Educational psychologists’ changing role and distinctive contribution within the context of commissioned services

A Thesis Submitted to The University of Manchester for the Degree of Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

2015

Victoria Katherine Anne Winward

School of Environment, Education and Development
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<td>AEP</td>
<td>Association of Educational Psychologists</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWDC</td>
<td>Children’s Workforce Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CYP</td>
<td>Children and young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfCLG</td>
<td>Department for Communities and Local Government</td>
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<td>DfEE</td>
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<td>DFES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSG</td>
<td>Dedicated Schools Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECM</td>
<td>Every child matters</td>
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<td>EP</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPS</td>
<td>Educational Psychology Service</td>
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<td>HCPC</td>
<td>Health and Care Professions Council</td>
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<td>IBBS</td>
<td>International Bibliography of Social Sciences</td>
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<td>LA</td>
<td>Local authority</td>
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<td>LGMA</td>
<td>Local Government Modernising Agenda</td>
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<td>NCTL</td>
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<td>NHS</td>
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<td>New Public Management</td>
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<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special educational needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator</td>
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The University of Manchester

Victoria Katherine Anne Winward

Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

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May 2015

ABSTRACT

Following financial cuts introduced by the government in 2010, fewer funding and decision-making powers are held within local authorities, restricting their role as the provider of public services (Buser, 2013). As a result, the majority of local authority educational psychology teams have adopted a partially or fully-traded model of service delivery, with the aim of generating income to meet some or all service costs (Woods, 2014a). Educational psychologists have expressed concern about whether service commissioners value their distinctive contribution enough to purchase services (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). This study sought to investigate the response to trading and what impact this has had on the role of the educational psychologist, from the perspectives of service commissioners and educational psychologists. A multiple-case study design was implemented, following a mixed methods approach. Two partially-traded local authority educational psychology services were recruited. Participants from the emerging service included five educational psychologists and three small scale service commissioners. Participants from the established service included three educational psychologists, three small scale service commissioners and two large scale service commissioners. Focus groups, interviews and service brochures provided qualitative data, which were incorporated with quantitative service delivery data. All qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings were presented as thematic maps. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to describe trends in service use. Findings show that the impact of trading on the role and contribution of the educational psychologist has been largely positive. Trading appears to have had a regenerating effect by creating the opportunity for an extension in the type and range of work now being completed. The findings are discussed in relation to current and future educational psychologist role and give an up-to-date insight into why the role exists, who may be willing to pay for the role and how this evolving role fits within the broader political contexts of education, special educational needs and disability.

Keywords: educational psychologist, distinctive role, commissioned services, school psychology, unique contribution.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that I gratefully acknowledge the support and help provided to me by the following people throughout the duration and completion of this thesis.

I gratefully acknowledge the support shown to me, during this project and throughout my time as a trainee educational psychologist, by my supervisor Professor Kevin Woods. Professor Woods has been a constant source of wise words, encouragement, good humour as well as a critical eye, all of which have helped me immensely when completing this piece of work.

I would like to thank both EP teams and all of the service commissioners who gave their time to participate in this study. Their enthusiasm, warmth and generosity in supporting me during this project are much appreciated. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, experiences and insight.

I would also like to thank my family: Hilary, David, Richard, Karen, Joshua, Kee and Ping for their support during the last three years. You have always shown love and unwavering belief in everything I set out to achieve. Thank you.

Lastly, I very gratefully acknowledge all the love and support shown to me by my partner Gary who is my inspiration and guide-post for everything.
THE AUTHOR

Prior to undertaking the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology I studied for a Bachelor’s Degree in Religions and Theology, subsequently developing a special interest in colonial India and the fragile interplay of politics and religion occurring within the region during this time.

Two years later, I undertook a Master’s Degree in Psychology of Education. During this time, my research interests focused on the achievement and emotional wellbeing of primary aged pupils identified as having specific literacy difficulties.

When commencing my training as an educational psychologist in 2012, I became aware that the future of the profession seemed uncertain. Questions had been raised regarding the continuation of government funded educational psychology training schemes and local authority educational psychology teams had been cut substantially in funding and numbers. During my second placement as trainee, I was invited by the educational psychology service to explore the impact of these cuts and to gather the perspectives of educational psychologists and potential service commissioners regarding the partially-traded model of service delivery due to be introduced. Service commissioners’ views of the educational psychologist role and what they thought about the prospect of it becoming a partially-traded service were of particular interest to the service. This project then as acted as the pilot for the present research project, which aims to explore how the role of educational psychologist may be shifting and adapting following the widespread adoption of the partially-traded model of service delivery.
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1 INTRODUCTION

Previous reviews of the profession of practitioner educational psychology\(^1\) have highlighted that the context in which services are situated impacts on how the role is operationalised (Stobie, 2002; Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires & O’Connor, 2006). Thomson (1996) asserts that within the socio-political milieu of 1980s and 1990s, in which governmental education assessment schemes such as national testing and school league tables were introduced, the role of the educational psychologist (EP) was also predominately occupied with assessment. Moreover, Fallon, Woods and Rooney (2010) further assert that the model of service delivery also impacts on the work that EPs are able to do and the skills they are able to utilise. Fallon et al. (2010) describe how the restructuring of children’s services, following the implementation of the Children Act 2004, presented an opportunity for EPs to shift away from their former traditional setting in schools. Fallon et al. (2010) also argue that this change in service model allowed EPs to work in a variety of contexts, which they were previously unable to access. Consequently, the aim of the current project is to explore how the most recent changes in socio-political context and model of service delivery have impacted on the role and contribution of EPs.

In addition to the series of modernisation reforms implemented within local and national government (Game, 2002; Hall & Gunter, 2013), there have been substantial cuts to public spending following the global economic crisis in 2010 (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). The combination of both these factors has meant that substantial restrictions have been placed on local authorities (LAs) in terms of their role as providers of public services (Buser, 2013). EPs are trained, and usually employed, as public servants, and consequently have had to respond

\(^1\) The role of practitioner educational psychologist in England is more usually known as school psychologist in other countries, such as the USA.
to this shift within the socio-political context (Fallon et al., 2010). Therefore, over the last two years most LA psychology services have been reconsidering their model of service delivery. The majority of services have subsequently moved to a partially or fully ‘traded’ model of delivery, in which the existing service is required to generate income from ‘customers’ in order to meet some or all of its costs (Woods, 2014a; 2014b). Commentaries regarding the impact of these changes are currently small in number and anecdotal (Fallon et al., 2010). Therefore, the rationale for exploring this topic area is to increase understanding about how the profession is adapting and evolving within this new traded context.

This project will hopefully have important implications for practice. The expected contribution to knowledge is that the research will provide more information on how the role of the EP is adapting and changing within an emerging context. It is hoped that the findings will broaden conceptual understanding of the current and future EP role in its social context. It will give an up-to-date insight into: why the role exists; how essential it is to outcomes for CYP; who may be willing to pay for the role; and how this evolving role fits within the broader political contexts of education, special educational needs (SEN) and disability. Additionally, by describing and analysing how the role of the EP is evolving within the model of traded services, it is anticipated that the social and economic impact may have implications for future training and employment opportunities of EPs.

It is argued that by providing information such as level of demand for EP services, trends or changes to the types of services delivered or who is commissioning services, the profession will be better equipped to respond in both the short and long term. The pilot study of the current project was commissioned by an LA educational psychology team on the cusp of becoming partially-traded. The researcher was on placement with the service as a trainee EP. The team held specific concerns about what the transition to a partially-traded model would mean in the short term. For example, what were service users’ perceptions of this change and would they
value the EP service enough to purchase from them? Through developing an increased understanding of these questions, the team was able to develop a short-term response strategy involving improved communication with service users, as well as increased confidence amongst EPs that trading may be seen as a positive step by potential commissioners.

Moreover, prior to the introduction to trading Fallon et al. (2010) outlined a series of hypotheses regarding potential long-term implications of trading for the EP profession and its distinctive contribution. Fallon et al. (2010) predicted trading would threaten the overall stability of the EP role, as difficulties in articulating and demonstrating the contribution of the role might deter potential commissioners. Furthermore, it was felt that the future of the role might be uncertain as EPs were likely to face high levels of competition from other providers perceived as offering similar services for less money (Fallon et al., 2010). However, it was also felt that there might be potential positives to adopting a traded model, such as expanding the types of services offered and range of commissioners that EPs work with (Fallon et al., 2010). Therefore, prior to its introduction there was a large amount of uncertainty from within the profession regarding how the move to a partially-traded model, within the current socio-political context, would impact the service’s role and contribution. Consequently, this research aims to be the first step in potentially a much wider and ongoing discourse surrounding the role of the EP in the context of traded services.

The thesis begins with a systematic review of the literature, structured by four literature review questions. Context to the project is provided through an overview of recent national and local government policy regarding the delivery of public services. The impact of these policies and initiatives on the role of EP is then explored in further detail. Discourse surrounding the current socio-political landscape and key hypotheses regarding the potential impact of a traded service model on the role and contribution of the EP profession are then
considered. A gap in the previous literature is identified and divided into a series of four research questions.

The methodology chapter situates the research within the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher. Research design, including the integration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, is outlined. Case study method is described in detail. Possible alternatives, criticisms and limitations of the design and approach are embedded throughout this chapter. Data collection and analysis methods, as well as sampling strategy, participant recruitment and participant demographics, form the penultimate section to this chapter. The chapter is concluded by consideration of ethical issues within the project, a case study protocol, risks to completion and a time-line of activities.

Results from the data analysis process are presented in the next chapter. The findings are structured according to research question in order to provide a cross-case comparison as the summary to the chapter. This summary draws out key themes which are considered in further detail during the discussion.

An evaluative summary opens the final chapter. The summary interleaves findings from the current study with previous research in order to create a series of new understandings regarding the role of the EP in the context of traded services. These suppositions are then used to inform a model of EP practice, implications for practice and suggested areas for future research. The chapter closes by outlining a summative conclusion to the thesis.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter outline

This chapter builds a rationale for the current study based on previous research and provides details of the research questions to be answered. It also outlines the systematic literature review strategy used in order to identify the literature. However, as there was a very limited amount of directly relevant literature surrounding the distinctive contribution of EPs in the context of traded services, a number of strongly related and relevant areas of research are reviewed.

The review is structured using four literature review questions.

1. What is the policy context for the delivery of public services in the UK?
2. How has the role of the EP changed in relation to public services changes?
3. What are the current models of service delivery evident in UK educational psychology?
4. What is the role of the EP and do EPs provide an essential or distinctive service?

2.2 Literature Review Strategy

The systematic search strategy used to identify relevant literature included the keyword search terms for each literature review question (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature review question</th>
<th>Keyword search terms (not including synonyms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>i. UK Local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Public spending cuts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iii. Public service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iv. Modernisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>i. Educational psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Service delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Public spending cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Modernisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A series of synonyms were also used in order to capture the full breadth of literature, e.g. ‘school psychology’ was used in conjunction with ‘educational psychology’ to identify relevant international literature. Two databases were searched: ERIC and International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS). Searches in relation to literature review question 1 were completed using IBSS, whilst ERIC was used to completed searches for literature review questions 2, 3 and 4. IBSS was selected for literature review question 1 rather than education or psychology platforms, such as ERIC or PsycINFO, due to the political and economic focus of the review section (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature review question</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Question 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Database</td>
<td>IBSS</td>
<td>ERIC</td>
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<td>ERIC</td>
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Once identified, journal articles were screened for selection using a series of inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Appendix A). Moreover, additional literature that met the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria was obtained through a process of consultation with educational psychology colleagues and university tutors and lecturers within the school of education. Finally, reference harvesting from academic papers identified through the systematic search highlighted further relevant material.

A range of different types of literature, including peer reviewed journal articles, PhD and doctoral theses, books and grey literature, conference addresses and government reports have been utilised in order to gain a broad and comprehensive perspective of the current field.
2.3 Literature Review Question 1

What is the policy context for the delivery of public services in the UK?

2.3.1 Public Sector Reform

Economic crisis and large-scale fiscal deficits during the 1970s and 80s are identified by a number of political commentators (Hall & Gunter, 2013; Wang, 2011; Pollitt, 2007; Bovaird & Löffler, 2002; Sanderson, 2001) as the precursor to a series of substantial reforms within the UK public sector. An agenda of modernisation, based on principles derived from the private sector, was adopted by the then government as the dominant paradigm within which to reshape public services (Sanderson, 2001). Principles of competitive tendering, the use of management techniques and performance measurement are seen as core features of this modernising approach which became known as New Public Management (NPM) (Hall & Gunter, 2013). The main objectives of applying NPM to the public sector was to overcome inefficiencies by minimising budget deficits, streamlining expenditure and improving service quality as well as public satisfaction with services (Haque, 2001).

Furthermore, despite emerging three decades ago, NPM has remained ubiquitous as the governmental approach to public sector reform in the UK, even amongst the different political parties (Hall & Gunter, 2013). However, it is argued that the longevity of NPM across different UK political parties is perhaps unsurprising given its status as a global discourse (Hall & Gunter, 2013). Whilst NPM initially emerged in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, it has found a global audience for the core tenets of improvement through competition and marketisation which has inspired public sector reform across the world (Hall & Gunter, 2013). However, as Hall and Gunter (2013) highlight, the implementation of NPM is not simply associated with the privatisation of public services. NPM is both a theory that public sector services can be improved by implementing business-like concepts as well as a set of specific practices.
associated with privatisation (Talbot, 2001). Consequently, whilst utilities such as telecommunications, gas and electricity previously in public ownership, have been sold to the private sector, other public sector services such as the National Health Service (NHS) continue in the most part to be publicly owned but operate with elements of NPM principles, e.g. the commissioning of contracts for specific services (Talbot, 2001).

### 2.3.2 Public Sector Reform and Local Government

Commentators such as Pollitt (2007) argue that NPM has become so strongly embedded as a governmental approach that it is now seen as the ‘normal way of thinking’ with regard to public services. This assertion appears to be supported by the vast array of legislation and reform agendas introduced by politicians between 1980 and 2014. For example, Game (2002) highlights that between 1979 and 1997 well over 200 Acts of Parliament were passed that directly impacted on local government and public services. Moreover, Martin (2002) describes how from 1997 the Labour government launched a large number of initiatives collectively known as the ‘Local Government Modernising Agenda’ (LGMA). Drawing on principles from NPM, the aim of LGMA was to improve local services, enhance community governance and increase public confidence in local government (Martin, 2002).

Consequently, it has been argued that LAs have been in a constant state of flux for at least two decades (Bovaird & Martin, 2008). Moreover, commentators such as Game (2002) describe how as part of a ‘modernisation’ agenda local government has also undergone significant shifts in terms of its operations and responsibilities. Through a series of White Papers, central government has reshaped the way in which LAs are funded and structured, as well as the services they provide (Bovaird & Martin, 2008; Game, 2002). For example the ‘Best Value Framework’ which formed part of LGMA has been described as one of the most transformative tools of NPM introduced to local government (McAdam & Walker, 2004). ‘Best Value’ replaced
initiatives such as ‘Compulsory Tendering’, where emphasis had been on cost reduction and focused instead on quality of service delivered to the public (McAdam & Walker, 2004).

2.3.3 Recent Government, Public Spending Cuts and Reforms

Moreover, the new Localism Act 2011 (DfCLG, 2011) introduced by the recent government continues to advocate that public service delivery is outdated and that it needs to modernise in order to focus on the needs of its modern consumer-citizens (Raco, 2013). The recent government argues that through its principles of localism it is aiming to empower local government. However, the way in which this will be achieved appears less clear as other key policies seem to be in direct contrast (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). For example, the promotion of the voluntary and community sector by the recent government devolves public service resources away from central and local agencies towards charities, co-operatives and social enterprises (Raco, 2013). Consequently, the Localism Act 2011 (DfCLG, 2011) has been described by political commentators as further restricting the powers of LAs to provide public services (Buser, 2013).

In addition to these reforms, the recent government has also introduced a key document called the Spending Review 2010 (HMT, 2010). This document was generated in response to the global economic crisis and what is described by Hay (2010, p.395) as the resulting “urgent and significant need for fiscal rebalancing”. Consequently, there have been substantial spending cuts to central and local government (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). Reductions of 25% have been made across all government departments, apart from health and overseas aid (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). Moreover, central government contributions to LAs were cut by a quarter (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). These cuts have been extremely significant for local government as it relies on central government for 80% of its revenue (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). Therefore, these dramatic cuts, in conjunction with current policy context, appear to have substantially marginalised the role of local governance in the delivery of public services.
2.4 Literature Review Question 2

How has the role of the EP changed in relation to public services changes?

2.4.1 EP Role and Socio-Political Context

Fallon et al. (2010) argue that EPs, who are trained as and usually employed as public servants, are reasonably expected to respond and contribute as constructively as possible to the social agenda of the government of the day. However, in contrast, Woods and Bond (2014) propose that as a profession bound by stringent ethical principles, EPs should prioritise acting in the best interest of their clients, who are children, rather than the government. In order to support this statement, Woods and Bond (2014) draw reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989), which the UK government has ratified. They argue that the guiding ethical principles set out by the UN convention in 1989 form the basis of EP practice and should therefore be placed above any government initiatives which seek to alter or influence the profession in a way which might deviate from ethical practice (Woods & Bond, 2014).

Nevertheless, Woods (2014a) argues that there have been several recent nationally initiated developments (e.g. the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004), statutory regulation by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and LA financial restrictions), which have affected the way in which the EP role is structured, delivered and conceptualised. These initiatives include changes to key pieces of legislation regarding the provision of services for children and the overall reshaping of public services by the recent government (Woods, 2014a). In addition, authors such as Stobie (2002) have also identified the importance of more historic socio-political changes in shaping the EP role. Shifting legislation, embedded within wider political agendas, in particular, has been highlighted by Stobie (2002) and Fallon et al. (2010) as one of
the major vehicles which has informed both the professional identity of EPs and the way in which they are able to operationalise their skill set.

2.4.2 Development of the EP Role and the Influence of the Socio-Political Context

Hill (2013) argues that in order to review the evolution of educational psychology it is crucial to understand the social, political and ideological milieu in which it was conceived. During its infancy in the early twentieth century, educational psychology developed alongside a medically-based system of cognitive assessment and categorisation of children’s potential for educational attainment (Love, 2009). Cyril Burt was appointed as the first EP in 1913 (Hill, 2013). The socio-political context of the time was the post-industrial era, in which there was strong political awareness of the need to educate a workforce in order to support industrial growth (Hill, 2013). Therefore, a system of selective education based on psychometric testing, developed by Alfred Binet, seemed an appropriate way to ration education as an economic resource and the 11 Plus testing framework was established as legislation by the 1944 Education Act (HMG, 1944) (Hill, 2013).

Burt then became a prominent voice advocating the merits of this framework throughout the 1950s and 1960s and as the first EP; he arguably established a strong heritage for the role within the paradigms of assessment and provision of SEN placement. Consequently, during the latter half the century, assessment still formed a substantial part of the EP role (Love, 2009). Love (2009) argues that continued EP interest in the field of psychometrics, and especially ‘closed’ assessments only available to authorised psychologists, led to an inevitable stereotyping of the profession as ‘testers’. However, it can be argued that EP ‘interest’ in psychometrics has been strongly driven by requirement of the role to make summative decisions regarding the degree of the need of children and young people (CYP). Furthermore, the system established at the time was categorical, i.e. placement of children in one type of provision or another, and as a result categorical data were needed. Subsequently, as well as
the profession steering its own path, Love (2009) also asserts that EPs came to be further embedded within the tester role via national legislation and LA policy. The 1981 Education Act (HMG, 1981) has been cited by a number of authors such as Fallon et al. (2010) as strongly tying the modern role of the EP to formalised assessment.

2.4.2.1 The Education Acts 1981 and 1996

The 1981 Education Act (HMG, 1981), and its subsequent revision in 1996 (HMG, 1996), is seen within the profession as substantially changing the status of the EP role (Fallon et al., 2010). These two acts laid down responsibilities to LAs for the processes of assessment and monitoring of children’s SEN, and required as part of this process that formal advice was sought from an EP (Woods, 2012). In comparison to early EPs whose advice was part of a medical-based decision making process, EPs were now being called upon formally as part of a statutory service. Moreover, in addition to having a new status, there was also a new role outlined for EPs by the Education Acts (HSM, 1981; 1996). EPs were now expected to provide advice and intervention as well as assessment (Fallon et al., 2010). However, Thomson (1996) argues that, in practice, this new aspect of the role often did not occur. Arguably, a possible explanation as to why EPs were unable to fulfil this new obligation is that the socio-political agenda at the time did not support it. It is argued that the mid-1990s had a strong political agenda highly influenced by NPM (Bovaird & Martin, 2008). The NPM modernising agenda during this period focused on better value for money and improving service quality; it also emphasised the role of parents as consumer-citizens (Bovaird & Martin, 2008). As a result, the context in which EPs were working was governed by principles of evaluation, assessment and results, which culminated in governmental education schemes such as national testing and school league tables being introduced. Consequently, it was psychological assessment and measurement, rather than intervention, which was valued and as a result dominated the work of many EPs in the 1980s and 1990s (Thomson, 1996).
Therefore, whilst the Education Acts 1981 and 1996 (HMG, 1981; 1996) are seen as giving status to EPs via their new statutory responsibilities, they are also described by a number of authors as having dominated the EP role during this time period (Fallon et al., 2010). It is proposed that by focusing on their statutory assessment responsibilities EPs and EP service commissioners constrained the range and development of other EP functions, such as intervention and research (Farrell et al., 2006). Furthermore, it is also asserted that by placing EPs at the centre of the statutory assessment process the EP role was not only restricted but was also distorted as it became functionally transformed to that of a ‘gatekeeper’ of SEN provision and resources (Ashton, 1996; Miller & Frederickson, 2006).

2.4.2.2 The Children Act 2004

Nevertheless, the Children Act 2004 (HMG, 2004) arguably represents one of the most significant national strategic developments to influence and shape the functional role of the EP (Farrell et al., 2006). The Children Act 2004 (HMG, 2004) arose as a response to the Laming report (2003), which was commissioned following the death of a young girl, Victoria Climbié. This report criticised the manner in which different health, social care and educational agencies had worked together prior to Victoria’s death. As a result, the report provoked nationwide debate regarding efficacy of services, including EPs, for CYP and families, initiating further examinations of their input to outcomes for CYP as well as reviewing the way in which they were organised within LAs (Fallon et al., 2010; Farrell et al., 2006). One of the most influential outcomes of these examinations was outlined via a Green Paper which set out five aims and aspirations for CYP, with the expectation that all professionals working with CYP had a shared responsibility for delivering them. This became known as the ‘Every Child Matters’ (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2003).

In order to create an infrastructure which could support this ECM agenda a new framework for public service delivery within LAs was developed (Fallon et al., 2010). Consequently, services
were restructured so that previously separate professionals, such as EPs and social workers, formed integrated multi-agency teams. These teams were to operate within agreed geographical parameters, usually conforming to LA and/or Primary Care Trust boundaries (Fallon et al., 2010). This shift to locality teams was a substantial change from educational psychology’s more traditional home within SEN (Fallon et al., 2010). However, in contrast to the changes introduced by the Education Acts (HMG 1981; 1996) there appears to have been some positive reception from EPs following this restructuring.

Fallon et al. (2010) suggest that the restructuring of services for CYP presented an opportunity for EPs to expand their work, enabling them to move on from the previous constraints of the statutory assessment process and broaden their range and focus of services offered. Farrell et al. (2006) concur and have suggested that the transition initiated by the Children Act 2004 (HMG, 2004) enabled EPs to shift away from their former traditional setting in schools to a position more central within communities, allowing them to develop work in a variety of contexts which they were previously unable to access. Drawing on a case study example, Fallon et al. (2010) further describe how an LA’s educational psychology service (EPS) utilised the restructuring as a development as well as expansion opportunity.

In-depth consultation with service users and potential service commissioners about their needs, as well as an evaluation of national and local statistics, were used by the case study EPS to develop a more targeted approach (Fallon et al., 2010). Moreover, partnerships were developed with other agencies within the new integrated locality teams and consultations were held with headteachers to explain the new focus of the EP role (Fallon et al., 2010). Consequently, authors such as Woods (2014b) argue that the Children Act 2004 (HMG, 2004) promoted the first ‘customer focused’ approach to EP service delivery.

Furthermore, the Children Act 2004 (HMG, 2004) and the ECM agenda (DfES, 2003) also appeared to have particularly strong links with the then government’s drive to promote
economic stability within the UK (Fallon et al., 2010). School achievement as part of the ECM agenda was viewed, as it has been by a number of successive governments, as the precursor to positive life chances, social inclusion and reduction in poverty (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005). Therefore, the role of the LA as the provider of public services, especially children’s services, was crucial as part of the wider governmental modernising strategy aiming towards national economic prosperity (Fallon et al., 2010; McAdam & Walker, 2004). In addition, the Children Act 2004 (HMG 2004) seemed to begin a process of increased accountability and ‘outcome or customer focus’, which is likely to have served as a platform for more recent shifts in EP service delivery (Woods, 2014a).

2.4.2.3 Post 2010 Decentralisation

Nevertheless, more recent socio-political developments have meant that the LA’s core function as the provider of public services has been called into question (Fallon et al., 2010). Following the introduction of a new UK central government in 2010, a process of decentralisation began (Woods, 2014a; 2014b). Several pieces of legislation were introduced which served to devolve public service resources and funding away from local government. The Localism Act (HMG, 2011) introduced in 2011 advocates social enterprises and voluntary groups taking over the running of LA services (DfCLG, 2011). Principles of NPM are drawn upon within the legislation to argue that localism will promote “high-quality services at good value” (DfCLG, 2011 p.8). Moreover, as part of the decentralisation process, the government also introduced school funding reform, which further served to decrease the amount of funds held centrally by LAs (DFCLG, 2011).

The objective of this funding reform was to significantly increase the number of academy and free schools that would receive all of their funding directly from central government, as a result reducing the spending power and decision-making of LAs (DfCLG, 2011; AEP, 2011). In addition, changes to the legislation regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) (EFA, 2013),
which previously allocated funding to the LA, meant that schools rather than the LA were now directly allocated funds according to a national funding formula based on regional demographics (MCC, 2011). As a result, since 2011 less money and fewer decision-making powers have been held within LAs, placing further restrictions on the powers of local governance to continue in the role as the provider of public services (Buser, 2013). Therefore, LAs appear to be rapidly reducing in their capacity to employ professionals such as EPs, who have traditionally provided public services to local communities (Fallon et al., 2010).

2.4.2.4 *The Children and Families Act 2014*

The Children and Families Act (HMG) 2014 was introduced in early 2014. As a piece of legislation, whilst retaining the statutory assessment role of the EP, the Children and Families Act 2014 (HMG, 2014) brings new changes by extending the age range of service users from 0-19 to 0-25 years of age. The Act also emphasises a more integrated approach amongst professionals working with CYP. A new single assessment pathway and intervention plan has been introduced, which incorporates advice from education, health and care (HMG, 2014). Moreover, as part of the Children and Families Act 2014 (HMG 2014) CYP and parents have been given the opportunity to act as budget holders and are therefore able to directly commission services. However, as the practical outworking of these changes are still evolving and the full impact of changes introduced by this Act continue to unfold, authors such as Woods (2014a; 2014b) highlight that the profession may need to be prepared yet again to make adaptations.
2.5 Literature Review Question 3

What are the current models of service delivery evident in UK educational psychology?

2.5.1 Current EP Models of Service Delivery in the UK

As a profession in which the vast majority of practitioners have been employed by LAs, EPs experienced the full effects of the changing status of the LA as a public service provider (AEP, 2011). During autumn 2010, the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) became aware that LAs would be reducing the size of many teams within children’s services, including their EPS (AEP, 2011). The impact of the cuts on EPSs has been varied, with some services experiencing only minor changes, whilst others have faced the dismantling of all of their previous structures (AEP, 2011). Consequently, political commentators such as Durose (2011) have argued that in order to make local governance work, front-line workers such as EPs need to be entrepreneurial, including being sole traders separate from the LA. Durose (2011) proposes that post 2010 front-line public service workers face an action imperative: in order to negotiate the “muddle and mess” (p. 979) of local governance they need to step outside their traditional boundaries of practice in order to innovate and reform their own services.

Accordingly, Woods (2014a) outlines that over the last few years most LA psychology services have been reconsidering their model of service delivery. Annual EP workforce surveys, undertaken by Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and more recently the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), outlined that the majority of services have moved to a partial or fully traded model of service delivery (NCTL, 2014), in which the service is required to generate income from customers in order to meet some or all of its costs (Woods, 2014a; 2014b). The 2011 CWDC survey found that of the 103 respondents 44 were operating a traded model; 39 of these were partially funded by the LA (CWDC, 2011). However, results from the 2012 survey found that 85 of the 124 respondents were funded via
an income generation stream (NCTL, 2013). Moreover, 52 respondents indicated that they were part of non-LA EP services, 2 of which were social enterprises (NCTL, 2013).

