Young People with Visual Impairments and their Social Inclusion in Secondary Mainstream Settings: exploring perspectives of the young people, their parents and key professionals.

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Abstract

This research was concerned with exploring the views of children and young people with a visual impairment (CYPVI) about their experiences and perceptions of social inclusion in secondary mainstream settings in England. It also targeted parents and key professionals working with and around CYPVI in their school setting.

The challenge for CYPVI in 'becoming social and communicative', particularly for those with the most limited vision, is well documented and it has been suggested that these young people are socially isolated in mainstream settings. The lifelong benefits that arise from successful social inclusion have also been reported, yet there exists a paucity of research regarding the socio-emotional experiences of CYPVI in mainstream settings, particularly those of a secondary age.

The current study, conducted by a Trainee Educational Psychologist, who was herself visually impaired, adopted a qualitative methodology. Semi-structured interviews were used with 12 young people, with a severe visual impairment, drawn from five London Boroughs; short questionnaires were used to elicit parents' and key professionals' perspectives. Thematic analysis was conducted on the data and eight main themes identified which were interpreted and presented within a conceptual analysis framework.

Although limited generalisability, owing to small sample size, was acknowledged, the findings indicate that CYPVI face many potential challenges to their successful social inclusion, particularly during the period of adolescence. Implications of the findings for future practice are discussed; the consideration given to the role of Educational Psychologists in understanding and supporting CYPVI was privileged.

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (excluding appendices and references): 36, 127 words

Acknowledgements

I would first like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisors Dr Karl Wall and Dr Ioanna Bakopoulou for their tremendous guidance, support and tireless enthusiasm for my research.

A special thank you to all the young people who took part in this research for their insight and honesty and to all the adults that participated who gave time and thought to their contributions.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, partner, peers and colleagues who have supported me throughout the last two years. It is through their eternal patience and unwavering belief in me that this journey has been possible.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Aims, Rationale and Justification for the Research

Three issues promoted the focus and final form of this study. The first was my experience of being an individual with a visual impairment (VI) who, second, was also a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) whose training had featured little preparation for working with children and young people with a VI (CYPVI). The third, then, was thinking about how to work with CYPVI as part of my future practice as an Educational Psychologist (EP).

In line with my own experience, the majority of CYPVI are educated in mainstream settings (Morris & Smith, 2008; RNIB, 2013), reflecting the current outcome of a recent national drive towards inclusive education (Keil, 2008). Of concern, however, is the existence of research suggesting that CYPVI in mainstream settings are socially isolated (Hatlen, 2004), arguably because of the difficulties they experience in the area of social interaction (Anderson, 2006). This raised questions regarding the development of the VI 'self', when educated alongside sighted peers, and the factors that might influence such development.

Reflecting on my own education, the transition to secondary school presented the greatest challenge. Indeed, a secondary school environment is larger and more complex than that of a primary school and involves many more potential social interactions with peers and teachers. Given the vulnerabilities of CYPVI in the area of social interaction, it might be expected that these difficulties are further exacerbated in the secondary phase of their education.

Yet, despite evidence highlighting the particular areas of difficulty for CYPVI, their socio-emotional experiences in mainstream settings remain an under-researched area. There exists a particular paucity of such research regarding CYPVI of a secondary age. The current study therefore aimed to contribute significantly to the research base by exploring issues of social inclusion for CYPVI of a secondary age in mainstream settings.

1.1 Thesis Structure

This thesis hereafter has the following structure: Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature and the resulting research questions, while Chapter Three presents the methodological considerations underpinning the research questions. The findings of the current study are then presented in Chapter Four; Chapter Five discusses these findings in relation to the literature presented in Chapter Two, before critiquing the current study and considering implications for future practice.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Chapter Overview

Consistent with my personal motivation and the concerns raised in Chapter One, the following chapter aims to review the literature relevant to the current study and further explain how the three research questions underpinning the study were established.

First, my perspective as a researcher will be detailed. The EP role will then be explained and the relevance of the current study to EP practice considered. Definitions for both VI and severe visual impairment (SVI) are then provided and the developmental issues faced by CYPVI highlighted. Attention will then turn to the literature regarding inclusive education and social inclusion, before giving consideration to the relationship between social inclusion and VI. A discussion of the research issues in relation to working with a VI population will follow. The theoretical perspective adopted within this study – the Eco-systemic approach of Bronfenbrenner (1979) – will then be discussed before introducing a framework for the successful social inclusion of CYPVI. Informed by these theoretical models, together with my professional experience as a TEP, selective research was undertaken, focusing on persons of influence upon the CYPVI. Finally, the resulting research questions are presented.

2.1 Perspective of the Researcher

As stated in Chapter One, both the experience of having a VI and being a TEP have been influential when undertaking the current study. Here, these aspects

are further detailed, and linked to research literature, in order to explain how they have informed my perspective as a researcher.

2.1.1 A researcher with a VI

Diagnosed at the age of eight, I have glaucoma (see Appendix 1 for glossary of eye conditions) which has rendered me blind in my left eye (no light perception; NLP) with, it is estimated, 70 percent vision in my right eye. The impact upon my daily life, however, is minimal and a high level of independence has been maintained. Consequently, I have always attended mainstream settings with very little support. One exception to this was upon entering secondary school, at the age of twelve. Following an operation on my right eye, the vision was left blurred and unable to be corrected by glasses. Therefore, as well as commencing my secondary career a week later than my peers, it became necessary for me to always sit at the front of the class, work from enlarged work sheets, use magnifying glasses and rely on peers to make class work more accessible.

To say this experience was an unpleasant one would be a gross underestimation. For my VI to be so apparent to my peers, at a time when first impressions were being formed and new friendships being forged, was devastating. In fact, although the support implemented was undoubtedly done so with the best intentions, the feelings that this experience evoked were so strong that I vividly recall conceiving it as tantamount to 'social suicide'.

While I was aware that my own experience was potentially distinct from those of the CYPVI within the current study, it was acknowledged that the strength of my

emotions had the potential to introduce an element of bias. The importance of exercising rigour to guard against this was therefore highlighted and attempts to ensure reflexivity, in exploring my role in relation to the data, were made (discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, section 3.7). It was, however, hoped that my personal experience of VI would in fact encourage increased levels of empathy with the CYPVI in the sample population and that the disclosure of my VI to them would promote the creation of a trusting environment in which to build rapport.

Indeed, the literature regarding disability research suggests that it is necessary for researchers to have a disability if meaningful disability research is to be carried out (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). There has, however, been a tendency of research "to ignore or minimise the influence of insider perspectives" (Armstrong & Moore, 2004, p.9), thus establishing a distance between a researcher's own commitments and the research context. Disability activists have retaliated against such an approach to disability research, condemning it for having done little, if anything, to tackle the social isolation and oppression experienced by disabled people or to develop policies resulting in a significantly improved quality of life (Oliver, 1992). For them, non-disabled researchers' lack of personal experience of disabling barriers means that their contribution to the field lacks authenticity, leaving those with disabilities feeling alienated and further marginalised (Barnes & Mercer, 1997).

In response, Oliver (1992) called for disability research to follow the principles of emancipatory research and the notion of researchers as experts was rejected (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). Importantly, this new approach suggested that the

historically asymmetric relationship between researchers and those being researched be changed; reciprocity between researchers and those researched was highlighted, such that the latter are instead considered 'expert-knowers' (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). Interestingly, this view is in alignment with that of EPs whereby the language of 'expert' gives way to the language of 'bringing expertise from a psychological perspective' (Wagner, 2000) in order that the interaction between practitioner and client is collaborative and empowering, rather than de-skilling.

2.1.2 A Trainee Educational Psychologist

The current study forms part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at the Institute of Education, University of London. A variety of psychological models underpin this Professional Doctorate, none more so than Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Eco-systemic Model (see Figure 1), which emphasises the importance of systems around the individual, and their interactions, in relation to development. The theory reconceptualises the ecological environment into four layers (or concentric circles) – microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem – with each additional layer representing systems further removed from the individual than the preceding one. This theoretical model, which prioritises a focus on the evolving interaction between the individual and the ecological environment, has been influential when conducting the current study and will be further explained in section 2.12.

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Eco-systemic Model
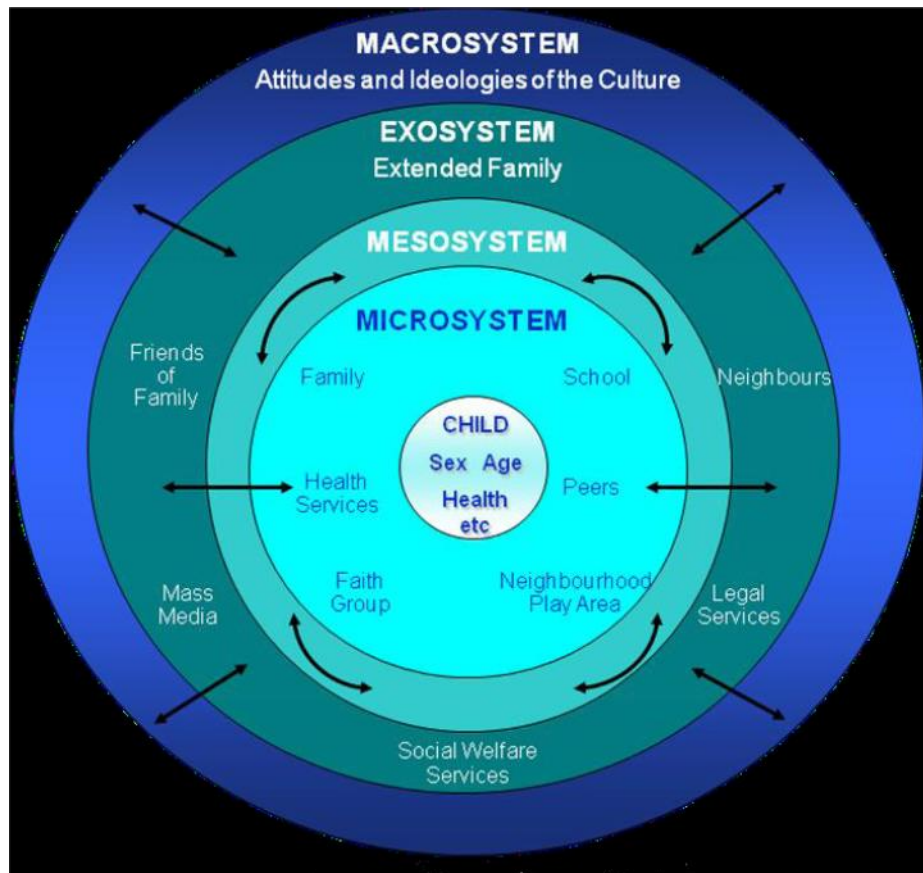
2.2 The EP Role and CYPVI

While the motivation for undertaking the current study has stemmed predominantly from personal experience, the bringing of an Educational Psychology perspective has also had important implications for both the research process and consideration of future EP practice in relation to CYPVI. While the theoretical perspective arising as a result of my EP training has been outlined (section 2.1.2), further explanation of the EP role and skillset is required, with a view to answering the question of how EPs can understand and support this population. This is pertinent since VI training as part of the

Professional Doctorate is, at present, limited (½ day) and is an issue that will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

EPs are considered to be both direct and indirect agents of change (Bozic, 2004; Idol & West, 1987). In order to engender this change, EPs work at a number of different levels - individual, group and organisational (Wagner, 2000), employing strong interpersonal skills (a core competency for applied psychologists and a prerequisite for training). Many UK Local Authorities (LAs) have adopted a consultative approach to service delivery, involving the raising of concerns through a collaborative and recursive process, combining joint exploration, assessment, intervention and review (Wagner, 2000). Despite possessing a high level of knowledge and skill, EPs are encouraged to adopt a non-authoritarian stance to their work, bringing non-threatening expertise (Conoley & Conoley, 1982; Lindsey, 1994).

The psychological roots of the consultation model are key; a paradigm shift has been seen from clinical styles of assessment (Wagner & Gillies, 2001), with a prevailing psychological model of individual pathology, to practice that draws mainly on systemic and social constructionist perspectives (Kennedy, Frederickson & Monsen, 2008). Clarification of the EP role is said to be essential in order to avoid regression to a traditional medical model (Dennis, 2004) and to dispel preconceptions that EPs are 'gatekeepers to resources'. Although it has been said that 'everything we do is consultation' (Dickinson, 2000), EPs are able to employ a range of techniques in their work including: Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955; Ravenette, 1999), Cognitive

Behavioural Therapy (Beck, 1979) and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (Ajmal, 2001; De Jong & Berg, 1998).

2.3 Relevance of the Current Study to EP Practice

Discussions with EP role partners have highlighted a lack of knowledge with regard to CYPVI; historically, a specialist EP or Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) has been given responsibility in this area. Thus, the need for this research aiming to empower and 'upskill' EPs is significant.

Further, EPs are likely to play a crucial role in the promotion of social inclusion and emotional well-being of CYPVI. EPs are well placed to help 'bridge' any gap between policy rhetoric and practice, yet the role is also implicated in the perpetuation of best practice.

Having focused on my experience as a person with a VI and as a TEP, attention will now turn to a review of the research literature related to the issues regarding children and young people (CYP) and the emergence of the VI 'self'. Accordingly, the following sections focus first on what VI means in relation to CYP, before examining how VI impacts upon children's development. The impact on early development and its implications for later childhood and adolescence, in particular, will be discussed.

2.4 Defining VI and SVI

The term 'visual impairment' describes a continuum of sight loss. The World Health Organisation (WHO) provide the most widely accepted definition of VI, based on visual acuity scores (the ability to see clearly) as part of a clinically-

based assessment; as a result people are classed as having normal vision, low vision or as being blind (see Appendix 1 for classifications of VI). However, while such classifications are useful (e.g. in allocating resources), it is important to acknowledge that they mask a plethora of eye conditions that affect people in many different ways (see Appendix 1 for glossary of eye conditions). The concept of 'functional vision' – what vision is available and how it is used - is instead thought to better accommodate this diversity.

According to the WHO definition above, SVI falls within the 'low vision' range. A person with a SVI is said to have: impairment of visual functioning even after treatment, and/or standard refractive correction, and has visual acuity of less than 6/60 to light perception or a visual field of less than 10 degrees from the point of fixation, but who uses, or is potentially able to use, vision for the planning and/or execution of a task (WHO, 1992). With regard to the VI population, one must be aware that, however functionally defined, a wide range of actual extents and availability of vision may be apparent, even in children with the same clinical diagnosis.

2.5 Development and VI

Vision is the dominant sense in human experience and has a major role in unifying information from other senses; Landsberg (2005), states that VI has an influence on 'normal' development. Indeed, there exists a wealth of information highlighting the significant impact that a VI can have on aspects of a child's development – cognitive, linguistic and social (Harris, Keil, Lord & McManus, 2012). CYP with a SVI (CYPSVI), or those who are blind, are said to experience substantial delays to their early childhood development and learning, some of

whom will follow an atypical developmental path (Keil, 2012). The following sections will explore the research literature relating to the relevant issues in more detail.

2.5.1 Issues of attachment and intersubjectivity

The importance of developing a close bond between infant and primary caregiver in early childhood has been well documented (Bailey, 2009) as the foundation for developing shared understanding, communication and language (Fonagy, Gergely & Target, 2007, as cited in Dale & Salt, 2007). Yet, since early social behaviour and communication are achieved through behaviours that depend on vision, such as eye contact and directed gaze, the infant-caregiver relationship may be placed at risk for a child with a VI. Indeed, vision is developmentally significant in parent-child attachment (Brazelton & Cramer, 1991). Although all senses – touch, smell and taste – have an important role to play, lack of visual responsiveness in infants with a VI can be a barrier to intersubjectivity (Preisler, 1995). With regard to future social relationships, this is thought to be influential (Warren, 1994); long-term consequences may be seen in social relatedness, communication and social cognition (Pring, 2005, as cited in Dale & Salt, 2007). Consequently, age of onset of VI is likely to have a significant impact upon development (Warren, 1994).

2.5.2 Age of VI onset

There are areas of development that appear to benefit from a period of early vision (Warren, 1994). While there is no convincing evidence to suggest that early vision affects the quality of sensory discrimination in the non-visual modalities, there is much evidence to suggest that it provides long-term benefits

with regard to integrative, perceptual abilities – including spatial understanding and aspects of locomotor control (Warren, 1994). CYP who have had a VI from birth have also been found to experience greater difficulty with regard to social relationships than those for whom a VI developed later in life (Huure & Aro, 2000). Such findings are corroborated by literature that stresses the importance of providing early (in the first two years of life) and intensive health and educational support to mitigate impact upon a child's development (Dale & Sonksen, 2002).

Given the reported impact of age of onset of VI upon development, it is important to note that approximately two-thirds of children with a SVI (and those that are blind) are diagnosed before their first birthday (Rahi & Cable, 2003). However, while the literature suggests that early visual loss places children at risk, there is also evidence to indicate that such risks can be ameliorated by environmental factors (Warren, 1994). For example, the physical environment and social-emotional climate of the family can help CYPVI to more successfully adapt and enjoy optimal development (Warren, 1994).

Nevertheless, in light of the literature documenting the role of early vision for later development, conducting research with CYPSVI – a population for whom early vision loss is likely – was thought to be interesting. It was first necessary, however, to further consider the implications of this on key aspects of their development: the impact upon language and the resulting social and communication difficulties.

2.5.3 Impact upon language

Studies have repeatedly documented a delayed developmental trajectory for language in children who are blind compared to their sighted peers (Calvert, Spence & Stein, 2004). For children with a SVI, expressive and receptive language skills are later to develop; it is reported, however, that this developmental gap is closed by the time these children reach school age (Keil, 2012). Thereafter CYPSVI display a tendency for strong structural language and verbal skills, although their pragmatic language skills – language used for social communication – continue to be an area of weakness (Tadic, Pring & Dale, 2010).

2.5.4 Social and communication difficulties

Concerns regarding the development of social skills among CYPVI have been expressed by a number of researchers (e.g. Sacks, 2006; Sacks & Wolffe, 1998, 2006) who hypothesised that a diminished ability to use non-verbal communication is highly implicated. For CYPVI, social cues may be missed or misinterpreted; it may not be possible to observe and interpret facial expressions, and establishing social contact with others may be difficult (Human, 2010). Further, for those with the most limited vision (e.g. CYPSVI), 'becoming social and communicative' is identified as an area of particular vulnerability (Dale & Salt, 2007). However, despite evidence highlighting this as an area of difficulty for CYPVI (and for CYPSVI in particular), there exists a paucity of research in England regarding the social experiences of this population.

While the developmental trajectories are likely to be unique for each individual CYPVI, it is important to note that there is thought to be a clear difference in the 'patient journey' for two distinct populations: those with and without additional needs (Rahi, Cumberland & Peckham, 2010). Marked differences in terms of a range of wellbeing and educational outcome measures are also reported for these two populations of CYPVI (Rahi et al., 2010). When considering the experiences and needs of CYPVI, adolescence arguably presents unique challenges; this aspect forms the focus of the next section.

2.6 Adolescence and VI

Within the context of the current study, adolescence, as a developmental stage, was taken to refer to early (12-14 years of age) and middle adolescence (15–16 years of age). At this time, adolescents are typically experiencing puberty, which is marked by physiological, anatomical and hormonal changes (Waddell, 2005). Although there are said to be many similarities between the characteristics of early and middle adolescence, early adolescence is said to be distinguishable primarily because of the emotional readjustment involved, towards the development of a more stable sense of self (Waddell, 2002).

2.6.1 Separation from parents

Waddell (2002) further suggested that the development of independence and autonomy from parents is the main developmental task for adolescents (particularly early adolescents), which ultimately leads to a sense of self-identity. However, research has highlighted that CYPVI may experience greater difficulty in establishing such independence as a consequence of their parents experiencing difficulty in 'letting go' (Wolffe, 2006).

2.6.2 Self-concept, self-esteem and friendships

While it has been suggested that self-concept remains relatively stable throughout adolescence (Coleman, 1974; Offer, 1974; Piers & Harris, 1964, as cited in Halder & Datta, 2012), contending with the limitations imposed by a VI is reported to strongly affect self-esteem development, particularly during adolescence (Chen, 2002, as cited in Hess, 2010). Adolescence too is a period in which physical appearance gains importance (Wertheim & Paxton, 2011, as cited in Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2012); for CYPSVI, who may be more reliant on others' evaluations of their physical appearance owing to their own difficulties accessing visual information, negative comments regarding their appearance may be especially damaging (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2012). Among friends this may be an issue.

Belonging to a friendship group is said to be of utmost importance in early adolescence (Waddell, 2005). Given the social and communication difficulties typically experienced by CYPVI (as reported in section 2.5.4), the forming of friendships is likely to present a challenge for this population, especially where this coincides with transition from primary to secondary school - a marker for entry into early adolescence (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford & Blyth, 1987).

2.6.3 Transition

Transition involves leaving the more personalised environment of primary school for the organisational complexity of secondary school. The discontinuities in relation to the size of the school, travelling to school independently, a greater number of students and teachers, together with a change in learning structure and environment are all evident (Tobbell, 2003).

Transition from primary to secondary school is stated as being a significant and stressful life event in early adolescence, yet, in relation to well-being, the majority of sighted adolescents are said to adapt to their new environment with relative ease (Gillison, Standage & Skevington, 2008).

The difficulties faced by sighted children during primary to secondary school transition may only be exacerbated for CYPVI, for whom navigating the environment with limited visual access presents a perennial challenge. Indeed, Roe (1998, as cited in Roe, 2008) has highlighted the specific challenges of a more complex secondary environment for CYPVI, further suggesting that a greater teacher staff base poses potential difficulties regarding teacher's understanding of the implications of visual loss. Stockley and Brooks (1995) have highlighted transition to a secondary school as a particularly difficult time for CYPVI, identifying timely and appropriate emotional support as important.

Adolescents with a VI face complex developmental challenges. Yet there exists a paucity of research regarding their socio-emotional experiences in their school settings. The following section develops issues regarding the prevalence of CYPVI being educated in mainstream (rather than special school) settings (see Chapter 1). In England, these are notionally 'inclusive' settings (Keil, 2008), influenced by a national drive towards inclusive education.

2.7 Inclusive Education and CYPVI

2.7.1 Prevalence and placement of CYPVI

Although described as a low incidence disability[1], there are said to be about 25,000 CYPVI under the age of 16 in the UK (RNIB, 2013). Approximately two-thirds (70%) are educated in mainstream schools (Morris & Smith, 2008; RNIB, 2013). There are approximately 15,000 CYPVI of secondary school age in the UK, of which 7, 000 are educated in mainstream schools (Keil & Clunies-Ross, 2003; Keil, 2008). These CYPVI are taught, for the majority of the time, alongside their sighted peers, although some mainstream schools may be additionally resourced for learners with a VI (RNIB, 2013). CYPVI taught in mainstream schools will be less likely to have additional needs (Davis, 2003; RNIB, 2013). A greater percentage of CYPVI have a statement of SEN at secondary (68%) than at primary level (57%) (Morris & Smith, 2008).

2.7.2 Inclusion: policy context

The concept of inclusive education was first introduced to the UK with the publication of The Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) and followed an investigation into the education of children with special educational needs (SEN). LAs were subsequently mandated to educate children with disabilities in mainstream schools (Equality Act, DfE, 2010), including CYPVI in early years, primary, secondary and further education settings. The inclusion agenda aimed to provide opportunities for all children to learn and achieve and was advanced on the grounds that there are strong educational, social and moral grounds for educating children with SEN with their peers (United Nations Educational,

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[1] According to the National Health Service (NHS), a total of 9, 635 CYP under the age of 17 were registered as blind or partially sighted in England at the end of March 2011 (NHS, 2011).

Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, 1994; SEN and Disability Act, SENDA, 2001; DfES, 2001a).

Schools were expected to acknowledge and address the various needs of their pupils (UNESCO, 1994) and it was later legislated that schools have a duty for making reasonable adjustments to the curriculum, specific to pupils' needs (DfEE, 1997, 1998; DfES, 2001b; DfE, 2010, DfE, 2014).

2.7.3 Inclusive education in practice

'Inclusive' education differs from previously held notions of 'integration'. Whereas 'integration' arguably focuses on helping students with disabilities 'fit in' to the mainstream classroom (that is the pupil is expected to adjust to the setting), inclusion emphasises the skills and resources available within mainstream schools that allows the school to adjust to the pupils needs. Inclusion should be considered as including children "in the enterprise of learning, wherever they learn best", rather than simply educating children with SEN in one setting (Warnock, 2005, p.14). This shift in emphasis endeavours to challenge the organisation and provision of the curriculum for students, whereas integration does not.

Although 'inclusion' is a rather ambiguous concept of which there exist a variety of definitions (Booth, Ainscow & Dyson, 2006), it fundamentally focuses on the changing of values, attitudes, policies and practices within a school (Polat, 2011). It must involve all members of the school community - teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and, crucially, the pupils themselves – if educational practices are to be changed (Soresi, Nota & Wehmeyer, 2011).

The concept of 'belonging' is key here, for one cannot be 'included' if one does not have a sense of what it is one is being included into. Belonging therefore becomes a central characteristic in 'inclusion' (Warnock, 2005); it implies that a pupil is *socially* connected to the class and school community (Brutsaert & Van Houtte, 2004).

Inclusion, as an approach to education, is not without its critics. As noted by Graham and Slee (2003), 'inclusion' does not necessarily *guarantee* inclusiveness in practice due to the assumptions related to identity, difference and academic trajectories that drive policy and practices. The political trend towards inclusive education and a more inclusive society has therefore received criticism, not only because of the ambiguity of governmental definitions as described above, but also for their understandings of the concept of inclusion. O'Brien (2001), for instance, suggested that a significant focus on political policies may have led to a lack of focus on the experiences of pupils with SEN. Warnock (2005) later modified her position, asserting that the application of inclusive principles may even be damaging for some children and that inclusive education could be taken 'too far'. Perhaps, as Lindsay (2007) stated, inclusion should not be advanced solely on socio-political arguments.

2.8 Social Inclusion

Interactions between the different actors in the school setting around and with the child are necessarily social. S*ocial* inclusion is thus considered to be a vital part of the broader notion of inclusion (Ainscow, 1999; Human, 2010; Rodney,

2003) and must embrace the concept of belonging (Warnock, 2005) (section 2.7.3).

2.8.1 Social inclusion and 'belonging'

Belonging is said to be a "powerful human psychological concept" (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009, p.2) and a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). But it has other implications. Upon achieving *a sense of* belonging (SOB), it is claimed that positive academic, psychological, behavioural and social outcomes are enabled (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bond et al., 2007; Goodenow, 2003). Goodenow (1993), for example – who utilised the Psychological Sense of School Membership questionnaire to assess the perceptions of secondary aged pupils with learning difficulties regarding acceptance and inclusion in school life - found that when SOB was achieved, pupils demonstrated higher levels of motivation, higher expectations of success and a belief in the value of their academic work.

Not all classroom practices, however, engender a SOB and, conversely, can exacerbate feelings of rejection. Importantly, pupils reporting low levels of social connectedness in their lower years of secondary are more likely to develop mental health problems, become involved in substance misuse and drop out from school (Bond et al., 2007). However, despite the UK government's recognition of the importance of SOB (for the achievement of positive outcomes for CYP, with key initiatives focusing on the central role of schools), little attention has been paid to SOB as a central characteristic of inclusion (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009). The next section explores issues related to the SOB of CYPVI.

2.9 CYPVI and Social Inclusion

2.9.1 The gap between policy rhetoric and practice

The social movement around disability suggests that disability is not about physical differences, but societal attitudes (Bailey, 2012). However, there has been a tendency for those with VI to be overlooked, arguably because of its classification as a 'low incidence disability' (McCall, 1999, as cited in Arter, Mason, McCall, McLinden & Stone, 1999). Individuals with a VI have asserted that the implementation of inclusive policy has been tokenistic, ignoring their true needs and lacking understanding (Dale, 2010). The small scale nature of this study (n=4), however, limits its generalisability.

2.9.2 The myth of social skill acquisition through 'incidental learning'

During the development of inclusive education, it was assumed that CYPVI would learn social interaction skills through incidental learning, through the 'give-and-take' environment created through being educated alongside their sighted peers. This was later reported not to be so (Warren, 2000) and, instead, it was proposed that these skills may need to be taught in a structured and systematic way to avoid placing children at risk of becoming social isolates in their mainstream classrooms (Webster & Roe, 1998). Indeed, having a VI appears to create unique challenges to learning that can only be addressed by specialist input (Keil, 2012). This challenge is particularly concerning when considered alongside the, well documented, lifelong benefits that arise from successful social inclusion (e.g. Stivers, Cropper & Straus, 2008). It has been argued, then, that the tendency for those with a VI to be overlooked has been a consequence of the low incidence nature of the disability. Low incidence raises issues for research purposes.

2.10 Researching VI

Researching the VI population poses a number of challenges: First, the low incidence nature of the disability (NHS, 2011) raises issues of accessibility and renders traditional large scale studies unfeasible. The heterogeneity among the VI population is the second important factor to note. Warren (1994, p.3) speaks of the "staggering" array of variables related to VI that may have an impact on development. These include severity of VI, age of onset (Warren, 1994) and the presence, or not, of additional needs (Rahi et al., 2010).

Warren (1994) further notes that the majority of existing research in the field of VI has adopted a comparative approach whereby CYPVI tend to be matched to their sighted peers, according to chronological age and other variables; any differences revealed between the two groups are, therefore, attributed to the variable that differentiates them – the presence or absence of vision. Although the significant contribution of such research to the field is not disputed (Warren, 1994), it is crucial to note that it lacks sensitivity to the variability within the VI population noted above. Warren (1994) offers an alternative to the comparative approach; namely, the differential approach that seeks instead to explain differences within a population. Adopting this alternative approach to researching CYPVI in turn offers sensitivity to the developmental variation among the population and greater opportunity for understanding causal relationships in the development of CYPVI.

It is evident, then, that conducting VI research can be challenging. In its ability to offer sensitivity to these unique characteristics, adoption of a small scale,

qualitative approach to research appears to be most appropriate, valid and reliable and, therefore, offer a significant contribution to the research base.

2.11 Researching Social Inclusion

SOB is said to be influenced by several aspects of the school experience, including both academic and social factors (Anderman, 2003). Together with individual positions, sociological positions to SOB should also be taken into account (Graham & Slee, 2003). This involves reflecting on what we seek to include, thus, where SOB is concerned, consideration needs to be given to the question 'belonging to what?'

SOB therefore needs to be examined within a particular school context and community. As such, research regarding SOB has largely focused on the whole school level rather than specific populations. Indeed, Goodenow's (1993) research (see section 2.8.1) was heavily criticised for its lack of acknowledgement of the *school context* and its inevitable interaction with SOB.

The two key responsibilities for a researcher exploring issues of social inclusion, then, appear to be: reflection on the question 'belonging to what?' and acknowledgement of contextual influences. To ignore context would result in an unsatisfactory exploration of social inclusion. Thus, in the current study, due consideration was given to context in order that the social inclusion of CYPVI was fully explored. The decision to do so, however, was further influenced by the theoretical perspective described in the following section.

2.12 Ecological Perspective: Bronfenbrenner

Through my own experience as a person with a VI and as a TEP, I am conscious that CYP construct their view of self through their interactions with their ecological environment and the systems within it. This is in line with the theoretical underpinnings of the Professional Doctorate; that is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Eco-systemic Model - the most widely accepted ecological perspective in human development.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed a complex conceptualisation of child development in which the child was placed at the centre of an interconnected set of systems. The layers of systems (introduced in section 2.1.2), will now be defined in greater detail, from the proximal (microsystem) to the most distal (macrosystem) (Tudge, Gray & Hogan, 1997).

The microsystem refers to the setting in which a person develops and may include family, school and peer group. Consideration is given to the interpersonal relationships between the individual and those around them, the activities an individual either engages in or observes and the roles assumed by those partaking in the activities. Often these interpersonal relationships will occur with one set of people in one microsystem, however, linkages between microsystems may also be seen – between home and school, for example. It is such a relationship between microsystems that constitutes the mesosystem.

There too exist contexts with which a developing individual will never have any direct contact, that nevertheless have an indirect influence. These contexts form the exosystem and may, for example, include the parental workplace (which is

thought to have an influence on the activities and interpersonal relationships that the child experiences), where the promotion of independence in children may be most likely among parents who exercise self-direction in the workplace (Tudge et al., 1997). The macrosystem gives further consideration to the indirect influences upon a developing individual, at the broadest level. Macrosystem effects are those at the cultural level and refer to the influence of social class, race and ethnicity. It was in his later model, Bronfenbrenner (1988) made explicit the dimension of the chronosystem. The chronosystem represents the passage of time (chronos) and highlights that a child develops in an ever-changing set of contexts at every layer of the ecosystem (Tudge et al., 1997).

Critics of Bronfenbrenner have claimed that he focused too heavily on the contexts of development (Tudge et al., 1997). Such critique, however, appears to have overlooked Bronfenbrenner's explicit attempts to highlight the interaction between an individual and their environment.

In 1989, Bronfenbrenner essentially expanded upon Lewin's equation, that saw behaviour as a function of the interaction between a person and their environment (B = f [PE]), substituting development for behaviour. This substitution is of critical importance since, unlike Lewin who was concerned with an outcome at a given point in time, Bronfenbrenner (1989) acknowledged: "the set of processes through which properties of the person and the environment interact to produce constancy and change in the characteristics of the person over the life course" (p. 191). He later stated that "human beings are not only the partial products, but also the partial producers of their environment" (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p.6) and, to further stress its interactive nature, referred

to his model as a "bio-ecological paradigm of human development" (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994, p.568).

The ecological perspective described above takes full account of contextual influences upon the developing individual. It importantly highlights the interactive nature of development in which the developing individual exerts an influence on their environment as their environment exerts an influence on them.

2.13 A Framework for the Successful Social Inclusion of CYPVI

George and Duquette (2006) conducted a case study of the psychosocial development of a sixth grade boy (age 11) with low vision in Canada. Exploration of the factors that led to the boy's social success, together with related literature, culminated in George and Duquette offering of a framework for the successful social inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream educational settings (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A Framework for the Successful Inclusion of CYPVI
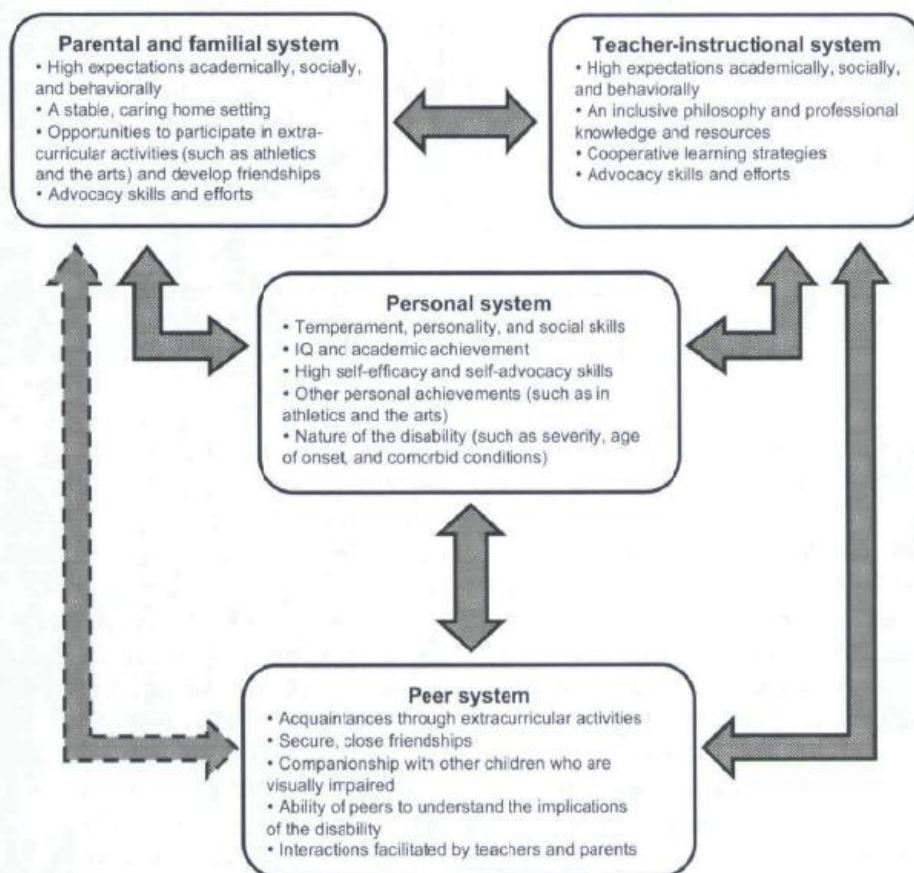
Note. Image source: George and Duquette (2006, p.159)

George and Duquette's (2006) framework captured the interaction between the VI 'self' and their environment and therefore focused on the social inclusion of a CYPVI from a constructivist perspective, as adopted within the current study. Given the relevance of their framework to the current study, it is drawn on throughout this chapter. A critique, however, is provided here to allow greater clarity for the reader.

