‘Time to Talk’:
Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age

A Thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

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School of Education
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Abstract

The University of Manchester

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Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

‘Time to Talk’: Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age

2012

It is estimated that as many as 20% of children and young people experience psychological problems at any one time (The Mental Health Foundation, 1999), and research suggests that young people have many concerns that may go unnoticed by the adults around them (Cheminais, 2008). Pupils’ interest in direct access to psychological services in the form of ‘drop-in’ opportunities has previously been highlighted (Nichtern, 1978; Woolfson and Harker, 2002; Woolfson et al., 2008; Weerasinghe, 2009). Wider evidence suggests that ‘drop-in’ services may be an age-appropriate method for older adolescents to seek emotional health support. There is some research evidence to support the use of Educational Psychology ‘drop-in’ services for parents, however, there is little evidence to date regarding the use of such services with pupils, and no evidence to support the use of Educational Psychology drop-in services for a post-16 population.

This thesis describes an Action Research project that was run in one secondary school in North Wales. A Trainee Educational Psychologist worked alongside a stakeholder group of school staff and other agencies in an effort to make Educational Psychologists (EPs) more accessible to post-16 pupils. The Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) framework was applied to support the joint design and implementation of a psychological drop-in service for Year 12 and 13 pupils. Data was collected through focus groups, on-going discussion with stakeholders, and the maintenance of a research diary, each audio recorded. Data was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis, with the key themes being fed back to the stakeholder group at pertinent stages of the RADIO model to help guide the direction of the action research project. The project did not take the anticipated course, as no pupils made use of the drop-in service during the pilot period. However, the critical realism stance adopted allowed for consideration of the underlying generative mechanisms that gave way to the outcomes achieved. Pupil’s perceptions of stigma and their negative constructions regarding the role of EPs were identified as particular barriers to direct access and participation with the service offered. The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and the potential implications for secondary school pastoral care staff and Educational Psychology Services.
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<td>ALNCO</td>
<td>Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinating</td>
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<td>BPS</td>
<td>British Psychological Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAMHS</td>
<td>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAMHS EIPT</td>
<td>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Early Intervention and Prevention Team</td>
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<td>CYPP</td>
<td>Children and Young People’s Partnership</td>
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<td>DCSF</td>
<td>Department for Children, Schools and Families</td>
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<td>DECP</td>
<td>Division of Educational and Child Psychology</td>
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<td>OD</td>
<td>‘Open Door Student Support System’</td>
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<td>OFSTED</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
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<td>ONS</td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>PATHS</td>
<td>Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>Principal Educational Psychologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>RADIO</td>
<td>Research and Development in Organisations</td>
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<td>SBC</td>
<td>School Based Counselling</td>
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<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
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<td>SFBT</td>
<td>Solution Focused Brief Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>Social Induction Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAMHS</td>
<td>Targeted Mental Health in Schools</td>
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<td>TEP</td>
<td>Trainee Educational Psychologist</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>UNCRC</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The role of the EP is one that has been scrutinised regularly since the first was employed by London County Council in 1913 (Thomson, 1996; Ashton & Roberts, 2006, Cameron, 2006, Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires & O’Connor, 2006; Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). It is obviously a role that is heavily influenced by socio-political contexts, and as such has experienced many changes in focus and direction.

In a move away from a narrow, statutory role, many local authorities (LA) have adopted ‘consultation’ as a service delivery model of choice (Watkins, 2000, Wagner, 2000). Consultation incorporates information-gathering, interpretation and intervention over time, at the individual, group and organisational levels. Through this process EPs are able to utilise and share their knowledge of psychological theory with key adults, for example, teachers and parents, in order to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and young people. Consultation identifies that everyone involved has a contribution to make in finding solutions and making changes, and firmly places ownership of the situation with the problem holders. A successful consultation reduces the pathologizing of difficulties, empowers the individuals involved to move away from a medical model and ‘within child’ perspective, and act on and implement the joint-solutions identified, (Wagner, 2000; Leadbetter, 2006). A ‘pure’ model of consultation views it as an all-encompassing framework of EP practice, “by operating as consultants we can provide more effective services and at the same time positively influence greater numbers of people” (Reschly, 1976, p. 107; Wagner, 2000; Dennis, 2004).

The EPS, in which the current study took place, has adopted a consultation framework for service delivery in schools. In LA 1, Planning Meetings are held twice a year with each school’s Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos), who are responsible for prioritising the children and young people to be discussed and referred for individual consultation with the EP. The difficulties sometimes created by such a model of service delivery, especially in ensuring children and young people’s rights to participation are met, and in ensuring that children and young people are appropriately prioritised for support are becoming increasingly evident, and may reflect the mixed reviews consultation has received by service users generally (Webster & Hoyle, 2000).
In partnership with a consultation model of service delivery, the EPS also holds ‘Time to Talk’ (drop-in) sessions for parents at local libraries (details of which are published on the authority’s website), echoing a move towards a more community oriented service (MacKay, 2006). This offers parents the opportunity to directly access the EPS and consult confidentially with one of the EPs at a neutral location, to discuss home or school issues regarding their child/children regardless of whether they reach criteria to be placed at any stage of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). Parents are encouraged to contact the EPS office and ‘book’ a slot, but can ‘drop-in’ on a session if preferred.

1.2 ORIGINS OF THE RESEARCH IDEA

At the time of the research, directly accessing EP support was not an available option to children and young people within the authority, with access being mediated by school staff or parents. During that time, the whole Additional Learning Needs Department in LA 1 was placing a general focus on developing ‘participation’ opportunities for young people within the authority. The EPS were concurrently focusing on how the Time to Talk initiative and model of working could be enhanced following the positive feedback received from parents who made use of the service (Gravell, 2008). The idea of extending the initiative by offering it to pupils, stemmed from those two main areas of focus.

The EPS was interested in evaluating whether a Time to Talk model of direct service delivery could also be applicable and effectively used with pupils (a ‘Pupil Time to Talk’ service) to increase access to psychological support, and as a result possibly increase pupil participation and overcome some of the difficulties inherent in a consultation model of service delivery. The EPS wanted to focus on Time to Talk’s potential for pupils who demonstrate mature understanding and the ability to express their needs and views independently of the adults around them, (pupils in year 12 and 13 were focused upon in this study). As a result, it was thought Pupil Time to Talk may provide educational psychology access to pupils who might not, for various reasons, be prioritised by school staff for consultation with EPs, and who might not reach criteria to access services such as School Based Counselling (SBC) and the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS); but who may still benefit from the opportunity to consult and problem-solve any difficulties/concerns with an adult not directly related to school or family.
1.3 THE ‘TIME TO TALK’ SERVICE

The Pupil Time to Talk service, the focus of this thesis, was largely modelled on the parental Time to Talk service already in existence. Therefore prior to introducing the reader to relevant literature in relation to the research, I will provide some information about the nature of the existing Time to Talk service and what it entails, as well as brief details of some evaluative studies that have taken place to date.

As with many aspects of EP work, a humanistic counselling approach is adopted during Time to Talk, using specific Person-Centred ideas to guide sessions. In this respect, the purpose of Time to Talk is not for the EP to ‘diagnose’ the roots of individuals’ difficulties or offer ‘expert’ advice; but to express positive attitudes towards individuals, empowering them to implement their own inbuilt skills and resources to improve their situation (Mearns & Thorne, 1988).

Due to its humanistic roots, and respect for the three ‘core conditions’ of person-centred counselling, a solution focused framework is often applied within Time to Talk, if appropriate to the concerns discussed. Ajmal (2001) sums up its usefulness for a time-limited, ‘drop-in’ psychological service such as Time to Talk by describing Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) as being interested “in solutions rather than problems, the future rather than the past and people’s resources rather than deficits, provides a structure which is encouraging, effective and economical of time and resources” (p. 10). Solution-Focused approaches have been widely used by EPs and other professionals (Ajmal & Rees, 2001; DfE, 2011). It supports individuals by focusing on their strengths, personal goals and as a result, their potential to find their own solutions. A recent systematic review of the research in relation to SFBT and its use with children and families (DfE, 2011) reveals that there is a small “reasonably reliable” (p.6) evidence base relating to its general effectiveness.

Psychoeducation can also be a prominent aspect of Time to Talk sessions, again depending on the concerns raised. The EP is able to share some knowledge of child development and psychological theories in order to promote understanding of the situation discussed, elicit new perspectives, and signpost to relevant services.

The sessions are usually brought to an end with the EP summarising the discussion and highlighting any goals or targets identified by the parent. A written summary of the session is offered and is sent in the post within 15 working days along with any
additional information requested. In a minority of cases, follow-up Time to Talk sessions may be organised or more formal arrangements to meet with school representatives may be arranged.

The Parental Time to Talk service was evaluated as part of a Doctoral study (Gravell, 2008). During 2007-2008, two Time to Talk sessions were offered weekly, with a total of 52 sessions attended by parents and carers. The main concerns discussed focused around children and young people’s behaviour management and emotional health, friendships, attention and concentration and educational progress. All parents attending a session were asked to participate in the evaluative study by completing a short and simple questionnaire aimed at eliciting their views on the service. All respondents stated that they found the Time to Talk sessions helpful and would recommend it to a friend.

These findings have since been substantiated by a large regional survey commissioned by CAMHS (Thomas, 2011). The survey also identified that parental Time to Talk was highly valued by other professionals. Such positive on-going evaluations support the notion that a ‘drop-in’ service is a worthwhile alternative method of service delivery for EPs within LA 1.

Although Pupil Time to Talk was developed in collaboration with a key stakeholder group to ensure the initiative ‘fit’ with the specific environment where it was implemented – it was envisaged that a Pupil Time to Talk session would continue to broadly follow the framework outlined above. Therefore, similarly to the Parent Time to Talk initiative which has its roots in brief psychological intervention and counselling psychology, it was conceived that Pupil Time to Talk may also be able to offer an alternative way to engage with young people on their own terms, offering a direct method of access for pupils to EPs, complementing other emotional health initiatives that may be on-going in school.

1.3.1 What any potential ‘Pupil Time to Talk’ service does NOT purport to be.

As identified, Pupil Time to Talk, as the parental counter-part, had its roots in brief psychological intervention and counselling psychology. I will review the literature around SBC services in Chapter 2, looking in particular at pupil views of SBC and the issues arising in relation to setting up such services within an educational context. I felt that important lessons may be learnt in designing and establishing a
Pupil Time to Talk service by drawing parallels with existing school-based emotional health initiatives such as SBC.

However, it is important for the reader to understand from the outset that Pupil Time to Talk does not purport to be an equivalent or alternative service to SBC, and does not provide a ‘counselling’ service for pupils per se. Bond (2000) provides a useful distinction between ‘counselling’ and the use of ‘counselling skills’. He states that “using counselling skills is not a role in itself, but something important to enhance the performance of another role” (p.34). That is essentially what Pupil Time to Talk aims to do, through the use of counselling skills, solution focused frameworks, and guidance, enhance the performance of the EPS in working directly with young people.

In distinguishing between the work of various professionals working in a therapeutic capacity with children and young people, Lloyd (1999) describes how some are working within a very clear framework, for example, psychiatrists and trained counsellors; whilst others’ qualifications lead to them having a broader focus, for example, Educational Psychologists. Lloyd (1999) proposes that it may be helpful to consider a ‘therapeutic continuum’ in relation to theses varying roles “which acknowledges that individuals may be helped [therapeutically] in ways that are more or less intensive and more or less formal” (p. 26). In this respect, Pupil Time to Talk should be considered as being on that therapeutic continuum, aiming to support young people experiencing difficulties and distress, but at a less intensive and less formal point in the continuum in comparison to SBC services for example.

1.4 MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH
The EPS recognised a role for me, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), to draw upon the knowledge base of psychological research and theory to trial and evaluate such a new way of working with children and young people as Pupil Time to Talk. Such a project also appealed to me on a personal level, following previous roles in voluntary and paid contexts where individuals have been able to directly access support in maintaining psychological well-being, without the need to go through a third party.

Action Research was deemed an appropriate research design in this instance, as it enables a practitioner to start with where a project is at and build on it, working in partnership with members of the system where a change is desired. Specifically, I
worked alongside members of staff and supporting agencies from one secondary school to consider, design and implement a Pupil Time to Talk service based on available literature from various fields of research, adapting ideas to the social context. Following reflecting on the outcomes achieved, we re-considered our approach in light of those outcomes – the action research cycle. The Pupil Time to Talk service was designed for year 12 and 13 pupils as the literature suggested that gaps in provisions exist for pupils in these years, as well as there being a general dearth of information regarding EP involvement with this population.

The research questions the project aimed to answer were developed during the early stages of the action research process:

1. How is ‘Time to Talk’ perceived by post-16 pupils and stakeholders?
2. What were the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of ‘Time to Talk’ in this context?
3. What are the implications for future implementation and delivery of Pupil ‘Time to Talk’?

The Research in Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd & Kelly, 2003) was used as a general framework for the research. The framework was chosen for its action research roots and particular relevance to EP practice, having been designed purposefully for TEPs wishing to work collaboratively with systems in order to promote shared ownership of the research undertaken and initiate change that is sensitive to the existing culture of the system.

In summary, this research was intended to be of relevance to the EPS as well as the school in which the research took place. It was also anticipated that the research would fill a clear gap in the literature as will be demonstrated in Chapter 2. In a deviation from usual practise, the thesis has been written in the first person to more accurately reflect the collaborative research journey and my learning and reflections on the way.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure and content of the study is outlined in the next sections:
1.5.1 Chapter 2: Literature Review.

This chapter synthesises the body of research literature which has informed this study. It is not an area which has been the main focus of previous research studies as exemplified by the fact that similar projects have not been documented in the profession’s main practising journal – *Educational Psychology in Practice*. As the proposed research does not draw directly from one particular body of literature, various relevant bodies will be discussed. The Chapter concludes with an overall summary of the literature reviewed and how they fit together in relation to a ‘Pupil Time to Talk’ service delivery model.

1.5.2 Chapter 3: Methodology.

An action research design was chosen, and as such the methodology was not pre-planned, rather it emerged through on-going collaboration with stakeholders. The chapter begins by introducing the reader to the research’s ontological and epistemological position as well as the personal values and beliefs that were influential in my participation in the project. Validity and reliability issues within critical realist research are also discussed, before a critical overview of action research and the RADIO framework in particular is provided. The chapter moves on to critically consider the data collection and analysis methods employed, and concludes with a consideration of the complex ethical considerations made during the course of the project.

1.5.3 Chapter 4: Results.

The twelve stages of the RADIO approach is used to depict the research process undertaken in collaboration with identified stakeholders, the analysis of the data gathered, along with the outcomes achieved. The results section is therefore presented in a linear fashion, following the RADIO stages sequentially, to support the Chapter’s flow; however, Timmins et al. (2003) acknowledge that “*phases often need to be re-visited in the course of an initiative*” (p. 230).

1.5.4 Chapter 5: Discussion.

The chapter addresses each of the research questions to be answered as well as other pertinent issues arising from the findings, making reference to the literature reviewed. My personal reflections are weaved throughout in accordance with the personal learning goal of action research. The chapter concludes with considerations of the research’s strengths and limitations and reflections on possible directions for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter explores the pertinent literature in relation to the area of interest, touching on relevant governmental initiatives and legislation, theoretical and psychological research; however, it does not draw directly from one main body of literature. As such, the chapter provides an overview of some areas of relevant literature and a systematic review of areas most closely related to the current study, which are:

- SBC and the establishment of school based emotional health initiatives.
- Pupil evaluations/perceptions of engaging with EPs

Initially, an overview of the literature in relation to adolescence and emotional and mental health issues prevalent at this developmental time period is provided, followed by a consideration of the socio-legislative context that has ensued as a result. This provides the reader with some contextual information in relation to the need for a psychological drop-in service. School based initiatives relevant to the emotional health agenda in Wales and LA 1 in particular will be discussed, focusing systematically on the literature pertaining to the development and pupil perceptions of SBC services, due to their relative parallels with the EPS’ Time to Talk. Considerations of the difficulties inherent in establishing initiatives focused on emotional well-being within education are also discussed, as these are important considerations in the implementation of any new service in this field.

I will subsequently guide the reader to focus on the EP role and primary clients’ access to the profession, encouraging reflection in relation to possible inequalities in EPS access. The argument for focusing exclusively on post-16 students is outlined and I will introduce the reader to the limited research pertaining to pupil perceptions of engaging with EPs and EPSs and the justification for considering psychological ‘drop-in’ services run by EPs for young people.

Young people accessing any sort of ‘drop-in’ service will essentially be expected to reach their own decisions regarding their need for support from professionals, drawing upon different motivational factors in comparison to attending
consultations/counselling initiated by others. Therefore, research in relation to Adolescent Help-Seeking will be discussed along with some of the psychological theories underpinning it.

The chapter goes on to comprehensively and critically review the broader literature around ‘drop-in’ services for young people drawing in particular from health and counselling perspectives, this will not only serve to highlight the potential appropriateness of this model of service delivery for this age-group, but also emphasize the dearth of research around this subject from an EP perspective.

Attempts to embed new initiatives within organisations often fail as the drivers of change have not given enough consideration to the pertinent factors involved in enabling organisations to evolve and adapt to accommodate such initiatives. Therefore, the literature review ends with an overview of the research in relation to enabling organisational change, with the research’s relevance also taken into account when considering the study’s methodological design in Chapter 3.

Figure 2.1 presents a visual flow of the literature review to help orientate the reader to the varying bodies of literature that will be visited.

![Figure 2.1: Visual representation of the literature review.](image)

The chapter ends with an overall summary of the literature review, and a consideration of the proposed research’s potential contribution to knowledge.
2.2 LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

Many different categories of literature have informed this study, including governmental guidance and legislation, psychological theoretical overviews, psychological and educational research and evaluation reports, and toolkits. Information has been collated from several sources including journals, books, governmental publications and the internet.

Key words and phrases relating to the areas of literature outlined above were used to search the University of Manchester Library Catalogue, electronic databases and the internet. Due to the wide-range of literature reviewed, the specific search terms used in relation to each area systematically reviewed will be described in more detail throughout the chapter. In general, articles were only considered if they were published in peer reviewed journals, and were relatively recent studies (2001-2012), articles relevant to a UK population were also preferred. However, older articles were not discounted if they were deemed to be illuminative, especially in considering theoretically pertinent areas. Ancestral searches were also made with key articles. Web site articles had to be used carefully as they are not usually subject to peer scrutiny and are therefore not regulated to the same standard as journal articles. The internet was predominantly used to identify research and statistics from government and non-profit organisations.

2.3 ADOLESCENCE AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

‘Adolescence’ is a relatively recent concept, a concept which differs between cultures (Dworetzky & Davis, 1989; Archard, 2004). In Western societies it is seen as a lengthy period of biological, psychological and cultural transition between childhood and adulthood, characterised by complex physical, cognitive and emotional development, an increase in responsibilities and independence from parents, development of romantic and sexual relationships, and identity formation. The World Health Organisation (1986) views adolescence as roughly accounting for those individuals aged between 10 and 19 years.

2.3.1 ‘Storm and Stress’ of Adolescence.

Interest in this life-stage grew following the influential work of G.S. Hall, an American Psychologist whose studies during the 1900’s characterised adolescence as a time of ‘storm and stress’, a characterisation which has become enshrined in popular culture (Dwortzky & Davis, 1989; Bee, 1994; Lerner & Steinberg, 2009).
Hall viewed adolescents as ‘tormented’ by hormonal and emotional changes ‘fuelled’ by unfulfilled desires (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007), and that this in turn led them to enter into conflict with parents, experience disruptions in mood and engage in risk-taking behaviours. Whilst subsequent research has identified that Hall’s ‘storm and stress’ characterisation “considerably exaggerates the degree of emotional upheaval most adolescents experience” (Bee, 1994, p. 253); adolescence is still considered a “demanding, disorienting” time, marking “the beginning of a quest for identity and for a way to find meaning and a place in the world” (UNICEF, 2002, p. 2). It is viewed as “a period of vulnerability marked by a rising need for environmental support to cope with stressful experiences” (Gilat, Ezer & Sagee, 2010, p.205). For many young people, adolescence is also a stage where many clinical and potentially long-term emotional and mental health difficulties develop.

2.3.2 Prevalence of emotional and mental health difficulties.

Recent reports focusing on the emotional and mental health of children and young people in the UK have identified grave concerns (The Children’s Society, 2006). “It is calculated that at any one time, 20% of children and adolescents experience psychological problems” (The Mental Health Foundation, 1999, p.6) with 7 - 10% experiencing moderate to severe problems (Baruch, 2001), or a “clinically diagnosed mental disorder” (Office for National Statistics, 2004, p. 24). Accurate data regarding the prevalence of mental health difficulties in young people in Wales alone is not available. Although, the Welsh Assembly Government’s (WAG) estimates that more than 40% of young people in Wales have recognisable risk factors for mental health difficulties, 30-40% may at some time experience a problem and that up to 25% have a diagnosable condition (WAG, 2001).

Suicide, often connected to mental health difficulties, is one of the leading causes of death in young people aged 15-24, with Wales demonstrating consistently higher annual rates of suicide per 100,000 individuals in comparison to England (Scowcroft, 2012). Hospital admissions for self-harm in Wales has increased, particularly among 15-17-year-old girls, from approximately 650 incidents per 100,000 people in 2003-2005 to about 900 per 100,000 in 2006-2008 (WAG, 2011). Despite such figures, it is estimated that only one in four of those with a “mental health disorder” will be referred to specialist mental health services, which is alarming considering the available evidence regarding continuity of emotional and mental health problems into adulthood (Baruch, 2001, p.549). The All Wales Mental Health Promotion Network estimated that the overall cost of adult mental health
problems in Wales between 2007 and 2008 was £7.2 billion (Friedli & Parsonage, 2009), exceeding the overall amount spent on health and social care for all other health conditions.

Whether or not the incidence of mental health difficulties in adolescents is generally on the rise has been a hotly debated issue. It is a very difficult area to research robustly, complicated by increased awareness and identification of mental health difficulties in recent years, changing diagnostic criteria and variations in assessment/research methods between studies. One study which tried to take these factors into account when investigating historical trends in adolescent mental health is the research undertaken by Collishaw, Maughan, Goodman and Pickles (2004).

They compared the findings of three large-scale British studies of child and adolescents’ well-being (focusing on 15-16 year olds) carried out at three different time points (1974, 1986 and 1999), in order to examine if emotional health problems became more common over time. They initially compared parent-rated emotional and behavioural difficulties over the 25 year span. Secondly, to ensure that any increases identified in parent-ratings did not reflect any reporter or social biases/changes in reporting thresholds, the authors examined the association between highly rated parental reports of difficulties during adolescence, with later negative outcomes using longitudinal data from two of the three studies compared.

A marked rise in parental reporting of conduct and emotional problems for both genders and across all family types and social classes was identified. This apparent rise in reporting is corroborated by the follow-up data gathered by two out of three studies (when participants were aged 33 and aged 29/30 respectively), indicating that the trend observed is unlikely to be the result of reporting issues (Collishaw et al., 2004, p. 1352). The findings echo those of West and Sweeting (2003) that found increased rates of distress and worry to be self-reported by Scottish female adolescents between 1987 and 1999. Collishaw et al. (2004) do not explore possible explanations for the rise identified in conduct and emotional problems in adolescence over the past 25 years. However, they do highlight a number of general issues that may be related to the trends observed e.g. the considerable changes that have taken place in social and family contexts within the western world, changing pressures on adolescents, and growing socio-economic inequality.
McKenzie, Murray, Prior and Stark (2011) point out that changes in societal values may be “creating new and additional stressors” (p. 68), for today’s children and young people to contend with.

Regardless of whether emotional and mental health needs are on the rise amongst UK adolescents (West & Sweeting, 2003; Collishaw et al., 2004), the current prevalence rates and the likely long-term economic costs alone highlight the need for early support and intervention for young people experiencing such difficulties (Friedli & Parsonage, 2009).

2.3.3 Adolescent emotional health support needs.

National Surveys of children and young people’s views and perceptions have demonstrated that they have many concerns that adults may not fully appreciate, and as a result may go un-recognised, posing a threat to their emotional well-being. Some of the concerns reported related to exams, friendships and relationships, school work, and their future (Cheminais, 2008). Baruch (2001) identifies that the needs of adolescents in particular go unrecognised due to cultural connotations about it being a period of ‘storm and stress’ and the tendency to believe that any problems experienced during this period will disappear with time. The Mental Health Foundation’s (1999) report regarding promoting children and young people’s mental health also highlights issues that arise when ‘older’ adolescents have difficulties, “they are often trying to establish themselves as distinct individuals. They may not wish to share their difficulties with their families, or with professionals in touch with their parents” (p.88). Young people questioned as part of the report also identified that they “did not have access to professionals to whom they could talk” (p.89), and that this problem is intensified for some young people aged 16 and above who may be at risk of falling between child and adult support services. Ahmad, Dalrymple, Daum, Griffiths, Hochrodge, and Ryan (2003) highlight similar sentiments. Hayton (2009) goes further and states that the issue maybe exaggerated further depending on the geographical area in which the young person lives. She states:

*Whilst there appears to be a universal acceptance that rural communities are positive environments in which to bring up children, the very factors that make them good for younger children make them less positive for older children and adolescents,* (p. 61).
She indicates that EPs may act as key resources to bridge the apparent gap in services experienced by young people within rural communities in comparison to those living in more urban areas.

**2.3.4 Socio-legislative context.**

Increasing prevalence rates, the recognised potential of child and adolescent concerns going unnoticed by adults, along with the UK’s reportedly poor record in terms of children and young people’s subjective well-being in comparison to other ‘rich’ countries (UNICEF, 2007), have led to an increased legislative focus on the emotional health agenda. Whilst this topic is talked about under numerous terms and titles, WAG identify emotional health, emotional well-being, mental health and psychological well-being as conveying similar meanings – they all describe an ideal state of personal development and satisfaction (WAG, 2010). This does not mean children and young people who are perpetually happy; being emotionally healthy indicates they are able to achieve their potential, participate meaningfully with their peers and their community, engage in less risky behaviour and cope better with the adversities they may face from time to time. WAG state that following a rights-based policy approach (WAG, 2004) will support all children and young people in Wales to achieve improved emotional health and well-being, and state that “well-being is at the heart of the School Effectiveness Framework” (WAG, 2010, p. 1).

**2.3.5 School-Based Initiatives.**

Baruch (2001) writes in detail about the expansion of school-based mental health services in the United States and the possible reasons behind this (p. 550-551) - a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly prominent in the UK. Locating such services within school would help make provisions more accessible, and may act to normalise such difficulties and related services, subsequently benefiting a wider range of children and young people. This has proved to be a challenging, controversial subject to those who view the purpose of education as only relating to teaching around core curriculum subjects (Humphrey, Curran, Morris, Farrell & Woods, 2007). Nevertheless, educational establishments are now widely identified as appropriate settings to target, improve and maintain children and young people’s emotional health, in some instances acting as a base for relevant services. However, Baruch (2001) warns that provision is currently “unevenly distributed throughout the country and highly variable in quality” (p. 551), with McLaughlin
(2008) emphasising the dangers of provisions being “bolted-on” at the expense of focusing on developing a whole-school ethos of building quality relationships between teachers and pupils (p.365).

*Everybody’s Business* (WAG, 2001), the strategy document on developing CAMHSs, sets out the key role that all education practitioners have in promoting children and young people’s emotional health and providing them with appropriate help when they are experiencing difficulties. Similarly to England (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008), Wales has adopted a staged or ‘wave’ approach to developing emotional health initiatives within educational settings, with schemes falling into three broad areas: universal, targeted and specialist support (WAG, 2010). The following section will focus on some of the emotional-health based initiatives implemented within LA 1, in which the proposed research takes place.

### 2.3.5.1 Universal Level.

At a strategic level, LA 1 has set up an ‘Emotional Health Steering Group’ as a forum for the implementation of school-based interventions to promote social and emotional well-being. The multi-agency forum is chaired by members of the EPS and the CAMHS’s Early Intervention and Prevention Team (CAMHS EIPT). It is highlighted as an example of good practice in the WAG’s *Thinking Positively: Emotional Health and Well-Being in schools and Early Years settings* (2010) document. The steering group has been influential in the development of the evidence-based initiatives within LA 1 discussed below.

All but four primary schools in LA 1 implement the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum to universally promote children’s emotional well-being, focusing in particular on: self-control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem, relationships and inter-personal problem-solving skills. PATHS is a structured programme, initially developed in the USA, and has a strong qualitative and quantitative evidence-base, (Greenberg, Kusche, Cooke & Quamma, 1995) including evidence of its effectiveness with an UK sample (Curtis & Norgate, 2007). On-going research is also taking place within LA 1 focused on the potential impact of PATHS on pupils’ curriculum attainments.

*OFSTED* (2005) identify that primary and special schools in England were much better at supporting children and young people’s emotional health and well-being
through whole-school initiatives in comparison to secondary schools. It may be argued that the same could be said of schools in LA 1, where in contrast to the uniform, well-monitored and supported whole-school initiative implemented in primary schools, the initiatives implemented at the secondary school level seem to be more ad-hoc, diverse and inconsistent in their application.

### 2.3.5.2 Targeted Level.

The EPS is specifically involved with two evidence-based targeted emotional health initiatives across the primary and secondary level within LA 1.

The FRIENDS programme, developed in Australia is a group based intervention for children and young people at risk of, or already experiencing, anxiety and low mood. The programme uses cognitive behavioural principles to build emotional resiliency and teach methods of coping with anxiety. It has been widely evaluated as being efficacious in reducing anxiety and promoting resilience, (Barrett, Shortt, Fox & Westcombe, 2001; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Carter, Osborn & Bush, 2005; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson & Goddard, 2008).

‘Seasons for Growth’ is a group based programme for children and young people who have experienced loss and grief, which aims to foster resilience and acceptance of change in their lives. Evaluations have found that the programme leads to improved use of positive coping strategies (Frydenburg & Muller, 2005). Perhaps more importantly, systematic evaluation of the programme’s use in LA 1 has identified similar positive effects (Riley, 2009).

### 2.3.5.3 Specialist support - School Based Counselling.

Since the WAG published its National Strategy on SBC services in 2008, much of the focus regarding providing specialist support to target children and young people’s emotional health and well-being in schools has been on developing such services comprehensively in each authority. Whilst SBC is experiencing a “significant revival” throughout the UK (Jenkins & Polat, 2005, p.3), the National Strategy places it at the forefront of the agenda in Wales.

The “significant revival” of SBC throughout the UK, has naturally led to renewed interest from a research perspective. The focus of many studies has been on pupil
views of SBC, allowing those involved in setting up such services to gain an insight into the potential factors that may act as facilitators and barriers to pupil use (Cooper, 2006; Fox & Butler, 2007; Quinn & Chan, 2009). As mentioned already, Pupil Time to Talk is not intended to act as an alternative to the existing SBC service. However, the relative parallels between both services (that is, they are both services intending to be offered in schools, to pupils, by outside agencies, focusing, albeit at different depths, on supporting individuals’ emotional well-being), mean that important lessons may be learnt in relation to the current Pupil Time to Talk project by considering the available SBC embedding and evaluative research.

As such, I systematically reviewed the literature in relation to SBC services within the UK particularly, focusing also on pupil perceptions and the perceived barriers and facilitators to their success within a school context. The databases PSYCHINFO, Psychology: A SAGE Full-Text collection, Science Direct along with Google Scholar, and internet search engines were used to search for information using the following key words and phrases combined using the Boolean operator ‘AND’:

- Emotional health initiatives AND School
- School-Based Counselling
- Establish* AND School-Based Counselling
- Embed* AND School-Based Counselling
- Emotional Health AND School AND Barriers
- Emotional health initiatives AND Ethics

Fox and Butler (2007) surveyed 415 pupils from five UK secondary schools and held nine focus groups in four of the five secondary schools sampled in order to obtain a mixed method account of pupil views of SBC. The survey results and content analysis of the focus group discourse indicated that poor awareness and promotion of the SBC service was a significant barrier for pupils, along with accessibility - that the counsellor was not permanently on site and sometimes operated a waiting list system. Offering a ‘drop-in’ facility was an idea discussed in the focus groups as a way of overcoming this issue “I like the just turn up idea because it’s a lot more subtle. You don’t have to go through loads and loads of people (male, year 7, group 3)” (p.106).
One aspect in particular highlighted the usefulness of Fox and Butler's (2007) mixed methods approach. The survey revealed that the issue of confidentiality seemed to serve as a benefit and problem in terms of pupils' perceptions of going to see a counsellor in school. It was only through analysing the focus group discourse that authors were able to hypothesise that despite being aware that SBC was supposed to be a confidential service, pupils remained doubtful as to the reality of this, thus accounting for ‘confidentiality’ being a facilitator and a barrier in service use. Another factor relating to confidentiality that was identified as a potential barrier, was pupils' familiarity (or lack of) with the counsellor. Whilst some of the advantages of talking to someone who did not know them on a personal level were discussed, viewing the counsellor as a ‘stranger’ was generally viewed as a distinct disadvantage. Pupils identified that getting to know the counsellor better e.g. by the counsellor coming into classes – becoming a familiar ‘face’ around the school etc. would help overcome this issue.

Whilst all of the factors considered by pupils in making use of SBC identified in the Fox and Butler (2007) study are issues that need to be considered by any professional offering services related to emotional well-being within schools - perhaps one of the most notable is that of pupils' fear of “others finding out” (p.106). Despite 84% of the pupils surveyed indicating that they value having a SBC service, and 36% stating that they would make use of such a service, it is evident from analysis of the focus groups’ data that significant social stigma remains regarding young people receiving counselling. It is perhaps too early to determine if the increased focus on children and young people’s emotional well-being ‘normalises’ the issue and results in a marked reduction in the associated stigma; therefore consideration of the privacy and discreetness of provision should remain a valid concern for those seeking to establish such initiatives within education.

Of course, caution must be taken not to generalise too much from Fox and Butler's (2007) findings. The conclusions reached are based on information gleaned from a survey administered in five secondary school and nine focus groups held in only four secondary schools. No information is provided regarding the locality of the schools i.e. urban, rural; and no information is provided regarding the ethnicity of the participants – a factor which potentially biases the results considering that ethnic minority adolescents historically have shown low take-up of such services (Baker & Adelman, 1994). Also, although the survey was administered to one class of pupils.
from each year group (7-11) in each of the five schools sampled, seven of the focus groups contained year 7, 8 and 9 pupils only. The barriers and facilitators highlighted by the younger pupils may be very different to the barriers and facilitators highlighted by older pupils studying for GCSEs, and the issues highlighted by this study may not be applicable at all for year 12 and 13 pupils, which were the focus of the current study. However, having drawn attention to the factors that reduce the generalisability of Fox and Butler's (2007) study, the fear of potential stigmatization as a result of accessing support about emotional or mental health difficulties is an issue that other studies also highlight (Moses, 2010).

Despite the fear of “others finding out” about counselling attendance, and the heightened possibility of this happening in a school setting, the pupils who took part in Fox and Butler's (2007) focus groups discussed the advantages of locating such services within a school. Two recent studies, focusing specifically on Scottish and Northern Irish pupils preferences for counselling location identified that 73.8 and 68.2 percent of the samples respectively ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ would prefer to see a counsellor at school as opposed to a community setting (Cooper, 2006; Quinn & Chan, 2009).

In a climate where it is imperative that practitioners justify their actions and demonstrate a robust evidence-base for services provided, the available evidence base for SBC services in the UK seems to have been constrained to some degree by the small scale nature of the research that has taken place (Jenkins & Polat, 2006). More recent efforts seem committed to overcome this issue (Jenkins & Polat, 2006; Cooper, 2009; Fox & Butler, 2009).

Cooper’s (2009) meta-analysis of counselling in UK secondary schools employed a strict eligibility criterion which resulted in the inclusion of 30 separate studies (representing approximately 10,830 clients). However, Cooper acknowledges the difficulties inherent in standardising data from numerous sources and the possible impact on the results obtained from the analysis (p. 138). Cooper (2009) describes an emerging picture of ‘typical’ clients as being around 14 years of age, female, and having been referred to counselling by a member of school staff. He identified that by the end of counselling clients are

likely to be feeling significantly better, and are likely to attribute a large part of this improvement to counselling. Most often, they will indicate that this
was because it gave them a chance to talk through their problems and get things off their chests (p.147).

In attempting to determine the general effectiveness of SBC in secondary schools the analysis used the available information from 16 studies regarding changes between pre and post counselling measures of psychological well-being (studies commonly used the SDQ and the TEEN or YP CORE questionnaire). The findings are encouraging, with SBC appearing "to stand up well, with a large mean pre- to post-treatment effect size and a 'remission rate' of just under 50%" (p.148). The author emphasises that this is similar to the outcomes found with other psychological interventions, for example Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Whilst this study is able to provide some indication as to the effectiveness of secondary SBC within the UK, it is unable to provide any answers regarding the efficacy of such services, due to the lack of control groups used in the studies analysed. Cooper acknowledges the potential ethical and practical difficulties inherent in such methodologies, but feels it is imperative that these are overcome and that randomised control trials are used to provide 'gold standard' evidence supporting the application of counselling in schools.

Fox and Butler (2009) evaluated 13 National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) SBC Teams operating within England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Unlike Cooper (2009), they found that the majority of the 219 client participants had self-referred to services, with the percentage of female self-referrals being significantly higher than males (65% of female cases and 32% of male cases). Of interest in relation to the current study is the fact that the number of self-referrals increased with age; 59% of 14-17 year olds self-referred in comparison to 44% of 11-13 year olds (p. 100).

In relation to self-referrals for support, a recent small scale evaluation of a Scottish secondary SBC service with ties to local CAMHSs, identifies that being referred to counselling by others can result in the support received being ineffective (McKenzie et al., 2011). Counsellors who participated in the study considered that, for a proportion of pupils referred by school staff, their input had not been helpful due to the young people initially being unclear as to why they had been referred and either did not want to attend or just attended to please the referrer. The authors emphasise the importance of young people being involved in any decisions made.
with regards to their emotional well-being, and related this to research findings regarding the links between client motivation/informed consent and the therapeutic alliance and efficacy of counselling.

Making independent sources of support more accessible to children and young people was one of the key recommendations of the Clywch Inquiry (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2004) which highlights the possible dangers of school staff acting as gatekeepers to such services. Although the WAG’s National Strategy for SBC (2008) is still in its infancy, issues regarding accessibility have already been identified with some services only being accessible via adult referral or with parental consent (Welsh Audit Office, 2009).

Self-referral by pupils is not encouraged in LA 1, school staff and other professionals are required to refer a young person to the authority’s SBC moderation panel (with parental consent if under the age of 14-15, and preferably with parental consent if older also), where the appropriateness of the referral is considered by a multi-agency panel and cases are prioritised accordingly. While such a system is pragmatic, it may be limiting the client base by ‘favouring’ those experiencing certain types of difficulties, difficulties that are evident to the adults working with them, and as such excluding others whose difficulties maybe not as overt. It may also deter those fearing parental involvement from considering this avenue of support. Such a situation may be problematic considering that young people have identified a “lack of early help when first realising that they had a problem” (The Mental Health Foundation, 1999, p.90), and that research focused on young people’s levels of engagement with services highlights the importance of having minimal or no waiting lists (French, Reardon & Smith, 2003).

2.3.6 Establishing emotional health services in schools.

One aspect of the international research on school-based emotional health initiatives such as SBC which is particularly relevant to the proposed project, is the discussion around how to establish those services. Whilst the context in which some of the research studies have taken place may be vastly different, important lessons can still be learnt. Literature highlighting why it is not always easy for those working in such settings to play a crucial role in developing and maintaining children and young people’s well-being is explored.
2.3.6.1 Practical considerations.

Carton and Weiss (1994), in their article describing how they developed, implemented and evaluated a SBC service for young people experiencing significant emotional and behaviour difficulties in Nashville, Tennessee, nearly twenty years ago, stated how the “successful implementation of any SBC program depends heavily on the cooperation of the host school” (p.248). Establishing a trusting relationship with key school staff, and finding a common goal was mentioned as a priority for initiative success.

Baginsky (2004), on behalf of the NSPCC, reviewed the literature around SBC services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to provide a context to the organisation’s large-scale evaluation of their SBC services. Baginsky (2004) states that the purpose of the review was not only to serve as a context to the evaluation, but to provide practitioners “where a new service is being considered” with useful ideas based on the “experiences and issues that practitioners and researchers have written about the subject” (p. 1). In discussing the ‘setting up’ of services, the author highlights the reality often experienced by practitioners, where schools are rather naïve regarding what is involved in establishing an initiative and often have unrealistic expectations about the commitment required from them. One area of conflict, highlighting schools’ unrealistic expectations of SBC services, is that of feedback, and Baginsky (2004) states “staff expect it and counsellors believe it is inappropriate” (p.21).

Burnison (2003) in his evaluation of NSPCC SBC services in Northern Ireland, similarly to Carton and Weiss (1994), emphasises that the only way to overcome such potential issues, was to work cooperatively with school staff to agree implementation procedures and protocols beforehand. Burnison (2003) notes that all parties involved in establishing the services identified this consultative process at the early stages of the initiative as crucial to the subsequent success of the service.

Baginsky (2004) in his review of the literature around the setting up of services goes on to identify other common themes and issues to consider. Among the most prominent were having:

- A shared understanding of the service’s purpose
- A code of practice and how it may function within the school context
- Clear referral procedures
• Respect for inter-professional boundaries
• Suitable, consistent and sound-proof accommodation within the school building
• On-going assessment through regular meetings with pastoral and other appropriate staff
• An understanding of the nature of the community to be served in terms of gender and ethnicity
• Contact with other relevant agencies
• Due concern for publicising the service amongst pupils and school staff.

It is argued that the methodological design employed by the current study allows for due attention to be paid to the service set-up themes and issues identified by Carton and Weiss (1994), Burnison (2003) and Baginsky (2004). Themes and issues which are likely to be relevant to any emotional health initiative being established within an educational context, not just SBC initiatives.