Furthermore, in 2012 the majority of respondents anticipated that more of their service would be commissioned and funded by schools through traded services (NCTL, 2013). In addition, a small number of respondents reported that their LA was considering models of service delivery such as partnership organisations, joint ventures and outsourcing of EP services (NCTL, 2013). Therefore, as predicted by Durose (2011), this new income generation or traded model appears to have created several new opportunities for EPs to develop independent consultancies, social enterprises or to work as sole traders taking commissions directly from schools and other agencies (Woods, 2014a; 2014b). Furthermore, as funds for SEN are now devolved to school managers and budget holders, commissioners appear to be in a position to buy more or fewer services directly from EPs (Woods, 2014a; 2014b).

This is a substantial change from the former time allocation system used by a significant proportion of EPS teams as part of the traditional LA model (Woods, 2014b). Whilst authors such as Woods (2014b) and Fallon et al. (2010) predict that the opportunity to expand outside these more traditional boundaries and previously ring-fenced budgets will be a positive change for the EP role, there have been concerns about the potential impact of service commissioning. Just prior to the widespread implementation of the traded model, Fallon et al. (2010) made several predictions about the potential opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses of commissioning EP services. The ‘selling’ of EP services on a long-term basis was seen as a both a threat which would inevitably influence EPs’ professional identity and as an opportunity to develop new ‘sellable’ specialist skills (Fallon et al., 2010).

Moreover, Fallon et al. (2010) suggest that a potential weakness of trading, which might impact on EP professional identity, may be the need to decline potential commissions where EPs themselves could not directly determine the effectiveness of their own contribution. Fallon
et al. (2010) argue that trading will draw a sharper emphasis on demonstrating positive EP contribution to outcomes and as a result may reduce the flexibility of EP service delivery (Fallon et al., 2010). However, a potential strength of this increased accountability may be that EPs complete more direct work with CYP or work more closely with partners to ensure the delivery of agreed interventions (Fallon et al., 2010). Furthermore, a potential opportunity of trading as described by Fallon et al. (2010) is the promotion of the range of work and impact that EPs can have via ‘advertising’. Trading is seen as opportunity to extend and expand not just the models of delivery (e.g. social enterprise) but the type of work that EPs are providing.

Nevertheless, Fallon et al. (2010) assert that a further potential threat of commissioning is that it will place EPs in direct competition with other children’s services. This, it is argued, may undermine the overall stability and distinctive contribution of the EP role (Fallon et al., 2010). There appears to be concern regarding how EPs may be viewed by schools and other commissioners when compared to service providers who are likely be perceived as undertaking a similar role (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Consequently, whilst authors such as Farrell et al. (2006) argue that the distinctiveness of the EP role compared to that of other professional groups is one of degree rather than kind, Fallon et al. (2010) highlight that within a traded context it is the commissioner’s role to determine the best provider of specific services. Arguably, this has the potential to create ethical dilemmas for EPs as they may be asked by a service commissioner to provide a service that they do not feel would be in the best interests of the CYP. Consequently, it appears that the commissioning of services has the potential to ignite debate surrounding who is the customer of EP services and who determines the EP role with CYP.

However, Woods (2012) asserts that the boundaries of client and customer remain clear even with this new era of traded services. Woods (2012) argues that the child is the psychologist’s client, whereas the LA or school, as commissioner of the child assessment, is the psychologist’s
customer. Furthermore, Woods (2012) outlines that the EP duty of care remains with the child above any other responsibilities to an employer, therefore a psychologist’s commissioned advice and work with a CYP should not be influenced by commissioner considerations, financial or otherwise (Woods, 2012). Nevertheless, it argued that there is still concern as to whether commissioners will value and choose to buy EP time and it is felt that this may depend on whether the profession is perceived to offer a distinctive contribution.

2.6 Literature Review Question 4

What is the role of the EP and do EPs provide an essential or distinctive service?

2.6.1 Valued or Not Valued?

Educational psychology as a profession has been under review from various angles for a substantial period of time (Fallon et al., 2010). Lucas (1989) outlined a series of questions surrounding the value and contribution of EPs to outcomes for CYP, including: ‘who needs LEA psychological services?’ and ‘what can you do that no-one else can?’ These questions have stimulated much debate both within and outside the profession. Wood (1998), a senior officer in a local education authority, wrote a paper titled Okay, then: what do EPs do? which criticises the value added by the EP role. Wood (1998) states that teachers are often let down by the basic guidance they are offered by EPs and as a result they fail to see how a profession in such a “vaunted position” (p. 12) is making an explicit and valuable contribution. Moreover, the status of an EP as an autonomous profession making decisions regarding the suitability of psychometric testing, the time spent with pupils, and who acts on behalf of the child and family, rather than school, is also strongly criticised (Wood, 1998). Wood (1998) argues that schools, as well as pupils, are the main customers of the EP and therefore EPs should work in a way that is more directed by schools. Wood (1998) also highlights that if EPs are not
responsive service providers, schools have a choice of services and that they will use the resources they feel to be “best quality” (p. 13).

Nevertheless, there are EPs who hold similar viewpoints to Wood (1998). For example, Baxter and Frederickson (2005) argue that there is a paucity of evidence to demonstrate what educational psychology services in the UK are able to contribute to children’s development. Drawing on the language of NPM they assert that the absence of “value added” evidence makes it harder to establish the case for deploying (allegedly relatively expensive) EPs when commissioning decisions have to be made using “best value principles” (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005, p. 89). In addition, Baxter and Frederickson (2005) further criticise the profession as they argue that EPs are amongst the best qualified to evaluate the effectiveness of what they do and so should be able to provide evidence of their input and effectiveness.

Furthermore, Baxter and Frederickson (2005) suggest that the statutory role previously allocated to EPs, whilst securing the ‘survival’ of the profession in the short term, has done little in the long term as it removed the pressure to demonstrate the value of the profession empirically. In further recognition of government reform, Baxter and Frederickson (2005) also argue that “customer satisfaction and customer experience” need to be incorporated into the evaluation of EP practice. Moreover, using the service business model (Checkland & Scholes, 1993), it argued that this evaluation should extend beyond surveys of school staff and should focus on collecting data demonstrating improved outcomes for children (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005). Consequently, there is an argument that the wider valuing of EP contributions has been hindered by a lack of evidence base regarding the profession’s effectiveness. Therefore, this lack of evidence appears to have been a significant factor in enabling criticism and questions regarding the worth and distinctive contribution of the EP role.
However, in direct contrast to Lucas (1989), Farrell et al. (2006) argue that the profession is highly valued. As part of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) review into the role and contribution of EPs (Farrell et al., 2006) the views of a range of different stakeholders, including parents, were surveyed about the work that EPs do. Questionnaires were sent out to 300 parents across a number of different LAs: the collated responses demonstrated that 97% of parents felt EP services were needed and 90% stated the service was distinctive (Farrell et al., 2006). These findings are supported by an earlier government-funded review in 2000 by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), which identified a number of examples of good and effective practice by EPs. Moreover, findings from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2006 review outline that all respondent groups reported EPs had an important role in supporting CYP with severe, complex and challenging needs (Farrell et al., 2006).

2.6.2 Valued but Not Distinctive?

Nevertheless, during the 2006 DfES review (Farrell et al., 2006), when commenting on examples of EP work, the majority of school-based respondents and approximately half of the EPs indicated that an alternative provider might have been able to carry out the work. School staff tended to state that Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and/or specialist teachers could complete the work, whilst EPs felt that clinical psychologists would be suitable alternatives (Farrell et al., 2006). This finding is similar to that reported by Ashton and Roberts (2006). When questioning SENCOs regarding which aspects of the EP role they most valued, the majority referred to advice giving and conducting individual assessment, which although they found valuable, many felt were services which could also be provided by an advisory teacher (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). However, SENCO participants also made a distinction between the quality of support offered by the two services, with EPs seen as bringing more experience, knowledge and training to a problem or difficulty (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).
Consequently, it appears that whilst there is strong evidence that the EP role is valued and deemed necessary by colleagues and parents, there is a lack of clarity regarding its distinctive contribution. However, when discussing the distinctive contribution of the role, Woods (2012) argues that the debate is not unique to educational psychology. Woods (2012) asserts that the distinctive contribution of a professional teacher, social worker or doctor may be also be called into question as the functions of all these professionals could be replaced to some degree by a worker not qualified in the particular applied discipline. Nevertheless, Woods (2012) acknowledges that there have been various and perennial challenges in communicating the value and distinctive contribution of the EP role.

Recurrent challenges, such as an overlap in work or client group with other agencies, or EPs not always agreeing with each other about what they offer, are cited as blurring the clarity of the EP role (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Moreover, a longstanding theme within this debate has been the ‘giving away’ of psychology to service commissioners or other professionals. It has been argued that this leads to the distinctive contribution of the EP being obscured (Woods, 2012). In addition, Cameron (2006) argues that this obscuring effect occurs as EPs are complex problem solvers. Cameron (2006) asserts that in approaching real-life difficulties sometimes the psychological component is obvious and clients are likely to view an EP explanation as not adding anything new; alternatively, when an explanation is not obvious to those without a psychological background, parents and teachers may feel scepticism about the value of the formulation.

Furthermore, in order to work with complex real-life difficulties, EPs need a breadth of expertise across a range of specialisms such as learning, behaviour, communication, child development and systems management (Woods, 2012). Whilst allowing practitioners to cover a range of work that might otherwise require several different specialists (Woods, 2012), it could be argued that such a broad skill set does not always allow for a clear role description.
However, Fallon et al. (2010) assert that in taking together the numerous reviews of the EP profession, a clear picture of what EPs actually do and how they are distinctive has been well articulated. Fallon et al. (2010) outline that EPs are scientist-practitioners who use psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training for the benefit of children and young people.

### 2.6.3 The Socio-Political Context of Change

Moreover, Frederickson and Miller (2008) draw clear parallels between the role of the first appointed EP and the range of practice seen today to argue that these EP core functions have remained consistent over time. This argument concurs with that proposed by Stobie (2002) and Fallon et al. (2010), who state that whilst the role of the EP has remained consistent, it is the socio-political context surrounding it which has determined how these skills have been operationalised. This perspective seems particularly important as the employment context of the EP is known to frequently change at both the local and national levels, creating shifting responsibilities and changes to ways of working. Authors such as Woods (2012) and Farrell et al. (2006) have been clear that some legislation and LA structures have a restrictive or even negative impact on the development of the EP role. Farrell et al. (2006) propose that it is a universally held view that EPs have been too heavily involved in statutory assessment and this has prevented them from expanding their work.

In addition, Woods (2012) questions whether LA employment of EPs for the purposes of statutory duties has been a restriction rather than a foundation for the profession. Moreover, the new era of service commissioning appears to be offering some support for these assertions. Whilst the evidence base is currently small and anecdotal, there are reports of EP teams using a traded model, both within and without direct employment by LAs, beginning to flourish outside of traditional assessment roles (MCC, 2011; Woods, 2012). Similarly, Farrell et al. (2006) found that a reduction in EPs’ statutory work correlated with an expansion of a
wider range of responsibilities and increased demand for range of other EP services.

Moreover, Fallon et al. (2010) outline anecdotal accounts from EPS team leaders, who in beginning to implement a traded element to their service, found that local demand for EP services might easily outstrip supply.

Therefore, it appears that the new traded model of service delivery is seen as creating the opportunity to work away from some of the parameters associated with traditional LA structures such as ring-fenced budgets and statutory responsibilities. This appears to have been perceived by EPs as a positive step which has afforded the opportunity to expand the EP role. Moreover, it is argued that this initial evidence raises an interesting new debate regarding the perceived value of the EP role by service commissioners. It is suggested that if the role were not distinctive and not seen as contributing positively to outcomes for CYP then the purchasing of services would not be continued. Nevertheless, it is also evident that there is concern and uncertainty within the profession (Fallon et al., 2010) regarding the commissioning of EP services as the distinctive contribution of the role has been subject to such a prolonged and high level of criticism (Wood, 1998; Baxter & Frederickson, 2005).

Consequently, it is suggested that there is a current and substantial gap in the research regarding the impact of trading on the EP role and how it is being perceived by service commissioners. In addition, it is asserted that the relevance of research in this area is only increasing as the traded model continues to expand across the UK. Moreover, as there is a large gap in this research area, a small exploratory pilot study was conducted to help inform the objectives of the project.
2.7 Pilot Study

The pilot took place within an EPS that was on the cusp of entering a partially-traded model of service delivery. In line with previous research, the main findings suggested that potential service commissioners saw the EP role as distinctive in its statutory responsibilities. Additionally, service brochures and publicity materials appeared to be key mediating factors in shaping commissioners’ perspectives of the EP role (Winward, 2013). Furthermore, results suggested that rather than an expansion of the EP role, service commissioners wanted to receive a business-like and value-for-money service (Winward, 2013). Consequently, it is argued that further research is needed to explore both commissioner perspectives and commissioning trends within different types of service models to establish what impact trading has had on the EP role.

2.8 Summary

Whilst discussions with practitioner EPs reveal anecdotal evidence that an anonymous EPS, which recently implemented a service commissioning model, has experienced high demand for services and that working away from ring-fenced budgets has afforded the opportunity to expand the EP role (Fallon et al., 2010), these are anecdotal accounts of single cases. There is currently little or no systematic research that examines the EP role and its distinctive contribution within the context of traded services. Therefore, there appears to be a gap in understanding about how the role of the EP will adapt to this new and emerging context. In particular, key questions exist regarding how this shift may affect service commissioners’ perspectives of the distinctive EP role. Subsequently, as result of the findings of the literature review and pilot study, the following research questions are proposed:

1. How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?
2. Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?

3. What do EPs, in the context of traded services, see as their distinctive contribution?

4. How do service commissioners view the role of the EP in the context of traded services?
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Outline

The chapter begins with an introduction summarising the project aims, methodology and objectives. An exploration of the inquiry paradigm informing the ontological, epistemological and axiological position assumed by the researcher then follows. Subsequent to this, details of the research questions informing the project precede a description of the pilot study for the current project followed a detailed description of the research design including participants, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical issues. The case study protocol, brief timeline and operational risk analysis conclude the chapter.

Throughout this chapter emphasis is placed on critical analysis. In order to demonstrate how the methods chosen best served the purposes of the research, a clear rationale for the selection of each method, position or approach is provided. In addition, further exploration is given to both the potential limitations and alternative methodologies, which may have been adopted.

3.2 Introduction

The aim of the investigation was to gather data about how the EP role is changing and adapting, following the adoption of traded services. In doing so, the researcher sought to investigate emerging trends in patterns of EP service delivery within two contexts: a partially traded emerging service and a partially traded established service. The research method employed was a multiple-case study design, with embedded units of analysis. By utilising this methodology, the researcher aimed to explore the unfolding of a real-life phenomenon in depth, and from a range of perspectives and data sources. Data was gathered from both EPs themselves and a range of service commissioners. Furthermore, an exploration was given to
possible mediating factors, such as service publicity materials, in shaping trends and ways of working.

Consequently, a series of different data gathering methods were used during this investigation: interviews, focus groups, record audits and documentation gathering. Each data source corresponded to specific research questions, as outlined in detail below. Data collection was a sequential process in which each data source was partially analysed in order to inform the next stage of data gathering. This enabled the researcher to engage in a continuous and reflexive process of meaning-making. The main objective in engaging in this dynamic and sequential process was to extend and expand existing anecdotal accounts regarding the impact of trading on EP work. Furthermore, it was hoped that the findings would give an up-to-date insight to why the role exists; how essential it is to outcomes for CYP; who may be willing to pay for the role; who assumes responsibility for the role; who benefits from its outcomes and how this evolving role fits within the broader political contexts of education, SEN and disability.

3.3 Inquiry Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose that for qualitative research, questions regarding the method of investigation are secondary to that of questions of paradigm. A paradigm, in this instance, is defined as a belief system or world view which guides the investigator (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, an inquiry paradigm defines what it is an investigation seeks to explore as well as the parameters of the research, e.g. the ontological and epistemological basis of the enquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose that inquiry paradigms fall into four categories: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism.
The inquiry paradigm informing this project was postpositivism. This paradigm represents the researcher’s world view that reality exists but is only able to be imperfectly or subjectively apprehended (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Other paradigms were discounted as they did not allow for this balance of objectivity and subjectivity needed for real world research. For example, a purely positivist position aligns researchers to the position that there is a true single reality, whereas constructivism guides projects to seek multiple, socially constructed realities, none of which are more or less true than the other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Additionally, critical theory requires investigations to adopt a historical world view in which reality can only be comprehended as a series of cultural, economic and political structures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

### 3.4 Ontological Position

Ontology relates to the nature of reality (Robson, 2011). Therefore, as a result of the researcher’s postpositivist viewpoint, the project adopted a critical realist ontological position (Parker, 1999). The strength of the critical realist position is the integration of positivist and constructionist ontological views. The combination of these two positions allowed the researcher to take the perspective in which psychological facts are understood as socially constructed within their present context (Parker 1999). Therefore, adopting this approach enabled the researcher to not only consider objective patterns in the data, e.g. most frequent types of work being completed by EPs in each service model, but to also explore why this might have been the case through gaining the perspectives of EPs and service commissioners.

### 3.5 Epistemological position

Consequently, the epistemological position, or the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched, was objectivist/dualist, which is based on the assumption that it is
possible to approximate (but never fully know) reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Moreover, the critical realist approach allows the researcher to conduct research that is grounded scientifically, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the potential influence and values of the researcher (Robson, 2011). Therefore, this position aligned with the mixed methods approach taken during the current study. The use of quantitative methods was congruent with the researcher’s position that it was possible to capture a current reality but that reality was only apprehended through a subjective viewpoint. Consequently, in order gather and understand that subjective viewpoint the use of qualitative methodologies and analysis was required.

3.6 Axiological Position

The axiology, or values, that the researcher brings to an investigation is highly important in shaping not only the project’s methodology but also the interpretation of the materials found (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the researcher’s beliefs and values and how these may have influenced: the selection of the research topic; the research design as well as the analysis and interpretation of results. A belief of the researcher, which underpins this study, is that EPs are effective in providing a valuable and distinctive contribution to outcomes for CYP. However, the researcher also considered that an alternative view may have led to a different focus in the inquiry. For example, if the belief was held that EPs were not effective in their contribution or that another professional could offer a similar service, the focus of the project would have extended more widely. This wider focus would have been likely to have generated questions regarding the relative contributions of other professionals and services and how they compare with functions or impact of EPs. However, it is argued, this would have led to a very different study with much broader research questions and objectives.
Nevertheless, it is also a strong belief of the researcher that in order to demonstrate EP value and contribution, more research is needed to explore how the role is being operationalised and perceived by those, who commission services. Therefore, the researcher believes that a project which examines how the role is being shaped and possibly expanded through new models of service delivery will be valuable to the profession. Furthermore, within the highly changeable climate of children’s services, these data may be highly important in shaping future directions for the profession and for ways in which CYP access EP support.

Moreover, a case study research design was selected as it would allow the researcher to capture, from multiple sources of information, an understanding of how this contemporary evolution of the EP role was taking place and being perceived. This multi-perspective approach was important as the researcher held several differing hypotheses prior to beginning the project regarding who (e.g. EPs or commissioners) and what (e.g. funding cuts), might be driving changes. Therefore, whilst the analysis of results will follow a systematic process which seeks to distance the researcher from the material, the interpretation of the results will incorporate the researcher’s own values and beliefs, in accordance with the critical realist approach.

### 3.7 Research Questions

As outlined in Chapter 2, a gap in the literature surrounding this subject has been identified. As a result, the researcher formulated four research questions in order to assist in addressing this gap:

1. How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?
2. Within the context of trading, how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?

3. What do EPs, in the context of traded services, see as their distinctive contribution?

4. How do service commissioners view the role of the EP in the context of traded services?

3.8 Pilot study methodology

The pilot study took place within an EPS, which was on the cusp of implementing itself as a partially-traded service. The scope of the project was jointly negotiated by the researcher and the EPS team leader. A project examining this transition was of high interest and utility to the service. Both parties were interested to ascertain and compare the perspectives of potential service commissioners and members of the EPS regarding the role of the EP. They wanted to know, in the context of traded services, if EPs were perceived as offering a distinctive contribution. In order to fulfil this rationale two research questions were developed:

1. What do educational psychologists, in the context of becoming traded, see as their distinctive contribution?

2. What do professional service users, in the context of trading, see as the distinctive contribution of their educational psychology service?

The study adopted a qualitative exploratory approach. It implemented an in-depth survey design. Sampling and participant recruitment took place within the EPS where the researcher was on practice placement. The data collection method was focus groups. Two separate sets of participants were recruited to form two focus groups. The first group of participants were
EPs currently working within the EPS. The second participant group were SENCOs who used the EPS regularly. Participants were recruited on the basis of the following inclusion criteria:

- The EP group participants were selected on the basis of a minimum of 3 years within the service.
- The SENCO group were matched on characteristics of place of work e.g. primary setting, level of professional experience e.g. minimum 3 years, regular use of the service and positive working relationship with the service.

The rationale for seeking SENCOs with positive working relationships was based on an appreciative inquiry (AI) organisational development method (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003). Although a full AI approach was not taken during this research, it was intended that this asset-based approach would provide a rich and stimulating description of what was working well between EPs and SENCOs. This approach was important for supporting research-practice links as the EPS intended to make reference to the research when developing their new service delivery strategies.

The study recruited seven participants for each focus group. However, due to attrition five participants took part in the SENCO group and four participants took part in the EP group. SENCO recruitment followed a nomination strategy (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Members of the EPS team were asked to nominate potential participants, based on the inclusion criteria of the research. A nomination list was drawn-up and names were randomly selected from this list for invitation to the focus group. SENCOs were invited to the group by email. Follow-up telephone calls were made over the next three weeks to confirm attendance. EP recruitment took place during a team meeting at the EPS base, during which the researcher gave a short outline of the research. A follow-up contact via email was made one week later to all eligible EPS team members asking for expressions of interest. Final recruitment was confirmed the following
week and a date for the focus group was circulated. The demographic details of the participant groups were as follows:

**Table 3. Pilot study EP participants demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Years working as EP in Newham EPS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 1</td>
<td>Senior Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 2</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 3</td>
<td>Senior Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 4</td>
<td>Senior Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. Pilot study SENCO participant demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
<th>% of pupils with a statement or on SA* plus</th>
<th>% of pupils eligible for FSM**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 1</td>
<td>Deputy Head teacher and SENCO</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary, Community</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 2</td>
<td>Deputy Head teacher and SENCO</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary, Community</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 3</td>
<td>Class teacher and SENCO</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary, Voluntary Aided</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 4</td>
<td>Deputy Head teacher and SENCO</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary, Community</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 5</td>
<td>Class teacher and SENCO</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary, Voluntary Aided</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*School Action **Free school meals (data collected from [www.education.go.uk](http://www.education.go.uk) [accessed 16.4.13])
Data was gathered using a multiple-category focus group design. This is a variation of the traditional focus group design and involved conducting two focus groups with two different types of the participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Data collection was sequential, with the focus group of EPs taking place before the focus group with SENCOs. This allowed the researcher to conduct a preliminary analysis on the first set of data in order to help inform the questioning route for the EP group. The researcher acted as facilitator for both the focus groups and data was gathered using an audio recording and was then transcribed in full.

The collected data was subject to the principles of thematic analysis, as outlined in the six stage model by Braun and Clarke (2006). The unit of analysis, during coding of the data, was at the statement level. This methodology was selected as it allowed the researcher to approach the data in an inductive ‘bottom up’ way whilst also recognising the active role of the researcher in eliciting semantic themes. The main findings were then shared with participants. Anonymised feedback was given to the EPS during a team meeting and a summary report was distributed to SENCO participants via email and if requested followed up with a short telephone conversation.

3.9 Case Study Strategy

3.9.1 Case Study Methodology

The project implemented a case study design. However, Stake (2005) argues that case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied, e.g. a case within a bounded system, bounded by time and place. Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that a case study is a strategy of inquiry, a methodology or a comprehensive research strategy but not a design. Nevertheless, in this piece of research, a case study was viewed as a type of research design, which was both the object of study and the vehicle for inquiry. Creswell
(2012) supports this position and argues that case study design is an approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (case) or multiple bounded cases or systems over time, through in-depth data collection using multiple sources of information.

3.9.2 Quantitative and Qualitative

Moreover, Yin (2009) argues that the unique strength of the case study design is its ability to integrate a full variety of evidence beyond what might be available through another approach. Yin (2009) asserts that as well as enabling researchers to collect data from interviews and observations, the case study method allows the gathering of quantitative evidence, such as numerical data. Therefore, according to Yin’s (2009) model, case study design is not limited solely to the paradigm of qualitative research. The approach used in the current research included both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. Traditionally, these approaches were viewed as two discrete methodologies (Creswell, 2009). However, in more recent commentaries they have been described as different ends of the same continuum (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative research is usually described as a method of testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables and then quantifying that relationship numerically (Creswell, 2009). In contrast, qualitative research is typically defined as a method to explore the meanings ascribed to human phenomena (Creswell, 2009). Research that uses a combination of these strategies, or mixed methods design, resides in the middle of the continuum (Creswell, 2009). However, employing a mixed methods approach involves more than simply collecting and analysing both types of data (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, the way in which these two types of data were integrated is outlined in more detail in the case study protocol (see Table 13) and data analysis strategy.
Criticisms of mixed methods approaches are that they often do not correlate accurately with the inquiry paradigm outlined by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). However, in this instance it is argued that the post positivist paradigm and subsequent critical realist ontological position align strongly with mixed methods research. The integration of positivist and constructionist positions allowed the researcher to take the perspective in which psychological facts are understood as socially constructed within their present context (Parker 1999). Therefore, it is argued that the collection of numerical data, e.g. the most frequent types of work being completed by EPs, was legitimately further explored further through qualitative findings, e.g. perspectives of EPs and service commissioners.

3.9.3 **Exploratory and Explanatory Case Study Design**

Moreover, as with other research methods, case study design can be used for three purposes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin, 2009). Each investigative purpose has a set of distinctive characteristics and aims: for example, an exploratory study would have the goal of developing pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry, whereas an explanatory study would seek to establish operational links (Yin, 2009). The study purpose and corresponding design protocol, whilst explanatory, also included an element of exploration. For example, following a detailed literature review, an important proposition or initial hypothesis guiding this study was that the introduction of trading is having an impact on patterns of EP service delivery and practice. Therefore, the project was strongly driven by an explanatory approach and aimed to establish if there is a link between trading and changes in EP services. Moreover, the project also aimed to explore and increase knowledge regarding what impact these changes may have had on service commissioners’ perspectives on the EP role.
Furthermore, Yin (2009) proposes that there are four different types of design for case study: single (holistic); single (embedded); multiple-case (holistic) and multiple-case (embedded), each with a unique rationale and purpose. The implementation of a single-case design, for example, is often intended as a method for gathering knowledge and theory building (Yin, 2009). This type of study fits well with exploratory purposes of helping to provide focus for future investigations (Yin, 2009). A single-case can either use a holistic (single unit of analysis) or embedded (multiple units of analysis) approach. Additional units can allow for increased opportunities for extensive analysis, therefore enhancing the findings of single-case designs (Yin, 2009). However, a more holistic approach is arguably more likely to retain focus and pose less risk of research shifting in orientation (Yin, 2009).

A multiple-case study enables researchers to conduct two case studies in different contexts, allowing in-depth data collection in each case as well as cross-case comparisons (Yin, 2009). Consequently, in order accommodate the dual purposes of the current project a multiple-case study design was selected, as it would enable both an in-depth initial exploration of real-life situations and support hypothesis testing both within and across contexts. In addition, an embedded approach was used as it complemented the early stage of exploration within this topic area. It was felt that a range of possible contributory factors should be explored with the aim of identifying a more specific area for future more targeted research. Moreover, it has been suggested that by using evidence from multiple cases research findings can be considered more robust (Yin, 2009).

Nevertheless, critics of the design argue that a disadvantage of the approach is that it can require extensive resources and time beyond that available to a single researcher (Yin, 2009). However, in this project the research was planned and conducted to a timescale which took
into account the need to collect data corresponding to multiple units of analysis across two different cases, further details of which can be found in the timeline below.

3.9.5 Alternative Strategies

In addition, it is recognised that alternative approaches such as surveys could have been implemented during the current project. Typically, surveys are used to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing an existing condition or determining relationships between specific events (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, a survey design could have been used during the present study to provide data from a broader sample of ‘cases’, e.g. EPSs. This may have been an efficient way to gather information Nonetheless, survey data of this kind have already been produced by the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC, 2010; 2011) and the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL, 2013; 2014). These data outline details of how EPSs are currently commissioned, the size of the EPS team and level of demand for services (NCTL, 2013). This descriptive information can be used to formulate numerical trends and predictions regarding EP service delivery. However, this type of survey research does not provide the same level of depth and breadth of contextual information as a case study design. More importantly, it does not consider possible mediating factors for change or the wider implications of these changes, e.g. service commissioners’ perspective on the role of the EP. Therefore, a case study design was selected to enable exploration of an emerging and dynamic situation from an in-depth perspective, including a broad range of stakeholders and possible factors facilitating this change.
3.10 Research Design

3.10.1 Defining the Units of Analysis

The study implemented a multiple-case study design with embedded units of analysis.