Limitations to this case study are acknowledged; not least the generalisability of the experiences of one student, particularly given the heterogeneity of the VI population. Further, the data – observations, interviews with the young person,

his teacher and mother - was collected over a relatively short period of time. A greater time period may have created the opportunity to collect data from peers in addition to teachers, parents and the focus child. Conducted in Canada, it is important to note the differing legislative and inclusive practices, as compared to the UK. Another key fact to note is that, in Canada, sixth grade constitutes the final year of elementary, or primary, education. It is possible, therefore, that the relevance of the findings to a secondary context may be somewhat limited.

However, the utility of George and Duquette's (2006) framework for the current study lies in part in identifying what they did not do from an ecological perspective e.g. the views of QTVIs and Teaching Assistants (TAs) were not sought. Consequently, it influenced the methodology of the current study as much as offering a way of thinking about the issues to be investigated.

2.14 Key Perspectives in the Bronfenbrenner Model Used in the Current Study

Informed by the theoretical models discussed in sections 2.12 and 2.13, it was hypothesised that the 'self' emerges through interactions with others and so could impact upon perception of self. Taken together with my knowledge and experience as a TEP, persons of influence upon the CYPVI, in social and SOB terms, were identified and selective research conducted accordingly.

2.14.1 Peer relationships

According to George and Duquette (2006), a variety of factors within the peer system contribute to the successful social inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream educational settings; these will be highlighted, in turn, throughout the following

section. First is the ability of peers to understand the implications of disability for a CYPVI. Since demonstrations of understanding are likely implicated in establishing a feeling of social connectedness (Brutsaert & Van Houtte, 2004), it follows that a SOB would too be engendered where peer understanding is evident. It is implied, therefore, that in school communities in which a lack of understanding exists, successful social inclusion is rendered less likely. Further, in a complex secondary school environment, with multiple peer groups, the challenge for peers in understanding the implications of sight loss are exacerbated (Roe, 2008).

Second, negative peer attitudes pose a major barrier to the full social inclusion of young people with disabilities (Cook, Swain & French, 2001). Referring to both staff and student populations, Pivik, McCormas and La Flamme (2002) suggested there are two types of attitudinal barriers to social inclusion: unintentional and intentional. A lack of knowledge and understanding is implicated in the former; the latter refers to bullying. Importantly, reports of bullying for children with a VI have been found to be significantly more likely than for those without (Harris et al. 2012). However, while the large sample size (n = 14, 000) and triangulation of data (reports of bullying were provided by teachers, parents and the children themselves) serve as indicators of the trustworthiness of Harris et al.'s (2012) study, the generalisability of the findings to other age groups may be limited since all child participants were aged seven. Indeed, in a review of the literature for the NSPCC, it was reported that bullying (referred to here as victimisation) tends to decrease with age, yet peak during the transition from primary to secondary (James, 2010). While explicit reference

was not made to CYPVI, this is important since transition is known to be a challenging time for this population in particular (e.g. Stockley & Brooks, 1995).

Third, it has also been reported that young people in their lower secondary years are often increasingly self-conscious and tend to possess a heightened sensitivity to social comparison (Anderman, 2003). Consequently they have an elevated need for positive and supportive relationships with their peers (and non-parental adults) (Anderman, 2003); negative attitudes and behaviour towards young people with disabilities are instead likely to result in feelings of insignificance and worthlessness (Shapiro, 2000). Indeed, Beaty (1992) reported a propensity among CYPVI to feel inferior and inadequate. It is possible that development of such a thwarted self – perception becomes likely through social comparison with more able-bodied others (Festinger, 1954). This becomes increasingly relevant where CYPVI attend mainstream schools with their sighted peers.

Fourth, and more specifically, a qualitative study exploring the social experiences of CYPVI aged 15-23 (n = 19) who were either attending or had attended mainstream and/or specialist educational provision in Northern Ireland, found that those who had attended a mainstream provision expressed greater dislike for school, than those who had attended specialist provision, and reported feeling different from their peers (Gray, 2010). Such feelings of difference are experienced as uncomfortable by young people, resulting in a desire to diminish difference among peers, particularly in early adolescence (Waddell, 2005). It is important to note, however, that, at the time of data collection (focus groups and one-to-one interviews), some of the participants in

Gray's (2010) study were no longer in education and were, therefore, articulating their views retrospectively. That a positive or negative bias may have been introduced when recalling aspects of their school lives is therefore possible. In addition, Gray (2010, p. 76) did comment that the CYPVI tended to try and "better a bad story" in focus groups, whereas individual interviews seemed to encourage the recounting of more positive stories. Further, of the 19 participants, 12 had a co-morbid condition – a factor that was not taken into consideration and that is likely to have had a significant bearing on their experiences (Rahi et al., 2010). Finally, as the research was undertaken in Northern Ireland, contextual factors need to be taken into consideration. The rural locations of the schools led many participants to vocalise the difficulty of partaking in after school activities; schools in urban areas with a greater access to public transport may experience less difficulty in this regard.

Indeed, participants in Gray's (2010) study who had attended mainstream provision also reported that they felt somewhat isolated. Human (2010) also noted that, for CYPVI travelling a distance to attend schools with suitable resources, important opportunities for involvement in after-school activities may become limited and establishing social contact with others may therefore be difficult. Arguably then, a mainstream school could therefore further isolate children with VI from their peer group rather than facilitate social inclusion (Bailey, 2009). Support for this view comes from Hatlen (2004, p.676) who suggests that "most students who are blind or visually impaired in inclusive education settings are socially isolated." This is important since social isolation is a marker for later adjustment problems, whereas peer acceptance presents

important opportunities to develop social skills and promote inclusion within groups and schools (Dunn & McGuire, 1992, as cited in Bailey, 2009).

2.14.2 Friendships

Friendships are developmentally significant for all CYP and it is through friendship that CYP are equipped with emotional and cognitive resources and that social skills are developed and refined (Hartup, 1996). Belonging to a friendship group is particularly important in early adolescence, when the nature of group belonging is unstable and fluid (Waddell, 2005). Failure to make and sustain close relationships is suggested to be a risk factor in psychological adjustment (Hartup, 1992).

Secure, close friendships were also stated as being important for the successful inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream settings (George & Duquette, 2006). In seeking to examine the views and experiences of special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) regarding the inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream settings – both primary and secondary – Gray (2009) found that overall, SENCOs thought that CYPVI enjoyed social aspects of school, mixed well with other pupils and had best friends. A startling limitation of this research, however, is its failure to hear the views of the CYPVI regarding their experiences of attending within mainstream settings. Again, this research was undertaken in small schools/communities of Northern Ireland, rendering it difficult to generalise the results to pupils attending larger schools/communities in other national contexts.

Conversely, her later study reported that CYPVI who either had or were attending a mainstream provision had fewer friends than those who attended

specialist provision (Gray, 2010). It is of concern that further evidence suggests that a substantial number of CYPVI experience difficulties making friends (Gold, Shaw & Wolffe, 2010; Keil, 2001). A quantitative study aiming to compare the psycho-social well-being and social relationships of CYPVI (n = 115), young people with chronic disabilities (n = 44) and those with no disability (n = 607) in a mainstream school, found that CYPVI experienced the greatest difficulty with relationships and reported fewer friends and dating experiences than their sighted peers. Since all participants were aged 13-16, these findings again highlight the potentially troublesome period of adolescence. Importantly, the majority of CYPVI were able to articulate that they felt their VI was responsible for impacting on their social relationships (Huure & Aro, 2000).

With regard to friendships *out of school*, Harris et al. (2012) found that children with a VI were less likely than their sighted peers to spend leisure time with their friends. While it is noteworthy that this study involved only children aged seven, this finding has been replicated in a quantitative study exploring the quality of friendships among adolescents with a VI (Lifshitz, Hen & Weiss, 2007). When compared to their sighted peers, adolescents with a VI scored significantly lower for spending leisure time with their peers and confrontation and betrayal (Lifshitz et al., 2007). Although the latter finding can be critiqued on the grounds that CYPVI cannot confront people they can neither see nor know to be present, it was hypothesised that this was so because CYPVIs need to depend, explicitly or otherwise, on their peers for support (Lifshitz et al., 2007). It was further argued that an element of confrontation constitutes a healthy friendship. In order to "elucidate this population's concept of friendship", Lifshitz et al. (2007,

p.105) stated that further research was required. A qualitative approach may have allowed for further exploration of this sample's concept of friendship.

Although the findings reported above regarding CYPVI and friendship are somewhat ambiguous, overall the picture seems rather bleak. It is important to return at this point to George and Duquette's (2006) framework for successful inclusion of a CYPVI in mainstream educational settings. Here it was demonstrated that a VI is not necessarily a predictor of poor peer relationships. Analysis of 'success factors' revealed the importance of socialisation with both sighted and VI peers; in particular, the ability of other CYPVI to empathise was highlighted, with the 11 year old boy involved in their study commenting: *"where everyone knows what it is like to be visually impaired or blind"* (George & Duquette, 2006, p. 156). Hatlen (2004) too spoke of the best social experiences for CYPVI being the time they spend with other blind peers. Although Hatlen (2004) did not offer an explanation as to what might constitute 'best' social experiences, the principle of 'homophily' (Human, 2010) may be of some utility in doing so. In relation to the social inclusion of learners with disabilities, it is suggested that contact with similar others occurs more frequently than among dissimilar people. It is indicative of a possible protective mechanism whereby socialisation with peers who also have a disability is less likely to infringe on the development of positive self-perceptions.

Similar 'others' may be similar because they have common interests. However, a widening cultural gap is reported in the move from primary to secondary education, making it more difficult to access interests that can be shared (Dunn, 2004). With regard to CYPVI, aged 10 to 15 years, Dunn (2004) noted the

similarity in interests they held to their sighted peers. However, where computer games, for example, were favoured by sighted peers, they were not able to be accessed by those with VI.

2.14.3 Teachers and CYPVI

With regard to the adults interacting with CYPVI, it has been noted that the majority of CYPVI are educated in mainstream settings (Morris & Smith, 2008). Yet, the low incidence nature of the disability means that encounters that mainstream teachers have with learners with a VI are likely to be rare (RNIB, 2013). Mainstream teachers may lack an understanding of the impact of a VI. Indeed, research has identified this as one of the difficulties faced by CYPVI taught in mainstream settings (Franklin, Keil, Crofts & Cole-Hamilton, 2001). Roe (2008) further noted the specific challenges for a secondary school in which a greater teacher staff base increases the likelihood of individual teacher's limited understanding of the implications of visual loss as fewer teachers would be likely to teach particular children on a weekly basis.

Staff development and practical training are seen as essential in enabling an understanding among teachers (Ward, Center & Bocher, 1994, as cited in Brickell, 2003); VI-specific training to raise awareness of support for mobility and independence skills (also known as 'habilitation') are seen to be particularly important since opportunities to develop independence and self-mastery are subsequently enabled (Gray, 2008). However, mainstream teachers reportedly receive very little or no VI-specific training (RNIB, 2013) and thus have limited opportunity to develop understanding and/or strategies to teach CYPVI effectively (RNIB, 2013). This may be further confounded by the pressure

placed on schools in relation to academic attainment that may overshadow attempts to deepen understanding of CYPVIs needs.

The reported lack of teacher understanding, together with lack of VI-specific training is important, particularly in relation to social inclusion since teacher support is said to be vital to a SOB (Osterman, 2000). Williams and Downing (1998) also stated that teachers play a central role in helping pupils achieve a SOB. Here, interviews and focus groups were conducted to research the perceptions of SOB among a sample of pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and typically developing pupils. While such research is suggestive of the importance of promoting SOB among the teacher population it is important to note that it was conducted in America. Thus, the extent to which the results are generalisable to the UK warrants questioning, given differing legislative and inclusive practices. Further, whilst the studies' qualitative data analysis appeared rigorous, the CYPs needs are likely to be somewhat different to those of CYPVI.

It is the expectation, as outlined in the current SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), that all educational settings have a member of staff who acts as an Inclusion Manager or SENCO. They have responsibility for co-ordinating provision for CYP with SEN and ensuring that all practitioners within the setting also understand their responsibilities with regard to identifying and meeting their needs (DfE, 2014). Support should be planned and reviewed in collaboration with class or subject teachers, parents and, where appropriate, the CYP (DfE, 2014). The role of an Inclusion Manager/SENCO also includes liaising with

professionals external to the setting (DfE, 2014); with regard to CYPVI, this is likely to involve contact with QTVIs, Habilitation Workers and EPs.

QTVIs work for LA VI Services and are one of the key professionals working with CYPVI (RNIB, 2013). They are required to hold a specialist qualification in VI, in addition to qualified teacher status (RNIB, 2013). Importantly, awareness-raising among mainstream teachers of the effects of VI on learning is said to be key to inclusive provision across the UK (RNIB, 2013) and the QTVIs are well placed to execute such a task. Indeed, the Scottish Sensory Centre (2005) have stated that visiting teacher services for CYPVI in Scotland (QTVIs) play a pivotal role in raising awareness in schools about issues of self-esteem, identifying those at risk and promoting strategic intervention work in schools

2.14.4 Teaching Assistants and CYPVI

TAs are a further key professional group working with CYPVI (RNIB, 2013); many CYPVI will have a TA to provide in-class and curriculum support (RNIB, 2013). Though their role is important, it is of concern that research has reported a negative relationship between TA support and pupil progress (Blatchford et al., 2009 et seq). It too has been suggested that TAs may create physical or emotional barriers to a child's interactions with their peers (Conroy, 2007), thus posing a threat to social inclusion (RNIB, 2013). Indeed, Gray (2010) found that, for CYPVI, having a TA, together with their need for equipment to enable them to access learning, acted as a barrier to the formation of friendships. Further evidence indicates that TAs can best support CYPVI if they have an understanding of VI and how it affects the individual (Douglas et al., 2009); however, specialist VI training is often not a requirement for TAs since the

majority are employed by individual schools in the UK, rather than LA VI services (RNIB, 2013).

2.14.5 Habilitation Workers

As a further key professional working with CYPVI in mainstream schools, Habilitation Workers (HWs) are said to be crucial in enabling mobility and independence through high quality training and support (RNIB, 2013). Douglas et al. (2009) have reviewed a number of studies that have demonstrated the importance of mobility and independence education, reporting that CYPVI are subsequently enabled to participate safely and confidently in activities both in and out of school. In particular, habilitation interventions help CYPVI to form: mental maps of their surroundings and the wider world, body concepts and concepts of distance. Arguably, then, the HW role becomes increasingly important in a larger secondary school environment.

Miller, Wall and Garner (2011) have further suggested that habilitation interventions seek to promote the physical, social and emotional independence of CYPVI. Indeed, equipping CYPVI with self-advocacy skills has been reported to be a key part of the HW role (Hewett, Douglas & Keil, 2013). Development of a child's social and communication skills can also be seriously impeded as a result of missed opportunities for early and intensive health, education and habilitation support (Dale & Sonksen, 2002). The importance of early habilitation intervention with regard to the more physical areas of development has also been highlighted, particularly for CYPSVI or those who are blind (Douglas et al., 2009).

In order to contribute to the successful social inclusion of CYPVI, Hatlen (2004) noted the importance of carefully planned and considered orientation and mobility support. Habilitation services may be used to raise awareness of the needs of CYPVI in schools alongside QTVIs (Miller et al., 2011).

Yet, despite the development of national quality standards for habilitation (Miller et al., 2011) to ensure CYPVI achieve the greatest possible independence and maximise their educational outcomes and life chances (RNIB, 2013), there is some evidence to suggest that these key, long-term skills may be neglected in favour of the traditional curriculum (Douglas et al. 2009). Further, the RNIB (2013) have reported concerns regarding public sector cuts, suggesting that LA VI services have been reduced and thresholds for accessing support increased.

2.14.6 Family and CYPVI

In 1995, a groundbreaking document entitled 'The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities' outlined key educational goals for this population. Crucially, it advocated an expanded core curriculum that prioritised instructional areas, such as social skills, in order to meet the unique educational needs of CYPVI (Sacks & Wolffe, 2006); the pivotal role of CYPVIs family members in understanding the need for the acquisition and maintenance of social skills in the promotion of socially competent behaviour has also been highlighted (Sacks, 2006). Significant others may be required to mediate this aspect of development, requiring families and educators to work in tandem in this regard (Sacks, 2006).

2.14.7 Parents of CYPVI

Both parental and familial systems were addressed in George and Duquette's (2006) framework for successful inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream settings. High academic, social and behavioural expectations were said to be an important contributory factor (George & Duquette, 2006). However, as noted in section 2.6.1, parents of CYPVI may experience difficulty achieving the delicate balance between nurturing and 'letting go' and, in relation to adolescence in particular, CYPVI may experience greater difficulty in establishing independence from their parents (Wolffe, 2006). This is of particular importance since Lewis and Wolffe (2006) suggest that autonomy and a sense of personal agency are required in the formation of identity.

Overprotection has been identified as a distinct challenge for CYPVI wanting to get around independently (Hewett et al., 2013) and, according to Roe (1998, as cited in Roe, 2008), can pose a barrier to social inclusion. Roe (1998, as cited in Roe, 2008) also stated that opportunities for CYPVI to learn about themselves and others can, not only facilitate the development of social skills and social competency, but also promote social inclusion.

A further factor highlighted as contributing to the successful inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream settings was the provision of opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities and develop friendships (George & Duquette, 2006). Indeed, that CYPVI may display more dependence on their parents for transportation, has also been highlighted (Kroksmark & Nordell, 2001). As such, questions are raised regarding the provision of opportunities for CYPVI whose parents are less proactive in this regard.

It has been suggested that time of diagnosis is a critical period in which parents should receive professional advice in order to equip them with the knowledge to understand their child's VI, its implications for development and subsequent support needed to enable their child to reach their full potential (Cole-Hamilton, 1996).

2.14.8 VI 'Self' [2]

For CYPVI, there is a risk of an absence of vision becoming synonymous with a child's identity (Rodney, 2003). It is therefore important that CYPVI are viewed positively, in terms of their abilities rather than disabilities; Rodney (2003, p.20) corroborates this stating that it is important that "the child with a disability becomes something more than just the sum of underdeveloped functions and qualities." It is suggested that the development of 'people-first' language – such that 'a blind child' becomes 'a child with a VI' – serves to diminish negative stereotypical perceptions and recognise the person as a 'whole' of which their disability forms only one aspect (Swart, 2004, as cited in Human, 2010). This is particularly important as the attitudes of others (including parents, teachers, family and peers) towards an individual with a disability are said to become internalised and constitute self-concept (Shapiro, 2000). It has been suggested, however, that many CYPVI experience a sense of internal conflict as a consequence of neither having an identity as a blind person, nor being considered fully sighted (Sacks, 2006).

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[2] The term VI 'Self' is the author's own construction, developed as a result of a perceived gap in the literature whereby sufficient attention is not paid to a VI child's emerging sense of self. The use of the term VI 'Self' will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

One way of not belonging – and so resolving an identify-based conflict - is through a sense of being stigmatised as different. Scambler and Hopkins (1986, as cited in Hess, 2010) distinguish between Enacted and Felt Stigma, suggesting the latter to be of greater relevance given its reference to an individual's subjective evaluation of perceptions and feelings. Felt Stigma was found to be lower when both school climate and teacher attitudes were positive (Hess, 2010). It has been suggested that insecure individuals are more likely to be hyper-vigilant for signs of rejection, thus posing an obstacle to the formation and maintenance of friendships (Gere & McDonald, 2010). In relation to rejection, Murray, Derrick and Leder (2008, p. 429) have proposed a "risk regulation model" that suggests that, if rejection is more hurtful than acceptance is satisfying, individuals will prioritise self-protection over connectedness. Further, risk regulation becomes more likely in individuals with low self-esteem since rejection could be devastating to the individual's sense of self (Murray et al., 2008).

Contending with the limitations imposed by a VI is reported to strongly affect self-esteem development (Chen, 2002, as cited in Hess, 2010). Consideration of this issue is pertinent since self-esteem has a key role in determining life chances, academic success and mental and emotional health, as well as social inclusion (Bowen, 2010). Indeed, for individuals living with a VI, an impact upon emotional well-being may also be seen (Bergeron & Wanet-Defalque, 2013). The psychological adjustment to vision loss has been likened to the grief process (Bergeron & Wanet-Defalque, 2013) in which denial refers to a refusal to acknowledge the VI (Tuttle & Tuttle, 2004) and acceptance is defined as full acknowledgement of it and the subsequent acquisition of new behaviours

(Hicks, 1979 as cited in Bergeron & Wanet-Defalque, 2013). Individuals who have lived with a VI for more than two years manifest higher acceptance and lower denial than those with recent vision loss ($\leq$2 years) (Bergeron & Wanet-Defalque, 2013). It follows then that timely and appropriate emotional support is said to be needed for CYPVI at the point of diagnosis and when their eyesight starts a new period of deterioration (Stockley & Brooks, 1995). Yet, it is a concern that the literature associates denial with a lack of uptake of rehabilitation service (including psycho-social support as well as functional training) (De Boer et al., 2006; Pollard, Simpson, Lamoureux & Keeffe, 2003). In the context of social inclusion, it is also important to note that a sense of isolation is reported to impede on emotional well-being, together with later social adjustment (Dunn & McGuire, 1992, as cited in Bailey, 2009).

In their discussion regarding the psychological adjustment to vision loss, Bergeron and Wanet-Defalque (2013) note the importance of individual factors, such as resilience, in relation to coping strategies. Interestingly, Pagliano, Zambone and Kelley (2007) also note the numerous benefits of humour with regard to self-esteem and mental health (2007). It is, of course, crucial to recognise individual differences among CYPVI; to recognise that each child is different and how they behave, play and develop interactions with others is dependent on their own experiences, personality and understanding (Webster & Roe, 1998).

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) stressed the importance of hearing the views of CYP with SEN in order to develop a school listening culture. Where inclusion and school development are concerned, young people are considered

to be agents of change; they should engage in dialogue with peers and school staff alike, with the aim of creating a more democratic narrative (Fielding, 2006). Indeed, with regard to CYPVI, Kippax (1999) has stated that individuals with low vision should be an essential part of the decision-making process and an integral part of the low vision team.

2.15 Conclusion, Aim of the Current Research and Resulting Research Questions

Throughout this chapter, the need to research CYPVI in mainstream settings has been highlighted. Given the identified psycho-social impact of VI and the heightened feelings of disempowerment in adolescence, it seems particularly pertinent to focus on those of secondary age. Further, since social and emotional aspects of learning are said to be the key through which to unlock a child's learning potential and set a child on a trajectory for life, it is deemed extremely pertinent to explore the factors pertaining to social inclusion and emotional well-being.

The current study aimed to explore issues of social inclusion for CYPVI of secondary school age. In particular, it was the intention to unearth how CYPVI, their parents and the adults working with them, construe their social inclusion. This remains an un-researched area, thus it was hoped that the current study would provide new insights into the experiences of this population and inform future practice with regard to their social inclusion. The consideration given to the EP role in understanding and supporting CYPVI was privileged.

The resulting research questions (RQs) generated from the preceding literature review were as follows:

RQ1) How do CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings construe their experiences of social inclusion?

RQ2) How do adults/professionals working with CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings construe their social inclusion?

RQ3) How is the EP role implicated in facilitating the social inclusion of CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the research methodology is presented. Starting with a statement of the purpose of the study, the RQs are then re-stated and followed by the broader philosophical position underpinning methodological considerations. The rationale for the research design, the nature of the participants and data methods and collection are then discussed. Issues of trustworthiness and reflexivity, together with ethical considerations will then be stated, followed, finally, by a description of the mode of data analysis.

3.1 Purpose

Research can fulfil a variety of purposes: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and emancipatory (Robson, 2002). According to Robson (2002), exploratory studies enable researchers to deepen understanding, in a little understood area, as well as generate ideas and hypotheses for future research. The purpose of the current study was informed by the literature review which revealed a dearth of research exploring issues of social inclusion, in relation to CYPVI of secondary-school age. In particular, it sought to uncover how these young people, and the adults working with them, construe their social inclusion. It was hoped that the current study would provide new insights that could inform future practice regarding the social inclusion of CVPVI.

3.2 Research Questions

The three research questions are re-stated below:

RQ1) How do CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings construe their experiences of social inclusion?

RQ2) How do adults/professionals working with CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings construe their social inclusion?

RQ3) how is the EP role implicated in facilitating the social inclusion of CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings?

Having outlined the purpose of the current study and presented the research questions, the broader philosophical assumptions will now be addressed.

3.3 Ontology and Epistemology

As asserted by Creswell (2007, p.15), "making paradigms explicit" is a key responsibility of the researcher. Paradigms – also known as 'worldviews' (Creswell, 2009) or ontologies and epistemologies (Crotty, 1998) – acknowledge that there are different ways of 'knowing'. In order to establish one's own ontological and epistemological position, a researcher must engage with questions such as 'What can we know?' (ontology) and 'How can we know it?' (epistemology). The answers to these questions frame a researcher's view of what they are studying and help to shape the way in which their research is carried out.

3.3.1 Rationale behind adopted worldview

Within psychology, different ways of 'knowing' are noted, forming two main traditions: positivist and social constructivist. Robson (1997) states that these are two opposing worldviews.

While the post-positivism movement has challenged the notion of an absolute truth, it remains similar to traditional positivism in accepting that there is a deterministic relationship between cause and effect. Consequently, the accepted approach to post-positivist research is experimental in nature and typical of quantitative research. However, quantitative lines of enquiry were not deemed appropriate for the current study, owing to research issues related to the VI population (discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.10); an inability to fully acknowledge context and acceptance of the notion of one objective truth.

In contrast, social constructivists dismiss the idea that there is one objective truth or reality and, instead, argue that there are "no incontrovertible social truths" (Macready, 1997, p.131). Creswell (2009) suggests that individuals have their own version of reality and seek understanding of the world by constructing subjective meanings of their experiences.

Critically, social constructivists regard interactions with others – predominantly through the use of language – as fundamental in the formation of meaning and, therefore, developing an understanding of the world (Burr, 2003). Creswell (2009) further suggests that this occurs within a social and cultural context at a particular point in history. As such, contextual data collection is foregrounded

because, in subscribing to this worldview, researchers accept that we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture (Crotty, 1998).

The current study subscribes to a social-constructivist worldview, of which the philosophical approach at the heart of this Professional Doctorate (described in Chapter Two, section 2.1.2) is an integral part. Adoption of an eco-systemic approach encourages consideration of the interacting nature of systems, together with individual responses to the continual activity of these systems. As such it offers an 'environmental' lens to human experience that acknowledges both interactions and interactants.

3.3.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions of the current study

Ontologically, in the current study, it was expected that CYPVI, and the adults supporting them, would construe their social inclusion differently, as a result of their own subjective experience encapsulating their notion of reality (Willig, 2001). Epistemologically, it was accepted that since this approach sees the researcher being actively involved in the process of interpreting and imposing meaning on the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), my own personal experience of VI, as the researcher involved, would also inform the research. The implications of this are discussed in the following section.

3.3.3 My role within the research

Creswell (2007) stresses the importance of the researcher recognising the impact of their own belief systems about the world on the interpretation and presentation of the findings. I am therefore aware of the importance of defining my position as a researcher: I considered myself to be researching *with,* rather

than researching *on* the participants. It was hoped that, in explicitly foregrounding this for participants, increased levels of empathy between the CYPVI and myself would be encouraged, thus supporting development of a trusting environment. With regard to interpretation and analysis of data, it was also hoped that increased levels of empathy would result in a deeper engagement with the data set, resulting in a higher level, more interpretative analysis. In light of the above, the decision was made to write in the first person throughout, rather than presenting as a detached, objective, positivist researcher.

However, it was also acknowledged that, commonality between myself and the CYPVI aside, my ontological position adopted within this study means my construal of social inclusion may differ (e.g. as a result of differing ages and experiences). Indeed, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Eco-systemic Model acknowledges the dimension of time (chronos) and would consider having experiences at different times to others another variable. Thus, rigorous attempts to ensure reflexivity in exploring my role in relation to the data were made and are evident in the research design and its rationale.

3.4 Research Design

A qualitative, non-experimental research design, with two phases, was employed within the current study. Phase one (Ph1) involved the collection of data from the CYPVI (and so focused on RQ1) and phase two (Ph2) involved the collection of data from adult participants (and so focused on RQ2 and RQ3). The research design was informed by several factors. First, the social constructivist worldview adopted; second, the explorative purpose of the current

study. Third, a qualitative design – characterised by an ability to "embrace the idea of multiple realities" (Creswell, 2007, p.16) - was considered most appropriate for capturing the multiple construals of experiences of social inclusion being examined, because it is focused on individual meaning and aims to understand the world in which people live (Willig, 2001). Fourth, a qualitative researcher acts to reduce the distance between himself/herself and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). It was hoped that my personal experience of VI would do this and so permit exploration of new topics and the creation of new understandings through active engagement with the CYPVI (Camic, Rhodes & Yardley, 2003), as a VI 'peer'.

While consideration was given to a qualitative case study design - given the ability of such a design to take an in-depth look at the 'ecology' of cases (Mabry, 2008) – it was not employed within the current study. This was primarily because a case study design would have required a small number of *related* cases (Robson, 2002); the current study, however, involved a relatively large number of cases and an extensive number of variables, including gender, age and SVI classification, for example. Further, a case study design would not have allowed for analysis across the data set, but rather, within. This was important since it was the intention to enable exploration of themes rather than salient idiographic issues alone.

3.5 Participants

CYPVI, their parents and key professionals around them participated in the current study. The following sections outline the inclusion criteria used to recruit

both the CYPVI and respective adult participants. The rationale behind these decisions is also given.

3.5.1 Inclusion criteria: CYPVI

The criteria for inclusion of CYPVI within the study sample were individuals:

- With a diagnosis of a severe visual impairment (SVI) that is persistent and not acquired through injury; nor should their diagnosis be co-morbid with another condition. Although the age of onset was considered in the analysis and discussion of findings, it was not considered within the key criteria for inclusion because of the further restriction it would have placed on recruiting a working sample size;

- Who attended a secondary, mainstream school, with or without a VI unit.

For the purposes of this study the WHO's, clinically informed, definition - the most widely accepted – of SVI was used, as detailed in Chapter Two (section 2.4). However, while such classifications are useful, it is important to acknowledge that, functionally, they mask a plethora of eye conditions that affect people in many different ways (see Appendix 1) and for which diagnostic criteria are open to interpretation by different practitioners.

There were two reasons for selecting CYP with a SVI (CYPSVI), one theoretical, the other methodological. Theoretically, consideration was given to the relationship between severity of VI and degree of social inclusion since CYPSVI are reported to have particular difficulties in the area of social understanding and communication (Dale & Salt, 2007). Methodologically, consideration was again given to sample size. While inclusion of CYP with mild

and moderate VIs would have, arguably, enriched the data and enabled greater generalisability within given contexts, the qualitative research design required restrictions to be imposed upon the sample size in order that the data set remained manageable with a view to analysis.

For the purposes of this research, the context was taken to mean a mainstream school wherein young people aged 11 to 16 (and over) are educated. It excluded special schools and those outside LA control (private schools). However, secondary schools with resourced provision units or bases for pupils with a VI, where pupils are educated for the majority of their time in mainstream classes, were included.

Participants with co-morbid conditions, such as those with dual sensory impairments (e.g. vision and hearing) or complex needs, were excluded as it was felt that their views on and experience of social inclusion would be likely to reflect the impact of their additional needs, together with their VI, rather than their VI alone.

3.5.2 Inclusion criteria: adult participants

The criteria for inclusion of adult participants were that they were:

- Parents/guardians of the CYPSVI identified according to the criteria above;
- Inclusion Managers and/or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) within the school in which the CYPSVI attends;
- Teaching Assistants (TAs) working most closely with the CYPSVI;

- Qualified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (QTVIs) working with the CYPSVI;

- Habilitation Workers (HWs) working with the CYPSVI;

- Educational Psychologists (EPs) attached to the school in which the CYPSVI attends.

As the importance of context is emphasised by both the social constructivist worldview and eco-systemic perspective adopted within the current study, it was considered to be vital that the contexts of the CYPSVI were sufficiently explored. The adult participants listed above were chosen because of their key role in the lives of CYPVI (RNIB, 2013). They were therefore thought to be best placed to put forth their views regarding the CYPSVI's social inclusion. The adults involved were:

- Parents/guardians: Information was gathered from parents/guardians given their central role in a child's development.

- Inclusion Managers/SENCOs: These, rather than teachers, were chosen due to their unique position and SEN legal responsibilities within the school context. Although current legislation (DfE, 2014) expects a degree of awareness and expertise among practising Inclusion Managers/SENCOs, it was acknowledged that the expertise of those in the current study in the field of VI may be somewhat limited, or at least, variable among the sample.

- TAs: Working closely with the CYPSVI, TAs were thought to hold more detailed information regarding CYPSVI's daily school activities and

encounters. It was expected that TA's expertise might be variable, but informed by their experiences of supporting the CYPSVI in question.

- QTVIs and HWs: These were thought to be well placed to provide important information regarding the nature of the CYP's VI and its impact. While it was acknowledged that, as non-school based professionals, their interactions with the CYPSVI would likely be more infrequent, it was nevertheless anticipated that interesting insights into social inclusion issues would be offered since their roles extend both home and school contexts.

- EPs: These were thought to be well placed to offer their perspective on perceived barriers to and facilitators of social inclusion for the CYPSVI. However, the low incidence of VI in the school population (NHS, 2011) might too have affected exposure and contact.

3.5.3 Recruitment of CYPSVI

This study utilised purposive sampling techniques. QTVIs across London Boroughs were initially approached via e-mail. An outline of the research study was provided, together with the inclusion criteria for CYPVI (section 3.5.1) and the definition of SVI adopted within the current study[3]. QTVIs access information regarding the number and placement of CYPVI, within the London Borough in which they work, as part of their role. They were therefore asked to identify any potential participants (CYPSVI) and the school that they attended.

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[3] This was important since a common definition and criteria for designation of SVI across boroughs could not be assumed.

This approach was met with differing success. Some QTVIs were enthused and keen to facilitate the research process; others stated that they were unable to name schools as this would be considered a breach of confidentiality. Where such a response was received, the recruitment process was pursued no further. In those London Boroughs agreeing to participate, contact details of the QTVI linked to the named school were requested. Liaison with the linked QTVI led to further contact with the school and an invitation to participate.