Baruch (2001) provides a detailed reflection of the practical barriers faced by psychologists and counsellors working within educational settings. Perhaps one of the most fundamental practical considerations is the issue of finding an appropriate location for the work in question to be carried out, an issue that is often discussed anecdotally amongst practitioners. Locations with an appropriate level of privacy for work of a therapeutic nature to take place are often in limited supply within schools. The professionals working within the case study settings described by Baruch identified that their need for such a location often gets overlooked due to not being permanent members of staff, and school staff perhaps underestimating the importance of a ‘safe’ setting in building therapeutic relationships. Despite such obstacles Baruch and his colleagues feel strongly “that these potential pitfalls are part of the exciting challenge of locating a psychotherapy service in schools and do not outweigh the advantages of the service being delivered at a school” (p.553).

2.3.6.2 Ethical considerations.

Whilst practical obstacles such as location might be easily overcome through building collaborative relationships with school staff, other issues are not as easily conquered. Daniels and Jenkins (2000) provide a thorough account of the ethical complexities that surrounds the issue of providing young people with emotional/psychological support and therapeutic/counselling work within a school
environment. They identify three conflicting approaches regarding the understanding of children’s rights within the law:

- ‘The welfare model: Children’s interests are decided for them by adults
- The participatory model: Children have a right to a say in decisions about their well-being
- The independence model: Children have rights to make their own decisions for themselves’ (p.53).

The difficulty they have encountered stems from the fact that “pastoral care in schools often work on the welfare model, based on the concept of in loco parentis, or the school as substitute parent” (p.53). The impact of this issue is that some schools adhere closely to the principle that parental consent has to be gained before a young person can make use of any emotional support or SBC services. Yet it is well-documented that young people desire the opportunity to speak about troubling issues in confidence, without necessarily involving parents or any known adults. Daniels and Jenkins (2000) describe how the popularity of the ‘Childline’ help-line is testament to this.

The notion of Gillick competence has acted to ameliorate the situation mentioned above to some degree, although a great degree of confusion remains. Currently in the UK, young people over the age of 16 are legally allowed to provide informed consent for issues such as medical treatments, without parental agreement. Young people under the age of 16 are also legally allowed to provide informed consent provided they are deemed to be ‘competent’. It has been strongly argued that this principle applies within the realms of emotional support for young people such as SBC, as well as early intervention emotional-health initiatives of which Pupil Time to Talk may be an example (Daniels & Jenkins, 2000). However, this remains somewhat at odds with the parental/adult-centred ethos of educational institutions, and care must be taken by individuals/services basing their work with young people around the notion of competence as highlighted by Evans (1999).

Evans (1999) stresses the need for ‘active consent’ from parents for any school-based emotional health intervention proposed to take place with children and young people, even if this results in some individuals requiring intervention, losing out. He writes “while education is mandated in our society, mental health treatment is not”
(p. 174), and states that if school-based professionals adhere to a different professional standard to those working within community or clinic based settings they place themselves vulnerable to criticisms. Whilst there are clear arguments for the advancement of school-based emotional health initiatives, and an enthusiasm shown from various agencies to offer such services, it is clear that sensitive ethical issues, for example that of consent, requires further exploration by scientist-practitioners within the field to ensure that professionals and clients remain protected.

Issues relating to parental consent will not apply within the current research context, as Pupil Time to Talk is targeted at young people in Year 12 and 13, all 16 years of age or older. However, being knowledgably about the subject area will be invaluable in answering potentially difficult questions from school staff and parents who hold similar views to those of Evans (1999).

Before I go on to review the literature around the act of help-seeking (essentially the psychological act performed when accessing a drop-in service) and drop-in services specifically, I want to return to the sentiments expressed in Chapter 1, section 1.1 around the barriers to EP work possibly created/maintained by the current dominant way of working. Barriers which maybe making it difficult to meet children and young people’s participative and emotional health needs in particular, especially those of older adolescents. Through this, the argument for focusing exclusively on post-16 students in relation to the current study, is made clear. Research pertaining to children and young people’s experiences of accessing EP support through more traditional models of service delivery, such as assessments and consultation is systematically reviewed. The reader will also be introduced to research which suggests that drop-in models of EP service delivery are considered desirable by children and young people.

2.4 ACCESS TO EPSs AND PUPILS’ PERCEPTIONS OF ENGAGING WITH EPs

One of the most recent conceptualisation of the EP role comes from Fallon, Woods and Rooney (2010) who stated:

EPs are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of CYP [children and young people], psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment,
intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners (p.14).

This indicates much more than a narrow statutory role, catering for a minority of children and young people, and fits with Cameron’s (2006) belief that EPs have a wider contribution to offer, including promoting the ‘healthy emotional development’ of all children and young people (WAG, 2004), and supporting those who may be experiencing “short-term uspset or crises” (Norwich, 2000, p.6).

I made reference in Chapter 1, section 1.1 that the current consultation model of EPS delivery employed in LA 1, and widely throughout the profession, is not without its difficulties. Some of those difficulties in terms of ensuring equality of access to EPs are discussed in the next sections.

2.4.1 Equality of access to EPs?

It has been commented that an eternal dilemma faced by the profession is the question of who is the EPs’ primary client? Mackay (2002) summarised the ambiguity of this issue as follows:

Educational psychology is a service that one party (children, parents) receive (often whether they want it or not), usually requested for them by a second party (teachers or head teachers), but funded by a third party (education authorities)... (p. 246).

The lack of clarity has often resulted in situations of divided loyalties where different parties’ needs and demands conflict with one another (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

The notion of a power differential between the EPs’ main clients, with parents and school staff perceived to be the primary clients, may go someway to explaining the evident inequality that exists in access to the service. Notwithstanding EPSs requirement to cater for individuals aged between 0 and 19 years of age (DfEE, 2000), anecdotal evidence suggests that fewer requests for EP consultations are received on behalf of children and young people aged 15 and above (Local Authority 1 Audit, 2009). This is despite a historical recognition that older adolescents, especially those making the transition to sixth form experience many psychological challenges (Gwens, 1993).
A possible explanation accounting for this apparent reduced focus on older adolescents maybe governmental emphasis on Early Years work (Shannon and Posada, 2007); or the possibly limited historical role EPs have undertaken with older adolescents as evidenced by the limited number of such articles in *Educational Psychology in Practice*, one of the profession’s main journals, and as suggested by Mackay and Hellier (2009). This can be contrasted with other countries, where the emphasis of school psychologists work is with older pupils, with pupils themselves being the main sources of referral (Kikas, 2003).

The ONS (1999) identify that help is often sought for children and young people based on the level of ‘burden’ they cause others rather than on the impact experienced by the individual. It is therefore likely that help is sought for those displaying externalising behaviours much earlier than for those who internalize their difficulties. Such sentiments are supported by research findings (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford & Hall, 2002).

A report for the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT, 2006) on the Identification and Management of Pupils with Mental Health Difficulty acknowledge similar difficulties in terms of teachers failing to recognise pupils displaying more internalised emotional health difficulties as opposed to externalised difficulties. As adolescent females have been identified to be more likely to experience internalised difficulties such as anxiety and depression (Lewinsohn, Gotlib, Lewinsohn, Seeley & Allen, 1998), the NASUWT’s findings offer a further explanation for the gender imbalance in EPS referrals evidenced by numerous sources (Hill, 1994; Vardill, 1996; Vardill and Calvert, 2000; Rees, Farrell and Rees, 2003), and exemplifies some of the barriers created by current service delivery models and pathways.

### 2.4.2 Children and Young People’s perceptions of engaging with EPs and EPSs.

The author agrees with Baxter and Fredrickson (2005) that children and young people should be embraced as EPSs’ primary clients, with EPs working with children and young people as well as key adults to meet the desired seven core aims outlined in the Right to Action Agenda within Wales (WAG, 2004) and the Every Child Matters five outcomes in England (DfES, 2003). However, asserting children and young people to be the profession’s primary clients is not enough to ensure that the reported inequality in access to EPS’ is reduced, due to the current
access pathways inevitably maintaining the issues identified above. Radical changes will be required in terms of service delivery if the profession is to ensure that groups of children and young people within the 0-19 year population are not further disadvantaged in accessing EP support. This issue will become even more pertinent in parts of the UK, if the plans relating to implementing the ‘Education, Health and Care Plan’ from 0-25 years of age, as detailed in the Department of Education’s (2011) Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special education needs and disability, are realised.

Baxter and Frederickson (2005) identify that involving children and young people in designing and evaluating appropriate service delivery processes and pathways might be a way of contributing to the radical changes required so that they are viewed not just as primary “clients’ but primary ‘customers’ with all of the rights, expectations and choices that flow from this” (p. 89). Aston and Lambert (2010) suggest that EPs need to go further than tailor the present system in which they work to facilitate young people’s access to services and opportunities to be involved in decision-making, by assisting local authorities to re-think the systems in existence, changing attitudes and cultures.

Although an overview of the literature around pupil evaluations/perceptions of experiencing EP input formed part of my initial literature review, as the research project evolved, I returned to consider this area of literature comprehensively and systematically due to its evident relevance to the findings. The databases British Education Index, PSYCHINFO, Science Direct along with Google Scholar and internet search engines were used to search for information and the following key words and phrases were used:

- Educational Psychol* AND Primary Clients
- Pupil perception AND Educational Psychol*
- (Pupil or child or adolescent) AND Perception AND Psychology
- Pupil evaluation AND Educational Psychol*

Teacher perceptions of EPs has been the focus of international research (Watkins, Crosby & Pearson, 2001; Pérez-González, García-Ros & Gómez-Artiga, 2004; Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka & Benoit, 2005); and parental perceptions in relation to aspects of the role have also been explored (Squires, Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney & O’Connor, 2007; Jebbett, 2011). However, an evident gap exists in the
literature around children and young people’s perceptions of psychologists, and educational psychologists in particular. As perceptions of the role are likely to impact on children and young people’s willingness to engage with EPs, be it through a teacher/parent referral or through self-referral, this is certainly an area of research that needs to be explored in more detail by the profession in future.

The limited number of studies conducted to date, aiming to evaluate EPSs from the viewpoint of children and young people have helped focus attention on the problematic aspects of the current system of service delivery, and allowed creative ideas about alternative methods of service delivery to come to the fore. Woolfson and Harker (2002) used a focus group to consult with eight young people aged between 12 and 15 years of age, who had experienced recent involvements with one Scottish EPS. The authors used the service’s Performance Indicators as ‘prompts’ during the focus group, to gain young people’s views on the service received. Whilst some positive views of the EPS were gleaned, a number of concerns regarding aspects of the young people’s participation in the planning and referral to the particular EPS came to light during the focus group. Issues surrounding initial contact with the EP were most prominent, with pupils reporting experiences of being unaware that a request for consultation had been made on their behalf and being given no choice in whether they wanted a meeting to take place or not. Issues regarding formal feedback from their meeting with the EP were also discussed, including participants’ wish for written reports to be shared with them using accessible language. The study reports on the experiences of a very small sample of young people from only one local authority, with the authors failing to report their analysis of the focus group content in any detail. However, the findings do ring true and reflect my experiences in engaging with young people as a TEP working and undertaking work experience in three different local authorities, and are therefore worthy of consideration.

Woolfson, Harker, Lowe, Shields, Banks, Campbell and Ferguson (2006) conducted four focus groups with various groups of young people of secondary school age or above, to discuss their preferences around EP consultations. Some had existing knowledge of EPSs and had experience of EP involvement, others did not. All groups were encouraged to discuss the issues from a hypothetical standpoint through being presented with a scenario of a fictional young person experiencing difficulties at school. The groups were made up of the following participants:
Table 2.1: Participants included within the four focus groups in Woolfson et al.’s (2006) study.

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<th>Participants</th>
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<td>Group 1</td>
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<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>Group 3</td>
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<td>Group 4</td>
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It may be argued that the recruiting method may have lead to a biased cohort being selected, for example the young people in group two were selected by residential child care unit staff who felt they would be comfortable in, and have something to offer the focus group. Those in group four were members of the School Council. Questions must also be asked of the ethics employed by the researchers in gaining informed consent from the young people. Mention is given to the young people’s parents and relevant support staff providing consent prior to the focus groups taking place. However, the young people themselves seem to have only been given information and consent forms to complete “immediately prior to participation in the focus group” (p. 34). It is questionable whether young people, some with additional support needs would truly be able to provide informed consent without having time to digest the information provided and consider over time if they wanted to take part.

Woolfson et al. (2006) notes that all the participants coped well with discussing how a fictional character should be consulted, with many participants offering ideas based on their own personal experiences:

*Improvements for consultation centred mainly on giving children and young people more choice. They want to be fully informed and prepared for discussions about their needs, to decide who should be involved in the consultation, and to dictate their own level and method of involvement. It is also very important that the consultation has some tangible outcome, as many young people had experienced previous consultation to be tokenistic (p. 350).*
The findings seem to echo those of Woolfson and Harker, four years earlier which took place within the same local authority.

Weerasinghe (2009) conducted a similar study focusing on young people’s understanding of the EP role and how an EP might best support them. The study highlights that young people were unclear regarding EPs’ roles and responsibilities, and that their presence within schools was not ‘visible’ enough to allow a common understanding of their work to develop. The study was described during a talk by the researcher at a TEP conference in 2009, it has not been published to date and therefore detailed information regarding the methodology is not available.

Lubel and Greaves (2000) wrote about a research project trialling the use of a pupil-friendly leaflet regarding the work of EPs with primary aged pupils. This work had come about as a result of their awareness of prior findings by Armstrong et al., (1993). Armstrong et al. (1993) researched the role of children in the assessment of their SEN, and their perceptions of this process. The sample included 29 children aged between 5 and 16 years of age from three local authorities, all of whom had been referred for assessment due to emotional and behavioural difficulties. A member of the research team observed each aspect of the assessment by an EP, and subsequently ‘interviewed’ them about their experiences of the assessment process. A further 18 pupils who had been placed in off-site units for behavioural difficulties were also questioned retrospectively regarding their experiences of the assessment process. Limited information about the study’s methodology is included in the journal article.

Despite Armstrong et al.’s (1993) study being carried out nearly 10 years prior to that of Woolfson and Harker (2002), there were many similarities between the young people’s experiences of EP involvement:

Nearly all the children in our retrospective sample did remember being seen by a psychologist yet only three out of the 18 were able to give any account of what the psychologist’s role in the assessment had been (p.123).

Those who were able to demonstrate some knowledge of the EP’s role and why they had been seen by one, attributed the role largely to confirming negative connotations they held about themselves; “to help him (the psychologist) find out what’s wrong with me” and “I had to see him because of my temper tantrums. I used
to be a bit of a psycho” (p.123). Some of those pupils going through assessment at the time of the research articulated that they viewed the meeting with the psychologist as an extension of their respective schools’ power over them, rendering any opportunities provided by the psychologists to express their views, as worthless.

It would be of interest to identify if such issues remain a concern in countries whose EPSs (or their equivalent) play are more visible part in school life, for example in New South Wales, Australia where psychologists are based in host schools (Faulkner, 2007a), and where the psychologist to student ratio stands at between 1:1,500 to 1:2,000 nationwide (Faulkner, 2007b). A survey of Estonian pupils’ views of their school psychology services suggests that whilst the work of psychologists based in schools are valued higher than those working in centre-based services, pupils remained generally unclear as to what the role entailed (Kikas, 2003). Whilst it is not possible to draw too many parallels due to the vastly different roles played by EPs/School Psychologists in different countries, Kikas’ (2003) concluding remarks may be applicable to many:

knowledge influences people’s expectations and, through this, their satisfaction. This study also showed that those pupils who knew more about psychologists’ work, gave it a higher rating. Therefore, it seems necessary to explain the aims of school psychologists to different groups of people: pupils; teachers; administrators and parents. This is the work psychologists themselves can and have to do (p. 30).

In order to improve the service received, participants in Woolfson and Harker’s (2002) study identify two possible new directions for the EPS under consideration:

1. For all written reports to be discussed with the young person before being distributed, and for the young person to receive a personal copy of that report.
2. For the EPS to establish a self-referral drop-in facility in each school, allowing young people from the age of 13 years to seek EP support independently.

The pupils consulted commented on how an alternative method of service delivery in the form of a drop-in facility would ease access to the service and improve young
people’s ownership of access, “it would be your decision whether you want to see them [EP] or not” (Woolfson et al., 2008, p.90).

The pupils consulted in Weerasinghe’s (2009) also identify the usefulness of a drop-in facility and develop the idea of a ‘drop-in’ service further by discussing the possibility of EP consultation and support becoming ‘instant’ in the form of e-mails and texts. It may be argued that Woolfson and Harker’s (2002) findings are based on a very small sample of eight young people who took part in one focus group, and cannot therefore be regarded as a representative view of young people’s preferred method of service delivery. However, the fact that similar views are identified by those pupils participating in Weerasinghe’s (2009) study adds some weight to Woolfson and Harker’s findings, especially as both studies were conducted in two very different demographic areas. It therefore seems that systematically reviewing the literature around the use of drop-in services would be beneficial in terms of determining its usefulness as a possible alternative method of EP service delivery for pupils, and older adolescents in particular, who seem to be disadvantaged by the current systems.

Before I turn the reader’s attention to this body of literature, consideration will be given to the construct of help-seeking in adolescence and some of the psychological drivers behind such behaviour. After all, making use of ‘drop-in’ services is very dependent on such behaviour. This is an area that has been subject to international research interest, as such, despite its relevance to the current study, only an overview of the most pertinent research is provided.

**2.5 ADOLESCENT HELP-SEEKING**

Gilat, Ezer and Sagee (2010) helpfully reviewed the literature and defined ‘help-seeking’ as “an interaction with others, focusing on a specific problem or emotional pain aimed at alleviating distress by means of informal or formal sources of support” (p.206). It is considered an adaptive way of coping with normative and non-normative problems or distress, and can include seeking help from informal sources such as family and friends, as well as from formal sources such as doctors, teachers, psychologists and counsellors. It is thought that increased willingness to seek help is linked to increased psychological adjustment. Following an initial focus on adult help-seeking behaviours, research attention is now being paid to adolescent help-seeking with findings indicating similarities between adults and
adolescents regarding aspects of help-seeking behaviours (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Fallon & Bowles, 2001). There is some evidence to suggest that help-seeking differs in relation to gender, developmental changes, personal characteristics and culture. However, it may be argued that many discrepant findings and a tendency to study hypothetical attitudes as opposed to actual help-seeking behaviours negate researchers’ ability to provide a coherent picture of this phenomenon during adolescence. In fact, Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlick and Morrissey (1997) went as far as describing adolescent help-seeking as a “complicated and poorly understood behaviour” (p.638).

Females are generally reported to have a more positive attitude towards help-seeking in comparison to males, and tend to seek help more often (Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Fallon & Bowels, 2001; Gilat et al., 2010). This may be explained by the fact that help-seeking seems more consistent with Western stereotypes of women as being better able to express emotions and being in more need of having someone to lean on, where males are expected to be more autonomous. Adding support to this explanation are some research findings identifying reduced gender differences between adolescent participants from some Eastern and Middle-Eastern cultures (Grinstein-Weiss, Fishman & Eisikovits, 2005).

Older adolescents have generally been identified as being more likely than younger adolescents to seek help (Bolldero & Fallon, 1995). A difference in the sources of support utilised has been identified as a function of developmental changes also, with younger adolescents tending to turn to parents for help and older adolescents being more likely to turn to peers as a source of support, reflecting the transformations that take place within social relationships during adolescence (Gilat et al., 2010). Schonert-Reichl and Muller (1996) on the other hand, report that older adolescents are more likely to consult professional sources of support in comparison to younger adolescents. Boldero and Fallon (1995) argue that the literature around adolescents and formal help-seeking identify similar patterns to those of adults, that is that they infrequently ask for professionals' help and when they do, they are more likely to consult with professionals they perceive as being ‘experts’.

Personality characteristics such as locus of control, helplessness, openness about mental health, attachment styles along with social factors such as previous meetings with psychologists and having acquaintances working in the field of mental
health have also all been researched as factors influencing help-seeking behaviours (Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Wilson, Deane & Ciarrochi, 2005). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this literature review to critically consider in detail the vast and varied factors researched in relation to help-seeking, a handful of consistent findings, particularly in relation to barriers to help-seeking are of interest to any professional working in a caring capacity with young people:

- Help-seeking is reported to be inversely related to the degree of distress experienced, therefore it is likely that those most in need of psychological help are often the least likely to seek it (Boldeo & Fallon, 1995; Wilson et al., 2005; Raviv et al., 2009).
- Help-seeking can be inhibited by adolescents’ desire to deal with problems independently, asserting their self-reliance and autonomy (Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlick & Morrissey, 1997; Wilson et al., 2005; Gilat et al., 2010). What Raviv et al., (2009, p.494) termed a “self-relational bias” has also been noted to negatively affect adolescent willingness to seek help. Self-relational bias refers to an individuals’ tendency to minimise their own need for help in contrast to others experiencing similar difficulties, perceiving their ability to cope effectively as being better than that of others.
- Help-seeking can be inhibited by a fear that adolescent problems would not be taken seriously by adults (Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994), along with a fear that asking for help signifies a personal weakness and inability to cope independently (Gilat et al., 2010), thus threatening the individual’s self-esteem.
- Help-seeking can be inhibited by a fear that discussions would not be kept confidential, a fear that is exaggerated if no prior positive interpersonal relationship exists between help-seeker and professional (Gilat et al., 2010). A finding that is supported by Fox and Butler’s (2007) findings regarding barriers in accessing SBC (see section 2.3.5.3).

Gulliver, Griffiths and Christensen (2010) in their systematic review of the literature around young people’s perceived barriers and facilitators to mental health help seeking, emphasise some of the factors identified above as well as highlight other pertinent issues. The eligibility criteria employed is described in detail by the authors. Gulliver et al. (2010) carried out a meta-thematic analysis on the qualitative studies included in the review and “topics specified as barriers or facilitators to help-seeking in the papers were coded respectively under... different barrier and...
facilitator themes” (p. 4). None of the quantitative studies investigated facilitative factors, instead using survey methods to elicit participant views on barriers. Gulliver et al.’s, (2010) systematic review collated the most commonly endorsed barriers from those studies.

The quality of systematic reviews are constrained by the methodological quality of the primary studies included. One limitation of Gulliver’s et al.’s (2010) review is the fact that the reliability and validity of the primary studies are not made explicit to the reader. Another limitation, characteristic of all systematic reviews is that the search strategy employed may not have captured all relevant studies; only three data bases were searched which limits the number of accessible journals, and the search terminology may not have been broad enough to capture all relevant articles.

The most prominent barriers and facilitators identified in Gulliver et al.’s (2010) systematic review of the qualitative and quantitative literature are provided in table 2.2:
Table 2.2: Themes identified by Gulliver et al. (2010) through a systematic review of the literature in relation to young people’s perception of the barriers and facilitators to help-seeking for mental health problems.

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Stigma was the most prominent help-seeking barrier found in Gulliver et al.’s (2010) review. Link and Phelan (2001) define stigma as existing when “elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows them” (p. 377). Gulliver et al.’s (2010) findings add weight to the “substantial amount of research that has been done on stigma and related issues in different health fields’ and its ‘major impact on public health interventions” (Heijnders & Van der Meij, 2006, p. 353). Of particular relevance to the current study, considering its setting, is Gulliver et al.’s (2010) statement.
that all three studies focusing on rural populations mentioned a high rate of barriers related to stigma, which is consistent with previous findings that perceived stigma may affect help-seeking more in rural than urban residing adults (p. 5).

Fallon and Bowles (2001) identify that educational settings may act as important environments to help rectify some of the belief systems behind some of the identified barriers to help-seeking during adolescence, for example the perceived and self-stigmatising attitudes described by Gulliver et al. (2010). Fallon and Bowles (2001) state that

not only is there a need for the provision of resources and programmes [in educational institutions], but the culture and climate must also be such that it is acceptable to make use of such resources (p. 245).

It will be interesting to determine with time whether universal and targeted psychoeducation programmes, such as PATHS and Seasons for Growth (discussed in section 2.3.5.1), positively influence some of the adolescent help-seeking barriers identified.

Raviv et al., (2009) also highlight the important role that peers may play in directing individuals towards appropriate professional support “given that adolescents are willing to refer friends to formal help sources” (p. 497). Such comments emphasise the value of ensuring that all young people are aware of the sources of support available to them and have a direct route for accessing that support. Zucker (2010) highlights that misunderstandings and a lack of knowledge about the role of EPs as described in section 2.4 above, “may be problematic in that not being accurately informed of the psychologists’ roles may impact on the consumers appropriate seeking of services and their use of this valued profession” (p.1).

It may be argued that psychological theories of motivation are closely related to the construct of help-seeking, with an individual’s motivation to seek support being behind some of the main facilitators or barriers in doing so. As such, a brief overview of the literature surrounding theories of motivation and self-determination may help shed further light on help-seeking behaviours and the skills required to directly access support services during adolescence.
2.5.1 Theories of Motivation and Self-Determination.

The study of motivation has been a major force within psychological research, a construct that Ryan and Deci (2000) describe as being “at the core of biological, cognitive and social regulation” (p. 69). Motivation is “the study of the determinants of thought and action – it addresses why behaviour is initiated, persists and stops as well as what choices are made” (Weiner, 1992, p.17). Motivation is said to be either intrinsic or extrinsic. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation reflects an innate human tendency to seek out new challenges; show interest in learning and exploring, and become active agents in reaching personal goals. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand “refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome and, thus, contrasts with intrinsic motivation” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71); as the term suggests the influence operates from outside the individual.

A wealth of research evidence supports the assertion that action fuelled by intrinsic motivation as opposed to action driven by externally controlled motivation results in: more interest, excitement, and confidence, which in turn is manifest both as enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity, and as heightened vitality, self-esteem, and general well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69).

Taken at face value, such findings have potentially important implications when considering the role of the EP in working directly with children and young people, who as noted by Mackay (2002) usually receive EP services upon the request of a third party.

These two concepts alone offer a very black and white perspective on behaviour, not taking into account actions that may not easily fit with either of the motivation ‘poles’. Ryan and Deci (2000) offer a more rounded account of motivation based on a “Self-Determination continuum”, where intrinsic motivation lies at one extreme of the continuum, amotivation at the other (referring to a complete lack of intention to act, resulting from not valuing an activity, feeling incompetent to do it, or a belief that a desired outcome is unlikely to be gained). Extrinsic motivation lies in between, reflecting differing degrees of self-determined behaviour. Self-determination can be described as individuals’ desire to experience ‘choice’ in instigating and directing their own behaviour, as opposed to their behaviour being largely ‘controlled’ by social and environmental factors (Deci & Ryan, 1985).
Ryan and Deci (2000) identify three psychological needs that are required for optimum self-determined, self-motivated behaviour to be initiated – the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness.

2.5.1.1 Competence.
Adolescent competence has been studied from many angles. Emphasis has been placed on the study of adolescent competence in relation to criminal responsibility (Scott, Reppucci & Woolard, 1995), risky behaviours (Kuther, 2000), management of health conditions and family functioning. Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins (2003) describe how the need for competence is met in an individual when “one feels effective at causing desirable and preventing undesirable outcomes (internal locus of control)” (p. 9).

Although written over twenty years ago, Mann, Harmoni and Power’s (1989) article provides the reader with a broad overview of competent decision-making in adolescence and their article has arguably influenced future research in the field. Mann et al. (1989) argue that some of the decisions taken during adolescence can have long-term consequences that shape individuals’ lives, and as such competence in decision-making is an essential skill to develop. They identified nine cognitive indicators of competence and reviewed the literature around the prominence/development of each during adolescence. Although the evidence-base is described as “sparse and incomplete” (p.267), the authors summarise their findings by stating that “greater competence is associated with late adolescence and in those areas where adolescents have most experience” (p. 271). The research reviewed identified a growth in competence at around age 15 years in particular, perhaps adding weight to the notion of ‘Gillick’ competence (see section 2.3.6.2). This provides further rationale for focusing on post-16 year old pupils in the research proposed.

Mann et al. (1989) go on to describe some of the “social, psychological and legal constraints” (p.272) placed upon adolescents’ competent decision-making capacity. Factors such as peer pressure and familial influence, along with low confidence and limited opportunity to engage in meaningful, important decision-making are discussed as possible constraints. As the article was written over twenty years ago, it would be of interest to identify if the latter factors would continue to be considered possible constraints in competent decision-making today considering the current rights and participation agenda.
2.5.1.2 Autonomy.

Autonomy development may be considered one of the principal challenges of adolescence (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991). Steinberg (1999) states that autonomy “...means thinking, feeling, and making moral decisions that are truly your own rather than following along with what others believe” (p. 276).

It may be said that autonomy development depends both on changes within the individual, for example cognitive and biological changes, and changes within the environment for example changes in intrapersonal relationships, role within the family or even changes in family composition. Theories of autonomy development differ in relation to whether more emphasis is placed on the role of the individual or on the role of social context. Truly autonomous functioning is achieved when the individual is able to maintain the relationship with social partners, for example parents, whilst self-regulating their actions and becoming increasingly independent (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). The available research consistently links ‘healthy’ adolescent development of autonomy with the quality of adolescent parental attachment and parenting styles (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991; McElhaney & Allen, 2001). Theories of autonomy development that emphasise its role in motivational constructs indicate that autonomy is very much dependent on a sense of agency, which combines both cognitive and behavioural autonomy (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003).

2.5.1.3 Relatedness.

Deci and Ryan (2000) describe relatedness as “the desire to feel connected to others – to love and care, and to be loved and cared for” (p. 231), and although it is not considered as powerful as autonomy and competence in eliciting intrinsic motivation to act, is still has a role to play in its maintenance. Deci and Ryan (2000) draw upon the theory of attachment to highlight relatedness’ role in encouraging intrinsic motivation. In this context, intrinsic motivation is seen as an infants’ willingness to explore the world around them, and advocates of attachment theory suggest that exploration is more prominent and robust in infants who are considered securely attached to a primary caregiver. Self-determination Theory expands on such views by proposing that intrinsic motivation will be more likely to flourish in contexts where a sense of security and relatedness perpetuates, at any stage of life, be it in relation to primary care-giver, a teacher or any other individuals of positive emotional significance.
Developing competency and autonomy is deemed one of the challenges of adolescence (Sessa & Steniberg, 1991); however, to do so successfully does not necessitate a severing of "childish ties to parental figures", but rather their development depends upon "continuing, but transformed attachments and connections to others (especially care givers)", (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003, p. 10-11) – essentially the changing sense of relatedness that also takes place during adolescence.

2.5.2 Pupil Time to Talk and Self-Determination.

It is argued that Pupil Time to Talk, as a direct method of service delivery, promotes each of these psychological needs. The existence of such a service may help instil a feeling of competence in young people. It means that they are being viewed as individuals who have the capacity to make judgements about the personal usefulness of a service and their ability to achieve a positive outcome from using the service, autonomous of any intervention from parents/teachers. Relatedness encapsulates the feeling that significant others are genuinely interested in promoting the individual's well-being. The possible negative effect of pupils not having a prior relationship with the EP hosting Pupil Time to Talk is overcome by the fact that the drop-in service takes place within the secure base of the school environment, promoted by school staff who pupils potentially know from experience are genuinely interested in them as individuals.
Figure 2.2: Ryan and Deci’s (2000, p. 72) Self-Determination Continuum of Motivation.

Whilst choosing to access Pupil Time to Talk remains an extrinsically motivated action, in that use of the service will be encouraged and promoted by others, it is argued that the action is fully self-determined by the pupil, reaching the stage of integrated regulation. “Action characterized by integrated motivation share many qualities with intrinsic motivation” (p. 73) - a positive implication when considering the benefits already noted above. Ryan and Deci (2000) elaborate by mentioning findings in relation to education -

- showing that more autonomous extrinsic motivation was associated with more engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991), better performance (Miscandino, 1996), lower drop-out (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992), higher quality learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987)…among other outcomes (p.73).

Many of the findings referenced have potentially positive implications in the context of outcomes for those making use of a drop-in service.

It may be said that the direct nature of drop-in services encourages personal choice and psychological empowerment in individuals, which cannot be as easily achieved by third party referral-based methods of service delivery. It is anticipated that by such support-seeking behaviour reaching the stage of integrated regulation during adolescence that such behaviours may continue into adulthood.

At this point in the literature review, having provided socio-legislative, theoretical and empirical information supporting the notion of developing more direct methods for young people to access EPs, I will now guide the reader through the literature pertaining to drop-in models of service delivery, arguably the most relevant area of the literature in relation to the proposed research project. I will focus on drop-in services operating within educational context in particular, as well as EPs’ current use of this service delivery model.

2.6 ‘DROP-IN’ PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

A systematic review of the literature around adolescent use of ‘drop-in’ service delivery models was carried out. The databases British Education Index, PSYCHINFO, Psychology: A SAGE Full-Text collection, Science Direct along with Google Scholar and internet search engines were used to search for information and the following key words and phrases were used using the Boolean operator ‘AND’:

- Drop-in services


- Direct Access/Drop-in AND Psychol* services
- Adolesc* AND Drop-in service
- School AND Drop-in service
- Education Psychol* AND Drop-in or Direct Access

“The drop-in, which has its origins in the walk-in surgery model of the GP practice, allows people to be seen promptly, without prior appointment, generally on the same day” (Jefferies, 2003, p.174). Jefferies’ (2003) description emphasises the direct nature of this type of service delivery.

2.6.1 Health-Based ‘Drop-Ins’.

Drop-in services have been widely used and researched within health contexts, although the services offered under the term have arguably been diverse in nature, as well as variably resourced and funded (Truman, Rankin, Backett-Milburn & Platt, 2007). A limited body of evidence has been published specifically discussing the use of health drop-in services with school populations. In a survey of common practice amongst Scottish school nurses ‘Drop-Ins’ are identified as the most widespread activity, and are “highly valued” when held regularly in or near secondary schools (Spratt, Philip, Shucksmith, Kiger & Gair, 2010, p. 136). The authors write that

although they took different formats, their distinguishing feature was that young people themselves made the choice whether and when to attend.

Whilst not specifically designated as a mental health service, a significant proportion of issues presenting at the clinic were reported to include a mental health component (p.136).

Ingram and Salmon (2007) explored young people’s experiences of a nurse led sexual health drop-in and stated that “traditional models of service delivery in the UK do not seem to meet the needs of young people in terms of availability, accessibility or acceptability” (p. 306) and that they require services that are specifically tailored for them. It may be said that Ingram and Salmon’s (2007) finding that “the drop-in nature of the clinic was essential” (p.313), for those making use of the service, can be explained by theories of motivation and self-determination described above.
Ingram and Salmon’s outlook echoes sentiments expressed thirty years ago by Nichtern (1978) in his discussion regarding psychological ‘walk-in clinics’ for young people. He said that adolescence:

*is a period in life when impulse and impulsive action dominate behaviour... a psychological period characterized by “now”. For these and other reasons adolescents often require their own clinical services, if these services are to be meaningful and effective at all* (p. 55).

He goes on to provide anecdotal evidence of the benefits of immediate interventions for young people, indicating that the failure of some interventions may be as a direct result of their failure to recognise the ‘urgency’ for support at this age.

Kay, Morgan, Tripp, Davies and Sykes (2006) evaluated a School Nurse drop-in service and describe it as “one of the most suitable and age-appropriate routes for young people to access the services of the school nurse” (p. 237). This relatively large cross-sectional study offers valuable insight to the significant mechanisms at play in determining young people’s use of such a service.

The authors collected three strands of quantitative data for the research from 11 secondary schools in South East London, where a school nurse drop-in service was available. Two pre-piloted questionnaires were administered. The first, a general questionnaire, was administered to a ten percent sample of each school’s population from years 8, 10, an 11 (n= 590); the second questionnaire was provided to all adolescent users of the eleven school-nurse drop-in clinics over a six month time frame (n=64, of which 86% were female pupils). The general questionnaire was designed to gain information about pupils’ health concerns, knowledge and experience of existing health services, and knowledge and views on the school nurse drop-in service. The questionnaire aimed at service users was designed to glean their views and experience of the drop-in service. The third data set came from the Primary Care Trust’s school nurse drop-in data base, designed to record pupils’ reasons for attendance. The data base for the 11 secondary schools participating in the study over an 11 month period was made available.

The results of the general questionnaire in Kay et al.’s, (2006) study indicates that about 10% of pupils surveyed had used the drop-in services in question. Pupils were asked to mark from a list of 18 options given to say why they had visited the nurse. Fifty-eight percent gave multiple reasons. Findings suggest that over half
(55%) of the presenting pupils’ main concerns related to emotional well-being (encompassing issues with school work, bullying, friendships, relationships, home issues, depression, anxiety and self-harm); this was consistent across gender and year groups. Information from the drop-in data base confirms that ‘interpersonal issues’ (50%) and ‘emotional well-being’ (42%) were the most common groupings nurses used to record the reason for a pupil’s attendance. These far outweighed issues relating to physical health or sexual health, which are commonly conceived as being the main rationale for providing school nurse-led drop-in services.

In identifying key factors that may encourage their use of the drop-in services, pupils highlighted issues such as having consistent knowledge regarding when and where the drop-in is to be held, quality of drop-in facilitator’s inter-personal skills, and explicit understanding of the confidentiality level offered. A further strand of the same research project is reported by Allen (2004), exploring the views of the school nurses running the drop-in services. Of interest, in relation to the Pupil Time to Talk project, is the participating nurses’ identification of the importance of the service being supported and endorsed by school staff, with the venture being recognised as part of a wider school policy. Previous studies looking at the relationships between health clinics and schools also acknowledge the importance of this factor (Baraitser, Dolan and Cowley, 2003), and echo the facilitating mechanisms identified in SBC research in section 2.3.5.3.

It may be argued that the issues pupils presented with in Kay et al.’s, (2006) study are well within an EPs’ ‘core’ remit (Department for Education and Employment, 2000). Kay et al., (2006) acknowledge that the service was most frequently attended by females, perhaps reflecting the notion that females are generally more likely to display help-seeking behaviour in comparison to males (Raviv et al., 2009). It is of interest that both pupils who had and had not made use of the drop-in service described in Kay et al’s (2006) study, identify some concerns and confusion regarding the limits of confidentiality, reflecting some of the findings regarding pupil views of SBC (see section 2.3.5.3). Around a third of pupils who had not yet made use of the service identify that confidentiality (lack of) may be an issue that would prevent them from making use of the drop-in. However, it is reassuring to note that some pupils use the drop-in on multiple occasions, indicating that “confidence in accessing the service may be gained once the service has been used” (p.243).
Baraitser et al., (2003) identify that some pupils may be tempted to initially ‘test’ the service on offer, to perhaps alleviate potential concerns around confidentiality.

Kay et al., (2006) have gone to some lengths to try and ensure that the service users’ questionnaire findings are not unduly impacted by the retrospective nature of the reporting by including information from the school nurse data base. However, the information recorded on that data base covers a longer time period than the questionnaire administration (11 months and six months respectively). It may also be argued that the relatively broad categorisation keys adopted by the data base (e.g. ‘general matters’ and ‘intrapersonal matters’) restricts the usefulness of the information it contains and the ability to compare the retrospective information provided by the young people and the school nurse recorded information about a drop-in session. The use of such broad categories may also have led to greater subjectivity in the nurses’ reporting of reasons for pupil attendance.

Kay et al.’s, (2006) desire to gain quantitative information, from their relatively large sample of young people from one primary care trust area, on the issue of school based, school nurse-led drop-in services, is understandable in terms of the need to demonstrate objective facts and figures to commissioners of services. However, more insightful information regarding young people’s reasoning for attending health-based drop-in services, and perceptions of acceptable and accessible ways to access such services could have been collected by adopting a mixed-methods approach, with qualitative information being gathered alongside the quantitative.

It is significant that one of the main findings by a recent study by the British Youth Council (2011) commissioned by the Department of Health, into children and young people’s views of School Nurse services and how to develop it, is that young people want to be able to directly access their school nurse through text, email or a phone call, rather than having to go through a teacher/school staff member. Such findings echo those of Weerasinghe’s (2009) pupil evaluation of an EPS; it therefore seems likely that new ways of working and engaging with young people is desired across different professions, and that innovative, exploratory projects, such as the one proposed, are required to trial such ideas.
2.6.2 Pastoral Care/Counselling based Drop-in Services in post-16 education.

The literature around pastoral care and counselling provisions in post-16, further and higher education establishments make references to the use of ‘drop-in’ methods of service delivery. Nearly twenty years ago Gwens (1993) evaluated what was termed an ‘Open Door Student Support System’ (OD) operating within a tertiary college with an excess of 600 16 to 19 year old pupils in a suburban area. The service was provided by ten members of the college staff who volunteered to make supportive personal contact available in an organised fashion to students experiencing confusion or stress with regard to aspects of school and personal life... the scheme thus functions for the students on a ‘drop-in’ basis, dictated by their needs and convenience (p. 13).

The college designated a room for the service and a member of staff was available there throughout each teaching day for students to approach.

Qualitative data was gathered in two ways; a questionnaire was administered to all ten staff participating in OD along with a follow-up interview. The questionnaire was focused on establishing the number of OD contacts staff received and what the presenting problems tended to be, with the interviews designed to probe participants’ attitude towards aspects of the project. Findings suggested that up to 366 OD contacts with students had taken place during the previous year. Presenting problems, similarly to the findings within the health literature discussed above, ranged from curriculum difficulties, to difficulties of a more personal nature (relationships, home issues, and emotional health issues such as anxiety and depression).

Interesting perceptions were elicited from the interviews with the OD volunteers. In terms of their motivation to host such a drop-in service, was the realisation that the personal tutor system in place within the college did not always provide students with adequate and appropriate opportunities to communicate personal difficulties for various reasons. In discussing the perceived importance of the service from the institutions’ view point, a general recognition prevailed that “the visible message that the college care enough about individuals to maintain the scheme was seen as critical in staff-student relations” (p. 15). The barriers of having a dual role as teachers on the one hand, and as ‘OD Counsellors’ on the other was evident, with volunteers finding the balance between “the counsellor’s responsibility to the
individual student-client, and the teachers’ responsibility to the institution” (p.17),
hard to achieve. This may be an argument for such services to be hosted by outside
agencies.

