the AI structure that helped her to reflect in this way.</td>
<td>Structuring tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She needed quite a lot of prompts and structure.</td>
<td>Different communication styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have noticed some of the youngsters benefited from more structure than others.</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of visuals seemed to help her engage in the process more</td>
<td>Use of visuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an awareness of learning needs meant I could cater sessions to ensure I used simple language and had visual with me to help explanations.</td>
<td>Use of simple language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danni responded well to general chatting and humour.</td>
<td>Use of humour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like getting to know the participants over several weeks has helped them to feel comfortable and gain confidence overtime. I have noticed that Sarah and Jen in particular present as more engaged as time goes on.</td>
<td>Meeting children several times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General chatting seemed to help build rapport and increase her levels of comfort.</td>
<td>Use of informal chat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm mindful to use their language when I reflect back and write ideas down. I'm hoping this helps to reduce any power imbalance and makes it feel relevant.</td>
<td>Use of YP's language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She seemed a bit fed up by the scaling activity.</td>
<td>Participant non-verbal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sensed she was a little insecure about drawing so I reassured her it was just</td>
<td>Researchers response to participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher/Participant Attunement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Factors Cont.</td>
<td>Researcher Engagement with Adults</td>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a quick sketch and provided an example which seemed to help.</td>
<td>Having a key contact in school been crucial in arranging sessions, ensuring there is an appropriate room for us etc.</td>
<td>Key adult in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite distracted at times and needed more prompts – doodling seemed to help with focus.</td>
<td>Differentiation of sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should be mindful of how my expectations of what I think they might say may impact sessions. I found it hard not to lead sometimes.</td>
<td>Researcher wanting to take the lead</td>
<td>Keeping adults on side</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found myself wanting to answer her questions more fully, despite knowing that this would be a breach of confidentiality, as I wanted her to maintain our relationship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m aware that a lot of time has gone by since the initial meeting with the school staff so made efforts today to check in with a couple of members of staff just chat informally and update them on general information regarding the research with the aim of maintaining the relationship and the research stays in the mind of the adults that will be ultimately in charge of implementing any changes.</td>
<td>Regular contact with adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it might be worry/insecurity regarding what the children might be sharing behind these questions and so I reminded her of the positive focus of the research with the aim of reassuring her.</td>
<td>Reassuring adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time gaining adult views seemed helpful in ensuring their buy in. By the end of the focus group they made comments suggesting they were motivated and excited about the research.</td>
<td>Gaining adult views</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the beginning of the focus group some staff seemed a bit apprehensive about the purpose and focus of the research but by the end their position seemed to have changed and they seemed more positive and motivated and I wondered if it were the AI framework which supported this change.</td>
<td>Using a positive framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m struggling to get a date for feedback and I am wondering whether the staff are going to continue engaging with the process.</td>
<td>Lack of commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think one of the potential issues might be the significant amount of time that has passed since I first met with the adults and whether its fallen off their radar somewhat.</td>
<td>Long-time scales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They presented as somewhat defensive and I wondered if they felt a bit threatened by the research and were worried about what the children might say.</td>
<td>Staff feeling threatened by research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m having difficulties arranging a time when all staff are free to complete the feedback and action plan session.</td>
<td>Staff being busy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went in today for the meeting to find out it had been cancelled but no one had informed me.</td>
<td>Cancellation of meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I’m wondering if some of the lack of commitment now is also as a result of staff not having a full understanding of the commitment needed to engage with AI and in hindsight would’ve spent more time explaining this and exploring their commitment at the beginning stages of the research.

I have sent several emails about the feedback meeting but am yet to hear back – I’m quite worried about the impact this may have on the research overall.

The social worker replied today refusing for Anna and Jen to be involved as she felt they had too much going on at the moment.

Discussed if there was anyone in school she felt comfortable telling. She identified a learning mentor.

I explained that the information she shared would need to be passed on to keep her safe. She seemed quite willing to talk to her learning mentor so this was set up before I left.

She disclosed a safeguarding issue (self-harm). She advised she had told no one else.

I found myself being questioned by the deputy head about what the children had been sharing.

I am mindful that the school staff and social workers have already given consent and therefore need to ensure they feel able to refuse to take part if they don’t want to.
I’m aware that by coming into school they may feel like they have to participate, and they might view it as school work and want to give me the ‘right’ answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I’m aware that by coming into school they may feel like they have to participate, and they might view it as school work and want to give me the ‘right’ answer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of school as a location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am hoping that by designing research which gives lots of opportunities for the youngsters to decide how to engage with it that this will minimise these power imbalances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am hoping that by designing research which gives lots of opportunities for the youngsters to decide how to engage with it that this will minimise these power imbalances.</th>
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<td>Choice and control over research</td>
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