As CYP with a particular SEN were the focus of this study, Inclusion Managers/SENCOs were invited to be the first point of contact within school settings. An information letter (see Appendix 6) was sent and their willingness to participate in the study was then ascertained. Permission from their Head Teacher, where needed, was also sought. An information letter with attached consent form (see Appendix 6) was then sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the CYPSVI. A deadline for the return of the consent form was given and the Inclusion Managers/SENCO's contacted me following their receipt. The process for recruiting CYPSVI is summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Summary of Recruitment Process: CYPVI
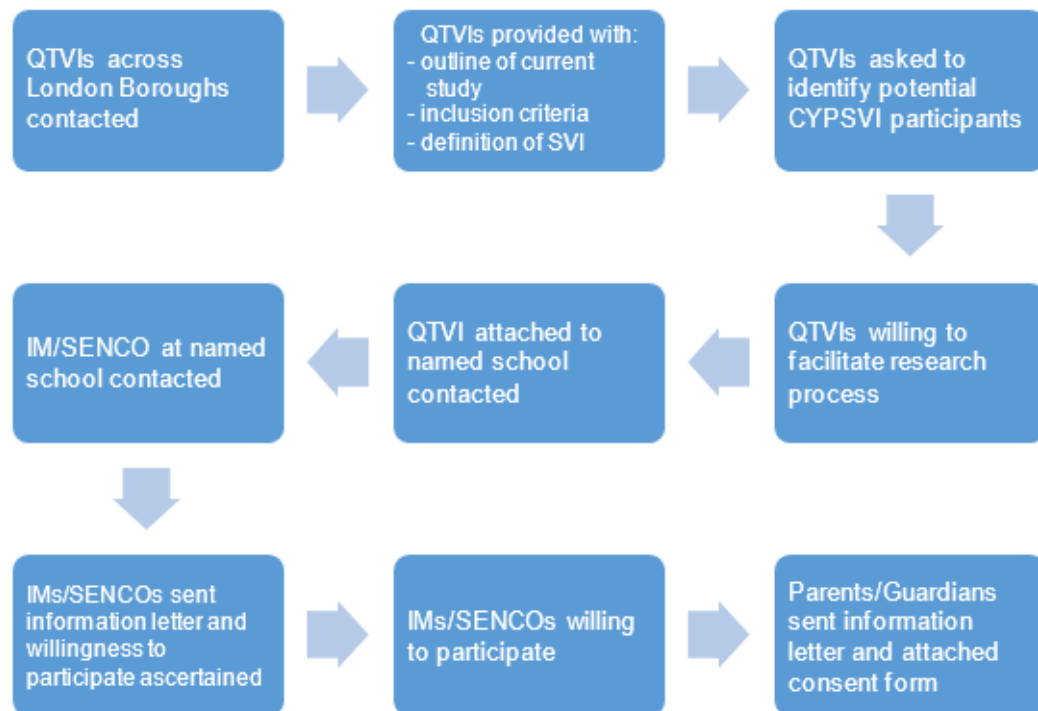
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

3.5.4 Participant characteristics: CYPSVI

A sample of 12 CYPSVI, aged between 12 and 16 years, were recruited as a result of the process described above. The sample consisted of six males and six females. They attended five schools across five (three inner, two outer) London Boroughs. Three schools had a VI base (School B, C and E); two did not (School A and D). One school (School C) was single sex (girls); four were mixed gender. Table 1 gives further details the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics: CYPSVI

School	Borough	CYPSVI						
		Code	Gender	Year	Ethnicity	SEN Code*	Nature of VI**	Age of Onset
A	1	YP1	M	7	White European	SA+	Nystagmus	Birth
		YP2	M	10	Black African	S	RP RCD	Birth
B	2	YP3	M	8	White British	S	Oculocutaneous albinism	Birth
		YP4	F	9	British Asian	S	RoP	Birth
C	3	YP5	F	9	Middle Eastern	S	Secondary cataracts Glaucoma	Not specified
		YP6	F	10	Middle Eastern	S	Bilateral Aphakia Glaucoma	Not specified
D	4	YP7	F	8	Arabic	SA+	Bilateral Aphakia Nystagmus Glaucoma	Birth
E	5	YP8	F	10	Bengali	S	Aniridia Nystagmus	Birth
		YP9	M	7	Bengali	S	Hypermetropia Micropthalmia	Birth
		YP10	F	7	Bengali	S	RCD	Diagnosis age 6
		YP11	M	10	Somali	S	Serious long-term eye infection Macular Oedema	Primary school age
		YP12	M	11	Bengali	S	RCD	Birth

Note. * SA+ = School Action Plus; S = Statemented. ** RP = Retinitis Pigmentosa; RCD = Rod-Cone Dystrophy; RoP = Retinopathy of Prematurity.

Issues of geographical variation were acknowledged. Conducting research across different contexts and climates of understanding can create a 'richer'

picture, but the "considerable variation" (RNIB, 2013) between LAs in terms of local support and provision of services need to be taken into account. Issues of variability in relation to age, ethnicity and VI were also acknowledged, yet thought to contribute to the acquisition of 'information-rich' material (Patton, 2002), providing a wider representation of CYPVI.

Codes were assigned to the CYPSVI to reflect participant type – such that young person became YP - and the order in which they were interviewed. The first CYPSVI to be interviewed was therefore assigned the code YP1, the second YP2 and so on.

3.5.5 Recruitment of adult participants

For every CYPSVI participating in the research study, six potential adult participants were identified:

- Parents/guardians;

- Inclusion Managers/SENCOs;

- TAs;

- QTVIs,

- HWs;

- EPs.

SENCO's and QTVI's provided me with direct e-mail addresses for all adult, professional participants. Subsequently, they received an e-mail outlining the current study and their willingness to participate was ascertained. Parents/guardians were also contacted by telephone and their willingness to participate ascertained.

3.5.6 Participant characteristics: adult participants

Table 2 reports on the characteristics of adult participants and their codes for the purposes of the study.

Codes were assigned to all adult participants to reflect their role and the associated CYPVI. Their role was abbreviated first:

- Inclusion Managers/SENCOs (became IM)

- QTVI (QT)

- TA (TA)

- Parent/Guardian (PG)

- Educational Psychologist (EP)

- Habilitation Worker (HW)

For IMs, QTVIs, EPs and HWs, the numbers that followed corresponded to the borough within which they worked (with the exception of QTVI6, as two QTVIs worked in School E). For TAs and parents/guardians, the number that followed corresponded to that assigned to the CYPSVI.

Table 2. Participant Characteristics: Adult Participants

School	Borough	Adult Participant	Assigned Code
A	1	Inclusion Manager/SENCO	IM1
		QTVI	QT1
		TA (YP1)	TA1
		TA (YP2)	TA2
		Parent/Guardian (YP1)	PG1
B	2	QTVI	QT2
		Educational Psychologist	EP2
		TA (YP3)	TA3
		TA (YP4)	TA4
		Parent/Guardian (YP3)	PG3
		Parent/Guardian (YP4)	PG4
C	3	QTVI	QT3
		Educational Psychologist	EP3
		Habilitation Worker	HW3
		Parent/Guardian (YP6)	PG6
D	4	Inclusion Manager/SENCO	IM4
		QTVI	QT4
		Educational Psychologist	EP4
		TA (YP7)	TA7
E	5	Inclusion Manager/SENCO	IM5
		QTVI (YP8,9,11,12)	QTVI5
		QTVI (YP10)	QTVI6
		Educational Psychologist	EP5
		Habilitation Worker	HW5
		TAs (YP8-12)	TA8-12
		Parent/Guardian (YP12)	PG12

Having identified and coded the participants in the current study, the following section will address the data collection process

3.6 Data Collection

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main study. The main study was split into two phases, as stated in section 3.4.

3.6.1 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted with two CYPSVI and respective adult participants, who had participated in a research project[4] of a similar nature during the first year of my Professional Doctorate training. Gudmungsdottir and Brock-Utne

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[4] This research project was concerned with eliciting the views of five secondary-aged CYPVI regarding their experiences and perceptions of social inclusion. The views of their respective Inclusion Managers were also sought. Although limited generalisability was acknowledged, owing to the small sample size, the findings largely indicated that being educated in a mainstream provision bears more advantages than pitfalls for CYPVI. Successful social inclusion was demonstrated and enabled by a positive school culture and support structures. Although this group of young people were found to be remarkably accepting and resilient with regard to their vision needs, adolescence appeared to present a particularly challenging time that caused resilience to waiver. Transition to secondary school, a heightened desire to 'blend in' and the potential for TA support to inhibit social inclusion were highlighted.

This research project was not considered to be a pilot study; a separate pilot study was undertaken as outlined in Chapter Three.

(2010) assert that a reflective pilot study has a meaningful influence on the focus, design, validity and reliability of research. The aim of the pilot study was:

- To inform development of the research instruments in order to ensure they enabled data to be gathered that was relevant to the research questions;
- To develop interview technique.

This process led to adaptations of both research instruments that will be detailed in the following, relevant, sections.

3.6.2 Ph1: process

Ph1 involved the collection of data from the CYPSVI and aimed to address RQ1. Given the qualitative design of the research study, and social constructivist perspective adopted within it, a semi-structured interview technique (Smith, 1995) was utilised. Semi-structured interviews are used widely in qualitative research and are believed to be particularly well suited to exploratory studies (Willig, 2001) as they offer the scope to empathise with a subject's "psychological and social worlds" (Smith & Osborn 2003, p. 57). Given the focus on personal constructs in the current study, this was of particular importance.

Smith (1995) suggests semi-structured interviews have the advantage that they:
- Facilitate rapport between the researcher and research participants;
- Allow flexibility in the coverage of topics of interest to participants;
- Allow researchers to explore areas they have not predicted in the development of the interview schedule;

- Produce rich data about participants' thoughts and beliefs about a particular topic (Robson, 2002; Smith, 1995).

Possible disadvantages include:

- The time-consuming nature of administering and transcribing (Smith & Osborn, 2003);

- A possible lack of reliability and difficulty in analysing the information elicited (Robson, 2002);

- The willingness or otherwise of vulnerable young people to disclose personal and sensitive information in an unfamiliar interview situation (Hill, 1997).

It was felt, however, that the advantages outweighed the drawbacks and semi-structured interviews were utilised as noted below.

The interview schedule, used with CYPSVI, (see Appendix 5) was constructed based on the research questions. It comprised five main questions, together with a number of probe questions in order to elicit detailed information and to encourage elaboration. The questions and prompts emerged from the relevant literature covered in Chapter Two and, thus, made it possible to introduce topics 'intentionally' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Topics covered included:

- use and impact of special equipment in class;

- role and impact of TAs;

- independence;

- hobbies and interests;

- friendships;

- psycho-social impact of VI.

The prompts were purposefully written as full questions to ensure consistency in delivery across participants. As a result of piloting, a substantial number of prompts were added to question 5 in order to ensure that information regarding the emotional impact of having a VI were elicited, together with the CYPSVIs views on friendship.

The interview schedule format supported the flexibility called for in semi-structured interviews (Smith, 1995), e.g. an 'extension' column to explore a novel topic raised by participants or to elaborate on question meaning was included. In addition, the 'comments' column enabled observations of the participant during the interview to be noted.

The interview schedule also contained an introductory and closing script. The scripts were in the form of short, concise statements, separated with the initial words emboldened. The purpose of this was threefold:

- To minimise the possibility of a 'scripted' interview threatening rapport;

- To acknowledge and give consideration to the language processing difficulties sometimes encountered by individuals with a VI (Calvert et al., 2004);

- To enable detailed notes to be taken with regard to the interview setting – of particular relevance given the worldview adopted within this study and the way in which context is privileged.

3.6.3 Ph1: procedure

Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1997, p.49) suggest that "conducting interviews is a complex, labour intensive and uncertain business, fraught with tricky issues". Indeed, semi-structured interviewing is said to:

- Require much skill on the part of the researcher;
- Active listening;
- Active questioning in an open-ended and non-leading manner;
- Require giving participants the time and space to think about their responses.

Participants were interviewed in their school – a familiar environment to facilitate their being at ease and the context about which they were being asked at the time of the interview. Participants were interviewed alone (to encourage openness and honesty in their views and perspectives) and to ensure their voices were foregrounded rather than someone speaking for them. The interviews ranged in length, from 30 minutes to one hour.

3.6.4 Ph2: process

Ph2 involved the collection of data from adult participants and aimed to address RQ2 and RQ3. For every CYPSVI participating in the research study, six potential adult participants were identified, as detailed in section 3.5.2. Qualitative surveys/questionnaires (as discussed by Braun & Clarke, 2013) were used for data collection.

The advantages of using qualitative surveys/questionnaires were thought to be that:

- They are a quick and inexpensive method through which to collect and access a wider range of views than is typical or practical using 'one-to-one' interactive qualitative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2013);

- They can "can generate great data" and "can be less daunting than doing interviews or focus groups" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 136)

- They are thought to be ideally suited to sensitive topics, due in part to the privacy they offer participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In particular, qualitative surveys are thought to align well with questions pertaining to experience, understandings and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2013);

- Survey data tends to preserve topic focus and, as all participants are presented with the same questions in the same way, also produces a greater standardisation of responses – useful for pattern-based analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Limitations to this data collection method, however, were acknowledged and related to:

- Flexibility: Unlike semi-structured interviews, qualitative surveys/questionnaires do not offer the opportunity to probe and extend participant responses (Frith & Gleeson, 2008); nor do they have the scope to clarify participant misunderstandings (Braun & Clarke, 2013);

- Response-rate: Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that, without physically handing surveys/questionnaires to participants and waiting to collect them, people may forget or become too busy, resulting in very few responses.

In designing the questionnaires then, consideration was given to the guidelines suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013). Of primary importance was that the questionnaires were as short as possible, in order to avoid 'question fatigue' and diminishing detail in answers. Consequently no questionnaire contained more than 13 questions. All questions were either open-ended or closed; leading and potentially judgmental questions were avoided. Although the questions themselves differed depending on the adult participant for whom it was intended, due consideration was given to the language used in all the questionnaires. Braun and Clarke (2013) state that good survey questions tend to be short, clear and unambiguous, whilst also using simple language. Finally, a statement of gratitude was provided and participants were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

As a result of piloting, a final question was added to the questionnaires to enable all adult participants to make any further comments that they deemed to be important - referred to by Braun and Clarke (2013) as a 'clean-up' question. The prompts included within the brackets purposefully guided the participants towards providing information regarding the CYPSVIs social inclusion (see Appendix 5). It was estimated that questionnaires would take approximately 20 minutes to complete (see Appendix 2 for an example of a completed questionnaire).

3.6.5 Ph2: procedure

As noted earlier (section 3.5.5), all schools, SENCOs and QTVIs provided me with direct e-mail addresses for all adult participants in order to explain the purpose of my contact, my role and the research. Willing participants were then

sent a consent form and questionnaire as an e-mail attachment (the rubric clearly stating they could return their completed questionnaire via e-mail or post, whichever they preferred).

Schools contacted the parents to check they were happy for their contact details to be shared with me. Parents were then contacted by telephone in order that I could introduce myself, explain the nature of the research and the purpose of contact. Parents of two CYPSVI did not have access to e-mail and were subsequently sent their questionnaires via post. A stamped, addressed envelope was provided for its return. Further, schools informed me that parents of four CYPSVI did not speak English. These questionnaires were translated into the required languages – Fulla and Bengali respectively - by an outer London Borough translation service.

Face-to-face contact had been made with a number of adult participants within their school setting, prior to the distribution of questionnaires. It is believed that this contact was helpful in increasing the response-rate.

Table 3 summarises the research methods employed in Ph1 and Ph2 of the research and highlights how the research instruments were deployed in order to address the research questions.

Table 3. Research Methods in Relation to Research Questions

RQ	Research Instruments	
	Phase One	Phase Two
RQ1	Semi-structured interviews	
RQ2		Qualitative surveys/questionnaires
RQ3		Qualitative surveys/questionnaires

3.7 Establishing Trustworthiness

Some researchers propose that reliability and validity are pertinent to qualitative inquiry (Morse, 1999); others reject such evaluative criteria (Wolcott, 1994). Although it is the subject of much debate, qualitative research is often evaluated by its 'trustworthiness' (Robson, 2011). This section highlights the main threats to establishing trustworthiness in the current study and the subsequent action taken.

Robson (2011) notes that there may be several threats to validity related to description, interpretation and theory. To counter such threats, the current study:

- Took great care to ensure that all interviews were fully transcribed from the audio recording, in order that data was accurate and complete (see Appendix 2 for example interview transcript) ;

- Conducted lengthy, detailed interviews to increase the likelihood of a valid interpretation of the CYPSVI's discourse (Grieg & Taylor, 1999);

- Made the purpose of the questionnaires clear to adult participants and, as such had high face validity (Robson, 2011);

- Triangulated perspectives (CYPSVI and adult participants), enabling potential commonalities in the interpretation of events to be established. According to Robson (2011), triangulation can help to counter all threats to validity.

In addition, reliability in qualitative research requires thorough, careful and honest execution of the research and a transparent audit trail (e.g. Robson, 2011). In the current study, reliability was increased by:

- Keeping full records of research activities;

- The standardisation of research instruments, thereby supporting the consistency of the data gathering process.

The production of a 'trustworthy' piece of research was further supported by adopting 'reflexive practices' throughout the research process. Creswell (2009) believes 'reflexivity' allows qualitative researchers to critique their role. In the current research this included:

- Recording of thoughts, feelings and reflections within the 'comments' section of the interview schedule at the time of the interview;

- Completion of a fieldwork diary, in which similar notes were made shortly after each interview;

- Engagement with the supervision process, in which supervisors encouraged critical thinking by adopting the position of a critical friend (Evans & Pearson, 1999).

While it is important to address issues of trustworthiness and reflexivity within the research process, ethical conduct is key.

3.8 Ethics

The current study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2010). Full ethical approval was gained from the Departmental Ethics Committee at the Department of Psychology and Human Development at the Institute of Education (see Appendix 7).

3.8.1 Ethical considerations

The BPS guidelines (2010, p.13) state that "researchers should endeavour to identify and assess all possible risks and develop protocols for risk management". The measures taken to minimise and manage risk in the current study are detailed below. Ethical considerations extended to both phases; particularly in Ph1 as it involved CYPSVI under the age of 16 and potentially explored issues that may be considered sensitive (BPS, 2010; Gray & Carville, 2008). They included: informed consent; fair access; right to withdraw; anonymity and confidentiality.

Ph1

- *Informed consent:* Following receipt of the information letter, providing an overview of the research aims and nature of the current study (see Appendix 6), IMs/SENCOs approached the identified CYPSVI in their setting to ascertain their willingness to participate.
- *Fair Access:* Where school informed me of the need to do so, information letters/ consent forms were enlarged to ensure fair access.
- *Right to withdraw:* All CYPSVI were informed of their right to withdraw at the end of their interview (closing script).

- *Anonymity:* All CYPSVI were assigned codes in order that they were not identifiable and transcription was conducted by the researcher.

- *Confidentiality:* It was explained to CYPSVI that all data (including audio data) would be held in the strictest confidence and in accordance with Data Protection Act regulations. Audio recordings were transferred to a password protected computer and later destroyed.

Ph2

- *Informed consent:* All adult participants were provided with an outline of the current study and the purpose of their requested involvement. Parents/guardians were contacted by telephone and gave oral consent. All other adult participants were contacted via e-mail and gave written consent.

- *Fair Access:* Where parents/guardians did not speak English, questionnaires were translated into their first language to ensure fair access.

- *Anonymity:* All adult participants were assigned codes in order that they were not identifiable.

- *Confidentiality:* All adult participants were informed, (via e-mail or telephone), that any information they were to provide within the questionnaire would be treated in the strictest confidence. Parents/guardians were reminded of this within the rubric on their questionnaire.

3.8.2 Anonymity: emerging issues

Given the low incidence nature of VI, some London Boroughs chose to opt out of this research as they felt that in providing the name of schools in which

young people with a VI attended, they would be in breach of the Data Protection Act.

3.8.3 Confidentiality: emerging issues

For each interview a private room was requested. This was agreed in all but one of the schools, in which YP7 was interviewed. In that instance the SENCO initially gave us use of the designated room in School D, however, shortly after the interview commenced, he interrupted the interview to request that we moved into the, more open, inclusion area attached to his office. The TAs working in that area were kindly asked to leave as I was concerned that their presence may influence the interview process. Another interview – with YP5 – was also interrupted and this was noted on the transcription.

3.9 Thematic Analysis

The data obtained was analysed using thematic analysis - an approach designed specifically for psychological application (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows for qualitative data to be encoded through a systematic process (Boyatzis, 1998) and permits an entire data set, or 'data corpus', to be analysed through emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analytic approach was chosen for a number of reasons. First, thematic analysis fits within a constructivist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and therefore aligns with the worldview adopted within this study. Second, it is capable of providing "a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Third, thematic analysis enables the exploration of themes

across a data set, whilst also allows for representation and consideration of salient idiographic issues (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the current study, constructionist thematic analysis – in which there is a focus on how topics are constructed and how accounts construct the world – was undertaken. The decision to utilise this variety of thematic analysis was informed by: (1) its alignment with the worldview adopted within this research, (2) the research questions. The participants' contexts and the contextual influences on their accounts were taken into consideration, in line with a 'contextualised' thematic analysis as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

3.9.1 Analytic process

In accordance with the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), six phases of analysis were followed:

- Familiarisation with data,

- Generation of initial codes,

- Searching for themes,

- Reviewing themes,

- Defining and naming themes,

- Producing the report.

Please see Appendix 3 for an example of a coded transcript; Appendix 4 provides for a more detailed account of the analytic process.

3.9.2 Inter-rater reliability

In order to ensure that the analysis makes sense to others and has developed in a way that reflects the data, Yardley (2008) recommends that coding should

be corroborated across two or more individuals. To this end, one coded transcript was shared with both supervisors and a colleague, also completing the Professional Doctorate and familiar with the process of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013). The criteria to explore were identified ahead of time and then reviewed. Although the raters generally made the same, or very similar, data selections, there was slight variation in the codes assigned to these selections. This finding is consistent with literature regarding thematic analysis which suggests that experimentation with how codes are labelled is often needed (Ezzy, 2002).

3.9.3 Development of conceptual analysis model

Following thematic analysis, further consideration of the data led to the development of a new conceptual analysis model (see Figure 4). This model recognises the diverse sources of influence upon the CYPSVI, but also sees the CYPSVI as active in the centre. It adopts an eco-systemic perspective reflective of Bronfenbrenner's Eco-Systemic Model (1979) and specifies potential key inputs and outputs to the child's understanding.

Figure 4. Conceptual Analysis Model: Research Findings
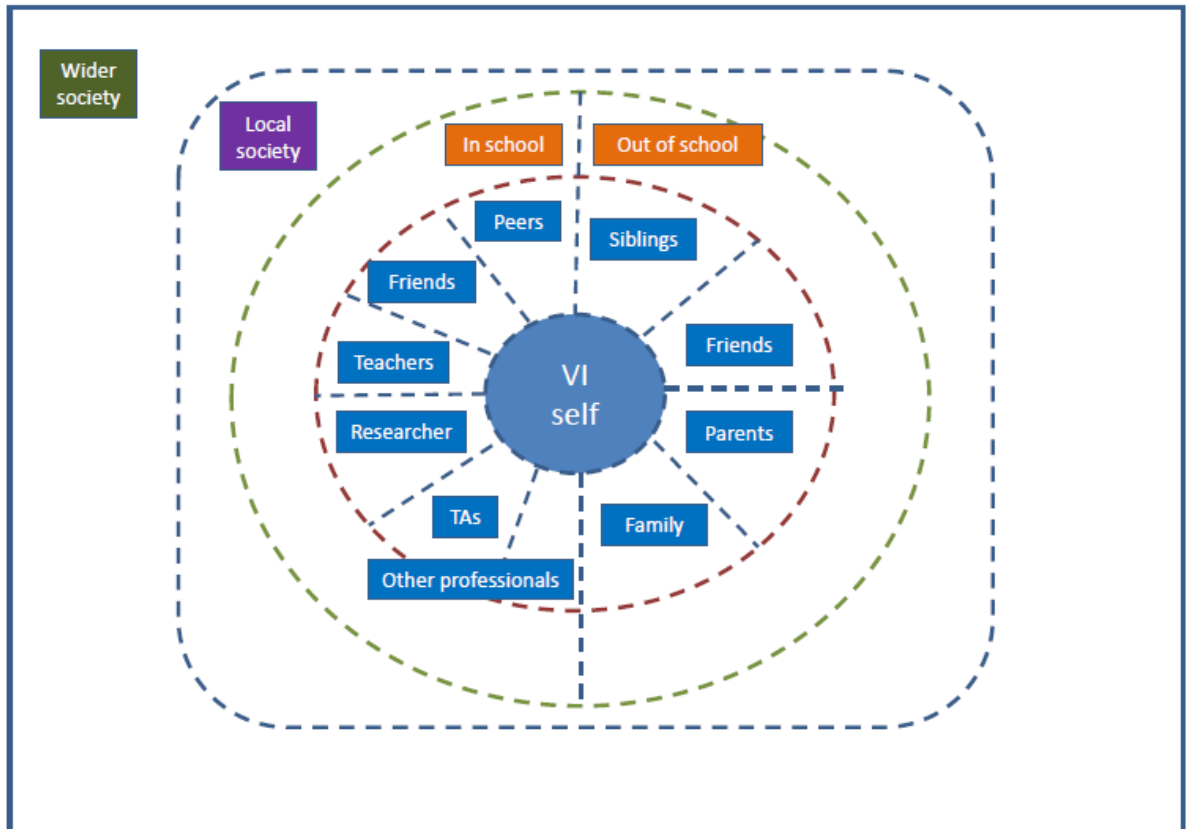
Note. Image source: developed by Lisa Plaskett.

Chapter Four: Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the current study. Qualitative data gathered from CYPSVI and adult participants is presented in order to address the three research questions.

4.0.1 Participant codes applied in the reporting of data

As described in Chapter Three (section 3.5), codes were assigned to all participants and will again be applied when presenting the data; for reference the codes are identified in Table 4.

Table 4. Participant Codes Applied in the Reporting of Data

	Participant						
	CYPSVI	QTVI	Inclusion Manager	Teaching Assistant	Habilitation Worker	Educational Psychologist	Parent / Guardian
Code	YP	QT	IM	TA	HW	EP	PG

Note. All codes will be followed by a number in order to identify individual participants. In the case of CYPSVI, their year group will also be included.

By including the CYPSVIs year group in their code, it is the intention to highlight age and stage of development in the reporting of the data; the impact of these factors upon the social inclusion of CYPSVI will therefore be more readily identifiable. In the presentation and discussion of themes, the number of participants who contributed to the development of that theme will be stated (e.g. 9/12 CYPSVI).

4.0.2 Identified superordinate themes and subordinate themes

This section presents the themes that arose from thematic analysis of the data. Figure 5 (presented below) provides a summary of the eight identified superordinate themes, with the twenty associated subordinate themes clustered underneath those headings. Themes will be referenced (and italicised) throughout the following chapter, in order to orientate the reader.

Figure 5. Summary of Identified Superordinate Themes and Subordinate Themes
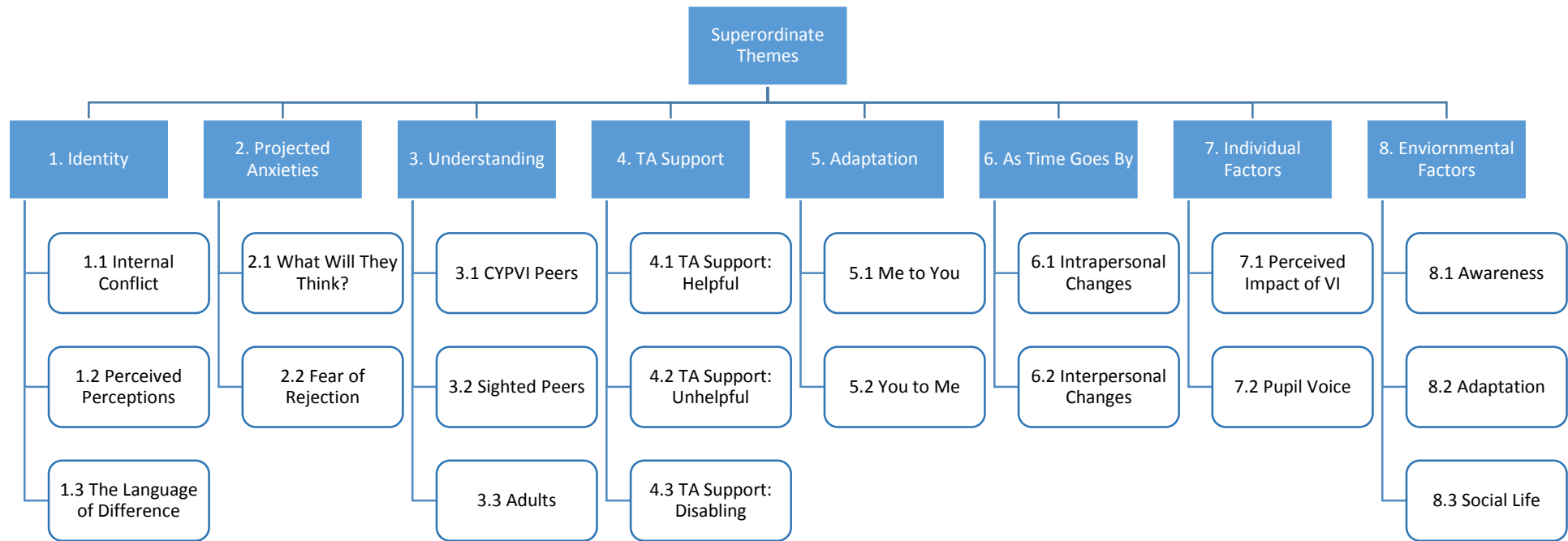
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.0.3 Underlying conceptual analysis model

While the themes that arose from thematic analysis of the data will be highlighted throughout this chapter, the conceptual analysis model - presented and explained at the end of Chapter Three – will be used as a framework to present the data. For the convenience of the reader it is reproduced below (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Conceptual Analysis Model: Research Findings
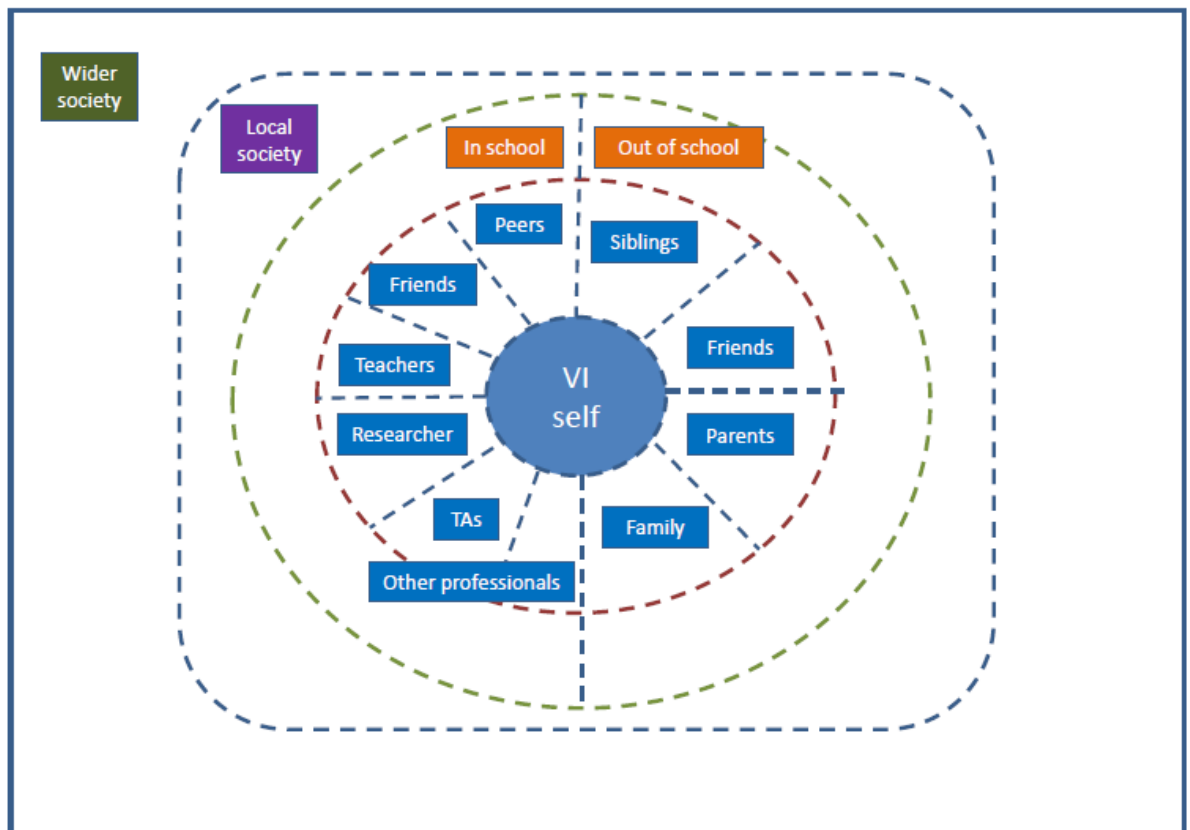
Note. Image source: developed by Lisa Plaskett.

Although bounded by local society, it could be argued that the CYPSVI experiences in and out of school influenced the construction of their understanding differently. The sources of influence in both environments will

therefore be reported in turn, before finally addressing the VI self as a source of influence on the world around them. The focus source of influence to be reported will be highlighted in red on the conceptual analysis model diagram.

Owing to the range and depth of data gathered, it has not been possible to present all quotes. Instead only indicative quotes, thought to exemplify points, are presented. Following the presentation of a theme, a brief summary will be provided to help signpost the reader. Each section will also conclude with a summary of key findings. Finally, a results chapter summary will be provided, highlighting key findings.

4.0.4 SVI classifications

The 12 CYPSVI in the current study were initially recruited on the basis that they met all the inclusion criteria, including that of having a SVI. In gathering information from QTVIs it seems that, for 3/12 CYPSVI, this initial classification may be subject to change. According to the QTVIs, the severity of VI for these participants would instead be described as 'moderate', 'moderate to severe' and 'not severe' respectively. This raises the broader issue of how VI is interpreted and the complexities around this in practice. Rather than excluding their data, the CYPSVI for whom this is relevant will be denoted throughout this chapter by an asterisk (*).

4.1 In School

Data from sources of influences upon the CYPSVI within the school context will be presented in the following section.

4.1.1 In school: Interactions with peers

This section explores the interactions between CYPSVI and their peers (see Figure 6). More specifically, it reports the social and linguistic interactions that participants identified. It should be noted that 'sighted peers' can be read for 'peers' throughout; where reference is made to peers with a VI, this will be explicitly stated.

Figure 6. Conceptual Analysis Model: Peers Focus
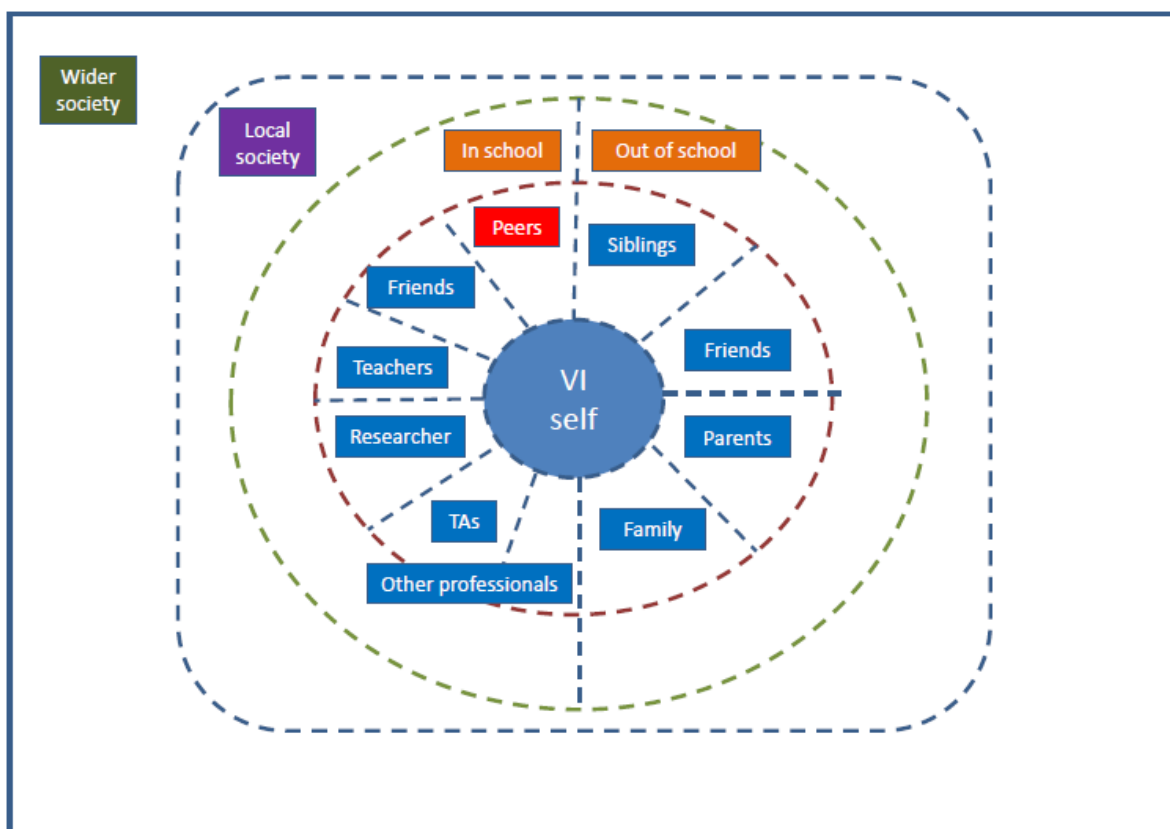
Note. Image source: developed by Lisa Plaskett.