Although issues of interest in relation to the current research project are raised
within this historical study, the methodological design of this study is not at all clear.
It was unclear what the OD service aimed to be, alternately being described as
predominately a ‘listening’ service to being described as ‘counselling’, despite no
member of the volunteer service having qualifications in this area. What constituted
as an approach to the OD service as opposed to approaching the volunteers in
relation to their wider roles within the college was not made explicit, no mention of
formal record-keeping in relation to OD sessions was made, and no mention was
made of how the qualitative data collected was analysed. As a result, limited
generalisation can be made to other pastoral care/counselling based drop-in service
operating within educational settings.

A theoretical journal article written a decade after Gwen’s (1993), suggests that a
drop-in model of service delivery remains prominent and “widely-practised” within
further and higher education counselling services and that “the adoption of the drop-
in seems to have taken place largely unnoticed and by default”, (Jefferies, 2003, p.
174). Jefferies (2003) makes it clear from the outset that her article takes up a “one-
sided position” against the wide-spread application of drop-in services within
counselling and uses three case vignettes to highlight her concerns. She argues
that ‘drop-in’ sessions run counter to all the established criteria required of the initial
pre-counselling assessment period, risking the standard of any subsequent clinical
work. Jefferies (2003) goes on to identify further issues arising from a ‘drop-in’
model of service delivery that potentially jeopardises the counsellors ability to safely
manage specific concepts such as emotional containment, and in psychodynamic
counselling, concepts such as transference and counter-transference in particular.

Whilst Jefferies (2003) acknowledges that drop-in services do have some benefits in
terms of helping to support potentially long service waiting lists, monitoring risks and
fast-tracking those in need of immediate support. She also acknowledges that the
existence of such services helps alleviate potential staff anxieties in being able to
adequately support vulnerable students. However, Jefferies (2003) believes that
ultimately, ‘drop-in’ counselling services are more favourable to the institution they
operate within, adding to the list of student support services, helping to meet performance indicators, rather than any potential clients of such a service. She argues that from a counselling perspective “a much fuller debate on the largely unexamined practice of the drop-in is called for” (p. 174).

### 2.6.3 EP ‘Drop-Ins’.

Research pertaining to the use of a ‘drop-in’ model of service delivery from an EP perspective is few and far between. Postings on EPNET (an internet based forum for professionals working in the field of Educational Psychology throughout the UK and elsewhere) suggest that the use of a ‘drop-in’ model of service delivery for parents is fairly widespread; however, published empirical investigations into such practices are limited.

Booth (2009) provides a detailed account of implementing and running an EP drop-in service for parents within a Children’s Centre context. The doctoral research project, set in a Children’s Centre in North East England, saw the author and her EP colleagues set up a drop-in service that ran intermittently over a two year period, which approximately forty parents and carers attended.

An Action Research design was used to reflect the desire to implement change within a real-life setting. Over the course of three action research cycles employing planning, acting, observing and reflecting, the drop-in evolved from one where the EP waited for parents to attend the designated drop-in room, to one where the EP attended the groups run by the Children’s Centre staff. This resulted in an increased service uptake.

Although this particular piece of research was carried out over a time period of two years, a much longer time period than will be afforded to the research proposed here, it provides a useful insight in to factors that may be pertinent to the planning and implementation of a pupil drop-in. Similarly to what was been asserted in the current project, Booth (2009) identifies that a drop-in facility may meet the needs of those who are likely to “fall through the net” (p.171), – individuals and families that may not meet the access criteria and thresholds of other services, but who may still benefit from support.
Booth (2009) offers numerous insights into the factors perceived as facilitating the success of the drop-in, including the psychological model adopted having to fit the brief nature of a ‘drop-in’ contact, and the need for the EP to be very clear regarding the structure and limits of the sessions offered. Booth (2009) adopted a Solution-Focused psychological model (Ajmal & Rees, 2001). It was proposed that the Pupil Time to Talk sessions would also fully adopt solution-focus approaches it as its guiding psychological model, as advocated by Booth, (2009), and as used by the Parental Time to Talk service (see secion 1.3).

Another useful insight offered by Booth to colleagues thinking of offering a drop-in method of service delivery, is the acknowledgment that at times the EP may feel overwhelmed by the range of issues that might arise. It is as useful to know what facilitated the process, as it is to know to what were the potentially negative aspects of implementing the service, normalising any anxieties that may be experienced by future researchers/practitioners.

One possible limitation of Booth’s study is the fact that only parents who actually made use of the EP drop-in are recruited as participants in the action research. It may be argued that a better understanding of how an EP run drop-in service may be used within a Children’s Centre could be ascertained by eliciting the views of all parents making use of the centre. Information as to why some parents had not accessed the service could be as useful as information as to what facilitated its use.

Whilst Booth’s single case study approach suited the action research design and allowed her to gain a deeper insight into the factors at play in establishing the EP drop-in within that Children’s Centre context, it may be argued that this limits the research’s relevance to other settings to some degree. However, Booth (2009) does provide strong arguments as to the research’s high level of sustainability, democratic validity and catalytic validity (p. 194), and these concepts’ role as plausible alternatives to generalisability.

Jebbett (2011) also carried out a doctoral research project on an established EPS parental drop-in service running within one Children’s Centre in the West Midlands. The focus of the research was what parents wanted from direct access to an EP within a Children’s Centre. To achieve an understanding of this issue, semi-structured interviews, aided by sort-card activities, were carried out with eleven
parents attending the Centre, and the data was subsequently analysed by thematic analysis.

Themes identified included parental wish for EP support at a community and personal level (relating to a range of difficulties with their children for example behaviour, emotional development). A general consensus regarding such difficulties being a result of parenting skills prevailed, leading to parents expressing feelings of shame and embarrassment. They viewed EPs as being appropriate professionals to help build confidence in their parenting skills, offer advice, information and direction in relation to such difficulties. Parents believed that EPs knowledge and training could be well utilized to offer them a unique perspective on their situation and a better understanding of their child.

However, of great concern, and arguably the finding most relevant to the proposed project, was Jebbett’s (2011) realisation that parents required a great deal of unanticipated support to be able to offer any views regarding what they would like from an opportunity to meet with an EP. This was because they possessed little knowledge about the role, which subsequently acted as a barrier to them having an insight into what they potentially want to approach an EP for, and in actually accessing services provided by an EP. A general theme of viewing EPs as only dealing with very serious/psychiatric difficulties was identified, leading to parents reporting a level of stigma attached to seeking or receiving support from a psychologist. This was then linked to a sub-theme of parents experiencing negative feelings in relation to support from an EP. A general sense of EPs needing to do more to publicise their role was identified “to ensure that parents were aware of the ‘subtle’ approach [EPs] they can offer” (p. 102). A parental extract captures this concept:

*Parent: ‘It is not all about if my child’s got difficulties, psychology in the brain and what not. Sometimes it is also just about having a chat with somebody and making them feel better. So yes, just put more information out there really to reduce fear’* (p.102).

Jebbett’s findings are based on a very small sample of parents attending one Children’s Centre in England. A further limitation is the fact that the researcher also had to use a script of information prior to the majority of interviews, in addition to the planned sort-card activity, to orient the parents with some information about the EP
role. This jeopardises the study’s claim of adopting a pure ‘bottom-up’ approach to researching parental views of what they want from direct access to an EP. However, this does not detract from the theme identified in relation to the stigmatising view held of EPs and psychologists in general. Further research is required to investigate whether such a view is an anomaly contained to this sample only, along with research into whether young people are also socialised to hold similar outlooks on psychologists. Should this be the case, it would have implications for the current study.

2.6.4 EP ‘Drop-ins’ for pupils.

Published literature in relation to Targeted Mental Health in Schools programmes in England, often led by EPs and Clinical Psychologists alike, suggest that pupil ‘drop-ins’ have been implemented (for example see Larkin, 2010/2011; Moore, 2011). However no research specifically in relation to their use in these contexts was found.

The WAG’s Thinking Positively: Emotional Health and Well-Being in schools and Early Years settings (2010) identified a ‘drop-in’ initiative run jointly by Torfaen Educational Psychology Services and the local Primary Mental Health Team as an example of good practice in engaging young people. ‘Drop-in’ sessions were held during lunch times at selected secondary schools, and it was claimed that

> most pupils attend after seeing posters placed around the school, although school staff also encourage attendance. In most cases, attendance at the drop-in session is a single event for a pupil to discuss a current concern. In some cases this may be the first step to seeking support from other services, (p.39).

Further information regarding this initiative is not provided in the report and no empirical evaluation of the project was found within the literature.

A recent post on EPNET (Jackson, 2010) queried the prominence of young people having direct access to EPs, and identified an interest in setting up a ‘drop-in’ service for pupils within a local authority. Such postings may suggest a growing interest in direct models of service delivery amongst EPs as recognition of the constraints of current methods of working in relation to adolescents in particular grow. It is likely that many projects of this nature are already taking place in various LAs in the UK, however, there is a clear gap in the research literature around the implementation and subsequent evaluation of such initiatives, including the
psychological factors accountable for making ‘drop-in’ services ‘appropriate’ for adolescent in particular. This thesis aims to address this gap by working jointly with secondary school staff in implementing and evaluating a Pupil Time to Talk service.

It was envisaged that Pupil Time to Talk would be able to offer early help to young people, without the need for a second party referral, benefitting from having minimal or no waiting lists. Due to its ‘drop-in’ characteristic, Time to Talk might have been able to support young people who did not necessarily reach criteria to access SBC/CAMHS. Conversely Pupil Time to Talk might have been able to signpost/refer young people deemed to require more support than the brief psychological/therapeutic intervention offered by Time to Talk.

Establishing a service such as Pupil Time to Talk might have also supported the EPS's commitment towards pupil participation, an increasingly important legislative drive (Fielding, 2001; Daniels & Jenkins, 2000; Children’s Act, 2004; Cheminais, 2008). It was envisaged that creating opportunities for pupils to directly access educational psychology support could assert some of the theoretical motivators behind the promotion of young people’s participation, such as benefitting pupils’ well-being and personal development, as well as improving service outcomes (Bragg, 2007).

It may be argued that Pupil Time to Talk is comparable to therapeutic initiatives that are already well-established in most Welsh secondary schools, initiatives that are already found to be effective in supporting young people, for example SBC services (Fox & Butler, 2009) as discussed in section 2.3.5.3. However, by offering an alternative way for the EPs to engage with young people on their own terms, it aimed to complement rather than compete with such services as described clearly in Chapter 1, section 1.3.1.

Thus far I have guided the reader through areas of the literature that provide a background context to establishing an EP ‘drop-in’ service for year 12 and 13 pupils, detailing the rationale and presumed need for direct methods of accessing EPs in particular, as well as drawing attention to the related psychological concepts of ‘help-seeking and taking self-determined action. This penultimate section of the literature review will provide an overview of organisational change literature. After all socio-legislative pressures and the implementation of new initiatives and directions ultimately require the organisations involved to adapt and change to positively
accommodate the changes taking place if they are to evolve and be considered successful.

2.7 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The literature in relation to change management is extensive and continues to expand. It encompasses change within organisations from large business corporations, change within the health and education systems, to personal/individual change needs (Elrod & Tippett, 2002). The wealth of research available regarding organisational change and development reflects the common consensus amongst academics and practitioners alike that organisations are facing “unprecedented levels of change” (Burnes, 2005, p. 73) within the modern world. Yet despite this focus on bringing about organisational change, the ability to do so successfully in practice remains a difficult task, with studies reporting high failure rates (Styhre, 2002; Burnes, 2005; Todnem, 2005).

Change can be characterised in different ways including, rate of occurrence, scale and how it comes about (Todnem, 2005). The literature reviewed for the purpose of the current study concentrates on approaches focusing on how change comes about within organisations. A critical appraisal of Kurt Lewin’s Planned Approach to Change will be provided, due to its relevance to the methodological decisions taken in relation to the current study. Planned approaches to change focus on the processes that needs to take place to bring about change - the importance of understanding the varying states that an organisation will have to move through to achieve its desired state of being.

2.7.1 Lewin and his Planned Approach to Change Model.

The psychologist Kurt Lewin is considered an influential figure within organisational change. He emphasises that individuals’ perceptions, feelings and subsequently their actions are very much the product of the group to which they belong, and therefore any planned change would be more effective if aimed at the group level (Smith, 2001; Burnes, 2004; Burnes, 2004a). Lewin advocates a ‘Planned’ approach to change with four inter-linked and robust elements. Whilst those four elements – Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research and the 3-Step model of change, have since been discussed within the literature as comprising separate entities within Lewin’s work, he very much saw them as a
unified whole with each element supporting and reinforcing the others and all of them necessary to understand and bring about Planned change, whether it be at the level of the individual, group, organization or even society (Burnes, 2004, p. 981).

Each element will be discussed briefly, before the criticisms aimed at Lewin’s framework for planned change is discussed.

### 2.7.1.1 Field Theory.

This element attempts to understand group behaviour by getting to grips with the environment in which the behaviour takes place (Back, 1992). Individuals’ behaviour therefore stems directly from the group environment, or ‘field’ as Lewin described. Lewin went on to hypothesise that certain forces or conditions within the environment supported the maintenance of the groups’ situation – the ‘status quo’ so to speak, and therefore any changes in the groups’ behaviour must stem from changes within the forces or conditions operating within the field (Burnes, 2004; Burnes, 2004a). However, far from viewing environments as a constant, where relatively little change takes place, Lewin believed that systems were in a permanent state of ‘quasi-stationary equilibrium’, that is, systems are forever changing as a result of the continuing fluctuating forces at play, but that more often than not equilibrium is maintained within the system.

Lewin postulates that forces or conditions in place would require weakening or strengthening in order to elicit meaningful change within the field – ‘disequilibrium’ (Schein, 1988). Generally the process of such change was conceptualised as a relatively slow process, unless certain conditions, such as personal, organisational or societal crisis, forces a shift in the field equilibrium, making the status quo redundant, ensuring that new, more viable patterns of behaviours emerge.

### 2.7.1.2 Group Dynamics.

Closely related to Field Theory, Lewin coined the term ‘group dynamics’, a term that is widely used and understood to this day, to emphasise the role of the group in shaping its members’ behaviours when faced with the forces that operate within their environment. Lewin theorised that it is unproductive to focus on changing the perceptions and behaviours of the individual independently as they will be
constrained to some degree by group pressure to conform to the norms and expectations set. Change processes should therefore focus on the group level to ensure success.

However, Lewin was not satisfied that better understanding of group dynamics and the environment within which they operate would alone lead to change; group members also required a model or a process by which they could plan and execute changes in their behaviour should they desire. This was the reasoning behind Lewin’s development of Action Research and 3-Step Model of Change (Burnes, 2004).

2.7.1.3 Action Research.

Action Research, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3 as it forms the basis of the current study’s methodological design, was a term initially coined by Lewin in the 1940’s and has become the focus of a great deal of interest since this time (Smith, 2001). The concept of Action Research firstly emphasises that for any change to take place some sort of action is required. Secondly, for any action to be successful, the situation needs to be researched or analysed robustly to gain an understanding of the circumstances, to conceive all the possible solutions and to determine which of the solutions identified would best meet the recognised needs. Lewin also postulated that for action to lead to change, the individuals involved need to recognise and accept that action is required; if this is not the case, change becomes difficult to implement. In this respect, Action Research requires participation and collaboration with the group/organisation members.

Lewin’s Action Research approach comprised of a spiral of steps ‘each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact finding about the results of the action (Lewin, 1946, p. 206, cited in Smith, 2001, p. 8). It is a repetitive process where one research spiral leads to another, or as described by Burnes (2004, p.984), “research leads to action and action leads to evaluation and further research”. In fact, as paradoxical as it sounds, Lewin did not believe that a full understanding of a system could be achieved without trying to change it first (Schein, 2010).

Using action research in practice led Lewin to become concerned about the permanency of the change achieved and an organisation’s ability to maintain the
gains made without having a plan in place to ensure such an objective from the outset. It is with this thinking in mind that Lewin designed the 3-Step Model of Change, demonstrating explicitly that for change to be adopted successfully, old behaviours needed to be disregarded (Burnes, 2004a; Tobnem, 2005).

2.7.1.4 3-Step Model of Change.

The 3-Step Model of Change is often cited as Lewin’s greatest contribution to organisational change and is often viewed as an independent model of planned change. However, Lewin did not envisage it an independent entity, but rather, as part of an integrated whole approach to Planned Change at the individual, group, organisational or societal level; an approach also consisting of Field Theory, Group Dynamics and Action Research, as described.

Lewin proposed that any successful ‘change’ initiative consists of three steps:

2.7.1.4.1 Step 1 – Unfreezing.

Unfreezing is the term Lewin coined to describe the process of creating a motivation to change within a given system, by destabilising the equilibrium of the status quo. Only by destabilising the equilibrium can old behaviour be unlearned and new approaches considered and adopted. Lewin felt that the methods used to make it possible for individuals within a system to let go of an existing pattern of work or behaviours would vary in each circumstance, depending on the group dynamics and forces at work.

Schein (2010) unpacked the Unfreezing stage of Lewin’s model further into three processes that have to take place prior to the generation of any motivation to change:

Table 2.3: The three processes required to during the Unfreezing stage (Schein, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Action involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disconfirmation</td>
<td>Enabling the group to question the validity of the status quo in order to achieve “serious discomfort and disequilibrium” (Schein, 2010, p.301). This can be achieved by presenting any information that suggests that the organisation is not meeting some of its...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
goals, or that some processes are not accomplishing what they are designed to achieve.

**Survival anxiety or guilt**

Disconfirmation leads to the induction of what Schein termed survival anxiety or guilt, a state of mind that implies if change does not occur, the individual, group or organisation will not be meeting needs. This occurs because most humans strive to ‘do their best’ in all circumstances. The induction of survival anxiety can sometimes be met with denial or an attempt to rationalise the information received as irrelevant in order to maintain cultural identity or self esteem. Schein postulated that this was because the prospect of having to learn new ways of operating also created anxiety – what he termed learning anxiety.

**Creating psychological safety**

The reduction of this learning anxiety is the third and most important component of unfreezing – the creation of psychological safety. The learner must come to feel that the new way of being is possible and achievable, and that the learning process itself will not be too anxiety provoking or demanding (Schein, 2010, p.302).

In other words, those involved have to feel safe from feelings of loss of self-esteem and inadequacy, in order to accept the new processes and behaviours and need for change. Psychological safety may be achieved through various methods such as working in groups, collaboratively, breaking down the learning process into manageable steps, and providing further training (Schein, 1996).

2.7.1.4.2 Step 2 – Moving.

Unfreezing an organisation creates a motivation to change but does not necessarily result in change; in order to achieve change, the individuals involved need to acknowledge and accept that change is required. It is at this point that ‘movement’ in thoughts feelings and/or behaviours can take place, where understanding of the system is achieved and best possible solutions are conceived, implemented and
evaluated – echoing Lewin’s Action Research based learning approach of research, action, followed by more research to enable change (Burnes, 2004a).

Schein elaborated that there are two basic mechanisms by which individuals learn new concepts and actualise ‘movement’ in their thinking and behaving:

- **Gaining new meaning for old concepts** – achieved through imitating a role model and psychologically identifying with their outlook and perceptions
- **Development of new standards of evaluations** – keep inventing your own solutions until something works; trial and error based learning (Schein 2010).

As mentioned earlier, Lewin was anxious that any change implemented was not short-lived and had this in mind when designing step 3.

### 2.7.1.4.3 Step 3 – Refreezing.

Originally termed ‘Freezing’ (Smith, 2001), this step refers to the need to seek stability within the group in order to maintain the new state of equilibrium achieved, sustaining new perceptions and behaviours. For this to be achieved, individuals within a system need to see that the new behaviours lead to improvements; and as Schein (1996) points out, the new behaviour needs to be incorporated into the learner’s self-concept and identity. This suggests that the new learning needs to be somewhat congruent with the rest of the learner’s values and surrounding environment/culture or it will simply rotate back to a new cycle of disconfirmation, launching a new change process (Schein 2010).

Figure 2.3 depicts Lewin’s 3 Step Model of Change combined with Schein’s (2010) elaborations:
As mentioned above, Lewin’s contribution to organisational change was the dominant force until the 1980’s. At this time academics and practitioners alike began to recognise that organisations seem to be facing “change that is more frequent, of greater magnitude and much less predictable than ever before” (Burnes, 2004b, p.886), and that radical transformations were required to enable organisations to adjust and remain successful in the modern world. With these recognitions, practitioners became less convinced that a planned approach to change, as advocated by Lewin and his followers, was feasible, and criticised it for being too simplistic and slow paced to be a realistic and efficacious option. Lewin’s critics argue that he viewed organisations as linear, uni-dimensional and fairly stable and un-flexible establishments, failing to take into account the political nature of most organisations by presuming that every individual will share an interest in participating in the change project (Burnes, 2004; Tbnem, 2005).

Weick (2000) describes how many of the Planned Approach to Change critics have gathered under the banner of Emergent Change approaches; approaches which view change as an on-going process with no planned intentions for change, just

![Figure 2.3: 3-Step Model of Change (adapted from Lewin, 1946; Schein, 2010).](image-url)
continuous accommodations, adaptations and alterations responsive to daily situations, ultimately resulting in evolving organisations. Emergent approaches, for example Complexity Theories, emphasise the role of lead stakeholders in creating environments where by members of an organisation are encouraged to be innovative, experiment within their role, take risks and embrace individual responsibility in identifying the need for change and implementing it. Emergent approaches believe that change has to emerge naturally, in a bottom-up fashion, rather than driven ambiguously from the top-down (Burnes, 2004; Burnes, 2004a).

2.7.3 Competing Approaches?
On the surface, Lewin’s Planned Approach to Change, consisting of the four elements described in section 2.7.1, appears very different to the ideas about organisations and the terminology proposed by complexity theories (Styhre, 2002). However, it seems that many of the criticisms aimed at Lewin and his work on organisational change is misleading and lacks validity, when looked at in more detail. Burnes (2004a) argues that many of the criticisms wrongly stem from individuals treating the four mutually-dependent elements of Lewin’s Planned Approach to Change as separate entities (see Marshak, 1993). It may be argued that the apparent common ground between Lewin’s Planned Approach to Change, and more contemporary approaches, suggests that rather than being too outdated a construct to apply to modern organisational change projects, Lewin’s four element approach still provides a valid framework for practitioners undertaking such initiatives. Burnes (2004a) concludes his re-appraisal of Lewin’s work by stating that an approach “based as it is on building understanding, generating learning, gaining new insights, and identifying and testing (and retesting) solutions” (p. 997) cannot be outdated. In fact, considering that one of the main criticisms aimed at complexity theories of organisational change is that they mainly provide a metaphorical understanding of the issues at play rather than a tangible model to work within; Lewin’s practical framework seems more appealing than ever (Burnes, 2005).

2.7.4 EPs and Organisational Change.
As practitioners who are involved in facilitating individual change and possibly less frequently, organisational change projects of varied scales, Lewin’s planned approach to change seems to fit well with EPs’ professional tendency to approach situations holistically, considering internal as well as external factors. Psychological
research tells us that organisational change, can at times trigger negative emotions in individuals, hampering progress in the long-term (Giæver & Hellso, 2010). Research suggests that such emotions are heightened when organisational change is thrust upon individuals without their involvement or consultation. Lewin’s planned approach to change provides EPs, who already have extensive background knowledge in supporting individuals experiencing change, with a clear participative framework which in itself is postulated to reduce any negative affect related to the change implemented. However, as with all aspects of their work, EPs are not dogmatic in championing one approach over another, they are generally driven to engage with the best available approach in relation to a given situation. EPs therefore need an awareness of alternatives to planned approaches, such as emergent approaches to facilitating change. It is unwise to view both approaches as competing approaches, rather, as stated by Burnes (2004b):

they are allies, each one appropriate to particular change situations but neither appropriate for all change situations... The Key issue for managers is to understand what they are trying to achieve, the context in which their organisation is operating and the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches to change (p.899).

Such sentiments were at the forefront of my mind when making decisions regarding the methodological design most appropriate for undertaking the proposed Pupil Time to Talk project.

2.8 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

The literature review guided the reader to consider adolescent emotional health and wellbeing needs, and how current governmental guidance and legislation is supporting professionals to address those needs, focusing on an education context. The practical and ethical lessons that may be learnt from evaluations and pupil views of SBC services in relation to the implementation of any emotional health based initiative within a school context were explored; constituting a particularly relevant body of research in relation to the current study (Daniels & Jenkins, 2000; Baginsky, 2004; Fox & Butler, 2007).

The literature suggesting how current models of EP service delivery may be creating inequalities in service access, for older adolescents and young people
experiencing more internalised difficulties in particular (Vardill & Calvert, 2000) (NASUWT, 2006; Mackay & Hellier, 2009), was explored. This provided a clear rationale for the need to trial new ways of working with such pupils. Research pertaining to children and young people’s experiences of accessing EP support through more traditional models of service delivery suggests that uninformed and arguably negative experiences prevailed (Armstrong et al., 1993; Woolfson & Harker, 2002; Weerasinghe, 2009). The same research base also suggests that ‘drop-in’ models of EP service delivery would be considered desirable by children and young people, providing direct access to “a professional they could talk to” (The Mental Health Foundation, 1999, p. 88), offering direct psychological support at a personally perceived time of need for pupils. It is implied that such direct models of service delivery aimed at older adolescents may help reduce inequalities in service access, taking the onus off third party identification of young people’s difficulties, leading to pupils experiencing more choice and involvement in relation to their support needs and subsequently a better understanding of the EPs’ role.

Prior to a drop-in framework of service delivery being considered further in relation to EPs and children and young people, I investigated the literature around some of the theoretical and psychological concepts relevant to adolescents making use of a self-directed psychological support service. The conditions that facilitate and act as barriers for adolescent help-seeking were considered along with related theories on motivation (Gulliver et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The literature suggests that females and older adolescents are more likely to seek help than males and younger adolescents; the two populations that the literature suggests are experiencing unequal access to EPs through current models of service delivery. Schonert-Rechtl & Muller (1996) also identify that older adolescents are more likely to consult professional sources of support in comparison to younger adolescents. Deci and Ryan’s (1985) concept of self-determination, identifies that an individual requires three psychological needs to be apparent in their skill set for optimum self-determined, self-motivated behaviour to be instigated. Adolescence is a time when these psychological needs are developed and fulfilled. It is argued that a Pupil Time to Talk service, therefore, encourages the development of the three psychological needs identified - competence, autonomy and relatedness, and thus promotes self-determined action and the positive benefits associated with such action (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
I subsequently focused on research directly relevant to such models of service delivery. Research pertaining to health-based and pastoral care/counselling ‘drop-in’ services were examined and again, lessons may be learnt in relation to the current study from the pupil evaluations of such services (Kay et al., 2006). It is of interest that most pupils accessing the health based initiatives researched, mostly accessed the services in relation to emotional health and school related issues, suggesting that there may be a gap in appropriate services that they feel able to approach in relation to such difficulties. Jefferies (2003) highlights the potential downfalls of offering a ‘drop-in’ service in relation to counselling. Whilst her comments are acknowledged as relevant in that context, Pupil Time to Talk clearly did not propose to offer ‘counselling’.

The only research pertaining to EPs’ involvement with a ‘drop-in’ model of service delivery relates to their use with parents (Gravell, 2008; Booth, 2009; Jebbett, 2011; Thomas, 2011), with the research on the whole demonstrating parents’ and other professionals’ positive views of such services. Further research is required within this context, considering that anecdotal evidence suggests that it is wide-spread practice within the profession to offer parental drop-ins. Finally, the literature review sought evidence of EPs’ use of ‘drop-ins’ with children and young people, and whilst no empirical evidence regarding such services were found, increased interest in such notions was identified amongst governmental publications and professional networking sites (Jackson, 2010; WAG, 2010). It is therefore imperative that, against the context of further changes to EPs’ role (Fallon et al., 2010), services seek to shape their service delivery model based on client feedback and provide empirical accounts of their endeavours to do so.

The review finally highlighted the likelihood that the implementation of any new initiative is going to require organisational change, and Lewin’s planned approach to change was deemed an appropriate model in this context (Burnes, 2004). How such factors were taken into account in relation to the current project will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

2.9 RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Based on the research reviewed, there is evidence to suggest that pupil drop-in service offered by an EP would be a desirable service for older adolescents in particular, helping to meet pupils’ identified needs and EP profession-wide issues.
The research aims to work collaboratively, using an action research methodology, with staff in one secondary school in LA 1 in designing and implementing Pupil Time to Talk and evaluating the initiative from the perspective of pupils and key stakeholders. School staff and representatives from outside agencies will act as the main stakeholders, as previous findings around implementing drop-ins within school environments indicate the need for adult endorsement, coupled with the fact that pupils might initially be unfamiliar with the work of EPs. Consideration will be given to identifying specific facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play within the research context, which may have contributed to how Pupil Time to Talk was perceived and accessed.

The research questions the project aimed to answer were developed during the early stages of the action research process:

4. How is ‘Time to Talk’ perceived by post-16 pupils and stakeholders?
5. What were the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of ‘Time to Talk’ in this context?
6. What are the implications for future implementation and delivery of Pupil ‘Time to Talk’?

2.10 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

It is anticipated that this research will be of particular interest to EPs, professionals working in the area of emotional health development and school staff, with the primary aim of trialling a new model of service delivery for older adolescents (Year 12 and 13), creating opportunities for pupil-initiated meetings with EPs. The literature review has highlighted gaps within the following areas:

- The perception of need for and the implementation and delivery of school based psychological drop-in services for young people. It is anticipated that this will not only be of interested for EPs, but also for related professionals seeking to offer direct access to emotional health initiatives within a school context (see section 2.6).
- Role of EPs in supporting post-16 pupils (see section 2.3 and 2.4).

The proposed research project aims to provide a unique contribution towards filling the gaps identified.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE
This chapter describes the theoretical and personal origins of the study, and following a consideration of reliability and validity issues, a critical appraisal of the research framework, design and methods adopted is provided. The chapter concludes with a description of how ethical standards were maintained throughout the process. The reader will be taken on a detailed journey of how the actual study was conceived and conducted in Chapter 4, using the RADIO stages as guidance.

3.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPITEMOLOGICAL POSITION

The way we think the world is (ontology) influences: what we think can be known about it (epistemology); how we think it can be investigated (methodology and research techniques); the kinds of theories we think can be constructed about it; and the political and policy stances we are prepared to take, (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 197).

As described by Fleetwood (2005), the ontological position and epistemological stance adopted by a researcher influences the design, conduct and interpretation of a study (Willig, 2002). As such it is imperative that due consideration is given to these positions and that they are made explicit to the reader.

3.2.1 Critical Realism.

The ontological and epistemological stance adopted by this action research project was one of critical realism (Baskahar, 1989). A critical realist perspective advocates that some ‘truths’ exist, independently of human awareness or activity. It therefore lies someway between positivism on the one hand, and relativism or constructionist stances on the other (Sayer, 2000). “While positivism concerns a single concrete reality, and constructivist interpretivism embraces multiple realities, critical realism concerns multiple perceptions about a single mind-independant reality” (Bisman, 2000, p.9). It postulates that there is an intransitive world that is real, and a transitive take on the world through the perceptions and theories that individuals develop about it (Houston, 2010). The transitive ‘reality’ is a human construction - influenced by factors such as individual values and ideas, interactions, experiences and contexts, which inevitably influence what is perceived and understood of
‘reality’. As a result, humans can only tentatively achieve a ‘true’ awareness of reality – a subjective or probabilistic reality (Pawson and Tilley, 1994; Sayer, 2000; Robson, 2002). Due to our evolving theories and perceptions, we do get closer to the intransitive world over time; however, our transitive take on the world will never directly correspond with reality, as accurately describing our experience of reality is beyond our cognitive and linguistic capabilities (Houston, 2010). As a result, critical realists believe all research to be fallible or imperfect, as it is constricted by the difference between actual reality and the researcher’s formulation of reality (Sayer, 2000).

Much of the focus of positivist research is on demonstrating a consistent and predictable ‘cause and effect’ relationship between two variables; critical realism disregards such a reductionist view of the world. The focus of a critical realist approach involves “unearth[ing] the real mechanisms and structures underlying perceived events” (Dobson, 2002, The object of research section, para. 2), and identifying significant relationships or tendencies between phenomena rather than search for formal associations and causality between them. Houston (2010) makes reference to critical realists who view critical realist research as “thinking backward” from effect to cause (p. 82).

Critical realists acknowledge that causal mechanisms are facilitated or hindered by human agency, and the time and social context in which they operate; and in order to determine “what works best, for whom and under what circumstances?” (Robson, 2002, p.39), it is essential to view an individual’s experience within those facilitating and constraining contexts in which they exist. The following diagram depicts the basis of a critical realist ‘cause and effect’ phenomenon:
It may be argued that Kurt Lewin’s planned approach to change model (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.1) resonates strongly with a critical realist ontology. Houston (2010) suggests that action research is the “most appropriate” (p. 86) method for carrying out research informed by critical realism, stating that action research:

*is a method that can embrace critical realist premises most easily as it is concerned, not only with programme evaluation, but also with emancipator change. It can embrace the search for deep mechanism operating at the ‘real’ level* (p. 88).

The continuous action research cycles of planning, acting, evaluating and acting again in light of your evaluation, allows the researcher to bring their transitive ‘knowledge’ closer to the intransitive reality of the situation over time.

He goes on to identify that critical realism allows the social scientist or researcher to get into the inner workings of an intervention or programme and identify how and why an intervention may or may not work in a particular set of circumstances. Used in conjunction with an action research methodology, which offers the researcher a chance to gain access to an array of stakeholders views on why a programme is/is not effective, it is possible to “capture the rich ontology of social life” (p. 89).
3.3 AXIOLOGY

As identified above, critical realists believe that all research is fallible or imperfect, as it is constricted by the difference between reality, and the researcher's formulation of reality (Sayer, 2000). In this respect, neither I nor my co-researchers on the current project were able to present a true account of reality in relation to the action research process undertaken and Pupil Time to Talk as an initiative; only a transitive take on the situation that ensues was achieved.

Axiology refers to the study of value, how we assign meaning and properties of richness to reality. As such, epistemology is surrounded by axiology, and acknowledging axiology is relevant in all research conducted as it helps explain why research is instigated and may highlight factors that may be influencing a researcher's interpretation of findings and assessment of what value it contains (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Carter & Little, 2007). I therefore acknowledge that my own beliefs and values as a researcher will have influenced my construction of that transitive world, as discussed in section 3.2.1. I shall therefore present the reader with a brief account of some of my beliefs and values that may have some bearing on my interaction with the action research process and my interpretation of the findings in relation to the action taken:

- I believe that children and young people should be treated fairly, and should not be discriminated against on any basis.
- I believe in showing care and compassion for others, especially the most vulnerable in society.
- I believe that children and young people should be involved in decisions and actions concerning them as appropriate, and increasingly so as they develop and mature.
- I believe that self-determined actions/decisions may result in more meaningful consequences and engagement, and that young people have the skills required to make self-determined decisions.
- I believe that EPs should be involved in universal, preventative work, and children and young people's access to the service should not necessarily rely on adults' recognition of their additional learning needs.
- I believe that each transition is an important milestone in an individuals' life, and due concern should be paid in ensuring that those transitions are well-managed and supported.
• I believe in the value of offering young people access to an independent source of psychological support.
• I believe that schools can offer pupils a safe and secure environment, conducive to developing and maintaining their emotional health and well-being.
• I believe that research should be concerned with solving real problems, eliciting personal learning and social change.
• I believe that by understanding and improving my own practice, my professional engagement with those around me will improve.

The close collaborative working with others, characteristic of action research, ensured that, my values came to the fore, and in Chapter 4, I have attempted to describe what we did, why we did it and what we hoped to achieve. Although it is acknowledge that the ‘findings’ presented are influenced by my inherent values and beliefs, additional steps have been taken to increase the research quality and are discussed in section 3.4.

3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY WITHIN A CRITICAL REALIST PARADIGM

Within a critical realism paradigm, both quantitative and qualitative methods are accepted as appropriate ways of investigating the underlying causal mechanisms behind actions or events. Therefore, neither use of the criteria used to determine quality in quantitative research, nor the criteria developed to determine quality in qualitative research strictly apply on their own. Bisman (2000) identifies that there are alternative methods for determining the validity of critical realist research, with the most common criteria including criticality, critical multiplism, and trustworthiness, which will be applied in relation to the current research.

3.4.1 Criticality and Critical Multiplism.

Criticality in critical realism comes from the acknowledgement that despite there being a single reality, our understanding of what is real is “value-laden”, in that it is influence by our own values, experiences and social conditioning (Bisman, 2010, p.12). In relation to the current project, I have attempted to make the reader aware of my personal value base (see section 3.3), and have maintained a research diary (see section 3.8.1.1) to consider personal reflexivity issues which may have influenced my interaction with the action research process (Willig, 2002). Engaging
in on-going critical reflection during supervision sessions with my supervisor also allowed me to ensure that the findings were grounded in the participants’ realities rather than representing my own, perhaps unconscious, issues in relation to the project’s focus of change. Issues arising from my personal reflections on the research process are described throughout Chapter 4, and their influences on the research course are highlighted.

Bisman (2000) wrote, “critical realism is concerned not only with achieving a corresponding position with the world, but also participating in criticising and changing it” (p. 12). It is argued that the adoption of an action research framework will help achieve criticality in this sense, as one of the goals of action research is to look critically at a real-life situation and promote a better understanding, and ultimately change, at an individual and organisational level (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003).

Critical multiplism refers to the reduction of bias in research, through acknowledging that no method is without its weaknesses (Bisman, 2000), and that in essence, triangulation is required. Triangulation refers to an attempt to provide a richer explanation of human behaviour or a social situation by studying it from more than one standpoint. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe how critical realist research depends on the use of multiple methods to capture as much of reality as possible. Bisman (2000) describes the numerous approaches to triangulation that can be employed to bring about critical multiplism. The methods employed in relation to the current research are described below:

- Use of multiple data collection methods within the RADIO framework, as described in section 3.8.1.
- Use of quantitative and qualitative methods, the former presented as descriptive statistics and the latter presented through thematic analysis (see section 3.8.2).
- Member checking, or researcher-subject triangulation as described by Bisman (2000), which allows the participants to corroborate or challenge the interpretations made by the researcher in relation to their contribution. See Chapter 4, section 4.4.3.2.2 for details of how this was achieved.
- Investigator triangulation, that is the use of more than one researcher in a single study to ensure that data analysis is not confined to one perspective (Bison, 2000). The RADIO framework allowed for this to occur naturally, and
verification of my data analyses by co-researchers and EP colleagues are described in Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.5 and 4.4.3.2.1.

3.4.2 Trustworthiness and Auditability

The concept of trustworthiness in critical realist research is inextricably linked to that of auditability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bisman, 2000).

*Trustworthiness is therefore judged by the extent to which the research can be audited by virtue of the databases maintained and the use of quotations of research subjects and participants in written research reports* (Bisman, 2000, p. 13).

In relation to the current study:

- a detailed account of the RADIO process is provided in Chapter 4 to support replication of the process;
- visual evidence supporting the data analysis process described in section 3.8.2 is provided in Appendix A;
- substantial use is made of direct participant/stakeholder quotes to help the reader understand the origins of decisions taken/themes identified from the data collected and scrutinise my interpretations in relation to the original data.

Bisman (2000) wrote that “*documentation also needs to be maintained following data collection in order to fully enable auditability, and thereby promote validity and reliability*” (p. 14). All stakeholders were made aware that any audio documentation would be held by me until December 2012, and that anonymous transcriptions were available to them upon request.

3.5 ACTION RESEARCH AND THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN ORGANISATION FRAMEWORK

The research proposed was a new venture within the authority, and according to the literature reviewed, designing and implementing a service offering year 12 and 13 pupils direct access to EPs was a new initiative within the field of Educational Psychology. The research was concerned with investigating how such a service is perceived by stakeholders and pupils alike, and what factors supported or hindered the design, implementation and use of the initiative. As such careful consideration was given to the methodology adopted, taking cues from previous research with
similar aims, (for example, Booth’s (2009), account of implementing a parental EP drop-in service, see Chapter 2, section 2.6.3), and from the literature reviewed in relation to organisational change (section 2.7).

Action Research was thought to be an appropriate methodology to address the real-life issue identified within our practice, and could be tailored to meet the unique needs of the research setting approached. Action research is usually concerned with addressing ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, which is particularly relevant here. Therefore, the literature around Action Research and one particular model of Action Research will be explored in more detail – The RADIO model or framework.

### 3.5.1 Action Research.

Action Research is a term that was initially coined by Lewin in 1946 (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.1). Action Research is described by McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003) “as a continuous process of acting, reflecting on the action, and then acting again in the light of what you have found” (p.58). In this respect, it may be said that action research processes fits well with EPs’ everyday practice as exemplified by the British Psychological Society’s (BPS) Division of Educational and Child Psychology Framework for Psychological Assessment and Intervention – an iterative process of identifying an area to investigate, planning, doing, and evaluating. Cohen and Manion (1994, as cited in Bell, 2010, p.6) suggested that “Action Research is appropriate when specific knowledge is required for a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system”, an explanation fitting well with the rationale for the current research.

Reason and Bradbury (2006), in their editorial for the Handbook of Action Research emphasise its participatory element and quest to address real-life issues, enabling an increasingly holistic reflection on a situation to emerge.

> It [action research] seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (p.1).

The action researcher’s role is explicitly described by Berg (2004) as standing
with and alongside the community or group under study, not outside as an objective observer or external consultant. The researcher contributes expertise when needed as a participant in the process (p. 202).

This aspect appealed to me, with the collaborative nature of action research ensuring that decisions were made based on a collective perception of need rather than based on what I thought they needed. Gaining a more rounded perspective of the research process through incorporating my reflections with those of my co-researchers and stakeholders was also an attractive aspect of action research for me.

Lewin’s theory emphasises the cyclical nature of action research, where people learn from experience in an on-going, reflective fashion; as such action research “does not come to a natural conclusion” (Noffke & Somekh, 2005, p. 89). Learning from experience tends to evoke new questions to be answered, leading to further cycles; the responsibility it placed on the researchers to determine when to conclude a piece of research, fitting in with their organisation’s needs and cultural/environmental changes. Carr and Kemmis (1986) emphasise the role and usefulness of action research in reflecting on and adapting one’s own practice. Action Research does not strive to present a finalised ‘answer’ to a problem, with everyone in agreement. It aims to reveal different truths and realities held by different groups and individuals and present those different truths to all involved to evoke a better shared understanding or joint construction of a situation (Gray 2009).