Figure 1. Multiple case-study design with embedded units of analysis

This design was chosen as it allowed the researcher to examine the topic area, which is a contemporary phenomenon, in a multi-factorial way and within its real-life context (Yin, 2009).

Moreover, Yin (2009) outlines that in case study methodology the definition of the unit of analysis is related to the research questions posed. Therefore, each research question corresponded to a specific unit of analysis, see Table 3 below.

Table 5. Units of analysis linked to research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question (RQ)</th>
<th>Unit (s) of analysis</th>
<th>Primary data-gathering method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?</td>
<td>Unit of analysis 2: Service delivery data</td>
<td>Audit of service records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?</td>
<td>Unit of analysis 3: Publicity documentation</td>
<td>Collection of service brochures and marketing materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do EPs, in the context of traded services, see as their distinctive</td>
<td>Unit of analysis 1: Perceptions of EP role</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.10.2 Sampling Strategy for the Cases

The sampling strategy selected was based in the first instance on a geographical cluster design. When the populations are as large and widely dispersed as those targeted in the current investigation, gathering a random sample poses substantial practical and administrative difficulties (Cohen et al., 2009). By cluster sampling within a specific geographical area the researcher was able to narrow down the target population to localities to which there was convenient access. However, as the region was selected by the researcher this was not a probability sample; as a result it is acknowledged that this may place a limit on the generalisability of results on account of regional variability in community demographic and local government funding. The geographical region selected was the North West of England, focusing particularly on the area of Greater Manchester.

The researcher used an existing directory of EPSs across the UK held by The University of Manchester to generate a database of contact details for services in the North West and Greater Manchester. In order to narrow down a list of potential services, the researcher then queried people within the University who were knowledgeable about services or had contacts already working within prospective EPSs. A short-list was then drawn up of services which may be interested in the project. Invitations to take part in the study were distributed by email to principals or team leaders of the services, along with information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix B).

Once in contact with interested services, the second stage involved a purposeful sampling technique. This method allowed the researcher and research supervisor to select the cases to
be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought (Cohen et al., 2009). Therefore, during the current study a set of inclusion criteria were generated and used to screen each of the potential cases. The project was seeking to recruit two different services or cases, one of which would be emerging as partially traded and one which would be established as partially traded.

As a result, a set of criteria had to be developed to ensure that the services were similar in most respects apart from their status as emerging or established as traded. For example, it was decided that the size of each of EP team should be similar in both cases, as should the demographics of the populations they provide a service for. In this instance demographics relate to population size and level of regional deprivation as defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DfCLG) (2011), e.g. the number of Lower Layer Super Output Areas in the region. These factors were chosen as team size, level of regional deprivation and size of the population served, have previously been identified as important factors in shaping the amount of demand for EP services and type of work that EPs complete (CWDC, 2010; 2011; NCTL, 2013; 2014).

Moreover, an operational definition of the terms ‘emerging’ and ‘established’ also had to be generated (see Table 4). In this instance ‘emerging’ was defined as less than 30% of current workload coming from trading and ‘established’ was defined as over 30% of workload coming from trading. In addition, the emerging service also had to have been traded for less than two years, whereas the established service had to have been trading for more than two years.

Table 6. Screening criteria for the cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Criteria</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30% of current workload from trading</td>
<td>&gt;30% of current workload from trading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2 years trading</td>
<td>&gt;2 years trading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have some service pattern delivery data</td>
<td>Have detailed service pattern delivery data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 EPs in the team</td>
<td>More than 5 EPs in the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve a region with a population</td>
<td>Serve a region with a population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.11 Participants

Participants were drawn from two LAs in the North West of England. Two locations were used in order to explore contrasting models of service delivery and to increase the validity and scope for generalisability of the findings. Participants were recruited once the researcher was satisfied they had met the inclusion criteria and written informed consent had been obtained. See Table 7 below for details of the participant EPSs statistics i.e. the length of time each had been traded and the percentage of the current workload from trading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of time trading</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of current workload from trading</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.11.1 Sampling Strategy for the Participants

3.11.1.1 EP Participants

After the EPSs had been secured, the researcher then focused on recruiting two participant groups within each of the contexts, namely EPSs and service commissioners. EPSs were recruited first. The researcher attended an EPS team meeting for each service to explain the project, participation requirements and selection criteria, e.g. EPSs taking part in the study should have been working within the service for at least six months. This time-specific selection criterion was chosen to try and ensure that EPSs had adequate experience of working within each of the models of service delivery and were therefore able to provide informed opinions or evidence in relation to the research questions. Information sheets and consent forms were shared at
these meetings (see Appendix B) and signed forms were collected from participating team members.

3.11.1.2 Service Commissioner Participants

Following recruitment of the EP services and individual EP team members, the researcher then used a nomination strategy (Krueger & Casey, 2009) to find service commissioner participants. EPs in each service were asked to nominate the commissioners that they worked with most regularly, and with whom they had worked for at least six months. These specific selection criteria were used as the researcher intended to recruit commissioners who engaged with and/or bought services both recently and regularly. In doing so, the aim was to gather information regarding purchasing decisions (e.g. what purchases had they decided to make? And, why and why not buy from other services?), therefore it was important to recruit service commissioners who were making decisions to buy from the EPSs.

However, it is acknowledged that this method does not allow for information to be gathered from schools or other agencies who decided not to purchase services. Nevertheless, it is argued that the method chosen of targeting commissioners who buy regularly more accurately fulfils the aims of the current investigation, which seek to establish how the purchasing of services may be shaping the role of the EP. It is proposed that a future investigation may explore in more detail the perspectives and purchasing habits of commissioners not choosing to use their LA EP team. However, during the current research, in order to try and gather as broad range of perspectives as possible from the target sample, the data collection strategy included questions, which asked service commissioners why they or other schools and agencies might not use or purchase from the service.

Moreover, service commissioner participants were also further divided into two subgroups: small-scale commissioners and large-scale commissioners. The division of commissioners into two categories was a result of initial discussions with EP service leads and reflects the ‘real-life’
distinctions being drawn by the services when tracking trading trends within their services. The division and selection criteria for each of these participant groups, drawn from discussions with EP service leads, are outlined in Table 5.

Table 8. Selection criteria for small and large-scale service commissioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of commissioner</th>
<th>Small-scale</th>
<th>Large-scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Small to medium-size organisation, e.g. school</td>
<td>Large organisation, e.g. Local authority department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piecemeal contract type, e.g. extra hours for casework or training</td>
<td>Large contract type, e.g. employing a full-time EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular purchasing</td>
<td>Regular purchasing or contract renewing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After a list of service commissioners had been developed by each of the EP teams, initial contact was made with each organisation via email or telephone call by the nominating EP. If following this initial contact and information sharing the organisation was interested in the project, this was reported to the researcher and a formal information sheet and consent form (see Appendix B) were sent. A period of one week was given before a follow-up email or telephone call was made by the researcher to confirm recruitment and to schedule a meeting. It is argued that this nomination strategy was successful in recruiting participants into the study, as it drew on already existing professional relationships which supported the researcher in establishing legitimacy and credibility with service commissioners.

However, it is recognised that selecting participants with on-going professional relationships with the EPSs may have risked biased results and led to more positive responses than if a randomised sample had been used. Nonetheless, the approach taken by the researcher aimed to mitigate this risk by offering confidentially to participants and through building trusting relationships. By taking this approach it was felt that researcher would be more likely to gain genuine and open responses and reduce potential for bias or overly positive results. In
addition, using an already existing group was also a time- and resource-efficient sampling strategy, which corresponded with the aims of the investigation. For example, the project is seeking to explore how and why trading may be shaping EP practice, therefore it was important to target service commissioners who were actively engaging and purchasing services from EPs.

3.11.2 Participant Demographics

The demographic details of the participant groups are outlined in Tables 6 - 10. According to context, e.g. established or emerging trading service and participant type, e.g. EP or service commissioner. In each context EP participants were recruited as were small-scale commissioners. However, as none of the commissioners involved with the emerging service met the selection criteria set for a large-scale commissioner, no participants of this type were recruited.

3.11.2.1 Emerging traded service

Table 9. EP demographics: Emerging service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Years working as EP in Northern Borough EPS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 1</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 2</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist-specialist</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 3</td>
<td>Principal Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 4</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist-specialist</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 5</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist-specialist</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 6</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist-specialist</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Small-scale service commissioner demographics: Emerging service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Years in post</th>
<th>Years working with EPS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 1</td>
<td>SENCO and Deputy Head Teacher</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 2</td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 3</td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.11.2.2 Established Traded Service

Table 11. EP demographics: Established service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Years working as EP in Northern Borough EPS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 7</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 8</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 9</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 10</td>
<td>Principal Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP participant 11</td>
<td>Executive Principal Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Small-scale service commissioners: Established service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Years in post</th>
<th>Years working with EPS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 4</td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 5</td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO participant 6</td>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Large-scale service commissioners: Established service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Role position</th>
<th>Years in post</th>
<th>Years working with EPS</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service commissioner participant 1</td>
<td>Virtual School Headteacher</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service commissioner participant 2</td>
<td>Local Authority Early Years Commissioner</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.12 Data Collection Methods

The purpose of case study data collection is to use a wide array of procedures in order to build an in-depth picture of each case (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, whilst each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, the three data collection strategies used during the current study were also selected as they are able to act as complementary evidence sources. Moreover, each method was chosen for its suitability and reliability in relation to the project aims and design. Table 12 provides a summary of the data collection methods used in each case.

3.12.1 Documentation

Documentation such as meeting agendas, reports or administrative records of the organisation are useful sources of information to the case study researcher. This data can be important in corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources (Yin, 2009). In addition, as the data is not created for or as result of the case study, this method is unobtrusive to the participants and/or organisation (Yin, 2009).

However, it is acknowledged that, even though useful, documents are not always accurate and may represent a biased rather than balanced view of an organisation or case (Yin, 2009). Therefore, when reviewing documents as a data source it was important for the researcher to consider who the author was and what purpose it was intended for (Yin, 2009). Two specific types of documentation were collected during the current study. The objective in selecting these sources was to gather information about potential patterns or trends in traded services as well as finding out more about how these services publicise and present themselves to service commissioners.

3.12.1.1 Data Audit

In each case study, a data audit was conducted of information held in relation to the number of clients using the traded service and the types of services they were purchasing. This was
done in conjunction with the record holder in each service: in the emerging service this was the EP team leader; in the established service this was the team secretary. The audit captured data from a period of two calendar years and included both archived and current records. The period of two calendar years was selected as a single calendar year is the current audit period used by the majority of services to evaluate service usage and demand. Therefore, collecting data pertaining to two calendar years enabled the researcher to directly compare and contrast across the two years any potential trends within each service, as well as between the two services.

However, the disadvantage with using documentation as a data source in multiple-case study design is that often services do not collect information in exactly the same way. This was the case during the current study. The emerging service records documented trading patterns from 2012-13 and 2013-14 in relation to the amount of sessions being bought by specific settings and from which EP. In contrast, the established service held records from 2012-13 and 2013-14 which documented the amount and type of services being bought by specific settings. Therefore, direct comparisons between the two services could only be made in relation to the amount of traded sessions being bought and by which type of setting rather than by EP.

Nevertheless, as highlighted by Yin (2009), this type of data is still helpful in providing corroboration of other sources and does not necessarily rely on being a single or standalone data source.

3.12.1.2 Publicity materials

Documents currently in circulation detailing the services provided by each setting were collected. These documents varied between the services and included service brochures, lists of EP specialisms and areas of interests as well as documents detailing services provided. From the established service an EPS service brochure and a booklet containing a professional profile of each EP in the team was collected. From the emerging service a brochure of services was
collected. In each case, these materials were collected from the EP team leader during a visit to the service and then later sent electronically via email. Moreover, it is worth noting that materials for the established service were more substantial in length and content than those from the emerging service. Nevertheless, it is argued that this was not necessarily a limitation and did not prevent valid comparisons between content of the documents being made, e.g. type of information included.

3.12.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing as a data collection method allows the researcher to ask participants questions as part of a highly flexible or more structured exchange (Robson, 2011). During the present study a semi-structured interview style was implemented. This method was selected as it allowed the researcher to generate a sequence of questions as a guide (see Appendices C-G) regarding the topics to be covered, default wording of questions, order of questions, whilst also enabling modifications to be made to any of these features based on the flow of the interview (Robson, 2011). Moreover, a semi-structured technique also provides the benefit of allowing the researcher to be responsive to the interviewee and follow up on areas of particular interest or add in unplanned questions (Robson, 2011). This was especially helpful when interviewing large-scale commissioners who tended to discuss much broader political and economic scenarios than had originally been planned for in the questioning schedule.

However, conversely the flexibility of the interview method has also been criticised for lacking standardisation, therefore generating questions regarding the reliability of the approach (Robson, 2011). Nevertheless, in this instance, it is argued that flexibility was a strength, which created the potential for generating a more dynamic and illuminating data set (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, as with the majority of qualitative methodologies, reliability often relates to the replicability and justification of the procedures rather than the uniformity of specific approaches.
3.12.2.1 *Interview Procedures*

In both cases, three sets of participants were invited to interview: the EP service leaders, small-scale commissioners and large-scale commissioners. In each setting the EP team leader was interviewed first: this interview then formed the basis for initial information-gathering and discussions regarding nominations for the service commissioner interviews. In the established service, two service leaders were interviewed as the structure of service incorporated a principal EP and an executive principal EP, both of whom had strategic responsibilities for trading. In the emerging service a single interview was completed with the service lead EP (see Table 11 for a summary of interviews conducted).

Service commissioners were predominately interviewed on a one-to-one basis as this allowed them to meet with the researcher at a time and place most convenient to them. All interviews with small-scale commissioners took place in schools. In the established service, two large-scale commissioners were interviewed. These interviews took place at the interviewee’s place of work at a time convenient to them. As none of the commissioners involved with the emerging service met the selection criteria set for a large-scale commissioner, no interviews with this participant group were conducted.

Table 14. Summary of interviews conducted in each case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service type</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service lead</td>
<td>1 participant interviewed</td>
<td>2 participants interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-scale commissioner</td>
<td>3 participants interviewed</td>
<td>3 participants interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale commissioner</td>
<td>0 participants interviewed</td>
<td>2 participants interviewed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information sheets and consent forms were sent out to all interviewees prior to the interview, as well as being discussed verbally on the telephone when the meeting was arranged. All interviews were conducted in a private space to allow for interviewee confidentiality. Each interviewee assigned a participant number to enable all materials and records from the session to be stored and analysed anonymously.
3.12.2.2 Interview Schedules

Each interview was scheduled to last for up to 60 minutes. The overall structure and content of the questioning schedules remained consistent across participant group and/or setting, although some modifications to wording were made as necessary (see Appendices C-G).

The schedule was developed by drawing on Yin’s (2009) proposition that in case study research questioning occurs at five different levels: 1) questions asked to specific interviewees; 2) questions asked of the individual case; 3) questions asked of the pattern of findings across cases; 4) questions asked of the entire study; and 5) normative questions asked about policy recommendations and conclusions beyond the scope the study. Consequently, when designing the questioning schedules (see Appendices C-G), it was important that the questions not only linked with the corresponding unit of analysis and research question (e.g. level 1 and 2 questions) but also covered content relevant to the other case, research questions and touched on potential broader issues outside investigation (e.g. level 3, 4 and 5 questions).

Furthermore, when developing the questioning schedules the researcher drew on material from several already existing sources including: Support and Aspiration Green Paper (DfE, 2011), Farrell et al. (2006) as well as schedules previously used during the pilot study (see Winward, 2013). Moreover, as part of a continuous reflexive process, data collected from earlier interviews were analysed and the primarily findings were used to update and modify the questioning schedule as necessary (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This resulted in the addition of further or modified sub-questions, whilst the main questions within the schedule remained fixed. The aim of undertaking this reflexive approach was to engage in data collection as a dynamic and responsive process of meaning-making (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009).
3.12.2.3 Data Collection Materials

A digital recorder was used to audio record the interviews. This audio recording was then fully transcribed verbatim. Notes were also taken during the interview to capture salient points made by the participants and to support the researcher in accurately remembering these in order to make reference to them at a later stage in the discussion. Notes also supported tracking of the content covered and aided the researcher in deciding when to move to the next topic or question.

3.12.3 Focus Groups

Focus groups involve several participants taking part in a joint or group discussion. The topic is supplied by the researcher, who then acts as the facilitator for the subsequent discussion (Cohen et al., 2009). The advantage of this data collection method is the yielding of a collective rather than individual view (Cohen et al., 2009). Therefore, it is argued that through joint discussion with colleagues, participants’ perspectives have the potential to be more developed than during an individual interview. Furthermore, joint discussions are highly efficient in terms of the amount and range of data able to be collected from several people at one time (Robson, 2011) and also in the generation of a more ecologically valid data set. Whilst a researcher will often generate a questioning schedule for a focus group, the advantage of this method is that a high proportion of the agenda and content is led by the participants interacting with each other and shaping their own discussion (Cohen et al., 2009). Therefore, arguably the findings are more likely to reflect the participants’ rather than the researcher’s perspective.

Nevertheless, a criticism and potential limitation of this method is that the quality or ‘genuine content’ of the data collected is dependent on the dynamics of individuals within the group (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In this group context, there is potential for participants to seek to present themselves in a way they feel would be most socially acceptable amongst peers or colleagues (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Alternatively, certain members of the group may
dominate the discussion and bias results (Robson, 2011). It is also possible that conflicts may occur between group members, detracting from the purpose and topic of discussion (Robson, 2011). Therefore, the ‘quality’ of data collected using this method can rely on the skill of the facilitator to mediate these intra-group effects (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

However, as the researcher has skills in consultation, mediation as well as knowledge of group dynamics and facilitation, it is argued that the risks of intra-group effects during the current study were significantly reduced and the opportunity to achieve quality or ‘genuine’ data was increased. In addition, it is argued that as the researcher was a member of same profession, this facilitated authentic participation as professional issues and tensions were already known and able to be addressed in a sensitive and informed way. Moreover, careful planning and recruitment of participants into the group are also important factors in reducing these effects and in collecting good quality data (Robson, 2011).

3.12.3.1 Focus Group Procedures

In each case, a focus group was conducted with a group of EP participants. All EP team members were invited to take part in the focus group by the researcher and EP team leader. In order to support variability and attendance, the focus groups were arranged to coincide with regularly scheduled EP team meetings. An email was sent out to remind team members about the focus group a week before. Information sheets and consent forms were also distributed at this point to all EP team members. The group lasted an hour, including warm-up time and closure of the discussion. Each participant was assigned a number to enable all materials and records from the group to be stored and analysed anonymously.

3.12.3.1.1 Group Size and Composition

Six participants were recruited for each focus group. For the emerging service, this was the total number of EPs in the team, all of whom attended the group. However, due to attrition...
three participants took part in the established service focus group. There is a variety of opinion regarding the optimum size of a focus group (Robson, 2011): four to twelve participants is suggested as ideal by Krueger and Casey, (2009), whereas Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) suggest between eight and twelve. However, Morgan (1988) advocates that researchers seek to over-recruit by 20% due to rates of attrition. Consequently, it is recognised that in the established service the number of participants was slightly below the minimum number suggested; however, as there is currently no fixed criterion for focus groups and as the discussion was balanced covering the topic areas as intended in the questioning schedule, this did not appear to have an adverse effect on the quality of data collected.

Moreover, Krueger and Casey (2000) are critical of the use of pre-existing groups when conducting focus groups. During the current study EPs recruited into the focus groups were all from the same service. Krueger and Casey (2000) argue that when using groups of people who work closely with each other there will, consequently, already be well-established dynamics, current relationships and hierarchies which can influence contributions. However, as this was known to be a potential limiting factor, the researcher carefully planned the questioning schedule (see Appendices E & F) and used skills in facilitation and mediation in order to try and minimise the potential impact of these influences on the research findings.

3.12.3.1.2 Questioning Schedule

The questioning schedules (see Appendices E & F) follow the same structure and content as the materials developed for the interviews. However, in order to support its use in the context of a group discussion, the schedule was further broken down into the following sections: opening, introductory, transition, key questions and ending questions. The purpose of modifying the questioning schedule in this way was to support effective participant engagement by providing the opportunity for the group to warm up and for dynamics to settle before the main questions were posed (Krueger & Casey, 2000).
3.12.3.1.3 Data Collection in the Focus Group

With the participants’ permission, each focus group was audio recorded using a digital recorder. This audio recording was then fully transcribed verbatim. Notes were also taken during the focus group to capture salient points and to record which participants shared these viewpoints in order to ask for clarification or further information. Notes also supported tracking of the content covered and helped the researcher maintain a suitable pace for the discussion.

3.12.3.1.4 Facilitator’s Role

The facilitator had an important role in establishing how the groups were conducted, as well as the content covered in each focus group. However, whilst overseeing the group, the facilitator needed to balance this with allowing conversation and ideas to develop from the participants themselves in a naturalistic way. As a result, facilitation typically encompassed asking a question from the schedule, summarising responses, reflecting back key ideas and moving the conversation forward or back to pertinent points. Another key role of the facilitator was to try and support each participant to contribute by taking a supportive and encouraging style which showed regard for each participant’s individual views without giving favour to any one contributor.
Table 15. Data-collection methods used for emerging and established services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1: Emerging service</th>
<th>Case 2: Established service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 1:</strong> How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?</td>
<td><strong>Research question 1:</strong> How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data source(s):</td>
<td>Data source(s):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary source:</td>
<td>• Primary source:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Service delivery data</td>
<td>o Service delivery data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secondary sources:</td>
<td>• Secondary sources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Interview with EPS service lead</td>
<td>o X 2 interviews with EPS service lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Focus group with EPS team</td>
<td>o Focus group with EPS team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o X 3 interviews with small-scale service commissioners</td>
<td>o Joint interview with X 2 small-scale service commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Single interview with small-scale service commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o X 2 interviews with large-scale service commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 2:</strong> Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?</td>
<td><strong>Research question 2:</strong> Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data source(s):</td>
<td>Data source(s):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary source:</td>
<td>• Primary source:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Service outline document</td>
<td>o Service publicity materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secondary sources</td>
<td>• Secondary sources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Interview with EPS service lead</td>
<td>o X 2 interviews with EPS service lead</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Focus group with EPS team</td>
<td>o Focus group with EPS team</td>
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<tr>
<td>o X 3 interviews with small-scale service commissioners</td>
<td>o Joint interview with X 2 small-scale service commissioners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Single interview with small-scale service commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o X 2 interviews with large-scale service commissioners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Research question 3: What do EPs, in the context of traded services, see as their distinctive contribution?

**Data source(s):**
- **Primary source:**
  - Focus group with EPS team
- **Secondary sources:**
  - Interview with EPS service lead
  - Service outline document

### Research question 4: How do service commissioners view the role of the EP in the context of traded services?

**Data source(s):**
- **Primary source:**
  - X 3 interviews with small-scale service commissioners
- **Secondary sources:**
  - Joint interview with X 2 small-scale service commissioners
  - Single interview with small-scale service commissioner
  - X 2 interviews with large-scale service commissioners
3.13 Data Analysis

3.13.1 Thematic Analysis

Audio data recorded during the focus groups and interviews was transcribed in full. The collected data was subject to the principles of thematic analysis as outlined in the six-stage model by Braun and Clarke (2006). During coding of the data, the unit of analysis was at the statement level. This methodology was selected as it allowed the researcher to approach the data in an inductive ‘bottom-up’ way whilst also recognising the active role of the researcher in eliciting semantic themes. This approach is advantageous in generating a rich picture of meaning when exploring the data within a critical realist paradigm. However, a criticism of this approach is that the researcher may fail to fully understand the data and its context and therefore fail to identify key themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, in order to mediate the risks and challenges associated with thematic analysis, such as the researcher failing to identify key themes, a set of procedures was conducted to help support the validity and reliability of data analysis.

Intercoder reliability is a process in which researchers check their coded segments to establish the reliability of the data analysis and findings (Creswell, 2012). In the current study this involved a small section of each transcript being coded by an independent researcher. A measure of percentage agreement between the researcher’s codes and independent researcher’s codes was established to determine intercoder reliability. 80% agreement of passages coded had been set as an appropriate indication of consistency. The percentage of intercoder reliability achieved was 83%.

In addition, intercoder agreement refers to the extent to which the coders understood the passages to mean the same thing. Therefore, the codes generated were collapsed into themes to establish if similar meanings would be drawn by the two researchers. The clustering of
codes into themes showed a good level of consistency, although labelling of themes produced slightly more variability. Nevertheless, it was agreed that there was sufficient consistency between the two data sets to establish confidence in the reliability of both process and findings.

The concept of validity within a qualitative methodology produces a number of different perspectives (Creswell, 2012). However, there is consensus that an attempt to assess the accuracy of findings is worthwhile and can be seen as a procedure which tries to establish validity (Creswell, 2012). There are several ways in which researchers might try to validate findings, such as triangulation, which involves making use of multiple sources and methods to corroborate findings (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, during the current study as a part of the final stage in the analysis process, the researcher considered evidence from the other data sources in order to establish validity for themes generated. Creswell (2012) argues that if themes are established based on converging several of data or perspectives from participants, then this can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study. Therefore, during the current study themes which were not supported during this process of triangulation were reviewed and re-categorised or if necessary discarded.

3.13.1.1  Process of Analysis

Analysis used the six-stage model by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. The first stage of the process was to engage and become familiar with the data sets. This involved transcription as well as active reading and annotation of the scripts. Informal initial notes were made during this stage to highlight pertinent phrases and ideas as well as possible units of meaning within the text.

2. During the second stage of the process formal analysis began with coding. Coding was a systematic process in which data from each case was reviewed in turn e.g.
transcripts from the emerging service were coded and then transcripts from the established service were coded. Codes were generated by research question e.g. extracts were coded in different colours (using highlighter pens) according to which research question they related to, although some codes were relevant to more than one research question and were coded for both.

The researcher generated initial codes, which as units of analysis were descriptive and encompassed both broad and more discrete levels of meaning within the data. Coding at this stage was data driven; as a result all initial code names were taken directly from key phrases or terminology used by participants. Any tensions and inconsistencies within the data were also noted and encapsulated by separate codes. Tables of initial codes were generated manually using a word document (see Appendix H) to support the collation and organisation of codes by case, research question and data source.

3. The third stage of analysis involved sorting the codes, generated during the second stage, into potential themes. Codes were manually sorted and grouped into semantic themes. Sticky notes were used by the researcher to label subthemes and over-arching themes within the data set (see Appendix H). Thematic grids or tables were then generated by the researcher in a Microsoft word document (see Appendix H). This allowed the researcher to clearly catalogue the results from the manual sort and sticky note labelling process, which created a clear record of how the codes informed the subthemes and how the subthemes fitted within a main over-arching theme.

At this stage, the researcher began to consider what the main over-arching themes were within the data, which themes were sub-themes and what if any may be discarded. At this stage, any codes which did not fit well within the generated themes were kept under a heading ‘miscellaneous’.
4. During the fourth stage, the researcher reviewed each of the codes and the line of quote they related to in the transcript. After comparing the potential quotes, the researcher choose the extract which best encapsulated and described the subtheme label. A review of the collated extracts was then conducted to ensure that they formed a coherent pattern within a theme. This review process was done be generating tables (see Appendix H), which enabled the researcher to view each of the coded extracts selected to represent each subtheme and consider whether jointly they formed a coherent pattern within the theme.

The validity of individual themes was then considered in relation to the whole data set. The researcher did this by evaluating the uncoded data to establish if any meaning or extracts had been missed during earlier coding. If new data had been found at this stage, then the researcher would have generated new codes and repeated stages 1 to 4 of the thematic analysis. However, during this analysis process, this did not occur.

5. The fifth stage was to further refine the themes and to encapsulate what each is about in a few short sentences. Moreover, the researcher generated thematic maps to representation of how the themes fit together as whole (see Appendix H). These maps are used within the findings chapter of the current project to provide a diagrammatic representation of the themes and subthemes.

6. Stage six was to write the analysed findings into a project chapter. This stage in the analysis involved not only paraphrasing of participants’ statements but also identifying what was interesting about a theme in relation to the research question posed.

3.13.1.2 Critique of thematic analysis

A criticism of the thematic analysis conducted during the current study is that strategies which seek to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of research findings were not implemented
(Creswell, 2012). A criticism of the inductive approach taken by the researcher (and of thematic analysis more generally) is that the researcher may fail to fully understand the data and its context and therefore fail to identify key themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, an approach such as member checking in which the accuracy of the qualitative findings is assessed by sharing the final report or specific descriptions of themes with the participants who took part of the investigation, may have increased the validity of the themes and findings identified (Creswell, 2012). This procedure would have involved conducting a follow-up interview with participants, providing them with the opportunity to comment on the findings (Creswell, 2012). However, this process of member checking did not take place during the current study due to time constraints on the both the researcher and the participants.