4.1.1.1 Peers' understanding of CYPSVI

'*Understanding*' emerged as a key theme from the data. Peers' lack of understanding ('*Understanding: CYPVI Peers*') in relation to the CYPSVIs visual needs was first identified and is captured by the words of one CYPSVI:

> If you're in a crowd, it's like that's the loneliest place.
> (YP10-Yr7)

YP4-Yr9 highlighted an idea reported by 6/12 CYPSVI, that:

> It's mostly children who think that…who just don't really
> understand what it's like for us" (YP4-Yr9).

This broad lack of understanding was evidenced in relation to two key areas. A perceived lack of emotional understanding was reported by 6/12 CYPSVI:

> Maybe they do a bit, like how I feel, but I don't think
> ordinary people, like people in the year, would know how I
> feel. (YP8- Yr10)

A lack of understanding with regard to equipment use and support was also reported by 3/12 CYPSVI:

> Sometimes…like they don't speak to me, they speak to
> the person next to me asking if 'she' would want
> something…it's just like "I can hear you, I can take in what
> you're saying, so why aren't you speaking to me?" (YP4-
> Yr9)

Some CYPSVI (2/12) articulated a perceived difference in levels of understanding between primary and secondary peers. Whereas YP12-Yr11 felt that primary peers demonstrated greater understanding, YP9-Yr7 thought the opposite:

> They didn't really seem to care. They just…because it's
> primary, they don't really mind if you have a visual
> impairment. (YP12-Yr11)

> *Cos, even though people know in secondary, cos I think they've gone much more mature from primary, so they don't say anything. (YP9-Yr7)*

The statement by YP9-Yr7 above may indicate that his primary school experience was not wholly positive; this was later confirmed by information presented in the following section.

4.1.1.2 Peers and bullying of CYPSVI

In his interview, YP9-Yr7 made reference to incidents of bullying in primary school. He stated:

> *They used to be like "Go away from me" and then I used to have one or two people near me. (YP9-Yr7)*

No further reports of bullying in primary school were made by the CYPSVI; some CYPSVI (4/12), however, reported incidents of bullying in secondary school:

> *Like when I used to go past, they would call me zombies and stuff like that….And I would just walk and they would be like "Look, monster's coming" and all this. (YP8-Yr10)*

It is noteworthy that, at the time referred to by YP9-Yr7 above, his VI was cosmetically evident. At the time of the interview and throughout his secondary schooling to date, however, this was not the case. Of the four CYPSVI that reported incidents of bullying, all had a VI that was cosmetically evident or required equipment that acted as a clear signifier of their VI.

In order to cope with bullying from their peers, 3/12 CYPSVI appeared to have developed strategies. Their reports acknowledged a possible lack of intent:

> *If they sort of say something they didn't mean to (YP3-Yr8)*

together with a lack of understanding on the part of peers:

> *Yeah and I can't speak to them about it because they don't understand what they're doing. (YP4-Yr9)*

Further CYPSVI reports also suggested that time was an important factor with regard to the issue of understanding among their peers.

4.1.1.3 Influence of time on peer views of CYPSVI

Levels of understanding amongst their peers increased with time according to 5/12 CYPSVI and contributed to the development of the theme *'As Time Goes By'*. Talking about his experience in primary school, YP2-Yr10 explained:

> *It was like as if my eyesight problem didn't exist. Cos everyone just...there was no issues, everyone understood...it just came to a point where everything just 'flowed'....Like it just worked. Yeah, it didn't become an issue after a while. (YP2-Yr10)*

For YP4-Yr9, starting secondary school posed a problem in this regard:

> *So in secondary school it was harder because they weren't as used to me at all. (YP4-Yr9)*

Although 3/12 CYPSVI reported the particular interest that their peers had initially shown in their equipment:

> *If a new piece of equipment is introduced, they get really excited (YP4-Yr9)*

this too seemed to change with time. Some CYPSVI (2/12) stated that:

They got used to the equipments I had (YP5-Yr9).

Thus far this section has focused on the theme of understanding of a CYPSVIs needs by their peers. In particular, a perceived lack of understanding from the CYPSVI's peers has been highlighted, together with incidents of bullying. The impact of time upon peers' understanding was then considered. Next I report on how the CYPSVI thought they were perceived by their peers and the issue of difference. Adaptations made in school are then considered in relation to this.

4.1.1.4 Perceived perceptions

How CYPSVI thought their peers perceived them was reported by 3/12 CYPSVI and led to the emergence of the theme of *'Perceived Perceptions'*. A number of issues were identified. YP4–Yr9 reported that, because of her VI, others perceived her to be weak and lower in the social hierarchy:

You've just got to stand up for yourself because they think that we're weak because one of our senses is not exactly 'whole'. (YP4-Yr9)

Sometimes I get the feeling that they kind of look down at me, like I'm some kind of idiot…like I'm some kind of stupid person. (YP4-Yr9)

While, YP9-Yr7 said explicitly that he thought his sighted peers chose to distance themselves as a consequence of his difference:

I think they were thinking "cos he has one eye, let's not be near him". (YP9-Yr7)

Notably, through their interactions with peers, 5/12 CYPSVI had arguably developed a heightened sense of difference (and contributed to *'The Language of Difference'* theme):

> *Yeah, there's always difference…in everything like other people do and I do. (YP8-Yr10)*

Sighted peers were referred to as *"ordinary people" (YP8-Yr10)* and the suggestion was made that the CYPSVI themselves were not 'normal':

> *If I act just normal (YP9-Yr7).*

For 3/12 CYPSVI, the notion of perceived difference was actually stated and conveyed a sense of isolation:

> *I used to think I was the odd-one-out…I still think it now, like, how I'm always the odd-one-out and all that. (YP10-Yr7)*

Further CYPSVI (4/12) also reported a sense of injustice on their part:

> *It's so unfair that other people can see, they don't need teachers for seeing to do stuff. It's like me, I just feel so sad. It's so unfair. (YP10-Yr7)*

The statements above clearly report a perceived difference between the CYPSVI themselves and their peers. A desire to diminish this difference, however, was also reported.

4.1.1.5 CYPSVI: diminishing difference

The issue of diminishing difference emerged as part of the theme *'Adaptation'.* In their reports, 3/12 CYPSVI conveyed a desire to diminish difference (*'Adaptation: Me to You'*). YP11-Yr10 stated:

> *I really wanna get involved. I don't want to be treated separately from other children. (YP11-Yr10)*

6/12 CYPSVI spoke of helpful adaptations made in school '*Adaptation: You to Me*'):

> *I have everything I need, so I'm basically another classmate to them. (YP2-Yr10)*

YP4–Yr9 specifically noted the adaptations made by her sighted peers:

> *Some of the students' willingness to adapt for me is good…usually when I come into the playground, someone sees me and then they find someone who's a friend of mine. (YP4-Yr9)*

However, 5/12 CYPSVI stated a different view and reported times whereby adaptations made in school had, arguably, highlighted their difference:

> *And sometimes people used to cuss me, like say "Oh, why are you on the disabled bus?" and that. I used to get quite upset. (YP12-Yr11)*

CYPSVI reports therefore suggested that adaptations made in school can either help to diminish or indeed highlight difference.

4.1.1.6 Peer interactions: *summary of key findings*

- A lack of peer understanding – emotional and in relation to their equipment use and support – was reported by the CYPSVI;

- For some, this lack of understanding appeared to have escalated to bullying – in particular, for those whose VI was cosmetically evident or clearly signified by equipment;

- In order to cope with bullying from their peers, a possible lack of intent, or indeed, lack of understanding, was acknowledged by the CYPSVI;

- Evidence suggested that levels of peer understanding increased over time;

- Some CYPSVI thought that their peers perceived them as weaker or lower in the social hierarchy;

- A heightened sense of difference was also reported by the CYPSVI, together with the perception that they themselves are not 'normal'. For some this appeared to lead to a sense of isolation and/or injustice;

- A number of the CYPSVI spoke of their desire to diminish perceived difference; adaptations made in school were reported to be both helpful and unhelpful in this regard.

4.1.2 In school: Interactions with friends

This section explores the interactions between CYPSVI and their friends (see Figure 7) and includes both CYPSVI and adult reports. Whilst the CYPSVI reported who their friends were, together with factors considered important for friendship, adult perspectives are reported in relation to the CYPSVIs friendships, popularity and overall social inclusion.

Figure 7. Conceptual Analysis Model: Friends (In School) Focus
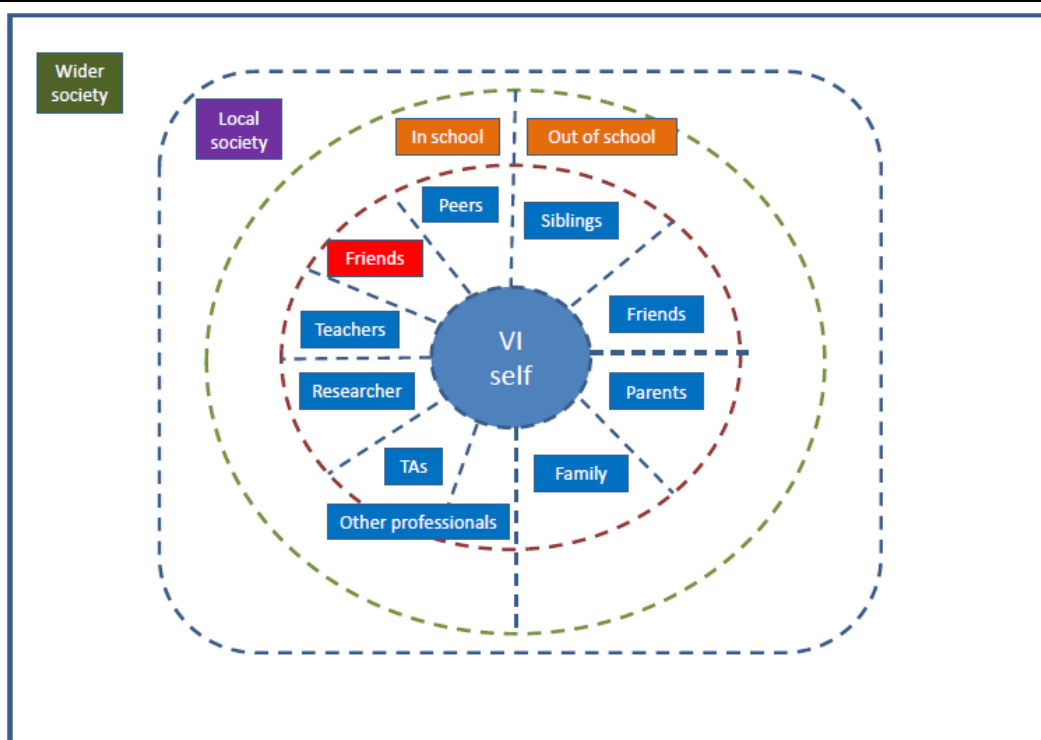
Note. Image source: developed by Lisa Plaskett.

4.1.2.1 Friends understanding of CYPSVI

As stated in section 4.1.1, '*Understanding*' (*'CYPVI Peers' and 'Sighted Peers'*) emerged as a key theme. Further, some CYPSVI reported a lack of understanding amongst peers in school; demonstrations of peer understanding, however, were reported by 4/12 CYPSVI:

> *I think everybody does cos they normally see my teachers*
>
> *saying "oh you need to hurry up" and all that innit. Yeah,*
>
> *so I think they know how it feels. (YP10–Yr7)*

For 3/12 CYPSVI it was their friends, rather than their peers, who demonstrated understanding:

> *I've always talked to my friends and they always kind of understand what I feel or what I want. (YP5-Yr 9*)*

In addition, 3/12 CYPSVI stated that understanding is important for friendship. When asked what, for him, counts as a good friend YP12-Yr11 simply said:

> *Someone who understands you (YP12-Yr11).*

For YP2-Yr10, understanding meant that his friends:

> *…don't care about the variables. Like they'll just treat me like someone else but then, when my eyesight plays in they just let me do what I do. (YP2-Yr10)*

He went on to explain:

> *My eyesight has become a thing we just laugh about (YP2-Yr10).*

Humour was also spoken about by YP4–Yr9 in relation to her friendships. She stated:

> *We regard my disability as…we don't really let it get in our way and it's kind of a humorous thing because we can laugh about it. (YP4-Yr9)*

The statements presented above raise the question of who the CYPSVI's friends are.

4.1.2.2 Friends with a VI

That they had friends with a VI was reported by 7/12 CYPSVI. According to his QTVI, YP1-Yr7 was:

Keen to meet up with other VI students in the school (QT1).

Reasons for this were articulated by 2/12 CYPSVI:

Because mainstream friends and sighted friends are really good things to have but it's also good to have friends who can relate to what you're saying more. (YP4-Yr 9)

Thus, some CYPSVI reported that friends with a VI were better able to understand them. However, it was evident that, among the CYPSVI themselves, their VI was seldom spoken about:

Well…we don't really talk about that part of it. (YP2-Yr10)

Rather, they stated a sense of an 'implicit' understanding ('*Understanding: CYPVI Peers*'):

Interviewer: *So what difference does it make for you, having friends who also have visual needs?*

Participant: *Um…that I can feel how they feel. And they feel the same way that I feel, but we don't really mind about that, we just get on…with life and stuff. (YP11-Yr10)*

In contrast, 2/12 CYPSVI communicated a desire for not having friends with a VI:

I'd rather have like 'normal' friends…cos I like to hang around with 'normal' people. (YP7-Yr8)

Again, the notion of 'normal' is explicitly referred to. While here the CYPSVI refer to *others* as 'normal' ('*Identity: The Language of Difference*'), YP8-Yr10 spoke about spending time with friends in:

> *a lunchtime and break time club where you can sit and play games (YP8-Yr10)*

that instead enabled her to report feeling 'normal' ('*Adaptation: You to Me*'):

> *There I can have my friends that, you know, that I can talk to and I'm more comfortable there and my break and lunchtimes go good. Like I don't feel like I'm visually impaired. I just feel like as they are…like normal. (YP8-Yr10)*

The statements above report on the interpersonal aspects of the notion of 'normal' and reveal how it was expressed in different ways and dimensions.

Thus far this section has focused on CYPSVI reports regarding interactions with their friends. Some CYPSVI reported having both sighted friends and friends with a VI and that understanding was an important factor in these friendships; others explicitly reported a desire to not have friends with a VI. Hereafter this section will focus on adult reports, exploring their perspectives regarding the CYPSVIs friendships, popularity and overall social inclusion.

4.1.2.3 Adults' views of CYPSVIs friendships

The responses from adult participants regarding the CYPSVIs friendships led to the emergence of the theme '*Social Life*'. Their reports were somewhat varied. Half (6/12) CYPSVI were reported to have a good group of friends and/or were considered to be popular:

> *He has a lot of friends. (TA2 re: YP2-Yr10)*
>
> *YP9 has so many friends and seems to be popular in class. (TA9 re: YP9-Yr7)*

For 3/12, however, the reports from adult participants differed:

> *YP6 has no 'real' friends apart from YP5. (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)*

The concept of social inclusion was addressed by 4/5 QTVI respondents. Indeed QTVI1 explicitly acknowledged that:

> *Often there can be issues of social inclusion to address (QT1)*

where CYPVI are concerned. However, 2/4 CYPSVI to which the QTVIs referred were reported to not have any difficulties with social inclusion. In contrast QTVI3 reported that:

> *YP6's vision has a huge impact on her social inclusion. (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)*

Thus a perceived relationship between an individual's VI and their social inclusion was stated and contributed to the emergence of a further theme: '*Perceived Impact of VI*'. A greater level of ambiguity regarding this relationship, however, was reported by 2/5 QTVIs. QTVI4 stated that, whilst YP7-Yr8:

> *is generally quite solitary,* her *VI does not appear to be impacting her social inclusion (QT4 re: YP7-Yr8).*

She added:

> *There are other factors impinging on this too (personality) – it's difficult to tease apart the two. (QT4 re: YP7-Yr8)*

Indeed individual differences were highlighted by six of the adult participants (TAs, QTVIs and HWs). For YP6-Yr10 in particular, broad cultural differences ('*Individual Factors: Perceived Impact of VI*') were considered to be a (further) barrier to social inclusion:

> *Efforts are made by her peers to include YP6 in their friendship circles but there is nothing they have in common to talk about, such as all the things that teenagers talk about – fashion, make-up, pop music, TV programmes and boys. (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)*

This raises the issue of common interests and their role in friendships.

4.1.2.4 Issues affecting friendships

Although the role of common interests ('*Environmental Factors: Social Life*') in friendships was not articulated by the CYPSVI, it was interesting to note that YP2-Yr10 – considered to be 'popular with the other students' *(QT1 re: YP2-Yr10)* – was reported to be able to access activities enjoyed by his sighted peers:

> *YP2's main interests revolve around athletics but enjoys all the usual things boys his age do. (TA2 re: YP2-Yr10)*

QTVI1 further stated that YP2-Yr10 is:

> *probably seen as quite cool, particularly around his athletic achievements (QT1 re: YP2-Yr10).*

He too acknowledged this:

> *I think cos I was quite sporty, I fitted in with quite a lot of people. (YP2-Yr10)*

In contrast, PG3 stated:

> *Ball sports are very difficult so participating in school team games doesn't happen. (PG3-of YP3-Yr8)*

YP3-Yr8 corroborated, further noting that difficulty accessing sports precluded the opportunity to access many school clubs:

> *Quite a lot of the clubs are sport related like rugby or football or something, so there are not really many that I can do myself. (YP3-Yr8)*

In relation to accessibility of school clubs, two further parents reported that:

> *There are not many activities that are suitable to him. (PG12-of YP12-Yr11)*

A further consideration regarding the accessibility of school clubs is the need, for some CYPSVI, to take special transport to and from school (arising under the theme of '*Adaptation: You to Me*'). While YP8-Yr10 reported on the flexibility of transport enabling participation in school clubs, YP5-Yr9* reported differently. When asked if she currently attends any school clubs, YP5-Yr9* stated:

> *No, not at the moment cos a lot of school clubs finish after school, so I have to take the minibus and stuff. (YP5-Yr9*)*

Evident then were several factors that may influence the accessibility of school clubs.

4.1.2.5 Interactions with friends: *summary of key findings*

This section has reported on the interactions between the CYPSVI and their friends and has included both CYPSVI and adult reports.

- According to CYPSVI reports, some friends demonstrated understanding and this was considered to be important for friendship;

- A number of the CYPSVI reported having friends with a VI and the notion of an 'implicit' understanding was revealed;

- In contrast, other CYPSVI reported a desire to not have friends with a VI, to whom they referred to as 'normal'

- According to the adults' reports, a greater number of the CYPSVI had good friends and/or were popular than those who did/were not;

- Whereas some adult participants perceived there to be a relationship between an individual's VI and social inclusion, others reported a greater level of ambiguity in this regard;

- For some CYPSVI, difficulty in accessing sporting activities, together with the need to use special transport, precluded opportunities to access school clubs.

4.1.3 In school: Interactions with teachers

This section explores the interactions between CYPSVI and teachers within school (see Figure 8). This is taken to include, not only subject and form teachers, but also Inclusion Managers and QTVIs as it was considered likely that CYPSVI would perceive them similarly. Again, both CYPSVI and adult reports are recorded.

Figure 8. Conceptual Analysis Model: Teacher Focus
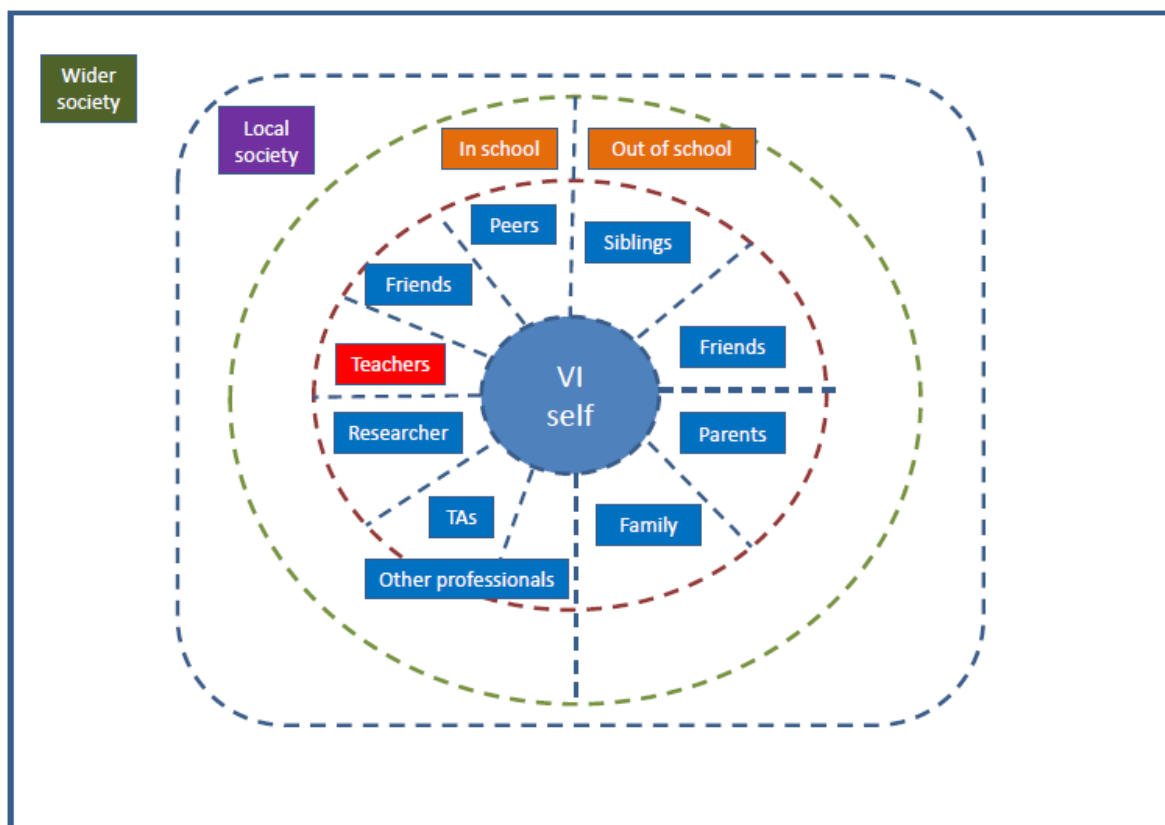
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.1.3.1 Teachers who do not understand

Reports of a lack of understanding from the CYPSVIs peers seemed to be replicated in relation to teachers in school ('*Understanding: Adults'*). Again, this reported lack of understanding focused broadly on emotional understanding and understanding with regard to equipment use and support. First, a lack of emotional understanding was reported by 5/12 CYPSVI:

> *Cos I didn't really feel like there was anyone there, like to actually understand. Like I could tell them and they would make it better but like - the emotional side of things – they didn't actually understand. (YP2-Yr10)*

Similarly 5/12 CYPSVI reported a lack of understanding with regard to equipment use and support:

A slant board, which I didn't need whatsoever! (YP1-Yr7*)

Seating position, and sitting at the front in particular, was also referred to by 3/12 CYPSVI. Although intended as an accessibility increasing adjustment ('*Adaptation: You to Me*'), it was evident that it was not always considered necessary by the CYPSVI:

I don't see the point of sitting at the front. Cos even if I did sit at the front, I'm not gonna be looking at the board, cos I've got my camera and I've got my helper to read it out. So they're just like "sit at the front"…"why do you want me to sit at the front?" (YP2-Yr10)

YP3-Yr8 also noted the negative connotations associated with sitting at the front, stating that:

It sort of seems like sitting at the front is a place for bad people (YP3-Yr8).

For YP8-Yr10, being made to sit at the front both removed a sense of agency and opportunities to sit with her friends, leading to a self-identified sense of loneliness:

Imagine like they say you can sit wherever you like….I would go and sit with my friends and they would move me saying that I can't see the board. So I would have to go and sit at the front with people I might not even know… everyone would have chats – group chats – and I would just be like lonely. (YP8-Yr10)

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Further, 2/12 CYPSVI indicated that their seating position was decided by their teachers and not by them (*'Individual Factors: Pupil Voice'*).

This section has highlighted the areas, reported by the CYPSVI, in which teachers were said to lack understanding. Issues relating to agency and social opportunities were also raised. Not all the CYPSVI, however, reported a lack of adult understanding.

4.1.3.2 Teachers who do understand

Demonstrations of teacher understanding (*'Understanding: Adults'*) were reported by 5/12 CYPSVI:

> *What's been the most help? Well I guess most teachers that teach the subjects, they do understand what I need and I usually tell them. (YP4-Yr9)*

For YP6-Yr10, having teachers with prior experience of working with CYPSVI was stated as being helpful:

> *The older years did kind of…like cos they already had the girl going through…and the teachers already knew what to do. (YP6-Yr10)*

YP8-Yr10 suggested that, where there is teacher understanding, it may preclude the need for TA support:

> *For example, I know a teacher that is aware of my condition and she knows how I feel, then maybe I won't need a TA there. (YP8-Yr10)*

However, for YP9-Yr7 it was his QTVI that seemed to demonstrate a greater understanding:

> *Like QT6 helped me a lot with…he knows that I should sit somewhere near the board, but he wouldn't make me sit at the exact front. He would at least make me sit where my friends are, so that I don't have to sit at the front all the time. (YP9-Yr7)*

Arguably, QTVI6 recognised the importance, for CYPSVI, of sitting with their friends.

4.1.3.3 QTVI understanding of CYPSVI needs

Through their own reports, QTVI understanding of CYPSVI needs was further demonstrated (*'Environmental Factors: Awareness'*). QTVI1 stated:

> *At this age, an observation can cause embarrassment and reinforce feelings of 'difference'. (QT1)*

Referring to YP2-Yr10 and laptop use, QTVI1 also reported:

> *Initially he felt embarrassed. (He felt conspicuous). (QT1 re: YP2-Yr10)*

Here, QTVI1 indicated that she understood the desire of some CYPSVI to neither highlight nor exacerbate feelings of difference - important given the reported QTVI role in adaptation:

> *I monitor vision and advise on adaptations and curriculum/work access (QT3).*

Indeed, 'Adaptation' ('*Environmental Factors: Adaptation*') again emerged as a theme from analysis of adult data. According to QTVI5, these adaptations become necessary when a CYP was defined as having a SVI:

> *In more general terms I would say severe means when the acuity or field is reduced to an extent that the person can no longer function in their day to day life, work or education without adaptations and modifications being made. (QT5)*

As part of their role, 2/5 QTVIs made reference to provision of opportunities for the CYPSVI. These included opportunities to meet other CYPVI together with extra-curricular opportunities:

> *So I discussed with a TA and she arranged for them all to meet over drink and biscuits. They all appeared to get quite a lot out of it and want to meet up regularly. (QT1)*
> *Any opportunities outside school I encourage the girls to join or access. (QT3)*

One QTVI also reported her role to be one of raising awareness among teachers and TAs ('*Environmental Factors: Awareness*'). For example, she stated that she had:

> *Raised awareness with teachers of the need to ensure that work is enlarged and e-mailed to YP1 prior to lessons. (QT1 re: YP1-Yr7*)*

It is noteworthy that all QTVIs reported undertaking extensive training to supplement their work with CYPVI, some of which was secondary age specific. QTVI3 further reported participating in a:

Braille course, specifically for teenagers (*sic*) (QT3).

Indeed, while three Inclusion Managers reported receiving *no* VI specific training, four reported receiving *indirect* training via the QTVI attached to their school.

4.1.3.4 Interactions with teachers: *summary of key findings*

This section has explored the interactions between CYPSVI and teachers. As with peers in section 4.1.1 and friends in section 4.1.2, understanding again emerged as a key theme:

- A lack of teacher understanding – emotional and in relation to equipment use and support – was reported;

- Further CYPSVI reports also raised the issue of a lack of teacher understanding in relation to seating position - in particular, sitting at the front. Here, issues relating to agency and social opportunities were reported;

- Demonstrations of teacher understanding were also reported. Prior experience of working with CYPSVI was thought to be helpful in this regard and preclude the need for TA support;

- Through CYPSVI and self-reports, QTVIs demonstrated the greatest levels of understanding. While their role in adaptation was recognised, so too was the CYPSVIs desire to diminish difference;

- The extensive VI-specific training undertaken by the QTVIs was noted; Inclusion Managers, on the other hand, had undertaken limited or no VI

specific training and instead reported receiving indirect training via the QTVI attached to their school.

4.1.4 In School: CYPSVI and a researcher with VI

Here, the interactions between the CYPSVI and myself – a researcher with VI - are reported (see Figure 9). Given that the CYPSVIs only experience of this interaction was within the school context, I am considered to be an 'In School', rather than 'Out of School', source of influence.

Figure 9. Conceptual Analysis Model: Researcher Focus

Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

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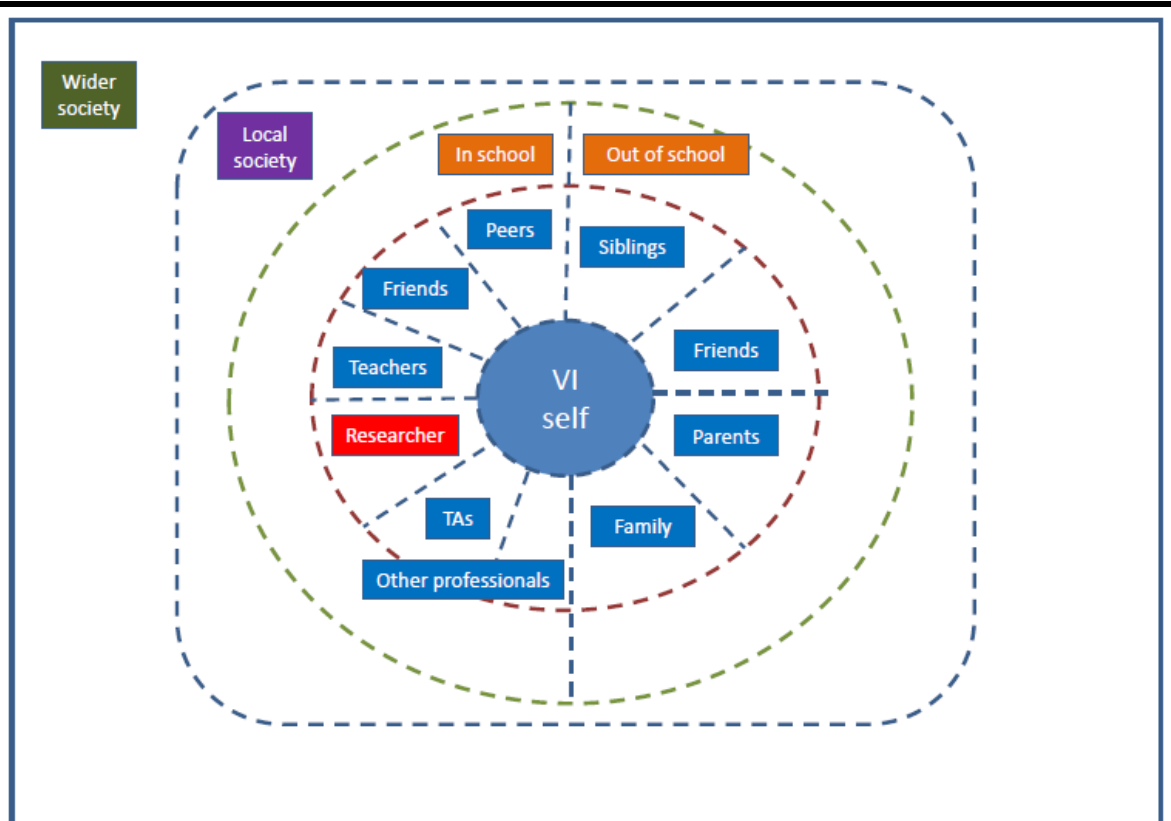
4.1.4.1 Impact of VI disclosure

Disclosure of my VI at the beginning of the interviews appeared important for the CYPSVI. Notes were made within the field work diary of any reactions to this disclosure – a change in body language (e.g. smiling, leaning forward) was observed for 9/12 CYPSVI. Some CYPSVI (2/12) were able to clearly articulate their thoughts in this regard:

> Participant: *Yeah, it's good that…for someone to really write about it, but not just an outsider, just someone who can relate to what we're saying and, yeah, that kind of thing.*
>
> Interviewer: *Do you feel like that makes a difference – that I have visual needs as well?*
>
> Participant: *Yeah, cos you know what you're talking about basically. (YP4-Yr9)*

Later in her interview, YP10-Yr7 also commented:

> *Yeah, yeah, that's right. You really understand me. (YP10-Yr7)*

The above statements again introduce the idea of a deeper or 'implicit' understanding ('*Understanding: Adults*'), on the basis of both researcher and participant having a VI.

4.1.4.2 CYPSVI and a researcher with VI: *summary of key findings*

Through both observations and CYPSVI reports:

- Disclosure of my VI was seen to be important for some of the CYPSVI;

- As with CYPVI peers, the idea of a deeper or 'implicit' understanding was reported.

4.1.5 In School: CYPSVI and Teaching Assistants

In their interviews CYPSVI reported extensively on TAs, expressing a variety of views around TA involvement. This section therefore explores the interactions between CYPSVI and TAs (see Figure 10) and addresses both helpful and unhelpful aspects of TA support. Both CYPSVI and TA reports are included.