There are numerous models and frameworks for undertaking action research, and they are usually presented as a series of steps or spirals (although not necessarily linear) for the researcher to follow. Lewin’s basic spiral involved the following general steps:
Lewin’s general spiral form has been criticised for suggesting that action research is merely a procedure to follow (Smith, 2001). Carr (1989) also argues that having a range of different models has resulted in a widely different understanding of action research to emerge, diluting its original premise. However, Booth (2009, p.53) identifies that there are common threads to the models and frameworks surveyed by her, suggesting that a general understanding of action research principles permeates. Berg (2004) wrote, “different sources seeking to describe the action research procedure all seem to describe essentially the same set of activities, simply in different ways and in different sequences” (p. 197). Blacklidge (2010) also argues that, regardless of the exact model followed, as long as an action researcher is developing their learning and practice, and reflecting on what they have learnt and the action taken, whilst living through their values in collaboration with others, then action research is taking place.

Stoker and Figg (1998) reviewed the literature around action research and its relevance to educational psychology practice. Whilst they conclude that action research offers EPs a methodology that validates their practice, allowing use of an ethical framework from which to work from, taking into account the complexities of conducting real-world research - they admit surprise at the relatively low number of published research by practising EPs making use of the methodology. Based on

Figure 3.2: Typical action research spiral (adapted from Smith, 2001).
their findings, they go as far as stating that care needs to be taken if describing the profession as based on “practitioner research” (p.61).

3.5.2 Research and Development in Organisation (RADIO) framework.

It may be argued that developments and advances in methodological tools, increased pressure to demonstrate evidence-based practice, and a change in EP training routes have all acted to counter Stoker and Figg’s (1998) conclusions. In the field of action research, a model designed purposefully for TEPs by EPs was developed. The Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Knight & Timmins, 1995) offers a clear framework for EPs to work in collaboration with key stakeholders in implementing and adapting new initiatives to suit the social context. It draws on the work of Edgar Schein who highlighted the important role ‘learnt’ organisational culture and dynamics can play in enabling or impeding change. His ideas are briefly discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.7.1, stressing that researchers should aim to gain an explicit understanding of the cultural environment in which they are working to achieve the most appropriate and sustainable outcomes. Ashton (2009) wrote:

The RADIO model consists of 12 steps which prompt the action researcher to take into account the complex factors surrounding their work, such as securing a genuine invitation to act and clarifying relevant organisational issues (p.223).

Whilst the model’s ‘12 steps’ may imply a sequential or linear approach to research, Timmins et al., (2003) clarifies that the steps may be re-visited as, and when, appropriate during the course of the project, concurring with McNiff et al.’s (2003) emphasis on action research frameworks’ cyclical, non-linear format. Table 3.1 depicts the phases of the RADIO framework, the twelve related stages and the typical activities a researcher may engage with at each step. The actions taken at each of the twelve steps in relation to the current study is presented in Chapter 4.
Table 3.1: RADIO Framework (adapted from Timmins et al., 2003, p. 231-233; Blacklidge, 2010, p. 106-107).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RADIO Phases</th>
<th>RADIO Stages</th>
<th>Typical RADIO activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying Concerns</td>
<td>Awareness of need</td>
<td>EP’s/TEP’s contact with school/LEA/teacher/pupils may result in identification of potential need for research or systemic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stages 1-4)</td>
<td>Invitation to act</td>
<td>EP/TEP contacts research stakeholder in a position to approve and resource the research and negotiates a role. Here the EP/TEP may need to press for an invitation to act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarifying organisational and cultural issues</td>
<td>Initial exploration of factors likely to support or impede the initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying stakeholders in area of need</td>
<td>Identify the major stakeholders and determine the nature of their involvement. Agree upon methods of collaboration allowing feedback and discussion with the stakeholders e.g. establishing a research coordinating group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>Agreeing focus of concern (research aims)</td>
<td>Research facilitator and major stakeholders to agree research aims and purposes (identifying research questions).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stages 5-8)</td>
<td>Negotiate framework for information gathering</td>
<td>An appropriate methodology and research design is selected to address the research aims, and a timescale is imposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gathering information</td>
<td>Information is gathered using agreed methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processing information with research sponsors/stakeholders</td>
<td>Research findings are shared and their implications discussed. Stakeholders are encouraged to examine their institution’s development needs in light of these, ensuring that the information is used to make plans to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three published articles on the use of the RADIO approach have appeared in the profession’s main journal *Educational Psychology in Practice* since 2003. Two of these articles were co-written by Paul Timmins, and described the use of the RADIO approach in evaluating a behaviour support initiative within a mainstream school (Timmins et al., 2003), and in developing an EPS’s consultation approach to practice (Timmins, Bham, McFadyen, & Ward, 2006). The usefulness of using the RADIO approach in enabling “individual schools and EPs to create a ‘partnership for learning’ based on a negotiated synthesis of Educational Psychology Service orientation and the school’s articulated needs” (Timmins et al., 2003, p. 241) is highlighted. The approach’s impact on individual and organisational learning is also emphasised (Timmins et al., 2006), an advocated feature of action research methodology (McNiff, 2002). However, it may be argued that as a founder of the RADIO approach, it is difficult for Timmins to offer an objective evaluation of the frameworks’ usefulness to EPs wanting to engage in action research. Ashton’s (2009) use of the approach therefore offers an important perspective on RADIO and its use by EPs.

Ashton’s (2009) article describes the application of the RADIO approach in five separate action research projects carried out in schools within one local authority, looking to improve pupil transition to secondary school. The multiple projects engaged with allowed the researcher, a practising EP, the opportunity to consider and compare the usefulness of adopting the RADIO framework across five research
contexts. Ashton (2009) identifies that, as is expected with real-world research, some of the projects were more effective than others in reaching positive and sustainable change, attributing the differences to mechanisms such as the motivation and interest level of key stakeholders, their ability to implement change within the school system and the research findings’ goodness of fit with existing school priorities. Overall the RADIO framework was deemed “a useful framework for action research” (p. 231) with the school staff involved in one of the projects describing how they would not hesitate in using the methodology again in investigating other issues.

However, Ashton (2009) felt it necessary to add another step to the framework developed by Timmins and colleagues. ‘Step 10-plus’ was incorporated into the framework to allow the findings to be shared with the children who contributed to the research. Ashton (2009), by setting a precedent of incorporating another step to the RADIO framework, argues that such an adaption improved the quality of the research, allowing increased pupil participation in decision-making, fitting with the ethos and rationale of the research undertaken. Adapting an action research model or framework to fit with the researcher or context needs is not an unknown concept within the field, with Mc Niff (2002) identifying that “you must decide what is right for you” (p.7), and Booth (2009) shaping her own model using ideas from previous frameworks.

The RADIO framework has also been utilised in Doctoral research studies. Blacklidge (2010) used the RADIO framework to carry out action research in relation to supporting a secondary school develop their practice in relation to Children in Care. She reflects that the RADIO’s clear framework helped guide her, and she highlights the importance of the language used within the RADIO framework, “I feel that this resulted in collaboration becoming embedded in the process, rather than something that had to be strived for” (p. 206).

Sheppard (2010) used the RADIO framework to carry out action research investigating how inquiry groups can promote learning within an EPS. Sheppard (2010) expresses confidence in using the framework to support service improvement work, and stressed the importance of paying due regard to the ‘clarifying organisational and cultural issues’ stage.
The findings to date reflect a positive reaction to the use of the RADIO approach, and the proposed research seeks to add further to what is currently a relatively small literature field.

3.5.3 Criticisms of Action Research.

Atkinson (1994) states that it is common knowledge that action research can be problematic, but that these problems are not often made explicit within the literature. One of the little discussed criticisms aimed at action research relates to the ‘messiness’ of the process. Cook (1998) highlights that the complex nature of the flexible and evolving research cycles is very difficult to encapsulate coherently in writing.

*When written down, it all seemed so obvious, the steps taken so logical and the outcomes so clear. This had not been the case whilst in the midst of the research when even the starting point was unclear to me,* (p. 93).

Atkinson (1994) expresses similar misgivings, arguing that action research models do not always represent a ‘true’ account of how research takes place. In her experience, the cyclical stages within action research models (all generally entailing planning, acting, reflecting, and acting again on the basis of the findings) do not always happen in such a seemingly straightforward manner, but often take place simultaneously, with the researchers having to juggle disparate thoughts and actions.

Action research is a methodology that embraces individuals who may not have a research background as such, and encourages them to learn more about themselves as practitioners/professionals and address an identified real-life problem usually within the workplace or community (Elliot, 1991). Action research has been widely used within education (Gray, 2009), with teachers acting as researchers or working collaboratively with a researcher. Atkinson (1994) draws attention to the difficulties a dual role as a teacher and researcher creates, particularly in terms of reflective practice where,

*...as a teacher I must act. I must make rapid decisions, then I must go straight for the solution. The thinking sometimes comes afterward... In research I must think before I act. Often the need is for thinking instead of action* (p. 387).
Atkinson (1994) also highlights how the often slow pace of action research negatively contrasts with the often fast-paced change occurring within education, sometimes rendering initial research questions obsolete. Lack of common language and terminology between research and teaching can also act as a barrier to successful collaboration in action research, as can competing time demands, as pragmatically described by Atkinson (1994):

> the tendency to act as a teacher rather than as a researcher, inevitably meant that the research and the quality of the data suffered. (I would, for example, abandon the writing of field notes at lunch time to sort out a playground problem), (p. 391).

These criticisms and apparently inherent problems with action research are obviously directly relevant to the current project where I aimed to work as a joint researcher with teachers, and these were therefore issues to be aware of. However, I would argue that the RADIO framework for action research in particular, supports co-researchers in being explicit with each other from the outset regarding the potential difficulties a dual role as teacher and researcher may create, allowing for solutions to be identified. For example, the stage involving ‘identifying organisational and cultural issues’ allows for discussions around competing time demands, identification of a common language or the need for a brief research skills training, or indeed any other factor that is likely to impede the initiative.

A critique that holds some resonance from a personal perspective relates to the fact that within action research, the researcher is a less dominant force, holding less control than would be expected of researchers engaged in more empirical studies (Ballinger, Yardley and Payne, 2004). This may lead to difficulties in envisaging the exact direction of the research at the outset, making it difficult to plan ahead. Todhunter (2001) describes how an unexpected change in the research’s direction can lead to outcomes that ‘may not be readily predicted and, for this reason alone, power holders may not be fully at ease with what they are not in control of’ (p. 1). This in turn has led to some claims that action research is not ‘scientific’ due to the reduced control over variables (Robson, 1993), with some claiming that it is impossible to know what action was responsible for which outcome within action research. Although the aim of the current study was not to establish direct cause and effect links, the reduced control held by the researcher over the research direction may be problematic in Doctoral research, bound by time constraints and
the need to address an identified gap in the literature. I felt that making judicious use of supervision opportunities both with my fieldwork supervisor and University tutor would help guide me through such experiences as they arose, reducing the impact of such issues.

Also, conventional assessments of research ‘successes’ are not always possible within action research designs as concrete outcomes may not occur within the research timeline. For example, the proposed research may not allow for a comprehensive ‘solution’ to be reached in terms of providing participative, self determined opportunities for post-16 pupils to access EP support. As a result, it was important to concentrate on the research process, collaborative working between EPs and school staff, lessons learnt and professional development.

3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research took place in one secondary school and as such the project is considered to have a single-case study design, utilising an action research RADIO framework. Methods of data collection and analysis are not pre-determined at the outset of an action research project, but are decisions that are reached collaboratively as the research evolves. Therefore, adopting a flexible research design, a characteristic of case studies, was important. In this instance, a mainly qualitative design was used to ensure that a rich-picture of processes and outcomes was achieved. Some quantitative information in the form of descriptive statistics was also planned to report and describe some aspects. Yin (2003) defines a case study as an inquiry that investigates a contemporary issue within its real life context, and is particularly useful when the boundaries between the issues investigated and the environmental context are blurred and when in-depth, holistic information is required. Gray (2009) identifies that the case study method is “ideal when a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked” (p. 247). Such descriptions tally well with action research aims, and therefore it seems an appropriate design to adopt.

One of the criticisms aimed at single-case study designs is the difficulty to generalise from the findings, this explains the preference for multiple-case designs where possible (Yin, 2009). However, action research is not necessarily concerned with generalising its findings between settings, as it is acknowledged that the issues facing one organisation are not necessarily the same as those facing another, even similar, organisation. Whilst lessons may be learnt between cases, the primary goal
was not to find generalisable, universal ‘truths’, or present finalized ‘answers’ to problems. The aim was to reveal the transitive takes on the world held legitimately by different groups and individuals; transitive takes which may ultimately lead us closer to understanding intransitive reality (Sayer, 2000; Gray, 2009; Houston 2010). The aim of the study was to influence systemic changes within a particular school and inform possible wider service changes within the EPS, therefore the need for the findings to be generalised to other contexts was reduced. It was anticipated that the research process undertaken to investigate the issue of pupil access to EPS’ may be applicable to other contexts, and that some aspects of the information obtained in relation to professional practice/experience may be applicable to other settings.

3.7 PARTICIPANTS

As action research involves the researcher “immersing himself or herself in a human situation and following it along whatever path it takes as it unfolds through time” (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 11), the researcher is naturally considered a participant. For me, one of the main benefits of being a participant was having the opportunity to gain a deeper sense of self-knowledge and understanding of my professional practice, in addition to the opportunity to develop a closer working relationship with the other participants, some of whom were already colleagues.

The professional roles and details of how the other participants became involved in the project is provided throughout Chapter 4 in relation to each stage of the RADIO. Their level of involvement naturally fluctuated depending on which stage of the RADIO framework we were at, and the direction the research took. The EPS team (consisting of seven participants), multi-agency members of LA 1’s Emotional Health forum (consisting of eight additional participants) and SBC service (consisting of three additional participants) were involved at the outset and helped identifying and initially explore the real life issue to be addressed, as well as identify a suitable secondary setting to approach for involvement (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2 for a detailed rationale for choosing the secondary school approached). Although the EPS stakeholders were not directly involved in making the day to day research decisions, they were still regarded as major stakeholders, as any findings are of direct consequence to the team and their future practise. They were kept updated about developments through supervision sessions and findings were formally fed-back to them at the end of the project.
The secondary school approached had an Inclusion Team (consisting of 10 additional participants), responsible for pastoral care initiatives, and they were again considered to be major stakeholders within the current project, with two of the Inclusion Team members fulfilling roles as co-researchers alongside me in the project. It was originally planned that year 12 and 13 pupils, who made use of the Time to Talk initiative set up, would be invited to participate in an evaluation of the initiative, and as such would be self-selecting participants. However, as will be explained in Chapter 4, the research direction evolved, and as a result, a random sample of eighteen year 12 and 13 pupils were invited to participate in focus groups instead.

3.8 RESEARCH METHODS

3.8.1 Data Collection Methods.
Blacklidge (2010) stresses that data gathering is the responsibility of all involved in the project and Gray (2009) writes that “data collection should be as comprehensive as possible, because important insights may only emerge once the data are being analysed” (p. 320). McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003, p.100) indicates that there are a number of actions involved in generating data in action research, involving:

- Monitoring your own action
- Monitoring other people’s actions
- Possibly monitoring critical conversations about the research

These assertions were kept in mind when deciding on the data gathering methods used over the course of the action research project, which are detailed below.

3.8.1.1 Research Diary.
Newbury (2001) states that keeping a research diary is ‘central’ to the process of conducting action research. He goes on to highlight that rather than present the research process in a linear form, the purpose of a research diary is to capture the ‘inner drama’ of the process. It allowed me to document the process followed and the reasoning behind the decisions and directions taken, without having to depend on retrospective accounts (Booth, 2009). It provided an opportunity for on-going observations, reflections and consideration of how my personal values may be influencing the course of the research; it also is a non-threatening way of
acknowledging personal thoughts and opinions within a research context, all considerations of personal reflexivity (Willing, 2002).

Schön's (1983) distinction between reflection and reflective practice helped guide my thoughts around the content of the research diary and influenced the way I reflected on the research. I was conscious of the two types of reflective thinking Schön identified. The first, reflection-in-action, referring to the implicit process of thinking whilst doing, which results in on-going modification of one's practice and learning as a result of those modifications; and the second, reflection-on-action, characterised by systematic and deliberate thinking back over one’s actions in order to gain knowledge from experience. Leitch and Day (2000) describe these two processes together as forming “the core professional artistry of the reflective practitioner” (p. 180). Leitch and Day (2000) highlight the importance of emotions in reflective thinking, and acknowledging how one's past experiences and patterns of responding are likely to influence current behaviours. As such,

reflection-in-action is always going to be limited or pre-empted by an individual's previous experiences where unprocessed or confused emotions predominate. Reflection-on-action is, therefore, a pre-requisite for reflection-in-action to be manifested effectively, (p. 187-188).

Rather than keep a diary in a written format, I decided to keep an audio diary. I carried a Dictaphone with me at all times, allowing for me to record my feelings and interpretations of events as they occurred, rather than depend on memory. The stakeholders were made aware that I was keeping a research diary, and the co-researchers were encouraged to do the same. The diary became a very personal account of the process and my thoughts and feelings in relation to it, and as such its contents were not shared with the stakeholders, other than to highlight particularly pertinent observations in relation to the analysis following partial transcription of the entries. Due to its personal nature the transcripts are not appendicised.

3.8.1.1.1 Criticisms related to maintaining a Research Diary. Although maintaining a research diary is considered ‘central’ within action research (Newbury, 2001), one of the main criticisms directed towards the process relates to difficulties experienced by researchers in motivating themselves and committing to maintaining a diary over a period of time (Willing, 2001). I was highly motivated to maintain my own diary, and found it to be a good de-stressor, however, it did prove
difficult for the co-researchers to commit to maintain one from their perspective as is described in Chapter 4, section 4.4.5.1.3. This was unfortunate as it limited the perceptions drawn upon in relation to the project’s outcomes to some degree.

3.8.1.2 Focus Groups.

Focus Groups are used to collect usually qualitative data in relation to a particular area of interest/focus, from a group of individuals, who sometimes possess similar characteristics. Focus Groups are interchangeably described as group interviews and focus group discussions within the literature (Barbour, 2008). The definition postulated by Kitzinger and Barbour (1999), and adopted in relation to the focus groups used in the current study is as follows:

Any group discussion may be called a focus group as long as the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to, the group interaction (p. 20).

Such a definition highlights the researcher’s role in facilitating the interaction between group members, not just with the researcher, paying due attention to the stimulus material used to allow optimum interaction and a variety of perspectives to be heard. Oates (2000) stresses that focus groups are not only useful in uncovering what participants think about a given topic, but also why they think as they do –

such interaction occurs as participants question each other, or challenge views which might differ from their own. Participants are obliged to expose the reasoning behind their own opinions, allowing the researcher to explore and record such interactions (p. 187).

Hennink (2007) argues that in comparison to one-to-one interviews with a researcher, focus groups are more representative of every-day social interactions.

3.8.1.2.1 Appropriate use of Focus Groups.

Historically, focus groups are heavily associated with market research, where people are brought together to elicit their views on a new product for example (Gray, 2009), but have evolved to be used across a range of disciplines and research areas. Hennink (2007) states that focus groups are now one of the central tools used within social science qualitative research.

Focus groups were used at various points within the RADIO framework in the current study. They were deemed appropriate since we were initially interested in
combining knowledge gained from the literature with information from the wider stakeholder group around their views and beliefs in relation to the needs of older adolescents and enabling direct access to services. As the project evolved, focus groups were also used with samples of year 12 and 13 pupils with the aim to gain their views on the pupil Time to Talk service offered and explore the perceived barriers to its use (see Chapter 4 for further details). The use of focus groups in this research fits with Oates (2000, p. 188) and Litoselliti’s (2003, p. 18) summaries of situations where use of focus groups are suitable.

3.8.1.2.3 Practicalities of implementing a focus group.

Hennink (2007) provides an in-depth discussion around the issue of group composition, focusing in particular on two aspects that in the author’s view are likely to impact on the group’s dynamics the most. The first, relates to the existing level of acquaintance between participants, and the second to the level of homogeneity between participant characteristics. There is no ‘ideal’ in relation to either, just that the decisions made are relevant to the purpose of the study. Creating an environment that fosters an effective discussion is the primary consideration for any researcher. In relation to the current project, the participants in each focus group held were fairly well acquainted with each other. Levels of homogeneity differed between each focus group. The adult focus groups contained both male and female participants of differing ages, however, they all held posts with a focus on the emotional well-being of children and young people, which was the most relevant consideration in relation to their role in the study. The pupil focus group were homogenous in terms of age and level of education.

There does not seem to be an exact consensus within the literature regarding the ideal size of a focus group with figures between eight and twelve being suggested by some (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), between five and ten by others (Kruegar & Casey, 2000). Barbour (2008) even indicates that it is perfectly possible to hold a successful focus group with three to four participants, and that may well be preferable in some situations. The sizes of the focus groups held during the current project are detailed in Chapter 4.

One of the most important preparatory steps involves designing facilitating questions or a discussion guide as described by Hennink (2007), to help the researcher or moderator prompt and manage the focus group discussion, ensuring
that all issues of importance to the research are addressed. “The quality of the information received will be a direct reflection on the forethought given to the design of the discussion guide and the question strategy” (Hennink, 2007, p. 44). Although the prompt questions act as a memory aid for the moderator, following such a guide allows for some consistency to be achieved between focus groups, without losing the unique information that may come as a result of the conversationalist, mainly participant-led, discussion. Such consistency is important when it comes to identifying themes across data sets. Good knowledge of the available literature in relation to the topic under study as well as a good understanding of the research context will support the design of appropriate facilitating questions. By the time I came to designing the facilitating questions to use in the initial adult focus groups (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.2), I felt I had a good grasp of the literature surrounding the field of interest, but was acting independently at the time, rather than in a collaborative, action-research mode due to the focus groups’ timing in the RADIO process. However, when designing the facilitating questions for the pupil focus groups (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.2), a collaborative effort between the co-researchers was achieved, allowing for a good understanding of the literature and specific research context to guide the design process.

I acted as the moderator in each focus group carried out during the course of the project. Hennink (2007) stresses that the task may not be as simple as it seems, describing it as a “challenging but critical task” (p. 165). Kruegar and Casey (2009) describe the varied role a researcher has within a focus group, naming moderating, observing, listening and analysing responsibilities. A moderator requires skills in facilitating discussion as well as in negotiating group dynamics. Although I had limited experience of facilitating a focus group for research purposes prior to my involvement with the current project, it may be argued that utilising those skills areas are daily requirement of EPs in hosting consultations and multi-agency meetings.

3.8.1.2.4 Focus Group Analysis.

All the qualitative data gathered during focus groups held at different points throughout the RADIO framework was subject to Thematic Analysis (see section 3.8.2 for further information about this method of analysis).
3.8.1.2.5 Critique of Focus Group use.

Focus groups provide the researcher with the opportunity to collect data from a group of participants simultaneously, with individuals reacting and building upon the responses of other group members. However, there is a strong possibility that the data obtained is biased by particularly dominant group members who explicitly influence the group dynamics and perspectives gained (Gray, 2009). The researcher will be instrumental in ensuring that quality data is generated by being prepared to direct the group appropriately and flexibly. I was confident in my ability to manage group dynamics following previous experience of chairing and facilitating meetings.

Some argue that focus groups are not appropriate for exploring sensitive topics with participants, as due to their very nature, they can never be entirely confidential or anonymous (Gibbs, 1997). Others argue that focus groups are appropriate for such discussions as they provide “safety in numbers” and the presence of others who may share similar experiences (Oates, 2000, p.188). The participants taking part in the focus groups conducted as part of the current study were asked to provide their general perspectives on help-seeking and Pupil Time to Talk as an initiative, they were not asked to discuss any personal experiences of either. Also, as described in Chapter 4 section 4.4.3.1, it was made clear to the participants at the start of the focus group that I would be available for individual debriefing should the content of what was discussed during the group impact them in any way.

3.8.1.3 Questionnaire.

Gray (2009) simply describes questionnaires as “research tools through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order” (p. 337). Questionnaires can be written in many different ways, and are widely used in all types of research situations, whether the goal is to obtain numerical data or indeed qualitative information (Brace, 2008).

3.8.1.3.1 Considerations when designing a questionnaire.

Gillham (2000) urges the researcher to consider what is the broad aim of the questionnaire, and what specific research questions is it hoping to address prior to its design. In relation to the current project, a questionnaire was deemed an appropriate method of seeking opinions on the Pupil Time to Talk service and how it
may be improved from pupils making use of the service. It was felt that inviting the purposive sample of pupils to complete a questionnaire at the end of a Pupil Time to Talk session was more appropriate than asking a pupil to take part in an interview at that point or even at a later point in time, due to increased potential impact of bias, along with other ethical considerations. The research questions the questionnaire was design to answer were:

- How is ‘Time to Talk’ perceived by post-16 pupils? and,
- What were the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of ‘Time to Talk’ in this context?

Ensuring transferability between the research issues to be addressed and the questions included in the questionnaire helps increase its validity as a data gathering tool (Foddy, 1993).

Gray (2009) provides a clear guideline to follow when designing an original questionnaire. He highlights the considerations that have to be made when writing individual questions, in ensuring that the language used is clear and concise, with each question being able to “stand on its own merits” (p. 340). I discussed key considerations in questionnaire design with the EPS stakeholders who supported me in developing the questionnaire (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.2).

In designing the questionnaire, we took notice of Cannell’s (1985) advice that using a variety of question types can help maintain a participants’ interest, and support response rates; as a result we used open and closed questions within the questionnaire. Whilst open questions potentially provide the researcher with rich responses from participants which is especially important within a field where no prior data exists, Gray (2009) mentions one of the disadvantages of open questions, as demanding more time and effort from the participant. As discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.2, one of the recommendations from the young people who piloted the questionnaire, was to reduce the number of open questions. A variety of closed question types were used, including list questions, ordinal scale questions, and continuum scale questions; the participant was also invited to provide further comment after some closed questions. It was recognised that one of the disadvantages of some of the closed questions, whilst perhaps acting as a thought aid, might influence the participants’ responses to later questions.
Myself and the EPS stakeholders involved in designing the questionnaire for the current project, also tried to adhere to the advice provided within the literature regarding the layout and sequence of the questionnaire. Oppenheim (1992, as cited by Gray, 2009) identifies that placing personal questions, for example, age and gender questions at the beginning of a questionnaire may diminish a participants’ enthusiasm to answer subsequent questions, suggesting that these sort of mundane questions should be placed at the end of a questionnaire. Gray (2009) also suggests that questions should be sequenced as going from relatively easy to harder questions, from more concrete questions to more abstract ones.

3.8.1.3.2 Piloting of Questionnaire.

Although the questionnaire designed for the current study was a simple tool and was not intended to be used to produce any inferential statistical information, considerations of its design quality and rigour remained important.

Williams (2003) stresses the importance of pre-piloting and piloting newly designed questionnaires to help determine their acceptability and quality. In relation to the current study, the questionnaire designed collaboratively with the EPS stakeholders was pre-piloted by five year 12 pupils from another secondary school within LA 1. The project aims and purpose of the questionnaire was explained to them. Subsequently they provided their views on the various issues relating to the appropriateness of the participant information sheet and consent form as well as the questionnaire. The pupils were encouraged to comment for example, on how easy the questions are to understand, if there were any ambiguities in the information sheet or questionnaire, was the layout easy to follow, how long did they estimate it would take them to complete the questionnaire, and so forth. The questionnaire and participant Information and Consent sheet was subsequently altered based on the recommendations from the pre-pilot (See Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.2 for details of the feedback obtained).

A further ‘pilot’ phase was not possible in the context of the this action research cycle, as it would have meant pupils who had experienced a Pupil Time to Talk session completing the questionnaire and providing their feedback on it prior to its use in the research.
3.8.1.3.3 Questionnaire Analysis.
A Thematic Analysis (section 3.8.2) was planned in relation to the responses obtained to the open questions included in the questionnaire. In collaboration with stakeholders, I planned for the closed questions to be analysed using descriptive statistics.\(^1\)

3.8.1.3.4 Criticisms of Questionnaire use.
One of the most prominent criticisms of this form of data gathering relates to the typically low response rates associated with self-administered questionnaires (Gray, 2009). It was hoped that this issue would be overcome in the current study by asking participants to fill in the questionnaire at the end of their Pupil Time to Talk session.

A significant weakness of questionnaires in comparison to verbal communication via interview or focus group, relates to the possibility that the participant may provide "flippant, inaccurate or misleading answers, but the researcher is not in a position to detect this" (Gary, 2009, p. 339). The feedback received from the pre-pilot of the questionnaire in terms of reducing the number of open questions included, alludes to the fact that participants are not often motivated to provide full, thoughtful and insightful answers within a questionnaire, impacting on the richness of the data collected. In relation to the current project, the co-researchers were aware of these potential limitations in comparison to other possible data gathering methods. However a joint decision was reached signifying that the potential 'costs' of using a questionnaire to gain pupil perspectives on the Time to Talk service they had received, did not outweigh the potential ethical dilemmas of using another form of data collection such as interviews (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.2).

3.8.2 Method of Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis.
Thematic Analysis is a method that seeks to identify, analyse and report on distinctive patterns or themes occurring within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning

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\(^1\) As will become clear to the reader in Chapter 4, no analytic use was made of the questionnaire designed, which explains the hypothetical phrasing used.
within the data set” (p. 82). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) describe how the themes identified through a systematic process of analysis reflect a “phenomenon” of interest to the researcher (p. 82). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that Thematic Analysis has been poorly distinguished within previous research, suffering from a widely held ideology that is it a tool to use across different methods rather than being a “specific approach in its own right” (p. 78). Thematic analysis is not a method affiliated to one particular epistemology as some qualitative methods of analysis are, making it a very attractive method for researchers of all theoretical backgrounds. In relation to the current study, Braun and Clarke’s perspective on thematic analysis as being a standalone, flexible method of analysis is adopted in relation to the critical realist stance taken.

Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss how themes can be identified in one of two ways during thematic analysis:

- Inductively – Involves approaching the data with an ‘open mind’. Themes are derived completely from the content of the data gathered, and are not influenced by the researcher’s theoretical interest, and as such are completely data-driven (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes identified through inductive analysis may not therefore bear much resemblance to research questions or content or the questions participants were asked to answer.

- Deductively – Involves approaching the data with a specific idea or question in mind, based on theory/information from the literature, and using the data to confirm or contradict the idea. Therefore the themes identified are driven by the researcher’s theoretical interests and knowledge of past findings in relation to a particular subject – prior research-driven and/or theory-driven (Boyatzis, 1998).

Both are valid forms of thematic analysis and the decision to adopt one or the other depends on the researcher’s reasoning for coding the data in the first instance. However, researchers adopting a purely inductive approach to thematic analysis need to bear in mind that it is not possible to completely free themselves of their theoretical values and prior knowledge of a phenomenon; as is made explicit by Braun and Clarke (2006), “data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum” (p. 84).
In relation to the current study, a hybrid coding framework was used (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). This approach complemented the research questions the focus groups sought to address by allowing the theoretical considerations identified within the literature review as relating to Pupil Time to Talk (deductive analysis) to be central to the coding process, whilst allowing for themes to be identified directly from the data sets using inductive coding. This allowed for a detailed analysis of the data in relation to the research questions to be achieved without losing sight of any important unexpected or unrelated information contained within the data. This was considered especially important considering that Pupil Time to Talk is a new service with no directly similar research having taken place previously.

Although it is a widely used method, researchers have implemented thematic analysis in different ways (Attride-Striling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), leading to a lack of clarity regarding its use. A step by step description of the actions taken in relation to conducting the thematic analysis during the current project is provided in section 3.8.2.2, ensuring that the process undertaken is transparent and easy to follow as advised by Attride-Sterling (2001). Prior to guiding the reader through a step by step guide of the process, I will describe the method used to arrange and illustrate the themes identified.

3.8.2.1 Thematic Networks

Attride-Stirling (2001) describes a technique for aiding and presenting thematic analysis in the form of thematic networks - web like illustrations organising and summarising the themes identified.

The technique provides practical and effective procedures for conducting an analysis; it enables a methodological systematization of textual data, facilitates the disclosure of each step in the analytic process, aids the organization of an analysis and its presentation, and allows a sensitive, insightful and rich exploration of a text’s overt structures and underlying patterns (p. 386).

Thematic Networks do not describe the analysis itself, but allow for the researcher to present three different levels of key themes identified within data sets following a systematic analysis. They are presented as web-like structures to overcome any concepts of hierarchy existing between the different levels of salient themes. Such a visual structure also emphasises the fluidity and interconnectivity existing throughout the network (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389), and how initial themes lead
the researcher to identify “the principal metaphors in the text as a whole” (p. 388). It is envisaged that using a tool such as Thematic Networks to illustrate our interpretations of the data collected will support the reader’s understanding of the analysis’ findings.

**Figure 3.3: Structure of a Thematic Network depicting three levels of themes.**

*Basic Theme* – These are the lowest order themes derived from the data set. In order for Basic Themes to be understood beyond their explicit meaning they need to be contextualised with the other Basic Themes identified, in isolation they will reveal
very little to the reader about the content of the text. Grouped together, they form Organising Themes.

Organising Theme – These are the middle order themes that cluster Basic Themes into groups which convey similar issues. They tend to be more abstract and more revealing of underlying ideas contained within the text. When Organising Themes are grouped together they reflect a broader theme that is significant to the data set as a whole – a Global Theme.

Global Theme – These are super-ordinate themes that describe the main metaphors contained within the data as a whole. Clustering Organising Themes together in this way presents an over-arching assertion or position regarding participants’ perceptions of reality. Global Themes summarise the lower order themes closely linked to the data.

An analysis of a data set may yield more than one Thematic Network, and therefore more than one Global Theme. There are no restrictions as to how many themes may be depicted within a Thematic Network, the researcher must decide what is appropriate in terms of doing justice to the data whilst remaining practical (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

3.8.2.2 The Thematic Analysis process
Aspects of the guidelines set out by Attride-Stirling (2001), Braun and Clarke (2006) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) were combined to direct the analytic process undertaken in relation to the current research. The process contained the following steps:
Table 3.2: The steps taken during the Thematic Analyses process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Analysis Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 – Familiarised self with the data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listened to the audio data of each focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transcribed the content of the audio recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read the transcriptions on several occasions, making notes of initial thoughts and ideas about the content in the margins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2 – Devised coding framework and generated initial codes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A coding framework based on the research questions and findings from previous literature was devised and applied to the textual data, systematically reducing it into manageable and meaningful coded sections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Following the deductive coding, the text was reviewed again and coded inductively by highlighting segments of the data that seemed to describe an alternative phenomenon to those identified with the predetermined codes, or that seemed to expand on an existing code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These deductively and inductively identified initial codes were applied to the entire data set manually (rather than by using a software package) using a highlighter pen to distinguish between representative text segments and salient information was transferred to post-it notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3 – Identified Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The text segments representing all initial codes were grouped together and organised into groups of particularly similar and salient ideas that represented patterns or themes within the data, based on researcher judgement. What constituted a theme was not dependent on its prevalence within the data necessarily, but on whether it captured something meaningful within the data set (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006, p. 82). A note was made of all selected themes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Step 4 – Reviewed and Refined Themes | • The initial themes identified were further reviewed and refined by ensuring that they were:  
  o Specific enough to be considered a discrete and independent theme.  
  o Broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in several text segments (see Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392).  
• The original transcriptions were revisited to ensure that the refined themes identified encapsulated the data, and to check whether any further data, that may have been missed originally, now needed to be coded in relation to any of the themes. |
| Step 5 – Defined and arranged themes | • The refined themes were organised into groups encapsulating similar ideologies and issues, and were titled appropriately in accordance with their core meanings. |
| Step 6 – Constructed Thematic Networks | • The themes derived from the original text, which were organised into groups were considered to be the Basic Themes within the thematic network/s.  
• The Basic Themes were arranged into clusters of similar issues/ideas to form Organising Themes.  
• The Organising Themes were subsequently reviewed and unified under a new Global Theme that represented the overarching essence of the thematic network.  
• Thematic network webs were produced to illustrate each network and checks were made to ensure that the networks accurately reflected the original data sets. |
| Step 7 – Described and explored the thematic networks | • Original text extracts were used to describe the content of each network.  
• The various thematic levels were explored by revisiting the original data, reflecting on underlying patterns and interconnections between themes. |
Step 8 – Summarised and interpreted the thematic networks

- A summary of each thematic network was produced to highlight the patterns that had emerged during the previous step.
- The thematic networks were then further discussed in relation to the study’s research questions and perceptions from the literature (see Chapter 5).

3.8.2.3 Conducting rigorous thematic analysis.

In addition to employing the methods outlined in section 3.4 to ensure good quality research is produced, I took heed of the advice provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) specifically in relation to thematic analysis. They highlight the criteria they consider essential in ensuring a good quality, rigorous analysis is achieved. They recognise the ongoing debates in relation to assessing qualitative research, and provide their own “15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis” (p. 96) which was followed in relation to the current study. One of the issues stressed is the “need to be clear and explicit about what you are doing, and what you say you are doing needs to match up with what you actually do... the theory and method need to be applied rigorously” (p. 96). The steps outlined above make explicit the process adhered to and photographic evidence of the analyses demonstrate the process in action, and is included in Appendix A. Using such a visual method of analysis as opposed to using a software package supported my subsequent sharing of the process with the stakeholders.

3.8.2.4 Criticisms of Thematic Analysis.

One of thematic analysis’ most attractive features – its flexibility, is also considered to be one of its main weaknesses. Its flexibility, and resulting lack of clear guidelines in relation to its use, may have inadvertently added weight to the general “anything goes” critique of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Braun and Clarke (2006) attempt to go some way to diminish this criticism of thematic analysis by providing researchers with a common vocabulary and a process to follow when conducting thematic analysis, without restricting its inherent flexibility.

Another potential disadvantage of thematic analysis in comparison to other forms of qualitative analysis methods is that it is focused solely on the themes contained within transcripts of text. It does not allow the researcher to speculate on the
language used by participants or on the fine-tuned, non-verbal aspects of interaction that may reveal interesting and alternative perspectives on the data. The inclusion of such information was not deemed a priority in relation to the current project, but such issues highlight the importance of choosing a method that is appropriate for your research questions rather than the other way around (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.9 OVERALL CRITICISMS OF METHODOLOGY

I have already highlighted the general criticisms aimed at each individual aspect of my methodology throughout this chapter, and acknowledged their particular relevance in this context. I will now provide a critique of the most pertinent factors impacting the overall design, bearing in mind that critical realists believe all research to be fallible and imperfect (Sayer, 2000).

It may be argued that the study does not actually constitute a ‘pure’ action research approach, originating in a ‘bottom-up’ fashion, with school personnel identifying a problem within their organisation and inviting a researcher to help them address the issue collaboratively. In this instance, the EPS initially ‘held’ the problem or dilemma and ‘shared’ it was a secondary school by seeking an ‘invitation to act’. It may be argued that the almost ‘top-down’ approach taken impacted on the level and nature of the collaboration achieved between myself and the co-researchers, and their ‘ownership’ of the focus issues.

In reality, a ‘pure’ action research approach may not always be possible when supporting schools with no prior experience of the methodology or working with EPSs in a research capacity. It is likely that key school personnel initially benefit from support to identify appropriate systemic issues that may be investigated through action research, with the hope that they realise its potential for their organisation, and subsequently engage in ‘purer’ forms of action research in future.

In relation to the current study, I do not feel that the EPS instigated collaboration unduly impacted on the collaborative relationship that was achieved overall between the myself and the immediate stakeholders. By end of the process it was clear that the school stakeholders acknowledged that the issues to be addressed were as much ‘theirs’, as they were the EPS's.
It may be said that issues of social desirability influence the data gathered from pupils during the project. I was initially introduced to all year 12 and 13 pupils during the initial stages of the project, when I presented them with details regarding Pupil Time to Talk. As I also facilitated the three pupil focus groups that took place towards the latter stages of the action research, it may be that the pupils participating did not view me as a ‘neutral’ facilitator, and as a result did not feel that they could contribute honestly and truthfully. This issue resulted from the adjustments that had to be made as the action research evolved, was not therefore foreseen.

Other significant issues arising from the design of the research, such as criticisms of the research’s timeframe and key stakeholders’ status within school are discussed as they arise during the RADIO phases and again in Chapter 5.

3.10 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval for this research to take place was granted by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix B for letter of confirmation). As a result, only the most pertinent and more complex ethical issues related to the project are discussed here.

The research project has taken regard of the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006) and the Health Professions Council’s (HPC) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2008) in the design of this study. Both stipulate the need for researchers to take responsibility in being professional in their conduct, be honest and explicit about what is required of participants, and take heed of participants’ psychological well-being, health, values and dignity. The guidelines provided in the BPS’ DECP Professional Practice Guidelines were also prominent considerations in the study’s design and implementation.

Robson (2002) alludes to the fact that action research may carry additional ethical implications in comparison with other types of research, due to participants having an active role within the process. In relation to the current study, there were two strands of the project to consider in terms of ensuring that ethical principles pervaded:
• Ethical *professional* practice in relation to offering a service to young people (young people making use of the Pupil Time to Talk service implemented did not necessarily also become participants in the research).
• Ethical *research* practice in relation to research participants.

### 3.10.1 Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Safeguarding issues.

As is described in Chapter 4, a short presentation regarding the nature and purpose of Pupil Time to Talk as a service was provided to all year 12 and 13 pupils. Due to Pupil Time to Talk being a new initiative, pupils were made aware during the presentation that, should they make use of it, they may be invited to provide feedback on their experiences by filling out a short questionnaire at the end of a session. However, it was stressed that making use of the Pupil Time to Talk service did not enforce participation in the research through providing feedback on their experience of it. Each pupil was given a Pupil Time to Talk information/promotion leaflet (see Appendix C), and a contact card with essential detail.