A potential disadvantage of not having utilised member checking arose when labelling themes. Participants discussed a topic area that they referred as ‘ethics’ and ‘the ethics of trading’, therefore the label ‘ethics of trading’ was generated to represent this discourse. However, some of the issues discussed by participants were viewed by the researcher as pertaining to politics rather than ethics e.g. schools being given devolved budgets. However, these ‘political’ issues were described by the participants as ethical concerns. This created a dilemma for the researcher, who wished to take an inductive approach to the analysis but wanted to capture and accurately label both issues. In this instance, the researcher decided which particular extracts referred to politics and which referred to ethics, which is in keeping with the critical realist epistemological position of the research that allows the researcher to conduct research that is grounded scientifically, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the potential influence and values of the researcher (Robson, 2011).

Nevertheless, an alternative approach would have been for the researcher to share a small sample of coded extracts pertaining to themes of ‘politics’ and ‘ethics’ with the relevant group of participants (e.g. EPs) in order to explore this issue of labelling further and to support the
researcher in developing a more nuanced understanding of the two issues. Therefore, it is reflected that if this process of member checking had been conducted it may have helped the researcher to resolve this particular issue of labelling themes, which may have increased the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

3.13.2 Content Analysis

In order to interpret the publicity materials collected, they were subjected to content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) propose that rather than being a single method, content analysis has three distinct approaches: conventional, directed and summative. Whilst all three of these approaches can be used to extract meaning from the content of text data, they each have different approaches to the generation of theses codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In conventional content analysis, codes or units of meaning are derived directly from the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Analysis in a directed approach begins with a series of propositions based on already existing theory and research findings, which act as guidance for initial coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Summative content analysis involves the counting of keywords or specific content, followed by an interpretation of the underlying context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Consequently, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) assert that the specific type of content analysis chosen by a researcher varies and typically aligns with the theoretical interests and the topic being investigated. As the current study takes a critical realist ontological position in which psychological facts are understood as socially constructed within their present context (Parker 1999), this led the researcher not only to consider patterns in the data but to also seek to derive meaning from the text. As a result, a conventional content analysis was conducted. This approach involves a subjective interpretation of the content of the data through the
systematic classification of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, conventional content analysis goes beyond counting words and examines language more intensively for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into categories of similar meaning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). These categories can represent either explicit or inferred communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Moreover, a conventional approach enables researchers to avoid the use of preconceived categories and immerse themselves in the data in order to develop new insights, which can be described as inductive category development (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The advantage of this approach is information is seen as coming directly from the data and therefore reflective of participant’s unique perspective (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As a result theme titles are intended to be reflective of key statements or phrasing of participants. However, potential risks or disadvantages of this method are that the categories identified by the researcher could miss key information and therefore findings might not accurately reflect the data. In order to try and minimise this risk the same strategies aimed at establishing reliability and validity used during the thematic analysis were followed.

3.13.2.1 Process of Analysis

The staged approach outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was used as the process of analysis:

1. The first stage involved reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the document as a whole.

2. The second stage was when formal analysis began and data were read word for word to derive codes. This was done by highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key points or concepts. During this stage, notes were made in order to record initial impressions, ideas and possible pertinent units of meaning or sections with the text.
3. During the third stage, labels for codes emerge that were reflective of more than one key point or concept. These formed an initial coding scheme.

4. The fourth stage involved sorting codes into categories based on how different codes were related and linked. These emergent categories were used to organise and group codes into meaningful clusters. The ideal number of clusters was 10 to 15 to keep clusters broad enough to sort a large number of codes.

5. During the fifth stage in analysis, the large number of subcategories were organised into smaller more over-arching categories. A tree diagram was developed to help organise categories into a hierarchical structure.

6. At the sixth stage, definitions for each category, subcategory and code were developed. Exemplars for code and category were identified from the data, in order to prepare for reporting the findings. Finally, relationships between the categories and subcategories were identified.

3.13.3 Exploratory Data Analysis

Exploratory data analysis is a form of analysis, which is responsive to the data being presented (Cohen et al., 2009). This type of descriptive, rather than inferential statistical approach, focuses on presenting what the data itself suggests (Cohen et al., 2009). Therefore, frequencies, percentages and graphical forms of visual presentation are often used to represent the data findings. Moreover, graphs, such as bar charts, are typically used to represent categorical and discrete data, e.g. highest and lowest, whereas pie charts are useful for showing proportions (Cohen et al., 2009). In addition, by looking at the percentage change between two sets of data, researchers are able to describe patterns and possible emerging trends (Cohen et al., 2009).
Consequently, during the current study descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency, percentage change) were performed in order to explore and describe numeric trends in traded purchasing. This was done by analysing two financial years’ worth of service delivery data from each case according to overall purchasing by year and purchasing by setting. Visual techniques of data presentation were selected and implemented according to the guidance provided by Cohen et al. (2009). Moreover, the way in which the services had collected their data allowed some additional descriptive analysis. The emerging service sold in large units of ‘sessions’, which included a number of set activities, e.g. consultation, observation, assessment and report writing. Conversely, the established service typically sold in much smaller units, e.g. assessment, observation or training session or in much larger contracts, e.g. a full-time or part-time psychologist. Therefore, data from the emerging service allowed the researcher to explore the proportion of schools buying certain quantities of sessions, whereas the data for the established service provided the opportunity to explore trends in purchasing via type of work, rather than proportion or number of sessions bought.


3.14 Ethics

This research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines from The British Psychological Society Code of Ethics (2006) and the Health and Care Professions Council’s Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2012). Prior to the research taking place, the researcher put forward an application for ethical approval to the University of Manchester’s School of Education Research and Ethics Committee (see Appendix I). Ethical approval for the project was received in September 2013 and again in November 2013 following some minor amendments to the interview schedules (see Appendix J).
A participant information sheet and consent form was created containing information about the research for EPs, small-scale and large-scale commissioners (see Appendix B). Key information such as the requirements of participation, how confidentiality and anonymity was established and maintained and the voluntarily nature of the research was outlined in the information sheets and consent forms. Confidentiality was ensured by making arrangements to conduct the interviews and focus groups in a private space. Names of services, EPs and commissioners were taken on the day in order to help the transcription process and allocation of interviews to the correct service. However, once transcription was complete all data was anonymised and kept on an encrypted and password protected data storage card provided by the university. Following approved completion of the project, this data card will be returned to the university and stored in a locked cabinet by the researcher’s supervisor. The supervisor will be the custodian of this data for five years.

Furthermore, prior to participants being formally recruited into the study, initial consultation meetings were held either in person or via telephone. This initial meeting allowed the researcher to discuss the information sheet detail and to answer any additional questions that potential participants may have had. At every stage in the research process the researcher ensured that participants were aware of their rights and ability to withdraw, to not provide information, to stop the interview or leave the group, to have their data removed from the study and their right to confidentiality.

In addition, ethical risks for the professional participants were also carefully considered. Using a case study design, with professionals who regularly work closely together, places several potential risks to participants including: risks to feelings of professionalism, concern that they may have said too much or have been perceived in a negative light by colleagues (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In order to minimise these risks during the current study, questioning schedules were designed to avoid any potentially inflammatory language and all interviews and focus
groups were conducted in a neutral manner, e.g. evaluation or the disclosure of other participant’s contributions from previous groups did not occur. Facilitation of the groups was also done in a deliberately neutral manner, which followed set ground rules outlined by the researcher at the start of each focus group.

Furthermore, an agenda was shared at the start of each focus group or interview, so that participants were aware of questioning areas before the session began. When requested, the researcher sent participants a copy of the interviewing schedule beforehand. Therefore, both during and prior to interview participants were given the opportunity to opt out of any particular question or topic area. Participants were also reminded prior to the session beginning that everything they said would be kept confidential and that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. A short debrief was given at the end of each focus group and interview. Time was also allocated at the end of each focus group and interview to enable any individual participant(s) to discuss issues or questions that may have arisen for them during the session. These discussions were confidential and were not recorded. Furthermore, whenever a participant discussed an issue in the interview or focus group and then immediately or later requested that it was not used in the study, that specific data was identified by the researcher and participant and was removed from the investigation.

3.15 Case study protocol

By outlining the main processes and procedures of a case study project, a case study protocol is intended to act as a structured guide for both the investigator and intended audience of the final report (Yin, 2009). Moreover, Yin (2009) asserts that having a case study protocol is important for projects using a multiple-case design as it provides a succinct overview of the rules governing the conduct of the researcher and therefore supports the integrity and
reliability of such multi-faceted projects. In addition, the process of preparing a protocol supports the researcher in anticipating any potential problems, including the way in which case study reports are to be completed, contributing to a more rigorous methodology (Yin, 2009).

The main features of a case study protocol related to this research are outlined in Table 16 below. A timeline for the project is provided in Table 14 and Table 15 outlines a full risk analysis surrounding completion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</table>
| Background    | • Research exploring the role of the EP in the context of traded services is currently small and draws on anecdotal accounts.  
• However, believing that the adoption of private sector principles could have significant and long-lasting impact on the EP profession, authors such as Fallon et al. (2010) made a series of predictions and assertions about possible risks and benefits of trading.  
• The aim of the research is to explore how the EP role is changing and adapting following the adoption of traded services.  
• In order to investigate this unfolding real-life phenomenon in more detail, the project was divided into four research questions to focus on: 1) Emerging patterns or changes to EP service delivery; 2) Communication and promotion of the EP role; 3) EPs views on their distinctive contribution in this new context; and 4) Service commissioner perspectives on the role and function of the EP. |
| Design        | • The research uses a multiple-case study design with embedded units of analysis. The cases are two EP services in the North West of England. The units of analysis corresponded to the research questions.  
• A series of data collection techniques were used: focus groups, interviews, data audit and collection of marketing documentation.  
• Analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. |
| Case selection| • Cases were selected using a purposeful sampling technique.  
• Services within a specific geographical area were contacted prior to recruitment and then interested parties were screened using a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria.  
• Two cases with similar demographics but different levels of trading were selected and invited to take part in the research.  
• All participants were provided with information sheets and consent forms detailing what the study would involve, their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, how data would be used and their right to withdraw at any point. |
| Data collection| • Phase one: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each EP service lead, using a schedule developed by the researcher.  
• Phase two: Following the interviews Service delivery data and
marketing documentation were collected from each of the service leads.
- Phase three: Focus groups with EP participants using the same interview schedule, slightly adapted for the group context, were conducted.
- Phase four: Joint semi-structured interviews and single semi-structured interviews with small-scale commissioners, using an interview schedule developed by the researcher were carried out.
- Phase five: Single semi-structured interviews were conducted with large-scale commissioners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis and interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Thematic analysis: Interview and focus group data were transcribed in full and then subjected to thematic analysis using the procedures outlined by Braun and Clark (2006). Invivo coding at the statement level was used to reflect key phrases and terminology used by participants. Codes were then sorted into themes from which thematic grids were developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Content analysis: Conventional content analysis based on Hsieh and Shannon’s (2005) staged approach was implemented to analyse each service’s marketing documentation. Data were coded at the level of manifest content and the unit of analysis was abstracted parts of the text. Codes were generated and then collated into a series of categories. Hierarchical maps were then developed from these categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Descriptive statistics: Frequencies, percentages and graphical forms of visual presentation were used to explore and present findings from the service delivery data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- A cross-case analysis of the themes and subthemes was carried out to compare and contrast findings in relation to each research question.</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reporting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The case study report is presented according to research question. Previous data are integrated with current findings in order to develop a conclusion to the report, including implications for future research and current EP practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The target audience includes EPs, educators and those responsible for local and national policy development.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## 3.16 Timeline for project completion

Table 17. Timeline for project completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Yr. 1</th>
<th>Yr. 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis proposal</td>
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<td>Ethical approval</td>
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<td>Pre-data collection</td>
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<td>Recruitment</td>
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<td>Systematic lit review</td>
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<td>Data collection</td>
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<td>Writing up</td>
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<td>Year of study</td>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Sep</td>
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<td>Preparation and exam</td>
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### 3.17 Operational risk analysis

**Table 18. Operational risk analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Contingency plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty recruiting SENCO participants</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>- Nomination strategy was used so that SENCOs who had a good relationship with the EP team were contacted first.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If there was a lack of response, a follow-up reminder was sent out via email, and then a telephone call was made.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Members of each EP team promoted the research when visiting schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty scheduling a date that all participants are able to attend for a focus group</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>- Researcher asked interested participants for suggested dates, times and locations to maximise accessibility and convenience.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Researcher arranged the focus group in advance and was clear about logistics (date, time, venue and duration).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Sent email reminders out two weeks, then one week before the focus group was due to take place.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If unable to arrange a convenient date for all participants to attend, series of separate individual interviews were to be conducted instead.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attrition of participants leading to insufficient numbers for a focus group to be held</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>- Researcher sought to over-recruit by 20% in case participants were unable to attend at the last minute or had scheduling difficulties.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Schedule focus groups either before or after a team/network meeting to ensure most participants will have some availability and will be at the same location.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Send out reminders and schedule the groups well in advance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Have a contingency date available for rearranging.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Alternatively, if sufficient participants did not arrive for the focus group, a joint or single interview was to be conducted instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-subscription of the focus groups</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>- Focus groups can have some flexibility regarding numbers 4-12 is the ideal.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If numbers rose above 12, then</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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nomination list would have been drawn up of individuals meeting the inclusion criteria and names selected at random.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mitigation Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| SENCOs or EPs may feel that they do not have time to take part in the project due to workload demands | Medium | • Flexibility regarding dates and times for the groups and interviews was provided by the researcher.  
• Arrangements were made well in advance so cover could be arranged if needed. |
| Services may not have sufficient data tracking the traded element of their service for analysis | Medium | • Service delivery data set as a screening criterion for entry into the study.  
• Expectations for the amount and type of service data to be different for the emerging and established service to reflect their respective development points in this new way of working.  
• Interview schedule for service leads included questions specifically targeting service delivery changes and trends in purchasing. |
| Participants choosing to withdraw from the research once it has commenced | Low   | • Sought to over-recruit by 20% in order to accommodate participant attrition.  
• Research started immediately after ethical approval had been granted to provide contingency time in case further recruitment was needed at a later stage. |
| Researcher illness/absence                 | Low   | • Researcher managed own health and planned time line of project completion so that there was flexibility and contingency for unexpected circumstances. |
| The interview or focus group is interrupted | Low   | • When the session was arranged, the researcher made sure a suitable room was available for the duration of the interview or focus group. |
4 FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter outline

This chapter presents a succinct summary of the research findings. The data are presented in relation to each of the four research questions. Each case is explored in turn and analysis from each of the different data sources is provided. Graphical forms of visual presentation are used to represent the data findings. For quantitative findings there are bar charts and pie diagrams, for the qualitative data thematic maps are used to outline the main themes and subthemes. A summary of analysis with an illustrative quote from each subtheme is provided. The chapter is closed by a cross-case analysis, which compares and contrasts key themes and topics to be explored in more detail during the discussion.

4.2 Emerging service: How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?

4.2.1 Service delivery data

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics in order to try and establish if there are any potential emerging trends or patterns with regard to service delivery and the introduction of trading.

4.2.1.1 Purchasing trends by year
Figure 2 shows that a total number of 28 more traded sessions were bought in 2013-2014, which represents an increase of 18.2% from 2012-13.

Figure 3 below, shows that in 2012-13 the majority of schools (60%) purchased single sessions. In contrast, only 2% of schools purchased between 12 to 16 sessions. This suggests that the smallest number of schools bought the largest number of sessions.
Figure 4 shows that in 2013-14 just under half of schools (48%) purchased single sessions. Compared to the previous year (Figure 3) this represents a 12% reduction. 44% of schools bought between 2 and 6 sessions, which is an 8% increase compared to 2012-13. The percentage of schools purchasing 7 to 11 sessions also increased slightly by 4% compared to the previous year. Schools buying the largest number of sessions remained the same. This suggests an emerging trend for purchasing more than a single session but below 12 sessions.
4.2.1.2 Purchasing trends by setting

Figure 5. Emerging service: Number of sessions bought by each setting by year

Figure 5 shows that there was an increase in the number of sessions bought across all settings, except nursery. The primary sector is the largest purchaser of sessions in both 2012-13 and 2013-14. The largest area of growth in purchasing has been in the secondary sector from 10 sessions in 2012-13 to 21 in 2013-14, which is an increase of 110%.
4.2.2  **EP service lead**

**Figure 6. Emerging service: EP service lead RQ1 main themes and subthemes**

- **Service expansion and improvement**
  - Expansion from within
  - Improvement for children
  - EPs more innovative
  - Increased demand
  - More of the same
  - Better understanding of services

- **Ethics**
  - School is the customer
  - Meeting needs

- **Business model**
  - School is the customer
  - Exceeding targets
  - Evidencing impact
  - Competition

### 4.2.2.1  Theme One: Service expansion and improvement

In this theme, the introduction of trading is strongly linked to positive developments in practice as well as to a sense of empowerment and regeneration coming from within the EP team: “I think we are in a lucky position and possibly quite a unique position that the expansion is coming from within.” This positivity also appeared to be linked to new opportunities created for EPs as a result of adopting a partially-traded model. The service lead outlined that the team were able to offer more creative and inventive services: “Each EP is individually going to their schools and they are offering kind of more innovative services and solutions.” Moreover, this
increase in the variety and creativity of services offered appeared to be creating a shift in the way that service commissioners were viewing the EP role: “I think we are just naturally picking up more because schools are saying, ‘Oh I didn’t realise you could do that now’.” As a result, it seemed that this expansion and innovation were also having a positive effect on the services provided for CYP as schools were buying in new interventions for children which were not previously offered prior to trading: “I think the upside is that schools are kind of realising that we do offer a lot more so they are buying in things for the children that they wouldn’t have before.”

In addition, as well as ‘new’ services being delivered, there appeared to be an increase in the overall level of EP work being completed. Schools were choosing to buy in additional hours of EP time above their allocated 5 sessions in order to access more of the same core services (e.g. assessment and consultation): “You would not know whether I was doing a free session or a traded session [...] it’s not like ‘oh we’ve got this five free and bought one in extra so we’ll do something different’.” Moreover, the level of traded work completed by the team had well exceeded targets set by the LA for income generation. This was seen as a measure of success for the traded service and an indication of the level of demand for EP services: “… last year we had a target, the powers that be set us a target of £50,000 income generation and then they put it up this year to £75,000 and both times we have exceeded so there is definitely more of a demand.”

4.2.2.2 Theme Two: Ethics

The theme of ethics alludes to the tensions felt by the team lead regarding the need to balance acting in the best interests of CYP and providing what the school, which is now a paying customer, wanted: “From everything I have just described there are those downsides in that you have to be mindful that what the school wants might not be the best thing, so that is a downside.” Issues regarding schools resenting paying for services were also seen as a potential
ethical dilemma: “... but they don’t want to pay out for anything but when there is a problem you know it is the SENCO’s phoning up saying “help, what do I do?”” It was felt that there were ethical tensions when a school had used their free allowance but still wanted to access more support without paying. However, there is a question as to whether this represents an argument regarding political values rather than an issue of EP ethical practice.

4.2.2.3 Theme Three: Business model

The changing relationship between schools and EPs was captured in this theme: “Now having seen the traded side, even though we are not fully traded there is definitely now an element of: the schools are now the customers and we have to keep them happy.” One way in which the service lead felt she had to keep schools happy was through evidencing the impact of her work: “If you are doing some consultation [...] the idea is that you kind of start empowering the teacher to start thinking for themselves: they might actually rate you quite low but in fact what you have done is a really good job, so it’s really hard to measure outcomes.” Therefore, it seems that a new pressure is being felt by EPs in terms of providing a service that is not only effective but also tangible to service commissioners in its processes and outcomes.

Furthermore, the ability to meet monetary expectations or targets set by the LA also appears to have become a performance indicator. Exceeding targets for income generation was seen as evidence to suggest that not only was trading successful but that there was a rising demand for EP services: “… we fairly quickly realised that we were going to easily meet the target and again, this year I think we have already exceeded it.” In addition, having financial targets seems to have increased a sense of competition with other services and providers: “The threat is definitely people impinging [...] we have already had [...] a neighbouring local authority send flyers out to our schools.” Therefore, trading has introduced a set of new business-like principles (e.g. financial targets, performance monitoring and competition) to the operation of EP services.
4.2.3  EP focus group

Figure 7. Emerging service: EP focus group RQ1 main themes and subthemes

4.2.3.1  Theme One: Positives of trading

In this theme, trading is described as a catalyst for the development and regeneration of EP professional practice: “Whereas I think, because they just had those visits, we kind of stumbled along without challenging ourselves to do other stuff, or we felt we couldn’t fit other types of work in.” As part of this development, the team felt that trading had enabled them to be creative and offer a greater variety of services: “It was us as a team that said we’d perhaps be a bit more creative and a bit broader about what we can offer.” More specifically, there appeared to be an emerging trend in the type of work delivered, with intervention and training being particularly popular: “… we’ve done a lot of the interventions or training.” In addition, it was felt that this expansion and improvement had a direct impact on CYP as they were able to
access support, which prior to trading the team would not have been able to deliver: “And that’s something we’ve offered them, and that is something that that little girl wouldn’t have been able to have before.” However, it was also clear that the introduction of trading had not been anticipated by the team as a potentially positive experience for the profession and for CYP: “But now we’re in it and I’m looking back down on it, in terms of creativity and types of work and the different stuff we can do, it’s actually been quite a positive experience in terms of professional development.”

4.2.3.2 Theme Two: School is the customer

This theme highlights the changing relationship and dynamics between schools and EPs. In particular, EPs felt that they had less control and were now more obliged to try and provide the service that the school wanted, rather than what they felt was needed: “Because it’s traded, we don’t have as much clout, because it’s their money and we can’t necessarily tell them how to spend it.” In addition, the focus group raised the issue that often a school’s ethos or approach towards inclusion dictates their buying decisions with regard to EP services: “How inclusive the school is and how much they value supporting SEN kids.” Therefore, in the context of trading it appears that the delivery of services is strongly directed by schools, especially school policy and budget plans, in terms of the amount and type of work completed. As a result, the team felt that in order to gain a commission they first had to establish what the agenda of the school was with regard to EP involvement in order to trade successfully: “So as EPs when we go in we have to get the commission, we have to work out what it is they want from us and try and deliver that.”

4.2.3.3 Theme Three: Business model

EP practice appears to be adopting a new way of working as result of trading, which has a strong emphasis on accountability: “I think we’re more explicit about how we’re working.” The pressure to provide a service which is seen, by schools and other commissioners, as valuable or
effective seemed to be the driving force behind the shift to more explicit ways of working and the need to demonstrate tangible outcomes: “I don’t know whether their expectations are different. I feel more pressure to be a good psychologist ...” However, there was also a sense that purchasing decisions may be mediated by the relationship between the practitioner and the school rather than by visibility of outcomes: “If they like you, they buy you.” This suggests that positive business relationships between schools and psychologist practitioners may be mediated by factors relating to interpersonal attractiveness, communication style or perceived compatibility.

Moreover, the need to stay competitive with other providers was also highlighted: “I think we’ve tried to, in order to create a market for training and other ways of working, we’ve tried to be fairly cheap.” It was felt that the service needed to stay relatively low-cost or present as value for money in order for schools to continue buying and not move to an independent or different LA provider. However, the partially-traded model was seen as beneficial in balancing some of the concerns regarding competition and schools not wanting to pay, or not having the resources to pay: “I think there’s enough flexibility with being partially traded, that we can say ‘it’s important, so it’s the right thing to do.’” The team also felt that having the first five sessions free allowed a relationship to be built with the school, which meant it was more likely to use the service when purchasing any additional EP time.

4.2.3.4 Theme Four: Politics

Variation in school budgets for buying services was highlighted as a potential ethical dilemma: “If you had to buy us in all the time there might be some schools that couldn’t access the service, and ethically, that affects the sort of children that we’re out there to meet the needs of ...” Although this statement implies that there is potential, in the traded context, for EPs to provide services only to a skewed client group, it more likely highlights a broader issue regarding the management and deployment of SEN funds by schools. Due to the current
system of funding within education, schools predominantly manage their own budgets, including funding for SEN. However, despite this, the team of EPs felt that it is the ethical obligation of the EP profession to account for whether children requiring SEN support receive it, rather than this being seen as the managerial responsibility of the school.

### 4.2.4 Small-scale service commissioners

#### Figure 8. Emerging service: Small-scale service commissioners RQ1 main themes and subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme One: Service has always been good</th>
<th>Disagree with trading</th>
<th>More need in schools</th>
<th>Positives of trading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td>Services should be free</td>
<td>Children have complex needs</td>
<td>Greater availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive working relationships</td>
<td>Don’t want a commercialised service</td>
<td>EP service is the last one available</td>
<td>More control</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Different services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Change in perception of EP role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.2.4.1 Theme One: Service has always been good

Some commissioners were very positive about the EP service and the impact it had had on outcomes for children and young people. However, the introduction of trading did not stimulate, as might have been expected, a new set of higher expectations in terms of the quality of EP practice: “I think all the EPs we have had right throughout have been really conscientious and have worked really closely with the school.” A view of service commissioners was that the service had always been of very high quality and generated good
outcomes for CYP: “You have got the ability to make a difference for a child’s life with the EP service on board, I feel.”

4.2.4.2 Theme Two: Disagree with trading/privatisation

This theme reflects some of the strong reservations held by some small-scale commissioners regarding the introduction of traded services, not only by EPs but across other public services such as Speech and Language Therapy (SALT): “... all those services [...] should be open and available for every single child to be able to achieve the very best within their capabilities, and the fact that we are having to buy in to that service I feel is despicable.” It seems that commissioners are concerned that trading will create inequality of access to services and support.

A link was also drawn between services trading and becoming commercialised or business-orientated. There appeared to be concern that this would lead to professionals losing their personal and value-driven approach: “You don’t want it to become commercial [...] small is good [...] it has got a good selling point. Especially with schools ‘cos you’re dealing with humans, aren’t you?” Nevertheless, there was positivity that EPs were one of the few remaining services offering a free element to their service: “I think the EP service is the only service now that is available to the school without the constraints, and although we can buy in that extra, it’s a service that is just there. I think the day that disappears is the day the majority of children on the SEN will not have their needs met.” It was felt that without this free provision schools would have great difficulty in meeting the needs of children with SEN. Therefore, in this respect, the partially-traded model was viewed much more favourably than fully privatised services.
4.2.4.3 Theme Three: More needed in schools

Commissioners were clear that in more recent years the level of children’s needs in schools had more become complex and that this, in addition to other pressures such as cuts to other services, was driving demand for EP services: “... when I first started teaching we used to meet the Ed Psych and used to just talk about the children we were having problems with, you know, how can you help us put all these things in place, but now it is not just that, the Ed Psych is here, like you say, on-going through the process to the end of a statement.”

4.2.4.4 Theme Four: Positives of trading

Some commissioners appeared to feel that being able to purchase EP services had several specific advantages, including more control over EP work completed in school: “... I think it makes schools feel as though they can be more in control of what the educational psychologist does when they are in school.” The increased level of availability of EP services was also viewed positively: “Now you can buy whenever you want, so if you have got a budget, all the time you can say ‘look I’ve got this, please, can you book us in?’” There also seemed to be a significant shift in service commissioners’ perspectives on the role of the EP: “I didn’t realise he did the training [...] I thought they just did assessing children and statements ... “ Commissioners seemed to be more aware that EPs were able to provide a greater variety of services. This appeared to have led to an expansion in the breadth of EP work completed in schools: “I suppose all the training I have asked her to do and the Lego therapy, and I have asked them all to do observations in class which I don’t think I would have asked them to do before.” However, two particular types of services were particularly popular, namely training and therapeutic interventions.
4.3 Established service: How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?

4.3.1 Service delivery data

Data for the established service was recorded in units rather than sessions. Each unit is equivalent i.e. 1 unit = 1 report = 1 meeting = 1 assessment.