Figure 10. Conceptual Analysis Model: TA Focus
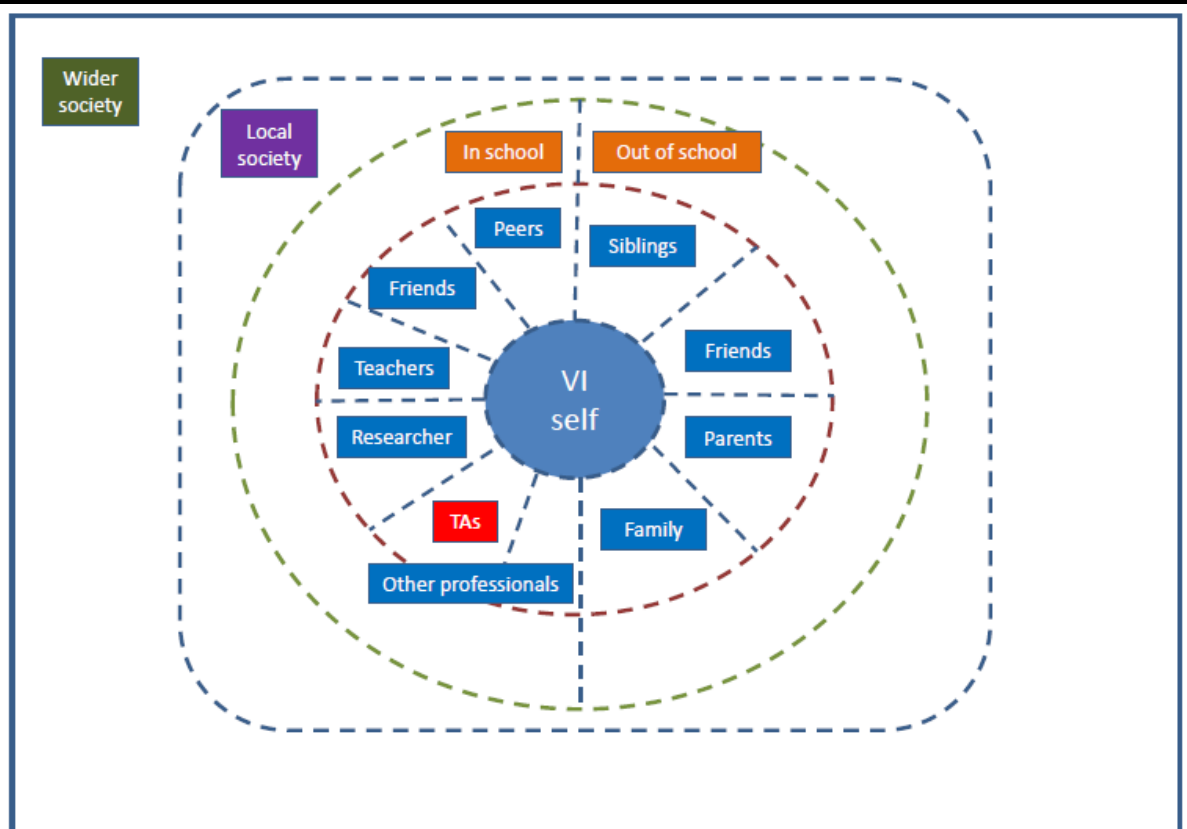
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.1.5.1 Positive aspects of TA involvement

Some positive recognition of TA support was expressed by 9/12 CYPSVI and, as such, '*TA Support: Helpful'* emerged as a theme. Some CYPSVI (2/12) commented more generally regarding the helpfulness of the TAs:

> *I like it cos they help me a lot and…yeah…they're just*
>
> *really helpful and I'm lucky to have them. (YP12-Yr11)*

However, appreciation for TA support seemed largely to focus on the facilitation of academic progress. Comments were made in this regard by 4/12 CYPSVI:

> [Without TA support] *I think I'd be a bit behind. Yep. (YP1-*
>
> *Yr7*)*

The emotional support and feeling of security provided by TAs was also spoken about by 4/12 CYPSVI:

> *Like sometimes when I feel sad…they would be there,*
>
> *they would support me and that helps a lot. (YP8-Yr10)*

One TA too recognised that:

> *the security of a safe adult* (TA3)

might be found helpful by CYPSVI. It is this, however, that YP2-Yr10 has, arguably, become dependent on:

> *I think it's a fear of losing that comfort in the classroom –*
>
> *of just sitting next to her basically. (YP2-Yr10)*

A further TA explained that she provides (*'Environmental Factors: Adaptation'*):

> *support adapting materials for YP8's needs' (TA8 re: YP8-*
>
> *Yr10),*

an aspect of the TA role that YP4-Yr9 articulated her appreciation for (*'Adaptation: You to Me'*):

And people are finding new ways of getting our resources

together and just making it more adaptable for us, so we

can just do so many new things. (YP4-Yr9)

However, 2/12 CYPSVI reported occasions wherein the adaptations made by TAs – presumably intended to be helpful - were not seen as such. Both focused on the enlargement of worksheets:

Sometimes I get stuff printed bigger. Like, on a computer.

They have all this space round, but they only put it in a

tincy little box and I'm just thinking "what's the point in

that?!" (YP1-Yr7*)

This section has highlighted a number of points regarding the helpfulness of TAs. What follows reports further negative reactions.

4.1.5.2 Negative aspects of TA support

'*TA Support: Unhelpful*' also emerged as a theme from the data. Firstly, 4/12 CYPSVI commented on the number of TAs that they have to support them:

I got like a million! (YP6-Yr10).

For YP2-Yr10 a sense of anonymity amongst the TAs was indicated:

I feel like they're all the same person. (YP2-Yr10)

It was evident that some CYPSVI (7/12) were not wholly positive about the support provided by their TAs. A sense of feeling watched was reported by 2/12 CYPSVI:

Occasionally they could be sort of…annoying. It's like

having a teacher sort of constantly looking at you. (YP3-

Yr8)

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For 3/12 CYPSVI, TA presence during group work was also described as being undesirable. When asked at what times he does not want help, YP2-Yr10 said:

> *If it's like an interacting activity or something, cos I like to*
>
> *be independent and just work with my peers. (YP2-Yr10)*

Some of the CYPSVI were also aware of the impact that TAs sitting next to them in class had upon their interactions with peers. This idea was clearly expressed by 2/12 CYPSVI:

> *Like, I mean, it's fine and everything but the TAs sit next to*
>
> *me and it's harder to talk to my peers I guess. (YP4-Yr9)*

When the TAs were asked if there were ever any times when they felt their help was not needed, 3/10 TAs referenced group or paired work. Both YP2-Yr10 and YP3-Yr8, however, indicated that the intended non-involvement of these TAs did not happen in practice. Further, in their comments, none of the adult participants, including TAs, demonstrated an awareness of the potential impact of sitting next to the CYPSVI in class ('*Environmental Factors: Awareness*'). One view, however, was shared by some TAs and CYPSVIs; the view that TA support during break or lunch was neither helpful nor necessary ('*Environmental Factors: Awareness*'). This was clearly stated by 4/12 CYPSVI who spoke of the perceived impact of TA presence at these times. Their ideas focused largely on the impact upon their popularity:

> *Well that would have been much worse because if I had a*
>
> *teacher with me at lunchtime then I wouldn't have been*
>
> *very popular. (YP3-Yr8)*

YP11-Yr10 was the only CYPSVI to talk about school trips and TA support. He explained:

> *I don't feel I need help, but I'm given help (YP11-Yr10),*

before going on to say:

> *I just wanna be independent, that's all. Like the other kids and I just try and avoid the TAs when they come to me and stuff. (YP11-Yr10)*

Here, YP11-Yr10 appeared to be linking TA support to a loss of independence. The following section explores this idea further.

4.1.5.3 Disabling aspects of TA support

'*TA Support: Disabling*' was a further theme to emerge from the data. Indeed 4/12 CYPSVI appeared to have made a link between TA support and a loss of independence, yet was reported most directly by YP2-Yr10 at a number of points throughout his interview:

> *I think that's kind of changed my education in a way, cos I've relied more on my helpers now. I think that's kind of 'strained' my learning a bit....I was more independent in primary school, I felt like I could...think for myself in a way! (YP2-Yr10)*
>
> *I feel like the more visual help I get, the less I lose like my original way of doing things. (YP2-Yr10)*
>
> *They basically like started thinking for me, rather than seeing for me. (YP2-Yr10)*

Together with a loss of independence, YP2-Yr10 reported what was arguably a sense of learned helplessness:

It's like I've gotten into it too much and if I was to break out of it I'd struggle, but if I said I don't want help anymore, I'd just be sitting there like trying really hard to focus because I've had that dependence on that person. (YP2-Yr10)

It doesn't work but it's too late. It's like I've lost my sense of ability to think for myself in class, but it's too late to pull out of it. (YP2-Yr10)

4.1.5.4 CYPSVI and TAs: *summary of key findings*

This section has reported on the helpful, unhelpful and disabling aspects of TA support:

- The CYPSVI spoke of the helpfulness of TAs, specifically with regard to facilitation of academic progress and the provision of emotional support and a feeling of security;

- Although the TA role in adapting resources was, at times, thought to be helpful, other CYPSVI reports suggested that this was not always the case;

- The number of TAs they have to support them was reported by several of the CYPSVI and an anonymity amongst the TAs was indicated;

- Further unhelpful aspects of TA support reported by the CYPSVI were:

  - a sense of feeling watched

  - the undesirability of TA presence during group work

  - the impact that TAs sitting next to them in class had upon their interactions with peers;

- While some TAs reportedly recognised that their support was not needed during group work, CYPSVI reports indicated that this intended non-involvement did not always happen in practice;

- TA reports demonstrated no awareness of the potential impact of sitting next to a CYPSVI in class;

- The view that TA support during break or lunch was neither helpful nor necessary, however, did seem to be shared by some TAs and CYPSVIs; Some CYPSVI reports in relation to TA support were very negative. In particular, a loss if independence and a sense of learned helplessness were reported.

4.1.6 In school: Other professionals working with the CYPSVI

Within this section, the interactions between the CYPSVI and other professionals in school – HWs, EPs and lunchtime staff - will be discussed (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Conceptual Analysis Model: Other Professionals Focus
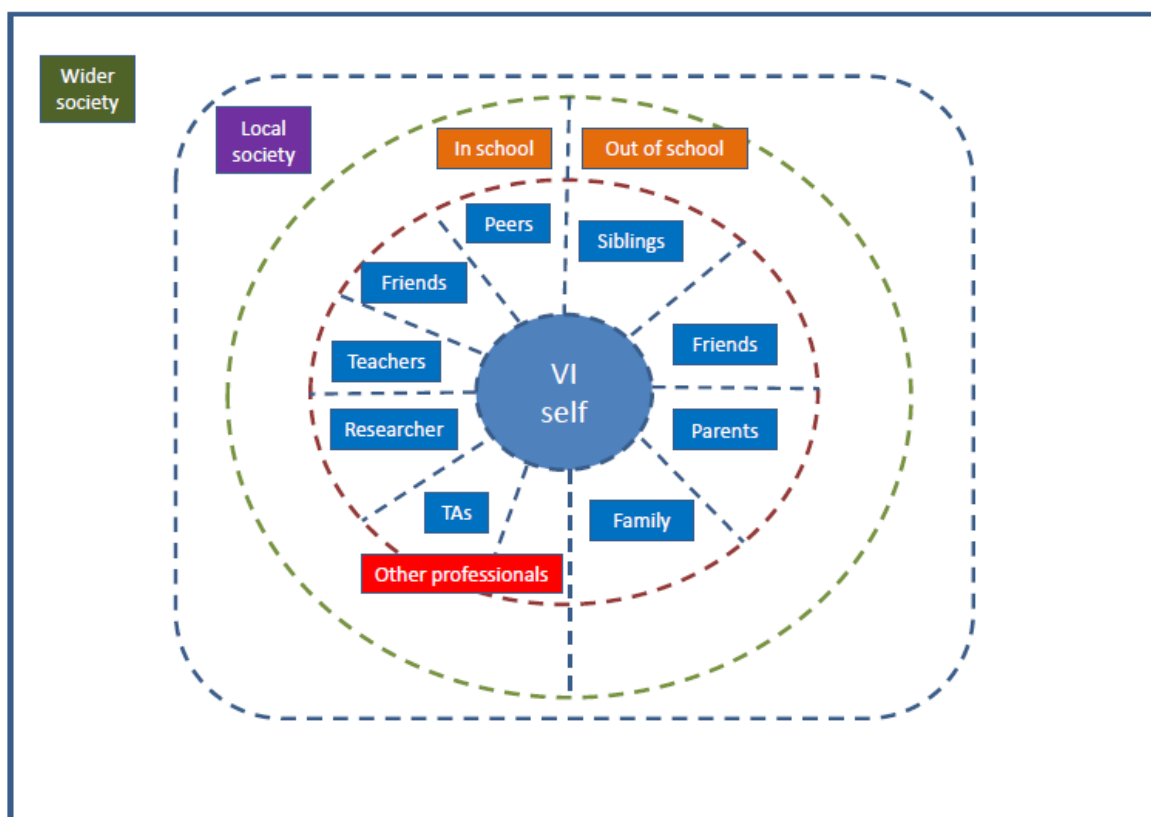
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.1.6.1 Habilitation Workers and CYPVI

The two HW respondents were able to provide information regarding their perceived role. HW3 reported that his role is to:

> *Provide habilitation input commensurate with their level of need and educational setting (HW3).*

Their reports suggested that they worked both directly and indirectly with the CYPSVI. In relation to his work with YP5-Yr9 and YP6-Yr10, HW3 stated that:

> *The task is to equip them with the skills to advocate for themselves and solicit and control the assistance which they will require to function as adults. (HW3)*

Here, reference to the importance of pupil voice (*'Individual Factors: Pupil Voice'*) is made. HW3 also stated, however, that:

> The task is to equip them with the skills to travel as independently as possible. (HW3 re: YP5-Yr9 and YP6-Yr10)

With regard to his contact with parents, HW5 also stated that his involvement is:

> Long term to persuade that YP8 is capable of independent travel. (HW5 re: YP8-Yr10)

As with the QTVIs, HW3 reported the adaptation (*'Environmental Factors: Adaptation'*) to be part of their role. This included adapting to a deterioration or variation in sight:

> YP6's presentation has varied during my time with her and so the programme has had to adapt. (HW3 re: YP6-Yr10)

However,

> Advising the school on modifications to make the environment more visually accessible (HW3 re: School C)

was also reported (*'Environmental Factors: Awareness'*). To this end, HW3 further reported that he has:

> *delivered several INSETs at School C'* (HW3).

When adult participants were asked what, if any, further training they would like, few participants offered anything. TAs 8-12 (School C), however all said they would welcome mobility training.

At the time of the interviews, 6/12 CYPSVI were receiving support from their HW; one CYPSVI's (YP2-Yr10) HW support had been withdrawn for financial reasons.

4.1.6.2 Educational Psychologists

During the early stages of the current study, it was originally intended that further information regarding the CYPSVI would be gathered from the EPs attached to their schools. In practice, however, no EP involvement was reported (with the exception of one EP involved with the statutory assessment of a CYPSVI). For that reason, more general information elicited from EPs, including any VI training and involvement in VI casework, is reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Information Gathered From EPs Attached to the CYPVIs Schools

EP	Place of training	Qualification	Years qualified	VI training pre-qualification	VI training post-qualification	Total number of VI cases	Number of cases with VI as main presenting need	Involvement with the CYPVI in this study
EP1	IoE	Masters	24	2-3 days	None	3-4	2-3	None
EP2	University of Dundee	Masters	15	½ day	4 hours	High number of pre-school cases. Otherwise very limited.	2	None
EP3	University College London	Doctoral	1	½ day	None	4	2	None
EP4	IoE	Masters	8	1 day	None	2	1	None
EP5	Tavistock and Portman	Masters	11	½ day	None	<5	Not reported	Completed statutory assessment for YP8-Yr10

The possible reasons for lack of EP involvement will be discussed in Chapter Five.

4.1.6.3 Lunchtime staff and CYPSVI

Reports regarding lunchtime staff came from one CYPSVI – YP10-Yr7. She referred to an incident in which she was sitting on a raised area within the playground:

My friends was up there and they were like "Oh, you're not allowed up there. You can't see. Can you use your cane?" And then I was explaining to them, but the teacher that stays with me said that I can keep it folded, and they literally forced me to open it up...and I didn't really like that. (YP10-Yr7)

Again the issue of a lack of understanding (*'Understanding: Adults'*) is raised here.

4.1.6.4 Other professionals working with CYPSVI: *summary of key findings*

This section has explored the interactions between the CYPSVI and other professionals – HWs, EPs and lunchtime staff.

- The HW role in the promotion of self-advocacy and independence for CYPSVI was reported as was their role in adaptation;

- The EPs attached to the schools attended by the CYPSVI reported no involvement (with the exception of one statutory assessment);

- Further, their reported VI training and involvement in VI cases throughout their careers was limited;

- With regard to the lunchtime staff, a lack of understanding was again highlighted by one CYPSVI.

4.2 Out of School

Section 4.1 focused on the sources of influence for the CYPSVI within the school context. Through their interviews, however, it was evident that the

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CYPSVI were also influenced by sources in the wider world. This data will now be reported.

4.2.1 Out of school: CYPSVI and family

The following section will address the interactions between the CYPSVI and their family (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Conceptual Analysis Model: Family Focus
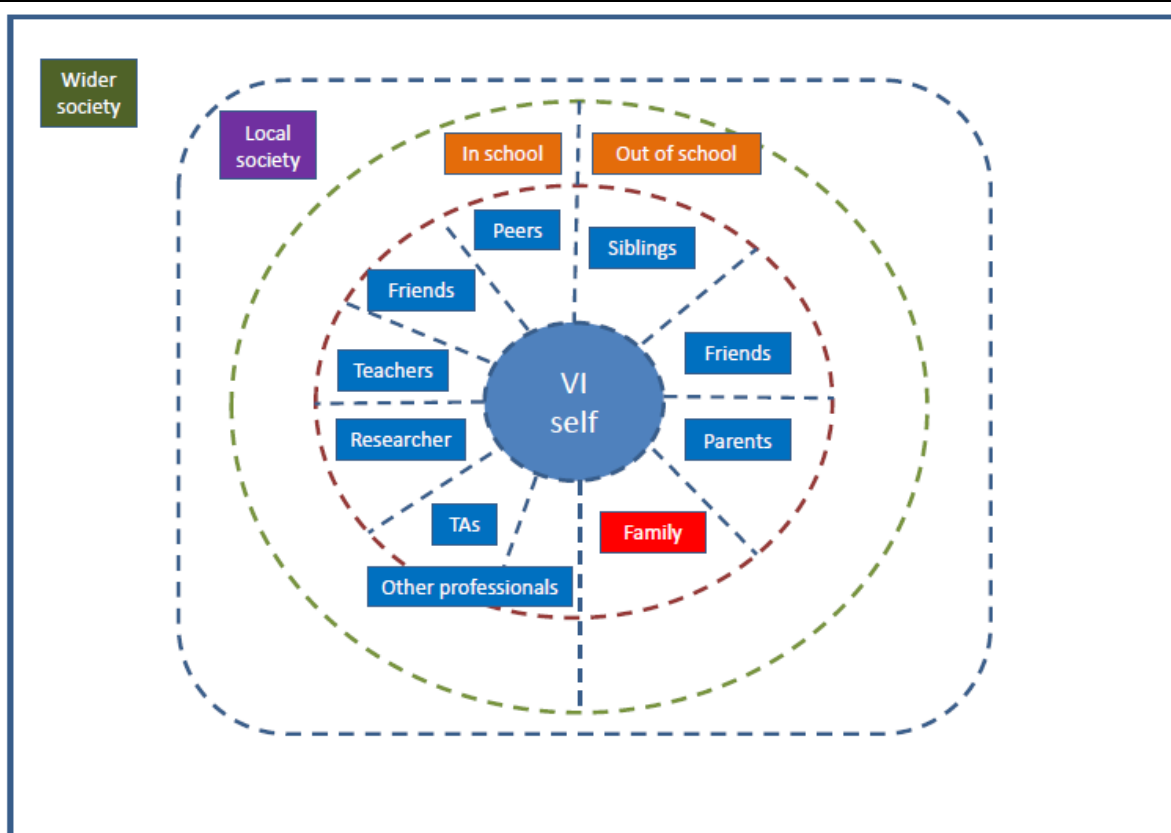
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.2.1.1 CYPSVI at home and school

A clear difference between their home and school experience was reported by 2/12 CYPSVI. More specifically, they articulated a superior experience at home:

> *When I come into school, the way I see things just changes and, when I go home, it goes back to how I want it to be. (YP2-Yr10)*

> *The only thing I care about my sight is at school. I don't really need no help, no nothing at home. (YP10-Yr7)*

In both cases the CYPSVI reported an increased sense of independence in the home environment. Firstly, YP2-Yr10 explained:

> *I just feel like…like, if I'm on a quest to do something, I've got all the resources I need…but then, when I'm in school, there's like lots of variables in the way. (YP2-Yr10)*

Secondly, YP10-Yr7 stated:

> *At home, like, my mum lets me do whatever I want (YP10-Yr7),*

adding later:

> *Basically she wants me to be independent. (YP10-Yr7)*

Here, YP10-Yr7 suggested that the parental role was instrumental in facilitating independence in the home environment (*'Environmental Factors: Adaptation'*).

4.2.1.2 CYPSVI and family: *summary of key findings*

- For some CYPSVI, their experiences within school and home environments are very different;
- For these CYPSVI, the home experience was reported to be superior, enabling an increased sense of independence.

4.2.2 Out of school: CYPSVI and Parents

This section focuses more specifically on the interactions between the CYPSVI and their parents (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Conceptual Analysis Model: Parents Focus
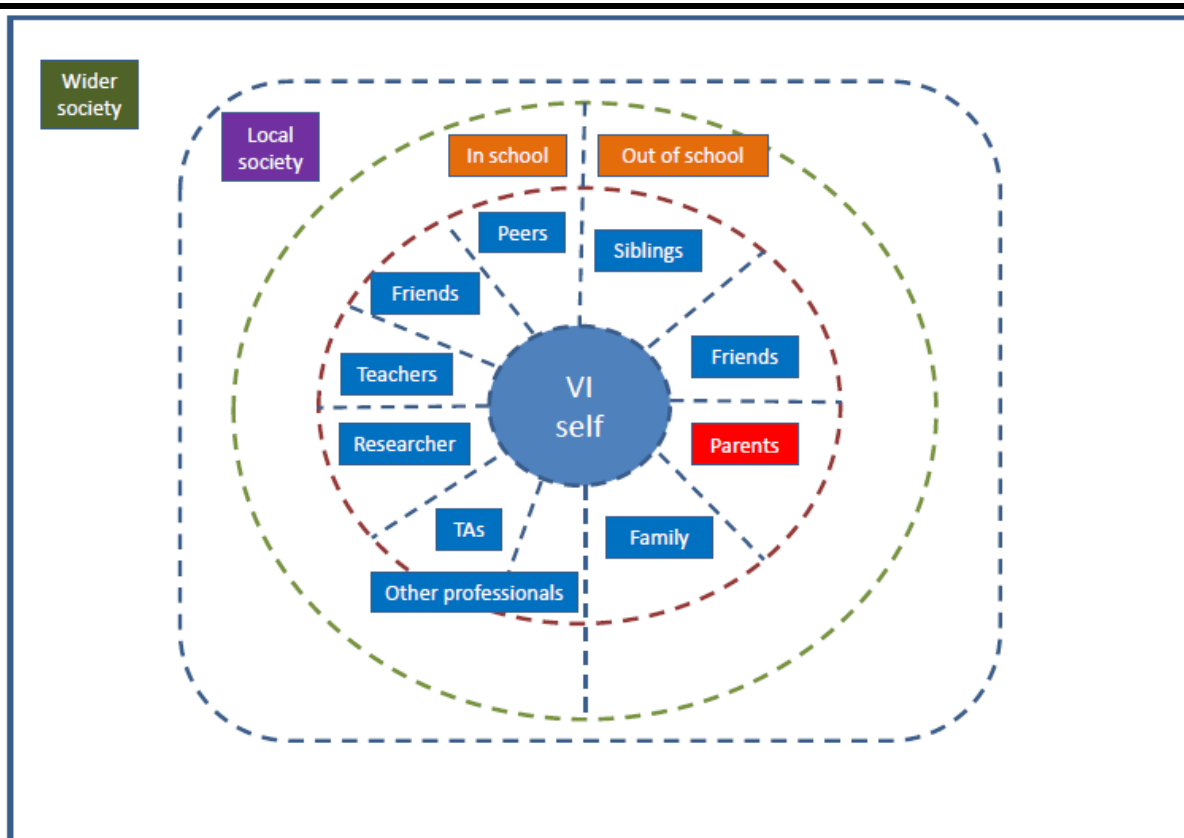
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.2.2.1 Parents and promotion of independence

The issue of independence was directly reported by one parent. In stating his reasons for not choosing a specialist provision, PG4 stated that it:

> *may instil a dependency culture on YP4 (PG4- of YP4-*
> *Yr9).*

He added that, as parents, they have been:

> *fighting for everything we could do to help her get on in life (PG4-of YP4-Yr9).*

On the other hand, some CYPSVI (3/12) explicitly reported a degree of parental overprotectiveness:

> *My mum doesn't let me out…she does like let me out, but not far away from the area. She just lets me go to a local park – that's it. Cos she's like scared that I might get crashed or…she's overprotective. (YP12-Yr11)*

As with decisions regarding seating position in class, the reported parental overprotectiveness arguably resulted in a diminished sense of agency, together with reduced social opportunities (*'Environmental Factors: Adaptation'*). For YP6-Yr10, her parents' cultural/religious beliefs *('Individual Factors: Perceived Impact of VI')* were reported to have a similar impact:

> *As YP6 is not allowed to watch certain programmes on TV as well as listen to pop music as an example she is unable to comment on what her peers are talking about. (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)*

Conversely, one parent saw part of his parental role as being to provide his daughter with opportunities.

4.2.2.2 Parents, friends and CYPSVI

PG4 stated that, as parents of a CYPSVI they:

> *Managed the best we could to give her the best opportunity in life, and we've continued to this day with that approach. (PG4-of YP4-Yr9)*

He went on to say:

> *She has a good network of close friends at school, who she sees out of school in X or at home, when we can arrange this. (PG4- of YP4-Yr9)*

The latter statement is indicative of an arguable reliance on parents of CYPSVI to provide social opportunities ('*Environmental Factors: Adaptation*') and, as such, some social opportunities may be precluded by non-proactive parents. The following statement by the QTVI involved arguably lends support to this idea:

> *Mum is trying to make more effort at getting YP6 involved in activities catered for young people with VI. (QT3 re: PG6-Yr10)*

4.2.2.3 CYPSVI and parents: *summary of key findings*

This section has reported on parents as a source of influence upon the CYPSVI.

- While some parents reportedly encouraged independence, others were reported to be overprotective;

- Issues of a diminished sense of agency and reduced social opportunities were considered in relation to both parental overprotectiveness and parental cultural/religious beliefs;

- An arguable reliance upon parents of CYPSVI for providing social opportunities was indicated and the impact of non-proactive parents considered.

4.2.3 Out of school: CYPVI and friends in the wider world

Whilst interactions with friends within the school context have been reported, this section explores the interactions between the CYPSVI and their friends outside of school (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Conceptual Analysis Model: Friends (Out of School) Focus
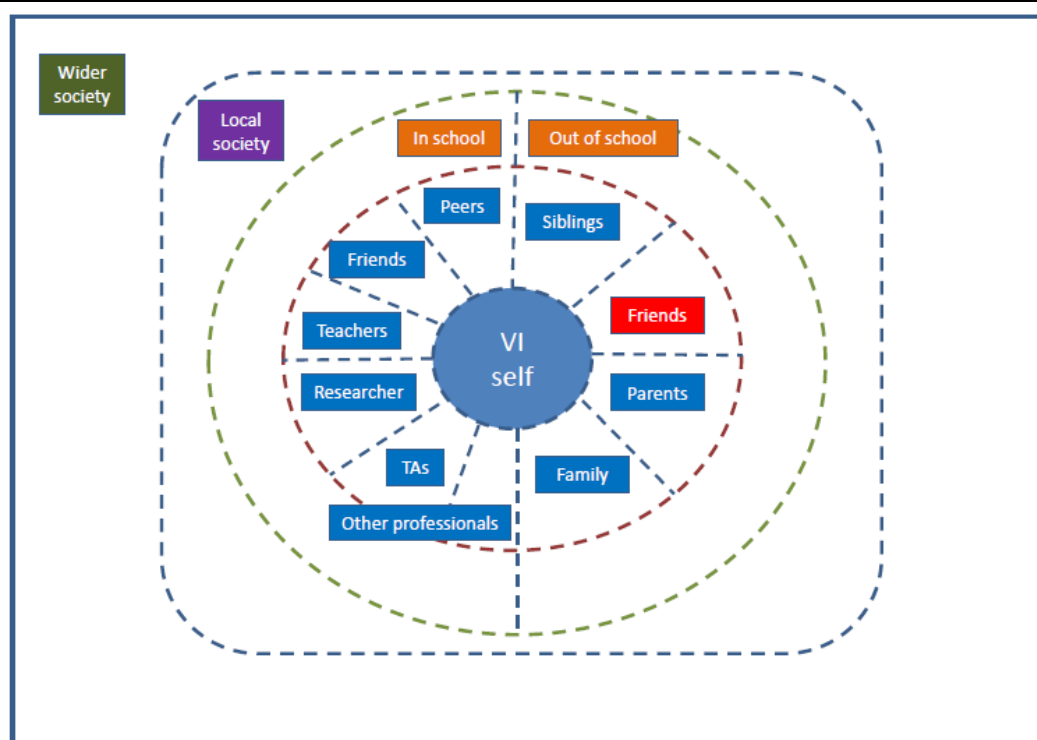
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.2.3.1 Friends out of school time

In the context of social inclusion, the inaccessibility of school clubs is exacerbated, for some, by the distance they need to travel to school. YP4–Yr9, who attends a school with a VI base stated:

> I live really, really far away so I could come to this school
> because it would help me. (YP4-Yr9)

For YP4-Yr9, however, this distance did not appear to have an impact upon her friendships outside of school (*'Environmental Factors: Social Life'*). According to her TA, YP4-Yr9:

> *Has a close circle of friends within school, some of whom she socialises with outside of school. (TA4 re: YP4-Yr9)*

Her father also commented on:

> *Her wide group of VI friends across the country. (PG4-YP4-Yr9)*

The same was not reported, however, for all CYPSVI travelling a distance to attend schools with VI bases:

> *All my other friends are here – in X [school vicinity]. So I got some friends around Y [home], but around where I live...I sometimes go out with them, but I can't go where they go. (YP12-Yr11)*

It was interesting to note that, his mother had a different opinion and remarked that he:

> *doesn't like to go out much (PG12- of PG12-Yr11).*

Arguably, parent and CYPSVI had differing perspectives on what was preventing him from being more socially active outside of school.

4.2.3.2 CYPSVI and friends in the wider world: *summary of key findings*

Here, the interactions between CYPSVI and their friends outside of school have been reported.

- For those CYPSVI required to travel a distance in order to attend schools with VI bases, reports regarding the impact upon their friendships differed;

- Divergent perspectives regarding one CYPSVIs limited socialisation outside of school were reported – whilst the CYPSVI referred to a lack of ability, his mother saw it more as a matter of personal choice.

4.2.4 Out of school: CYPSVI and siblings

This section is intended to focus on the interactions between the CYPSVI and their siblings (see Figure 15). It should be noted, however, that relevant data was limited.

Figure 15. Conceptual Analysis Model: Siblings Focus
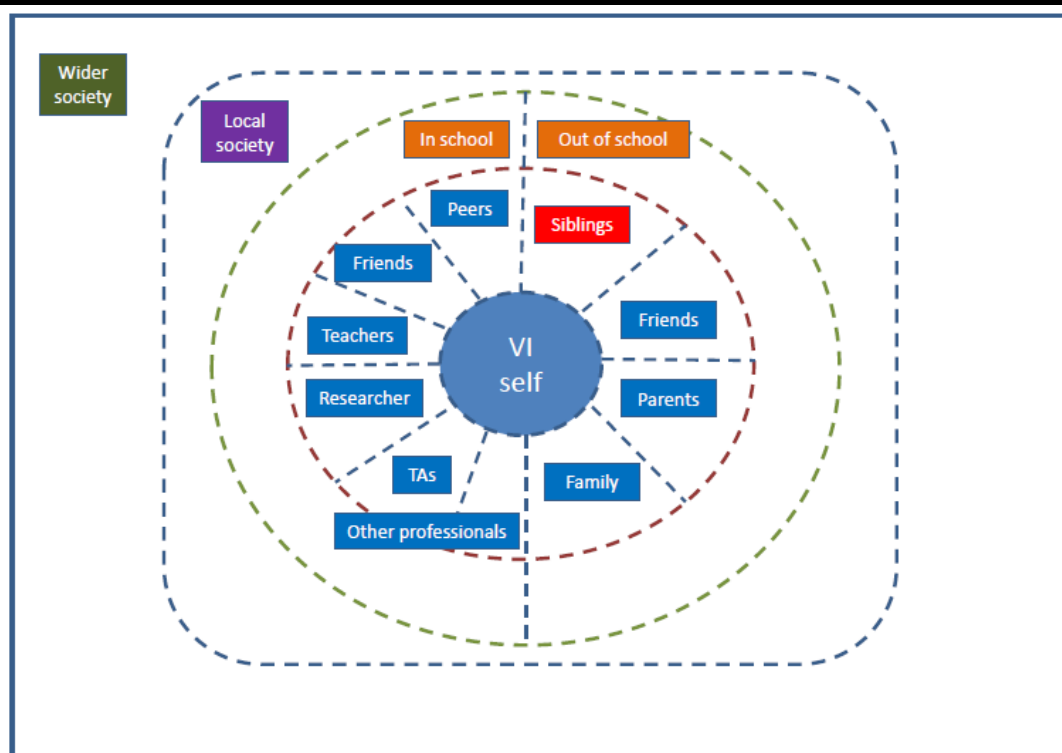
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.2.4.1 Sibling relations

In their interviews, 2/12 CYPSVI spoke of their siblings. It was explained by YP7-Yr8* that her younger brother also has visual needs and that QTVI4:

> *comes and checks on my brother as well these days (YP7-Yr8*).*

When reporting the hardship of having a VI, YP7-Yr8* stated:

> *My brother couldn't even stand wearing his glasses when he was a baby. (YP7-Yr8*)*

This statement was, arguably, made to strengthen her point regarding the hardship of having a VI. YP7-Yr8* further reported that:

> *I'm getting all the help from…even my little brother! (YP7-Yr8*)*

The reports by YP7-Yr8* were indicative of a VI experience shared, to some extent, with her brother. In contrast, YP10-Yr7 – one of four siblings and the only CYPSVI – reported experience of differential treatment (*'Identity: The Language of Difference'*):

> *Like my mum gave them iPads and stuff yeah and I don't get nothing. I'm like the unluckiest one. (YP10-Yr7)*

4.2.4.2 CYPSVI and siblings: *summary of key findings*

Two of the CYPSVI made reports regarding their siblings.

- Whereas one had a sibling with a VI, the other did not;

- The CYPVI who had a sibling with a VI made reports indicating a shared experience and a supportive relationship. For the other, a sense of being unlucky was reported.

As reported in section Chapter Three (section 3.9.4), the conceptual model used to structure the findings of the current study recognises that, not only are their diverse sources of influence upon the CYPSVI, the CYPSVI themselves are active in the construction of their understanding. Having reported the data in relation to sources of influence in and out of the school context, attention will now turn to the influence of the VI self.

4.3 VI 'Self'

That CYPSVI were reporting themselves as active agents in the construction of their understanding is evidenced within the following section (see Figure 16). Anxieties experienced by the CYPSVI are reported in relation to their impact on the world around them. Adaptations made by the CYPSVI to their environment, the reason behind their adaptations and the extent to which they are helpful are considered. The impact of time upon the CYPSVI is then reported, before finally addressing the issue of pupil voice.