In relation to pupils making use of the Pupil Time to Talk service, they were offered the same level of *conditional* confidentiality as a young person accessing the EPS through an adult-directed referral. That is, the content of a Time to Talk session will remain confidential between the pupil and EP, unless explicit permission is given to share relevant information with others, or information sharing is deemed necessary to promote the best interests of the pupil, for example, if concerns for their safety or the safety of those around them have been identified. The Confidentiality Agreement presented to them at the outset of a session made this issue clear and ensured that pupils were well informed of what the service could offer in terms of confidentiality, and record keeping, and were consenting of those issues (see Appendix D).

Towards the end of a Pupil Time to Talk session, practitioner/researcher judgement was going to be employed to determine whether it was appropriate to ask the pupil to partake in the research through filling out the questionnaire. Had that been the case, a Research Information sheet was designed to be read through jointly (see Appendix E), providing the pupil with opportunities to ask questions as issues arose prior to providing consent by signing the consent form.
3.10.2 Protection from harm.

A large proportion of my current work as a TEP working within a local authority setting involves working individually with vulnerable children, young people and adults alike, adhering to the Professional Practice Guidelines set out by the DECP (BPS, 2002) and HPC (2008) standards. As a result I have well-developed skills in building rapport with individuals and using appropriate therapeutic techniques to support their emotional well-being, being mindful that they are likely to be particularly anxious about meeting with a psychologist and discussing personal issues of concern. These skills would be put into practice during Pupil Time to Talk sessions to eliminate potential risks of harm to the young person. I also recognise the limits of my professional competence, and contingencies were in place should I feel that a pupil accessing the service required more support than I or the EPS was able to offer, due to the close working relationship established with the school based counselling service and the CAMHS EIPT.

Having described the design and methods used, the next chapter will describe how they were put into practice within the RADIO framework adopted.
Chapter 4: Results

4.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This Chapter is organised sequentially by the twelve RADIO Stages carried out, in accordance to Timmins et al.’s (2003) approach. The relevance of findings achieved through the action research process to the three research questions set will be discussed in the next Chapter.

4.1.1 The RADIO stages undertaken and brief summary of the results found.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the activities carried out at each stage of the RADIO process undertaken and a brief summary of the results/findings at each stage.

Table 4.1: Activities carried out at each phase and stage of the RADIO process and a brief summary of the outcomes/findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RADIO Phases</th>
<th>RADIO Stages</th>
<th>Activities carried out</th>
<th>Results/Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying Concerns</td>
<td>1. Awareness of Need</td>
<td>I discussed the potential need for further investigation of EPs’ work with post-16</td>
<td>• Clear support/rationale for proposed project within psychological literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stages 1-4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>students with a variety of individuals/services e.g. EPS team, SBC Team, Multi-Agency</td>
<td>reviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Health Forum, Identified School’s Inclusion Team, and clarified current</td>
<td>• Clear need identified by multi-agency individuals consulted along with their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>psychological services available to post-16 pupils. I also introduced the proposed</td>
<td>support for the project.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>project to gain their thoughts on the idea.</td>
<td>• Thematic Network in relation to Pupil Time to Talk’s potential to fill a gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings/focus group discussions transcribed. Thematic Analysis was carried out with</td>
<td>formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the results depicted through Thematic Networks.</td>
<td>• Potential school to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods Mode (Stage 5-8)</td>
<td>5. Agreeing focus of concern</td>
<td>Agreement reached with Major Research Stakeholders regarding particular research aims</td>
<td>Three Research Questions established</td>
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<td>4. Identifying stakeholders in area of need</td>
<td>During an Inclusion Team Meeting identified the major stakeholders in the research process and established appropriate feedback and contribution opportunities. Also identified co-researcher roles to work collaboratively with the research facilitator at all stages.</td>
<td>• Inclusion Team Members and EPS team members identified as Main Research Stakeholders • Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher identified as co-researchers</td>
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<td>3. Identifying organisational and cultural issues</td>
<td>Potential supportive or hindering factors in relation to carrying out research within the school were explored in an Inclusion Team Meeting.</td>
<td>• Potential facilitating factors as well as barriers or threats to the research process identified. • Brief discussion around ways to ameliorate some of the hindering factors identified.</td>
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<td>2. Invitation to act</td>
<td>I approached the school identified as a possible setting for the research with the support of the school’s allocated EP. School’s Inclusion Team identified as most appropriate contact within the setting. Ideas discussed with School’s Inclusion Team.</td>
<td>• Invitation to act received from the identified schools’ Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Also received advice from multi-agency perspective regarding potential schools to approach with project proposal.</td>
<td>approach identified</td>
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<td>Stage</td>
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| 6. Negotiating framework for information gathering                    | Due to the nature of our action research project, this stage initially consisted of reaching decisions with the stakeholders regarding the implementation and related logistical factors essential in getting Pupil Time to Talk ‘up and running’. After such decisions had been made, research design and appropriate methods of data collection were agreed upon in order to ‘answer’ the research questions posed. | • Marketing plans for Pupil Time to Talk agreed.  
• Logistical factors regarding when, where and how pupil Time to Talk session would take place agreed.  
• Focus Groups, questionnaire and research diary agreed as appropriate initial information gathering tools |
| 7. Gathering information                                             | 10 full days, over period of one term, spent at School A offering Pupil Time to Talk                                                                                                                          | • No questionnaire information was gathered.  
• Information regarding various issues that arose during this time period, reflected upon in research diary. |
| 8. Processing information with research sponsors/stakeholders       | Meeting with smaller group of stakeholders slightly earlier than initially planned on 16th November 2012.                                                                                                    | • Information processed with stakeholders in relation to research context.                  |

**Organisational change mode (Stages 9-12)**

| 9. Agreeing areas for future action                                  | Decisions reached by stakeholders regarding next steps in research process based on information gathered to date.                                                                                             | • Identified that further, direct information was required from pupils to help answer research questions 2 and 3.  
• Focus groups decided as best method of |
gathering information required.
- Pupil Time to Talk to continue to be offered until January 2011, but in a new location at the year 12 and 13 block.
- Stakeholders considering options for developing pupil participation within school.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>10. Action Planning</th>
<th>Joint working with stakeholders to move forwards with the areas for action identified.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Year 12 and 13 pupils informed of new Time to Talk venue.</td>
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<td>• Pupil Focus Group Information Sheet and Consent Form designed.</td>
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<td>• Focus Group Facilitating Questions formed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Participants randomly selected using the school register and invited to participate by the co-researchers. 18 potential participants identified.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Stakeholders to approach Head Teacher with their ideas regarding pupil participation.</td>
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<th>11. Implementation/ Pupil Time to Talk</th>
<th>Three Global</th>
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<tr>
<td>action</td>
<td>session continued to be offered. Three focus groups carried out with 18 young people and the content was transcribed. Thematic Analysis was carried out with the results depicted through Thematic Networks.</td>
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| 12. Evaluating Action | Focus group analysis was fed back to the immediate and wider stakeholder groups, and the work undertaken during the action research project was evaluated in relation to the developmental needs of school and EPS. | • School A will consult with pupils on a regular basis.  
• School will consider the support needs identified by pupils and implement strategies to that effect.  
• School will consider developing the use of technology in relation to its pastoral care arrangements.  
• EPS will produce service information leaflets aimed at pupils.  
• EPS will become involved with more universal work within secondary schools, drawing on the 'workshop' ideas suggested during pupil focus groups.  
• Concept of Pupil Time to Talk will be revisited at a later date. |
4.2 RADIO ‘CLARYFING CONCERNS’ PHASE

4.2.1 RADIO Stage 1: Awareness of Need.

The first stage of the RADIO approach involves identifying an area of need, where research may help address or increase understanding of the need identified.

Prior to my commencing work at LA 1, the EPS team had been discussing how the parental Time to Talk initiative and model of working could be enhanced following the positive feedback received from parents who made use of the service (Gravell, 2008). The EPS was interested in how Time to Talk may also be utilised for young people’s use, in particular those who were not receiving psychological support from any other source.

Following supervision sessions discussing various research ideas, I carried out a brief investigation of the literature related to EPs and their use of ‘drop-in’ models. This suggested that there may be a gap in the knowledge-base around this area generally, let alone their use with young people; a dearth of research into EPs work with older adolescents was also evident and therefore we approached the PEP and the EPS team for their thoughts.

4.2.1.1 EPS Team Meeting.

I created a brief presentation detailing my initial findings from the literature for the meeting. The team members recapped upon some of their previous discussions on enhancing Time to Talk, and felt strongly that in recent years the service might have veered too strongly towards working through a consultative model, possibly at the expense of working directly with young people. They hypothesised whether or not a ‘Pupil’ Time to Talk could potentially rectify that situation. One of the EPs, who was particularly interested in the needs of Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils due to a background as a lecturer in a tertiary college, suggested that the project should initially focus on offering the initiative to this population only, suggesting that it was a population that often misses out on EP input for a variety of reasons. She also felt that an EP project focusing on this population would help highlight older adolescents’ unique set of needs to school staff and potentially promote organisational changes within schools with regard to the provisions in place for this population. I made a note in my research diary to look at the service audit information to gain anecdotal evidence regarding the team’s current involvement.
with older adolescents, particularly post-16 pupils, and to seek further information regarding consent issues for EPs working directly with young people.

During the meeting I shared my initial methodological ideas with the team to gain their thoughts on its feasibility as a project. It was agreed that one school should be used to pilot the initiative. Based on my previous experiences of undertaking research in schools, I felt strongly that school staff should be closely involved in the project, providing a feeling of shared ownership and a stake in its development.

One of the team members had just completed her Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology and had used an Action Research methodology in her thesis. She felt that the proposed project sounded like a quest to learn about how the EPS could improve its service to young people, and that as a service we were likely to reflect on the findings of a pilot Pupil Time to Talk before adapting our service further in light of those findings – essentially the cyclical information gathering, taking action and evaluating, that Action Research seeks to achieve. This insight, coupled with my prior observation about the need to work collaboratively with school staff in designing and implementing the proposed project, seemed to provide a clear rationale for undertaking an action research project. It was decided that, in accordance with RADIO, if the main research stakeholders agreed to its use, it would be the model of action research adopted for the proposed project.

We discussed the need to approach a secondary school with the proposed research idea and seek an ‘invitation to act’. It was suggested by the team that I continued to investigate the awareness of need by introducing the idea during the next LA 1 Emotional Health Forum (described in Chapter 2, section 2.3.5.1) to gain a multi-agency perspective on the proposed project and seek advice from the forum members regarding possible secondary schools to approach.

Upon reflecting on the discussion that took place during the EPS team meeting, I identified several different strands of inquiry that I wanted to follow up on within the literature. It was evident that the idea of a pupil drop-in service did not have its roots within one clear area of psychological theory and research, and as such I needed an overview of many different areas as well as comprehensive knowledge of the literature most closely related to the proposed project. Over the next few months I review the literature in order to gain a better perspective of the wider need for such
a service, to support the information and insights I already had about the local need for such a service.

In discussion with my supervisor, I decided that the best way of collecting information about the need for such a service would be to discuss the idea with as many sources as possible – a wide stakeholder group. This would also provide me with an understanding of their general views around Pupil Time to Talk. I could then use the content of these discussions as data sets to analyse deductively in relation to these pertinent issues.

4.2.1.2 Emotional Health Forum.

Following gaining the necessary consent (see Appendix F), I planned to engage the multi-agency forum members in a focus group discussion around the issues of pupils directly accessing EPs, and I prepared facilitating questions to aid the discussion (see Appendix G). The focus group with the Emotional Health Forum acted as a pilot to my subsequent meetings with school-based stakeholders. Unfortunately it was not agreed that the focus group could be audio recorded, and therefore one of the EPs in attendance agreed to take detailed notes of the focus group content.

In addition to providing me with a data set for analysis around the local need for such an initiative through their contribution to the focus group, the advice and experience of the Emotional Health Forum members proved invaluable in identifying a school to approach to work with collaboratively on the project. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.2.

Following the focus group, the SBC Team Leader, who was a Forum member, invited me to present the project idea to her colleagues, thinking that they would be very interested in being kept informed of its on-going development.

4.2.1.3 Meeting with SBC team.

I felt that this meeting with the SBCs provided me with further opportunity to gather information about the perceived need for such a service. Timmins et al. (2003) writes that although their presentation of the RADIO model suggests a "sequential
approach to research and development, phases often need to be re-visited in the course of an initiative” (p.230).

4.2.1.4 Focus Group with school-based stakeholders.

This focus group with the identified stakeholders from the school at which the project was set will be introduced and discussed in more detail during RADIO Stages 2 and 3, as its main purpose was to explore the cultural and organisational barriers to the research. However, it is mentioned briefly here, as a number of issues around awareness of need and stakeholder views of the initiative were discussed during the course of that focus group, and are included in the analysis of these issues and Thematic Network produced (see 4.2.1.6). This focus group was carried out in Welsh, as that was the stakeholders' preference.

4.2.1.5 Thematic Analysis

As I had discussed the project with various individuals from multi-agency backgrounds, some of them months apart, I felt that I needed to clarify my thoughts around their perception of need for such an initiative, and how they fitted with the research literature. I felt that analysing the data thematically and presenting the identified themes in a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001) would support my understanding of the area and structure my thoughts.

The written notes taken during the EPS team meeting and Emotional Health Forum focus group were used in conjunction with the fully transcribed audio recording of the SBC focus group and school stakeholder focus group for the analysis.

I approached the data with the idea that, based on the literature, there was a need for an initiative such as Pupil Time to Talk in theory, and the data was coded specifically on that hypothesis (that is, deductively, see Chapter 3, section 3.8.2). The purpose of the thematic analysis was to decipher if that theoretical need was identified by stakeholders are being a real, local need for young people. The data sets were analysed as a whole rather than separately.

Triangulation of the analysis was achieved through verification of my analysis by an EP colleague. My supervisor was aware of the pertinent findings I had made within the literature reviewed that had led to the hypothesis around the need for such an initiative. It was therefore possible, with that contextual knowledge, for us both to
deductively code the data independently, before meeting again to compare our
codes. I coded the whole data set, and my EP supervisor coded the SBC
counselling data set due to time constraints. This allowed for a level of ‘inter-rater
reliability’ to be achieved. We then reflected on the similarities and differences
between our coding systems and how we had arranged those codes into potential
themes. Our coding systems were amalgamated to produce the basis for the
thematic network produced below.

4.2.1.6 Thematic Network: Time to Talk: Potential to Fill a Gap.

This thematic network consists of three Organising themes and seven Basic
Themes.

It represents an exploration of the wider and more immediate stakeholders’
perceptions around the need for an initiative such as Pupil Time to Talk. The
discussion highlighted that the stakeholders perceive such an initiative as ‘filling a
gap’ at three different levels, which form the main themes: Pupil Needs, School Staff
Needs, and External Agencies’ Needs. Text segments from the original data sets as
well as notes taken at the time are used to illustrate the themes deduced.
4.2.1.6.1 Organising Theme: Pupils’ Needs.

This Organising Theme relates to how an initiative such as Pupil Time to Talk could meet individual needs at the pupil level. The Basic Themes highlight some of the issues faced by young people, the barriers faced in trying to gain access to appropriate support services, and how the initiative may help bridge some of those barriers.

Basic Theme: Direct Access to External Agency

Some stakeholders identified the potential benefits of pupils being able to access support from an external agency directly, highlighting some of the barriers involved with ‘referral’ based services. They felt that being able to directly access a service
that may be able to offer them a more stringent level of confidentiality (albeit in line with child protection guidelines) in comparison to school staff was an attractive quality, especially for young people in their late teens seeking support.

I mean, with the best will in the world, there is a big pressure on us to prioritise those pupils who are really struggling with their learning or those who are causing a real behaviour management issue for the whole school during planning meeting and things... I think these other pupils that we’re talking about are the ones that are always discussed in the teachers’ lounge because so many people are concerned for them, but don’t really know where to turn, because the difficulties maybe haven’t quite reached that level yet, (ALNCo).

In my experience older adolescents often seem to ‘lose touch’ with significant adults within school, adults they might have turned to for support at an earlier point in their school career, as a result of their growing independence from school structures. This is at the same time, don’t forget, as a huge increase on the demands placed on them takes place... so we do need to be thinking differently, and offering different services to these young people... offering a direct service is really age-appropriate I think, (CAMHS EIPT worker).

Basic Theme: ‘Grey’ Pupils
This basic theme is closely related to that of Directly Accessing External Services. Some of the stakeholders made reference to an often unrecognised group of individuals who get by day-to-day without drawing attention to themselves, but perhaps experience internalised difficulties such as anxiety or low mood. Stakeholders reflected on the possibility of such difficulties over time, especially if they remained unrecognised, leading to those individuals experiencing significant difficulties, impacting on all areas of their lives.

I remember in a course or something once, somebody making reference to ‘Grey’ kids... and I’d never heard that term before... but it stuck with me because I think that it sums up some pupils very well... they just blend into the background and none of us realise anything is bothering them until the problem has escalated and is really entrenched... I think that the outcomes
for those pupils are often bleaker than they are to those pupils who’ve been causing difficulties all along... something like this could help at least some of those pupils, it provides those with some insight into their difficulties with an avenue of support, (Head of Inclusion).

**Basic Theme: Falling between Child and Adult services**

Difficulties face by post-16 pupils when accessing services such as CAMHS were discussed, as is highlighted in the notes taken during the emotional health forum focus group:

- CAMHS in LA 1 is open to referrals for individuals up to the age of eighteen
- However, individuals are put on their waiting lists but have crossed that age threshold by the time they are offered an initial appointment
- Then another long wait to be seen by the local Adult Mental Health team

A service like this [Pupil Time to Talk] might be able to identify young people in need of support and signpost them to relevant services sooner than would usually be the case, so we’d have less young people falling between the cracks, (Psychological Therapist).

**4.2.1.6.2 Organising Theme: School Staffs’ Needs.**

An evident theme was the idea that a service such as Pupil Time to Talk, would not only meet young people’s needs but also inadvertently address some of the issues experienced by school staff who are working closely with them.

**Basic Theme: Additional layer of support**

Some stakeholders made reference to the fact that school staff are often placed in difficult positions when attempting to support pupils experiencing problems, and may feel ‘out of their depth’ at times. Having an easily accessible service such as Pupil Time to Talk was perceived to provide staff with an ‘additional layer’ of support to fall back on if required.

Staff with responsibilities relating to pastoral care, and Teaching Assistants and Mentors, who young people often turn to for support, do ask me for supervision almost at times because they’re feeling overwhelmed. Something like this could potentially relieve some of the pressure on those
staff, who often had received limited training in this area, by providing them with the knowledge that an additional ‘layer’ of accessible support was available for these young people, if they require it, (School Nurse).

Basic Theme: Raise Awareness
Some saw the implementation of a service specifically to meet the needs of year 12 and 13 pupils as a positive opportunity to raise awareness of this cohort’s unique needs amongst staff, who may have assumed that they no longer required the levels of pastoral support offered to them during their younger school years.

People still hold that traditional view of 6th formers as being pretty sorted young people who’ve got that resiliency to cope with the pressures they’re faced with... I think in many cases the sort of pastoral support that schools have almost dries up once they get to 6th form... they are expected to do it on their own, almost self-directed... with all the changes to post 16 education, I don’t think that’s the case anymore, you’ve got a more varied cohort with varying degrees of academic, social and emotional needs... that needs pointing out to staff, help them see the link between emotional well-being and kind of academic... results, (School Based Counsellor).

4.2.1.6.3 Organising Theme: External Agencies’ Needs.
In some respect, the origins of the idea for Pupil Time to Talk stems from the EPS’s desire to fulfil some of its own development needs. Some of the stakeholders identified that aspect and elaborated on the possibility that such a service may also meet other external agencies’ needs.

Basic Theme: Participation
Some of the participants suggested that a service such as Pupil Time to Talk allows pupils to be integral to the decision making with regards to their support needs, rather than having to go along with adult-led referrals characteristic of current services.

At the moment, consultation can hardly be regarded as true participation, even if pupils’ views are taken into account and so forth, because they’ve rarely chosen of their own accord to be part of that. Something like this, pupil directed, well that’s real participation, having the power to decide when, and what for..., (Senior EP).
I think that self-referrals often have more powerful outcomes, because that young person has chosen to participate in that system, (School Based Counsellor)

Basic Theme: Relieve pressure

Some participants touched upon the fact that having a service that could be accessed without necessarily having to meet an access criteria, would provide some pupils with access to support that they may not receive otherwise, as well relieving pressure on services by ensuring that referrals to them are more appropriate.

I think we sometimes receive inappropriate referrals because school do not know where to turn to, which clogs up our system in a way... but conversely I think that some of these individuals would benefit from the opportunity to off load and share their concerns, that middle band of children, they don’t necessarily need the intensive support that SBC could offer but need something on a lower scale, (School Based Counsellor).

Yes, maybe it would allow us to adhere more closely to our access criteria than we’re doing currently, just because in some cases we’re making allowance for those kinds of cases, (SBC, Team Leader).

4.2.2 Identifying a School to approach.

Before describing some of the factors identified within the literature and by the Emotional Health Forum members as potential reasons to approach the secondary school which eventually became the setting for the project, I will firstly provide the reader with some details about the recommended school, which I will refer to as School A.

School A is a secondary school for pupils between 11-18 years of age with two learning streams, a Welsh medium stream, and an English/Welsh bilingual stream. Just over half of the pupil population come from homes where Welsh is the first language, and approximately 60% of the pupils attend the Welsh medium learning stream. The school is situated in a market town and caters for pupils transitioning from 16, mostly rural, primary schools. It had 765 pupils on role at the time of the research, with 119 pupils in Year 12 and 13. Some neighbouring secondary schools
do not have a post-16 provision and therefore pupils from outside School A’s catchment area often move from these schools to attend their post-16 provision, as opposed to attending a local tertiary college. Approximately 98% of pupils are of White ethnic origin. Fourteen percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a lower proportion that the Wales average of 17%; however, the school has a higher percentage of pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs in comparison to the national average (6% and 3.4% respectively). The Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales (ESTYN, 2008) school inspection report describes School A as neither being in an affluent area, nor a particularly deprived area. It is however, according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2008), deemed to be in one of the 10% most deprived areas in Wales in terms of access to services, one of the eight domains of deprivation used to calculate the overall level of area deprivation.

Bello (2006) identifies that one of the most important factors for him in choosing a school to work collaboratively with on an action research project, was the organisation’s openness to joint learning and resulting time afforded to staff to get involved with such projects. From my previous experience of carrying out research within schools, I could appreciate this being a priority, as without the support of an organisation’s senior management team, staff enthusiasm can be overshadowed by time constraints and competing responsibilities. Booth (2009) similarly discusses the importance she placed on ensuring that the research setting’s culture and sub-cultures were compatible with the research undertaken. She quotes Deal and Kennedy (1983, as cited in Stoll & Fink, 1996), who stated “when culture works against you, it’s nearly impossible to get anything done” (p. 801).

The CAMHS EIPT Leader initially recommended School A, due to her experience in training staff and supporting them in setting up the FRIENDS for Life programme there. She was aware that the school had a very effective pastoral support team (called the school’s Inclusion Team) who had developed good links with external agencies and tried to promote a help-seeking ethos within the school. ESTYN (2008) identified that the care, support and guidance afforded to pupils was “good with outstanding features” (p.20), with the Inclusion Team receiving direct praise – “The pastoral system is based on structures that are planned and managed effectively” (p.20). The CAMHS EIPT Leader shared that the school’s Inclusion Team was keen to expand on the number of emotional health and therapeutic
based initiatives on offer to pupils within the school, and that it was likely to have the support of the Senior Management team in working collaboratively to do so.

Bello (2006) cites that he felt that geographical proximity between the school or research setting and the researcher’s usual workplace was important in facilitating research. One of the Emotional Health Forum members shared some contrasting thoughts. The Head of Educational Welfare Service shared that she often felt that School A missed out on some new projects and pilots being run by external agencies. She explained that due to its geographical location, outside of the county’s main hub, in addition to School A’s need for bilingual workers due to the linguistic characteristic of the area, it is often overlooked by agencies in favour of other schools. Therefore, she felt that it was likely that the school would be very motivated by an opportunity to be part of an initiative in its infancy, and that that motivation and enthusiasm would prove to be a great research facilitator, outweighing any difficulties created by the school’s geographical remoteness.

The Emotional Health Forum members were aware that I was not a familiar face in School A, but rather than viewing this as a negative factor, they felt that it would provide me with an opportunity to be regarded as a researcher first and foremost, rather than as a Trainee Educational Psychologist trying to fit in a research role around main grade duties. They felt that school staff may be able to be more focused in identifying any organisational and cultural issues that may support or impede the success of the initiative, being aware that I had no background knowledge of the school. They may also be more willing to take onus for organising meetings and managing the logistics of the project, knowing that I did not have a prior professional relationship with key individuals within the school.

I felt, that if I was to go ahead and approach School A - a school I was not familiar with, that it was important for me to work closely with the named EP for School A and utilize her existing relationship with key stakeholders within the school. Her input was invaluable, especially during the Clarifying Concerns and Organisational Change Mode phases of RADIO. In evaluating the action taken with the key stakeholders and planning possible further action research cycles, she was able to look at our findings objectively and support the school staff that I had been working collaboratively with, in reflecting purposefully on the work.
4.2.3 RADIO Stage 2: Invitation to Act.

Timmins et al. (2003), acknowledges that research in reality often stems from someone working as a research facilitator having to initially approach an organisation and “press for an invitation to act” (p.231). Therefore, following identifying a potential need for research within a ‘system’ or organisation, the RADIO model stipulates that the next step is for the TEP/EP to contact those research sponsors/stakeholders who are in a position to “approve and resource the research/development work and negotiate roles” (p. 231) and seek an invitation to act.

I took advantage of the pre-existing relationship between school staff and their allocated EP, and attended the Spring Planning Meeting with the school’s ALNCo in order to introduce the research and gain his thoughts on the best way forward. Although this was quite an informal method of approaching the school, I felt that a face to face discussion might result in more immediate action than if I were to send a formal letter for example to the head teacher.

He agreed to discuss my proposal further with the Inclusion Team leader and ask that individual to contact me within the week. I made a note in my research diary that evening reminding myself that, as I was still very much in the early stages of building a professional relationship with the school, I should still take the onus for moving ahead with the research, contacting the school again if I had not heard back within two weeks. However, I received a telephone call from School A’s Head of Inclusion the following day stating that she and the team were very interested in working collaboratively to develop and implement an initiative. I was invited to meet with her and the Deputy Head Teacher to discuss the project further.

The meeting went well, with School A’s Deputy Head Teacher and the Head of Inclusion recognising a need for such an initiative at the school level and appreciating the EPS’s drive to pilot a new way of working. They communicated a keen commitment to research, discussing a previous experience of being part of an evaluation study for a Primary-Secondary transition programme. Although they had not been actively part of the research process, they had seen the potential benefits of learning more about their day to day practice through systematic analysis. I introduced the basic ideals of action research and the RADIO approach as a possible framework for joint working, not wanting to overwhelm them with too much
information being sensitive to their limited research background. The Deputy Head Teacher expressed that the school was happy to follow the RADIO approach as long as I felt it was appropriate, emphasising again their restricted knowledge of research methodologies. She was however, especially pleased to notice the focus placed on exploring the research setting via the ‘clarifying organisation and cultural issues’ stage, insightfully stating that in her opinion many new educational initiatives are unsuccessful as they are often imposed on schools, failing to take into consideration the unique nature and needs of the different contexts in which they are implemented.

I emphasised where we were currently in terms of the RADIO stages and where we need to proceed to next. They felt that the next Inclusion Team meeting might be the most conducive setting to discuss ways forwards and clarify any organisational factors that may facilitate or hinder the research process. This would allow for a multi-agency perspective, as in addition to all the School A staff who have pastoral responsibilities for example, ALNCo, Heads of Years, and Guidance Mentors, external agencies who work closely with the school are also part of the team. These individuals include the School Nurse, School Based Counsellor, and Education Welfare Officer.

4.2.4 RADIO Stage 3: Clarifying organisational and cultural issues.

This stage, characterised by an exploration of opportunities and threats within the research setting’s culture likely to facilitate or impede the initiative, is considered to be important within research literature. I was therefore pleased that a full discussion would be possible with School A’s wider Inclusion Team. I prepared for the meeting in a similar way to what I had done prior to my introduction to the Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher. I brought information about the parent Time to Talk initiative along with the awareness of need identified within the literature and by individuals consulted at a local level regarding the possibility of implementing a similar initiative for post-16 pupils. I also provided each member with a table depicting the phases and stages of the RADIO model, explaining which stages in particular were to be address at the meeting. Discussions during supervision sessions led to the idea of holding a brief and relatively informal focus group following my introduction to the research project. This would ensure that I encouraged the team to consider numerous aspects of the next few stages of the RADIO model through the use of pre-identified facilitating questions. I composed a
set of questions and e-mailed them to the Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher for their thoughts; they suggested a few amendments, mostly to place more focus on School A particularly which we all agreed on. The facilitating questions used are included in Appendix H.

Despite consciously trying to define an organisation’s ‘culture’ being a notoriously difficult task (Stoll and Fink, 1996), a relatively in-depth discussion was had around potential facilitating and barrier factors in relation to the research within School A’s organisational culture. I will initially present the reader with the potential facilitating factors identified by the Inclusion Team, followed by the potential barriers or threats – some consideration of how their effect may be minimised will also be presented as appropriate.

Table 4.2: Potential Organisational and Cultural barriers and facilitators to research identified by immediate stakeholders.

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<th>Potential Facilitating Factors</th>
<th>Potential Barriers/Threats</th>
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<td>1. Historically, School A had placed a strong focus on providing effective pastoral care for its pupils, driven by the Senior Management team and in turn penetrating the whole school ethos. It was therefore thought that staff would be innately supportive of the initiative proposed.</td>
<td>A new Head Teacher had been appointed. It was not known whether he would continue to support the Inclusion Team’s work and prioritise their desire to become a school known for its emotional health initiatives.</td>
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<td>2. EPS as an external agency may be attractive to pupils who did not wish to share their concerns with parents or school staff, and perhaps offer a stricter confidentiality code.</td>
<td>Concern that a collaborative, action research project was not a feasible endeavour time-wise for the Inclusion Team as a whole.</td>
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<td>3. Considering the relative remoteness of School A geographically, providing an accessible service from an external agency within school premises was likely to be viewed favourably.</td>
<td>Identifying a location within School A that provided privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A School Nurse ‘Drop-In’ initiative was already up and running within School A for Year 7-11 pupils. It was therefore likely that pupils were already familiar with external agency support being implemented for their use within Linguistic context of School A:</td>
<td>Linguistic context of School A:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Availability of Welsh-English bilingual EPs to run Pupil Time to Talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Concerns that pupils from Welsh speaking communities may be less</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the school, and that they may have previous experiences of determining their own needs and seeking support independently through a 'drop-in' system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Some young people may have already received input from the EPS during earlier years at School A, Pupil Time to Talk could then be viewed as a continuity in provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Psychology was taught in School A at post-16 level, possibly providing a proportion of the pupils with a broader overview of what the EPS maybe able to offer them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2.4.1 Potential steps to ameliorate identified Barriers/Threats.

- The Head of Inclusion was planning to prepare a report for the new Head Teacher detailing the projects the team were involved with and agreed to include details of Pupil Time to Talk. We also discussed the possibility of arranging a meeting with the new Head Teacher once he had an opportunity to settle into post.
- The team agreed that as I had mostly been working with the Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher/Head of Year 12 and 13 up until this stage, that it would continue to be appropriate for them to collaborate closely on the project, involving the whole Inclusion Team only at specific decision points.
- The team agreed to give detailed consideration to identifying an appropriate location within school.
- The availability of bilingual EPS members was unlikely to cause difficulties during the pilot phase as I, the main contact, am a Welsh-English bilingual, and the team were satisfied with this.

I reflected on the discussion that evening and noted some concerns about one particular aspect in my research diary. I was somewhat concerned that the Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher had been identified as the main co-researchers on the project, not because they had indicated any lack of enthusiasm to date, but because they both held such demanding posts within School A and were likely to be
time-pressed. I also had reservations about the fact that the school was going to be led by a new Head Teacher, a fact I was not aware of prior to the meeting. Despite these issues it was too late in the research process to approach another school to gain an invitation to act, and I did not want to disappoint School A staff who had shown a great commitment to working together thus far.

4.2.5 Radio Stage 4: Identifying stakeholders in area of need.

Timmins et al. (2003) identify that at this stage in the research process it is beneficial to clarify and agree on a process for collaborative working, feedback and discussion with the research stakeholders. School A’s Inclusion Team was already identified as the immediate stakeholder, with the Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher acting as co-researchers. It was agreed that the Inclusion Team would receive feedback regarding progress intermittently and be involved in major decisions when appropriate, for example to help focus and clarify research questions. The co-researchers were involved on a more day-to-day basis, maintaining communication with all stakeholders, dealing with logistical issues related to the research and supporting research take-up where possible.

The EPS was also part of the research’s wider stakeholder group, as potentially the research may influence future ways of working. The EPS had already been consulted at the early stages of the research and I felt that their on-going input could be valuable. To ease the research process, School A’s Head of Inclusion felt that it may be useful to invite the school’s designated EP to be part of the wider Inclusion Team. This would hopefully ensure better collaboration between the two stakeholder groups for the duration of the research project and could potentially result in the EPS working with School A on a more systemic level in the future. Some external agencies were already part of School A’s Inclusion Team and therefore the EPS viewed the invitation to join the team as a positive step forward in its relationship with School A.

A long discussion was had regarding the issue of viewing the year 12 and 13 pupils as research stakeholders. I felt that inviting a small group of young people to work collaboratively on the research could possibly strengthen any resulting initiative, ensuring it met the needs identified by young people themselves, and instil a sense of ownership over the specific provisions School A offered them. Concerns were raised by some of the stakeholders that young people’s participation at this stage of
the research may not be all that meaningful, and that we may be asking them to provide views and contribute ideas about a service and a profession that they have limited knowledge of. The Deputy Head Teacher also added that it may not be ethically appropriate to invite a group of year 12 and 13 pupils to work collaboratively on a research project, with so many other demands on their time during those two years.

The Emotional Health Forum had also been consulted during the earlier phases of the research, and as with every new initiative with an emotional health strand taking place within LA 1, it was expected that the initiatives' progress would be fed back to the forum at some point in the future. However, it was not regarded as an active stakeholder in the research process and was not involved in any future decision making.

The next steps of the RADIO process involved making important decisions that would determine the course of the research process, therefore, it was agreed that they would be discussed during the next Inclusion Team Meeting. I agreed to present the relevant RADIO stages and facilitate the discussion. It was also agreed that once those decisions had been made by the stakeholder group, myself and the two co-researchers would meet to discuss implementing the decisions.

4.3 RADIO ‘RESEARCH METHODS’ PHASE

4.3.1 RADIO Stage 5: Agreeing focus of concern (Research Aims).
At this stage of the RADIO, research facilitators and the major stakeholders work together to agree on the particular aims and purpose of the research.

The EPS, as one major stakeholder, had identified early on in the research process that its aim was to work collaboratively with school staff to trial a new method of working with young people, providing them with the opportunity to access EPs directly. Whilst School A and the Inclusion Team had recognised this aim as potentially meeting pupil needs within the school, tying in with their own aim to offer a range of emotional health initiatives – I was anxious that major stakeholders from school A had the opportunity to determine the exact focus they wanted the project to take, ensuring it ‘fitted’ with the organisational and cultural factors identified, providing them with as much ownership over the research as possible.
It was decided that the main focus would be to implement Pupil Time to Talk for year 12 and 13 students and gather information about perceptions of its effectiveness from pupils who had made use of the Time to Talk service. The Inclusion Service felt that gathering such information may also provide them with indirect evaluative feedback on the pastoral care offered within the school. To achieve this aim the following research question was agreed upon:

- Research Question 1: How is ‘Time to Talk’ perceived by post-16 pupils and stakeholders?

Due to the critical realism stance adopted (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1) and RADIO’s emphasis on the organisational and cultural mechanisms at play in supporting or impeding the action research, I discussed the need to, not only gather information from pupils and stakeholders regarding their ‘reality’ of Time to Talk, but to also look specifically at the “mechanisms and structures underlying perceived events” (Dobson, 2002, The object of research section, para. 2) in order to determine “what works best, for whom and under what circumstances?” (Robson, 2002, p.39). Again, School A’s stakeholders identified that reflecting upon the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of Time to Talk, could potentially provide them with useful information to help achieve their long-term goal of implementing and delivering a wide range of emotional health initiatives to support pupils and parents. The EPS stakeholders were naturally interested in gaining an overview of those within-Schools A mechanisms, along with more general facilitating and barrier mechanisms identified, to inform future projects and ways of working. To achieve these aims, the following research questions were agreed upon:

- Research Question 2: What were the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of ‘Time to Talk’ in this context?

- Research Question 3: What are the implications for future implementation and delivery of Pupil ‘Time to Talk’?
4.3.2 RADIO Stage 6: Negotiating framework for information gathering.

This stage focuses on negotiating an appropriate methodology and research design with the stakeholders, to support the quest to address the research questions identified.

As stated in ‘RADIO Stage 2 – Invitation to act’, the RADIO framework had been introduced to the co-researchers and suggested as an appropriate research design framework to facilitate a collaborative action research project, and its use was agreed. The RADIO model is open to multi-methods of data collection, one of its most appealing characteristics. During School A’s Inclusion Team Meetings time scales and research methods were agreed upon.

Due to the nature of the action research project, decisions had to be reached, not only in terms of how we would gather the information required to answer the research questions posed, but also in terms of how the initiative should be implemented initially and the logistical factors that would contribute to its success or otherwise. Therefore, the decisions reached at this phase are reported in two stages – decisions related to implementation and decisions related to information gathering.

4.3.2.1 Decisions researched on Logistical Factors associated with implementing Pupil Time to Talk.

- School A’s stakeholders felt that the optimum model for the pilot of Pupil Time to Talk would be to offer it each day at different times during the school day to enable every pupil to have the opportunity to access the service if required. However, in practice it was agree that this would not be possible.

- The EPS stakeholders were happy for me to spend one full day a week based at School A during the pilot phase of Pupil Time to Talk, using the time to write reports and carry out administrative work when the service was not in use. The possibility of offering before or after school sessions was discussed, but dismissed due to the fact that most pupils are transported to and from school to the satellite villages School A serves. However, due to the more flexible timetable followed by year 12 and 13 pupils School A’s stakeholders were reassured that most pupils would have some opportunity during the school day to access the service if they wished.
• The location of Pupil Time to Talk within the school was deemed a crucial facilitating factor. The stakeholders felt that the location needed to offer the utmost level of confidentiality for pupils to consider making use of the service. Various rooms within the school were discussed as possible locations; however none were without their flaws for locating a confidential ‘drop-in’ service. The stakeholders finally agreed the school’s ‘Medical Room’ to be the most appropriate location for Pupil Time to Talk, in that it was situated away from the year 12 and 13 ‘block’ in a relatively secluded part of the school, was unused most of the time offering relative confidentiality with the door being solid and the window facing away from the school grounds. I voiced some concerns about the possible connotations implied in locating a service aimed at supporting young people’s emotional health within a ‘Medical Room’, but the stakeholders felt that the room’s benefits outweighed such factors.

• As pupil representatives had not been invited to become research stakeholder the introduction and promotion of Pupil Time to Talk was considered to be even more crucial. The School Nurse, with her experience of setting up ‘drop-in’ services for pupils, felt that one of the attractive features of Pupil Time to Talk to years 12 and 13 pupils was that it was a service specifically for that cohort, closed to all other pupils. As such she felt that marketing it in that way, introducing it as part of the transition to post-16 education, was the best way to ‘sell’ it to young people. The stakeholders agreed that preparing a short presentation, detailing recognition of the school-based and personal issues post-16 pupils may be experiencing and how Pupil Time to Talk could support them in working through such issues, signposting to appropriate services, may be the best way of introducing it to pupils. They felt that providing pupils with specific ‘case study’ examples may be a good way of relaying such information, providing pupils with a concrete idea of Time to Talk and how it could support them. They felt that reference should also be made during the presentation, to the fact that pupils making use of the service may also be invited to share their views of Pupil Time to Talk, making clear that pupils were free to choose whether or not they wished to do so or not.

• Supporting the information provided in a oral presentation with a flyer to take away was deemed crucial to enable pupils to consider the service independently, away from potential peer pressure. It was agreed that myself
and the co-researchers would prepare a short presentation and design accompanying flyers (see Appendix C). It was also agreed that the most appropriate time to introduce the initiative would be during the orientation week taking place for all year 12 and 13 pupils, where various outside agencies would be presenting or holding workshops on the specific services available within School A and the surrounding community. That meant that each year 12 and 13 registration class would be presented to separately which I felt may be more productive than doing so to a whole year group.

- Some of the stakeholders felt that reinforcing the messages shared during the presentation on Pupil Time to Talk again a couple of weeks into the school term would also be beneficial. It was agreed that the year 12 and 13 assembly would provide a good opportunity to do so.
- The research stakeholders felt that school staff support could also prove valuable in promoting the service during the pilot phase and, therefore, wanted to ensure that all staff were aware of the initiative and what it could offer. It was agreed that a short presentation on Pupil Time to Talk should also be offered during a whole staff team meeting, which occurred fortnightly. A brief letter was also sent to all teaching staff at the school (see Appendix I).
- A relatively prescriptive formula for sessions was devised to ensure that each pupil would be given the same information about confidentiality and the limits of the service, and asked to sign a ‘Confidentiality Agreement’ (see Appendix D). All stakeholders were keen for appropriate records to be kept of any Time to Talk sessions held and a revised form based on the parental record form already in use by the EPS was agreed upon (see Appendix J).

4.3.2.2 Decisions reached in relation to Information gathering methods.

4.3.2.2.1 Questionnaire.

- The school nurse shared that she had experienced great difficulty in evaluating some of the services she offered to the school pupils. However, some of the stakeholders added that we were focusing on young people’s perception of the service offered in this instance rather than trying to ‘measure’ the service’s effectiveness. Gray (2009) states that it is generally unwise to use a questionnaire as a data collection tool for action research, unless it is used for gathering information that could not be ascertained in an
alternative way for example, “for evaluating the effect of an action research intervention” (p.326). The possibility of interviewing pupils who made use of the Time to Talk sessions subsequently to gain an in-depth view of their thoughts around the service was discussed, however it was felt that such a method posed many challenges, the most prominent of which being the strong possibility of response biases.