4.3.1.1 Purchasing trends by year

Figure 9. Established service: Total number of units bought per year

Figure 9 shows that a total number of 354.5 more traded units were bought in 2013-2014, which represents an increase of 40.5% from 2012-13.
4.3.1.2 **Purchasing trends by setting**

*Figure 10. Established service: Number of units bought by each setting per year*

Figure 10 shows which settings, rather commissioners (e.g. large scale commissioners are not included) purchased units in both 2012-13 and 2013-14, therefore it does not account for the total number of units purchased each year which can be seen in Figure 9 and Figure 11. Figure 10 shows that the primary sector was the largest purchaser in both 2012-13 and 2013-14, although growth in this sector was only up 4% in 2013-14 compared to 2012-13. The secondary sector remained stable with 65 units purchased in 2012-13 and 65 in 2013-14. Expanding sectors include special schools, academies and faith schools. The academy sector grew from 38 units in 2012-13 to 63 in 2013-14, which was an increase of 66%. Purchasing by special schools also grew from 0 units in 2012-13 to 40 units in 2013-14. Growth in purchasing by faith schools rose from 2 units to 16 units.
4.3.1.3  *Purchasing trends by type of work*

Figure 11. Established service: The number of units of each of type of work bought per year

Figure 11 shows that in 2013-14 the largest area of growth in terms of type of work purchased were large commissions. This sector saw a 212% increase, with 131 units being purchased in 2012-13 compared to 408.5 units in 2013-14. Other areas of growth include report writing, meetings, observations and assessments. This may imply that a higher amount of individual casework was completed in 2013-14 compared to 2012-13. However, the number of consultations completed in 2013-14 decreased by 18% compared to 2012-13, which may reflect a trend for moving away from this model.
4.3.2  **EP service leads**

Figure 12. Established service: EP service leads RQ 1 main themes and subthemes

4.3.2.1  **Theme One: Expanded use of psychology**

Trading appears to have created a context in which EPs have been able to expand the range of work they undertake. This was viewed by the service leads as enabling a positive reframing of the role: “... *the big breakthrough about the trading, the issue of showing people just what psychologists can do* ...” The catalyst for this change was seen as the ability to work with commissioners other than schools or the local authority: “... *when before we perhaps were restricted because it was run by one conceptual buyer and what they saw as our parameters* ...” Consequently, within the established traded service, commissions were being drawn from a wide variety of sectors: “... *internal markets within the local authority, so early years is a sector, looked after children is a sector, fostering and adoption is a sector [...] Commissions with health is a small but growing sector. Commissions with the independent sector are also growing. Commissions directly from parents are one that we're looking at very carefully* ...”
Moreover, working with a wider variety of commissioners also appeared to be shaping EPs’ views of themselves as a profession and what they offer. This was referred to as: “... expansion of psychologists’ concept of self and where they can make a difference.” The level of demand for EP services was also highlighted by the service leads and was linked to the new understanding that commissioners have regarding the range of work that EPs can provide: “... once they find out what we can do, they want a psychologist with them all the time.” In addition, working with alternative commissioners was seen as enabling access to more vulnerable groups and allowing the profession to better meet the needs of these clients: “The other thing is the bigger commissions have opened up access to other communities and vulnerable children that we thought we were seeing but I don’t think we were now.”

4.3.2.2 Theme Two: Changing dynamics

Shifts in power dynamics were a particularly prevalent issue raised by both service leads. For example, as schools are now paying for some services, this seemed to introduce a new dynamic to negotiations regarding work: “... psychologists aren’t there to do exactly what you want. They’re just there to do what is right for the young person.” This was seen as an ethical concern. Prior to trading, contracting work appeared to be dictated more by the psychologist’s assessment of CYP’s needs as well as the ethical and professional boundaries of the profession. Whilst both service leads were insistent that these boundaries were not compromised in a trading context, it was acknowledged that due to a shift in power, working as an external objective agent was becoming more difficult: “I think they’ll find that, over time, we’ll become more reliant on the schools [...] seeing them more as friends, rather than as working partners.” The service leads seemed to feel that as trading develops, instead of working alongside schools; the profession will become more embedded in schools and will lose some of its identity as an external and objective profession.
Within the wider context of the LA, funding cuts have meant that the majority of services previously seen as competing with the EP are now reducing in size and capacity. However, potential tensions have been created as EPs are being bought in to fill the gaps in provision created by these cuts: “... we can do a heck of a lot of people’s jobs but they can't do ours.” Nevertheless, within schools there seems to have been a drive towards more of the same, rather than branching out into new ways of working: “We've been trying as a service to sell ourselves as a service and sell other aspects of things we can offer. But it seems to be the same schools who want the different things and the same schools that don’t.” Therefore, the dynamic here appears to be that EPs want to expand services in schools; however, it is the ethos and perspective of the school regarding the role of the EP which can be a limiting factor. As a result, for some schools having to pay has led to even more conservative use of the role: “... for some that didn't understand it very well in the first instance it might have even taken a step back because they just think we'll do some testing and they have to pay for that bit, but then they can request formal assessment.”

4.3.2.3 Theme Three: Business model

Income generation was linked strongly to retaining jobs. This appeared to be the first priority of introducing a traded element to the service: “... the strength in psychologists is we do work as a bigger group and [that is] why going partially traded was so important for me. In that, I think psychologists do work better if they have a group.” Therefore, trading has enabled services to stay large and this in turn seems to have allowed further expansion in terms of the diversity of work undertaken: “It’s allowed us to employ more psychologists, which has then allowed us to go and get alternative markets.” Other business-like principles introduced include the customer-provider relationship: “I think when there's someone in the room who's paid for you, and paid quite a lot of money for you, they're either flattered or it makes them work a bit harder.” However, this dynamic was not seen as a power struggle but a relationship
which sharpens EP ways of working or enables them to showcase their skill set: “You do a good job, they’ll buy, you don’t need to sell, you need to do your good job first ...” There was a strong message that success in trading relies on quality, responsivity and flexibility, not necessarily providing something new or different.

Nevertheless, both service leads did reflect on a growing pressure to demonstrate quality of service through tangible outcomes: “They’re paying for your time so you need to be more overt about your contribution. It surprises me actually when I am more overt about my contribution, how well it goes down.” Demonstrating the unique EP contribution and valued added appeared to be highly important, not only as services were being paid for, but due to instability of funding streams. It was acknowledged that funding, especially within the LA, was not secure, therefore a key role was to keep looking for other sources of income and to gather evidence of positive impact to support these bids: “... if we can have a contract for a year and show that we made a big difference, even if that contract doesn’t continue, that’s really good evidence for us going forward.”

4.3.2.4 Theme Four: Better psychologist

Trading was described as providing the opportunity for psychologists to improve their practice: “To me that’s one of the big advantages of trading, it lets you be a better psychologist really.” These improvements were seen as being led by the ability to use EPs’ existing diverse skill sets and to carry out work that prior to trading they had not been able to undertake: “And from everybody now, consistently, the feedback is yes, they’ve all used a wider range of the skills that they were trained to use, and been able to do things they wanted to do and felt they were not able to do before.” Therefore, as a consequence, the service leads were seen as supporting the service to meet the needs of the community more effectively by allowing them to: “... get psychology to where it’s needed.”
4.3.2.5  Theme Five: Implementation

It was reflected that change is a constant feature when working in the context of children’s services. However, it was felt that although there had been a high level of speculation regarding the implementation and impact of trading, it had not been any more radical than any other restructure or change to ways of working: “The only constant is change [...] so I don’t think it feels particularly more radical than other changes ...” Furthermore, in contrast to other changes which have been introduced by local or national government, there was a sense of ownership regarding trading: “So in some respects there’s some ownership of it, I guess, because it was our solution, it wasn’t handed to us ...” This ownership seemed to be reinforced as the pressure to generate income was only in order to pay for the EP team. There was no pressure to provide any further funding to other LA teams or services: “... the only pressure to trade is to pay for ourselves, nobody’s currently asking us to trade to claw back money for the authority ...” Therefore, it was an incentive led by the team for the team. In addition, the drive to further develop trading seems to be coming from within the EP team and LA processes are hindering this to a certain extent, which is creating a barrier to expansion: “We’ve set this up and we want to be responsive to the market and grow with it and yet we’re part of this much bigger structured, hierarchical organisation that’s driven by a lot of rules. And in lots of ways they are hindering our progress.”
4.3.3  **EP focus group**

Figure 13. Established service: EP focus group RQ1 main themes and subthemes

4.3.3.1  **Theme One: Pressure on EPs**

Following the introduction of trading, EPs seem to feel a new set of pressures in terms of their accountability to schools and to the EP service. Tension was especially apparent regarding the number of hours of trading that different members of the team were registering on a joint system: “... there are people in the team that do feel very stressed out by the accountability in hours ...” Having a shared time logging system that all the people in the team could view had become a way of comparing productivity and who was being ‘purchased’ most heavily. As a result, some EPs were feeling stressed and under pressure in terms of accounting for their time and, to a certain extent, performance. An additional pressure was having the capacity to meet the somewhat unpredictable demands of trading: “... schools can buy in additional time at any time [...] if a school turned round and said ‘I do want to buy an extra 10/20 hours’ [...] that would really stress me out because I would think ‘I haven’t got capacity to do that’”. Therefore, trading appears to have some marked benefits for schools, children and EPs, but this theme highlights that it was also creating some stressful working conditions for EPs.
4.3.3.2 Theme Two: New employment patterns

Several practitioners were in posts funded by large-scale commissions: “I do four days a week and two-and-a-half days is funded by the virtual school team and social care.” This seemed to reflect a new trend in working patterns. It also appeared to have a direct impact on service delivery and the types of work that these particular EPs were undertaking. One practitioner was working within a school, which bought in several days a week: “Actually, I find quite a lot of need for therapeutic work which is something that we didn’t know schools really valued ...” Therefore, being situated in a school appeared to open up broader ways of working and also enabled more long-term projects, e.g. therapeutic interventions.

However, it was felt that being embedded in a school context did have some disadvantages. For example: “… if you work alongside the SENCO say, every day, then when they come and say ‘you’ll never believe what’s happened’ just by being there and listening, you’re almost part of the problem. So they could go into a meeting next time and say ‘I’ve had a conversation with the EP’ you can be part of the problem.” It seemed that having a base in a school made it much more difficult to remain external to the politics of the organisation. The quotation above highlights some concern that this lack of neutrality could compromise the status of the practitioner or their working relationships in the setting.

4.3.3.3 Theme Three: Buying in Certain People

As well as trends in purchasing being influenced by schools wanting different types of activities, they also appear to be related to schools wanting to buy in certain practitioners: “A school said to me a week ago that they would look at buying in, but only if they could specify which psychologist they had.” The ‘buying’ of a certain person was described as being related to certain features such as popular personalities, the way the particular practitioner works or the level of experience they are perceived to have. However, it was felt that this new shift in power for schools to be able to select psychologists was potentially creating vulnerability for
practitioners and for CYP as there would be less ability to challenge schools without feeling they might not be asked to go back to the school. For example: “I always think it’s hard as you say, when what we are selling is the person. Which is great when everything’s going well and you’ve got a relationship [...] But when it’s not going well it’s oh god, it’s the person. It can feel, ‘don’t come back into my school’.”

4.3.3.4 Theme Four: Schools more directive

As commissioners and purchasers of services, schools seem to have more control in terms of directing EP work: “Sometimes with some schools you’re able to negotiate round that and come up with something more appropriate but sometimes you’re met with ‘well I’m buying you in, so therefore, this is what I want you to do’.” This seems to suggest that even in more established services where demand is high, schools still have a significant directive authority over EP work. Another school-based agenda which seems to be influencing trading patterns is the need to show outcomes and value for money. Certain EP work is becoming more popular with schools as it lends itself well to tracking progress, is able to be mapped onto provision maps and typically provides an outcome measure: “I think, the therapeutic work, you can put that on a child’s provision map and show it’s very clear [...] And I think schools are cottoning-on to that actually it’s a good way of showing that you’re spending quality on pupils.”

4.3.3.5 Theme Five: Ethics

The importance of implementing a partially-traded model of service delivery was linked to an ethical imperative to provide services for vulnerable children: “... why we have these ten hours, should be for our vulnerable children. So if there is a [Team around the Child] or there is a Child in Need meeting I can go.” This aspect of equality in access to services was important to the focus group. It was felt that schools/CYP should be able to access EP services based on need rather than money. Moreover, the group also outlined that trading should be run as an ethical enterprise rather than focusing on income generation: “We could just go in and do lots
of exam concessions for example, for a good amount of money but it’s not necessarily ‘good EP work’.”

4.3.4 Small-scale commissioners

Figure 14. Established service: Small-scale commissioners RQ1 main themes and subthemes

4.3.4.1 Theme One: School budgets

There was concern regarding monetary pressures. The rising number of students with special educational needs, together with cuts to services, was of significant concern to some commissioners. It was felt that as need was increasing funds/services were decreasing: “The financial implications I think for SEN children, regardless of the traded service and the buy in, has gone up massively.” Therefore, money management and budgets were correlated to the purchasing of services: “... those schools that don’t have any money, those in deficit and those who are literally black, red, black, red, I think without those ten they would have nothing.” However, the commissioners noted that they themselves were not budget holders and perhaps did not have the full picture with regards to funds and management of money within
school. Moreover, there was also strong dissatisfaction with the way in which EP hours were
devolved to schools. As opposed to each school receiving ten hours ‘free’, it was suggested
that this time should be allocated according to school size and level of need: “Some areas
where it is a very small school they get the ten hours and they never have to buy in any extra
because that suffices for their needs.”

4.3.4.2 Theme Two: Purchasing factors

In terms of purchasing trends, although there was an awareness of other services, casework
was the predominate type of EP work purchased: “I know that a lot of the EPs offer staff
training [...] but because I think of the funding we [...] buy in specific assessments of children
with the view to leading towards ultimately a statement ...” This suggests that the role of the
EP is seen as a gateway to additional resources. However, the idea of buying packages or
special offers (e.g. buy 10 sessions and get 1 training session free) and more structured
programs of intervention was fairly popular: “I think in going forward it would be useful if there
were certain packages, if you paid for twenty hours we will give you three hours of staff
training free.” Therefore, as traded services continue to become more established, it may be
that packages, programmes or special offers become part of the traded offer.

Furthermore, another significant factor in schools’ purchasing decisions was the perceived
effectiveness of the service and/or individual practitioner: “... if the free hours are working
well and you are getting a service that is effective then it will encourage you to buy more,
won’t it? Whereas if you have got your free hours and the service is poor then that is when you
would look elsewhere ...” Factors determining whether a service is poor or good quality
appeared to be correlated, for some commissioners, with the pace of work: “I think that is why
people are buying in private firms [...] I was talking to a SENCO and she said she [...] they were
buying their own and the EP comes in [...] she does it all in one day and then a week later does
the report.” In contrast, for others it was the quality of working relationships and consistency
of service that was important: “... you just feel they have that relationship despite the fact there are hundreds of children and schools on her books. It does work when it is consistent.”

This highlights that the need for EPs to establish the school agenda and preferred way of working, especially in the traded context as schools seem to view themselves as customers and EPs as service providers.

4.3.4.3 Theme Three: Customer-provider

This theme highlights the changing dynamics in the relationships between EPs and schools. As the customer of services, school have more control over the amount of EP time that they receive: “... we have managed to buy in extra hours and that is helpful actually [...] you know we can request the extra time.” Moreover, adopting of the role of paying customer also appears to have created a heightened sense of customer service expectation. Some service commissioners seemed to feel much more empowered regarding their right to complain if the service they received did not meet expectations: “... but if I felt that somebody had spent more time than they needed to or not done what we had wanted or asked or anything like that then I guess as a customer you would complain and say you had not had value for money.” At this stage it is unclear as to whether this will enable more effective joint working and clearer negotiations between schools and EPs or whether it will create barriers and difficulties for EPs, who retain a professional and ethical obligation to work in the best interest of the CYP, rather than just following the remit of the paying customer.
4.3.5 Large-scale commissioners

Figure 15. Established service: Large-scale commissioners RQ1 main themes and subthemes

4.3.5.1 Theme One: Improved service

There was a consensus, amongst the large-scale commissioners, that following the introduction of trading there had been some specific improvements to the EP service. Working relationships were viewed as being more productive: “But I think we work far closer and I also think we're more efficient and more effective [...] it was very hit-and-miss. I thought I’d allocated children and it didn’t happen but we’re very clear now.” There was also a shared opinion that buying time in bulk (e.g. a full-time equivalent), rather than commissioning on a piecemeal basis, allowed for greater predictability and more effective planning of EP time: “This is an annual or even long-term shop going on that allows for more predictability in terms of planning a service.” Moreover, as well being more efficient, buying in bulk also allowed for a more responsive service: “That EP was not only able to offer advice but because this is a dedicated role, she was able to say “I’ll undertake some assessments, observations, and I will do some therapeutic work with that young person.”” Therefore, it appears that when EPs are
commissioned to take up a dedicated role this can create the opportunity and availability of
time for them to do longer-term work, such as provide therapeutic intervention.

4.3.5.2 Theme Two: Use of EPs

EPs contracted by larger-scale commissioners were undertaking a broader variety of work, in
addition to more typical ‘core’ functions such as consultation and assessment: “And alongside
that work, there’s actually training and supervision that the EPs offer for us, and we pay for
that.” However, commissioners had strong views about the need for services to be developed
further in terms of capacity: “… often the scope and capacity for that is not there.” Moreover,
increasing capacity was seen as important in ensuring that psychology is embedded more
widely in the education system: “I think we need far more psychology in schools. I think every
large secondary school should have a psychologist, and perhaps clusters of primary schools.”

Lack of capacity was seen as a key barrier to effective work such as therapy, training and
supervision being provided. In addition, there was the perception that EPs needed to package
their services most effectively to make them more attractive to schools: “… I’d recommend
that little Johnny would really benefit from a programme of, and the cost would be in this
region.” This may be a development that services need to consider in the future, e.g. how they
package and evidence service impact.

4.3.5.3 Theme Three: Value and impact

The investment in EPs as a service, which has the potential to support substantial change and
work in a way that prevents further needs arising for children and families, was viewed as good
value for money: “If that starts to turn around a very complex child like those mentioned, the
saving is incredible.” However, evidencing impact was also seen as crucial to retaining
contracts where more in-depth direct work or systemic early intervention was being carried
out by EPs: “This is being funded by the virtual school and by the adoption service and we need
to demonstrate very clearly what we do for them with that funding. And anyway their survival
will be dependent on it, in those particular roles.” As a result, there appears to be an increasing need for visibility of EP impact and accountability in terms of outcomes as it is possible that there will be an increase in contracts linked to performance.
4.4 Emerging service: Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?

4.4.1 Service outline document

4.4.1.1 Category One: Communication of EP skill set

This category of information appeared to be targeted at providing the reader with detailed information about the skills and knowledge base of EP: “Educational psychologists use their knowledge of psychological theory and research to promote learning, social and behaviour development and emotional well-being.” This basic level of information may suggest that there was an assumption by the EP team that the reader (i.e. potential service commissioner) might have not worked with an EP previously or may have done so in a very narrow way, e.g. statutory assessment. Therefore, the communication intention appears to be establishing EPs as skilled professionals who work in diverse ways with different clients: “EPs have considerable training in research and evaluation and can support schools with organisational issues” and “well-being of adults.”
4.4.1.2  Category Two: Communication of provision

The information provided by this category is focused on communicating the services on offer to commissioners. The focus of the booklet appears to be on intervention: “group interventions”, “intervention with individuals”, “intervention packages” and training: “EPS is able to provide training to individual schools and school clusters.” Much less information is provided about research and whole school work: “Whole school research/projects.” Moreover, the number of intervention packages and training sessions offered in the booklet suggest that the EP team may feel that these types of work are more tangible and easily ‘sellable’ than whole systems work: “We can develop training to meet an individual school’s needs and have a wide range of packages available.”
4.4.1.3 Category Three: Communication of service model

Figure 18. Emerging service: Service outline document RQ2 category three

The focus and communicative function of this category was to outline to potential commissioners the service strands and their corresponding processes: “Each LA maintained school receives 5 funded sessions per financial year” and “schools should plan these sessions with the EP. The LA requires that pupils undergoing statutory assessment are prioritised from within this allocation.” A similar approach is taken to outlining the processes for commissioning traded work: “Schools have the opportunity to purchase additional sessions of educational psychology time ...” However, in addition to communicating the service model, the booklet also asks for feedback from readers: “Please indicate up to 10 packages you may be interested in purchasing” and explains that this will help inform staffing levels for the next financial year. Therefore, the booklet also appears to be serving as planning document and market research tool.
4.4.2  EP service lead

Figure 19. Emerging service: EP service lead RQ2 main themes and subthemes

4.4.2.1  Theme One: Previous strategies ineffective

Marketing and communication of services to schools appears to have been very limited prior to the implementation of traded services. Annual reviews of service and LA brochures were used in order to try and gauge potential interest in EP services: “... we used to do were those annual review services which we’re are in the process of changing and we actually haven’t done them this year ...” Moreover, as a promotional tool the annual review proved to be ineffective: “... it is not really marketing as such but there is something generic that goes out to all schools about all traded services within the authority so it includes drains and things like that [...] and they get asked to express their interest in how many educational psychologist visits they would like to buy but because it is really generic it is complicated.”
4.4.2.2  Theme Two: Developing marketing strategy

Since beginning trading, a more proactive and comprehensive approach to communicating the EP role and services has been taken: “... we have been much more proactive in marketing the service so we have put together some packages about the services we offer and we are finding an increase in schools buying us in.” A booklet outlining EP services had been developed and shared with schools. Moreover, this booklet appears to have had a significant effect on service commissioners’ perspectives of the EP role. Therefore, the service lead was very positive about the impact that the service booklet was having as communication tool regarding the role of the EP: “Now they have got the booklet they kind of look through that and go ‘oh right, that’s what you do now’ and you are thinking that’s what we have always done but we just couldn’t get that message across before.” Nevertheless, it was felt that the development of a marketing strategy was still at an early stage: “I suppose opportunities that we haven’t taken up much really is us going out there and marketing ourselves.”

4.4.3  EP focus group

Figure 20. Emerging service: EP focus group RQ2 main themes and subthemes
4.4.3.1 Theme One: Marketing is needed and useful

Opinion appeared to be divided in this data set regarding the effectiveness and necessity for marketing. EPs working in settings where the booklet had been seen and used found that service commissioners had much broader perspectives about the range of services that the team were able to provide: “That had a massive impact. As we said before, its broadened people’s perceptions of what we do, hasn’t it? They’ve realised we do more than cognitive assessment and consultations.” Therefore, for these EPs further developing this mode of communication was seen as a possible priority for future development of the service: “To develop a brochure. I think perhaps we need to ...”

4.4.3.2 Theme Two: Marketing isn’t needed

In contrast, other members of the team were less convinced that the booklet had an impact: “Because some of my SENCOs have referred to it and some others haven’t [...] so I don’t know whether it made a difference to some of them or not for sure. I’ve never asked them.”

Moreover, within this second group of EPs there was a feeling that the ‘selling’ of the services through strategies such as marketing and promotion had not been necessary as trading had been successful without it: “... our traded service has been successful without a brochure, basically.”
4.4.4 Small-scale service commissioners

Figure 21. Emerging service: Service commissioner RQ2 main themes and subthemes

4.4.4.1 Theme One: Current communication about services

Some service commissioners outlined that they predominately used consultation and discussion with their EP in order to find out about services offered: “I usually just ask and say, ‘I thought of this, what could you do for that?’ […] and she said ‘oh well I could come in and do training’.” Alternative forums such as SENCO network meetings, where informal discussions took place between SENCO colleagues, were described as providing information about the EP services offered. Brochures had not been seen or used by any of the participants interviewed: “… I have never kind of seen a brochure.”

4.4.4.2 Theme Two: Brochure would be helpful

However, the idea of a brochure, similar to school prospectus, was suggested by some service commissioners as it would provide a comprehensive list of services and particularly interventions available: “Not had one here but just having one in the staff room, something like
that, on the noticeboard [...] you know, it is like a prospectus, a school prospectus” and “everything that you could do in school and all the services that they offered”.

4.5 Established service: Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?

4.5.1 Service brochure

4.5.1.1 Category One: Communication of service approach

Figure 22. Established service: Service brochure RQ2 category one

This category of information seemed to be targeted at communicating the distinctive approach and values of the service. Emphasis was placed on working collaboratively both as a team of EPs and as part of a larger LA: “We are grounded by core principles which focus on working in mutual respect with our clients and in ways which best fit the purpose” and “strong working links with other agencies”. This high level of collaboration and joint working appeared to be emphasised as a unique selling point of the service. Moreover, the reader was told that the service was practical, effective and responsive in its approach: “Resources and practical issues: what schools can expect from the service”, “EPS is an evidence-based consultation service. This means that conversations have been found to be crucial in effecting positive change” and
“Personalised training and research packages”. This type of information focuses on establishing service credibility as well as approach.

4.5.1.2 Category Two: Communication of EP skill set

This communicative function of this category was to provide the reader with information about the skills that EPs have and how they are able to implement them in practice. Emphasis was placed on the service being a large and collaborative team: “As a team we are able to offer a vast range of psychological interventions, assessments, training and projects.” In the context that the service was situated, there were a high proportion of independent EPs operating as lone workers. Therefore, when promoting the role and contribution of the service it appears to have been a priority to highlight the strengths and advantages of purchasing from a team, such as being able to offer a variety of work: “Range of psychological services.” Moreover, status as a large specialist team appears to be a consistent message or narrative throughout the document and is arguably the unique selling point or identity of the service.
This category of information provides detailed information for potential service commissioners regarding the types of contract they are able to establish with the service: “The local authority will provide statutory services to schools, settings and partner agencies. There will be no charge for these statutory services ...” and “The opportunity of purchasing a wide range of additional packages of support through a service level agreement as ‘traded services’. The service is then further divided into four categories of specialism: “Key areas which we often work within include: cognition and learning, emotional well-being, language and communication, physical/medical needs.”

However, the way in which information is presented in this category implies that commissioners have a good understanding of what type of EP service they require and how it would be effective. For example, the interventions offered within the four strands are highly specific (e.g. “motivational interviewing”, “resilience groups”) and whilst a description is given, there is no concrete example or case study of how this approach might be successfully implemented. Therefore, as interventions appear to be quite abstract, this may present a
barrier for commissioners who are less familiar with the service. In addition, it may also correlate with service commissioners viewing the brochure but not purchasing any services from it as it is unclear what they are buying.

4.5.2 **EP service leads**

Figure 25. Established service: EP service leads RQ2 main themes and subthemes

4.5.2.1 **Theme One: Impact of brochure**

The aim of the brochure was to act as a communication tool to help shape and steer thinking surrounding the role of the EP and what the service is able to offer: “... *when we first went traded, we developed an interests leaflet [...]. What we were trying to do was get the schools to perceive us as a team ...*” However, there appears to be some uncertainty about the impact of this strategy. On the one hand, the service leads suggest that the brochure supported a gradual expansion in the types of work commissioned: “*Initially they buy what they’ve always bought, then they see the bigger opportunities with the service brochure and they like it so they want an expansion.*” On the other hand, it was also suggested that this expansion was only seen in the schools which already had a fairly broad perspective on the EP role: “*But it seems*
to be the same schools who want the different things and the same schools that don’t.”

Nevertheless, there was consensus that the brochure had been useful in shaping thinking and ways of working within the team: “I think what the brochure has done, and working on as a service, has helped us be more slightly more consistent in what we do and what we offer and I think that has also impacted on the role.”

4.5.2.2 Theme Two: Embedded PR

Promotion of the traded service seemed to predominantly occur through verbal consultation and conversation: “I think that when schools do opt to do something different [...] it’s usually because the individual EP has sold it to them verbally, rather than anything to do with the brochure.” There was a sense that communication about the role and EP service had increased substantially following the introduction of trading, as there was now the opportunity to volunteer or present proposals in a way that would not have been possible within the previous model of delivery. For example: “Well, trading gives you permissions which allow you to say, I can make a difference there, and then you do it.” In addition, quality of work was a strong theme in this data set. The service leads felt that the focus should be delivering a quality service and that alone should act as effective Public Relations (PR): “Because the proof of your product should be the quality of the delivery.”

4.5.2.3 Theme Three: Development and future plans

It was felt that marketing would play an important role in staying competitive with other providers in the future: “… as the market becomes more competitive [...] you may have to do that in order to keep your status or your edge in the market.” Consequently, current approaches were in a process of refinement and development: “… we put out ones that were too big to start with, we’ve honed it down somewhat, because people haven’t got time to read them [...] I think that's really the next step with trading, we need to get a lot more savvy about how we present ourselves.” Nevertheless, the idea of investing in “… very glossy brochures …”
was not felt to be in keeping with the service ethos as there was concern that this would lead to resources being diverted away from day-to-day work with CYP in schools. Therefore, this aspect of trading seems to be in a state of uncertainty in terms of both impact and future directions.
4.5.3  **EP focus group**

Figure 26. Established service: EP focus group RQ 2 main themes and subthemes

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4.5.3.1  **Theme One: Brochure supports role expansion**

Some group members had found the brochure to be an effective tool for reframing service commissioners’ perspectives of the EP role: “*But before we had this [...] it was very woolly wasn’t it? You were relying on what had gone before. What they were familiar with [...] I do think it’s a step in the right direction.*” This suggests that the brochure has been an important communication tool for enabling more effective communication regarding the range and breadth of EP work. It has given EPs the opportunity to suggest alternative ways of working in a neutral and non-threatening way: “*... I think it’s lovely as a conversation starter. It’s nice to leave it with them, let them digest, a lot of them don’t know about it straight away and then when you ask them ‘have you had a look? Is there anything you sort of identify with?’*”
4.5.3.2  Theme Two: Brochure not reflective of the service as a whole

There was also concern in the group that having a written form of communication about the service and EP role would be potentially restrictive: “Because there’s something about having something written down that shrinks you, in a way. So as long as it’s taken as an example of what we can do, rather than ‘this is what we do’.” Therefore, it appears that for some EPs having a ‘menu’ of services is very different and perhaps limiting in contrast to their previous ways of working, which is likely to have been very autonomous. Moreover, it was also felt that having a glossy brochure was not part of the service ethos. The most effective tool for communication and expanding trading was seen as the EP themselves and the relationships they had built with the local community: “So actually our service is more about the people, do you know what I mean? And we’re very good with schools and we’ve got a lot of relationships, a lot of EPs have been there a really long time and know everybody and know all the systems.”