Figure 16. Conceptual Analysis Model: VI 'Self' Focus
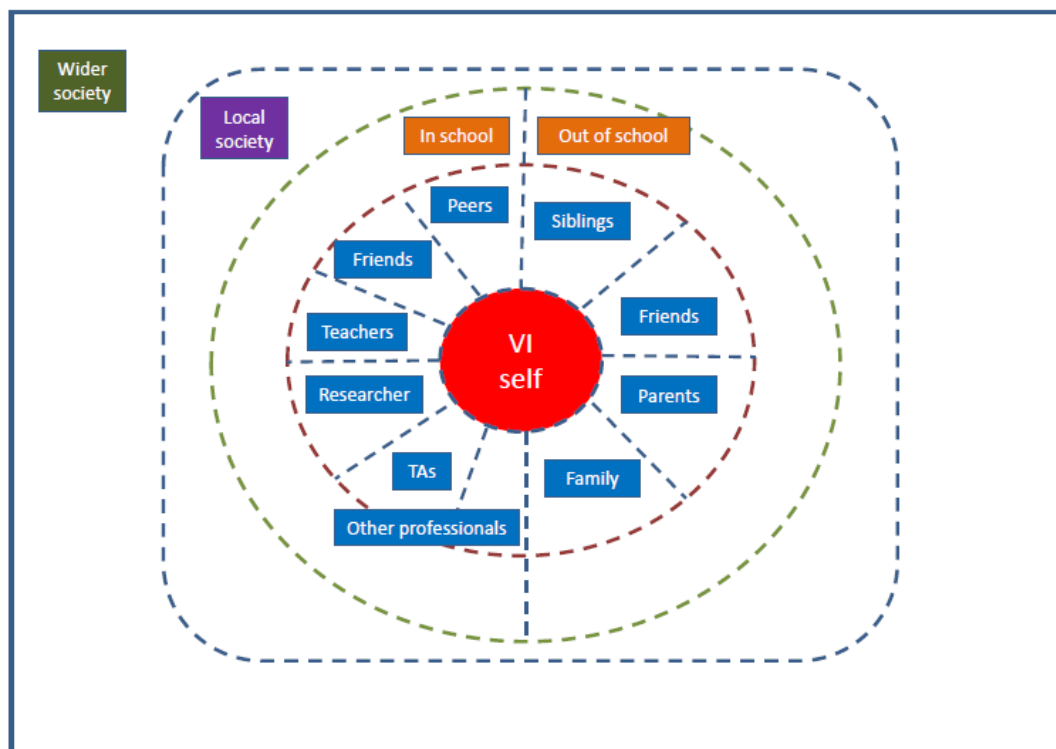
Note. Image source: created by Lisa Plaskett.

4.3.1 Projected anxieties: equipment and TA presence

Anxieties were reported by 4/12 CYPSVI who expressed concerns with regard to what their peers might think of either their equipment use or TA support (*'Projected Anxieties: What Will They Think?'*). When asked how he felt about using his laptop, with attached camera, in class, YP2-Yr10 explained:

> *It makes me feel quite anxious using it. Like cos you know you always think, "what are my friends gonna think?" (YP2-Yr10)*

He also directly reported his unease regarding use of his voice activated software in the presence of others:

> *It feels awkward like doing it when other people are around, but if it's just me on my own, I don't mind doing it. (YP2-Yr10)*

YP10-Yr7 explained:

> *Like when I'm using my cane I feel very embarrassed...people might think I'm a weirdo. (YP10-Yr7)*

When asked if anyone had ever made such comments, YP10-Yr7 said:

> *Um, not really, but sometimes like when I go outside and all that, some people might say "Oh, look at that girl – she's blind" (YP10-Yr7)*

Thus, the theme of '*Projected Anxieties*' began to emerge.

Both YP2-Yr10 and YP10-Yr7 commented directly with regard to TA presence.

Whilst YP2-Yr10 simply stated that TA presence when:

> *I go to work in my group (YP2-Yr10)*

made him feel:

> *a little bit self-conscious (YP2-Yr10),*

YP10-Yr7 spoke in greater detail:

> *Participant: I feel alright, but I kind of feel embarrassed...because people might think "can't she work on her own?" and like "oh, why can't she do it?", "she's weird" and all that.*

> *Interviewer: And has anyone ever said these things to you*
>
> *or are they things you worry about?*
>
> *Participant: Nah, I'm just worried about it. (YP10-Yr7)*

For YP8-Yr10, projected anxieties as a barrier to friendship formation were reported on directly:

> *No I didn't make friends with anyone. I didn't get along with anyone. I would just keep to myself....I think it was just coming from me, because I didn't know what people would think about me. (YP8-Yr10)*

The next section will further explore the CYPSVIs projected anxieties in relation to friendship.

4.3.2 Projected anxieties: fear of rejection

Comments regarding anxieties about the self and friendship formation were made by 5/12 CYPSVI. At the time of the interviews, two of these CYPSVI reported more ambiguously:

> *It was a bit difficult because I didn't know if people didn't wanna be friend or something. (YP5-Yr9*)*

Reports from the other three CYPSVI, however, were more direct:

> *I thought people wouldn't want to make friends with me. (YP8-Yr10)*

Here, the CYPSVI reports were indicative of a fear of rejection (*'Projected Anxieties: Fear of Rejection'*); 2/3 CYPSVI mentioned above reported a fear of rejection in the event that a disclosure of their VI was made. YP9-Yr7 stated:

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I just didn't wanna tell someone about it cos, like they'd probably not be near me, like that. That's why I never used to tell. (YP9-Yr7)

YP11-Yr10 too explained that:

When I was young I thought that my friends wouldn't be my friends any more if I told them I'm visually impaired and stuff. (YP11-Yr10)

When talking about his current friendships, it was evident that YP11-Yr10 had continued to feel this way. Although he had disclosed that his visual needs to some of his friends, he had purposefully not told others:

cos it might spoil our friendship (YP11-Yr10).

When considering disclosure of VI it seems pertinent to consider the extent to which it is cosmetically evident. YP9-Yr7 spoke of:

getting a shell for the look (YP9-Yr7)

and described how it provided him with a means of concealing his VI:

Then some of them forgot. They were like "oh, you have two eyes now" and I used to be like "oh yeah, yeah", cos I didn't want everyone to know. (YP9-Yr7)

It was his view that, when cosmetically concealed:

They don't really mind, but before people did (YP9-Yr7).

4.3.3 CYPSVI adaptations to their environment

The CYPSVIs efforts to conceal their VI from those around them, again linked to their desire to be 'normal'. Comments made by 3/12 CYPSVI suggested that they did not consider themselves to be 'normal'. YP10-Yr7 clearly stated:

Like, imagine you wanna be like other people and not like

a lowlife and all that. (YP10-Yr7)

Arguably, the CYPSVI made attempts to adapt to their environment in order to 'be like other people'. CYPSVI adapting to their environment emerged as a theme ('*Adaptation: Me to You*') and was reported by 5/12 CYPSVI:

I feel like I have to change the way I…do things, just to fit

in with… (YP2-Yr10)

Some of these adaptations were helpful. As having a VI:

impacts your ability to know who people are (YP4-Yr9),

5/12 CYPSVI reported use of alternative methods through which to identify people:

I can tell who they are by their voice really (YP3-Yr8).

A further 4/12 CYPSVI had established a fixed location within school to meet friends at break or lunch times or at the end of the school day:

Yeah, cos playtimes - I have a place where I meet all my

friends. From late they're always there….So we always

meet near a certain place, so YP6 doesn't get confused and

I don't get confused! (YP5-Yr9*)

Some CYPSVI (3/12) spoke of their dislike of crowds and subsequent avoidance of them, either when moving between lessons or at break and lunch times:

> *I do occasionally find that there's a hoard of elephants sort of stampeding along the corridor because there are so many people in this school. But I sort of always go outside because there's less people here, there's way to cut the traffic. (YP3-Yr8)*

In relation to break and lunch time, YP2-Yr10 stated that he felt unable to join in activities with his sighted friends:

> *Cos, whatever they do, it's quite fast-paced and I don't feel like I can keep up with what they are doing. I just stand and have a conversation while they're doing what they're doing. (YP2-Yr10)*

No other CYPSVI reported a difficulty in joining in activities with their sighted friends, however 3/12 mentioned that, at break and lunch time:

> *I just hang around with my friends (YP7-Yr8).*

Although it cannot be assumed that 'hanging out' is an adaptation rather than simply a preferred social activity for secondary aged pupils, it is nevertheless possible that doing so helps to diminish, or at least not highlight, difference. Indeed, 3/12 CYPSVI spoke about break and lunchtimes as an opportunity to:

> *just feel normal (YP9-Yr7),*

and, further, an opportunity for escapism:

> *I just feel like it's an opportunity to reconnect to myself, rather than being in the lesson that's going on. I just feel like I can finally breathe. (YP2-Yr10)*

For 5/12 CYPSVI in particular, a wide range of interests were reported. It was notable, however, that 2/12 CYPSVI had found an interest/hobby that instead

required adaptation on the part of their sighted peers – Goalball. In doing so, YP3-Yr8 commented that:

You're all on the same playing field. (YP3-Yr8)

Whereas this section has reported helpful adaptations made by the CYPSVI, the following section considers those that were, arguably, unhelpful and their purpose.

4.3.4 Internal conflict

YP10-Yr7 and YP11-Yr10 – both cane users – reported their reluctance to use their canes because:

it's embarrassing (YP10–Yr7).

TA12 (re: YP12-Yr11) revealed that YP12-Yr11's refusal to use his cane in school had meant he was not allowed into the playground at break or lunchtime, thereby potentially imposing barriers to his social inclusion. A tension therefore arises between the recognition of the necessity of support and the CYPSVI's recognition of its undesirability.   Reports from 4/12 CYPSVI led to the emergence of the theme '*Internal Conflict*'.

Interviewer: *So, what are the times when you don't feel you need help?*
Participant: *Errr, I wanna say all of them [laughed]…but then I know that's not the case. (YP2-Yr10)*
Basically like lunch, break…like I wanna be independent, but then I need them. (YP10-Yr7)

YP10-Yr7 later added:

I tried being like the others, but still it won't work. (YP10-Yr7)

This statement suggests that, while CYPSVI strive and make efforts to be 'normal', there remain differences that are unable to be overcome.

Thus far this section has explored the anxieties experienced by some CYPSVI and considered their impact, particularly upon friendship formation. It too has reported the adaptations – both helpful and unhelpful – made by the CYPSVI and suggested that these are an attempt to conceal their VI. Hereafter, this section will explore the impact of time on the CYPSVIs anxieties and acceptance of their VI, within which the issue of emotional wellbeing will be addressed. Finally, issues relating to pupil voice are reported.

4.3.5 The impact of time

The theme '*As Time Goes By*' in part emerged as a result of the reported impact of time for the CYPSVI ('*As Time Goes By: Intrapersonal Changes*'). It was interesting to note that some of the anxieties described by the CYPSVI seemed to diminish over time. Comments with regard to use of equipment were made by 3/12 CYPSVI, including YP2-Yr10 who stated:

But then after a while you start…losing that feeling. I just realised, "so what if they think that, I don't care". (YP2-Yr10)

YP11-Yr10 also spoke of an increased likelihood of disclosing his VI to friends that he had known for a long time:

> Interviewer: *So, the friends you have chosen to tell, what's the reason for that?*
>
> Participant: *Um, cos they be my old friends. I knew them for quite a long time and they'll cope with it - they don't mind. But the other people I don't…I just wouldn't talk with them. I never knew them for that long as the other ones. (YP11-Yr10)*

The CYPSVI also conveyed a sense of increasing acceptance of, or indeed resignation to their VI over time:

> *We're so used to being like this. (YP4-Yr9)*

Indeed, YP4-Yr9 appeared to have moved beyond acceptance of her VI and had found an alternative, almost superior, way of construing the world:

> Participant: *And, to be honest, without sight my life has been better than it would have been with sight.*
>
> Interviewer: *Why do you say that?*
>
> Participant: *Because you get to do…you get to meet so many new people and you get to do so many new things that you wouldn't have been able to do and you get to experience life in a completely different way and you can think about other things and your perspective on the world is different. (YP4-Yr9)*

Further statements made by YP4-Yr9 indicated that her positive attitude was helpful in this regard:

> *If you believe you can do it and if you want to do it and set your mind to it, then you'll be able to. (YP4-Yr9)*

Two further CYPSVI also made reference to attitude and attitude change. For YP6-Yr10, however, her attitude was, arguably, reported to be less positive ('*Individual Factors: Perceived Impact of VI*'). QTVI3 explained that she was:

> *Still trying to address YP6's coping with the loss of her sight as I do feel that she does go through some 'low' days. (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)*

Reportedly, when counselling or therapy was offered, PG6 handed the choice to her daughter who declined. QTVI3 further explained that:

> *Mum [PG6] has always given YP6 the opportunity to make choices and I feel that at times she has not been mature enough. (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)*

The above is pertinent with regard to pupil voice, a topic explored in more detail in the following section.

4.3.6 Pupil Voice

That the CYPSVI were involved in decision making ('*Individual Factors: Pupil Voice*') was reported by 4/12 adult participants (QTVI, HW, TA and parent/guardian):

> *I tend to leave it up to the individual pupil to decide if they want me to do a classroom observation. (QT1)*

This was echoed by 3/12 CYPSVI who gave examples of occasions in which they had been involved in decision making:

> *They're saying "what lessons do you feel that you don't need support in?" (YP5-Yr9)*

Yet 6/12 CYPSVI made statements to the contrary:

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If they did listen to me. (YP10-Yr7)

Indeed, one TA described a situation in which pupil voice had been overridden:

YP9 claims he doesn't need support but we still provide

support by enlarging his work sheets. (TA9 re: YP9-Yr7)

Reports in relation to pupil voice then were somewhat ambiguous.

4.3.7 VI 'Self': *summary of key findings*

This section has reported that CYPSVI are active agents in the construction of their understanding.

- Anxieties experienced by some CYPSVI - including a concern regarding what peers might think of their equipment and TA support and a fear of rejection by peers - were considered to be projected anxieties because they had not been affirmed by others, yet were reported to have an impact on the CYPSVIs interactions and, in particular, their friendship formation;

- It has been suggested that the adaptations – both helpful and unhelpful - made by the CYPSVI were an attempt to conceal their VI and appear 'normal';

- Despite such efforts, however, some CYPSVI reported a remaining sense of difference that could not be overcome;

- For some CYPSVI, their reports indicated that this led to an internal conflict;

- The impact of time upon the CYPSVI was also explored:
  - It was reported that their anxieties - in relation to equipment use, TA support and disclosure of their VI – diminished over time

- An increasing acceptance of, or indeed resignation to, their VI was also reported to occur over time, however the CYPSVIs attitude was also implicated here;
- Emotional wellbeing concerns were raised;
- Issues relating to pupil voice were reported.

4.4 Key Research Findings

The key research findings will be highlighted below in relation to the sources of influence reported in previous sections. These points will provide a framework for discussion in the following chapter.

4.4.1 In school

4.4.1.1 Peers

- A lack of peer understanding;
- A lack of peer understanding at times appeared to escalate to bullying;
- Strategies to cope with bullying had been developed by some CYPSVI;
- Peer understanding was reported to increase over time;
- A heightened sense of difference and perception of self as inferior or not 'normal'
- For some, a sense of isolation and/or injustice;
- A desire to diminish difference;
- Adaptations made in school highlighted or helped to diminish difference.

4.4.1.2   Friends

- The CYPSVIs sighted friends were reported to demonstrate understanding;

- Some CYPSVI had friends with visual needs who were reported to have an 'implicit understanding';

- Understanding was considered to be important for friendship;

- Some CYPSVI reported a desire to not have friends with visual needs;

- Adult reports regarding the CYPSVIs friendships varied;

- Regarding the CYPSVIs overall social inclusion, adults gave nuanced accounts;

- Opportunities to access school clubs were, for some CYPSVI, precluded by a difficulty in accessing sporting activities or the need to use special transport.

4.4.1.3   Teachers

- A lack of teacher understanding was reported by the CYPSVI;

- Demonstrations of teacher understanding were also reported by the CYPSVI;

- QTVIs demonstrated the greatest levels of understanding;

- QTVIs had undertaken extensive VI specific training; Inclusion Managers received indirect training via the QTVI attached to their school.

4.4.1.4   Researcher

- Disclosure of my VI was seen to be important for some CYPSVI;

- The idea of a deeper or 'implicit' understanding was reported.

4.4.1.5 TAs

- Positive and negative aspects of TA support were reported;

- TAs were reported to be helpful in the facilitation of academic progress and the provision of emotional support and a feeling of security;

- A perceived anonymity of TAs was reported by some CYPSVI;

- A sense of feeling watched, the undesirability of TA presence during group work and the impact upon peer interactions of TAs sitting next to CYPSVI in class were also reported;

- Awareness of the above amongst TAs was variable;

- Both TAs and CYPSVIs shared the view that TA support during break or lunch was neither helpful nor necessary;

- For some CYPSVI, a loss of independence and a sense of learned helplessness were reported.

4.4.1.6 Other professionals

- The HW role in the promotion of self-advocacy and independence for CYPSVI was reported;

- The HW role in adaptation was reported;

- EPs attached to the schools attended by the CYPSVI reported no involvement;

- EPs reported limited VI training and limited involvement in VI cases throughout their career;

A lack of understanding was reported in relation to lunchtime staff.

4.4.2 Out of school

4.4.2.1 Family

- Different experiences in and out of school were highlighted by some CYPSVI;

- For these CYPSVI, the home experience was reported to be superior.

4.4.2.2 Parents

- Some parents were reported to encourage independence; overprotectiveness was reported for others;

- The impact of overprotectiveness and parental cultural/religious beliefs were linked with a diminished sense of agency and reduced social opportunities;

- An arguable reliance upon parents of CYPSVI for providing social opportunities was indicated.

4.4.2.3 Friends

- Reports regarding the impact upon friendships of travelling a distance to attend a school with a VI base differed.

4.4.2.4 Siblings

- Differences between having a sibling with a VI or not were indicated.

4.4.3 VI 'Self'

- Anxieties – not affirmed by others – were reported by the CYPSVI;

- These anxieties were reported to impact upon the CYPSVIs interactions with others and, in particular, friendship formation;

- Some CYPSVI reported making adaptations to their environment – suggested to be an attempt to conceal their VI;

- Whilst some adaptations were helpful, others were, arguably, unhelpful;

- Despite efforts to adapt, some CYPSVI reported a remaining sense of difference that could not be overcome;

- Some CYPSVI reports were indicative of internal conflict;

- Over time, the CYPSVIs anxieties were reported to diminish and an increasing acceptance of/resignation to their VI was stated;

- Reports by some CYPSVI suggested that personal attitude may be important regarding the above;

- Emotional wellbeing concerns were raised for one CYPSVI;

- Reports regarding pupil voice were variable.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter concluded with a summary of the main findings, mapped on to the RQs:

RQ1) How do CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings construe their experiences of social inclusion?

RQ2) How do adults/professionals working with CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings construe their social inclusion?

RQ3) How is the EP role implicated in facilitating the social inclusion of CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings?

In this chapter, the conceptual analysis model presented will again be used to structure and present the main findings (see Figure 4 below). Links to theoretical frameworks and research literature will be made throughout. The relevance of the findings to particular research questions will be explicated within the discussion. A critique of the methodology employed in the current study, its strengths and limitations and possible gaps will be given. Areas for further research will be identified and the relevance of the current study and implications for practice considered, culminating in a summary of the research and conclusions.

Figure 4. Conceptual Analysis Model: Research Findings
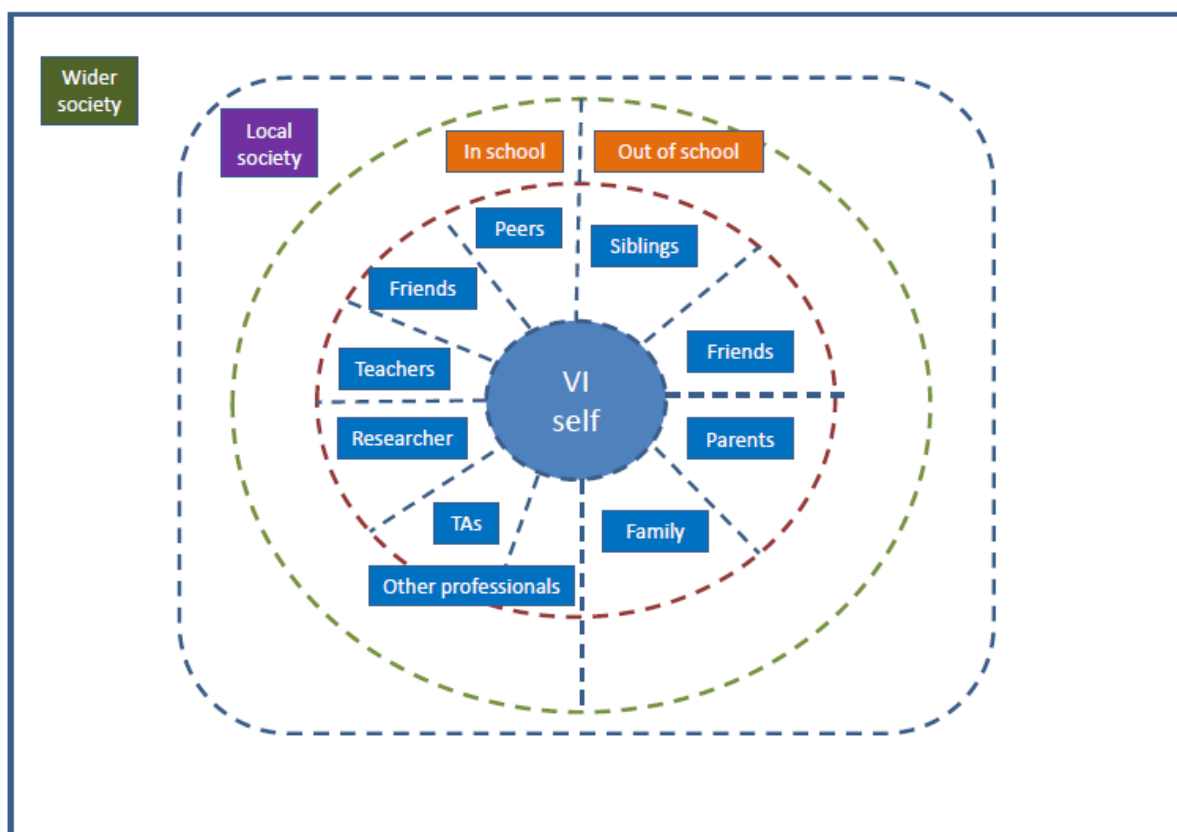
Note. Image source: developed by Lisa Plaskett.

5.1 In School: Peer Interactions

Within their framework for successful inclusion (see Chapter Two, section 2.13), George and Duquette (2006) note the ability of peers to understand the implications of disability. It is a concern then that a lack of peer understanding – emotional and in relation to equipment use and support - was reported by half of the CYPSVI in the current study.

With regard to emotional understanding, the CYPSVI were reporting that their sighted peers did not understand how it felt to have a VI. Further, they noted the lack of effort, on the part of their sighted peers, to try and understand. With no

direct experience of VI, sighted peers cannot be expected to fully understand the emotional experiences of CYPSVIs. However, this finding suggests that, for some CYPSVI, the act of their peers *trying* to understand would in itself be important and meaningful. Indeed, this may encourage a feeling of social connectedness to the class and school community – important in achieving a sense of belonging (SOB), a concept central to inclusion (Warnock, 2005) and, as yet, not researched in relation to CYPVI. It is further possible that such interactions would be mutually beneficial for CYPVI and sighted pupils alike.

Where a *lack* of peer understanding in relation to equipment and support was reported by CYPSVI in the current study, an awareness on their part, of a lack of malicious intent, was apparent. Rather, it suggests an unintentional barrier to social inclusion in which a lack of knowledge is implicated (Pivik et al., 2002). In the current study, this lack of knowledge related to the purpose and impact of equipment and support provided; as such, the need to increase knowledge and raise awareness amongst the CYPSVIs' sighted peer group was highlighted. Such a task could be executed by QTVIs or through interaction with the CYPSVI themselves, facilitated by adults, as suggested in the George and Duquette (2006) model: offering a framework for the successful inclusion of CYPVI in mainstream educational settings.

Unfortunately, for some CYPSVI in the current study, the lack of understanding from their sighted peers appeared to have escalated to bullying. According to Pivik et al. (2002), bullying is considered an intentional attitudinal barrier to social inclusion. Although reporting on a younger age group, Harris et al. (2012)

too found that reports of bullying for children with a VI were significantly more likely than for those without.

In the current study it was noteworthy that, of the CYPSVI who had experienced bullying, all had a VI that was cosmetically evident or required equipment that acted as a clear signifier of their VI, such as a long cane. This is perhaps somewhat unsurprising given that adolescence is a period in which physical appearance gains importance and attractiveness is said to lead to social approval from peers (Wertheim & Paxton, 2011). Negative comments regarding appearance may be especially damaging for CYPSVI who, owing to difficulties accessing visual information, are more reliant on others' evaluations of their physical appearance (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2012). Achieving self-acceptance (Konarska, 2005), therefore, when the self is described as *"monster"* and *"zombie" (YP8-Yr10),* conceivably becomes a greater challenge.

The strategies developed by some CYPSVI to cope with bullying from their sighted peers were interesting in their acknowledgment of a possible lack of intent and understanding. This stands in contrast to the view of Pivik et al. (2002), who classify bullying as an intentional barrier to social inclusion. It is possible that, in removing the element of accountability for their sighted peers' behaviour, CYPSVI had developed a strategy that rendered confrontation futile. Indeed, Lifshitz et al. (2007) found that CYPVI scored lower on levels of confrontation than their sighted peers. Further, they hypothesised that this may be due to CYPVIs' need to depend, explicitly or otherwise, on their peers for support.

In the current study, it was further reported that time was an important factor with regard to the issue of understanding, with some CYPSVI suggesting that levels of understanding amongst their peers increased with time. This finding constitutes new knowledge and was consistent with CYPSVI reports that starting secondary school posed a problem in this regard. James (2010), in a review of the literature carried out for the NSPCC, reported that victimisation tends to decrease with age but peaks during the transition from primary to secondary school.

Through their interactions with peers, the CYPSVI in the current study appeared to have developed a heightened sense of difference which, in turn, led to a conveyed sense of isolation. This mirrors Gray's (2010) findings in Northern Ireland, in which CYPVI aged 15-23, who were either attending or had attended a mainstream school, reported feeling different and somewhat isolated from their peers. A sense of isolation is further pertinent since it impedes emotional well-being and later social adjustment (Dunn & McGuire, 1992, as cited in Bailey, 2009). For the CYPSVI in the current study, however, perceptions of the self as inferior or not 'normal' were also evident. Indeed, Beaty (1992) indicated that CYPVI were prone to feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. In line with social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), it appeared that the development of less positive self-perceptions had occurred as a result of comparisons being made with more able-bodied 'others': their sighted peers. It is possible that it was such social comparisons that informed CYPSVIs reported feelings of injustice.

Further evident in the current study, was the desire to diminish difference. Indeed, Waddell (2005) referred to a drive to minimise difference among peers and suggested that this would typically occur in early adolescence. Interestingly, reports of a desire to diminish difference in the current study came from CYPSVI in Years 10 and 11 – middle adolescence – thus indicating that it is perhaps a more pervasive desire than previously thought. While some adaptations made in school appeared to be helpful in diminishing any perceived difference, others – such as special transport – seemed instead to highlight the feeling of difference for CYPSVI. This has potentially important implications for the provision of 'special transport' as a 'reasonable adjustment' (DfES, 2001b; DfE, 2010, DfE, 2013) made to support CYPVI attendance at school.

5.2 In School: Interactions with Friends

Given the previously stated importance of peer understanding for successful inclusion (e.g. George & Duquette, 2006), it was positive that some of the CYPSVI in the current study reported demonstrations of understanding from their sighted friends. These reports indicated that a frequency of contact and a sharing of emotions and desires were helpful in enabling this understanding. These ideas may have important implications with regard to enabling understanding amongst the peer group – sighted and CYPVI - as a whole. Further, some CYPSVI suggested that understanding was an important component of friendships. It is possible that friends' understanding may compensate for a lack of understanding from peers, enabling a SOB to prevail.

Humour was also mentioned by some CYPSVI in relation to their friendships. More specifically, CYPSVI reported that they were able to laugh about their VI

and its ramifications with their friends. It seemed that, where there was known understanding, laughing about one's VI was seen as 'laughing with' as opposed to 'laughing at'. Pagliano et al. (2007) note the numerous benefits of humour with regard to self-esteem and mental health, but also in refining social skills and cementing social bonds. The latter is particularly important given concerns about the development of social skills among CYPVI expressed by a number of researchers (e.g. Sacks, 2006; Sacks & Wolffe, 1998, 2006).

Over half of the CYPSVI in the current study reported having friends who also had visual needs and this was associated with a deeper or 'implicit' understanding. Indeed, Hatlen (2004) spoke of the best social experiences for CYPVI being the time they spend with other blind peers; in their study, George and Duquette (2006) noted the importance of companionship with other children with a VI for social inclusion, further commenting on the children's ability to empathise. In addition, Human (2010) talks of the principle of 'homophily' in relation to the social inclusion of learners with disabilities, suggesting that contact with similar others occurs more frequently than among dissimilar people. It is suggestive of a possible protective mechanism whereby socialisation with peers with SEN is less likely to infringe on the development of positive self-perceptions.

It seems somewhat counterintuitive then that some CYPSVI in the current study communicated their desire for not having friends with a VI, instead stating a preference for 'normal' friends. Interestingly, for the individual CYPSVI that explicitly stated a desire to only *"hang around with 'normal' people" (YP7-Yr8*),* concerns regarding her social inclusion were also reported by her QTVI (QT4).

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Alternatively, it is possible that choosing to not have friends with a VI also acts as a protective mechanism. For CYPVI, friends with a VI may serve as a reminder of their own VI and, thus, 'difference' and may create barriers to being with the desired 'normal' friends. Tuttle and Tuttle (2004) may suggest, however, that such choices are indicative of being in a stage of denial, since denial refers to an individual's refusal to acknowledge their VI.

Reports from QTVIs, TAs and parents regarding the CYPSVIs friendships, in which half of the CYPSVI were reported to have a good group of friends and/or were considered to be popular, aligned with the results of Gray's (2009) study in which it was reported that, overall, SENCOs thought that pupils with a VI enjoyed the social aspects of school, mixed well with other pupils and had best friends. This finding is also consistent with research literature (Fisher, Pumpian & Sax, 1998, as cited in Human, 2010) asserting that, overall, the social experiences of young people with disabilities in mainstream schools enables them to be more socially competent than their peers attending specialist provisions However, that some of the CYPSVI in the current study experienced *difficulties* with regard to forming and/or maintaining friendships was also reported by adult participants (QTVIs and TAs). Their comments add support for Gray's (2010) account that CYPVI (aged 15-23) who were either attending or had attended a mainstream school, reported having fewer friends than those who attended specialist schools.

When discussing friendships, popularity and, moreover, social inclusion, it is important to give consideration to individual differences. For the CYPSVI in the current study, a range of personalities were described. Indeed, some QTVI

reports noted the difficulty of unpicking whether it was a CYPSVI's personality, their VI or both that impacted upon their social inclusion. As with George and Duquette's (2006) study (where a VI did not necessarily predict poor peer relationships), other factors arose from the current study that appeared to influence popularity. For YP6-Yr10, broad cultural differences between her and her peers meant that their efforts to include her in their friendship circles were futile as common topics, such as fashion, pop music and boys, were unavailable for her. The potential (further) impact of a CYPVI's culture upon their social inclusion is, thus far, unexplored. In contrast, for YP2-Yr10, his athletic prowess appeared to be helpful with regard to peer acceptance and enabling him to feel as though he "fitted in" (YP2-Yr10).

Conversely, other CYPSVI and their parents reported a difficulty in accessing sporting activities – ball games, in particular. As many school clubs were reportedly sports based, the opportunity to join school clubs was, on occasion, also precluded. Reports of this nature were made only by and about male CYPSVI and, as such, raised the issue of gender. Arguably, ball games, such as football, have greater prominence in the social realms of male adolescents; where male CYPSVI are unable to participate then, one wonders about the impact upon their social inclusion. For the two male CYPSVI concerned, reports from their QTVIs and TAs regarding their social inclusion were somewhat ambiguous.

A further factor potentially impacting on the accessibility of school clubs, many of which were out of school hours, was the need for some CYPSVI to take special transport to and from school. While the CYPSVI affected in the current

study appeared unaffected by such a ramification of their VI, this evidence is consistent with literature arguing that travel to and from school can further isolate a child from their peer group (Bailey, 2009).

5.3 In School: Teachers

In the current study, the CYPSVIs reports regarding teacher understanding were conflicting – while five CYPSVI reported demonstrations of teacher understanding, five CYPSVI reported the opposite. The latter is perhaps less surprising. Although most CYPVI in the UK are educated in mainstream schools (RNIB, 2013), the low incidence nature of the disability means that encounters that mainstream teachers have with learners with a VI are likely to be rare (RNIB, 2013). Roe (2008) noted the specific challenges for a secondary school in which a greater teacher staff base increases the likelihood of individual teacher's limited understanding of the implications of visual loss, as fewer teachers would be likely to teach particular children on a weekly basis. This might also be the case for CYPVI moving from infant to junior school in the primary phase and from lower to upper school in the secondary phase. Given that mainstream teachers are not VI specialists and receive very little or no VI-specific training, a lack of understanding regarding equipment is perhaps explicable and supports existing evidence of teachers having little opportunity to develop strategies for teaching CYPVI effectively (RNIB, 2013).

Some of the CYPSVI in the current study also reported a lack of teacher understanding in relation to seating position – in particular it was evident that the CYPSVI themselves did not always consider it necessary to be sat at the front. Although presumably intended by their teachers as an accessibility

increasing adjustment, it was apparent from the interview data that there are times when a teacher's perceptions of a young person's VI are incongruent with that of the CYPSVI themselves. This appears to be experienced as unsettling for the CYPSVI in pursuit of establishing their identity. In particular, CYPSVI noted the negative connotations of sitting at the front (linked to misbehaviour) and a removal of a sense of agency and opportunities to sit with friends.

Some CYPSVIs also reported a lack of *emotional* understanding from teachers. Although there is little current research which addresses the issue of emotional understanding directly, Osterman (2000) suggested that teacher support is vital to a SOB; Williams and Downing's (1998) study also concluded that teachers play a central role in helping pupils achieve a SOB. Fortunately then, some demonstrations of teacher understanding were also reported in the current study by some CYPSVIs.

Importantly, one CYPSVI (YP6-Yr10) thought that having teachers who had prior experience of working with other CYPVI had been helpful. Another CYPSVI reported that, where there is teacher understanding, a need for TA support may be precluded. In considering the issue of teachers' emotional understanding, it is perhaps also pertinent to consider the pressure placed on schools in relation to academic attainment. It is conceivable that any efforts to deepen emotional understanding may be overshadowed by a focus on academic work. Indeed, it has been reported that aspects of education falling beyond the traditional curriculum may be neglected (Douglas et al. 2009).

Through both CYPSVI and QTVI reports, however, it became evident that QTVIs demonstrated the greatest levels of understanding of CYPSVIs' needs in the current study. QTVIs are required to hold a specialist qualification in VI, in addition to qualified teacher status (RNIB, 2013) so this finding was perhaps to be expected. Understanding was demonstrated in relation to seating position – recognising the importance of sitting with friends, where possible – together with the desire of some CYPSVI to neither highlight nor exacerbate feelings of difference. This was seen to be important given the QTVIs reported role in adaptation – an element of their role that may too gather prominence in a secondary school context, in which the visual demands upon a CYPVI are significantly increased as a result of increased workload and reduction in print size (Khadka, Ryan, Margrain, Woodhouse & Davies, 2012). It was evident too that the QTVIs saw their role as being one of providing both social and contact opportunities (to meet other CYPVI) – both identified as contributory factors to successful inclusion (George & Duquette 2006).

Although only one QTVI reported their role to include raising awareness among teachers, there was a strong message from the Inclusion Managers in the current study that they were reliant upon the QTVI attached to their school for indirect, VI-specific, training. According to the Scottish Sensory Centre (2005), visiting teacher services for CYPVI (QTVIs) in Scotland play a pivotal role in raising awareness in school about issues of self-esteem, identifying those at risk and promoting strategic intervention work in school. Furthermore, awareness-raising among mainstream teachers of the effects of a VI on learning is said to be key to inclusive provision across the UK (RNIB, 2013). Given the results of a recent study that reported that many QTVIs feel ill-

equipped to teach literacy through braille (McCall et al., 2011), it was interesting to note that one QTVI in this study reported undertaking a braille course specifically for working with teenagers.

5.4 In School: CYPVI and a Researcher With VI

Armstrong and Moore (2004) noted the traditional tendency of research "to ignore or minimise the influence of insider perspectives" (p.9), establishing a distance between a researcher's own commitments and the research context. Owing to my personal experience of VI, however, it was the intention throughout the current study to research 'with', rather than 'on', the CYPSVI. Upon reflection, I have felt that the decision to do so was a valuable one.