- In this instance, a collaborative decision was reached that the most efficient and ethical method of gathering qualitative information from the Time to Talk service users in order to ‘answer’ research questions 1 and 2, was to ask them to complete a short questionnaire (see Appendix K) independently at the end of their session (using professional judgement to decide on the ethical appropriateness of presenting a pupil with such a task, depending on the intensity of the Time to Talk session). As the EPS team member holding the pilot Pupil Time to Talk sessions, I planned to ensure that each pupil was guided through the Information Sheet and Consent Form thoroughly (see Appendix E) before the questionnaire was presented, maintaining the ethical standards discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.10. To maintain a sense of confidentiality and reduce response biases, the stakeholders decided that pupils would be given the option of either, completing the questionnaire independently there and then, placing it a sealed envelope and leaving it in a designated box in the ‘Medical Room’, or taking it away with them to complete independently and posting it to the EPS in a stamped addressed envelope that would be provided.

4.3.2.2.2 Focus Groups.

- Holding Focus Groups with the stakeholders at various points during the RADIO stages (as had already taken place during RADIO stage 3 – Clarifying Organisational and Cultural Issues), was decided to be a research method that would facilitate collaborative working and elicit rich data from the stakeholders regarding their views. The information gathered through focus groups could then be interpreted collaboratively and combined with the other information gathered in a bid to ‘answer’ each research question.
4.3.2.2.3 Research Diary.

- I shared with the stakeholder group that it was considered good practice to maintain a research diary when carrying out action research in particular, acting as an aide-mémoire for informal discussions between co-researchers and also providing a reflective account of events through which the researchers could later use to make tentative interpretations (Gray, 2009). I re-emphasised the importance placed on professional development through the action research process and how keeping a research diary may contribute in this endeavour. I stated that I was already using a Dictaphone to record verbal ‘diary’ entries, and had been since the start of my thinking around the thesis research project. I queried whether a ‘richer’ picture of a collaborative research project may be gained if the co-researchers also kept a reflective research diary, allowing for triangulation of any subsequent interpretations made.

- Whilst the Deputy Head Teacher stated that she could see the benefits of doing so, she felt unable to commit to maintaining a research diary due to other time pressures related to her senior dual role. The Head of Inclusion, as the other co-researcher, asked to hear examples of some of my ‘diary’ entries and agreed to “give it a go”.

I met briefly with the co-researchers, where we were able to pen a presentation regarding Pupil Time to Talk, outlining the important features discussed by the stakeholder group, but maintaining a relatively informal style to appeal to young people. We worked together in deciding on the text to be included in the flyer, we all agreed that providing my contact details may be useful for some pupils who may feel more comfortable in arranging a ‘drop-in’ beforehand. In terms of its design, the Deputy Head Teacher suggested we asked year 12 pupils undertaking IT courses to become involved. We all initially agreed that this would be a good idea and would probably provide us with a more professional and attractive looking flyer than one designed by ourselves. The Deputy Head Teacher agreed to make enquiries with School A’s IT teacher, and it was agreed that we would meet again to design an appropriate questionnaire for users of Pupil Time to Talk.

That evening I reflected on the meeting with the co-researchers and recorded a research diary entry noting my uneasiness with our decision to invite year 12 pupils
to participate in designing the Time to Talk leaflet. I felt that having previously decided with the stakeholder group not to invite pupils to work collaboratively on the research as a whole, inviting some to participate at this stage only may be considered tokenistic. I decided to contact the co-researchers the following day and express my concerns. In the research diary entry I also reflected on my continued anxiety that one session together to design the required questionnaire would not be enough, and it may be likely that I would be expected to work on this aspect of the project independently.

I emailed both the Deputy Head Teacher and the Head of Inclusion to share my reluctance regarding involving pupils in designing the leaflet. I received an answer from the Deputy Head Teacher the following day, stating that she had discussed my email with the Head of Inclusion, and although neither felt uncomfortable about the idea personally, they appreciated my views and agreed that we would design the leaflet ourselves. I decided to design a tentative leaflet, including the text agreed upon together, and e-mailed the co-researchers asking for their thoughts. Both were pleased with the design (see Appendix C for the finalised version).

Unfortunately, the Head of Inclusion had to cancel our next meeting. I therefore agreed to draft the questionnaire with support from the EPS stakeholders over the next couple of weeks and present it to the co-researchers at our next meeting.

The draft questionnaire needed to be pre-piloted by young people of a similar age to the year 12 and 13 potential participants at School A. Any individuals ‘piloting’ the questionnaire would also need to be Welsh-English bilinguals to ensure that both versions were synonymous. However, with it being the end of the school year it could prove difficult to recruit a group to volunteer to provide their opinions on the acceptability of the questionnaire.

This issue was overcome by the fact that the service’s Portage worker had a daughter, a year 12 pupil at the other Welsh medium secondary school within LA 1, who was happy to ‘pre-pilot’ the questionnaire along with four of her peers (three other females and one male, all in year 12). They were presented with a brief explanation of Pupil Time to Talk and an idea of the information the questionnaire was designed to gather. The Information Sheet and Consent form relating to the questionnaire’s use were shown to each young person. Within an informal
discussion with myself and School A’s designated EP, they provided constructive criticism of the drafted documents, mainly aimed at the wording of some of the questions, especially on the Welsh versions which they felt needed to use less ‘formal’ language. They also felt that reducing the number of open-ended questions would help maintain pupil motivation to complete the questionnaire. It was subsequently amended to reflect their views (see Appendix K for the finalised version).

Research diary entries recorded over the summer holidays reflect my feelings of relative isolation within the research project; during that time, what was supposed to be a collaborative project was beginning to feel like a solitary endeavour. I reflected that it was fortunate that the research stakeholders included EPS team members who were available outside of the school term to work jointly on some aspects of the preparations required. The research diary also signifies a sense of the mixed emotions I was experiencing relating to the start of the new school year. On the one hand, excitement because of the imminent implementation of a new initiative, but on the other, anxiety as a result of the ‘unknowns’ related to all action research projects, and in particular in this instance anxiety in anticipation of the relatively informal plans in place for September.

I met with the co-researchers at the beginning of term. They had set aside the whole morning to focus on Pupil Time to Talk. We visited the room allocated to hosting Pupil Time to Talk sessions, and spent time discussing the drafted questionnaire. I later reflected in the research diary that I found it quite difficult to engage the co-researchers in a constructive discussion around the questionnaire design despite spending time explaining some of the important considerations required when designing a questionnaire. They continued to express a lack of confidence in their own research skills, stating that they were happy with its design as long as I and the EPS team members felt it was suitable.

During the morning it became clear that the co-researchers were more enthusiastic and committed than ever to the project and that this in part was due to information that had come to light over the summer. Two year 12 pupils, who had transferred from a neighbouring secondary school to attend post-16 courses at School A in the previous year, had decided not to return to year 13. Upon further investigation by their parents as to their reasons for not wanting to return, it became clear that the
two pupils had been subject to quite significant 'bullying' at the hands of some of their fellow post-16 pupils. School A had not been aware of any difficulties until the two sets of parents raised the issue with them over the summer, as the two year 12 pupils had not felt able to share their concerns and experiences with any staff members during the year. The Head of Inclusion had been aware of some 'bullying' behaviour amongst the year 12 and 13 pupils during previous years, but stated that perhaps not enough had been done about it due to the general feeling that the pupils were “old enough” to deal with such issues themselves and that it “wasn't a widespread problem at that age”. Both co-researchers felt that an initiative such as Time to Talk, offering pupils direct access to an outside agency, might provide pupils experiencing such difficulties with an avenue of support that they felt comfortable in pursuing in future.

During the last week of the summer term the Deputy Head Teacher/Head of Year 12 and 13 had organised the orientation week, and had included a presentation slot for Pupil Time to Talk on each class’ time table. My diary entries on those days suggested that the presentations to introduce Pupil Time to Talk to the year 12 and 13 students went well; although the only question asked by the pupils related to where the ‘Medical Room’ was located, they showed an interest in what I had to say and in the leaflets and information cards that were distributed. The form teachers were also helpful in reinforcing my messages around pupil independence in making use of the service and levels of confidentiality. When I fed back to the co-researchers in an email about the question asked regarding pupil Time to Talk’s location, they decided to provide each year 12 and 13 pupils with a map of School A with the ‘Medical Room’ highlighted.

The co-researchers had arranged for me to attend School A’s team meeting, as although they volunteered to present our research project to the staff, they wanted me to be on hand to answer any questions and become a ‘known face’ within the school community. In reflecting jointly on the meeting, we were all pleased with the reactions received; all staff agreed to remind pupils during each Monday registration that the service was available on that day and reinforce the initiative as appropriate, three teachers stated that they would be highlighting the possible benefits of Pupil Time to Talk with pupils that they held particular concerns about, and a couple approached me at the end asking for further information of the parent Time to Talk sessions.
4.3.3 RADIO Stage 7: Gathering Information.

This stage involves gathering information using the agreed methods. In this instance, some information relating to the research questions set, for example, stakeholders view of Pupil Time to Talk, was already in the process of being gathered, therefore, the gathering information stage described here specifically relates to the information gathered during the implementation of Pupil Time to Talk, during the Autumn term.

I spent 10 full days (one day per week) at School A where Pupil Time to Talk ‘drop-in’ sessions were on offer. During this time no pupils made use of the service or contacted me directly. Research diary entries recorded over this time period contain my reflections on a number of different factors or events that may have played a role in the course of the research project.

Research diary entries demonstrate that my concerns regarding the location of Pupil Time to Talk seemed to steadily increase. On three occasions I was asked to vacate the room for an hour whilst it was used for physiotherapy, and on another occasion one of the teachers came to lie down following injuring her back during a Physical Education lesson!

On a day I was in School A offering Pupil Time to Talk sessions, the Head of Inclusion came to the ‘Medical Room’ with School A’s designated SIS Outreach\(^2\) worker, stating that she wanted me to meet her and share information about our research project. Previous discussions with the SBC team indicated that pupils previously supported by the SIS Outreach team (SIS OT) were also likely to be pupils who would benefit from a service such as Time to Talk in years 12 and 13 if they were pursuing post-16 education at School A. The Head of Inclusion felt that informing the designated worker of our project could, in future, result in the SIS OT being able to signpost pupils they were previously involved with pre-16, to Time to Talk at post-16. Although I later reflected in my research diary that I felt these types of discussions were rather premature within the research cycle, we had a very interesting discussion with the SIS Outreach worker that provided us with an

\(^2\) The SIS OT is a local authority maintained team that receives referrals from schools to work with pupils experiencing behavioural, social and emotional issues on a short term basis. The aim of their work is to try and prevent fixed term exclusions, long-term absences and social isolation. The service is open to pupils up to year 11.
alternative viewpoint as to how the project may be seen by others. On the surface, the SIS Outreach worker seemed interested in the project and stated that she could see its potential benefits. However, one of her parting remarks suggested that she felt relatively threatened by the pilot of a new project that she possibly viewed as offering similar support to the Outreach service provided by her team, despite Pupil Time to Talk targeting a different age cohort altogether. She expressed an uneasiness about the fact that whilst the LA, on the one hand, was cutting funding for the SIS OT, possibly resulting in redundancies; on the other, they were funding and promoting a new initiative that had not been “tried and tested” over time. We re-emphasised the origin of the project, what Pupil Time to Talk could offer (support that was intrinsically different to that offered by the SIS OT), and that no ‘funding’ was being provided by LA 1. However, it was clear that as a result of the current economic climate, services were being very protective of their perceived roles, and that any new initiatives may be viewed as a threat to those roles.

During this phase of the project I was approached by one of School A’s teachers in the Staff Room, seeking advice regarding one of the year 12 pupils she taught. She explained that she was becoming increasingly concerned about his emotional well-being and that his recently erratic attendance might be a reflection of her concerns. She asked whether she would be able to “refer” him to Pupil Time to Talk. I explained that I would be more than happy for her to signpost the pupil to Time to Talk, reminding him that a confidential service was available should he appreciate the opportunity to share any concerns. I felt that a more formal referral, with an ‘appointment’ being set for the pupil would have to be discussed with the research stakeholders as it seemed to go against the ethos of Time to Talk. I agreed to discuss it with my co-researchers and get back to the teacher in question with advice. Following further reflection with the co-researchers, I felt that the most appropriate avenue of support for the teacher was to discuss her concern with the ALNCo, who could if appropriate ‘refer’ the pupil for an EP consultation. Opening Pupil Time to Talk to teacher referrals at this stage in the project would be somewhat contradictory to its aims, and could essentially result in Pupil Time to Talk mimicking the difficulties inherent with the EP consultation process.

Over the course of the information gathering phase, I was inadvertently made aware of the changes that may be taking place in relation to the Head of Inclusion’s role and subsequently School A’s Inclusion Team, due to the new Head Teacher’s
vision of how he wanted the school to operate. He did not share the team’s vision regarding developing further a variety of emotional health initiatives to be offered to pupils and parents within the school, wanting the Head of Inclusion’s role to focus more firmly on discipline and attendance issues. He was happy for initiatives that were already established to continue. However he would not, for the time being, be allocating further funding or time away from school for staff training in the other areas of emotional health earmarked by the team for development for example, running parenting courses. Although such a change in direction did not directly impact on Pupil Time to Talk, as shown within the literature on organisational change and well-being, a range of negative emotions such as stress can often be related to unplanned changes (Giaæver & Hellso, 2010), and it was evident that some of the research stakeholders were experiencing such feelings as a result of the changes afoot.

4.3.4 RADIO Stage 8: Processing Information with research sponsors/stakeholders.

This phase provides an opportunity to share research findings and discuss their implications with research stakeholders. Timmins et al. (2003) suggests that stakeholders should be encouraged to examine their organisation’s development needs in light of the research findings.

Despite our initial agreement that Pupil Time to Talk would be piloted until the end of term, I felt that the stakeholders should be made aware of the situation sooner rather than later as it was clear that a change in the research direction would more than likely be required. I reflected in my research diary that if I was not bound by the related time constraints of thesis write-up, then I might not be as anxious to move forward and would have been happy to continue as planned until the end of term before feeding back and considering the next steps/research cycle.

Due to the organisational changes that had taken place within School A since the start of the project, the original immediate stakeholder group i.e. the school’s Inclusion Team, were not meeting as regularly as previously, which created difficulties in feeding back. The co-researchers managed to arrange for a smaller group of the stakeholders to meet. The group consisted of myself and the two co-researchers, School A’s ALNCo, School Nurse and designated EP. I reported back on the events that had taken place since the previous stakeholder meeting and the
co-researchers discussed some of the issues that had been raised e.g. location issues. No reference was made to the change in direction faced by the Inclusion Team at the request of the new Head Teacher despite its relative impact on the action research project. I did not feel that it was my place as a TEP who had been invited to work with the school, to comment on such a sensitive and potentially political issue in front of the stakeholders at this time.

Whilst some of the stakeholders’ reflections on School A’s developmental needs had not resulted directly from activities carried out during the ‘Gathering Information’ phase, the staff did share that the action research process to date had set them thinking. The ALNCo and Head of Inclusion described how my initial presentation to the Inclusion group, where I drew their attention to pupil participation issues, had led to a series of discussions between School A staff members about their role in enhancing pupil participation through the school. Whilst they were aware that the obligatory initiatives were in place, for example school council, they felt that more could be done to ensure that pupil voice helped shape School A’s development.

4.4 RADIO ‘ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE’ PHASE

4.4.1 RADIO Stage 9: Agreeing areas for future action.

The stakeholders felt that a number of issues remained unanswered regarding pupil Time to Talk, and that the potential reasons for the fact that no use had been made of the service to date remained ambiguous. They concluded that questioning pupils directly was the only way of seeking explanations and gathering further data in relation to the research questions.

Various methods of doing so were discussed, with the Deputy Head Teacher initially keen to ‘interview’ the year 12 and 13 School Council representatives. The ALNCo challenged the validity of seeking information from such a limited source, arguing that School Council members were perhaps not representative of the pupils Time to Talk was aimed at. School A’s designated EP suggested that holding focus groups with randomly selected pupils would be an appropriate method of gathering rich data from a representative sample of the year 12 and 13 population. The co-researchers relatively limited research background was again evident in their suggestion that they ‘chose’ pupils to be invited to take part in the focus groups, based on their knowledge of “who would have a lot to contribute”. I later reflected
with School A’s designated EP during a supervision session that different research priorities/understanding between myself and some of the stakeholders acted as a barrier to joint working at times.

Following further discussion, the stakeholders agreed to randomly select nine year 12 pupils and nine year 13 pupils using the class registers and invite them to take part in focus groups concentrating on their general thoughts around formal and informal help-seeking, before focusing in more detail on their thoughts of the Pupil Time to Talk service offered. I would facilitate the groups.

In the meantime, the stakeholders were keen for Pupil Time to Talk to continue being offered on a weekly basis, but in a different location due to the issues raised with regards to its location in the Medical Room. The Deputy Head Teacher advocated its re-location to the Year 12 and 13 block to ensure that the pupils were reminded of the service’s existence, despite the possible confidentiality compromise. Due to the fairly limited alternatives available within School A, the re-location to the year 12 and 13 block was agreed.

In terms of exploring what could be done to promote pupil participation generally within School A, members of the Inclusion team had already begun to act. They had been making enquiries about the purchase of the Pupil Attitude to Self and School Programme, and had approached LA 1’s Children and Young People’s Partnership (CYPP) for further advice. They felt that the next step for them was to approach the Head Teacher with their views and ideas.

4.4.2 RADIO Stage 10: Action Planning.

I agreed to format information sheets and consent forms for pupils who would be invited to be focus group participants (see Appendix L). The Deputy Head Teacher agreed to use the year 12 and 13 register to randomly select 18 pupils, nine from each year, and subsequently approach each pupil individually to introduce the research and invite them to participate. I worked with the two co-researchers at the end of the meeting to identify appropriate facilitating questions for the focus group session (see Appendix M).

The Head of Inclusion agreed to format new handouts informing pupils of Time to Talk’s new location, and arrange for them to be distributed amongst all year 12 and
13 pupil during registration over the coming week. An announcement would also be made during assembly, as to the new location.

I received an email from the Deputy Head Teacher, stating that whilst she had encountered some difficulties in recruiting pupils to participate in the focus groups, 18 had now agreed to take part (11 from year 12 and 7 from year 13). They had been given the information sheets to take away and consider further, prior to the focus groups which were due to take place in three weeks time.

4.4.3 RADIO Stage 11: Implementation / Action.

Pupil Time to Talk re-located to the alternative location identified within the year 12 and 13 block but again, no pupil made use of the ‘drop-in’ service. Although I felt that the location was very unsuitable in terms of providing confidentiality for pupils who may want to use the service at some point, it did provide a base from which the year 12 and 13 pupils could get to know me and get used to the service being offered.

4.4.3.1 Focus Groups.

A focus group consisting of 6 participants from year 12 was followed by a second focus group consisting of 7 participants from year 13. A third focus group consisting of 5 year 12 pupils also took place. Three focus groups were necessary due to difficulties relating to co-ordinating participants’ timetables to allow for only two focus groups to take place. Whilst the number of pupils partaking in each focus group may be lower than advocated by some researchers (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), they reflect the “more manageable” numbers suggested by Oates (2000, p.190). Each focus group took place in the room that had been available for Pupil Time to Talk sessions for the past couple of weeks within the year 12 and 13 block. Following discussion with the co-researchers we decided against having mixed year 12 and 13 focus groups, to allow issues that may be specific to one year group to be easier to identify during analysis, and because participants may feel more comfortable in contributing in a group of their immediate peers.

At the start of each focus group, following introductions, the content of the Information Letter was re-visited, reinforcing how and why the participants had been invited to take part, emphasising confidentiality arrangements and their ethical right
to withdraw from participation at any point. I explained my role as the focus group facilitator and the purpose of the audio recording, before checking that they were still willing to participate. I read aloud the content of the Consent Form, gave each participant the opportunity to ask any questions before asking them to sign and date the Consent Form. Each group got to choose whether they preferred to carry out the discussion in English or Welsh. The first year 12 focus group participants chose English whilst the other two were conducted in Welsh. Refreshments were available for all participants throughout each focus group. The first year 12 focus group lasted approximately 50 minutes, the second 45 minutes, while the year 13 focus group lasted approximately 40 minutes. At the end of each focus group, the participants were thanked for their time and contribution to the research. I re-iterated some of the Information Letter content again - that I would be available for the remainder of the school day should they have any questions following reflecting on their experience, and that my contact details was provided on the Information Letter should they require further debriefing at a later date.

4.4.3.2 Thematic Analysis.

I fully transcribed the content of the three focus groups in order to fully immerse myself in the data. During this initial process of familiarising myself with the three data sets, reading and re-reading, it became clear that there was significantly more in common between the issues discussed during each focus group than there were differences. In consultation with the co-researchers, it was decided that the analysis would therefore attend to the homogenous themes that could be seen across the focus groups rather than try to delve into potentially insignificant group differences by analysing each data set separately.

A thematic analysis was employed in accordance to the process described in Table 3.2, with the view to providing an account of the themes relating to the following research questions:

7. How is ‘Time to Talk’ perceived by post-16 pupils and stakeholders?
8. What were the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of ‘Time to Talk’ in this context?

In this instance a hybrid coding framework was used as described in Chapter 3, section 3.8.2 (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).
Triangulation of the analysis, to help increase its dependability and credibility, was achieved by the following means:

4.4.3.2.1 Verification of analysis by EP Colleague.

An EP colleague with experience of using thematic analysis as part of her own Doctoral research project agreed to meet with me to consider the validity of the codes I had identified from the original transcripts. I felt that at this stage of the analysis, triangulation was required from someone with prior experience of coding, rather than one of the co-researchers for example. She read two of the three transcripts and compared my coding structures to the data set. She suggested that some codes could be collapsed into one code as they were essentially tapping into the same constructs and she highlighted some additional data driven issues that I may not have necessarily included without her constructive criticism.

4.4.3.2.2 Member Checking.

I encountered some difficulties in arranging further sessions with the focus group participants for ‘member checking’ of the analysis to take place, as they were sitting exams and were on ‘study leave’. The co-researchers eventually managed to arrange for a small group of participants (6 of the original 18) to meet with me to describe and explore the thematic networks with them and for them to corroborate or challenge the interpretations made.

Some of the participants expressed surprise at the depth of the analysis, that it went beyond the semantics of what was discussed in the focus groups. One of the Global Themes that had come to the fore was initially titled ‘Expectation vs Competence’, and as will be explained in more detail below, related to the expectations placed on year 12 and 13 pupils in initiating self-determined behaviours, developing their independence, and their perceptions of themselves at struggling with such expectations. The pupils felt that ‘Expectations vs Competence’ was not the right title to the theme in question. They felt it likely that they were expressing feelings related to lack of confidence in their competency rather than a lack of competency per se. It was agreed that the Global Theme’s title would be change to ‘Expectation vs Confidence in Competence’.

No other aspect of the analysis was challenged by the participants. This may reflect a number of factors including:
They felt that the analysis and resulting thematic networks were an accurate reflection of the perceptions they expressed during the focus groups in relation to Pupil Time to Talk.

They felt unable to challenge the analysis carried out, due to possible perceptions of power differentials between researchers and participants.

They felt unable to accurately challenge any further aspects of the analysis due to the time lapse between the focus groups and member checking session.

4.4.4 Thematic Networks derived from pupil focus groups.

The following section describes and explores the three theme levels in each thematic network, using text segments from the original data sets to illustrate the themes deduced. An exploration of the patterns contained within and between networks, will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter in relation to the research questions set.

Transcribed data from the three focus groups were organised into 17 Basic Themes. In turn, these Basic Themes were arranged into clusters of similar issues and produced seven Organising Themes. The Basic and Organising Themes were further developed into three Global Themes which reflected the main ideas from the lower order themes.

4.4.4.1 ‘Logistical Factors’ Thematic Network.

This thematic network consists of three Organising Themes and seven Basic Themes. It represents an exploration of the logistical factors considered by participants as being important considerations in running a ‘drop-in’ service, such as Pupil Time to Talk.

Discussions around pupils’ first impressions of Time to Talk when it was introduced to them in their form groups inevitably led to several logistical factors being highlighted as barriers to the service’s success in its current format, barriers which could be considered pertinent for any school based service for young people. Through the discussion more acceptable alternative formats also came to the fore. The thematic network depicts the main themes contributing to logistical factors.
identified as significant by young people: Organising Themes - Confidentiality, Embeddedness and Relationships.

Figure 4.2: 'Logistical Factors' Thematic Network.

The focus groups highlighted that these organising themes were the main logistical considerations made by young people when considering making use of Pupil Time to Talk, and focused in detail on levels of confidentiality, existing relationships with peers, parents, school staff and outside agencies, as well the initiative’s fit with existing services pupils have experience of in school.
4.4.4.1 Organising Theme: Confidentiality.

This Organising Theme relates to the paramount significance placed by young people on confidentiality when considering sharing information of a personal nature, and how any potential compromise in the levels of confidentiality on offer acts as a barrier in seeking support regardless of the alternative.

The Basic Themes highlight the complexity of confidentiality issues, from the concrete where, when and how type of issues to more abstract issues related to boundaries and perceptions of difficulties and support requirements.

Basic Theme: Location

Pupils had mixed views regarding the appropriateness of locating a service such as Time to Talk within school. Some identified that level of confidentiality is inevitably compromised within a close knit school environment, an environment that feels suffocating for some pupils at times:

*I don’t like the fact that it’s in school...If it was somewhere outside of school but easy to get to then not so many people would gossip about it and not as much people would know.* (K, Year 12).

*You couldn’t really tell anyone here anything because they’re probably related to someone!.* (S, Year 12).

Others felt that location within school offered convenience to those pupils who lived in rural communities, far from town amenities:

*Yeah, but think of all of us who live 12-15 miles from anywhere, when things like this are held in the library or surgery or that new healthy community centre place, well it means that it’s impossible for us to go to it without our parents knowing. No, I think that more things should be available within schools,* (R, Year 12).

Basic Theme: Technology

Some of the pupils felt that the use of technology was sometimes overlooked by new and existing services for which maintaining confidentiality was paramount, suggesting that the anonymity offered by various technological advancements overcame many of the confidentiality issues identified during the discussions:
I don’t know why more use isn’t made of text and emails and stuff. Like the School Counsellor, instead of having to go through a teacher you could txt her and ask for some counselling sessions, agree on a meeting place within school, rather than go to a specific room that everyone knows is for counselling, and nobody would be none the wiser, (B, Year 13).

I get most of my information off the internet, if I was worried about something or had a problem, that’s probably the first place I’d turn to, (E, Year 12).

Basic Theme: Differing Boundaries
Several pupils touched upon how they felt that significant rifts exist between their perceptions around what constitutes a significant, serious problem in comparison to the perceptions of the adults around them. They went on to explain that such a discrepancy often leads to pupils not sharing some of their troubles with adults for fear that it may get ‘blown out of proportion’ and that as a result confidentiality may be compromised.

If something is like bothering me, I won’t talk to my parents, or school staff really, because I kind of feel like they take it a bit too seriously sometimes, they just take it a bit out of hand and it’s not really supposed to be a serious situation, (E, Year 12).

Pupils showed an awareness of the confidentiality limits placed upon professionals working within education in particular, and how uncertainties within those responsibilities possibly inhibit some pupils in seeking support.

I don’t think I’d ever trust a school Doctor or nurse... if they do feel its worrying in anyway then they have got the responsibility to say to someone – ‘right, well this is happening’... and everyone has a different opinion about what’s safe... it snowballs, (C, Year 13).

4.4.4.1.2 Organising Theme: Embeddedness.
A caring and supportive school ethos with a focus on pupils’ emotional health is conducive in creating a setting where young people feel able to ask for support when required, without fear of negative consequences. This organising theme relates to the pupils’ thoughts around newly established services and how they resonate with their perception of the school’s current culture.
**Basic Theme: Whole School Approaches/Ethos**

Some pupils highlighted a common conception of school being an appropriate setting to share concerns and seek support during younger years, conceiving problems at that age to be less significant in nature than they could be aged sixteen plus.

*Problems when you’re younger are ok to talk about with teachers, because they’re not anything really... Doesn’t really matter, but now you kind of feel like your problems are a bit more serious so you don’t want to talk about them as much,* (L, Year 13).

*In the 6th form you see school as a place to learn not as a place to deal with problems and stuff... It feels lately that this school is trying to cater for everything, when really it’s just a place to learn. School in that way [place of support], is more important for younger kids,* (B, Year 12).

Some pupils also shared concerns regarding potential discussion taking place between teachers, if you were to share personal information with them.

*We all know that teachers sometimes gossip in the teaching lounge,* (K, Year 13).

**Basis Theme: Establishing Services**

It was clear from the data set that most of the pupils felt that they had not been given enough opportunity to “get used” to the Pupil Time to Talk service, and see it as a part of what was on offer for them in year 12 and 13.

*I thought that it was a really good idea [Pupil Time to Talk] – to have someone you can sort of depend on and know they can be trusted... but because it hasn’t always been there you don’t always think about it as an option,* (A, Year 12).

*If it had been known throughout the school, people would turn to it straight away without thinking really, but when it’s a new thing you don’t think of it,* (L, Year 13)

*Forget that it’s there because it hasn’t been there for ages,* (B, Year 12).
Some pupils also touched upon the difficulties faced in promoting new services. The need for firsthand experience of a service such as Time to Talk was suggested as a way of overcoming misunderstandings/misconceptions regarding what such a service could offer.

*I did think that [Pupil Time to Talk] was a good idea, just difficult to get it started, new things are difficult to make people know about it,* (LI, Year 13).

*Give people experience of it the first time, set up an appointment for everyone in turn... it would be much easier to go second time of you own accord,* (R, Year 12).

*Have specific day for specific concern... and provide the information about in lots of different ways,* (G, Year 12).

*I like that it’s [Pupil Time to Talk] a ‘drop-in’, makes it less formal, but maybe it could be targeted on particular days for particular issues,* (M, Year 13).

4.4.4.1.3 Organising Theme: Relationships.

This organising theme relates to the importance placed by the pupils on the relationship between them and a source of support. Contrasting views regarding the ideal nature of that relationship was evident. The basic themes highlight issues around the familiarity of the person offering support, as well as their personal characteristics and the impact on likeliness of support seeking. The innate trust often placed in professionals and figures of authority is also a prominent theme.

Basic Theme: Familiarity

Most young people were adamant that a significant factor for them in considering seeking support from an outside service such as Pupil Time to Talk was their prior familiarity with the professional in question. Being familiar with them, and having some sort of pre-existing relationship with a person was deemed a crucial factor:

*If you were here all the time and we knew who you were but still not anything to do with the school...more willing to talk to someone like that,* (LI, Year 13).

*Really we should know who you [Educational Psychologists] are from Year 7 upwards, like the school nurse, we know who she is, even if we haven’t been involved with her directly, we’re familiar with her,* (B, Year 12).
Even when considering the potential benefits of accessing support from a ‘stranger’, some pupils still expressed a preference for accessing a familiar person.

I suppose that a stranger would have a clear mind for the situation, but, I don’t know... sometimes you can feel that someone who doesn’t know you judges you a lot, (G, Year 12).

Basic Theme: Personal Characteristics

When considering accessing a service such as Pupil Time to Talk, some of the personal characteristics of the professional in question surpassed the importance of the pupils’ levels of familiarity with them in some respect. A variety of preferences came to the fore regarding the ideal age of the professional, with some young pupils expressing a preference for a younger person:

The younger they are, the easier it is because they are closer to your age and stuff, (C, Year 13).

Whilst others expressed that they would feel more comfortable accessing a service delivered by an older professional:

Maybe I wouldn’t want to speak to someone younger...someone older maybe has more experience, (S, Year 12).

A clear theme identified was that some pupils, both male and female, expressed a preference for accessing female professionals:

Gender comes into it, like for example, when I was learning to drive I wanted to have a woman... a female instructor. I would feel more confident and safer, for something like this, with a male it would be a bit awkward really, (L, Year 13).

However, some pupils expressed that a professional’s personal qualities override concrete characteristics like age and gender. Accessing a professional who conveyed empathic, caring qualities was seen as a definite facilitator to formal help-seeking:

First impressions are more important than anything, (P, Year 12).

If they’re an ‘ok’ person... that’s more important than their title or role or whatever or anything else about them. If they show that they may be able to
understand and relate to your problems and know where you are coming from, and that they look like they’d be easy to talk to, (E, Year 12).

Basic Theme: Trust in Outside Agencies
Having an inherent trust in professionals and outside agencies in comparison to peers and school staff was identified by some pupils as a positive factor in building relationships with sources of support:

You feel like they knew what they were talking about, so you’d be more able to trust them, (R, Year 12).

They probably see similar problems all the time, so they would be more able to make you feel better in comparison to your friends and teachers, who may be a bit taken aback, (M, Year 13).

4.4.4.2 ‘Stigma’ Thematic Network.
This thematic network consists of two Organising Themes and five Basic Themes. It represents an exploration of the pupils’ overt views of themselves as individuals who care less as they mature about other’s perceptions of them, whilst highlighting the more implicit fear of being stigmatised for sharing concerns with others.

![Stigma Thematic Network Diagram]

**Figure 4.3: ‘Stigma’ Thematic Network.**
Facilitating questions around help-seeking and perceptions of professionals led to discussions that initially seemed to imply that concerns about help-seeking were more prominent in younger pupils for fear of peer reaction. Initial discussion also implied that Professional titles such as ‘Psychologist’ did not cause any anxiety and that personal characteristics were more important. However, as the discussions went on it became clear that ‘stigma’ towards help-seeking and, accessing support from certain professions in particular was a clear and prominent theme. The thematic network depicts the main themes contributing to feelings or stigmatisation and expressions of stigma identified by pupils: Help-Seeking and Psychology.

These organising themes were the main stigmatising factors identified by young people when considering making use of Pupil Time to Talk, and focused in detail on their view of other people’s help-seeking behaviours as well as their own, the fear of ‘being found out’, and the information and perceptions they held about various professions related to psychology based on prior experiences.

4.4.4.2.1 Organising Theme: Help-Seeking.

This Organising Theme relates to the overt and more covert views expressed by pupils of help-seeking and their perception of its related connotations. The basic themes highlight clearly why some of the perceptions may act as a significant barrier to seeking formal support regardless of need.

Basic Theme: Peer pressure

Initially, some of the pupils expressed a view that peer pressure reduces with age and that younger pupils are more likely to be bother about what other think of them:

Care more about what people think when you’re younger though, when you get to our age you get over it more, (B, Year 13).

However, as the discussion went on, it became clear that even for those in the 16-18 years of age group, peer pressure and the desire to conform to peers’ norms remained a strong motivator for behaviour, and in this instance acted as a significant barrier to seeking support from an outside source:

I’d be afraid of people talking about me if they knew I was going to see someone in school... thinking ‘what’s my problem’? (K, Year 12).
You would definitely get rumours started about you... I know from experience... It’s just easier to keep your head down and keep things to yourself, (S, Year 12).

Some of the pupils even expressed their shock as they realised that some of their initial thoughts around the impact of peer pressure ‘reducing’ as they got older were perhaps ill-founded, and they reflected on the more implicit messages conveyed in their discussions:

I’ve just realised that most of this discussion has been about how other people feel about what we do! (P, Year 12).

After saying all that about not caring what people here think, we sound quite pre-occupied with it now, (B, Year 13).

Basic Theme: Attention Seeking
This basic theme is closely related to the theme of peer pressure discussed above. It illustrates the perception that some pupils expressed help-seeking being synonymous with attention seeking, and demonstrates their dismissive feelings and possibly stigmatising reactions towards fellow pupils who may be finding it difficult to cope with their concerns alone.

People who go to a school nurse or counsellor or someone are usually just attention seeking... they go to be seen going, (R, Year 12).

Some people, yeah, just like that thing of everyone making a fuss over them, so they conjure up these dramas so that they’re the centre of attention, (K, Year 13).

Basic Theme: Seriousness of Issues
Several pupils expressed that they were less likely to seek support from a formal source if they perceived their concern or issues to be ‘serious’ in nature, and felt that most of their peers would feel the same way.

If you have a serious problem you’re less likely to talk to someone you don’t know, (A, Year 12).

I’d be more likely to use a service like this if I just wanted to off-load about something quite small, something that you just wanted to get off your chest.
or get advice about. If it was something big, I’d just talk to my friends, (E, Year 12).

One pupil reflected that this issues of ‘seriousness’ and likelihood of seeking support was probably related to the patterns of behaviour a pupil had seen at home:

*I think it depends on your up-bringing and family values really*, (LI, Year 13).

4.4.4.2.2 Organising Theme: Psychology.

The transcribed data highlighted the sometimes limited information pupils hold about psychology, and Educational Psychology as a profession, and how possessing limited accurate information leads to them having to depend on their own and possibly wider societies’ perceptions. Some pupils viewed having contact with a psychologist as being quite a taboo and stigmatised subject. Many of the pupils were clear that such perceptions would act as a significant barrier to accessing a ‘Psychology’ related service independently.

Basic Theme: Information

Some of the pupils described having limited information or knowledge of the work of psychologists, and the related professions. Some commented that undertaking an A Level Psychology course had not really developed their understanding of the work carried out by practitioners.

*When you came in to explain about it, I did think it was a good idea having something just for people our age with problems... I don’t have a lot of problems personally, but for those with lots going on at home I thought it was a good service. But really I didn’t know anything about the school psychology service...education psychology... before then, and really I think we all need more background information about it and what you do other than Time to Talk*, (C, Year 13).

*I haven’t done a psychology course so I haven’t a clue what psychologists do!* (K, Year 12).

*Well, I have [done a psychology course] and I know about the theories and stuff, but I don’t know what psychologists really do with that. I know that they link your problems to your childhood experiences... Freud*, (S, Year 12).
Basic Theme: Perceptions

This basic theme is closely linked to the ‘information’ theme discussed above, or the lack pupil of information about practising psychologists as the data seemed to suggest. This theme highlights the prevalent perceptions pupils held about psychologists and EPs in particular. Whilst some of the perceptions could be interpreted as positive views of psychologists as reliable sources of information/support who could be trusted due to their professional responsibilities:

You feel like they would know what they are talking about, (P, Year 12).

They’re probably more trustworthy than talking to anyone else in school, (G, Year 12)

Others held largely negative, stigmatising connotations related to accessing psychological support:

Psychologists work with psychos.... (P, Year 12).

If anyone found out you’d been [to Pupil Time to Talk], you’d definitely get people saying ‘she’s got depression’, or ‘she’s done this’, ‘she’s going to see a psychologist and everything’, (L, Year 13).

I’d worry about being seen as more of a case study that a person to a psychologist, (M, Year 12).

Some pupils expressed their perception of psychologists as only working with individuals/groups with significant difficulties, who would not be interested or get involved with difficulties perceived to be less severe:

Psychologists only deal with serious problems...like rape, (E, Year 12).

If you go to a psychologist then people would assume that there is something seriously wrong with you... otherwise why would you be seeing one? (B, Year 13).

You know that you don’t have major problems, but you do need to talk someone and a psychologist may be the perfect person to talk with... but because you know that other people would class you then as having a major problem, you just wouldn’t, (N, Year 13).
In relation, to EPs in particular, pupils held perceptions of the service they could offer as being more relevant to younger pupils, or as being related to pupils experiencing cognitive or school based difficulties:

*Educational Psychologists are more like Careers Advisers I think and would probably tend to talk to you more like a child*, (C, Year 13).

*I wouldn’t go to a ‘Child Psychologist’... sort of an educational one... because its different problems really I think... Depends what the problem is though as well, if it’s to do with school then they’d know more, but a Clinical Psychologist would know more about other issues that would be a lot more useful for us at this age I think*, (LI, Year 13).

Some pupils perceive that school staff or parents were more likely to be psychologists’ primary clients rather than young people themselves, acting as a further barrier for pupils who may be considering accessing support independently:

*I think they’d side more with the school or your parents, rather than you*, (S, Year 12).

### 4.4.4.3 ‘Expectations vs Confidence in Competence’ Thematic Network

The thematic network consists of two organising themes and five basic themes. It represents an exploration of the anxiety felt by pupils at this transitional stage in their lives, feeling the pressure of adult expectations on their shoulders, but being unsure if they will be able to meet those expectations independently. The main themes on which the perceived discrepancy between adult ‘expectations’ and pupils’ ‘confidence in their own competence’ are based are ‘ability to undertake self-determined actions’ and ‘transition’.

Data suggested that many young people perceive that, whilst in theory, it’s good to have a support service that pupils can access independently, perhaps in practice, pupils who would benefit from such a service may not have the skills required to make use of it. Participants also reported a strong sense of anxiety about their imminent transition from school and into further education or the workplace, perceiving that the support systems in place were not equal to their perception of need.
4.4.4.3.1 Organising Theme: Ability to undertake self-determined actions.

Several pupils questioned whether pupils who may benefit from a service such as Pupil Time to Talk would possess the skills required to access such a service independently. Some went on to suggest measures that may support them in feeling more comfortable in acting independently and engaging in self-determined actions.

Basic Theme: Competence

Some pupils questioned whether expecting pupils to access a service such as Pupil Time to Talk independently, may be beyond the skill levels of the pupils who would benefit most from such a service. The textual data highlighted the possibility that the perceived discrepancy between service expectations and pupil skill levels renders the idea unworkable in its current format.

*It depends on how you see yourself as a person, if you’re quite a confident person you can go and sort your problems yourself, go and see a*
psychologist or counsellor or just a teacher or whatever... But, the people who need most support tend to keep it all in and wouldn’t say that they needed help if they’re low in confidence and are self-conscious or whatever... they haven’t got the skills to ask for that support, (K, Year 13).

Basic Theme: Autonomy
Some pupils described their need for more ‘encouragement’ to act independently in the context of accessing a ‘drop-in’ type service. The discussions highlight some of the measures that could be implemented to increase pupil confidence in acting independently and engaging in self-determined actions.