4.5.4  Small-scale commissioners

Figure 27. Established service: Small-scale commissioners RQ2 main themes and subthemes
4.5.4.1  **Theme One: Brochure promotes EP services**

The service brochure was seen as a means to promote the EP team: “So I think because they are traded they have got to behave [...] more like a business, promote themselves more, say this is what they can do.” However, its impact on service commissioners as tool for communication and ‘selling’ services appeared to be fairly tepid: “Yeah it’s good to be aware of and a reference point or if other staff ask for training, I can say that I can’t do that but our EP could.”

4.5.4.2  **Theme Two: Influences on buying**

The brochure had been read by all of the commissioners but none had purchased services from it. The services advertised in the brochure were seen as expensive or as a luxury which they were not able to afford: “It is a bit like looking through a holiday brochure; you look through the hotels and think we’ll have to have the basic one.” In contrast, several commissioners had bought in the same intervention package from the EP team, which was not advertised in the brochure: “… an Ed Psych in the authority that’s devised his own program that is really useful, really works [...] you are gonna find that money and then if that is gonna work we’ll use it.” This intervention package had been ‘sold’ to the schools by the EP who developed it. The EP had advertised the package by giving a presentation during a staff meeting. The commissioners seemed to feel much comfortable and confident with this more personal approach. They seemed to be clear about what they were buying and were satisfied that it worked and was value for money.
4.5.5 Large-scale commissioners

Figure 28. Established service: Large-scale commissioners RQ2 main themes and subthemes

4.5.5.1 Theme One: Effectiveness of a brochure

None of the large-scale commissioners had seen the service brochure: “I honestly have no memory of them so they didn’t make a big impact on me.” All had developed and agreed their respective contracts with the EP team through existing working relationships and face-to-face consultations: “It might be that there’s almost a deal been done and we’ve got a good working relationship, so I’m not one of the people who needed it.” Moreover, when reviewing a copy of the brochure, it was felt that the current version lacked in impact, especially in terms of ‘selling’ to potential customers: “But haven’t yet had anything jump out of the page.”
4.5.5.2  *Theme Two: Alternative strategies*

This theme reflects a strong assertion from the large-scale service commissioners that, whilst the current brochure is not particularly effective, in the context of traded services, promotion is important: “*Now, there’s an important thing for a traded service, promoting ‘what do we do?’ There’s an assumption that we all know what educational psychologists can provide for us.*” This was also linked with a need for EPs to talk money, budgets and funding so they could outline the types of services available and how they would be value for money: “*... we might need to give schools and other local authority services quite a strong steer on how it might be funded. Think about, for the price of five Pupil Premiums, we can have an EP for one day a week ...*” Moreover, there was also a call for greater transparency regarding the services themselves in terms of what is on offer and how they impact on CYP. It was felt that EPs should offer packages or parcels of time: “*... attachment and trauma, school-based training in behaviour management, whole range of things. It could also be that we can provide direct therapeutic work as well as, but you’ll have to pay for it.*” The clearer sense of accountability in terms of what is being bought and what impact it might have, was seen as being both appealing to commissioners and as a good way of ‘selling’ services: “*... your selling strategy was based on hard examples of where you’ve intervened and where it’s made a very, very clear difference ...*”
4.6 Emerging service: What do EPs, in the context of traded services, see as their distinctive contribution?

4.6.1 Service lead

Figure 29. Emerging service: Service lead RQ3 main themes and subthemes

### Theme One: Unique skill set

This theme centred on establishing the unique set skill set of EPs in comparison to other professionals. It was felt that EPs were able to provide a qualitatively different service as they have further knowledge of child development and learning processes which they are able to combine with subject specific understanding: “I think for me one of the differences is that as EP’s we’ve kind of, we not only have their knowledge of autism but we also have the knowledge of you know, how do adults think and learn.” Moreover, further training was seen as equipping EPs with psychological skills needed to help facilitate change: “Again for me the uniqueness of the EP role is that yes, on the surface it looks similar but we’re trained to infer what people are saying and, you know, holding that in your head, we’re trained in how to plant those seeds rather than just give direct advice.”
4.6.1.2 Theme Two: Trading has changed EP ways of working

Trading appears to have initiated a shift towards more directive practice: “I think I have become kind of more ‘oh, I’ll send them this advice pack’. It does feel like I am doing more of the tangible things, I try not to be totally directive, but, yes I definitely have noticed that shift in my own practice.” This appears to be in contrast to theme one, in which the unique contribution of the EP role was seen as the processes surrounding psychological questioning and facilitation, rather than giving direct advice. Therefore, in the context of trading, the perception of the EP distinctive contribution as an expert in psychological processes may become less valuable. It is suggested that this trend may be led by the need to provide more tangible outcomes now that services are being paid for directly by schools: “I think because of buying something in they feel like they don’t want that ‘airy fairy stuff where she does her psychology on me, I just want to be given something concrete’.”

4.6.2 EP focus group

Figure 30. Emerging Service: EP focus group RQ3 main themes and subthemes
4.6.2.1  Theme One: Core skills

This theme highlights two main functions, which the group viewed as core or central to the distinctive contribution of the EP role. Psychological knowledge and holistic thinking were the first unique contribution brought by EPs: “... I think that’s what’s different about us as other services might home in on one aspect whereas we’re about the whole child.” The second distinctive function performed by EPs was being an evidence-based practitioner: “That’s our unique contribution. We’re the only research evidence-based practitioner.” The group reflected that EPs were the only profession in the context of education who had skills in research, evaluation and understanding of the quality assurance surrounding peer-reviewed research and evidence.

4.6.2.2  Theme Two: Evolution of the role

Trading was seen by the focus group as having a significant impact on the contribution of the EP role: “I think we’ve got more opportunity to use skills and interests that we have, whereas when it was just the old kind of service delivery, I think we got stuck in just doing consultations or just doing schools visits. Whereas I think we are broadening out more now.” Therefore, the opportunity for practitioners to utilise their skill sets more fully and broadly is being linked by the group to an expansion in the contribution of the EP role. Moreover, the extensive skill set of EPs was drawn on to also describe how the profession has been able to remain adaptable and responsive to local and national changes. This ability to evolve was also seen a distinctive contribution of the EP role: “So it’s forever evolving but we’re forever responding to that and trying to keep the distinctive contribution while being responsive to local needs and national changes.”
4.6.3 Service outline document

Figure 31. Emerging service: Service outline document RQ3 category one

4.6.3.1 Category: EP distinctive contribution

Information shared in the service booklet highlighted to readers that EPs would be able to provide a level of expertise and specialism distinctive to the role. This was outlined in a number of different ways including references to EP specialist training, research skills and knowledge: “EPs use their knowledge of psychological theory and research to promote the learning, social and behavioural development and well-being of CYP.” Moreover, specific processes or ways of working were promoted as being distinctive to the role. The process of consultation and collaborative problem-solving was referred to throughout the booklet as an instrumental part of EP practice: “The foundation is based in joint problem-solving and underpins all our work.” Finally, being able to provide work at different levels was a predominate feature of the booklet: “The EPS offers services at an individual, group and whole school level.”
4.7 Established service: What do EPs, in the context of traded services, see as their distinctive contribution?

4.7.1 Service leads

Figure 32. Established service: EP service leads RQ 3 main themes and subthemes

4.7.1.1 Theme One: Evidencing contribution

The focus on process, facilitation and analysis was seen as a key contribution of the EP role: “I think what we do, that is unique, is probably analysis and being driven by outcomes rather than activities.” This distinction between outcomes and activities was seen as a key contrast between the role of the EP and that of other professionals. EPs were described as being agents of change through the psychological processes that they use, rather than the ‘activities’ they complete: “And it’s always been something that is difficult to capture, so trading or not trading that’s always been the case. So if you’re really good at signposting, redirecting, asking a really good question at the right point, that moves things on ...” Moreover, as the extract above
highlights, the service leads also reflected on the longstanding requirement of the EP profession to evidence its contribution and the difficulties often encountered in doing so. It was felt that psychological change is often effected through processes which are not visible or tangible to EP commissioners or role partners.

4.7.1.2 Theme Two: Unique perspective

Having the knowledge to understand child development in its entirety and being able to synthesise that understanding into a holistic formulation was outlined as the unique contribution of the EP role: “It's bringing together the understanding of total child development...” In addition, as well as understanding the child, EPs were seen as bringing an ecosystemic perspective which provided insight to systems surrounding the child: “... the value of being an educational psychologist is that understanding of the systems that children spend their lives in.” Therefore, the service leads felt that the specialist knowledge and understanding of EPs enabled them to bring a unique and distinctive contribution to work with CYP.

4.7.1.3 Theme Three: Contribution in the traded context

Changes to the working context of EPs were seen as generating shifts in the debate surrounding the contribution of the role. Funding cuts within the LA and the subsequent reduction to services for CYP was correlated with a move away from the need to justify or explain what EPs could provide that other professionals could not: “... as services are getting cut, and there's less people on the ground, we're not having to do that, answer that question so much anymore.” Moreover, when other services closed, the EP team were able to provide a service to fulfil that gap in provision: “Because the interesting thing is with our level of training, we can do a heck of a lot of people's jobs but they can't do ours. So as well as our unique psychology angle, we can also fill in an awful lot of gaps.” Consequently, it seems that the debate regarding the unique contribution of the EP role has been reversed within the traded...
context. There seems to be a new question that asks what other services can do that EPs are not able to provide.

Furthermore, the service leads felt that there had been a shift following the introduction of trading away from the EP role being seen uniquely as a statutory service or a gatekeeper to resources: “I don’t think it’s necessarily statutory assessment any more, but I think it is assessment though, and casework. And I think it’s about when they think it needs more working out or understanding […] they expect assessment and advice …” However, the role of expert and assessor of need was still a central part of the EP contribution and one which was continuing to be in demand.

4.7.2 EP focus group

Figure 33. Established service: EP focus group RQ3 main themes and subthemes

4.7.2.1 Theme One: Selling the contribution

Rather than being a specific set of skills, in the context of trading, the distinctive contribution of the EP role appears to be more flexible and to a certain extent context-specific.
trading, in order to be seen as valuable and effective, it seems that EPs first need to establish what the customer wants and then provide it in a visible and tangible way: “I think, in a traded model you show the side of yourself the school want to see more. So if a school want training, then the bit of myself that I go and show is my knowledge of whatever the topic is.” Furthermore, the group also expressed a shift away from the existence of a ‘general’ set of unique EP skills. It was argued that each individual EP has a unique selling point and that it is important when selling to present that set of skills to potential customers: “And I think what being traded is about […] is working out what your unique contribution is and selling that.”

4.7.2.2 Theme Two: Balancing customer want versus need

The need to establish credibility with commissioners before being able to challenge or make suggestions was a key theme in this data set. EPs in the group felt that they needed to allow customers to have a high level of direction over their work in the first instance: “So I gave them what they wanted initially and now I’ve ended up with a nurture room because that’s what I said they needed.” Nevertheless, there was some argument whether establishing creditability was sufficient, in the context of trading, to be able to act as critical friend. The above extract suggests that this might be the case; however, it was not the opinion of all group members: “What I find the part of our distinctive contribution as I see it, is to be critical friend. And I find that quite difficult within a traded model.” Therefore, it seems that some practitioners felt compromised in their distinctive role, whereas others felt able to still fulfil this aspect of their practice despite being within the traded context.

4.7.2.3 Theme Three: Unique perspective

Having a holistic overview of child development as well as broad skill set was seen by some members of the group as a unique contribution distinctive to that of EPs: “I think we’re in a unique position in we have an overview of child development and the skills to help other people to see our point of view.”
4.7.3 Service brochure

Figure 34. Established service: Service brochure RQ3 main themes and subthemes

4.7.3.1 Category: EP distinctive contribution

The service brochure provided the reader with some key information regarding the distinctive contribution of the EP. There was a particular emphasis on portraying the EP as an expert who could provide specialist services: “Utilise their expertise to promote the social inclusion, emotional well-being and all round progress of your pupils.” Moreover, there was a focus on valuable and distinctive skill sets of individual EPs, giving the reader the impression that people in the team as well as services were being sold as unique. For example: “Senior and specialist EPs have a vast experience and knowledge.” Furthermore, the emphasis on people and relationships was pervasive throughout the brochure. The brochure made reference on several occasions to working collaboratively with a range of clients and other professionals: “Having strong links with University ensures the highest quality of research knowledge and evidence-based practice” and “We offer a supportive network ...” In addition, the brochure contained a long list of different services that the team could provide; implying that the EP team could
offer a broad or diverse range of work: “Consultation”, “Staff support groups”, “Training”, “Intervention”, “Critical incident response” and “Systematic change”.

4.8 Emerging service: How do service commissioners view the role of the EP in the context of traded services?

4.8.1 Service commissioners

The role of the EP was seen by service commissioners as having several core functions, central of which was that of the expert: “So for me, an educational psychologist can give above and beyond [...] they have a greater depth of knowledge and usually a wealth of experience [...] that maybe you wouldn’t get from a specialist teacher.” This level of knowledge and expertise also placed EPs at the heart of the SEN process, as they were seen as the professional, who would be able to accurately identify the CYP’s needs, support teachers and help ensure children make progress: “I think for children with special educational needs you have got to have that involvement from educational psychology if you’re going to be able to help them to reach their potential.” Formal cognitive assessment was seen as highly valuable: “... it is a vital service for
schools [...] because it helps identify children’s needs that we can’t identify.” Moreover, it was the view of some service commissioners that EPs also bring with them a fresh perspective or different viewpoint as part of their assessment process, which is just as important as formal testing: “their role is to look at things from a different perspective [...] after we have kind of been down all the avenues that we can access on our own and take it to that next level of understanding …”

Nevertheless, one of the most referred to qualities in this data set was the ability to establish good working relationships: “I think you feel like you can have that two way conversation about what works for us, well for our children, and what we need to get ...” Moreover, as well as being good listeners and professionals who are willing to work with schools, some commissioners also valued that EPs were effective in working with parents who may present challenges for the school or who might find it difficult to accept that their child requires additional support. In addition, in order to establish the value or contribution of the profession, service commissioners were tending to look for improvements in the circumstances of the CYP. Whilst some commissioners felt this could be increased confidence and wellbeing of CYP, others were seeking to track progress in terms of measurable academic levels.

However, there was also the perception from some commissioners that it was the responsibility of the school, not the EP, to follow up agreed actions or to implement interventions and that this was the mediating factor in pupil progress: “... we still have to implement what they recommend. They are not going to come in and do an assessment and then this child will be all singing and all dancing.” Therefore, this may suggest that whilst there is some consensus amongst service commissioners regarding core functions of the EP role, there may be differing expectations of the unique or distinctive contribution made to outcomes for CYP.
4.8.1.2 Theme Two: Trading with EPs

This theme captures service commissioners’ perspectives on the role of the EP following the introduction of traded services. Paying for services seemed to place an emphasis on schools gaining both value for money and quality of service: “For me, I suppose when you are buying in to a service you are looking for quality, aren’t you?” Moreover, ‘quality’ of service appeared to be associated with different features for different commissioners. For example, some valued price and availability: “A bit like supermarkets, bids, you know ‘ours are cheaper than yours, come to us’ you know what I mean, ‘we will provide you with a next day service’, we would start looking at it in a different light ...” Alternatively, knowing that a practitioner is part of the LA was seen as ensuring the quality of their knowledge and expertise: “In terms of finding a private and independent person [...] as a school you can’t really be a judge of how good that educational psychologist is and how in-depth their knowledge is and whether or not they are advising you correctly. Whereas, if you are coming from the authority you know that they have been through a rigorous system to be appointed and that is being done for you.”

Moreover, it seems that following the introduction of trading, some commissioners felt they have more choice and control regarding the services they receive, including the type of work EPs carry out: “... I think it makes schools feel as though they can be more in control of what the educational psychologist does when they are in school. I think it gives us a greater confidence to say ‘actually, could you do this rather than this?’” It is argued that this could present an ethical dilemma as there is the possibility that schools want to direct EP work in a way that does not best meet the CYP’s needs. However, it was the view of some commissioners that the agenda of the head teacher or budget holder can play a significant role in determining access to EP services of any kind: “If you have a head who does not prioritise SEN and doesn’t support you through your SEN process that makes it a very lonely position doesn’t it?” It was felt that if SEN was not a priority then schools would not be able to take advantage of being able to buy in more EP time. Nevertheless, there was a strong agreement
that accessing EP support should be a high priority: “I just don’t understand why you wouldn’t access a service that is obviously going to give a wealth of knowledge to your staff and which ultimately improves outcomes for your children.”
4.9 Established service: How do service commissioners view the role of the EP in the context of traded services?

4.9.1 Small-scale commissioners

Figure 36. Established service: Small-scale commissioners RQ 4 main themes and subthemes

4.9.1.1 Theme One: Distinctive function of EPs

The small-scale commissioners were in agreement that there are several core functions or types of activity distinctive to the EP role. The most prominent of these activities was assessment. However, it was not necessarily statutory assessment that was strongly associated with the EP role but more psychological and/or cognitive testing “... the assessments are the unique part of their role because that is something we can’t do as teachers so that is generally when we get the Ed Psych’s involved.” EPs were also seen as being able to provide effective strategies, which support the settings in terms of capacity building as well as individual casework: “... the resources that have been recommended from the different EPs [...] have not
only been useful for one child but, then you have a child a year later with similar needs ...”

Moreover, commissioners seemed to indicate that EPs work in a much more collaborative way, compared to other services, especially in terms of involving parents: “Yeah we work very much collaboratively, and they help us, they work with parents as well.” Skills in consulting and advising parents seemed to be particularly valued by school-based commissioners: “... we work very much collaboratively, and they help us, they work with parents as well.” The role as an independent advisor external to the setting was also viewed as a highly important function of the EP role: “… I think somebody coming in with that completely independent no background, you know, to offer advice is good.”

4.9.1.2 Theme Two: Value of EP role

This theme highlighted that when commissioners were able to have a greater understanding of the EP role, specifically the psychological purpose of activities, they gained a greater appreciation of the role and saw it as valuable: “Initially, I used to think that it wasn’t great value but since then doing joint observations [...] I have found them really useful.” This suggests that in the traded context, EPs may need to consider not just demonstrating activities or impact but also making psychology more visible for commissioners. However, currently the role of the EP appears to be evaluated in terms of the effectiveness of strategies recommended and ultimately whether casework and assessment lead to access to additional funds and resources: “Whether strategies that they have suggested, you know, when you have implemented them, how successful have they been. Ultimately with some children, whether they get a statement or not ... ”

4.9.1.3 Theme Three: Trading with EPs

Service commissioners appeared to be divided in some of their opinions regarding the role of the EP within the context of traded services. This division appeared to be related to different perceptions of what was valuable or effective about the EP role. For example, some
commissioners felt that private providers were becoming more appealing as they work quickly:

“... I also hear that some private EP’s work on a much faster timescale and it only takes you know, only a couple of months to go through that whole cycle.” However, others appreciated the LA EP team had greater commitments and restrictions, than private providers, which would prevent them from working in a similar way: “I think some EPs are less flexible and their hands are tied due to case numbers and due to the restrictions under which they work.”

Nevertheless, there was then sense that the traded service, once established, was seen as professional: “I think out of all the different trade services we have used, educational psychology is reliable, professional, it works.” Finally, when it was visible to commissioners that the service was seeking to work with them to make the most effective use of the time they were buying, this seemed to establish trust and positive working relationships within the new context of trading: “... I think there is a lot more that EPs give above and beyond the hours that they are given.”
4.9.2 Large-scale commissioners

Figure 37. Established service: Large-scale commissioners RQ4 main themes and subthemes

4.9.2.1 Theme One: EP contribution

The role of the EP as expert was a predominate theme in this data set: “We need their expertise.” As specialists and experts, EPs were viewed as valuable providers of direct and indirect opportunities for capacity building: “... seeing how the EPs work with the children, watching them, reading their advice, how that actually increases our knowledge and skills as well.” Furthermore, EPs were seen as highly important to the identification of CYP needs: “... what the EPs then do is take that and actually analyse it and work with the child to work out what the problem is, what the difficulty is. And that’s why I think we need them in early years settings.” However, as well as carrying out detailed assessments and making recommendations regarding provision, large-scale commissioners appeared to be successfully utilising EPs for intervention work: “... I’m convinced already that we have something that makes a difference and I think it’s partly to do with this individual, perhaps therapeutic-type
work that might be undertaken.” Whilst, currently it is larger-scale purchasers who appear to be commissioning intervention work, this trend may expand as work such as one-to-one or group therapy is visible in terms of time, impact and therefore EP contribution.

4.9.2.2 Theme Two: Traded context

This theme reflects the perspectives of large-scale commissioners regarding the current and future context of traded services. There was an emphasis on the rising accountability of schools in terms of their budgets: “It's a lot of money for a pupil, so millions of pounds are going to be given out. So there will be increasingly accountability, and schools might welcome suggestions on how they might use that money effectively.” In this instance, it was suggested that EPs may need to think about how they present their service, especially to schools, as a financially sensible and worthwhile investment. Moreover, the future context of trading was described as unsure and potentially volatile. Funding streams were seen as insecure and changeable; therefore it was felt that there may be a rising pressure for EP teams to move further away from the LA in order to become financially independent: “And who funds that? The local authority? Again, increasingly the pressure’s going to be to become more financially independent, and don’t rely on the funding from the local authority.” Therefore, whilst trading is a relatively new context, it seems to be gathering momentum and this is creating an increasing need for EPs to engage in discourse about money, funding, impact and investment for the future.
5 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Service delivery patterns, in both the emerging and established services, show a significant increase in the amount of trading from 2012-13 to 2013-14. However, for the established service this increase was proportionally greater than for the emerging service (e.g. 40.5% compared to 18.2%). In both services the primary sector remained the largest purchaser, with the secondary, academy and special school sectors developing as nascent prospects. Data from the established service highlighted a potential increasing trend for purchasing casework and a decline in buying consultation. Nevertheless, the most substantial area of growth was large-scale commissions. Bulk buying by providers such as virtual schools and LA early years’ services grew by over 200% within the established service.

Service expansion was referred to by both services in terms of increasing demand and extension in the type of work being conducted, e.g. training and therapeutic interventions. Moreover, this expansion was closely linked to service innovation and improvement, especially within the established service where a strong association was drawn between trading and being a better psychologist. By being able to offer a greater range of work and a more responsive service, the EPs felt that in the traded context they were more effective in meeting CYP needs. However, for the emerging service, trading also raised some ethical issues in relation to service delivery. It was felt that as the school were now the customer they were more able to direct the work of EPs and that this might create a dilemma in terms of acting in the best interest of the child. In contrast, ethics was seen as a lesser issue in the established service as there was a greater expectation for negotiation with schools and commissioners, rather than receiving direction.

Furthermore, the shifting dynamic between EPs and schools was also common to both services. The need to provide schools with what they want and to demonstrate outcomes seemed to be a significant pressure for EPs. There appeared to be an increasing sense of
accountability of contribution, which was having a significant impact on practice and service delivery. Practitioners in both services outlined that in order to make their contribution more overt they were becoming increasingly directive and less consultative when planning intervention or making recommendations. It appeared that whilst EPs continued to value consultation, they felt that commissioners were not keen to pay for it. Moreover, from the perspective of service commissioners, what they valued about the EP service as a traded enterprise was that it provided them with more control and flexibility regarding the service they receive (e.g. able to commission more EP time). In the established service, commissioners had different views about what was most important in making a purchasing decision. For some commissioners it was having a positive relationship with a practitioner, whereas for others it was less about a practitioner’s personality or expertise and more about pace of work. Larger scale commissioners were particularly interested in value for money and wanted EPs to offer more packages of time and intervention as part of their standard service delivery.

Both services appeared to have developed a brochure or booklet with the intention that it would support them in communicating to potential service commissioners their role and contribution. As a result, the overall content of the brochures (e.g. service model, EP skill set) was similar. Despite this, each brochure had a different slightly different emphasis in terms of the distinctive EP contribution. Moreover, the perception of what the team of EPs could offer that was unique or distinctive appeared to be context-specific. For example, within the context of established service the main competition came from sole trader EPs, therefore a strong narrative throughout the service brochure was the advantage and distinctiveness of purchasing from a team of psychologists. Nevertheless, there were divided opinions in each service regarding the effectiveness of a service brochure as a vehicle for communication and marketing.
EPs in the emerging service felt that the brochure had broadened service commissioners’ perspectives of the role and expanded the type of work that was being requested. However, whilst some EPs in the established service concurred that the brochure had helped reframe the role for service commissioners, it was noted that this effect was most pronounced in settings where the role was already viewed as broader than that of a statutory assessor or gatekeeper to resources. Moreover, service leads in the established setting reflected on how the brochure had not only potentially shifted service user perceptions of the EP role but had shaped practice and refined ways of working in the team itself. Following the development of the brochure it was noted that team members were offering a more consistent service by working to the slightly more fixed framework advertised in the brochure. Therefore, it appears that the brochure contributed to the development of EP practice, although perhaps not as a marketing tool.

The majority of service commissioners in both services had not seen the brochure. Furthermore, none of the commissioners had bought services as a result of viewing the brochure. Alternatively, trading purchases seemed to occur through face-to-face consultation with EPs or as a result of word-of-mouth recommendation. However, it was felt by commissioners that a brochure would be helpful but that it should offer clear packages of time or intervention and that evidence of impact should be provided through data such as case studies. The current slightly generic descriptions of ‘intervention’ within the emerging service brochure and the highly specific techniques (e.g. motivational interviewing) of the established service did not appear to result in customer confidence and purchasing.

The distinctive contribution of the EP role was viewed similarly by each service. EPs were seen as experts with highly specialised knowledge, experience and skills. EPs were also defined as experts in psychological processes such as consultation and collaborative problem-solving. Moreover, in the context of traded services, both services described the positive development
or evolution of the EP role. As a result of trading, EPs are no longer commissioned by one buyer (e.g. the LA); therefore this appeared to lift previous restrictions and conceptions, for both EPs and commissioners, of the type of services they were able to deliver. As a result, both the emerging and established services felt that there had been an expansion of the EP role and that in the context of traded services they were more able to use the full range of their skills and expertise. However, it was also reflected that in this new context, EPs’ ability to perform some their previously unique or distinctive roles was diminished. For example, it was felt that being able to act as a ‘critical friend’ who challenges schools or other commissioners regarding their practice was becoming more difficult now that the role of school or commissioner had shifted into that of a paying customer.

Furthermore, in the emerging service, EPs discussed the difficulties or risks in effecting change through psychological processes which might not be visible or tangible to customers. As a result, practitioners described becoming more directive in their approach through giving advice or providing packages of intervention in an attempt to make their contribution more visible to customers. In the established service this process was slightly more developed. EPs outlined that they would frequently choose to emphasise or present certain aspects of their practice in order to demonstrate the skills that they perceived the customer most valued. Further to this, in the established service each EP was described as having their unique selling point.

However, whilst there appeared to be a new emphasis on customer satisfaction and selling, it was also argued that in the current context there is less pressure on EPs to be distinctive. Following the series of cuts to local and national funding there appear to be fewer support services in existence within the LA that may have offered similar services or activities to EPs. Consequently, in the established service EPs are described as being able to fill the gaps left by
other services due the breadth of their skill set. It was also felt that in this context the debate surrounding the unique contribution of the EP role had lost relevance.

There was a consensus amongst commissioners from each service regarding the core functions of the EP role. EPs were viewed as experts who provide specialist cognitive or psychological assessment. Moreover, in most instances the role of EP as an assessor was not directly linked to statutory assessment. Additional core functions included working with others, especially parents, and providing a different perspective to problem situations. However, despite this level of agreement about what EPs do, there was much more variance in opinion when discussing which aspects of the role are most valuable to commissioners and CYP. In the established service it was felt by commissioners that the more they understood the psychology or reasons behind the way in which EPs work, the more valuable they felt the service was. In contrast, in the emerging service individual commissioners had varying expectations of what would constitute an effective EP contribution, which included having a good relationship with a practitioner or seeing improved outcomes for CYP, such as academic progress or an increase in emotional wellbeing.