As noted in Chapter Four (section 4.1.4.1), the disclosure of my own VI appeared to have an impact upon the CYPSVI. Although not articulated by all, this perceived impact was thought to have been positive – both with regard to establishing rapport and in the extent to which sensitive information was subsequently shared. It is possible that, in disclosing personal and sensitive information about myself, the CYPSVI felt 'permissioned' to do so themselves. Further, it was felt that my disclosure perhaps changed the dynamic of the interviews for the better, as the CYPSVI too felt that I was researching 'with' and not 'on' them. As noted in Chapter Three (section 3.3.3), it was also felt that my increased levels of empathy - arising from personal experience of VI - resulted in a deeper engagement with the data set, which in turn led to a higher level, more interpretative analysis. Indeed, Barnes and Mercer (1997) have noted the necessity of having a disability in order to carry out meaningful disability research.

5.5 In School: CYPSVI and Teaching Assistants

The recent debate regarding TA support (e.g. Blatchford et al., 2009 et seq.) has been a highly prominent one. Interestingly, this was somewhat reflected in the current study as the CYPSVI spoke extensively about their TAs and expressed a variety of views.

In light of the Blatchford et al. (2009 et seq.) research, which reported a negative relationship between TA support and pupil progress, it is important to note that three quarters of the CYPSVI in the current study expressed their appreciation for TA support. That some of the CYPSVI expressed appreciation for TA support with academic work is of particular significance, given the TAs role in providing in-class and curriculum support. TAs for CYPVI also have a responsibility for adapting and modifying the learning environment for those they support. In the current study some of these adaptations and modifications were seen to be helpful by the CYPSVI, however, others were not. For example, a lack of understanding in relation to the enlargement of worksheets was evidenced. The CYPSVI described how, although they had received larger worksheets, the font size had remained the same. Importantly, while some TAs are employed by LA VI services, most are employed by individual schools; they are not required to have specialist training (RNIB, 2013), although this training is available (Partners in Learning course; RNIB 2014). This may help to explain the aforementioned lack of understanding. Indeed, evidence indicates that TAs can best support children with VI if they have an understanding of VI and how it affects the individual (Douglas et al. 2009).

The CYPSVI in the current study also spoke about the number of TAs that they had to support them in class. They reported not knowing when they would be receiving TA support or which TA would be providing it, and commented "*so it's whoever's available I think really" (YP1-Yr7).* It is interesting to think about the message that this may send a CYPVI. It is conceivable that a CYPVI may feel anxious and uncertain in such a situation. This, however, stands in contrast to other CYPSVI reports in the current study, that TA support provided a feeling of security. Baumeister and Leary (1995) shed some light here with their suggestion that frequent contact is an important factor in developing a SOB and a strong attachment bond, with which those not seen frequently does not satisfy.

A sense of feeling watched was described by some CYPSVI. Although Roe (2008) has proposed that supervising from afar can be an effective means of providing indirect support, such reports by the CYPSVI in the current study suggest that doing so can be an uncomfortable experience for them. It is possible that supervision of any kind would be perceived as immature by CYPVI. The current study also found clear evidence to support the findings of Conroy (2007) that TAs may create physical or emotional barriers to a child's interactions with their peers. CYPSVI reports stated that their TAs acted as a barrier to peer interaction both in group work and when sitting next to them in class. As such, support was also found for the idea that, whilst TAs play an important role, they may also prevent social inclusion (RNIB, 2013). It is a concern, however, that, although the undesirability of TA presence was acknowledged by the TAs themselves, their intended non-involvement did not happen in practice. More positively, both the CYPSVI and TAs were in

agreement that TA support during break or lunch was neither helpful nor necessary. The CYPSVI in the current study strongly reported the perceived impact upon their popularity of receiving support at these times.

Finally, it is a significant concern that a loss of independence and a sense of learned helplessness were reported by one CYPSVI (YP2-Yr10). Indeed, Banks et al. (2001), state that young people should be seen as active, independent and competent and not simply as passive recipients of adult influence.

5.6 In School: Other Professionals Working with the CYPSVI

5.6.1 CYPSVI and Habilitation Workers

Hatlen (2004) noted the importance of careful planning and consideration of orientation and mobility (habilitation) support for successful inclusion. Indeed, in the transition from primary to secondary school, the space requiring navigation by a CYPVI becomes much larger and more complex; the issue of orientation and mobility support therefore becomes increasingly prominent in a secondary school environment. It is significant then that over half the CYPSVI in the current study reported their confusion, anxiety and even fear at the time of their transition to secondary school, yet only three CYPSVI reported receiving helpful support from a HW at this time. According to the RNIB (2013), a 'mobility teacher' (sic)/HW should be available to teach CYPSVI in order to enable them to achieve the greatest possible independence. The advantages of receiving HW support at the time of transition were articulated by YP3-Yr8 who felt he *"knew where to go better than other people did" (YP3-Yr8).*

The two HW respondents in the current study referred to both the direct and indirect nature of their work with the CYPSVI. They spoke about their role in

equipping them with the skills to advocate for themselves and travel independently. Importantly, when exploring the idea of independence for CYPVI, both self-advocacy and mobility factors (together with access to information) were found to be key (Hewett et al., 2013). One HW (HW5) also reported parental liaison to be part of his role. In particular, he reported his long-term plan to persuade YP8-Yr10's parents of her capabilities for independent travel. This is important since a protective family has been identified as a distinct challenge for CYPVI wanting to get around independently (Hewett et al., 2013).

One HW (HW3) also reported his role in delivering training, in part to ensure that necessary adaptations were made within the school environment. Gray (2008) reported seeing VI-specific training to raise awareness of support for mobility and independence skills as particularly important in enabling opportunities to develop independence and self-mastery. Interestingly, while the QTVI role in raising awareness in schools is well documented (e.g. Scottish Sensory Centre, 2005), Miller et al. (2011) note that habilitation services may also be used in this regard. Further, it is possible that the expressed interest in undertaking mobility training by all five TA respondents in School C is testament to the perceived value of the support provided by HWs.

Finally, it is noteworthy that one CYPSVI (YP2-Yr10) in the current study had had his HW support withdrawn as a result of financial cuts. Although he was able to reason that he no longer required HW support, financial cuts raise important issues for those CYPVI that do. The RNIB (2013) have indeed reported concerns regarding the relationship between public sector cuts, a

reduced staff in LA VI services and subsequent increasing needs thresholds for access to support.

5.6.2 CYPSVI and Educational Psychologists

All five of the EPs attached to the schools attended by the CYPSVI participated in the current study. However, with the exception of one EP (EP5), who had completed the statutory assessment for YP8-Yr10, none reported having any involvement with the CYPSVI.

The five EP respondents completed their training at four different institutions: one was Scotland-based and the remainder were London-based. Although bound by a common curriculum, there exists an element of flexibility among the individual institutions with regard to training content and delivery. It was interesting to note then that the amount of VI training across the training programmes attended by the EPs in the current study varied between ½ day and 2-3 days. Further, in reporting 2-3 days, EP1 declared her uncertainty about the exact length of VI training, noting that 24 years had passed since completion of her training. Since EP4, who completed her training programme at the same institution more recently, reported receiving just one day of VI training, it is possible that training content has changed in that time period or that EP1 was mistaken. If the latter is taken to be true, it is conceivable that EP1's retrospective amplification of the number of days allocated to VI training during her training was indicative of its perceived importance. Had she not thought the area of VI to be important or relevant to the EP role, the reported number of days allocated to training may have been reduced.

Of the five EP respondents, four had gained a Masters qualification and one had completed the course at Doctoral level. It was evident that the increased length of the Doctoral programme did not seem to equate to an increase in VI training.

In asking EPs how long they had been qualified, it was hoped to get a sense of how this may/may not have impacted upon their level of VI experience. However, despite a notable variability in the length of time that EPs in the current study had been qualified (between one and 24 years), a significant difference with regard to their involvement in VI cases was not apparent. Overall, EPs reported being involved in between two and four VI cases *throughout their careers to date*; this dropped to between one and three VI cases when asked specifically about their work with CYP for whom VI was their main presenting need, with no additional needs.

That the only EP involvement with the CYPSVI in the current study entailed completion of a statutory assessment is noteworthy. Since approximately two-thirds of secondary age CYPVI have a statement of SEN (Morris & Smith, 2008), the importance of the EP role in the statementing process for CYPVI is not to be denied. However, this finding is perhaps indicative of a tendency for EPs to be viewed as 'gatekeepers to resources' and suggests that ongoing clarification of the EP role is essential if preconceptions are to be dispelled and regression to a traditional medical model avoided (Dennis, 2004). It seems quite possible that, when working with CYPVI, Inclusion Managers/SENCOs may consider only QTVIs and HWs to be relevant professionals and, thus, not approach their EP for psychological advice.

However, given their putative increased role in the current SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), it seems that Inclusion Managers/SENCOs would likely welcome, and benefit from, alternative specialist support such as that offered by EPs. While it is argued in section 5.16 that EPs indeed have many skills to offer with regard to the facilitation of social inclusion for CYPVI, due consideration must also be given to the extent to which EPs themselves feel confident to do so given their limited VI-specific training. The proposal, within the current SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), for increased levels of joint training and professional development for the various professionals working with CYP with SEN should go some way in helping to alleviate this concern.

5.6.3 CYPSVI and lunchtime staff

A lack of understanding from lunchtime staff was highlighted by only one CYPSVI (YP10-Yr7) in the current study. It nevertheless seems pertinent to consider this within the context of social inclusion, particularly since these members of staff are present during the times of a school day with a purely social designation (such as breaks and lunchtimes). Further, given the likelihood that all adults in school are perceived and referred to as 'teachers' (by CYPVI and their sighted peers alike), it is quite possible that lunchtime staff too have an important role where SOB is concerned. One may question the extent to which successful social inclusion can occur where inclusive practices are fostered by most, but not all, school staff. Indeed, Soresi et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of involving all stakeholders of the school community if traditional educational practices are to be changed. It seems crucial then, that whole-school VI training is available in schools attended by CYPVI.

5.7 Out of School: CYPSVI and Family

For two of the CYPSVI in the current study, their experiences in the home environment were reported to be markedly different to those in school. Moreover, their experience at home was reported to be superior. For YP10-Yr7, her reports indicated that the lack of necessity for extra help or support in the home environment was significant and that the support she received in school was therefore what caused her to *"care about [her] sight" (YP10-Yr7)* in the school environment. It is possible that, no matter how helpful and necessary the support provided is objectively deemed to be by the adults working with a CYPVI, the CYPVI's subjective preference may be for no support at all. Again, support of any kind may serve as a reminder of their VI and, thus, difference.

However, YP2-Yr10 – who related his superior experience in the home to an increased sense of independence – suggested that this independence was enabled by *"having all the resources I need" (YP2-Yr10).* He went on to explain that the many variables within his school environment instead posed barriers to his independence. His use of the word 'variables' was interesting and alluded to the complexities of a larger, secondary school environment previously referred to. It was interesting too to consider the fondness with which YP2-Yr10 spoke of his primary school experience; it is possible that there are parallels to be drawn between the home and primary school environment that cannot be drawn with a secondary school environment. As such, the challenges of fostering inclusive practices in a secondary school environment are further highlighted.

Finally, YP10-Yr7 also spoke of her increased sense of agency in the home: *"At home, like, my mum lets me do whatever I want" (YP10-Yr7).* This stands in

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contrast to her reports in relation to school in which she twice spoke of being *"forced" (YP10-Yr7)* by adults to do things. Importantly, her reports indicated that she had interpreted her mother's willingness to let her do whatever she wanted as a desire for her to be independent. While the parental role can indeed be instrumental in facilitating independence (discussed in section 5.8 in more detail), it is important that the multi-faceted nature of independence – inclusive of self-help, mobility and self-advocacy skills (Hewett et al., 2013) - is discussed with CYPVI. In order to ensure that the provision of support for CYPVI is not misinterpreted as any attempt to quash independence, close liaison between home, school and other professionals and the CYPVI themselves seems essential.

5.8 Out of School: CYPSVI and Parents

Although parental promotion of CYPSVI independence was reported in one instance (PG4 re:YP4-Yr9), the findings of the current study also lend some support to Wolffe's (2006) view that, in adolescence, CYPVI may experience greater difficulty in establishing independence from their parents. A degree of parental overprotectiveness was reported or explicitly stated by some of the CYPSVI in the current study. Their comments indicated that their parents may have experienced a difficulty in 'letting go' (Wolffe, 2006). This is a concern since, according to Roe (1998, as cited in Roe, 2008), overprotection can pose a barrier to social inclusion. Indeed, CYPSVI spoke about not being allowed to travel far from home (owing to a parental fear for their safety) which, conceivably, negatively impacts upon social opportunities. Consideration was also given to the potential for a diminished sense of agency resulting from parental overprotectiveness, together with influential parental cultural/religious

beliefs, of which the language of *"doesn't let me out" (YP12-Yr11)* and *"not allowed to" (QT3 re: YP6-Yr10)* was indicative. This is particularly important given Lewis and Wolffe's (2006) suggestion that both autonomy and a sense of personal agency are required in the formation of identity.

In contrast, one parent saw their role as being one of providing 'opportunities'. Notably, parental provision of opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities featured in George and Duquette's (2006) model for successful inclusion. Roe (1998, as cited in Roe, 2008) also stated that opportunities for CYPVI to learn about themselves and others can, not only facilitate the development of social skills and social competency, but also promote social inclusion. While that is not disputed here, it was interesting to note the possible reliance of CYPSVI upon their parents in the *provision* of, or *making accessible*, these opportunities. As Kroksmark and Nordell (2001) noted, this could be due to a dependence on their parents for transportation. Where non- or less proactive parents are concerned however, questions are raised regarding the provision of social opportunities, and, thus, the potential for promoting social inclusion.

It is possible that parents of CYPVI who are less proactive in providing social opportunities for their child have not been provided with the necessary professional advice at the critical period around diagnosis (Cole-Hamilton, 1996). At this time parents need to be equipped with the knowledge to understand their child's VI, its implications for development and subsequent support needed to enable their child to reach their full potential (Cole-Hamilton, 1996). Arguably, this becomes increasingly important for parents of CYPVI

diagnosed after the age of two, since the development of the child's social and communication skills can be seriously impeded as a result of missed opportunities for early intensive health, education and habilitation support (Dale & Sonksen, 2002). Finally, given the implications of a late diagnosis noted above, it is noteworthy that one study evidenced an increased likelihood of a child's VI going undetected in some Asian ethnic groups (Rahi et al. 2010). This could be a contributory factor within the current study, given the ethnically diverse composition of the sample.

5.9 Out of School: CYPSVI and Friends in the Wider World

Ware (1998, as cited in Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2000) states that inclusion involves the presumption of belonging to a regular class in the *neighbourhood* school. Indeed, Human (2010) noted that travelling a distance to attend a school with a VI base can make establishing social contact with others difficult. However, in the current study, for the CYPSVI doing so, the distance appeared to have a differing impact upon their friendships outside of school. While YP4-Yr9 was reported (by her TA and parent) to have friends with whom she socialised after school, YP12-Yr11 reported a greater level of difficulty in this regard. Rather than facilitating social inclusion, then, it appeared that attending a mainstream school was perhaps further isolating him from his peer group.

5.10 Out of School: CYPSVI and Siblings

Only two CYPSVI in the current study spoke about their siblings: YP7-Yr8* who had a younger brother with a VI and YP10-Yr7 who had three siblings without a VI. YP7-Yr8* seemed to report a sense of a shared experience with her brother,

in particular, noting the hardship of having a VI. It seemed too that, because of this shared experience, and in spite of his younger age, YP7-Yr8*'s brother was seen as a source of support. Further, it is interesting to consider the VI status of YP7-Yr8*'s sibling in light of her decision to not have friends in school with visual needs. It is conceivable that she felt she was provided with an 'implicit' understanding in the home environment, thus rendering it unnecessary for the school environment; alternatively, having both friends in school and a sibling at home with a VI may present an inescapable reminder of her own VI.

YP10-Yr7, who reported that her mother treated her differently to her siblings, considered herself to be the unluckiest member of her family. As such, the previously reported sense of injustice, borne out of comparison with sighted peers, was echoed.

Perhaps also a heightened sense of difference is further exacerbated when a CYPVI is the only sibling to have a VI. As stated by Pring (2008), interactions with others, including siblings, in early life often provide the richest source of knowledge from which to learn about the world.

5.11 VI 'Self'

A major theme to arise from the CYPSVI interviews was one of projected anxieties – a new concept in this field of research. From their reports, it was evident that some of the CYPSVI felt concerned as to what their sighted peers would think of their equipment use or TA support. With regard to equipment, these anxieties were expressed in relation to use of a laptop with attached camera, voice activated software and use of a long cane. The CYPSVIs

anxieties regarding equipment echoed the results of Gray's (2010) study that found that CYPVI felt their need for equipment (enabling them to access learning), acted as a barrier to the formation of friendships.

It is perhaps noteworthy, however, that anxieties in relation to laptop use *alone* were not reported; at a time when laptop use in the classroom has become commonplace, use of such equipment may have become normalised. This is important since the CYPSVIs anxieties appeared to stem from a concern that their equipment would highlight difference. For example, when talking about using her long cane, YP10-Yr7 explained: *"people might think I'm a weirdo" (YP10-Yr7).* Importantly, when asked, the CYPSVI that expressed these anxieties also reported that such comments had in fact not been made by their peers. In line with Scambler and Hopkins (1986 as cited in Hess 2010), the CYPSVI in the current study appeared to be experiencing Felt rather than Enacted Stigma. It seemed that their projected anxieties were a reflection of the way in which they perceived themselves, rather than any known perception of others.

YP8-Yr10 also introduced the idea of uncertainty about the self and, in particular, uncertainty about how the self would be received in interpersonal relationships. Her anxiety acted as a barrier in friendship formation. While some CYPSVI conveyed a level of ambiguity around how they would be received in interpersonal relationships, others more directly reported a fear of rejection.

Gere and MacDonald (2010) suggested that insecurity can make individuals hyper-vigilant for signs of rejection, rendering the forming and maintaining of

friendships more difficult. Murray et al. (2008, p. 429) proposed a *"risk regulation"* model and suggested that, if rejection is more hurtful than acceptance is satisfying, individuals will prioritise self-protection over connectedness.

Furthermore, they proposed that risk regulation is more likely in individuals with low self-esteem since rejection could be devastating to the individual's sense of self. With regard to SOB, Baumeister and Leary (1995) stated that even thinking about loss of connections can bring about negative affect.

In relation to their fear of rejection, it was evident that some of the CYPSVI in the current study were reluctant to disclose that they had visual needs to peers and friends. Clearly communicated was the idea that, if *peers* were to know about their VI, they would not wish to initiate a friendship with the CYPSVI and that, if *friends* were to know about their VI, it *"might spoil [their] friendship" (YP11-Yr10).* It is conceivable that the CYPSVI in the current study harboured concerns regarding their absence of vision becoming synonymous with their identity (Rodney, 2003) and envisaged that others would experience difficulty in recognising them as a 'whole' of which their disability forms only one aspect (Swart, 2004, as cited in Human, 2010). Some of the CYPSVI made efforts to conceal their VI and their desire to be 'normal' was evident through the adaptations they made to the environment around them.

It was apparent that there were many influences upon the CYPSVI's emerging sense of self, including: anxiety about their sighted peers' perceptions of their equipment use or TA support, uncertainty about how they would be received in

interpersonal relationships and a concern that their absence of vision would become synonymous with their identity (Rodney, 2003) – the latter caused some CYPSVI to make adaptations to their environment in an effort to conceal their VI. The use of the term VI 'self', constructed and developed by the author is used to capture the multiple dimensions of the issues just raised.

Some of the adaptations made by the CYPSVI – alternative methods of identifying people and establishing a fixed location in school to meet friends - appeared to be helpful. Indeed, Roe (2008) acknowledged that locating friends in the playground can be a challenge in a school context and this is a challenge exacerbated in a secondary context where young people must adjust to a larger, more complex environment.

Some of the CYPSVI in the current study also spoke about their dislike of crowds, referring to both transitions between lessons and break and lunch times. They had subsequently developed strategies that enabled them to avoid the "*hoard of elephants sort of stampeding along the corridor" (YP3-Yr8).* It was also interesting to note that, although only one of the CYPSVI (YP2-Yr10) reported feeling unable to join in activities with their sighted friends at break and lunch, several CYPSVI in the current study spoke of 'hanging out' at these times. As noted in Chapter Four (section 4.3.3), while it cannot be assumed that 'hanging out' is an adaptation rather than simply a preferred social activity for secondary aged pupils, it is nevertheless possible that doing so helps to diminish, or at least not highlight, difference. It is interesting then to consider the differences between primary and secondary schooling in this regard. Where a greater emphasis is placed on structured games and activities in primary

school, it is possible that the issue of access may in fact heighten feelings of difference in a primary school context.

A striking finding of the current study was the way in which some of the CYPSVI spoke about break and lunch times. A sense of escapism was described. They reported how they felt *"freer" (YP4-Yr9)* at these times and how they saw it as *"an opportunity to reconnect" (YP2-Yr10)* to themselves. YP2-Yr10's use of the word 'reconnect' is highly pertinent given the wealth of literature that refers to connectedness as an important facet of SOB (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brutsaert & Van Houtte, 2004; Murray et al., 2008). Interestingly, Naraine and Fels (2013) reported on the importance of break and lunch time activities for individuals with blind and low vision. They referred to such times as 'strategic chat time' and suggested they present opportunities for the development of relationships and friendships and informal social interaction.

Findings of the current study also related to the adaptations made by the CYPSVI that were seemingly unhelpful. The reluctance of two of the CYPSVI to use their long canes was reported, through either self or adult reports. YP10-Yr7 described her embarrassment when using the long cane and her subsequent determination not to use it when travelling to and from school or in the playground, wherever possible. Her TA (TA7) reported that YP10-Yr7 was not allowed into the playground unless she agreed to fully extend her long cane. The same was true for YP12-Yr11, however his refusal to do so meant that he did not go outside at break and lunchtimes which, in the context of social inclusion, seemed somewhat counterintuitive. His behaviour perhaps provides a further example of risk-regulation and self-protection, as proposed by (Murray et

al., 2008). The disparate ages of the two CYPSVI described above seemed pertinent and, again, was taken to be indicative of a CYPVIs desire to diminish as difference as being more pervasive than Waddell (2005) suggested.

A tension between recognition of the necessity of support and recognition of its undesirability was demonstrated by some CYPSVI in the current study. Reports from four CYPSVI indicated that this tension had led to a sense of internal conflict – a desire to be 'normal' or 'fit in' while also recognising and balancing this with the need for differentiated support in order to reach their academic and social potential. Sacks (2006) would suggest that this arises as a consequence of these learners neither having an identity as a blind person, nor being considered fully sighted. One CYPSVI (YP10-Yr7) acknowledged that, whilst she may strive to be 'normal', there remain differences that are unable to be overcome.

Importantly, several of the CYPSVI in the current study reported how the anxieties they had experienced regarding others' perceptions of their equipment use diminished over time. Time also seemed to be an important factor with regard to the CYPSVIs disclosure of their VI to friends and an increased level of trust was conveyed. The impact of time - both with regard to reducing anxieties about equipment use and disclosing VI to peers/friends – is perhaps indicative of a shift in the CYPSVIs self-concept over time. This is important since some researchers have suggested that self-concept remains relatively stable throughout adolescence (Coleman, 1974; Offer, 1974; Piers & Harris, 1964, as cited in Halder & Datta, 2012) and, as such, sheds new light on the matter for a specific population. Furthermore, the current study also highlighted an

increased acceptance of the self as time passed. Indeed, one CYPSVI (YP4-Yr9) appeared to have moved beyond acceptance of her VI and spoke of the superiority of life without sight and a different perspective on the world. According to YP4-Yr9, her own attitude had been instrumental in this regard. Indeed, Bergeron and Wanet-Defalque (2013) note the importance of individual factors, such as resilience, regarding the psychological adjustment to vision loss.

It is interesting to consider this point in relation to the only CYPSVI for whom concerns regarding emotional well-being were reported – YP6-Yr10 (diagnosed at 2 ½ years of age). An operation conducted two years ago, to improve the sight in her 'good' eye resulted in short-lived success before leading to a permanent loss of vision. In an informal discussion, her QTVI (QT3) described the experience as "traumatic" for YP6-Yr10, further commenting on her joy at being given her sight back before it was then taken away. To some extent, YP6-Yr10's unfortunate experience provided support for Stockley and Brooks (1995) who suggested that an individual with a VI may be particularly emotionally affected when their eyesight starts a new period of deterioration. However, two years on, concerns regarding YP6-Yr10s emotional well-being remain. In exploring the issue of psychological adjustment to visual impairment, Bergeron and Wanet-Defalque (2013) found that individuals who have lived with a VI for more than two years manifested higher acceptance and lower denial than those who had had recent vision loss (≤2 years). It is possible then that YP6-Yr10 may soon enter a more accepting phase in relation to her vision loss.

Importantly, significant concerns regarding emotional well-being were not reported for eleven of the CYPSVI in the current study. However, it was notable that, during the recruitment phase, where home and/or school had concerns regarding emotional well-being, consent to the participation of the CYPSVI was not given. It is therefore possible that the sample in the current study is skewed in this regard. Nevertheless, reports suggesting that the 'patient journey' can be markedly different for CYPVI with VI as their main presenting need, when compared to those CYPVI with additional disabilities (Rahi et al., 2010) are otherwise corroborated.

In light of YP6-Yr10s experience, it is pertinent to give further consideration to her decision to decline the offer of counselling or therapy. If it is accepted that, given the duration of her most recent loss, she is in a phase of denial (Bergeron & Wanet-Defalque, 2013), the literature would indeed have predicted her lack of uptake of such services – denial is considered to be a barrier to the utilisation of rehabilitation services (including psycho-social support as well as functional training) (De Boer et al. 2006; Pollard et al., 2003). However, it is conceivable that, given the deleterious consequences of her decision making historically, she has grown reluctant to exercise her voice.

Positively, some adult participants (a QTVI, HW, TA and parent) in the current study provided reports that were suggestive of pupil voice being privileged. Importantly, the majority of the CYPSVI to whom these adults referred were also able to give examples of occasions in which they had been involved in decision making. Indeed, according to Kippax (1999), an individual with low vision should be an essential part of the decision-making process. It is of

significant concern then that half of the CYPSVI in the current study reported instances in which their voice did not appear to have been privileged, nor even heard. Where school development is concerned, Fielding (2006) suggested that young people are agents of change and should engage in dialogue with peers and school staff alike, with the aim of creating a more democratic narrative.

5.12 Reflections of a VI Researcher

The interactions between the CYPSVI and myself, in relation to the perceived impact upon the research process, were discussed in section 5.4, Here, my personal journey throughout the research process will be addressed.

At the beginning of this journey, I was, of course, aware that I had 'problems with my eyes'. However, only as the research process continued did I truly acknowledge that I too am in fact 'visually impaired'. Through engagement with the supervision process, a recognition of my increasing tendency to locate myself with the CYPSVI as time went on was also enabled. As Creswell (2009) has stated, qualitative researchers interpret data through an 'inescapable personal lens'. This became particularly apparent when interviewing the CYPSVI - it was notable that certain topics or comments raised by the CYPSVI held some resonance for me, bringing emotions to the fore. As such, constant engagement in reflexive practice (Fox et al., 2007) was necessary. While the rigorous efforts to adopt reflexive practices within the current study are documented in Chapter Three (section 3.7), I also perceived there to be a positive impact of my enhanced level of empathy with the CYPSVI (Chapter Three, section 3.3.3). It is hoped that this level of empathy will be beneficial in my future work as an EP since the role requires more than the 'science' of

applying an underlying knowledge base; it too calls for the 'art' of facilitating human interactions – an 'artful science' (Idol & West, 1987).

5.13 Strengths of the Current Study

- There exists a paucity of research in the UK regarding the socio-emotional experiences of CYPVI and, therefore, the current study contributed significantly to the research base by gathering in-depth, context-specific information from a variety of sources (enabling strong triangulation of data), while foregrounding the voices of the CYPSVI;

- Being a researcher with personal experience of VI was beneficial in the gathering of a rich data set;

- Methodological strengths included: effective use of the piloting process, sensitivity of the interview schedule to the potential language difficulties of CYPSVI (e.g. Calvert et al., 2004) and sample size – exceeding that that might be expected given the low incidence nature of VI.

5.14 Limitations of the Current Study

- The decision to focus on a specific category of VI (SVI) may have limited the extent to which the findings of the current study can be generalised within the given school contexts;

- Although questionnaires were distributed to the adult participants in order to triangulate the data from the CYPSVI within given school contexts, not all were returned. Therefore, for some of the CYPSVI within the current study, not all of the information, intended to provide a rich, context-specific picture of their social inclusion, was gathered;

- Owing to the lack of EP involvement with the CYPSVI in the current study, information gathered regarding the EP role in facilitating their social inclusion was rather less than anticipated.

5.15 Suggested Areas for Further Research

Throughout the research process, a number of potentially pertinent issues were raised that have not been (fully) explored within the current study, either due to a lack of direct relevance to the research questions or lack of substantive data. These issues are listed below as suggested areas of further research in order that they may be explored in greater depth and contribute to the evidence base:

- When interviewing CYPVI with a similar VI to my own (blind in one eye), the disparity between current levels of support and that which I received as an adolescent was noted. Having never considered myself to be 'visually impaired', prior to embarking on this research process, the question of whether support can in fact fuel a VI identity was raised. Since there is considerable variation in levels of provision between LAs (RNIB, 2013), it would be interesting to explore the relationship between level of support provided and extent to which individuals consider themselves to be 'visually impaired';

- Ambiguities regarding identity were identified in the current study. Interview data revealed the multiple ways in which the CYPSVI referred to themselves: disabled, visually impaired and 'normal'. Although this information was not included in the current study, owing to elevated levels of inference, this warrants further exploration. Further, some of the language and terminology used by the CYPSVI in the current study was interesting. Given the research topic and specific needs of the sample,

phrases such as "turn a blind eye" (YP4-Yr9) seemed to hold particular resonance. It is suggested that using discourse analysis as an analytic method to explore these suggested research areas may prove illuminating;

- Further exploration of the impact of lunchtime staff on the social inclusion of CYPVI seems warranted. In particular, the extent to which they may bolster or impede otherwise inclusive practices in schools should be considered;

- With a view to further informing EP practice, it would be of great benefit to conduct a large-scale study, exploring the nature of EP involvement with CYPVI more widely. Where EPs have successfully contributed to the social inclusion of CYPVI, an analysis of factors enabling this success would be valuable.

5.16 Implications for EP Practice

It is the intention within this section to detail ways in which the EP role may be implicated in facilitating the social inclusion of CYPVI in secondary mainstream settings. In doing so, RQ3 will be directly addressed.

EPs are considered both indirect and direct agents of change (Bozic, 2004; Idol & West, 1987), working at a number of different levels in order to engender this change within systems. These levels are individual, group and organisational (Wagner, 2000) and this section will be structured accordingly.

5.16.1 Individual level

- EPs' capacity to engender change is facilitated by strong interpersonal skills - a core competency for applied psychologists and a prerequisite for training. The ability of an EP to quickly establish rapport with individuals would be vital when working with CYPVI;

- Some of the CYPSVI in the current study referred to the inaccessible language used by the medical professionals involved in their case. Despite possessing a high level of knowledge and skill, EPs are encouraged to adopt a non-authoritarian stance to their work, bringing non-threatening expertise (Conoley & Conoley, 1982; Lindsey, 1994);

- EPs are able to employ techniques such as Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955; Ravenette, 1999) through which a young person is able to explore their fundamental constructs. Given the complexities revealed in the current study regarding the development of the CYPSVIs constructs, such work could prove valuable;

- Negative self-perceptions were evident among the CYPSVI in the current study and these were seen to have an impact on their behaviour. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (Beck, 1979) – a therapeutic tool utilised by EPs – could prove helpful in challenging some of the negative assumptions CYPVI may hold about themselves;

- The current study highlighted that there can be a tendency – for adults, peers and the CYPSVI themselves – to become deficit focused. In such cases, there is a danger of a deficit discourse prevailing. In contrast, EPs adopt techniques such as Solution Focused Brief Therapy (Ajmal, 2001), which would enable CYPVIs to be reminded of their strengths and resources. They too would be empowered to find their own strategies

and solutions to self-identified problems (De Jong & Berg, 1998). In doing so, the CYPVI would be empowered to engender change themselves. This may be of particular relevance, for example, where issues of bullying are raised.

5.16.2 Group level

- Given the reported difficulties regarding transition for CYPVI, carefully developed transition programmes would likely be beneficial. Although transition here refers predominantly to that between primary and secondary school, such programmes may also have utility for transitions within both primary and secondary phases. EPs would be well placed to offer consultative support, or indeed co-deliver, transition programmes. It is further possible that communication between primary and secondary schools may be facilitated by an EP;

- EPs may also be able to assist schools in setting up evidence-based social skills groups for CYPVI, with the goal of social inclusion in mind. Again, co-delivery might be possible or an EP may adopt a more consultative role;

5.16.3 Organisational level

- Opportunities for EPs to deliver training may also exist. In particular, EPs may be well placed to inform school staff of the developmental concerns for CYPVI and raise awareness regarding their social and emotional needs. Importantly, it is suggested that any training should involve all members of staff;

- EPs can also play an important role in school policy development. Where inclusion policies are concerned, EPs can encourage schools to adopt a holistic view of CYPVIs needs and give consideration to social aspects of inclusion. This may include working with sighted peers to celebrate, rather than denounce, difference.

5.17 Summary and Main Conclusions

RQ1:

- Peers' lack of understanding (6/12), highlights the need to increase knowledge and awareness amongst sighted peers;

- Impact of time upon understanding (5/12);

- Heightened sense of difference (5/12) and suggestion that they considered themselves 'not normal';

- Projected anxieties – fear of rejection (5/12);

- While helpful adaptations are made within the school environment that help to diminish difference (6/12), some in fact highlight difference (5/12);

- CYPSVI reported a need for them to adapt to their environment (5/12);

- Ambiguity regarding teacher understanding (5/12 did; 5/12 did not);

- Positive recognition of TA support (9/12);

- However, with regard to TA support CYPSVI also reported unhelpful aspects (6/12);

- 6/12 reported not being listened to.

RQ2:

- 6/12 CYPSVI were reported to have a good group of friends/ be popular; In relation to the perceived impact of VI upon social inclusion, individual differences were highlighted;

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RQ3:

- While the EPs in the current study had little or no involvement with the CYPSVI, their skillset has much to offer;

- Given the putative increased role of Inclusion Managers/SENCOs in the new SEN Code of Practice, EP support would likely be welcome.

Chapter Six

6.0 Introduction

In this final chapter, the conclusions drawn at the end of Chapter Five are discussed in greater detail. Recommendations for practice are made and linked, largely, to the new SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014).

6.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

That the CYPSVI's sighted peers lacked understanding – emotional and in relation to equipment use and support – was an important finding, revealing a need to increase knowledge and raise awareness amongst the CYPSVIs' peer group. QTVIs may be well placed to execute such a task, particularly in light of the new SEND reforms which place greater emphasis on collaborative working practices (DfE, 2014). In order to deepen understanding of CYPVIs' emotional experiences, it is suggested sighted peers be encouraged to interact with the CYPVI themselves (mediated by adults where necessary); indeed the current study showed a frequency of contact, together with a sharing of emotions and desires, were helpful in enabling understanding of the CYPSVI by sighted peers. For some of the CYPSVI in the current study, simply the act of their sighted peers *trying* to understand may have been important and meaningful, encouraging a feeling of social connectedness and important in achieving a SOB - a concept central to inclusion (Warnock, 2005).