I think that young people need a bit more encouragement really... Maybe being invited to a taster session, or it being a session for a specific issue one day then something different the next, just a push really for you to take the plunge and go to something that may be of help to you, so you’d be more likely to go yourself in future or when you’re older or something, (A, Year 12)

I think that initially, people our age wouldn’t go out of their way to seek support, but with if someone in authority tells you to go first time and you think it’s good, then you’re more likely to do it of your own accord the second time, (LI, Year 13).

Basic Theme: Relatedness
Some pupils touched upon the importance of word of mouth/encouragement from a trusted source such as a friend in acting as a catalyst for self-determined independent action such as seeking support from a service such as Pupil Time to Talk, and that evidently this has not had time to materialise in this instance:

If I knew a friend had been, and they told me about it, I’d be more likely to make use of it myself then because I’d trust what my friend said about it. Sometimes we depend on our friends for support about stuff, when really we should get it from somewhere like this, our friends don’t know any more than us! (G, Year 12).

4.4.4.3.2 Organising Theme: Transition.
Transitions are often anxiety provoking, and this organising theme relates to pupils’ perceptions of their anxiety as possibly stemming from a discrepancy between the decisions they are now expected to make and their confidence in their ability to
make ‘the right’ decisions independently. Some pupils expressed feelings of discomfort at the rate they perceived school support to have decreased in year 12 and 13.

Basic Theme: Anxiety
Some pupils expressed a natural feeling of anxiety at the thought of undertaking exams, and about leaving school and moving on to the next stage in their lives:

“I’m worried about exams now more than ever, so worried I’ll mess it up,” (K, Year 13).

“Don’t really know what you’re getting yourself into... I’m terrified about leaving school and maybe going to Uni,” (P, Year 12).

Some expressed feeling ill-equipped to make such important decisions about their future:

“They are talking about choosing University courses, but I don’t know what I want to do, but they still push University, but that’s not the right option for everyone. How am I supposed to know if it’s the right thing for me? I think about it all the time, and when I ask, people just say it’s got to be my decision,” (Ll, Year 13).

“They expect us to do it ourselves... and I don’t know where to start,” (S, Year 12).

Basic Theme: Need for more support
Several young people expressed an understanding that more is expected of them as they mature and that school is trying to find a balance between offering guidance and allowing them to think independently. However, they also expressed that at times, the balance is not quite achieved and they are left yearning for more support:

“We still want support, maybe not as much [as last year, year 11] because after we leave school there won’t be any support at all, but we would like some support just to get some sort of idea of what to do and where to go,” (E, Year 12).

“Exam pressure gets worse and worse as time goes by and support gets less and less,” (A, Year 12).
I’m getting more and more concerned about the financial side of University, yet no support is provided from that front, (K, Year 13).

The data suggests that pupils felt that the EPS may have a role to play in offering some of the support that they perceive to be missing currently:

I think that the key skills time could be used by you to do more of this kind of stuff in groups, workshops and stuff about exam stress, revision... it’ll help people understand that you don’t just work with psychos or whatever? (C, Year 13).

About going to University... transition, there is some input about the academic side but I think it would be good if someone offered input about coping with the social/personal sides of it, (M, Year 13).

I think work needs to be done on helping the kids from other schools get on and integrate with us, because at the moment they just stick to their little groups... the psychology service would be good to do that, in form time maybe? (P, Year 12).

4.4.5 RADIO Stage 12: Evaluating Action.

According to Timmins et al. (2003), this phase of the RADIO involves stakeholders reviewing the ‘effectiveness’ of the action taken in light of the initial information gathering/research cycle and possibly requesting further EP involvement.

In this instance, this involved presenting the themes identified as a result of the focus groups, and again asking the stakeholders to reflect on the findings in relation to the organisation’s developmental needs. Whilst the findings had implications for School A, they also had implications for the EPS, and therefore not only was the information gathered shared and processed with the smaller group of stakeholders who were still meeting following the changes to School A’s Inclusion Team, but it was also processed separately with a wider stakeholder group, namely the EPS team as a whole.
4.4.5.1 Feedback to immediate stakeholders.

I met with the immediate stakeholders in School A to feedback the focus group findings and evaluate the work carried out together as a whole. Whilst the feedback was audio recorded, only a partial transcription was carried out, as full analysis of the discussion was not required. Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate that data only has to be transcribed to an "appropriate level of detail" (p. 96) to meet the needs it was intended for. In this case, we were not seeking to analyse the discussions in depth, its purpose was to seek clarification of the stakeholders’ responses to the findings and thoughts on potential next steps.

4.4.5.1.1 Reflections on Pupil Focus Group findings.

The Stakeholders jointly reflected that the Basic and Organising themes identified in relation to Logistical Factors were more or less in line with what they had expected the pupils to comment upon and what they themselves had experienced over time when implementing new initiatives.

Whilst I’m not surprised that the pupils felt that the Time to Talk locations were not suitable, I’m not surprised either, that they were unable to come up with an alternative location... It’s something we battle with all the time when we want to find a quiet/confidential space. Their ideas regarding not having a fixed room, swapping and switching with each appointment, is something that we might need to consider in relation to School Based Counselling and other such things as well, (Head of Inclusion).

They were however quite surprised at some of the other themes identified, giving them a new perspective around the issues faced by post-16 pupils within the school. They expressed particular concerns around some of the attitudes identified in relation to ‘help-seeking’:

That worries me quite a bit, that perception that seeking help is equivalent to attention seeking behaviour; that suggests a complete lack of empathy towards their peers.... doesn’t it? As a school, firstly I don’t know what our role has been in creating that perception and secondly how we can overcome such associations? (Deputy Head Teacher)
The ALNCo added that the “catch twenty two” often faced by school staff in relation to offering support for social and emotional issues may be contributing towards young people’s perception of formal help-seeking.

_I think that we battle quite often between trying to support pupils going through a difficult time, developing a trusting relationship and maintaining their wish for confidentiality – and our statutory duty to report matters of significant concern to the relevant authorities. I guess for us, the possible repercussions of not reporting are far more significant that any chaos that might ensue as a result of a pupil perceiving that we’ve betrayed their trust, (ALNCo)._

Some of the stakeholders initially felt uneasy about the Expectations vs. Confidence in Competence theme identified, stressing that year 12 and 13 pupils at School A received support from school staff as well as outside partners in terms of careers/further education guidance. I later reflected in my Research Diary that the initial response received felt rather defensive. However, by the end of the meeting, having had the opportunity to contextualise and possibly normalise the findings in relation to this aspect, the stakeholders saw this as a clear area for further action by the school.

During the discussion, the stakeholders shared that with the support of the CYPP, they had carried out an initial pupil survey on their views of school, using an ESTYN designed questionnaire. Whilst they were in the main happy with the results, two issues had come to the fore, the latter tallying with the themes identified in relation to the Global Theme, Expectations vs Confidence in Competence:

- Over fifty percent of pupils felt that the school did not listen to their opinions and carry out changes suggested by them.
- Nearly forty percent of pupils in year 10, 11, 12 and 13 did not feel adequately supported in making decisions regarding transition etc.

_4.4.5.1.2 Plans for future action._

By the end of the feedback session and related discussion, stakeholders had agreed upon areas for further action by the school, in effect, a further cycle of action research. The following areas would be explored further:

- Inviting pupils to take part in focus groups to discuss specific aspects of school life, and using the information gained to make reasonable changes.
• Embedding the skills introduced during the ‘Motivational Day’ arranged for year 11, 12 and 13 around revision skills and stress management, throughout the curriculum. Ensuring that their subject teachers reinforced the skills learnt through the year may help reduce the natural feelings of anxiety during these important school years. The speakers for this ‘Motivational Day’ would be bought in initially.

• Long-term work on the school intranet; using technology to support work around pastoral care, providing information about the various outside agencies that can support pupils in school.

• Staff workshops on developing Pupil Participation.

• EPS INSET training for Year 12 and 13 Tutors focusing on the needs of this pupil population.

The stakeholders also queried the action that the EPS would take as a result of the action research project, expressing an interest to be part of any future plans by the EPS around Pupil Time to Talk, continuing to view such a service in a positive light despite the barriers identified around its implementation and use within a school setting:

_We continue to have an interest in providing a service with your [EPS] support whilst accepting the points identified by the pupils themselves of course... I appreciate that the pilot had to be relatively short in nature because you were doing it as part of your course, but I think we need to give it more time to become embedded... Anyway, I know that you will need time to discuss the next steps as a service, and we’ll go from there..._ (Deputy Head Teacher).

### 4.4.5.1.3 Reflections of the research process.

Before the feedback session drew to a close, I asked the stakeholders to reflect on the action research process as a whole. Interestingly, the Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head Teacher were the most vocal in their reflections – the two co-researchers. This perhaps reflected the changes that had taken place within the immediate stakeholder group during the research timeline, and the fact that the remaining stakeholders felt rather out of touch with the process as a result.
Both co-researchers commented that they felt that the action research process had been positive, and that it had opened their eyes to the joint work that could be carried out between agencies:

*We are so used to having new initiatives thrust upon us and then disappear without us knowing what went on, it's been great to be part of this process from the beginning... I guess that one of the main purposes of the Inclusion Team was to facilitate this kind of multi-agency work, so I'm really disappointed that that may not be possible in the same way in the future...* (Head of Inclusion).

*I liked the flexibility of it...you try something, get feedback, try another way... often, without trying different ways, you can never get it right,* (Deputy Head Teacher).

Both co-researchers made reference to that fact that balancing their roles as co-researchers with the demands of their senior management roles within the school proved tricky at times, especially as a result of the changes that had taken place within the senior management team during the course of the research:

*I was thinking the other day actually, I'm not sure about taking on the role of co-researcher... if I'd do that again or not... On the one hand, I don't know if you'd agree, but I felt it was useful to have people who could make decisions and influence things working closely on it, but on the other I'm not sure if I could always give it a hundred percent with everything else that's been going on?* (Deputy Head Teacher).

*Yes, yes, I'd second that J... I would have liked to be more involved really, but time wise, it just wasn't possible. I was conscious that at times I was perhaps making promises I couldn't keep... like with the research diary...* (Head of Inclusion).

When asked specifically about their thoughts about the use of RADIO as a framework to the action research project, their reflections were rather limited:

*I don't think I'd have any comment other than it's obviously a very logical, structured approach that, helps guide you towards the next steps, especially when things didn't exactly go the way we initially thought it might... yes... that's it really,* (Head of Inclusion).
I still think that that step about considering the cultural setting where the work is taking place is a very useful concept to bear in mind, I could see me making reference to that in future when we’re thinking of implementing new initiatives and so forth, (Deputy Head Teacher).

The Deputy Head Teacher re-iterated the wish to be kept informed of the EPS’s future plans, and expressed a desire to work with the service on future research project:

Like we said before, I think we’d like to be kept in the loop about the future of Pupil Time to Talk.... and more than that, it would be great to draw on the EPS’s research skills for other school development projects I think... (Deputy Head Teacher).

4.4.5.2 Feedback to wider Stakeholder group

Myself and one of the co-researchers (Head of Inclusion) also fed back on the pupil focus group results and the action research process as a whole to the EPS members during a team meeting. School A’s designated EP was unable to attend, which was unfortunate as she may have been able to provide an unique insight, being part of the immediate stakeholder group (School’s Inclusion Team) and part of the wider stakeholder group (EPS team member).

Naturally, the EPS stakeholders mostly focused upon the feedback around the Global theme of ‘Stigma’ and the ‘Psychology’ Organising theme, as the impact of pupils’ views in relation to those themes may be significant barriers to the work of the EPS generally. A long discussion ensued about the EPS’ ways of working, and it is beyond the scope of this research project to analyse that discussion in great detail. However, below are direct quotations from the partly transcribed discussion, which go some way to explaining the rationale behind the decisions reached by the EPS regarding developing the service further in light of the research findings:

4.4.5.2.1 Plans for future action.

The EPs reflected on the fact that for involvement to be meaningful in any way, the individuals participating (pupils in this instance) needed to understand and be informed about what they were participating with. Clearly in this instance pupils did
not feel that they knew enough about the work of EPs and what they could offer them, and the EPs therefore reflected on the need for more ‘groundwork’ to be carried out before the service even thought about next steps in developing ‘participation’ and direct access opportunities.

*There is a common theme here, because we have this problem with agencies as well, so it’s maybe our problem that we are really poor at clarifying our role and identifying what we actually do and promote that...* (Deputy Principal Psychologist).

*It just shows that pupil participation is much more than filling in an ‘All about me, especially at that age... lots more ground work needs to be done, we’re just not there yet, (A, EP).*

- Whilst the EPS were already in the process of designing an information leaflet for professionals, it was agreed that a joint focus should be placed on designing a service information leaflet for children and young people, differentiated for different age-groups. This had been discussed many times before, but was always put on the ‘back burner’ so to speak because other matters, believed to be more pressing, took priority. The findings from the action research project highlighted the importance of this proposed work.

Some of the EPs questioned where the pupils’ more positive views on Clinical Psychology had stemmed from and wondered whether the fact that the CAMHS EIPT had been involved in some whole group work was the key factor, and whether this was a route for the EPS to consider.

*The way we work currently means that young people really only associate us with pupils with additional learning needs and behaviour difficulties... a deficit rather than universal service... I guess the difference with CAMHS is that the pupils have maybe worked with whole classes implementing programmes... so they’ve become familiar faces around school and their input has been normalised to some extent...* (Deputy Principal EP).

*Yes, well, we’ve been saying for a while that we need to get more involved at Key Stage 3 and 4, change the way we work with them... and as these young people have said here they would value whole group work of the kind that we could offer, relaxation skills, anxiety management etc. I mean we are*
looking for ways to implement this CBT [Cognitive Behaviour Therapy] course... that is the type of 'ground work' that needs to be done... make us an acceptable source of support... then try to implement something like Time to Talk again, (Senior EP).

- It was agreed that ‘workshops’, aimed at young people in Key Stage 4 initially, using the ideas proposed during the pupil focus groups, would be designed as part of the next research cycle, and offered to piloting secondary schools. The main aim of holding the focus groups would be to offer a universal service, and become a ‘familiar’ service for pupils within schools.

- It was also agreed that the concept of Pupil Time to Talk would be re-visited within in a year to two years time, once the agreed actions in terms of promoting the service had been implemented.

**4.4.5.2 Longer-term developmental changes within School A**

Interestingly, in my role as the EPS’ representative on LA 1’s SBC Moderation Panel, I was made aware of the fact that, during and after the action research project with School A, a shift occurred with regard to their referrals to SBC. The SBC counselling service maintain a record of the referrals received per school year. The number of year 12 and 13 pupils being referred from School A had risen from 1 pupil between 2009-2010, to 9 pupils between 2010-2011 (LA 1 SBC, 2011). Whilst this alleged ‘shift’ may be completely unrelated to the project, it may also reflect the increased awareness of this population’s needs amongst staff, as described by the Head of Inclusion.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE
This final chapter will address each of the research questions in turn, providing my personal reflections on the action research process throughout. Pertinent issues arising from the study which warrant further discussion are also presented. The key findings will be considered in light of previous research outlined in the literature review. I will also contextualise the findings in relation to some new literature that may not have been discussed previously in the original review. This is because I continued to access relevant literature as the action research evolved and changed direction. The chapter will include considerations of the research’s strengths and limitations and end with reflections on possible directions for future research.

5.2 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PERTINENT ISSUES ARISING FROM THE FINDINGS
It is calculated that as many as 20% of children and young people experience psychological problems at any one time (The Mental Health Foundation, 1999). Studies have identified that young people perceive themselves to have many concerns that go unnoticed by the adults around them (Cheminais, 2008), and that support is not easily accessible when required (The Mental Health Foundation, 1999; Ahmad et al., 2003). Existing literature tells us that young people and professionals alike have identified accessible service delivery models, such as ‘drop-in’ services, to be desirable and age appropriate methods for adolescents to seek, and engage with emotional health support (Nichtern, 1978; Woolfson & Harker, 2002; Kay et al., 2006; Woolfson et al., 2008; Weerasinghe, 2009). It is proposed that being provided with opportunities to access such support independently of third party referrals, may lead to more meaningful pupil participation with services, which is also a current legislative drive (Daniels et al., 2000; Whitty et al., 2007). Research into theories of Motivation suggest that older adolescents possess the skills required to make self-determined decisions and take independent action based on such decisions (Mann et al., 1989; Sessa & Steinberg, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). This suggests that older adolescents posses the ability to make use of services offering direct access, un-mediated by a third party. Drop-in services for parents are quite widely implemented by EPs and emerging research supports their use (Booth, 2009;
Jebbett, 2011); Parental Time to Talk is already a successful ‘drop-in’ service operated by the EPS in LA 1, valued by parents and other professionals alike (Gravell, 2008; Thomas, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to work collaboratively with staff in one secondary school to consider year 12 and 13 pupils’ access to and participation with EPs. A Pupil Time to Talk service was designed and implemented based on the established Parental Time to Talk model to provide pupils with direct, confidential access to discuss any concerns with an EP. The service offered was evaluated from the perspectives of pupils and key stakeholders. The course of the research evolved in response to the planned actions taken, as is characteristic of action research.

The key points outlined above suggest that it would be reasonable to predict that a Pupil Time to Talk service could be implemented and embedded within any secondary school, and it would elicit interest from the target population. Especially, as the lessons learnt by other researchers/agencies in embedding emotional health initiatives within schools were considered and taken heed of in relation to the current study (Carton & Weiss, 1994; Burnison, 2003; Baginsky, 2004). However, when this was attempted within School A, this was not the case. A summary of the findings in relation to each research question is presented in the next sections, providing some insight into why this might be, and what was learnt as a result.

5.2.1 Research Question 1: How is Pupil Time to Talk perceived by stakeholders and post 16 pupils?

5.2.1.1 Stakeholders

To remind the reader, there were two major stakeholders groups, both involved to a different extent in the research project. The immediate stakeholder group consisted of members of School A’s Inclusion Team, with two of the members acting as co-researchers on the project. The wider stakeholder group included the EPS, who had been influential in developing early ideas with regard the project.

As would be expected considering their role in the concept development, the EPS stakeholder group perceived Pupil Time to Talk to be a positive change in service delivery (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.1). However, the potential benefits of developing opportunities for young people to access EP support directly was also
immediately recognised by School A’s Inclusion Team. When the concept of Pupil Time to Talk was introduced and developed with them, they perceived it as potentially impacting on three different levels. They are described by the ‘Time to Talk: Potential to fill a gap’ Thematic Network’s Organising Themes as: Pupils’ Needs, School Staff Needs and External Agencies’ needs (see section 4.2.1.6).

Stakeholders were particularly insightful in discussing the short-falls of existing service delivery models, acknowledging that the external pressures placed upon them in making referrals to services, may mean that some pupils are overlooked. This is evident across all three Organising Themes. Such an insight may add another dimension to NASUWT’s (2006) finding that teachers experienced difficulties in recognising pupils with more internalised emotional needs, and young people’s perception that their concerns often go unnoticed by the adults around them (Baruch, 2001; Cheminais, 2008). The stakeholders seemed to suggest that teaching staff do posses the skills to identify internalised difficulties such as anxiety and low mood in pupils (as particularly identified by two of the ‘Pupils’ Needs’ Basic Themes – Direct Access to External Agencies and ‘Grey’ Pupils). However, external pressures to prioritise pupils whose difficulties directly impact on school management and performance, coupled with a lack of knowledge regarding appropriate avenues of support for pupils with internalised difficulties, may be leading to the disproportionate referrals received by EPS’, as discussed in the literature review (Vardill & Calvert, 2000, Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson & Wallingsford, 2002).

Stakeholders’ positive perception of the concept of Pupil Time to Talk was enhanced by their acknowledgement of the differing needs of older adolescents, and the difficulties experienced in meeting those needs by way of the existing support structures. (See Organising Theme ‘Pupils’ Needs’, Basic Themes Direct Access to External Agency and Falling Between Child and Adult services; Organising Theme ‘School Staffs’ Needs’, Basic Theme Raise Awareness). This acknowledgement resonates with earlier findings by the Mental Health Foundation (1999). The stakeholders recognise the need to “be thinking differently, and offering different services” (CAMHS EIPT worker), to young people in this age group. Such opinions support Aston and Lambert’s (2010) ideas about the need to re-structure present systems to allow children and young people to become primary clients in their own right. The stakeholders’ desire to continue to work closely with the EPS in
relation to such issues (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.5.1.2 and 4.4.5.1.3) suggests that they hold similar views to those expressed by Hayton (2009); that EPs are well-placed professionals to bridge gaps identified in supporting older adolescents in particular, especially in rural areas.

Some stakeholders recognised the potential in individuals choosing to engage with a service of their own accord, and the positive outcomes that can ensue from such situations (see Organising Theme ‘External Agencies’ Needs’, Basic Theme Participation). Such sentiments echo those discussed in the literature review in relation to the impact self-determined behaviours can have on individual motivation and outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and potentially adds weight to McKenzie et al.’s (2011) misgivings about third party referrals. It is of interest that perhaps the most vocal stakeholder in relation to this issue was a school based counsellor, who perhaps has witnessed the positive impact of self-determined engagement, as opposed to participation as a result of third-party referrals, in her own professional practice.

The stakeholders’ generally positive perception of Pupil Time to Talk as a concept did not alter despite the service not being taken up by pupils during the pilot period. They remained very interested in the service and its future direction following the themes elicited from the pupil focus groups being fed-back to them (see 4.4.5.1.2). Rather than attributing the outcomes of the current study as relating to a flaw in the concept itself, stakeholders seemed to take an almost critical realist view of the situation, identifying potential mechanisms that may have played a part in the outcomes achieved. They were especially critical of the time afforded to the pilot phase, viewing it as an unrealistic time-frame to embed an initiative. In discussing educational change processes, Fullan (2001) suggests that the implementation period for change can take two years or more; with the steps from an initiative’s “initiation to the institutionalization” (p.34) potentially taking between three and five years. Whilst it is likely that Fullan (2001) was discussing change initiatives on a much larger scale than that of Pupil Time to Talk, the stakeholders’ criticisms are understandable.

The stakeholders continuing positive perception of Pupil Time to Talk and commitment to the concept of making EPSs more accessible to older adolescents may be explained in terms of Lewin’s 3-Step Model of Change. It seems that being
presented with findings from the early stages of the RADIO framework, and working collaboratively to identify potential organisational and cultural issues, created a motivation to change amongst them. This was described by Lewin as ‘Unfreezing’. As Schein (2010) postulates, presenting an organisation with information suggesting that it may not be meeting some of its goals can lead to ‘disconfirmation’ of the status quo; and as most organisations strive to ‘do their best’, or in this instance do the best for the children and young people they work with, this may have led to ‘survival anxiety or guilt’. Schein (2010) proposes that survival anxiety can give way to what he terms ‘learning anxiety’, at the thought of having to learn and adapt to a new way of operating. Towards the end of the research process, I reflected in my research diary that perhaps working collaboratively with an outside service such as the EPS, to trial a new way of working, reduced any potential anxiety felt by School A’s Inclusion Team in this instance. Working collaboratively on the project may have allowed an environment of ‘psychological safety’ to be created (Schein, 2010). This may have reduced any potential anxiety felt by the stakeholders, allowing the positive perceptions identified to reign, rather than use the poor uptake of Pupil Time to Talk as a reason to maintain their previous working culture and identity.

It seemed that that the stakeholders were firmly in the ‘Moving’ Stage of Lewin’s Model of Change. They were continuing to conceive best possible solutions and were motivated to trial and evaluate different ideas rather than stick with the status quo – ‘Development of new standards of evaluations’ as described by Schein (2010). Upon personal reflection, I do not think that this would have been the case had the EPS trialled Pupil Time to Talk independently, without collaborating with key stakeholders within the school and other outside agencies. Had the initiative been ‘bolted-on’, as is the danger with emotional health initiatives according to McLaughlin (2008), key individuals within the school would not have considered persevering with the concept of direct access to an EP, and would have been happy to maintain their previous way of working. Providing key stakeholders with ownership of the issues identified ensures that the momentum for change continued and their perception of Pupil Time to Talk remained positive. Also, had the immediate stakeholders not been as involved in the project throughout, it is unlikely that they would have committed to the future action identified on their part.
5.2.1.2 Post-16 Pupils

On the face of it, it might be argued that the perception held by School A’s pupils regarding the Time to Talk service is made clear by the fact that no use of the service was made. However, a more complex, and somewhat conflicting picture of the perceptions held emerged from the pupil focus groups. The three Thematic Networks discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.4.4, all contain very revealing information regarding pupil perceptions of the service offered.

Perceptions of interest and positivity in relation to the concept of Pupil Time to Talk were elicited during the focus groups, (see Global Theme Logistical Factors, Organising Theme Confidentiality, Basic Theme Establishing Services, and Global Theme Stigma, Organising Theme Psychology, Basic Theme Information, in particular). Such perceptions of interest echo those previously identified by Nichtern (1978), Woolfson and Harker (2002), Kay et al., (2006), Woolfson et al., (2008) and Weerasinghe (2009). School A’s pupils expressed that they believed the initiative to be a good idea in theory, but those beliefs were evidently clouded by some logistical factors in relation to putting the concept of Pupil Time to Talk into practice.

Of interest is the perception held by pupils participating in the current study, that they have very different ideas regarding what constitutes a ‘serious’ problem, to that of the adults around them (see Global Theme Logistical Factors, Organising Theme Confidentiality, Basic Theme Differing Boundaries). As a result, they perceived that sharing a concern or issue with an adult, would result in them taking “it a bit too seriously... take it a bit out of hand” (E, Year 12, p.?). This is in direct contrast to a finding contained within the existing literature around help-seeking, which suggested that young people were resistant to seek adult support for fear that their concerns would not be taken seriously (Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994). The reason for this difference in perception is unclear, but could reflect pupils’ implicit understanding of schools operating under ‘the welfare model’ and concept of in loco parentis described by Daniels and Jenkins (2000).

Reflections from my research diary immediately following the pupil focus groups indicated my surprise at the pupils’ perceptions of their skills, confidence and ability to seek support from a service such as Pupil Time to Talk. The discussions represented by the Global Theme Expectations vs Confidence in Competence, Organising Theme Ability to undertake self-determined action, suggested that pupils
did not believe that some would be able to access Pupil Time to Talk without prior ‘encouragement’ from known adults or peers. Indeed, they indicated that those in most need may not have the confidence to access such a service at all in some instances. Previous studies relating to adolescent help-seeking identified that it is a behaviour often inversely related to the degree of distress experienced (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Wilson et al., 2005; Raviv et al., 2009). However, I was surprised that ‘lack of confidence’ continued to be such a prominent issue for adolescents of this age group, on the cusp of adulthood.

I discussed during supervision session how my ‘surprise’ in relation to these issues may reflect my own circumstances as a post 16 pupil, having to transfer from a school based setting to a tertiary college, due to my secondary school not having a year 12 and 13 provision. I discussed that my experience of that transition might have made it more difficult for me to ‘put myself in School A’s pupils shoes’, so to speak, resulting in my being ‘surprised’ by their lack of confidence in self-directing. I feel that the transition I experienced resulted in me and my peers having to mature quite quickly, and it signified a time where we had to become more self-reliant in addressing any barriers we encountered, either educationally or emotionally. We could no longer depend on ‘encouragement’ and external motivation from school staff that we had built a relationship with over time. Most of the pupils participating in the focus groups continued their post-compulsory education within the secure setting of a school they had attended since the age of eleven, and were perhaps accustomed with being ‘guided’ more firmly towards avenues of appropriate support.

One of the main concerns highlighted by pupils related to the level of confidentiality offered by the service (see Global Theme Logistical Factors, Organising Theme Confidentiality, and Organising Theme Relationships, Basic Theme Trust in Outside Agencies). Despite each pupil being experiencing an oral presentation and being provided with written material emphasising the confidentiality offered by the service, a doubtful perception as to the extent of that confidentiality permeated. Such concerns echo those highlighted by pupils partaking in other evaluative studies of emotional health support and counselling services (Fox and Butler, 2007; Gilat et al., 2010; Guilliver et al., 2010). Issues relating to pupils’ familiarity with the service provider was also a factor discussed by the pupils in the current study (see Global Theme Logistical Factors, Organising Theme Relationships, Basic Theme
Familiarity, in particular), as has been the case in previous research (Fox and Butler, 2007; Gilat et al., 2010).

Whilst it is clear that such factors do have some bearing upon pupil perceptions of the service, upon reflection, I do not believe that the lack of uptake can be explained solely in terms of such issues. As identified in the literature review, pupils have generally expressed concerns about the confidentiality of SBC services, and School Based Counsellors within LA 1 are not known to pupils prior to their engagement with the service. However, neither factor has led to such services being redundant, either within LA 1 or nationally. In my view, it is likely that the constructions pupils held of psychologists and EPs in particular (constructions that have not been widely investigated within previous literature), and the stigma reported to be associated with such help-seeking, were more influential than any other factors in colouring perceptions of Pupil Time to Talk. It is clear from the data collected in relation to the current study, that the pupils held very similar perceptions of psychologists to those expressed by the parents participating in Jebbett’s (2011) study (see Global Theme Stigma). Although the presentation regarding Pupil Time to Talk described the service and what it could offer, and contained general information about the EPs’ role - quite a basic lack of information regarding psychology and a psychologists’ role permeated pupils’ contributions in the focus groups. This echoed the lack of information pupils possessed about the EP role described in studies by Armstrong et al. (1993), Woolfson and Harker (2002), Kikas (2003) and Weerasinghe, (2009).

Rather than such ill-perceptions and mis-information regarding psychologists, and the EP role in particular, being anomalies representing the perceptions of small samples from one particular area or age group, a picture is beginning to emerge that suggests that this is a fundamental problem faced by the EP profession and the field of psychology as a whole. I reflected in my research diary that it may be inevitable that children and young people, parents and teachers are unclear as to what the role entails, when the profession itself seems to be experiencing “an enduring under-confidence about professional identity and direction” (Fallon et al., 2010, p. 2). However, whilst such a perception exists amongst our primary clients, it will be difficult to ensure that truly participative and productive engagement with services takes place. This clearly has implications in terms of developing opportunities for children and young people to access EPs directly, as well as for those engaging at the request of a third party. As described by Fallon and Bowles
(2001), making services accessible for young people is only half the battle; they must also feel that it is acceptable to make use of such services. It is clear from the pupils’ description of the perceived stigma related to receiving support and their perceptions of EPs that this was not achieved in relation to the current study.

In hindsight, I feel that the decision to exclude pupils from the stakeholder group resulted in the research focusing too much on the organisational change processes required in School A and its staff to enable the implementation of Pupil Time to Talk. As a result, perhaps that not enough focus was placed upon pupils’ transitive take on the world, or the cultural changes required in relation to the school’s pupil population to ensure uptake of the service. Lewin’s Field Theory and Group Dynamics aspects of his framework for planned change, emphasises the need to understand the forces operating within the environment in which individuals exists, and how such forces influence the group dynamics, in order to elicit change (Burnes, 2004). Perhaps the impact of stigma on the post-16 age group was underestimated by the co-researchers and stakeholders alike, and the lack of previous research meant that not enough was understood about pupil perceptions of EPs prior to the research taking place. Had this been the case, perhaps the early stages of the action research could have focused on creating ‘disequilibrium’ within the field experienced by the Year 12 and 13 pupils, challenging and questioning their transitive world. In turn, this may have elicited a more consistent and balanced pupil perception of Time to Talk, EPS’ and psychology in general.

5.2.2 Research Question 2: What were the facilitating and barrier mechanisms at play in the implementation and delivery of ‘Time to Talk’ in this context?

As stated previously, the project’s target population, School A’s Year 12 and 13 pupils, did not make use of the Pupil Time to Talk service following its implementation. A positivist researcher may view this outcome as a rejection of their initial ‘hypothesis’ and take the generalised view that a Pupil Time to Talk initiative ‘does not work’ or is not a desirable service for year 12 and 13 pupils, despite what previous, related research suggests. Such a reductionist view would not support any progress in the researchers’ or the organisations’ learning; and does not provide any ways forward in terms of addressing the issues that led to the conception of such an initiative in the first instance. However, what the Critical Realist ontological and epistemological stance, and the action research framework adopted allowed,
was consideration of the underlying mechanisms that gave way to this outcome in School A, at that point in time by the target pupils, (Pawson & Tilley, 1994, see section 3.2.1). This resonates with Booth’s (2009, p.177) thinking that following an action research framework allows for research to move fluidly to a different direction, rather than be abandoned when things take an unexpected course, and is as such more in-keeping with the reality and challenges of day to day living.

From considerations of the underlying mechanisms we can learn about the forces operating within a given field and the dynamics between those forces, as postulated in Lewin’s Field Theory (Burnes, 2004). Such understanding would provide an insight as to which of the forces or mechanisms would require weakening or strengthening in order to elicit meaningful change within the field – ‘disequilibrium’, prior to a further action research cycle (Schein, 1988):

*We will only be able to understand ... the social world if we identify the structures at work that generate those events or discourses ... Social phenomena (like most natural phenomena) are the product of a plurality of structures* (Bhaskar, 1989, p2).

The pupils’ views gathered through focus group discussions, coupled with my reflections, and the views of stakeholders gathered throughout the process, allowed for a focus to be placed on explanations of outcomes, as is customary of critical realist research. Outhwaite, (1987) suggests that a good explanation of outcomes can be achieved when:

- The postulated mechanisms is able to explain the phenomenon experienced
- We have good reason to believe in the existence of the mechanisms uncovered, and
- We cannot think of other plausible alternatives.

Figure 5.1 below, depicts the mechanisms that focus group data suggest gave way to the particular outcomes achieved during this action research project, with each being considered in more detail subsequently.
5.2.2.1 Facilitative Mechanisms.

I will firstly focus on the facilitating mechanisms, or forces at play, as despite no pupils making use of the service over the term, discrete, positive gains were achieved as a result of the design and implementation of Pupil Time to Talk in this context, particularly in terms of stakeholders' perceptions of the focus issues as identified in section 5.2.1.1. Some of these facilitative mechanisms were identified beforehand, during RADIO Stage 3 (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.4), which encourages researchers and stakeholders to work together to clarify organisational and cultural issues which may support or impede an initiative.
5.2.2.1.1 Relationship with stakeholders.

Comments from my Research Diary throughout, support the statement that the main facilitative mechanism in the design and implementation of Pupil Time to Talk in this context, was the collaborative nature of the project, and the relationship that developed between myself, the co-researchers and the wider stakeholder groups. The action research framework, coupled with my critical realist stance meant that there was an expectation placed on all involved to develop and learn as professionals, rather than the focus being placed solely on Pupil Time to Talk as an initiative. Through our interactions together, it was clear that over time the co-researchers and stakeholders began to reflect on their role and the school’s role in facilitating pupil participation in general. This reflection resulted in their administration of the ESTYN designed pupil views questionnaire, described in section 4.4.1 and 4.4.5.1.1, and their desire to gain further information about pupils’ experiences of School A and how that experience might be improved.

I felt that, due to the close working relationship that developed between us over the course of the project, the stakeholders were better able to consider and reflect on some of the pupils’ more critical comments and constructions more objectively than might otherwise have been the case. I felt that I had communicated my respect for them as professionals throughout, and that as a result, they felt secure enough in my presence as a relative ‘outsider’, not to feel the need to ‘defend’ against some of the more challenging statements voiced.

5.2.2.1.2 Conducive context.

Booth (2009) highlights the facilitative power of the following issue in her research, and it was certainly found to be the case during the current project also. The fact that School A was a context already conducive to supporting the emotional well-being of its pupils, placing a lot of value on its existing pastoral care system, was important. As a result, the staff on the whole were very ‘open’ to a new initiative being trialled and showed an interest during the staff presentation on Pupil Time to Talk, and a willingness to promote the service. This existing ethos, and their openness to joint working with outside agencies, meant that, although not the preferred course of action, an ‘invitation to act’ was received promptly following the idea being presented to them. The school’s structure during that period allowed for staff to work on relevant projects as appropriate, to further their own professional
development and further school initiatives, an essential factor in considering a school to approach for an action research project according to Bello (2006).

Ashton et al. (2009) comment that having motivated and available key staff is all well and good, but if they are not in a position to drive forward changes in practice, then action research becomes nothing but “...an interesting set of papers on a shelf” (p.230). However, reflections contained in my research diary suggest that having senior staff members, who were able to implement changes, taking a prominent role in the project was somewhat of a mixed blessing. The co-researchers seemed to share this insight as indicated by their comments when discussing their thoughts on the research project (section 4.4.5.1.3). Perhaps that having a research team consisting of some senior staff members alongside some staff with less systemic responsibility would be desirable for any future projects.

5.2.2.1.3 New ‘face’.

In my view, a view shared by the researchers in Ashton et al. (2009)’s action research study, the fact that I was not School A’s designated EPS contact facilitated our work together. The stakeholders were not concerned that the time spent on the project was being deducted from their allocated EP time, and they were not pre-occupied with discussing individual pupils with me. This allowed them to experience a different way of working with the service, broadening their perception of what can be offered, and consider how part of their designated EP’s time could be spent working systemically in the future. Blacklidge (2010) expressed similar thoughts, but questioned whether her action research project would have gone ahead had it been deducting time form the school’s annual EP time allocation, arguably a pertinent question for most EP-led action research projects.

It could be argued that my involvement with stakeholders also facilitated a better working relationship between them and School A’s designated EP, as evidenced by the invitation received for the designated EP to become part of the multi-agency Inclusion Team.

As discussed in relation to the stakeholders’ perception of Pupil Time to Talk in section 5.2.1.2, the facilitative mechanisms discussed above, supported the stakeholders’ continuing positive constructions of the initiative and its related concepts, and movement through Lewin’s 3 Stage Model of Change. However, it is
clear from the overall outcomes of the action research cycle that those facilitative forces were not dominant enough to create the ‘*disequilibrium*’ required within the field to elicit new behaviours across the organisation, and encourage self-determined actions from pupils in accessing Pupil Time to Talk. Therefore, it is essential that due thought is given to the restrictive or barrier mechanisms at play at this time in this context, ensuring that lessons are learnt to facilitate future action research cycles.

**5.2.2.2 Barrier Mechanisms.**

Again, having time allocated within the RADIO framework to jointly consider possible organisation and cultural issues that may be barriers for organisational change, proved invaluable. Although little could be done to rectify the potential impact of some of the barriers identified, the fact that we were made conscious of them early on in the research process was useful. It meant that they could be discussed during supervision sessions, and reflected on over time.

**5.2.2.2.1 Change in Management.**

One such issue, which I discussed a number of times during supervision, was that of School A gaining a new Head Teacher during the course of the project. Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco and Hansen (2003) in their review of fidelity implementation literature, observe that “an organization that is overwhelmed or turbulent is likely to have more problems with implementation” (p. 251). As identified during various stages of the RADIO framework, the new Head Teacher’s vision of the Inclusion Team’s future direction, did not necessarily correspond with the vision shared by the team’s members, which indeed created a somewhat turbulent atmosphere within the school. Fullan (2001, 2002) discusses at length the impact school Principals can have on the success, or otherwise, of school-based change initiatives, emphasising the importance of a positive, motivating relationship between a school’s leader and its staff. The importance of this issue is reinforced by Hannay, Smeltzer-Erb and Ross (2001), in their article on restructuring and reculturing secondary schools within one school district in Canada. Whilst this issue might not have proved to be a direct barrier to the implementation and delivery of Pupil Time to Talk, I mentioned during supervision sessions that I felt it was causing the co-researchers a lot of anxiety, and that I felt torn between my core values in
wanting to offer them support, and a fear of not wanting to ‘speak out of turn’ as a TEP ‘outsider’. I also felt that within that context of uncertainty, which seemed to be escalating as the project developed, the immediate stakeholders’ ability to focus on planning future action in light of the findings was compromised to some degree.

This type of organisational barrier is beyond any researcher’s control, and it is unlikely that I would be able to reduce the impact of such a barrier to ensure that the driving forces are stronger if engaging in similar work in the future. However, I feel that as a result of this experience my skills as a TEP have developed; I am confident that I would be better able to find the ‘middle ground’ in future, being able to positively support school staff as required, but remain a neutral ‘outsider’.

5.2.2.2.2 Location.

A potential barrier that was mentioned extensively in the literature around establishing school based emotional health support services, counselling services in particular (Baruch, 2001; Cooper, 2006; Quinn & Chan, 2009), clearly proved to be a barrier in this context also. Pupils expressed mixed feelings about Time to Talk taking place within school, as opposed to a community context, and were unanimous in condemning the locations used within the school. Although the initiative’s ‘location’ within School A was discussed extensively during the planning period, the issue was not overcome, as evidence by the pupils’ focus group discussions; (represented by the Logistical Factors Thematic Network, Organising Theme Confidentiality, Basic Themes Location and Technology). It is likely that, in any school setting, it would be a struggle to find a location for such a service that would be considered ‘ideal’. Therefore, in future, to reduce the role of this barrier in maintaining the status quo, I would consider the pupils’ solutions more carefully. Their idea of being able to ‘book’ a Time to Talk session and utilise a different location within school each time, whilst requiring some logistical thinking, may be one alternative that would overcome the confidentiality fears experienced by pupils.

5.2.2.2.3 Rural values and perceptions of their community.

The pupil focus group content confirmed one of the factors that the stakeholders identified as a potential restrictive factor in relation to the initiative’s success early on in the process. The perception pupils held of the close-knit wider community, clearly acted as a barrier in seeking support from a service such as Pupil Time to
Talk; fearing that some of the stereotyped characteristics of a rural community compromised confidentiality. This barrier is summarised effectively by one pupil’s comment: ‘You couldn’t really tell anyone here anything because they’re probably related to someone!’ (S, Year 12).

Again, this relates to Fallon and Bowles (2001) accessibility/acceptability debate. Whilst little can be done in preparation by the researcher to ameliorate general perceptions of rural, close-knit communities, it will be interesting to see the long-term impact of universal programmes such as PATHS pupils’ perceptions of the acceptability of seeking support and discussing personal, emotional issues.