In the context of traded services, value for money and quality were important in both services. However, as with perceptions of EP effectiveness, what was seen as constituting a value for money and quality service varied across different commissioners. For some, price and availability were the determining factors in purchasing, whereas for others it was the pace at which work was able to be completed. Repurchasing of the same practitioner was important for some commissioners as consistency and a good working relationship were the most valued attributes of their EP. Moreover, flexibility towards the commissioner and in service delivery was seen as important when buying a service. Furthermore, several commissioners highlighted that they chose to buy from the LA rather than a private provider as they felt that this gave them quality assurance.
Finally, large scale commissioners were insistent that EPs needed to sell their contribution more directly by using evidence such as case studies to demonstrate that in the context of traded service EPs are a worthwhile investment. Commissioners agreed that, regardless of the particular impact or service being sought, buying in EPs was a high priority in terms of meeting the needs of CYP with SEN.
6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Chapter outline

This chapter begins by presenting an evaluative summary of the findings in relation to each research question. Previous research and academic literature are drawn on during this summary in order to situate the findings and their contribution to knowledge within the relevant context. Based on this analysis, theoretical and practical implications for EP practice are proposed. Implications and priorities for areas of future research are also discussed. The chapter concludes by reflecting on possible limitations of the investigation and by outlining a summative conclusion to the thesis.

6.2 Evaluative summary

RQ 1: How are service delivery patterns changing in response to the development of EP traded services?

Fallon et al. (2010) made a series of predictions about the potential threats as well as opportunities that the service commissioning model or trading would have for EPs. Relying on initial evidence from early adopters of the partially-traded model, Fallon et al. (2010) asserted that the change to trading presented an opportunity for EPs to develop and expand in a way in which existing structures (e.g. time allocation model and high demand for statutory assessment) had not previously allowed. Findings from the current study are in agreement with Fallon et al.’s (2010) initial hypothesis. EPs described trading as having a positive and regenerating effect on the profession. New opportunities to use existing skills, expand services offered and work within more diverse sectors were all highlighted as benefits brought about following the adoption of a partially-traded model.
Moreover, based on the same evidence from professional experience, Fallon et al. (2010) predicted that in some localities the popularity of trading would lead to rapid expansion and high demand for services. However, findings from the current study suggest that the growth in trading starts small before any substantial acceleration or increase occurs. This study found that when the partially-traded model had been in place for fewer than two years, there was an annual expansion of 18.2% in trading. In the more established service, where trading had been occurring for more than two years, the annual rate of growth was much higher at 40.5%. Furthermore, it appears that Fallon et al.’s (2010) initial assertion that demand would be present was correct; however, it also seems that the potential rate of expansion is linked to the capabilities or infrastructure of services to support and enable growth. EPs in the established service highlighted the need to develop their capacity through recruitment or via flexible working contracts (e.g. associate staff), increased administration support and a business management strategy or advisor, as well as maintaining or creating a greater presence through the use of social media.

Moreover, service delivery patterns also highlighted a potential emerging trend in EP practice following the adoption of the traded model. Practitioners noted that they were using consultation as discrete activity much less. EPs felt that in the traded context they had become more directive, especially when giving feedback. As a result, rather than consulting with commissioners about the problem situation, EPs in the study were more frequently making recommendations, giving advice, signposting to existing packages or programmes and offering to deliver interventions. Patterns within the service delivery data also supported this finding. There was a substantial decrease in the number of consultations during 2013-14 compared to 2012-13. Therefore, this might suggest that in the traded context there is likely to be a move away from some of the practices currently associated with the consultative model of working.
However, this assertion is likely to be challenging for a number of practitioners as consultation has been one of the most popular and widely adopted areas of EP practice within the profession’s more recent history (Leadbetter, 2006). Nonetheless, rather than being a discrete activity, consultation is described by Conoley and Conoley (1990) as a problem-solving relationship in which the primary purpose is to enhance the problem-solving capacity of the consultee, which does not necessarily involve giving advice or solutions. Similarly, for Wagner (2000) consultation is not a discrete item on a menu, it is a process in which concerns are raised and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint exploration, assessment, interview and review. Moreover, in Wagner’s (2000) view, consultation is effective when a greater capacity develops in the system for developing solutions.

Consequently, it is argued that the way in which consultation is conceptualised and communicated to commissioners may need to be carefully considered in the traded context. Currently, trends in the current study suggest that the selling of consultation meetings as a discrete activity has reduced in popularity and EPs themselves feel uncertain about how to evidence their contribution during these sessions. In the traded context, practitioners may be feeling an increasing accountability to commissioners who are now paying for their services. Therefore, the pressure to make their contribution more explicit or tangible, perhaps through completing direct work with CYP, seems to be leading a shift away from consultation-led feedback meetings. However, it is suggested that EPs do not necessarily need to move away from consultation or the use of other process skills in order to make their contribution visible.

In the current study, service commissioners described how they rated the service that they received more highly when they were able to more fully appreciate the psychological function and reasoning guiding EP practice. This finding concurs with Cameron (2006) who asserted that psychological formulation and processes are likely to be seen as adding nothing new to those without a psychological background.
Therefore, this suggests that more emphasis may need to be placed on building commissioners’ understanding of psychology. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that there has been a longstanding debate regarding the ‘giving away’ of psychology to commissioners and other professionals by explaining or articulating the psychological processes involved in EP work (Woods, 2012). Previously, Woods (2012) reflected that questions had been raised as to whether this act of revealing the psychology would lead to the distinctive contribution of the EP becoming obscured. Nevertheless, in the traded context customer satisfaction seems to be mediated to a certain extent by the commissioners’ understanding of the services they are receiving. Therefore, in order to make psychology more tangible, as well as being directive, it is suggested that EPs may consider practising in a way that communicates and shares psychological knowledge, formulation and processes more clearly.

Consequently, it appears that a key factor shaping practice in the traded context is the changing relationship between service commissioners and EPs. Fallon et al. (2010) made the assertion that this changing dynamic, in which commissioners become customers and EPs become service providers as well as shaping service delivery, would also potentially present ethical dilemmas. There was concern that the ethical responsibilities of EPs could become compromised if their services were being bought and they were asked to do work that they did not consider to be in the best interests of the child (Fallon et al., 2010). However, findings from the current study suggest that as a service becomes more established as traded, as a team the EPs are able to develop in their ethical sensitivity and become more comfortable and skilled in resolving potential ethical conflicts. Moreover, it was also apparent that as EPs became more secure in knowing that they were not under pressure to ‘sell’ and were able to retain their foremost duties and responsibilities to the child and young person, the negotiation of work, offering of choices and simply saying no to commissioners became much less of a dilemma for both individual EPs and teams.
RQ 2: Within the context of trading how do psychological services communicate and promote their role and contribution?

The communication and promotion of the EP role undertaken by services adopting a partially-traded model was of particular interest during the current study. Previous investigations reported recurrent challenges in communicating the value and distinctive contribution of the EP (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Contributing factors are cited as an overlap in work with other professionals, as well as EPs not agreeing with each other regarding the services they offer (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Moreover, Ashton and Roberts (2006) assert that this lack of clear communication has impacted on service commissioners’ perceptions of the EP role and created narrow expectations of the work provided, e.g. statutory assessment. Furthermore, findings from the pilot study of the current investigation suggested that service promotional materials may have opened a new channel of communication, which had the potential to address some of the previously identified issues.

Nevertheless, results from the current investigation indicated that materials such as service brochures and leaflets, which were intended to communicate the new model of service delivery, had a mixed impact. Whilst some EPs felt that the booklets broadened service commissioners’ perceptions regarding the type and range of EP work, others thought that these materials were unnecessary and ineffective. Service commissioners were in favour of having a booklet of EP services, yet interestingly none had purchased new or additional services after having read this type of material. This may suggest that commissioners simply appreciate the idea of having services presented to them; alternatively it may be that as customers there is now an expectation from commissioners that EPs are required to present and pitch their services more readily. However, all of the commissioners within the current study chose to buy EP services based on face-to-face meetings with EPs or from practitioners that they had an existing positive working relationship with. Furthermore, some
commissioners specifically chose to buy from LA providers, rather than the independent sector, as they felt this provided them with a higher level of quality assurance.

Therefore, it is suggested that in the traded context customer confidence in a service seems to guide purchasing, rather than exposure to promotional materials. Commissioners appear to be using a series of implicit assumptions to assess quality, including service reputation and current working relationships with individual practitioners. Within the business sector, reputation is defined as how the organisation is perceived (Low & Kalafut, 2002). Portman-Smith and Harwood (2015) assert that reputation can be central to the success or failure of a venture. As reputation relies purely on perception, negative publicity, whether true or not, can lead to decline in customer base, litigation and revenue reductions (Federal Reserve System, 2004). Alternatively, establishing a good reputation is thought to increase the amount of trade and investment a firm experiences (Cravens & Oliver, 2006). Therefore, it appears to be in the best interests of both developing and more established organisations to manage reputation and reputational risk as a promotional tool and business asset (Portman-Smith & Harwood, 2015).

Moreover, Portman-Smith and Harwood (2015) investigated reputational risk (RR) and reputational risk management (RRM) within small non-corporate enterprises which, similar to EP partially-traded services were operating in a context where there were fairly high levels of competition from other providers, often insufficient funding and unregulated contracts. Working in conjunction with these small enterprises, Portman-Smith and Harwood (2015) identified a series of strategies for managing and developing reputation, which included: behavioural adaption, working through third parties to gain contracts, choice of venture or setting to work with, use of equipment and resources, working collaboratively and being constantly reliable. Whilst it is acknowledged that not all of these components will map directly onto EP practice, it is asserted that understanding the key factors underpinning
reputation from the perspective of commissioners will become increasingly relevant for the profession. Consequently, as a guide, Rayner (2003) argues that reputation can often be defined as the difference between what is experienced and what is expected. This suggests that in order for services to be perceived as highly effective they need to not only meet but surpass customer expectations.

During the current study, it was found that service commissioners’ expectations and perceptions of the service were in part related to the tangibility of psychology. It was also found that perceptions of effectiveness were related to the demonstration of outcomes. Nonetheless, there was variability in terms of what was viewed as a good or effective outcome of EP involvement, e.g. a report, subject level progress, increased wellbeing or retention of a placement. EPs also described an increased sense of accountability linked with the need to demonstrate outcomes and contribution. However, it was the commissioners who asserted that in order to develop their traded enterprise EPs should consider how to more effectively communicate their role and contribution through the demonstration of positive outcomes. Moreover, this assertion concurs with previous commentaries, which have argued that there is a paucity of evidence to demonstrate what EP services are able to contribute to children’s development (Baxter & Frederickson, 2005).

However, a joint report published in 2009 by the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) and the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP) highlighted that the evaluation of effectiveness of EPs can be problematic, particularly because of the number of variables that occur between the psychological input and the outcome (AEP/DECP/NAPEP, 2009). Similarly, Cameron (2006) argued that EPs are complex problem solvers and that when approaching real-life situations there are often a number of contributing factors, each of which can impact outcomes. Therefore, the AEP/DECP/NAPEP (2009) report asserted what is not possible is to factor out
multiple variables easily or reliably, however what is possible is to look at EP’s activity, its purpose and take measures in close proximity to that activity in order evaluate effectiveness.

Consequently, the AEP/DECP/NAPEP (2009) report outlined a framework for EPs to measure the effectiveness of their impact on CYP. Based on the Every Child Matters agenda initiated as part of the Children Act 2004 (HMG, 2004), the evaluation matrix proposed by the AEP/DECP/NAPEP report (2009) aims to facilitate the establishment of the linkage between the activity and desired outcome. This matrix provides a series of stages between EP activity and evaluation, including ‘purpose’, ‘with whom’ and ‘links to ECM outcomes’ (AEP/DECP/NAPEP, 2009). Therefore, whilst the framework may need updating to reflect more current legislation, it is argued that in the traded context this type of tool could assist EPs in making psychology more tangible (e.g. purpose) and in articulating more clearly their contribution.

RQ 3: What do EPs in the context of traded services see as their distinctive contribution?

Findings from the current investigation suggest that EPs see their distinctive contribution as linked specifically to their expert role and highly specialised psychological knowledge and skill set. Moreover, this specialised skill set was seen as important in enabling EPs to view and approach problem situations in a qualitatively different way to other professionals. Taking a holistic or systemic viewpoint, which accounted for the interplay of multiple factors simultaneously, was seen as a particularly valuable and unique role of the profession. Consequently, from the perspective of the practitioners, it was not any particular activity that made the role unique; it was the process and way in which this work was undertaken which were seen as qualitatively different. These findings support those of Farrell et al. (2006) who, within their review of the EP profession, asserted that the distinctiveness of the role within the broader context of children’s services is one of degree rather than of kind.
Moreover, drawing on parallels between the inception of EP practice and current practice, Frederickson and Miller (2008) argue that the core skills of the EP profession have remained consistent over time. However, Stobie (2002) builds on this argument to assert that it is the socio-political context in which these skills are operationalised that determines to a large extent the contribution they are able to make. Consequently, the current study found that in the traded context, as services become more established as partially-traded, there is a move away from a model in which there was a single conceptual buyer to a more diverse and open market with multiple commissioners. Moreover, this new open market appears to have created opportunities for EPs to work more closely with already existing commissioners. For example, service delivery data from the established service outlined a substantial growth in large-scale contracts with sectors such as early years and virtual schools. Moreover, there was also growth within sectors which were previously minimally engaged with the service. For example, small-scale contracts from sectors such as special and faith schools rose substantially in 2013-14 compared to the previous year of 2012-13.

Furthermore, an expansion in the range of commissioners also seems to have opened up new ways of working. In the established service, EPs were being employed on a full-time basis, through some of the larger-scale contracts, to specifically provide longer-term interventions and therapeutic support to CYP. Therefore, the partially-traded model seems to have created the flexibility and capacity for EPs to use their skills in intervention much more readily and has supported them to undertake more in-depth or prolonged pieces of work. This it is argued represents a substantial move away from previous periods in the history of the profession, such as mid-1990s forwards when assessment, especially for statutory purposes, dominated the work of many EPs (Thomson, 1996). However, within this new traded era, whether intervention or therapeutic work will come to be viewed as the distinctive contribution of the EP role remains to be seen.
Additionally, Farrell et al. (2006) stated that it is the role of the commissioner to determine which professional is the best provider of specific services and thereby distinctive in their contribution. Findings from the current study extend this assertion. When asked what they felt was valuable or distinctive about the role of the EP, there was significant variety in the responses from service commissioners. For example, some valued their relationship with a particular practitioner, for others it was the pace at which work could be completed. Expertise in a specific field, psychological assessment, therapeutic support and work with parents and other professionals were also detailed as valuable and distinctive contributions of EPs. Moreover, EPs described varying their contribution to match the perceived or stated specifications most agreeable to the commissioner. Practitioners outlined a process of establishing which of their skills and communication style would be best preferred by the customer.

Consequently, it is asserted that this process of assimilation, in which the distinctive contribution is co-constructed between commissioners and EPs, is a central finding of this investigation. Previously, it has been argued that the EP contribution is distinctive due its qualitative difference from other services (Fallon et al., 2010). Whilst Fallon et al.’s (2010) assertion may be accurate, as EPs work with an ever increasing range of different commissioners and sectors, in the traded context, they appear to becoming more conscious that these different types of customers will value different aspects of their skill set. Therefore, what is viewed as distinctive in one setting or sector (e.g. therapy) may not be seen as effective use of the EP role in another. Subsequently, it appears that a central task of for EPs in this new context of multiple commissioners is to jointly co-construct their distinctive contribution with each customer.

Moreover, it is proposed that further shifts in the socio-political context have also informed how the distinctiveness of the EP role is currently understood. Following the substantial
spending cuts initially introduced to both national and local government as part of the 
*Spending Review 2010* (HMT, 2010), the number of different agencies within LAs providing services for children has reduced dramatically (Pearce & Ayres, 2012). Subsequently, in the current study EPs noted that they were justifying their distinctive contribution in respect to other services much less. In fact as other services reduced in capacity or were no longer available at all, EPs reported that they were being commissioned to ‘fill the gaps’ left behind. Therefore, it also appears that the question of the distinctiveness of the EP role is also context specific as well as commissioner specific.

RQ4: How do service commissioners view the role of the EP in the context of traded services?

Commissioners in the current study were very positive about what they described as their increased control over EP time and work since the introduction of the partially-traded model. As paying customers, commissioners felt that they had more choice over which service to buy (e.g. LA or private), how much time they needed and what type of services they wanted. EPs shared commissioners’ positivity that CYP were able to receive more, as well as a greater variety of, EP input, however, here were also concerns about shifting dynamics in the relationship between commissioners and EPs. In a critique of EP services, Wood (1998) argued that schools, as well as pupils, are the main customers of the EP and therefore EPs should work in a way that is more directed by schools. Commissioners in the study seemed to agree with Wood (1998) and described how their new status as paying customers had created the expectation that they would be able to assert more influence over EP work. For example, commissioners stated that they were not willing to try certain interventions.

Subsequently, EPs in the study described an increasing sense of accountability and pressure to ‘keep customers happy’. However, it was also found that as services became more established this pressure reduced somewhat. Practitioners and services described negotiating with commissioners and offering them choices with regard to work or intervention, as well as saying
no if they felt work would not be in the best interests of the CYP. Consequently, it appears that there is an initial period in which boundaries are negotiated between commissioners and EPs and to some extent reasserted by EPs. Nevertheless, Woods (2012) argues that the boundaries of client and customer remain clear in the traded context: the child is the psychologist’s client, the LA or school as commissioner is the customer. Consequently, the EP’s duty of care remains with the CYP above any other responsibilities to employer (Woods, 2012). An EP’s commissioned work should not be influenced by commissioner considerations, financial or otherwise (Woods, 2012).

Moreover, as part of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) review into the role and contribution of EPs, a range of stakeholders were asked whether they felt that EP services were needed (Farrell et al., 2006). The collated responses found that 97% of parents felt EP services were needed and that all respondent groups reported that EPs had an important role in supporting CYP with severe, complex and challenging needs (Farrell et al., 2006). Findings from the current investigation concur with this report. EP input was valued highly by commissioners. Obtaining EP input, especially specialist psychological assessment and advice, was described as a priority and integral in meeting needs of CYP with additional needs and SEN. This finding addresses and allays Fallon et al.’s (2010) concerns that commissioners may not value EP services enough to purchase them. However, there was an interesting pattern of purchasing identified in the study. In the emerging service, schools which had previously engaged well with the service prior to the introduction of trading, tended to be the same settings commissioning further work following the adoption of a partially-traded model.

Moreover, small-scale commissioners, such as SENCOs provided information which appears to give further insight into this finding. SENCOs described how their ability to purchase EP services often depended on the ethos and values of school budget holders, who were typically headteachers or senior leaders in school. Subsequently, if a leader such as a headteacher
prioritised SEN or had an inclusive ethos then the SENCO’s ability to commission EP services was much greater. This finding supports that of Ainscow (1995) who argues that inclusion is not simply a set of practices, it is a whole school approach and attitude, usually established and filtered down from the institution’s leadership. Therefore, it may be suggested that purchasing behaviours are mediated to a large extent by the existing attitudes and belief systems either of individuals or organisations (Bem, 1967).

In addition, Bem (1967) uses cognitive dissonance theory to also argue that behaviours can equally mediate attitudes and values. For example, if a school does not buy in a service, the resulting attempts to explain or rationalise this behaviour may lead to a conclusion or belief system that the service is not valuable or worth paying for. Alternatively, it may be that Bem’s (1967) theory can help account for the increase in trading. In the case of commissioners who previously felt ambivalent about EP input (e.g. it is just something they have) and who initially bought very little when trading began, their resulting cognitions or attempts to justify buying services may have led to the conclusion that the service was highly valuable, resulting in an increase in purchasing behaviour. Therefore, it may be that trading will increase the status and value of the EP role from the perspective of commissioners as they are now in a position where they have to pay for the service. However, this was not a finding of the current study. Commissioners in both services retained the consistent narrative that they had always found the service to be of good quality and effective, both within and prior to this new model of service delivery.
6.3 Implications for conceptualisation of the EP role

Figure 38. Model of EP distinctive contribution within the context of traded services

**Socio-political context:**
- Local and national government policy
- Funding allocation
- Number of service providers

**Commissioner:**
- Policies and funding allocation for SEN
- Ethos, attitudes and beliefs regarding SEN
- Knowledge and understanding of psychology and EP role
- Use of other service providers

**Co-construction of EP distinctive contribution**

**EP service:**
- Model of service delivery
- Capacity to meet demand
- Communication and promotion of the service
- Skill set within the team
- Values of team regarding SEN and EP role
- Evaluation frameworks/tools
- Ethical sensitivity
Previous theories have suggested the distinctive contribution of the EP role is one of degree rather than kind, meaning that EPs provide a qualitatively different service to other providers who may be seen as doing the same activities (Fallon et al., 2010). However, findings from the current study revise and extend that assertion. The model outlined in Figure 38 highlights that the socio-political context is the over-arching factor informing the distinctive contribution of the EP. During the current study, it was found that due to the reduction in number and availability of other service providers, EPs were less often required to justify their distinctive contribution compared to other agencies. Moreover, EPs were frequently commissioned to fill the ‘gaps’ left by other services. These findings suggest that the concept of EP distinctiveness is mediated by the level of competition faced and therefore can be understood as a contextually specific construct.

Moreover, previous research has also documented that the socio-political context determines important operational factors for EPs, such as funding, capacity and models of service delivery (Stobie, 2002). It has also been asserted that these socio-political factors then impact the operationalisation of the EP role and the contribution that EPs are able to make (Stobie, 2002). However, during the current study it was found that in addition to the parameters set by the socio-political context, the values, attitudes, policies and knowledge base of commissioners also informed how the EP was used and perceived. Findings suggested that based on these factors, service commissioners develop a series of expectations regarding the EP role and that these expectations inform the types of work they commission and what they perceive as the distinctive contribution of the EP role. Therefore, this would suggest that the distinctive contribution is service commissioner specific, as well as context specific.

Nevertheless, EPs in the current study also outlined how, based on their understanding of service commissioners’, values and expectations of what is distinctive about their role, they would choose to use or present different aspects of their skill set. As a result, it is suggested
that EPs are then creating a space in which the distinctive contribution of the EP role is co-constructed with service commissioners. Consequently, in Figure 38 the model outlines that the distinctive contribution of the EP role is a construct developed between service commissioners and EPs, who are both influenced by the socio-political context as well as the values, ethos and ways of working within their respective settings.

6.3.1 Potential strengths and weakness of the model of EP distinctive contribution within the context of traded services

It is argued that a potential strength of the model presented by the current study (see Figure 38) is that it could be used as a framework order to sensitise EPs to the factors influencing and mediating the role, arguably equipping them to be active agents in the future development and direction of the profession. The model offers a set of parameters or points of reference, which EPs and EPSs may want to consider when developing a traded element to their service e.g. level of competition, funding streams. In addition, the model also highlights important factors that individual practitioners may want to reflect on when contracting their role and contribution with commissioners, both old and new e.g. values and ethos regarding SEN and expectations of the EP role. Therefore, it is suggested that model has the potential to be of high practical relevance to practice of educational psychology.

Moreover, the model also builds on previous theoretical conceptualisations of the EP profession, which state that operationalisation of the role is mediated by the socio-political context. However, the model presented by the current study argues that EPs are not passive agents to changes in the context that operate within. The model suggests that EPs have a much more active part in shaping and constructing their role based on their professional values, skills and capacity. Therefore, it is suggested that a potential strength of the model is
that it extends conceptual understandings of the operationalisation of the EP role as well as having practical or functional relevance.

However, a potential criticism of the model is that it does not just represent the EP role in the traded context; instead it represents the EP role more generally. Arguably, the model draws on factors which have always been present in shaping the EP role, such as the socio-political context and commissioner’s expectations or values. Consequently, from this perspective, what the model represents is an original articulation and framework of the EP role, rather than a conceptualisation of the EP role in the current traded context. Moreover, if the model is viewed as a more general representation, then arguably it should be able to account for the variation in different models of EP service delivery, such as social enterprises, fully traded services or embedded models. However, it is reflected that this may result in the core elements of the model being present but in a slightly modified format. For example, a model of the EP role within an embedded context may need to account for a higher level of influence or control of the service commissioner in the negotiation of the EP distinctive contribution.

6.4 Implications for future research

This research provided an in-depth exploration of the development and impact of trading within two EP services, one emerging and one established as partially-traded. However, given the increasing rate of expansion of traded services, it is suggested that further research may seek to replicate the current study in order to further explore the model of EP distinctive contribution. It may be that as the socio-political context shifts and moves forward, different factors mediate how EP distinctiveness is constructed. For example, as the traded market develops, providers may be commissioned for different services or purposes by a single setting or commissioner. Therefore, the type of case explored by future research may depend on the
context and market surrounding traded services. It may be pertinent therefore to explore a fully-traded/independent service or a social enterprise in order to assess whether the model of EP distinctiveness remains an accurate description of the interaction between EPs, commissioners and context. This would be an important piece of research as it would provide further indication as to whether the model can be generalised as a framework of, and informing, EP practice.

Furthermore, as well as exploring the model within different service delivery structures of EP practice; it might be useful to explore its possible implications for other service sectors. For example, to what extent is the model likely to be applicable to other services within the services sectors? This may include specialist teachers, behaviour support teams, and social care or welfare teams. It might also be relevant to compare the model to already existing service sector frameworks in these areas to establish if there are any commonalities, contrasts or further points to consider with regards to EP service delivery, as well as within the broader sphere of the services sector.

Moreover, it is asserted that the role and use of consultation within the context of traded services would be a valuable area for further exploration. Consultation currently forms an important part of EP practice as a discrete activity and as an embedded component within much of EP work. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future understanding and directions within the profession if there were a more comprehensive review of consultation in the traded context. This piece of work might also explore whether EP practice in the traded context has moved towards more directive practice (e.g. advice giving), direct work and intervention as this will have implications for future practice of the profession e.g. training and service models. In addition, it is suggested that an investigation into whether EPs are gathering data relating to outcomes and the impact of their work would be highly relevant within the expanding sector of traded services. An exploration of trends in service evaluation, frameworks for
demonstrating contribution and methods of gaining service user satisfaction would provide clearer direction for the profession in terms of responding to the increasing pressure to make psychological input visible to customers.

6.5 Practical implications for professional practice

Understanding the EP role and its contribution currently forms a core component of training for trainee practitioner EPs. Therefore, it is asserted that the model proposed by the current study would be a useful framework to sensitise trainees to key mechanisms underpinning and mediating their contribution. The model would also help orient trainees’ understanding of the context in which they work and support them to appreciate that it is ever evolving and shifting. Moreover, through having an understanding of the model trainees will also gain insight into how they might be expected to respond and adapt throughout their career within the profession. Therefore, by developing a greater appreciation of the context and relationships they will be working within, it is suggested that trainees would be more prepared for both placements and entrance into employment.

Furthermore, key implications that may be drawn from the model for both trainees and qualified practitioners include an understanding that the distinctive contribution of the EP role is not fixed to a particular skill set or series of processes, neither is it consistent across different settings or commissioners. It is asserted that the distinctive contribution of EPs is based within their multi-faceted skill set and ability to jointly construct their input with service commissioners in a way that meets the needs of CYP and retains both psychological and ethical integrity. Therefore, it is suggested that the model provides a framework in which the integrity of psychology as an academic discipline is able to be synthesised with the practical demands of the role within a new and emerging context. This will be especially important for trainees and qualified practitioners for whom there is uncertainty about the boundaries of the role in the traded context. Within the current study, practitioners often reported feeling pressure to ‘sell’;
however, the model suggests that there is space to negotiate and co-create work within the traded context, which is psychological, evidence-based, ethical and defensible.

In addition, findings from the current investigation suggest that, in order to support the development of a traded enterprise, there needs to be a stage of formulation in which the portfolio of practice is reviewed and if necessary updated. Services reported finding this stage of reflection and refinement useful in creating a set of clear and coherent expectations for themselves and service commissioners. It appeared that having these boundaries, together with knowledge that colleagues were either acting in similar way when contracting work or would be able to provide specialisms if needed, made the process of negotiation and co-construction with commissioners more effective. It was also found during the current study that verbal communication with service commissioners was the main tool for service promotion. Whilst brochures and booklets were viewed positively by service commissioners, it was the interactions and discussions with EPs which led to purchasing of services. This may suggest that presentations and consultations would be more effective for services seeking to promote their role and contribution.

6.6 Limitations of the research

It is acknowledged that the main limitations in relation to this research, not previously discussed in other chapters, relate to the scale of the project. The inclusion of additional cases (e.g. four cases rather than two) would have provided the opportunity for further exploration of possible service trends and emerging patterns within EP practice, e.g. level of demand for services. Therefore, this would have enabled a broader analysis of the traded context, which may have provided additional insights or perhaps contradictions to the model developed. The inclusion of four cases would have also extended the level of analytic generalisability (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) asserts that multiple-case designs are to be preferred over single-case designs as the analytical benefits from having more than one case are substantial.
Nevertheless, Yin (2009) also argues that analytical conclusions arising from two cases will be more powerful than those coming from a single case alone. In addition, if deliberately contrasting elements are chosen as part of the design and the subsequent findings support the hypothesised contrast, the results are also strengthened compared to those from a single case (Yin, 2009). Therefore, it is asserted that the results of the current study still retain an adequate level of analytic generalisability.