5.2.2.2.4 Time Restriction.

Both stakeholders and pupils were critical of the relatively short time in which the service was trialled, and how that restricted the possibility of the service becoming truly embedded within the school’s support system. This proved to be a barrier in eliciting change in the way pupils engaged with the EPS, as reflected by the statement “[we] forget that it’s there because it hasn’t been there for ages” (B, Year 12). Again, pupils offered solutions regarding how such a barrier may be overcome in future, for example, by providing opportunities for pupils to become familiar with the service quickly, offering everyone initial Time to Talk sessions. The time restriction imposed in this case, mostly reflected the fact that I was doing it as part of my Doctoral studies. More flexibility could be possible during similar projects the EPS may engage with in future, bearing in mind Fullan’s (2001) assertions regarding the time required to embed a new initiative. However, the pupils’ suggestions are not ones to be overlooked as methods to reduce the identified barrier to change in this context.

Whilst the barriers identified and considered above did play a role in the outcomes achieved in relation to the delivery of Pupil Time to Talk in this context; the focus group data strongly suggests that two mechanisms in particular played the greatest role in maintaining the status quo, restricting the development of Pupil Time to Talk. The two mechanisms in question are:

• The stigma perceived in relation to help-seeking, and
• Pupils’ constructs of psychologists and EPs in particular.

The potential negative impact of these two main issues were, perhaps naively, not given enough forethought by myself, the co-researchers and the wider stakeholder
group; possibly reflecting the limited previous literature focusing on these subject matters and the uncharted nature of the action research's focus.

5.2.2.2.5 The Stigma of help-seeking.

I have already made reference to the significance of this issue in discussing pupils’ perception of Time to Talk. It was evident from the pupil discussions represented by the Stigma Thematic Network, that asking for help and seeking support, especially for social and emotional reasons, was strongly regarded as a negative, almost shameful action, which would certainly be the topic of ‘gossip’ for others. Initially, the pupils sampled were very keen to express their maturity, highlighting that older adolescents are not ‘bothered’ by others’ perceptions of them and their actions, to the same degree as their younger counterparts. However, as the discussion wore on in each of the three focus groups, it became clear that others’ perceptions of them continued to matter a great deal, and was in fact, a significant deterrent to using Pupil Time to Talk. Some even expressed surprise at the fact that their seeming understanding of ‘reality’, did not tally with the statements made thereafter: “After saying all that about not caring what people here think, we sound quite preoccupied with it now” (B, Year 13). In critical realist terms, this realisation may have bought their transitive take of the world a step closer to the intransitive world (Houston, 2010).

5.2.2.2.6 Constructs of Educational Psychologists.

Again, I have already discussed the significance of this issue in response to Research Question 1 (section 5.2.1), and it is obviously very closely related to the barrier mechanism discussed directly above. Considering what the focus groups’ content revealed to be the constructions held of psychologists and EPs in particular, it was inevitable that this would constitute a noteworthy barrier to the implementation and delivery of Pupil Time to Talk in this context. Regardless of all the other barriers identified, it is unlikely that pupils would choose to participate with a service that they had little or negatively distorted knowledge of. As I stressed earlier, I believe that this issue is likely to act as a barrier to meaningful participation between the EPs and pupils referred through more traditional methods also, and therefore reducing the impact of this barrier should be highly prioritised.
5.2.3 Research Question 3: What are the implications for future implementation of ‘Pupil Time to Talk’?

Pawson and Tilley (1994) in their account of a realist evaluation, suggest that consideration of underlying mechanisms which may have given rise to the outcomes achieved by a particular study is a useful starting point for further research. They identify that reflecting on those mechanisms, refining them over time with iterated studies will eventually lead to a “movement towards a theoretically specified set of mechanisms and their required context which would enable predictions to be made about outcome patterns” (p.304).

School A’s stakeholder team expressed during the final feedback session (section 4.4.5.1.3) that they would be keen for a further action research cycle to take place, similar to what is suggested by Pawson and Tilley (1994) - adapting Pupil Time to Talk’s implementation based on the current cycle’s findings. Their enthusiasm for the project and desire to persevere might reflect their previous experiences of implementing school-based emotional health initiatives and innate understanding of what is suggested by Fullan (2001) in terms of the time it takes to embed such initiatives. It may also reflect their desire to demonstrate to the new Head Teacher that the Inclusion Team’s multi-agency links, innovative work and ambition was an asset to the school. On a professional and personal level, I was very pleased that they wished to proceed. It suggested that they found our work together to be of some value, and may lead to exiting opportunities for the EPS to engage in further systemic work in the future.

However, despite the immediate stakeholder group’s desire to engage in a further cycle of action research - a further pilot of Pupil Time to Talk, the wider stakeholder group seemed to realise that some of the barrier mechanisms uncovered would require the service’s focus over a period of time if their impact were to be reduced permanently. They viewed addressing pupils’ constructs of EPs, and subsequently perceptions of stigma around receiving and seeking support, to be the next logical steps across the service based on the current findings. The EPS stakeholders seemed to take on board the pupils’ suggestions regarding how they may reduce the impact of the two main barrier mechanisms identified (represented within the Expectations vs Confidence in Competence Thematic Network, Organising Theme Transition, Basic Theme Need for more support and Logistical Factors Thematic Network, Organising Theme Relationships, Basic Theme Familiarity). They conceptualised it as a need to do more ‘ground work’ before any future
implementation of Pupil Time to Talk or direct access to emotional health support from EPs is considered, and if pupil participation with the service is to improve.

Whilst the mechanisms uncovered are specific to the implementation of Pupil Time to Talk in this context, it is likely that the two main barrier forces identified also have implications for the EP profession as a whole. After all, generalisations can be derived from critical realist research as long as it recognised that they “concern a probabilistic truth, rather than an absolute truth” (Bisman, 2000, p.9). I have already made reference to the fact that in my view, these barrier mechanisms are as relevant to pupils self-directing engagement with EPs, as they are for pupils being referred for consultation/individual case work by an ALNCo or parent. Therefore, further research is required to ascertain if these identified issues and negative perceptions found by the current research, and hinted at by previous research (Armstrong et al., 1993; Woolfson and Harker, 2002; Weerasinghe, 2009; Gulliver et al., 2010; Jebbett, 2011), are widespread amongst EPS’ primary clients; and if so, what implications can referrals to EPS’ have on pupils’ self-esteem and concept of themselves.

5.2.4 Further pertinent issues to consider.

Some of the inadvertent findings arising from the pupil focus groups also warrant further consideration. In particular, the anxiety and concern expressed by pupils regarding their perceptions of others’ expectations of them at this stage in their lives, and the ensuing lack of confidence they feel in their ability to meet those expectations, just go to show the nature of the pressures faced during this developmental period (UNICEF, 2002; Gilat, Ezer & Sagee, 2010). It might be argued that the stakeholders’ somewhat defensive initial reactions to pupils’ views in relations to these issues seem to suggest that the adults around them may be unconsciously reinforcing such feelings (see 4.4.5.1.1).

Previous literature around pastoral care for older adolescents, and those entering post-compulsory education, suggest that the feelings expressed by a sample of School A’s pupils in relation to such issues are not just representative of this context. Studies by Schofield (2007) and Rogers (2009) demonstrate that post-16 pupils generally show a great level of insight into the demands placed upon them at this age and a desire for continued adult support that is not always perceived to be
available. This is eloquently summed up by a participant in Rogers’ (2009) study, in discussing the transition from school to a post-16 college setting:

    It was like, ‘Get on with it. You’re an adult now. It’s up to you’. You don’t … it’s not like you reach 17 and suddenly you don’t need any help anymore (p. 116).

As a result of these findings, as a service, we are now significantly more mindful of the needs of pupils transitioning to year 12, and pupils making the transition from year 13. Since this action research cycle came to an end, we have been dedicating time during our secondary school Planning Meetings with ALNCos to enquire about any pupils from this population that they may have some concerns about. This ensures that the significance of these transitions are reinforced in the minds the ALNCos, and as a result the information is disseminated to a wider circle of staff. The universal group work in development (see section 4.4.5.2.1) is also focusing on this population of pupils, aiming to support and normalise such issues, utilising peers’ support.

From a wider perspective, the project’s chance findings in relation to this issue of pupils’ perceptions of others’ expectations, desire for additional support and natural anxiety regarding transition, also add weight to a recent article by Bradley (2012). He argues that “educational and child psychologists should engage with the question of transition to university in the same way that we involve ourselves in other broad educational issues” (p.107). He goes on to state that EPs are equipped to carry out such work on two levels; firstly on a systemic, policy-making level, and secondly through engaging in individual case work, supporting pupils in ‘non-directive’ therapeutic fashion to explore their own goals and ambitions post-school. Bradley’s (2012) vision of this new direction for the profession, seems to go hand in hand with the plans detailed in the Green Paper ‘Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special education needs and disability’ (Department of Education, 2011). It is therefore a topic area where we are likely to see a profession-wide focus in the near future.

I discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.7.4 that at times, it may be necessary to draw upon alternative approaches to organisational change (Burnes, 2004b), dependant on the change situations. In this instance, the longer-term developmental changes that took place within School A, and the ones that are continuing to take place within
the EPS, maybe best explained by one of the ideologies of Chaos Theory – one example of Complexity Theories of organisational change, rather than Lewin’s planned approach to change. Hannay et al., (2001) describe how the most common image in chaos theory literature is that:

...of a butterfly flapping its wings, which causes disturbance in the upper atmosphere that eventually can impact conditions elsewhere... The Butterfly does not cause the chaos; rather, the insignificant flapping of its wings within a system has a substantial impact on another part of the system, that in turn, affects another part of the system and eventually moves the system, (p. 272).

It may be argued that the personal learning achieved by the immediate stakeholders as a result of collaborating on the action research project, and the oral presentations given to all year 12 and 13 pupils and school staff alike, resulted in an increased awareness of this population’s needs. The upshot of this increased awareness in turn, was that more pupils are referred by staff to SBC (LA 1 SBC, 2011). Such outcomes only serve to emphasise the benefits and unexpected advantages that can result from EPSs promoting and engaging in organisational work.

5.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

5.3.1 Contribution to Knowledge.

West and Hanley (2006), in their account of what they considered to be a ‘failed’ project aiming to use e-mail technology to access an US based sample of Quaker counsellors, describe that:

we tend not to hear of dead ends, of piloting failures, of time wasted pursuing promising leads that got nowhere. Rarely does it seem we hear or read of research attempted that resulted in abject failure. This creates unreal expectations particularly for novice researchers (p. 209)

I would argue that a lot can be learnt from research projects that did not take the expected course, and that such accounts are as valid as the ‘success stories’ where, “in reality the likelihood is that there is a process of narrative smoothing occurring” during write-up (p. 209).

Despite no pupils accessing Pupil Time to Talk within the pilot period, the study still contributed to the knowledge base regarding:
The perception of need for and the implementation of school based psychological ‘drop-in’ services for young people; including the factors which may act as barrier and enabling mechanisms within certain contexts. Indeed, this aspect fulfils a significant gap in the research literature which has to date, focused mostly on School Nurse and Counselling perspectives.

- Pupil perceptions and understanding of the EP role and psychologists generally.
- Post-16 pupils’ perception of their support needs and what role EPs may play in providing that support.

5.3.2 Reflections on the use of the RADIO framework.

I believe that the greatest asset in relation to undertaking of the current study was the methodological framework adopted. The RADIO model (Timmins et al., 2003) was used to guide the co-researchers and stakeholder group through the action research process. As novice action researcher, I felt that its phases and stages clearly guided me and those involved, giving us direction and a future focus. It was also flexible enough to accommodate the change in research direction that resulted following implementation of Pupil Time to Talk.

Ashton (2009) sets a precedent during her use of RADIO as a framework to carry out five action research projects focused on transition from primary to secondary school, for adding an additional step to the model. The ‘Step-10 plus’ (p.228) allowed for the action research findings to be shared with pupils attending the participating schools, and next steps to be discussed. Whilst I tend to agree with Blacklidge’s (2010, p.207) sentiments, that pupil participation can adequately be incorporated into the pre-existing RADIO stages, if I were using the RADIO model in future as a framework for embedding a new initiative, I would consider the addition of a ‘Step-5 plus’. In relation to the current study, as Pupil Time to Talk was a new initiative, many logistical factors regarding its implementation needed to be discussed and agreed between stakeholders, before we considered how we would gather the information required to answer the research question posed. Ensuring enough time was allocated for such considerations was vital, and warrants a step of its own to emphasise its importance for stakeholders, rather than having to fit it in to Step 6 as is the case here.
In summary, I would recommend the use of RADIO to any EP wishing to undertake a piece of action research, not just TEPs, for which it was initially designed (Timmins et al., 2003). It has provided me with the confidence required to engage in similar research in the future, safe in the knowledge that there is a clear but flexible framework to fall back on.

5.3.3 Limitations of the Research.

Every effort was made to ensure that the current research was subject to peer-review throughout, to promote its credibility and validity, notably through regular supervision with my fieldwork and university-based supervisor. Although, my inevitable personal influence on the outcomes presented are acknowledged, by means of involving others in reflecting on my postulations I have attempted to reduce the inherent subjectivity in the work. As identified in Chapter 3, section 3.4.1, Bisman’s (2000) criteria for ensuring the validity of critical realist research was applied as appropriate. However, due to the change in research direction resulting from no pupils accessing Time to Talk, it was not possible to engage all the methods of triangulation described. Only qualitative data was gathered through two different collection methods, namely focus groups and research diary entries). It is therefore acknowledged that the reduction in the data type and gathering methods employed is likely to have diminished the breadth and depth of critical multiplism achieved by this study, posing a threat to the level of confidence that can be placed upon its results (Bisman, 2000, p. 13).

I discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.9 that one limitation of the project was that it did not constitute ‘pure’ action research. That is, it did not originate in a ‘bottom-up’ fashion, where a problem was identified specifically in the context of School A, and an external researcher was invited to work with the problem holders to address it. Whilst, this issue did not, in my opinion impact on the level of collaboration achieved, and the onus School A stakeholders took in relation to the focus area, upon further reflecting on my research diary contributions throughout, I suspect I was at times viewed as the ‘leader’ of the project. Whether this was because of the way the project came about, because School A stakeholders felt I had more research experience, or because they were aware that the project was also the focus of my doctoral research, such perceptions of a power imbalance go against the fundamental philosophy of action research (Berg, 2004; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Martin (2001) advises that no matter how hard the researcher-facilitator
professes that all partaking are equal and that everyone’s contributions are valid, participant’s prior constructions and experiences will influence how empowered the feel within that context. In future, to try and reduce any underlying perceptions of ‘leadership’ or power imbalance, I would take more time in skilling key stakeholders in the appropriate background research skills, developing their confidence in the equal value of their knowledge and expertise.

I have briefly touched upon the limitations resulting from excluding pupils from the stakeholder group (see section 5.2.1.2). In hindsight, this may be viewed as a significant error in judgment. That being said, Hannay et al., (2001) express that restructuring of an organisation (or in this case, the introduction of a new initiative) needs to occur prior to any reculturing being able to take place. This is “because in secondary schools it might be necessary to challenge the traditional homogeneous structure in order to uncover tacit knowledge” (p. 279). That is, individuals sometimes need to experience a change in order to bear their underlying feelings about it. Inviting pupils to participate more closely in the action research process may therefore be more appropriate during any ensuing action research cycles at School A, working with the EPS to support endeavours to demystify the EP role for example.

I have already discussed the drawbacks of Pupil Time to Talk being piloted for such a short period of time, but another limitation of the research in this context may have been the time of year in which the pilot took place. It may be argued that the period leading up to exams and transitions are the most stressful times of year for pupils, rather than the ‘settling in’ period of September to December. Therefore it would be interesting to see if holding the pilot from March – June for example, resulted in different outcomes in the use of Pupil Time to Talk.

5.3.4 Avenues for further research.

The current research represents an action research cycle, there is plenty of scope for engaging in further action research cycles to evolve our understanding of what has already been learnt, taking our transitive understanding of reality in relation to Pupil Time to Talk and School-Based Psychological drop-in services, closer to the intransitive reality of the situation (Houston, 2010). At the same time, engaging in further cycles of action research allows for some of the limitations identified to be rectified, thus enhancing the credibility and validity of what is discovered.
I have already discussed the wider stakeholders' views that next steps should be focused on reducing the two main barrier mechanisms identified in this context, through becoming a more ‘visible’ service, engaging in what pupils identified as ‘valued’ initiatives, for example universal group work, work focused on transition to university and so forth, (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.4.3.2). It would be interesting to identify if such work results in a change in pupil perception of the EP role, which could be investigated through pre and post surveys of those perceptions, eliciting quantitative and qualitative data.

To consider the issue of analytical generalisation (Bisman, 2000), carrying out replicated studies within other LA 1 secondary school may add depth to our understanding of the generative mechanisms influencing outcomes. In turn, this would allow for theory development and model building in relation to implementation and delivery of school based psychological drop-in services to occur. Conducting a similar piece of research in a secondary school situated in a more urban environment for example, would help shed light on whether some of the barriers identified in relation to the current study's context (see section 5.2.2.2), reflect general barriers for pupils directly accessing EPSs within a school setting, or are in fact context specific barriers. It might be that we have mistakenly attributed some of the pupils’ comments in this instance to be about the barriers of living and attending school in a rural setting; where in fact, they might be reflective of a more a universal barrier, about the intimacy of all school contexts, regardless of which type of community it serves. In the same way, carrying out a similar piece of action research attempting to implement and deliver a Pupil Time to Talk service within a community setting such as a library, would help add weight to or weaken the postulated mechanism of service ‘location’. Carrying out similar studies within different contexts, would help clarify issues, and allow us to strive for achievement of a “probabilistic truth” (Bisman, 2000, p.9) in relation to Pupil Time to Talk.

5.3.5 Implications for EPs.

I have made reference to the wider implication of the study’s overall findings for the profession of Educational Psychology throughout this chapter. As I draw the chapter to a close, I feel it is important to reiterate the potential implications for the practice, if it is found that pupils generally hold similar perceptions of the role, to those which the current study found. Farrell et al. (2006), in their review of the modern EP role,
identify that it has expanded considerably over the past quarter century, to the point that the profession is “now in a position to deliver psychological services through a variety of activities and contexts”, (p. 104). However, such varied and accessible services are rendered obsolete if pupils, EPs’ primary clients, do not view them as acceptable or appropriate services to engage with.

It is imperative that EPs do more to publicise accurate information about the role, demystifying any ill-perceptions held. On an individual level, each EP has to be responsible for explicitly communicating their role with each client and not take it as a given that what they can and cannot offer is evident to all, or will be shared from teacher to parent and from parent to child for example. On a service level, there is a responsibility to ensure that information on the role and the profession of Educational Psychology is accessible and understandable, be that achieved through service leaflets, websites or by playing a more visible part within schools and communities. Work to demystify the role on an individual and service level must naturally be supported at a systemic level in order to have a wide impact. Political and media portrayals are just two avenues where a profession-wide focus may be placed to ensure that an accurate understanding of who EPs’ primary clients are, what EPs can offer and what the role entails, permeates into the public perception.

Kikas (2003) wisely wrote that “…knowledge influences people’s expectations, and through this, their satisfaction... this is the work psychologists themselves can and have to do” (p. 30).

5.4 Overall summary

This research project fulfilled its aim of working collaboratively with staff in one secondary school in LA 1 in designing and implementing Pupil Time to Talk. Whilst it did not gain the views of pupils with firsthand experience of using the service, the pupil and key stakeholder thoughts gathered allowed insight into their “multiple perceptions about a single, mind-independent reality” (Bisman, 2000, p. 7). Although no pupils directly accessed EP support during Pupil Time to Talk’s pilot period, the research provided us with a theoretical understanding of why that might be, by shedding light on the generative mechanisms at play in this context. This work has provided those involved, school staff and EPS team members alike, with an opportunity to reflect on our practice in relation to year 12 and 13 pupils, and develop new ideas and approaches to supporting and working with them. It has also
provided us with the opportunity to reflect on wider issues impacting our work with children and young people. McNiff (2002, p.19) identifies that as a result of new knowledge gained and opportunities for reflection on current practice, action researchers will engage in new ways of working that will be “...more in line with the way you wish things to be. You are living in the direction of your values, (though you might still have far to go)” (p.19). This assertion rings true in relation to the current project.

As highlighted by Dobson, Myles and Jackson (n.d), critical realist researchers believe that any knowledge gains are typically provisional, fallible, incomplete and extendable, as ‘reality’ cannot be entirely apprehended (Guba, 1990). This certainly fits with my understanding of action research as a continuous quest for a better understanding rather than a finalised ‘answer’ or ‘truth’ (Gray, 2009). Whilst the current study has contributed to knowledge, as identified in section 5.3.1 there are clear directions for future research, or clear potential for “new beginnings” as described by McNiff and Whitehead, (2009, p.110).
References


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Rogers, R. (2009). 'No one helped out. It was like, “Get on with it. You're an adult now. It's up to you”. You don't … it's not like you reach 17 and suddenly you don't need any help anymore': a study into post-16 pastoral support for 'Aim higher Students'. *Pastoral Care, 27*(2), 109-118.


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psychologist work together to share and improve areas of practice. Doctorate in Educational Psychology Thesis: The University of Birmingham.


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Appendix A: Photographic Evidence of Thematic Analysis process

Picture 1 & 2: SBC Focus Group transcript coded deductively based on the findings from previous literature and focus of research questions.
Picture 3: Deductively and Inductively identified coded extracts for what evolved into the ‘Logistical Factors’ Thematic Network, transferred from transcript to post-it notes.

Green Post-It Notes: Deductively Identified Coded Extract
Pink Post-It Notes: Inductively Identified Coded Extract
Orange Post-It Notes: Coded Extract added following verification by EP colleague
Picture 4: Coded Extracts grouped together according to similarity of content/constructs.

Picture 5: Groups of Coded Extracts further refined into specific and salient basic themes.
Appendix B: UREC confirmation of Ethical Approval

Ms Einir Wyn Jones
PhD Student, Educational Psychology
School of Education

5 July 2010

Dear Einir,

Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Beings
Jones, Woods: Using the research and development in organisations framework to improve direct access to Educational Psychology Services for post-16 pupils (ref 10113)

I write to confirm that your project was reviewed by the Committee at its meeting on 24th June and has been given ethical approval.

This approval is effective for a period of five years and if the project continues beyond that period it must be submitted for review. It is the Committee’s practice to warn investigators that they should not depart from the agreed protocol without seeking the approval of the Committee, as any significant deviation could invalidate the insurance arrangements. We also ask that any information sheet carry a University logo or other indication of where it came from.

Finally, I would be grateful if you could complete and return the attached form at the end of the project or by June 2011.

We hope the research goes well.

Yours sincerely

Dr T P C Shibbs
Secretary to the Committee
Appendix C: Pupil Time to Talk Promotion/Information Leaflet

Leaflet front cover:
Year 12 and 13 represents a time of change, hard work and important decisions.

Sometimes it can be too difficult to speak to family, friends or school staff about something that is playing on your mind.

**Time to Talk offers you an independent and confidential drop-in service.**

You can meet with an Educational Psychologist to discuss your concerns in private, problem-solve and receive information about other services. Following a drop-in, if appropriate and with your permission, a meeting can be arranged with relevant school staff.

**You don't need an appointment—drop in!**

Time to Talk is a service specifically for Year 12 and 13 students—your views about the service and how it may be improved to meet your specific needs would be welcomed.
Appendix D: Time to Talk Information and Confidentiality Agreement

Time to Talk - Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality
The Time to Talk service recognises the importance of confidentiality between the Educational Psychologist (EP) and you as a pupil and user of the service:

- to enable a trusting relationship to develop
- to allow you to speak freely about the issues that concern you

You are free to talk to anyone about your Time to Talk session if you wish. Under usual circumstances the EP will not directly talk about the content of your Time to Talk session with other individuals e.g. parents and teachers, without gaining your prior consent. However, in exceptional circumstances, if you disclose information which raises serious concerns about your own, or someone else’s welfare and safety, the EP will be required to take appropriate action and pass on the information to the relevant persons.

In such circumstances, the concerns will be discussed with you before the EP takes any action, in the hope of reaching an agreement about what is best to do. Wherever possible, the EP will also consult with his/her supervisor before taking any action.

Record Keeping
When accessing the Time to Talk service the EP will make a note of your name, age and any other contact details you wish to provide. These details will be kept centrally at the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) offices, along with a copy of the signed confidentiality agreement and a brief written record of the session’s content. Also, if at any point to wish to receive written feedback of the session, or for feedback to be provided to any other individual, a copy of the document sent will be kept by the EPS. These records are kept to ensure that the service is accountable and that it can be monitored and evaluated.
Access to records
Under the Data Protection Act, you have the right to see records that are kept about you. If you would like to do this, please ask the EP. The EP will explain anything in a record that is unclear. You retain the right to correct any part of the record that you believe is wrong.

Please sign below to demonstrate that you have understood and agree with the information provided above.

..................................................................               ...........................................................
Name of Participant                      Date

..................................................................
Signature

..................................................................
Name of person taking consent            Date

..................................................................
Signature
Appendix E: Information and Consent Sheet for pupils who accessed Time to Talk and agreed to give their views on the service

‘Time to Talk’:
Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age

Participant Information Sheet
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, 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.

Who will conduct the research?
***** *****. ***** is currently a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for ***** County Borough Council and is studying for a Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology at the School of Education, University of Manchester.

Title of the Research
‘Time to Talk’: Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age

What is the aim of the research?
The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) wants to improve the service it provides to post-16 pupils by creating ‘drop-in’ opportunities for young people with Educational Psychologists (EP). A similar ‘drop-in’ service is already offered to parents within the authority through an initiative named ‘Time to Talk’. Time to Talk offers parents the opportunity to meet with an EP directly in a convenient location to discuss and problem-solve any concerns they may have with regards to their children.

The EPS believe that young people have a right to access their service, to express their needs and views, independently of their parents or teachers; ‘Time to Talk’ aims to meet this right. Providing a ‘Time to Talk’ service specifically for post-16 pupils would allow young people the autonomy to confidentially discuss any concerns or difficulties they may be experiencing. An EP will be well-placed to listen
to a young person, support them in being solution-focused, signpost them to other agencies, and if appropriate, advocate for them in school.

The research aims to trial a ‘Time to Talk’ service for post-16 pupils, and evaluate its effectiveness from the viewpoints of those young people making use of the service.

Why have I been invited to take part?
As a pupil who accessed ‘Time to Talk’ during its pilot phase, gaining your views on the service offered to you is extremely important in evaluating its current potential and future direction.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be asked to respond to a short questionnaire (it should not take more than 15 minutes to complete) focusing on your views on the ‘Time to Talk’ service and how it may be improved. A stamped addressed envelope will be provided, allowing you to reflect on your time with the EP and complete the questionnaire independently and in your own time, before posting it back.

What happens to the data collected?
The information gathered from all returned questionnaire responses will be pooled and used to identify similarities and differences in pupils views on the service received. The themes identified in the feedback received will be integral to the evaluation of ‘Time to Talk’ and its future direction.

How is confidentiality maintained?
You will not be asked to provide your name on the returned questionnaire, and school names will be anonymised. The returned questionnaire will be kept securely in the EPS office until December 2012, before being destroyed.

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 and without detriment to yourself. Any contribution you made to the evaluation of ‘Time to Talk’ before withdrawing from the research will not be used by
the researcher. If you do not wish to take part in the research this does not affect your rights to make use of the ‘Time to Talk’ service again in future.

**Where will the research be conducted?**
You are provided with a stamped addressed envelope, allowing you to complete the questionnaire at your convenience.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**
The research will be written up as a doctoral thesis and submitted to the University of Manchester in September 2012. Your school will be provided with a summary of the research findings and you may also request a copy of the summary by contacting the researcher directly (see contact details below).

**Criminal Records Check**
The researcher and all EPs who may be involved in implementing ‘Time to Talk’ have undergone a satisfactory criminal records check.

**Contact for further information**
Should you require any further information before making the decision of whether to take part in the research or not, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

*************** (Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist)
*************** Council
Tel: *********
Email: ***************

If you decide to take part in the research, and subsequently wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the research, please write to the following address:

Head of the Research Office,
Christie Building,
University of Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester, M13 9PL

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.
Participant Consent Form

‘Time to Talk’: Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age.

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

Please Tick Box

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had any such questions 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 and without detriment to any treatment/service.

3. I agree that anonymous quotes may be extracted from my written feedback.

4. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers.

I agree to take part in the above project.

.................................................................................................................  ........................................
Name of Participant                                                                  Date

Signature................................................................................................

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Appendix F: Example of Research Stakeholder Information Sheet and Consent Form

‘Time to Talk’: Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age

Participant Information Sheet
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, 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.

Who will conduct the research?
************. ***** is currently a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for ************ Council and is studying for a Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology at the School of Education, University of Manchester.

Title of the Research
Time to Talk: Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to improve access to Educational Psychology Services for Post-16 pupils.

What is the aim of the research?
The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) wants to tailor the service it provides to post-16 pupils by creating ‘drop-in’ opportunities for young people with Educational Psychologists (EP). A similar ‘drop-in’ service is already offered to parents within the authority through an initiative named ‘Time to Talk’. Time to Talk offers parents the opportunity to meet with an EP directly in a convenient location to discuss and problem-solve any concerns they may have with regards to their children.
The EPS believes that young people have a right to access their service, to express their needs and views, independently of their parents or teachers; ‘Time to Talk’ aims to meet this right. Providing a ‘Time to Talk’ service specifically for post-16 pupils would allow young people the autonomy to confidentially discuss any concerns or difficulties they may be experiencing. An EP will be well-placed to listen
to a young person, support them in being solution-focused, signpost them to other agencies, and if appropriate, advocate for them in school.

The research aims to work collaboratively with school staff to develop a ‘Time to Talk’ service for post-16 pupils, investigating individual’s perspectives of the service on offer.

Why have I been invited to take part?
As a member of the Local Authority’s Emotional Health Forum your views on pupil ‘Time to Talk’ and how it may fit with other initiatives on-going within the authority, and how it may be developed will be important in determining the course of the research. Other members of the forum will also be invited to participate.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be asked to attend a Focus Group held during one of your twice termly meetings. The Focus Group will be made up of attending members of the Emotional Health Forum who have been asked to take part in the research. The researcher will be present to guide a discussion regarding your views on ‘Time to Talk’. The Focus Group discussion will last for approximately 30-40 minutes, and will be audio-recorded.

What happens to the data collected?
The audio data collected during the focus group will be transcribed and used alongside other data gathered, to help inform the school and EPS in designing ‘Time to Talk’ for post-16 pupils.

How is confidentiality maintained?
The audio data transcribed will be anonymised i.e. no participants will be identified by their names and school names will also be anonymised. The audio file will only be heard by the researcher and will be kept on her laptop until December 2012, before being deleted.

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 and without detriment to yourself. Any contribution you made to the
discussions before withdrawing from the research will not be used by the researcher.

**Where will the research be conducted?**
The Focus Groups will be conducted at the Local Authority’s Education Services offices.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**
The research will be written up as a doctoral thesis and submitted to the University of Manchester in September 2012. The researcher will present the outcomes of the research at a future Emotional Health Forum meeting. You may also request a written summary of the research by contacting the researcher directly (see contact details below).

**Criminal Records Check**
The researcher has undergone a satisfactory criminal records check.

**Contact for further information**
Should you require any further information before making the decision of whether to take part in the research or not, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

************ (Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist)
************ Council
Tel: ********
Email: ********

If you decide to take part in the research, and subsequently wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the research, please write to the following address:

Head of the Research Office,
Christie Building,
University of Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester, M13 9PL

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.
‘Time to Talk’:
Using the Research and Development in Organisations framework to implement and evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for pupils over 16 years of age

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please tick the boxes and sign the consent form below.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had any such questions 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 and without detriment to any treatment/service.

3. I understand that the focus group will be audio-recorded.

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers.

I agree to take part in the above project.

Name: ........................................................................... Date: .........................

Signature: .............................................................

Signature of person taking consent: .............................................................................
Appendix G: Wider stakeholder Group Initial Focus Group Facilitating Questions

Wider stakeholder Group RADIO stage 1 and 3 Focus Group Facilitating Questions

- What do you perceive is the need for a direct access, short – term service such as ‘Time to Talk’ for pupils over the age of 16? How could it benefit the school?

- How can such a service compliment your work as allied professionals?

- How do you perceive ‘Time to Talk’ will be viewed by pupils?

- How will we know if ‘Time to Talk’ for post-16 pupils has been successful? How can we measure/evaluate this?

- Which organisational and cultural factors within the school/wider community will facilitate the implementation of ‘Time to Talk’?

- Which organisational and cultural factors within the school/wider community will act as a barrier to the implementation of ‘Time to Talk’?
Appendix H: School Stakeholders Initial Focus Group facilitating questions

School A Initial RADIO Stage 1 and 3 Focus Group facilitating questions

- What do you perceive is the need for a direct access, short – term service such as ‘Time to Talk’ for pupils over the age of 16? How could it benefit the school?

- How can such a service compliment your work as pastoral care staff and other on-going initiatives within the school and wider community?

- How do you perceive ‘Time to Talk’ will be viewed by pupils?

- How will we know if ‘Time to Talk’ for post-16 pupils has been successful? How can we measure/evaluate this?

- Which organisational and cultural factors within the school/wider community will facilitate the implementation of ‘Time to Talk’?

- Which organisational and cultural factors within the school/wider community will act as a barrier to the implementation of ‘Time to Talk’?

- Do you have any particular concerns about working collaboratively on an action research project?
Dear Staff,

This is to inform you of a new initiative being piloted at Ysgol ************ during this term. **********’s Educational Psychology team is offering a weekly drop-in, ‘Time to Talk’ service for Year 12 and 13 pupils. Time to Talk offers pupils the opportunity to meet individually and confidentially with an Educational Psychologist to discuss any home or school issues that may be causing them concern.

The Time to Talk service aims to build on the success of the drop-in service already on offer to parents within the county, and increase accessibility to the Educational Psychology Service for Year 12 and 13 pupils who might not necessarily meet criteria to receive support from other sources during this important time in their lives.

Enclosed are the Time to Talk flyers already circulated amongst Year 12 and 13 pupils at Ysgol ************ for your information. Your support would be appreciated in promoting the service by ensuring pupils are aware of when the service is available, and by recommending the service to individual pupils who may benefit from attending.

Yours Sincerely

Statutory Head of Education Services (Chief Education Officer)
Appendix J: Pupil Time to Talk Record Form

Taflen Record Amser i Siarad / Time to Talk Record Sheet

Enw/Name: ____________________________________________________________

Blwyddyn Ysgol/School Year:
☐ Blwyddyn/Year 12
☐ Blwyddyn/Year 13

Rhyw/Gender:
☐ Gwryw/Male
☐ Benyw/Female

Iaith ddewisiol/Preferred Language:
☐ Cymraeg/Welsh
☐ Saesneg/English

Cyfrinachedd wedi ei esbonio/Confidentiality explained: ______________________

Ymwybyddiaeth o bresenoldeb/Knowledge of attendance:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Achos pryder/Issue of concern:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________
Agreed Outcomes:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Referral to other services:
☐ Ia/Yes
☐ Na/No

Sylw/Comment:________________________________________________________

Preferred form of feedback (review session, letter etc.):
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Part of the research:
☐ Ia/Yes
☐ Na/No
Appendix K: Time to Talk Pupil Questionnaire

****** Educational Psychology Service Time to Talk Questionnaire

Thank you for making use of the Time to Talk service. In order to ensure that this Service is meeting your needs it would be helpful if you would complete this questionnaire about your experiences and how you think the service could be improved.

All responses are anonymous and should take no longer than 10 minutes.

1. Which of the following encouraged you to attend Time to Talk? Please tick as many as is applicable.

- ‘Drop-In’ nature of Time to Talk
- Confidentiality of Time to Talk
- Service specifically for Year 12 and 13
- Opportunity to discuss issues with an Educational Psychologist
- Located within school
- Other (Please explain)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

2. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the box that best sums up your view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending Time to Talk was a useful use of my time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Time to Talk helped me better understand my situation and my feelings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued overleaf...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel more positive about my situation after the Time to Talk session.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was useful/good to talk to someone outside of the situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel no different following my Time to Talk session.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would attend Time to Talk again if I needed to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend Time to Talk to a friend.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would consider making use of a similar service after leaving school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How would you rate your ability to move forward with what was concerning you?

Please tick the rating that best sums up your situation:

**Rating Key:** 1 = Completely unable to move forward  
5 = Know exactly how to move forward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before attending Time to Talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After attending Time to Talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Are there things that could have been different in your Time to Talk session?

It would have been better if...

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

I didn't like...

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Anything else?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

5. Is there anything that could be improved about the Time to Talk Service generally?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

6. Would you have attended Time to Talk if parental request was required? Please tick.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Maybe
- [ ] Don’t Know

7. How would you feel, if someone at school (e.g. teacher, another pupil) became aware that you had attended Time to Talk?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Please tick the applicable boxes (this information is useful in making comparisons between responses, and will not be used to identify respondents):

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Year 12
- [ ] Year 13

Thank you for taking time to answer the questions above, you views are valued and will be used to improve the service.

If you have additional comments regarding Time to Talk please note them on the back of this page.
Appendix L: Pupil Focus Group Information and Consent form

Time to Talk: Evaluating an educational psychology drop-in service for Year 12 and 13 pupils.

Participant Information Sheet
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, 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.

Who will conduct the research?
*************. ***** is currently a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for ****** County Borough Council and is studying for a Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology at the School of Education, University of Manchester.

Title of the Research
Time to Talk: Using Research and Development in Organisations framework to evaluate an educational psychology drop-in service for Year 12 and 13 pupils.

What is the aim of the research?
*****'s Educational Psychology Service (EPS) wants to improve the service it provides to Year 12 and 13 pupils by creating ‘drop-in’ opportunities for young people with Educational Psychologists (EP). A similar ‘drop-in’ service is already offered to parents within the authority through an initiative named ‘Time to Talk’, and offers parents the opportunity to meet with an EP directly in a convenient location to discuss and problem-solve any concerns they may have with regards to their children.

The EPS believes that young people have a right to access their service, to express their needs and views, independently of their parents or teachers; ‘Time to Talk’ aims to meet this right. Providing a ‘Time to Talk’ service specifically for Year 12 and 13 pupils would allow young people the independence to confidentially discuss any concerns or difficulties they may be experiencing. An EP will be well-placed to
listen to a young person, support them in being solution-focused, signpost them to other agencies, and if appropriate, advocate for them in school.
The research aims to work collaboratively with school staff and pupils to develop and evaluate a ‘Time to Talk’ service for Year 12 and 13 pupils, investigating individual’s perspectives of the service on offer.

**Why have I been invited to take part?**
A ‘Time to Talk’ service is currently running in your school. Your name was chosen at random from the school register. Approximately 25 other pupils from your school have also been chosen at random and invited to take part in the research.

**What would I be asked to do if I took part?**
You will be asked to attend a Focus Group, made up of between 3 and 7 other pupils from your school who have been asked to take part in the research. The researcher will be present to guide a discussion regarding your views and ideas on help-seeking generally, the ‘Time to Talk’ service and the possible directions it may take in the future. The Focus Group discussion will last for approximately 30-40 minutes, and will be audio-recorded.

**What happens to the data collected?**
The audio data collected during the focus group will be transcribed and used alongside data collected from other focus groups and interviews with staff and pupils from your school, to help the EPS develop and evaluate the ‘Time to Talk’ service and the general service provided to Year 12 and 13 pupils within the authority.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**
The audio data transcribed will be anonymised i.e. no participants will be identified by their names and the school name will also be anonymised. The audio file will only be heard by the researcher and will be kept on her laptop until December 2012, before being deleted.

**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 and without any disadvantage to yourself. Any contribution you made to the discussions before withdrawing from the research will not be used by the researcher.
If you do not wish to take part in the research this does not affect your rights to make use of the ‘Time to Talk’ service.

**Where will the research be conducted?**
The Focus Groups will be conducted on school grounds during school hours.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**
The research will be written up as a doctoral thesis and submitted to the University of Manchester in September 2012. Your school will be provided with a summary of the research findings and you may also request a copy of the summary by contacting the researcher directly (see contact details below).

**Criminal Records Check**
The researcher has undergone a satisfactory criminal records check.

**Contact for further information**
Should you require any further information before making the decision of whether to take part in the research or not, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

********* (Trainee Educational Psychologist)
***** County Borough Council
Tel: ********** / **********
Email: ****************

If you decide to take part in the research, and subsequently wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the research, please write to the following address:
Head of the Research Office,
Christie Building,
University of Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester, M13 9PL

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.
Time to Talk: Evaluating an educational psychology drop-in service for Year 12 and 13 pupils.

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please tick the boxes and sign the consent form below.

6. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had any such questions answered satisfactorily.

7. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service.

8. I understand that the focus group will be audio-recorded.

9. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

10. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers.

I agree to take part in the above project.

Name: .......................................................... Date: .........................

Signature: ..........................................................

Signature of person taking consent:............................................................


Appendix M: Pupil Focus Group Facilitating Questions

- If you were faced with a difficulty or concern what would you instinctively do?
  - Be proactive? Sit back and hope it sorts itself out? Ask for help from others?

- Who would you feel able to discuss it with?
  - Would you prefer to talk to someone who doesn’t know you personally?
  - Would you be willing to talk to someone who is a psychologist?
  - Would you be willing to talk to someone who is a school based counsellor?
  - Would you feel more willing to talk to one more than the other?

- What did you initially think when the Time to Talk service was first introduced to you in your form groups?
  - Positive/Negative/Irrelevant/Unclear what it was?
  - Knowledge of *****’s Educational Psychology Service?

- What type of difficulties do you think an Educational Psychologist might be able to support you with?

- Is ‘direct’ access to an Educational Psychologist useful?
  - Independence/Confidentiality/Benefits of Self help-seeking

- Would you be likely to persuade a friend to access such a service if you knew they were having a hard time?

- How would you feel if you attended Time to Talk and someone found out?

- What factors would prevent you from making use of the Time to Talk service in its current format?
  - ‘Drop-in’ nature? Location? Psychologist?

- What changes could be made that would make it more probable that you make use of a service like Time to Talk in the future?
  - Referral System? Appointments? E-mail access? Location?

- What kind of services would be useful for Year 12 and 13 pupils from Educational Psychology Services?