Moreover, in order to explore trading and its impact for role of the EP more fully, the researcher might have recruited two different models of service delivery, e.g. a fully-traded service and a social enterprise or educational trust. This may have shown more contrasting variations in terms of EP contribution and service commissioner perception of the role. However, the fully-traded service approached to take part in the project was concerned about a lack of anonymity. The service held a fairly prominent position within the North West Region and the profession more generally; therefore they felt that despite measures taken to establish confidentiality (e.g. use of pseudonyms), the nature of the research would mean that identifying features of the service might have become open to the public domain.

Furthermore, the social enterprise invited to take part in the study declined. It was felt by the service that asking commissioners to be interviewed might place a burden or compromise the existing relationship between the enterprise and its client base. In addition, the social enterprise preferred to distance itself from the concepts of trading and income generation, instead viewing itself as a community or need-driven service. Consequently, the current study was unable to gather data from either of these two models of service, which may limit the generalisability of findings to services operating a partially-traded model. Nevertheless, data collected by an NCTL (2014) workforce survey indicates that a high proportion of EP services are currently dual funded by the LA and income generated through trading. A much small number were commissioned as social enterprises or were in receipt of funding solely from
non-LA sources (NCTL, 2014). Therefore, whilst the findings might not be generalisable across all models, they are relevant to the most widely implemented method of income generation with the current traded context.

6.7 Conclusion

This research has considered the distinctive contribution of the EP role in the context of traded services. Findings suggest that the impact of trading on the role and contribution of the EP has been largely positive. Trading appears to have had a regenerating effect. Entering into a context in which the expansion in the concept of buyer has created the opportunity for an extension in the type and range of work now being completed by EPs. Service delivery patterns suggest a potential emerging trend towards EPs becoming more involved in direct work and intervention, especially therapeutic support. However, psychological assessment and skills in synthesising complex real-life problem situations are also still valued by commissioners. Nevertheless, the role of consultation seems to be shifting. In the traded context, commissioners want to see and understand the psychology or the contribution of the EP in more tangible terms, which is likely to have implications for service delivery and evaluation.

Moreover, findings from the current research suggest that there is diversity in what commissioners perceive and value as the distinctive contribution of the EP role. Whilst there was consensus amongst commissioners that psychological assessment and advice formed the core of what EPs do, what they valued as a distinctive contribution varied much more. For example, some commissioners prioritised pace of work over consistency of working relationships, therefore purchasing a sole trader on a more sporadic need-lead basis was viewed as a good option. However, for others consistency and quality assurance were the most important and valued aspects of the EP role; therefore buying in from the LA service was viewed as the best way to achieve this. Subsequently, in a context containing an increasing variety of commissioners and therefore variety of expectations, EPs described using their skills
in negotiation and consultation to jointly co-construct their distinctive contribution, in a way that met the needs of the CYP and fulfilled the expectations of the customer.

Therefore, meeting or matching customer expectations appeared to be a growing priority for services in the traded context. Communication of the EP role and contribution seemed to be mediated by reputation and relationships rather than brochures or marketing materials. As a result, reputation development and management may become a future area for consideration, particularly as findings from the current study suggest that relationships and word of mouth are central to commissioner perceptions. Consequently, EPs in the study questioned whether formal channels of promotion (e.g. brochures) are needed as demand for EP services appears high. It was clear that commissioners had valued the role prior to trading and continued to see it as distinctive and necessary in order to meet the needs of CYP with SEN. Moreover, in the context of trading, commissioners also appreciated the flexibility and increased options they had within the partially-traded model for purchasing more or different services.

Finally, the socio-political context in which trading has developed also appeared to impact on the distinctive contribution of the EP role. Reductions in the number of other services, offering similar activities to EPs, meant that EPs were less frequently having to justify their contribution and instead were being commissioned to fill ‘gaps’ left by other services. Therefore, the distinctiveness of the EP role also appears to be context specific. Moreover, the question regarding EP contribution seems to have been reversed, from a previous position of role uncertainty and potential instability to a more secure position with regard to their role in services for CYP and SEN.
7 REFERENCES


Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP). (2011). *The delivery of educational psychology services*. Durham: AEP.

Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), The Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), & The National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP). (2009). *The evaluation of educational services in light of outcomes for children*. Durham: AEP.


Manchester City Council (MCC) (2011). *Trading local authority education services to schools-Manchester’s model*. Manchester: MCC.


8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix A: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature searches

Literature review question 1: What is the policy context for the delivery of public services in the UK?

Table 19. Literature review question 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature searches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion criteria</th>
<th>Exclusion criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studies that have good utility/focus of study relevant to the literature review question:</td>
<td>Studies that provide no utility in answering the literature review question:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Studies focusing on the socio-political changes affecting UK public services</td>
<td>- Main focus of the research is not directly referring to UK context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Studies that address historical socio-political changes affecting UK public services</td>
<td>- Includes key words in title or abstract but is not in a related field to the literature review questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Studies examining the impact of the modernisation or reform on UK public services</td>
<td>- Is related to the research question but the findings are not generalizable/applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Studies that focus on the impact of recent (i.e. post 2010) economic changes to the delivery of UK public services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies that are reasonably accessible to the researcher:</td>
<td>Studies that are not within reasonable access to the researcher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Journals available through The John Rylands University Library</td>
<td>- Journals not available through The John Rylands University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Theses accessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
<td>- Theses inaccessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
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</table>
Literature review question 2: How has educational psychology service delivery changed in relation to changes in public services?

Table 20. Literature review question 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature searches

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Studies that have good utility/focus of study relevant to the literature review question:</td>
<td>Studies that provide no utility in answering the literature review question:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Studies which focus on educational psychology service delivery in relation to changes in UK public services</td>
<td>• Main focus of the research is not directly referring to UK context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies which explore the role of the educational psychologist in relation to changes in UK legislation</td>
<td>• Includes key words in title or abstract but is not in a related field to the literature review questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies that address economic changes to UK public services, including educational psychology</td>
<td>• Is related to the research question but the findings are not generalizable/applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies that examine different models of educational psychology service delivery in the UK, including trading and commissioned services</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies that are reasonably accessible to the researcher:</td>
<td>Studies that are not within reasonable access to the researcher:</td>
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<td>• Journals not available through The John Rylands University Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Theses accessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
<td>• Theses inaccessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Literature review question 3: What are current the service delivery models evident in educational psychology?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studies that have good utility/focus of study relevant to the literature review question:</td>
<td>Studies that provide no utility in answering the literature review question:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies which focus on educational psychology service delivery in the UK context</td>
<td>• Main focus of the research is not directly referring to UK context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies which explore the role of the educational psychologist in the UK context</td>
<td>• Includes key words in title or abstract but is not in a related field to the literature review questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies which address the development and history of the educational psychology service delivery in the UK context</td>
<td>• Is related to the research question but the findings are not generalizable/applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies that discuss educational psychology as a traded or commissioned service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies that are reasonably accessible to the researcher:</td>
<td>Studies that are not within reasonable access to the researcher:</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Theses accessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 21. Literature review question 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature searches
Literature review question 4: What are educational psychologists being used for and are they a distinctive service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion criteria</th>
<th>Exclusion criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studies that have good utility/focus of study relevant to the literature review question:</td>
<td>Studies that provide no utility in answering the literature review question:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies which focus on the role of the educational psychologist in the UK context</td>
<td>• Main focus of the research is not directly referring to UK context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies that explore the distinctive contribution of the educational psychology role in the UK context</td>
<td>• Includes key words in title or abstract but is not in a related field to the literature review questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Studies that discuss the value and/or contribution of the educational psychology role in the UK context</td>
<td>• Is related to the research question but the findings are not generalizable/applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Studies which review the function of the educational psychologist in the UK context</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies that are reasonably accessible to the researcher:</th>
<th>Studies that are not within reasonable access to the researcher:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>• Journals available through The John Rylands University Library</td>
<td>• Journals not available through The John Rylands University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theses accessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
<td>• Theses inaccessible through UK Institutional Repository</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22. Literature review question 4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature searches
8.2 Appendix B: Information sheet and consent form

‘A case study investigation into Educational psychologists’ changing role and distinctive contribution upon entering the context of commissioned services’

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study which will contribute to the researcher’s doctorate qualification in educational and child psychology.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

The aim of the research is explore how the role of the educational psychologist (EP) is being affected by moving into a traded model of service delivery. Following a successful pilot within a partial-traded service, the current investigation wishes to explore the role of the EP in two different contexts, namely fully traded and partially-traded EP services. It will aim to compare the work undertaken by EPs in these different settings as well as exploring service users and EPs’ perceptions of the role.

Who will conduct the research?

Katherine Winward,
Title of the Research

A case study investigation into Educational Psychologists’ changing role and distinctive contribution upon entering the context of commissioned services

What is the aim of the research?

Recent reductions in public spending have led to massive changes in the nature of the delivery of public services. In autumn 2010, it became clear that Local Authorities (LAs) would be reducing the size of many teams within Children’s Services, including their Educational Psychology Services (EPSs). The effect on individual EPSs has been varied, with some services experiencing only minor changes, whilst others have faced the dismantling of all of their previous structures. In response to this, three main models of Educational Psychology service delivery have developed: ‘traditional LA model’, ‘LA plus model’ or ‘partially-traded’ and ‘fully-traded/commissioned’.

The aim of the present research is to understand how the EP role has begun to adapt to the reduced LA capacity and how entering a traded service model or retaining a partially-traded model may have affected EPs’ distinctive contribution to outcomes for children and young people, from their perspective and that of potential service commissioners.

Why have I been chosen?

You are being invited to take part in this study, either because you are a Principal Educational Psychologist, Educational Psychologist or another professional working within education.
This is a small scale case study and there will be approximately 20 other professionals involved.

**What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

As a participant you would be asked to take part in a one hour focus group with the researcher and a small number of colleagues (maximum 5). This would involve discussing how the recent changes to EP service delivery may have affected the EP role and its contribution to outcomes for children and young people.

If you are Principal Educational Psychologist you would also be asked for information regarding the types of work EPs in your service are currently engaged with.

**What happens to the data collected?**

Discussion during the focus group would be audio recorded and then transcribed. All data will be collected anonymously and confidentiality will be maintained throughout.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

All data will be collected anonymously using a four digit non-identifiable participant number.

No identifying information (e.g. names, schools or services involved) will be taken.

The data will stored in a secure, password protected location on the researcher’s laptop, to which no one else will have access. The recordings and transcription will be destroyed once the project has been submitted (approximately May, 2017).

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**
The researcher and the University of Manchester are not able to offer any payment for participation in this study.

**What is the duration of the research?**

Commitment to take part would be one hour.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

The research will conducted at a time and local convenient to you, preferably your school or service office.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

An anticipated outcome of the research is that results may contribute to a piece of published research.

**Criminal Records Check**

The researcher has undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check at the Enhanced Disclosure level.

**Contact for further information**

Researcher contact: Katherine Winward, email: Victoria.winward@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Supervisor contact: Professor Kevin Woods, email: Kevin.a.woods@manchester.ac.uk

**What if something goes wrong?**

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', or
by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093.
‘A case study investigation into Educational psychologists’ changing role and distinctive contribution upon entering the context of commissioned services’

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that the focus groups will be audio recorded

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

5. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant ______________________ Date __________ Signature ______________________

______________________________ ___________________________ __________________________

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8.3 Appendix C: Interview schedule for EP service leads for both services

1. Traded context (RQ 1)

**Main question:** What’s the current context/ agenda regarding traded service in your authority?

**Sub questions:**
- What percentage of your service is currently traded? How long have been trading?
- Is there a plan to move to/ increase trading?
- Is the service under pressure to trade/ trade more?
- What would be your SWOT analysis of a move towards/ increase in trading?

2. Changes in service delivery between traded and non-traded elements (RQ 1)

**Main question:** Do you envisage that working within a non-traded model your work within schools is different from that of commissioned services?

**Sub questions:**
- Have you seen any patterns in the types of EP services that schools are paying for and the services which they expect to be provided via the local authority funding?
- Has your role changed since developing a traded element to the service? If so how?
- Do you feel that either model is more beneficial (for schools)? Why, why not?
- What impact do you think EPs becoming traded has had on the services provided to children and young people (CYP)?

3. Role of publicity materials and service brochures? (RQ 2)

**Main question:** How might you market the service traded element to the commissioners and why? e.g. core/ additional balance/ strategy; brochures/ launch (to whom?)

- How did the service outline the work is it able to provide before a traded element was introduced?
- Do you feel the role of the EP is well understood by service users/commissioners (in terms of breath of services e.g. not just statutory role)?
- Do you think schools have found it easy to understand how to buy in services and what will be charged?

4. Distinctive contribution (RQ 3)
Main question: What work do EPs do that is unique to their role?

Sub questions:

• Does the EP distinctive contribution remained constant or does it differ within different models of service delivery?

• Do you think there are (would be/ will be) any tensions with other services providing similar activities to EPs?

• How do you know that EP input has been valuable? (Would it be beneficial if the things you think are helpful could be quantified?)

5. Service commissioners views of the EP role (RQ 4)

Main question

• Have service commissioners shifted in their perspective of the EP role since introducing a traded element? (E.g. see it as optional; flexible; scalable?).

Sub questions:

• What do you think service users/commissioners see as the distinctive contribution of the EP? Why is that valuable?

• Do you think the service is seen by commissioners as value for money?

• What do you think may be the issues for schools that do not use EP services?

6. Ending questions:

• Is there anything you came wanting to say that you did not get a chance to say?

• Is there anything else I should have asked you about?
8.4 Appendix D: Focus group interview schedule emerging service

1. Traded context (RQ 1)

Main question: What’s the current context regarding traded service in your authority?

Sub questions:

- How much do you feel that EPs are driving changes to service delivery themselves?
- Do you feel it has allowed you expand your role or develop specialisms in certain areas?
  - Is that driven by demand in the area or own interests and skill sets?
- Is the (service) under pressure to trade/ trade more?
  - Is there a temptation to say yes to everything?
- What would be your SWOT analysis of a move towards/ increase in trading?
- Have any ethical concerns been raised for you by trading?

2. Changes in service delivery between traded and non-traded elements (RQ 1)

Main question: Do you envisage that working within a non-traded model your work within schools is different from that of commissioned services?

Sub questions:

- Have you seen any patterns in the types of EP services that schools are paying for and the services which they expect to be provided via the local authority funding?
- Do you feel that either model is more beneficial (for schools)? Why, why not?
- Has your role changed since developing a traded element to the service? If so how?
- Since trading has there been any change to the way you work with other teams or services?
- What impact do you think EPs becoming traded has had on the services provided to children and young people (CYP)?

3. Role of publicity materials and service brochures? (RQ 2)

Main question: Has having a service brochure increased understanding and/or uptake of EP services?
• Do you feel the role of the EP is well understood by service users/commissioners (in terms of breath of services e.g. not just statutory role)?

• Do you think having a free element of five sessions encourages schools to continue links with an EP if they were to buy in additional services?

• Do you think schools have found it easy to understand how to buy in services and what will be charged?

4. **Distinctive contribution (RQ 3)**

**Main question:** What work do EPs do that is unique to their role?

**Sub questions:**

• Does the EP distinctive contribution remained constant or does it differ within different models of service delivery?

• Has your practice shifted towards thinking more about tangible outcomes or offering concrete/visible packages of work?

• Do you think there are (would be/ will be) any tensions with other services providing similar activities to EPs?

• How do you know that EP input has been valuable? (Would it be beneficial if the things you think are helpful could be quantified?)

5. **Service commissioners views of the EP role (RQ 4)**

**Main question**

• Have service commissioners shifted in their perspective of the EP role since introducing a traded element? (E.g. see it as optional; flexible; scalable?).

**Sub questions:**

• What do you think service users/commissioners see as the distinctive contribution of the EP? Why is that valuable?

• Do schools see themselves as the customer? Has that changed working relationships?

• Do you think the service is seen by commissioners as value for money?

• What do you think may be the issues for schools that do not use EP services?

6. **Ending questions:**

• Is there anything you came wanting to say that you did not get a chance to say?

• Is there anything else I should have asked you about?
8.5 Appendix E: Focus group interview schedule established

1. Traded context (RQ 1)

**Main question:** What’s the current context regarding traded service in your authority?

**Sub questions:**
- How much do you feel that EPs are driving changes to service delivery themselves?
- Do you think that EPs have a well marketable skill set?
- Do you feel it has allowed you expand your role or develop specialisms in certain areas?
  - Is that driven by demand in the area or own interests and skill sets?
- Is the (service) under pressure to sell/ trade more?
  - Is there a temptation to say yes to everything?
- What would be your SWOT analysis of a move towards/ increase in trading?
- Have any ethical concerns been raised for you by trading?

2. Changes in service delivery between traded and non-traded elements (RQ 1)

**Main question:** Do you envisage that working within a non-traded model your work within schools is different from that of commissioned services?

**Sub questions:**
- Have you seen any patterns in the types of EP services that schools are paying for and the services which they expect to be provided via the local authority funding?
- Has trading expanded the breadth of your work?
- Do you feel that either model is more beneficial (for schools)? Why, why not?
- Has your role changed since developing a traded element to the service? If so how?
- Since trading has there been any change to the way you work with other teams or services?
- What impact do you think EPs becoming traded has had on the services provided to children and young people (CYP)?

3. Role of publicity materials and service brochures? (RQ 2)
Main question: Has having a service brochure increased understanding and/or uptake of EP services?

- Do you feel the role of the EP is well understood by service users/commissioners (in terms of breath of services e.g. not just statutory role)?
- Do you think having a free element encourages schools to continue links with an EP if they were to buy in additional services?
- Do you think schools have found it easy to understand how to buy in services and what will be charged?

4. Distinctive contribution (RQ 3)

Main question: What work do EPs do that is unique to their role?

Sub questions:

- Does the EP distinctive contribution remained constant or does it differ within different models of service delivery?
- Is there a drive to look for how and where EPs can make a difference and demonstrate that clearly?
- Has your practice shifted towards thinking more about tangible outcomes or offering concrete/visible packages of work?
- Do we need to give psychology away so people will understand it more and then want to have more? Increased understanding meant increased value?
- Do you think there are (would be/ will be) any tensions with other services providing similar activities to EPs?
- How do you know that EP input has been valuable? (Would it be beneficial if the things you think are helpful could be quantified?)
  - Is it when people buy you back?

5. Service commissioners views of the EP role (RQ 4)

Main question

- Have service commissioners shifted in their perspective of the EP role since introducing a traded element? (E.g. see it as optional; flexible; scalable?).

Sub questions:

- What do you think service users/commissioners see as the distinctive contribution of the EP? Why is that valuable?
- Do schools see themselves as the customer? Has that changed working relationships?
• Do you feel you have more or less control of the focus of the work?
• Was the EP role narrower before when limited to what school/LA understood it as (one conceptual buyer)?
• Do you think the service is seen by commissioners as value for money?
• What do you think may be the issues for schools that do not use EP services?

6. Ending questions:
• Is there anything you came wanting to say that you did not get a chance to say?
• Is there anything else I should have asked you about?
8.6 Appendix F: Small-scale commissioner interview schedule for both services

1. Distinctive contribution (RQ 3) Service commissioners views of the EP role (RQ 4)

Main question: What work do EPs do in school that is unique to their role?

Sub questions:

- Why would you choose to use an EP service rather than a specialist teacher team or behaviour team?
- How do you know that EP input has been valuable?
- Following the move to trading are outcomes and evaluation made clearer?
- What EP work would you like more of in your school?
- Do you think, in the market of traded services, that EPs offer value for money?
- What do you think may be the issues for schools that don’t buy in EP services?

2. Traded context (RQ 1) and changes in service delivery between traded and non-traded elements (RQ 1)

1. Impact of becoming traded

Main question: How has the change to becoming a partially-traded service affected your work with the Educational and Child Psychology Service (ECPS)?

Sub questions:

- Have you used a service (e.g. training) that hadn’t used before trading was introduced?
- Do you think having a free element encourages schools to continue links with an EP if they were to buy in additional services?
- Do you think schools have found it easy to understand how to buy in services and what will be charged?
- Do schools see themselves as the customer? Has that changed working relationships?
  - Do you feel you have more or less control of the focus of the work?
- Have you noticed anything else different about the way the service is delivered? (more business-like).
- Do you feel that either model is more beneficial (for schools)? Why, why not?
• How would you feel about having another EP from the service, that wasn’t your own school EP, for some work?

• What impact do you think becoming traded has had on children and young people?

3. **Role of publicity materials and service brochures? (RQ 2)**

• **Main question: How do you know what services EPs can provide?**

• Has that changed since the introduction of trading?

• Have you seen or do you use the service brochure?
  - If so, has having a service brochure increased understanding and/or uptake of EP services?

**Ending question:**

• Is there anything you came wanting to say that you did not get a chance to say?

• Is there anything else I should have asked you about?
8.7  Appendix G: Large-scale service commissioner interview schedule established service

1.  Traded context (RQ 1)

Main question:

- **Did you work with the EPS before they introduced a traded model?**
  - If so, has the service you received changed since the EPS has become traded?
  - Has the type/amount/way you commission work from the EPS changed since the introduction of a traded element to the service?

Sub questions:

- **How have you found commissioning work from a partially-traded service?**
  - Do you think having a free element encourages schools/services to continue links with an EP if they were to buy in additional services?
  - Do you think, in the market of traded services, that EP’s offer value for money?
  - Do you think schools/services have found it easy to understand how to buy in services and what will be charged?

- **What do you think may be the issues for schools/other services that don’t buy in EP services?**
  - Do you know of other services buying less and why that may be the case?

- **Do you have contracts with other agencies or services that are now trading?**
  - What type of other services are you buying in?

7.  Role of publicity materials and service brochures? (RQ 2)

Main question:

- **How did you become aware that service was going to be using a partially-traded model of service delivery?**
  - Have you seen a copy of their service brochure?
  - If so, did it give you a clearer idea of the services EPs could offer than you hadn’t used before?
  - How else did was the service promoted?
• What is your view about the range/breath of services that EPs offer?
  o Has your view of the range or types of services that the EPS can offer changed since they introduced a traded element?
  o If so, how and why?

8. Distinctive contribution (RQ 3)

Main question:

• What work do EPs do that is unique to their role?

Sub questions:

• What do you value most about the work that EPS provides?
  o When commissioning EPs what outcomes do you expect to see and how do you know they have been achieved?
  o How do you know that the service is having a positive impact?
  o What EP work would you like more of?

9. Service commissioners views of the EP role (RQ 4)

Main question:

• Has being a service customer or commissioner changed your working relationship with the EPS?
  • As you pay for the service does that shift your expectations of the work provided?

Sub questions:

• What impact do you think EPs becoming traded has had on the services provided to children and young people (CYP)?
  o Do you feel that either traded or non-traded model is more beneficial? Why, why not
  o Have any ethical concerns been raised for you by trading?

Ending question:

• Is there anything you came wanting to say that you didn’t get chance to say?
8.8 Appendix H: Worked example of the stages of thematic analysis

The following appendix provides a worked example including, worded description, photographs and tables to describe the processes implemented to establish codes, subthemes and themes from the research data.

Stage 1: Transcription and familiarisation with the data set

All interviews and focus groups were transcribed in full into a word document. Active reading, highlighting and the annotation of informal notes took place during this stage, see Figure 39. The focus at this stage was on identifying pertinent phrases, key terms, ideas and potential units of meaning within the text.

Figure 39. Example of stage one thematic analysis
Stage 2: Generating initial codes

During this stage the researcher began the formal analysis process by generating initial codes from the data. Coding at this stage was data driven; as a result all initial codes were taken directly from key phrases or terminology used by participants. Bold type was used to highlight particularly pertinent key words. Tables of initial codes were generated manually using a word document (see Table 23) to support the collation and organisation of codes by case, research question and data source.

Table 23. Example of stage two thematic analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Established case</th>
<th>Research question 3: EP focus group</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>So if a school want training, then the bit of myself that I go and show is my knowledge of whatever the topic is</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think, in a traded model you show the side of yourself the school want to see more- show what customer want to see</td>
<td>The face of it is probably different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So is it my psychological knowledge, is it my power to build relationships?</td>
<td>I think it’s about the holistic picture, joining up services, joining up things and making them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think we’re in a unique position in we have an overview of child development and the skills to help other people to see our point of view</td>
<td>Some people have a lot more knowledge, or have a lot more personality, or have a lot more social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would also disagree that the unique contribution is the same for every EP, it’s not</td>
<td>I think actually we might end up individually becoming more specialist but our service we’re selling as generalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a very certain set of skills and she will capitalise on that because that’s what she’s great at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I find the part of our distinctive contribution as I see it, is to be critical friend.</td>
<td>But if feel you have to tread a lot more lightly and extra carefully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And I find that quite difficult within a traded model because that's what I said they needed. Because they'll always be that list of kids, but sometimes you need to be invited to the table. You can’t just turn up and put your feet on you have to start off by saying "yes" and being what they want you to be and then you can whip out a nurture room at the end and go surprise! And you go up in street-cred in terms of, they listen to you more once you've done it. Once you've been brave, but it is hard when they're paying.

Stage 3: Searching for themes

This stage involved sorting the codes into potential themes. Codes were manually sorted and grouped into semantic themes. Sticky notes were used by the researcher to label subthemes and over-arching themes within the data set. In the example below (see Figure 40), pink sticky notes were used to label the main over-arching themes and green sticky notes were used to label the subthemes.

Figure 40. Example of thematic analysis stage three: Grouping semantic themes
Thematic grids or tables were also generated during this stage, see Table 24. This allowed the researcher to clearly catalogue the results from the manual sorting and sticky note labelling process. This created a clear record of how the codes informed the subthemes and how the subthemes fitted within a main over-arching theme.

Table 24. Example of thematic analysis stage three: Thematic grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Selling the contribution</th>
<th>Individual EPs have unique selling points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme</td>
<td>Show the skills the customer wants</td>
<td>And I think what being traded is about, and I wrote about this in my thesis, is working out what your unique contribution is and selling that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>So if a school want training, then the bit of myself that I go and show is my knowledge of whatever the topic is</td>
<td>I think actually we might end up individually becoming more specialist but our service we're selling as generalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So you're more aware of what bit, what angle you're showing to a school so your contribution is probably always the same but you're more aware of which side you're showing</td>
<td>Some people have a lot more knowledge, or have a lot more personality, or have a lot more social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think, in a traded model you show the side of yourself the school want to see more-show what the customer wants to see</td>
<td>So that's why we say &quot;why our service? Because we've got all these skills&quot; but actually, it's about each individual and knowing which bit they're best at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The face of it is probably different</td>
<td>You show, because they're the customer, you show them what they bought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You show, because they're the customer, you show them what they bought</td>
<td>a very certain set of skills and she will capitalise on that because that's what she's great at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would also disagree that the unique contribution is the same for every EP, it's not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>So is it my psychological knowledge, is it my power to build relationships?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 4: Reviewing themes

During this stage, the researcher reviewed each of the codes and the line of quote they related to in the transcript. After comparing the potential quotes, the researcher chose the extract which best encapsulated and described the subtheme label. A review of the collated extracts was then conducted to ensure that they formed a coherent pattern within a theme. This process was done by generating tables, see Table 25. This enabled the researcher to review each of the coded extracts selected to represent each subtheme and consider whether jointly they formed a coherent pattern within the theme.

Table 25. Example of thematic analysis stage four

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selling the contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subthemes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show the skills the customer wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual EPs have unique selling points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conclude this stage of analysis, the researcher also evaluated the uncoded data (i.e. reread the transcript) to establish if any meaning or extracts had been missed during earlier coding. If new data had been found at this stage, then the researcher would have generated new codes and repeated stages 1 to 4 of the thematic analysis. However, during this analysis process, this did not occur.
Stage 5: Defining and naming themes

The fifth stage was to further refine the themes and to encapsulate what each is about in a few short sentences. Moreover, the researcher generated a representation of how the themes fit together as whole thematic map, see Figure 41. These maps were used within the findings chapter of the current project to provide a diagrammatic representation of the themes and subthemes.

Figure 41. Example of thematic map

Stage 6: Producing the report

Stage six was to write the analysed findings into a project chapter. This stage in the analysis involved not only paraphrasing of participants’ statements but also identifying what was interesting about a theme and how this related to the research question posed.
Dear Katherine

Ref: PGR-5583935-A1

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has now been approved by the School Research Integrity Committee (RIC) against a pre-approved UREC template.

If anything untoward happens during your research then please ensure you make your supervisor aware who can then raise it with the RIC on your behalf.

This approval is only for the Ethical Approval Application, you are still required to have received approval from your Panel and/or the Fieldwork Risk Assessment before carrying out any research.

Regards
Gail

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Tel: +44(0)161 275 3390
Appendix J: Ethical Approval following amendment

Dear Katherine

Ref: PGR-5583935-A1

Your amendment form relating to the above referenced application has been confirmed by the Manchester Institute of Education, Research Integrity Committee (RIC),

This has been noted on your original approval/submission and you are able to continue with your research.

Regards

Gail

Gail Divall | Senior Programmes Administrator

School of Environment, Education and Development | The University of Manchester | Arthur Lewis Building 2.020 | Oxford Road | Manchester M13 9PL | UK