The passing of time appeared to have a positive impact upon understanding, carrying with it important implications, particularly in relation to the transition to secondary school - indicating a need for timely support and careful transition planning. A multi-agency approach - involving all Education, Health and Care

professionals, together with parents and the CYPVI - would be necessary to cater for the reported confusion, anxiety and fear at this time, as well as to facilitate understanding of the sighted peer group. A unified approach to provision should ensure that, unlike the CYPSVI in the current study, all necessary support is provided at this time e.g. habilitation support.

Since a number of the CYPSVI in the current study appeared to have developed a heightened sense of difference, leading to a conveyed sense of isolation, it suggests important work remains to be done to promote the celebration of difference in schools. This aligns well with the SEND reforms (DfE, 2014) in which person-centred approaches actively encourage a focus on the whole CYP and their strengths, rather than their diagnostic label. Opportunities to focus on what the CYPVI *can* do would help prevent their absence of vision from becoming synonymous with their identity (Rodney, 2003) and encourage others to recognise them as a 'whole' of which their disability forms only one aspect (Swart, 2004, as cited in Human, 2010). This too may serve to counteract any tendency of CYPVI to perceive themselves less favourably – important in the context of social inclusion since self-perception is key to achieving a SOB.

While some adaptations made within school helped diminish a feeling of difference for the CYPSVI in the current study, others in fact served to highlight differences. This has important implications for the 'reasonable adjustments' (DfES, 2001b; DfE, 2010, DfE, 2013) made within school environments and, in particular, the importance of eliciting pupil voice. The SEND reforms challenge practitioners to ensure CYP are provided with the information and support

necessary to enable their participation in decision-making as fully as possible (DfE, 2014). It is proposed that eliciting pupil voice would be invaluable in ensuring that adaptations/adjustments made within school are agreeable to the CYPVI themselves. Half of the CYPSVI in the current study reported instances where their voice was neither privileged, nor even heard, and some of the more negative experiences reported may have been avoided had efforts been made to elicit their voice. Person-Centred Reviews (DfE, 2014) would present CYPVI with a formal opportunity to comment on the efficacy of their support and may, for example, include review of special transport, seating position and nature of TA support/supervision.

While eliciting pupil voice could go some way to addressing the sometimes incongruent perceptions of need between a CYPVI and their own teachers, the current study also demonstrated the need for greater awareness-raising among mainstream teaching staff. Although the low incidence of VI and greater staff base means encounters between mainstream teachers and CYPVI are likely to be rare (RNIB, 2013; Roe, 2008), this does not render the teacher role any less important in the lives of CYPVI. Indeed, teachers are said to play a central role in helping pupils achieve a SOB (Williams and Downing (1998) and therefore require greater opportunity to develop strategies for teaching CYPVI effectively (RNIB, 2013).

Training should endeavour to raise awareness of, not only CYPVIs equipment use and support, but also of their possible emotional needs/experiences. In line with the views of Gray (2008), Miller et al. (2011) and the Scottish Sensory Centre (2005), it is suggested that both QTVIs and HWs are well placed to

deliver such specialist training. As a result of the current study, however, it is further suggested that mainstream teachers, with prior experience of teaching CYPVI, and EPs (see section 5.16.3) may also be able to offer training support (epitomising the collaborative ethos of the SEND reforms, DfE, 2014). Further, the lack of understanding evidenced among teachers, TAs and lunchtime staff points to a need for training to be delivered at the whole-school level. Although Douglas et al. (2009) reported that TAs can best support CYPVI if they have an understanding of VI and how it affects an individual, specialist training is not a requirement at present (RNIB, 2013).

The practice recommendations outlined relate to the main findings of the current study and are increasingly relevant in the current educational climate - driving inclusive practice, collaborative/joint working and CYP (and familial) participation in decision-making processes (DfE, 2014). In terms of generalisability, given the low incidence nature of VI (NHS, 2011) and "staggering" variability of the VI population (Warren, 1994), the use of large sample within the current study would have become problematic. It was, however, possible to achieve a sample size of 12 which, in VI terms and according to Warren (1994), would be considered relatively large. That the sample of 12 was drawn from five different LAs further increases the generalisability potential of the findings – and implies the issues raised need to be considered more broadly.

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Appendix 1: Visual Impairment Information

Classifications of Visual Impairment

The WHO definition of visual impairment is now the most widely accepted and this is based on visual acuity scores. Those with visual acuity scores ranging from:

6/6 to 6/18 may be described as having normal vision;

<6/18 to >3/60 may be described as having low vision;

<3/60 may be described as blind.

NB A person described as having a SVI will fall under 'low vision', (<6/60 to >3/60), but towards the more severe end of the continuum.

These scores are based on the sight perception of people with 'perfect' vision. For example, a person with a score of 6/18 implies that he/she can see, when 6 metres from an object, what a person with perfect sight would see at 18 metres. Alternatively, a score of 3/60 means that an object at a distance of 3 metres appears in its detail as it would to a person with 'perfect' vision if it were 60 metres away.

It is important to note that the vast majority of people who are classed as blind have sight; usually the term blind does not mean unable to see anything at all. A person with no sight facility at all may be referred to as being totally blind.

Glossary of relevant eye conditions

Aniridia

Aniridia is a rare condition, typically affecting both eyes, that children are born with. If a CYP has Aniridia, it means the iris is missing or incomplete. The iris is a muscle that controls the size of the pupil and, thus, the amount of light let into the eye. When the iris is missing or incomplete, the eye is not able to adjust to differing levels of light. For some, this may lead to mild, blurred vision and sensitivity to light; for others it may lead to substantial sight loss.

Aphakia

Aphakia refers to the absence of the lens in the eye. It may be congenital, however typically occurs as a result of surgical removal of a cataract. A person with Aphakia will have an impaired ability to focus.

Cataracts

Opacity in the lens of the eye that is present before birth. Cataracts prevent light from reaching the retina and are treated surgically by removing the lens. Once removed, the eye is no longer able to focus and the child must wear glasses, contact lenses, or have a surgically implanted artificial lens to enable them to see. A student with this condition will usually be sensitive to light and glare. Many children with cataracts have severely impaired vision, even with corrective lenses.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma can be regarded as a group of diseases that have optic neuropathy in common. This is caused by raised intraocular pressures which can lead to

sight loss as a result of damage to the optic nerve. There are several types of glaucoma, however, the two most common are primary open angle glaucoma, having a slow and insidious onset, and angle closure glaucoma, which is less common and tends to be more acute.

Hypermetropia

Hypermetropia is also known as long sightedness. A CYP with hypermetropia is more likely to see better at long distance than short 'long-sight'; they therefore may see the blackboard clearly, while reading a book may be difficult and require much focus. This may cause eye strain and headache. Hypermetropia can often be caused by other eye conditions such as Retinitis Pigmentosa and Micropthalmia.

Macular Oedema

The macula is the central part of the retina at the back of the eye and is responsible for fine vision (e.g. that required for reading, writing and recognition of faces). Macular Oedema is a condition caused by leaking blood vessels in the retina that lead to an accumulation of fluid in the macula. This may occur spontaneously but can occasionally follow cataract surgery.

The impact of Macular Oedema is dependent on its severity, however, may include blurring and distortion of vision.

Micropthalmia

If an eye (opthalmia) does not grow to its full size and is smaller (micro) than it should be, this is known as Micropthalmia. Most cases of microphthalmia occur

by chance, however it can occasionally run in families. Very rarely an infection in the womb can lead to Microphthalmia.

Microphthalmia can have differing effects on vision. If the eye is only slightly smaller than the normal, a CYP child may have normal vision; however, if both eyes have almost completely failed to grow properly, a CYP may be more severely visually impaired (seeing only bright lights and large shapes). Micropthalmia can often be seen along with other eye conditions including Hypermetropia and Nystagmus.

Nystagmus

Nystagmus is a condition that involves the continuous, uncontrolled movements of one or both eyes. The eyes therefore look as if they are moving from side to side, up and down or in circles. Most people with nystagmus will have reduced vision; Students with this condition may lose their place frequently when reading.

Oculocutaneous Albinism

CYP who do not make as much melanin as normal have Albinism. Typically, CYP only have a problem making melanin in their eyes – Ocular Albinism. However, for others, the lack of melanin affects all parts of the body – Oculocutaneous Albinism – causing pale skin, blonde hair and light coloured eyes. CYP with Oculocutaneous Albinism are likely to have Nystagmus and may have impaired vision.

Retinitis Pigmentosa

Retinitis pigmentosa (RP) is the name given to a diverse group of inherited eye disorders that affect the retina. RP causes permanent changes to vision that may include difficulty with vision in dim light or the dark and the loss of peripheral vision. The rate of progression, however, differs between people; while some people with RP may become blind, most maintain some useful vision into old age.

Retinopathy of Prematurity

The retina (found at the back of the eye) is a complex and sensitive structure that is responsible for the initial formation of the visual image. In babies that are born prematurely, the retinal blood vessels do not develop which can cause problems. Abnormal blood vessels may grow out of the retina and cause scar tissue to form, leading to detachment of the retina. This damage is known as Retinopathy of Prematurity (RoP) and can lead to a serious loss of vision if not diagnosed and treated early.

Rod-Cone Dystrophy

Rod-Cone Dystrophy (RCD) is an uncommon, progressive disease of the retina that causes deterioration of the cones and rods, frequently leading to blindness. This is associated with significantly reduced distance and near vision, a reduced visual field, light sensitivity and loss of night vision. There are no treatments or cures for RCD but deteriorations of vision may be slowed by wearing sunglasses and avoiding bright light.

Appendix 2: Raw Data

Example of interview transcription (YP2 – School A)

>Script of introduction

Q1)

>So I have told you a little bit about what I can see.

>Are you able to tell me what you can see?

> Um, mine's really weird actually. So I have no peripheral vision – so I can't see to the side or the top, I can only see straight ahead. And this eye…it's like my eyes are separate; I can only use one eye at a time, so I switch. Through this eye [points to right eye] I can barely see about 10 per cent and this one's [points to left eye] about 50 per cent/60 per cent. And it's like, it's not one bit that I can see – it's like patches. So I can see through one patch and then another patch – it's like dotted. So I can't see through one giant sphere, I can only see through…bits.

>OK, so when you're looking straight at me, can you only see parts of me and the other parts…

>It's just not there! [laughs as if acknowledging it is hard concept to understand] It's not blurred or it's not like a black patch, it's just not there. It's like there's no…it's like looking behind you – there's nothing there. And I can see an outline of your body and your glasses and the tone of your skin, but that's about it.

>OK, so is it quite difficult for you to identify people?

>Yeah it is. Like usually with my friends, if I'm looking for someone in the playground or…, I don't really go for their face – I go for their like height or if I hear them or something, or like body shape and things.

>Yeah I can understand that actually. Some people have characteristic walks that can be helpful when you're trying to find them don't they.

>Yeah [said emphatically].

>Well it sounds like you have your strategies sorted anyway!

>Hmmm.

Q2) Intro.

>So thinking about your primary school, can you remember what special equipment you used?

>Yep, um, I had…first of all I had a raised up board to put on the table to put my books on so I don't have to look down [demonstrated by leaning over table with body] cos it would just be raised up for me. I had a…it was only in Year 6 which I had a laptop, so I'd type up things and I could make them as big as I want, rather than writing on a book and it be a set font. And I had a magnifier, which

had a light in it so I could…if the room was dark and I had a text or something, I could read it.

>Oh right.

>Cos light is a huge part of my eyesight as well, cos I can't see if the light isn't a specific brightness or something.

>Ok, can you tell me more about that?

>Yeah, it's like, if it gets to night time and I'm just walking in the street, I wouldn't see anything apart from dotted lights, which would be, err, lamp posts and things.

>Right ok. So what impact does that have on you at this time of year, when it's darker earlier?

>[almost laughs] A lot cos it restricts my time outside, so it means I can't go out at a specific time so…

>Ok, well perhaps we can think about that a bit more when we are talking about secondary school and how things are now?

>Uh huh.

>So, in primary school, in terms of the equipment you used, you had the laptop and the sloping desk and the magnifier with a light on it. Did you find those things helpful?

>Yeah [said emphatically]. It gave me a…a sort of independence cos I could do some things for myself, like read and things, rather than having someone reading (different things? – inaudible).

>OK, that's good.

>Was there a Teaching Assistant in your class?

>Yep.

>Were they there just for you or with other children in your class as well?

>It was really weird actually cos it wasn't a set one for me – he would go round. So in some lessons I'd be by myself, in some lessons he'd be with me. So he wasn't there like *all* the time. I think I was more independent in primary school…

>OK

>[looked thoughtful]…and I think that's kind of changed my education in a way, cos I've relied more on my helpers *now*. I think that's kind of 'strained' my learning a bit. Cos when I was more independent in primary school, I felt like I could do more, cos I could…think for myself in a way! [laughs].

>And now you feel that's not quite the same?

>Yeah.

>So what made you more independent in primary school do you think? What has changed?

>Um, it's like, I could be by myself and have… it's just me and my thoughts. Like everything would be planned out in my head and I could add this and that and the teacher talking and I could interact with my…people around me. But then, with the teacher sitting next to me, it's like lots of different information coming in and I'd have to balance it out and I'd have to switch from me thinking for myself and then listen to them reading something and explaining it, like what the teacher just said. It would just be a bit hectic and then I just like switch off.

>Oh [slight sympathetic tone]

>Yeah [slight laugh, as if in agreement that sympathy is warranted].

>So – just to check that I am understanding – now in school you have a Teaching Assistant with you all the time?

>Yeah.

>And they are always sat next to you in class?

>Hm-mmm.

>And for you that makes a difference in terms of your independence because they are saying things to you and perhaps disturbing you when you are trying to think?

>Yeah.

>Ok, well thank you for that.

>Where did you sit in primary school?

>Um, at the front I guess, near the board. [pause] Yeah, it was good actually cos the teacher would walk around and talk, so it didn't matter where I was, but then when they came back to demonstrate something, I'd always be there. And we mostly sat on the floor…do you remember that?!

>[laughed together] I do, yes! It seems funny thinking about that now!

>Yeah, yeah. But I'd always sit at the front so…

>OK, so you needed to be at the front for board work?

>Yeah.

>And do you remember how your classmates reacted?

>[smiled and laughed]. It was like as if my eyesight problem didn't exist. Cos everyone just…it was all just like…there was no issues, everyone understood and if we were playing football…it just came to a point where everything just 'flowed'. Like there was no issues like "oh no we have to do this, we have to do that, we have to get a yellow ball for S [himself] cos he can't see it". Like it just worked. [pause]. Yeah, it didn't become an issue after a while.

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>So, because they knew you so well, they were able to get the yellow ball, for example, without making a fuss about it; it was just normal for everyone?

>Yep.

>OK. So it doesn't sound like you felt that your classmates at primary school really noticed that had visual needs – like they acknowledged it and were helpful but didn't over-react?

>Yeah. Cos they didn't really…cos they weren't there to, um…cos I have everything I need, so I'm basically another classmate to them so they had no interactions with how I kind of did my work and things. They were there just to kind of be the friend and be, you know, have a laugh while doing the work and things. So I had everything I needed and you know…

>Yeah, that's brilliant. It sounds like you had a good experience in primary school.

>Yeah [quick to answer].

>Did you have any adults from outside of school come to help you back then?

>Uh, yeah. There was a….what's it called…visual…it was a lady from a council about visual impairment. But she came to visit all the children around the borough who had a visual impairment and ask them how they were doing and, like, what equipment they could be using…like books with thicker lines and things. And saying if I was struggling in school and they'd just ask questions.

>And what was her name, can you remember?

>B…

>N?

>Yeah. Do you know her?

>I have spoken to her previously yes, but she's retired now isn't she?

>Yeah.

>Ok. Did you have any help at break or lunchtimes?

>[pause] Ummm, it was funny actually, cos I wasn't at the same primary school. I was in a primary school in Birmingham for…til Year 5 and then I moved to X (borough) in Year 6.

>Oh right, ok.

>So I spent one year at a primary school in Year 6, so that was quite interesting.

>So was there much of a difference between your school in Birmingham and the primary school in X?

>Um [pause] at the start yes, but then I kind of got back all the equipment I used to use and…how I did things and then they just integrated it so…it just felt the same…apart from the accents!

>[laughed together} Yeah, you definitely don't have a brummy accent anymore! Did you when you arrived in Year 6?

>[laughed] Yeah.

> Who did you talk to about your visual needs in primary school?

>So like, go up to them and tell them…

>I suppose I'm thinking about the feelings that may come with having visual needs. Did you feel you had anyone to speak to or did you not feel you needed to?

>Um, a bit of both actually. Cos I didn't really feel like there was no-one there, like to *actually* understand. Like I could tell them and they would make it better, but like - the emotional side of things – they didn't actually underst…like…um…lets say uh you told your teacher that you couldn't see or you couldn't read this and they'd blow it up for you. Like you would *see* it but then you'd feel like, um…aaah [laughs] it's hard to explain!

>Don't worry. I think you're doing really well.

>Um, you'd see it but then you'd still feel like more could be done but you couldn't explain how it could be done. Like I could read it but it'd still be sloooowly. Like it'd be big and I could see it, but, um, I couldn't…I didn't 'connect' with it.

>It still wasn't easy…

>Yeah.

>So it sounds like trying to explain your feelings has been quite a challenge at times.

>Do you think part of that is that people can't understand unless they've experienced the same or similar thing?

>Er, yeah. I guess, sometimes, if you overdo it and keep on asking them, they'd start to get a bit annoyed [smiled], but then they wouldn't understand why. They'd just be like, "oh he wants me to do this, he wants me to do that…" They wouldn't actually understand. They'd just think you were winding them up!

>OK so you're kind of worried that, if you keep asking for things they are going to think you are demanding?

>[laughed] Yeah.

>How did you travel to and from primary school?

>Um, I had transport. They'd pick me up from home yeah.

>When you changed from your primary school in X to come here, what help did you get during that change?

>Er, none. It was just me and my family.

>Ok, so you didn't have any extra visits to School A or anything before you came here?

>No.

Q3) Intro.

>So what special equipment do you have now?

>Er, there was one expensive one which was a camera which I connected to my laptop and I could zoom in as far as I wanted to into the board and I could see it on my laptop. And I could put a sheet under it…there's like two separate cameras – one for looking out there and one for looking…like you put the sheet under the camera and it will blow it up and it would read it to you if you want it to

>Ah right, ok. It's so cool what they can do isn't it!

>[laughs] Yeah.

>So do you just need things blown up or do you also need to change the contrast of colours?

>Um, not the contrast, no. but then I guess if it was like grey and black or something then yeah. It has to be clear like black on white or white on black, not like funny colours!

>Yeah, well I suppose most of the time things are black and white are they?

>Yeah.

>Is there any other equipment that you use now?

>Yeah, I still use my laptop for typing and it's easier cos I can just e-mail my work to the teachers and they will e-mail it back and it's faster cos I can type faster than I can write. And like, if I wanted to revise at home, I could just blow it up and read it or get my laptop to read it to me.

>Yeah, that's true. Ah, so your laptop has voice activated software does it?

>Yeah.

>And how do you feel about using that?

>Um, I don't mind. Like, if it was just me, I don't mind, but then when other people come in and they're like "that's funny, why do you do that?" it's like "shut up!" [laughs].

>It feels awkward like doing it when other people are around, but if it's just me on my own, I don't mind doing it.

>So it's something that you use at home rather than at school really?

>Yeah.

>Ok, so you said it feels awkward using the voice activated software in class. How does it feel using the camera and laptop in class?

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>It makes me feel quite anxious using it. Like cos you know you always think, 'what are my friends gonna think?' But then after a while you start…losing that feeling. I just realised, 'so what if they think that, I don't care'. But then, the camera, even though it was really expensive, it didn't help me as much as I wanted…like I thought it would. It just didn't feel right [laughs], I dunno. Cos even though it zoomed in to the board, like the writing was still thin and I didn't feel like I could…like I'm actually grasping it.

>So, like you described before, it sounds like help is there but somehow it doesn't seem to make quite the difference you hope it will…

>Yep.

>And where do you normally sit in class now?

>At the front.

>And who decides that?

>Er, my teacher.

>So how do you feel about sitting at the front?

>I don't see the point of sitting at the front. Cos even if I did sit at the front, I'm not gonna be looking at the board, cos I've got my camera and I've got my helper to read it out. So they're just like "sit at the front"…"why do you want me to sit at the front?" [laughs]. I mean I can hear you clearly cos my hearing's…I can hear things more cos I use…sometimes I just close my eyes and just listen so…

>So, with your camera, it makes no difference where you sit?

>Yeah.

>Do you feel you could say to someone that you don't think you need to be sitting at the front?

>They'd probably think I'm trying to be mischievous or something…and sit with my friends at the back!

>[laughed together]. Do you have a Teaching Assistant in all your classes now?

>Yeah. Every single one.

>Ok, so lets talk a bit more about this.

>So you said that now they're sat next to you in class, is that right?

>Yeah.

>And they are there just to work with you then presumably?

>Yeah.

>Do you have the same Teaching Assistant in all of your lessons, or do you have different Teaching Assistants?

>Most lessons it's the same ones. So yeah its like…so lets say I've got four Teaching Assistants and they're split into like 25% of my lessons and 50%.

>Ok, so what does it feel like having a Teaching Assistant sat next to you in class?

>It doesn't work but it's too late [laughs]. It's like I've lost my sense of ability to think for myself in class, but it's too late to pull out of it, you see what I'm saying? Like in primary school…I was pretty clever in primary school and then when I came to high school, I had someone else there so they basically like started *thinking* for me, rather than *seeing* for me. I just kind of retreated away from it…and I think too much…and now I'm just in my zone and then…even though the teacher's talking, I still feel like, she's there [TA], she'll just tell me after. And I dunno, I felt [pffft], just lost [laughs].

>So do you feel like you switch off when the teacher's talking, because you feel that your Teaching Assistant will repeat it anyway?

>Yeah.

>Ok. Do you get any help at break or lunchtimes now?

>No. Nah I don't really need it cos I've got my friends and, well we don't really play football anymore, we just talk and things so it doesn't really matter as much.

>Which members of staff do you think you have most contact with here?

>Um, probably these ones…in special educational needs.

>And would it be mainly Mrs S?

>Yep.

>And what do you do with Mrs S?

>Well she's in most of my lessons so I can just tell her whenever I feel like…

>OK, and what do you do with the other people in special educational needs?

>It's exactly the same.

>Oh right, ok.

>They all work together. I feel like they're all the same person so whoever I tell, it doesn't make a difference.

>Is that quite nice? Does that give you some kind of security, knowing that they are all communicating with each other?

>Yep.

>And do any adults from outside of school work with you now? You mentioned BN. Do you have a new one [QTVI] here now?

>Yeah, I have a new one here who visits. And I used to have… I dunno if it's gonna continue…but I used to have a, well I do braille – there's a braille teacher

that comes in twice a week. And I used to do mobility training…with a stick. That, um, I'm quite advanced but I'm not sure if the sessions are still gonna continue.

>Why is that, do you know?

>Funding.

>Ah right. So where does that leave you in terms of using the stick? Do you have your own that you can and do use?

>Yeah. I know enough to travel so, I dunno if there's more to learn or, you know, I think that's something that I have to talk to him about.

>Right, ok. So you have a teacher of the visually impaired, a braille teacher and a mobility officer – is that everyone that comes in from outside of school?

>Yes, yeah.

>Ok. And who do you or can you talk to now about, as you said, the more emotional side of things?

>[pause]. No-one really [laughs]. I don't have an emotional thing to talk about cos I…cos even if I did, there wouldn't be as much change so, I dunno, I usually just find my own way of doing things and I feel that's more helpful cos I know what the exact degree of what I need to do is and telling that to someone else is just kind of…they'd put their own input in but they wouldn't understand as much.

>Ok, so you kind of take control a bit more?

>Yeah.

>So do you feel emotional about your visual needs but feel there's no point talking about it, or do you just not feel very emotional about it?

>No [laughs]

>You don't feel very emotional?

>No.

>Alright, can I ask you how you find moving between lessons?

>[pause]. I hate it to be honest [laughs]. Cos I have to carry my laptop in my bag and like, cos I don't have peripheral vision, they'll be people coming from this side and this side [gestures] and it just gets confusing.

>And what's done to help you with moving between lessons?

>Well we always say we're gonna leave five minutes early or something, but it never happens [laughs].

>So is your Teaching Assistant with you at those times?

>[pause] Sometimes I don't have the same one for next lesson, so they just go away and I have to go to my next lesson and meet the next one.

>What happens then?

>I just make my own way there.

>[laughed together] Well most of my friends aren't in my classes anyway so…I see them around and they'll be like "hey, how you doing?" and stuff like that…

>And do you have a lift pass?

>Yeah, but that's just for one building and I think I only have three lessons there so…

>Yeah, it would be helpful if there were lifts in all buildings wouldn't it!

>[laughs] Yeah.

>And how do you travel to and from school now?

>Transport still.

>Special transport?

>Yep.

Q4)

>OK, so when do you feel you need the most help – in lessons or break/lunchtime?

>Lessons yeah.

>And we've spoken a little bit about how the dark affects you. Are there particular times of day in school that you find you need more help?

>Uh, waking up in the morning!

>[laughed together]. I feel you on that one!

>No, but it's light during the whole day so…and my transport takes me to and from school and home so…it doesn't really affect me much.

>That's true. I suppose it might be different if you took public transport or had to walk home…

>Yeah.

>So, what are the times when you don't feel you need help?

>[long pause] Errr, I wanna say all of them [laughs]…but then I know that's not the case. I'd say when there's… if it's like an interacting activity or something, cos I like to be [in]dependent and just work with my peers.

>Ok, so do you mean like, in a classroom, if an activity is set for you to work in groups or pairs for instance, those are the times you don't feel you need help?

>Yeah.

>You'd just rather be with your friends and your peers.

>Yeah, and it feels a bit awkward cos, if I go to work with my group, I know they're [TA] still there looking at me. It's like "what are you doing?" [laughs].

>And how does that make you feel?

>[laughs] like a little bit self-conscious I think.

>Yeah, you feel like you're being watched?

>Yeah [laughs].

>On the flip side, what do you think is done at School A that is particularly helpful?

>Um, well everything they do is helpful to me.

>If I were to ask you for one thing that you think is particularly helpful, what would that be?

>Um, [pause], I'd say having… like knowing that someone is there whenever I need them. Cos I think that's quite a big job – like always having someone there next to you. Cos I think they are always like willing to help. I think that's quite good.

>Yeah, that's great.

>And is there anything done that you do not think is helpful?

>Um, not really, no.

>Ah brilliant, well that's positive! [laughed together]

Q5)

>Ok, so onto the final set of questions…

>So far we've talked mainly about your work and lessons, but now I'd like to think a bit more about break and lunchtimes now?

>So what do you normally do at break and lunchtimes?

>Um…what do I do…well I don't do homework! [laughed together]. Yeah, I guess I hang out with my friends a lot and we just talk about games and things…just fun things, like relax, just let go of the atmosphere of school.

>When you say games, do you mean computer games and things?

>Yeah, consoles and movies and things…just anything I guess!

>Just for a bit of an escape it sounds like?

>Yeah. Ha yeah [laughs].

>And you said you don't play football anymore; does that mean you used to play football?

>Well they don't really play football at this school…cos I think everyone's grown up or something…

>Oh right, you can't do that in Year 10?!

>Well you can I guess…well there's like a rule where you have to bring a school ball and kick it against a wall, which no-one does!

>Yeah that doesn't sound all that fun!

>OK, so do you feel that you can normally join in activities that your friends are doing at break and lunchtimes.

>Um, not really. Cos, whatever they do, it's quite fast-paced and I don't feel like I can keep up with what they are doing. I just stand and have a conversation while they're doing what they're doing.

>OK, so when you say they do something fast-paced, what kind of things are you thinking about?

>Basketball.

>OK.

>Yeah.

>So if some of your friends are playing basketball do you hang back with a couple of others and talk about other things, like computer games, that you are able to access?

>Yep.

>Ok, so things like computer games, are you able to access them without difficulty?

>Well, that's not the only thing we talk about!

>[laughed together] No I know, that's just an example!

>Um, some of them. Err, if it's quite a clear game – like everything's easy to see for me – then I can play it, but then if its…yeah, I dunno…I just play games I can play and then we'll talk about them.

>Alright. So how do you feel at break and lunchtimes then?

>Um, quite happy to be honest! [laughs].

>It really sounds like it is an escape for you – a proper *break* time.

>Yeah, I dunno, I just feel like… it's an opportunity to…reconnect to myself, rather than being in the lesson that's going on. I just feel like I can finally breathe and yeah…

>Just sort of 'be'?

>Yeah.

>OK, so what do your visual needs mean for you?

>Um [pause], well, to do everything by myself. Um, to be independent. I feel like the more visual help I get, the less I lose like my original way of doing things.

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Cos I'd rather just [exhales, perhaps in frustration] do things more simply than more complicated and this and that and this camera…

>So you feel like you could maybe find a way of doing your work and being in the classroom that is simpler and less complicated?

>Yep.

>So, again you've used that word independence…

>Mmmm.

>That sounds like it's really important for you?

>Yeah. Well I like my own privacy. I dunno its…I feel like there's too much happening and then I'll switch off and then I won't understand it [laughs] and then it goes through this cycle and then…I think, I dunno, it's like I've gotten into it too much and if I was to break out of it I'd struggle, but if I said I don't want help anymore, I'd just be sitting there like trying really hard to focus [laughs] because I've had that dependence on that person.

>Hmmm, so do you think, although you would love to be independent and you feel like you are that sort of person, you've almost grown to be dependent on your Teaching Assistant, for example.

>Yeah, but then it's not like that at home cos at home I'm just by myself, on my computer, and I feel like I can do anything. I just, you know, go on the console, play a game, go on the computer, you know, watch TV, but then it's not like that at school [laughs]. Like, I feel like I can do that at school – like just go to my next lesson, you know, go get my book out and do the work, but it won't be the ssssame [thoughtful]…I don't know what it is. It's like there's a field(?) Like, when I come into school, the way I see things just changes and, when I go home, it goes back to how I want it to be. It's like I'm comfortable at home and when I come to school, everything's like…I dunno…

>Hmmm, why do you think that's the case?

>I don't know what it is.

>Is it easier to think maybe of what's going on at home that makes it a better experience, if we think of it that way round?

>Ok. Um, I just feel like…like, if I'm on a quest to do something, I've got all the resources I need. Like I've got the internet, I can get a book and get my magnifier, but then, when I'm in school, there's like lots of variables like in the way [laughs] and then I just feel like I *have* to keep on doing that or else the whole thing will just topple over or something. It's like…I think it's a fear or something. I don't know what it is.

>So you're fearful?

>[pause] I dunno. I think it's a fear of…losing that comfort in the classroom – of just sitting next to her basically. So I feel like I just have to carry on doing that or else everything else will just…fall over [laughs].

>Yeah. So it is kind of comforting and reassuring in some ways, but it also sounds like you're wrestling with it a little bit…

>Yeah [laughs] .

>…wanting to fight against it almost…

>Yeah.

>That sounds right does it?

>Hmmm.

>I think it's interesting what you say about there being a lot of variables in school and that's one of the things about secondary school I suppose that's different.

>In primary school you have one class, one teacher – most of the time - whereas in secondary school there are many classes, many teachers, many Teaching Assistants, many classrooms…

>Yeah [laughed together].

>…and that makes it a much more complex environment to be in.

>And also, it's like everything…it's like all the lighting in this school is different so I have to adjust myself and then like moving from one topic to the next, I feel like I have to change the way I…do things, just to fit in with…like for in History, we've got like a textbook, I've got my laptop to type on when the teacher's talking, like you know it's just switching from one thing to the other.

>Yeah.

>And then, when I go to Maths, it's like "read this…", do in it my book and then the teacher's gonna explain how you do it; and then when it comes to English, it's just type and just listen to what the people are reading.

>Yeah. It sounds like quite a lot to juggle really, you know, to think 'when I'm in Maths I do this and when I'm in English I do this…"

>Yeah .

>Ok. When you came to School A, did you find it easy to make friends?

>Yeah [said confidently], everyone was really…I think cos I was quite sporty, I fitted in with quite a lot of people. They was like "Oh it's S, he's fast man!" And everyone knew me and I knew them. And I think it's still like that – we're all friends, like there hasn't been any negative… sides to it.

>Well you do seem like such a friendly person, I can't imagine that you would have had problems making friends!

>Do you have any other friends that have visual needs?

>Um, well I *know* of…but we don't really talk about that part of it so, yeah.

>Oh right, ok.

>For you, what counts as a good friend?

>Um, [long pause]…that's a good question! [laughed together].

>Um, I guess not caring. Not in the sense that they don't care about me, but they don't care about the variables. Like they'll just treat me like someone else, but then, when my eyesight plays in they just let me do what I do. So if we were all walking down the street and I get out my stick, they wouldn't care so…

>OK, so again it's that…not going too far with it.

>Yeah.

>I also wanted to ask you what you think your friends might say about you?

>Um [pause], well my eyesight has become a thing we just laugh about. It's just like become a comfortable thing. Like it feels…it makes me different, like I'm not the same as though so, and we'll laugh about things like "Oh S, there you go – it's chocolate" and it's not chocolate! [laughed together] And this has become like, you know, a funny thing now. So we all feel comfortable around each other.

>OK and you find that funny do you, you don't mind?

>Yeah [smiling], cos I know it's all kind of intentional so…

>OK and very last question then.

>Are you part of any school clubs now?

>School clubs?

>Yeah. Either during school or after school?

>After school I do athletics and during school I'm doing Media.

>Oh right, brilliant.

>And with the after school athletics, how does that work with you getting the transport?

>Um, I've got some funding so they'll take me there and back as well.

>Oh brilliant.

>Closing script.

Pupils with a Visual Impairment and Social Inclusion

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Questionnaire for QTVI's

Please return your completed questionnaire to me via post or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1) Could you please describe your general training to date?
   I qualified as a primary school teacher in 200. In 2011 I completed a 2 year Graduate Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education (Disabilities of Sight) at the Institute of Education. This included 2 teaching practices, one in a primary resource base and the other in a peripatetic service covering all ages. Since my Diploma I have attended occasional training days related to visual impairment (e.g. VIEW conference, iPad, technology training)

2) What VI training have you received specifically for pupils of secondary school age?
   I have had no specific training related to secondary aged pupils; however much of the training I did crossed all age groups, as did my assignments.

3) Which age group of pupils do you work with at the moment?
   Birth to 18

4) What, specifically, did/do you do with each age group of a secondary school age?
   Depends very much upon the individual but generally a visit with secondary age pupils will include an initial assessment of their functional vision (preferred print size, distance vision acuities, contrast sensitivity, hand/eye coordination, colour vision, tracking). This enables me to give advice to teachers about strategies to support pupils' visual access to curriculum resources and materials. I meet 1:1 with the pupil to discuss issues that arise for them re visual access but often there can be issues of social inclusion that need to be addressed. We talk through the notes from the previous visit record to see if issues have been resolved and if anything else has come up. I meet with the SENCo and support assistants who work with the pupils. If I do a classroom observation I speak with the teacher of that lesson. Unless there are any real difficulties in the classroom with visual access, I tend to leave it up to the individual pupil to decide if they want me to do a classroom observation, as at this age, an observation can cause embarrassment and reinforce feelings of 'difference'. I attend annual reviews if a pupil has a statement.

5) Please describe YP1's and YP2's VI.
YP1:__Albinism, nystagmus, requires print size N18; distance vision 6/30_____

YP2:_Retinitis pigmentosa. Advanced bilateral rod/cone dystrophy and the condition is degenerative. Loss of peripheral vision, visual clarity & colour vision affected. Significantly reduced near & distance vision especially in right eye. Sight fluctuates. Reduced night vision & difficulties adjusting to changes in light conditions. Also has nystagmus & moderate right convergent squint.

6a) In your view, would their VI be classified as 'severe'? (Yes/No)
YP1:__No_____
YP2:__Yes_____

b) Please state what you define 'severe' as being'?
We use the NATSIP criteria to define the severity of visual impairment._____

7) What was the age of onset of their VI?
YP1:_Birth_____
YP2:_Birth_____

8) Please describe your work with YP1 and YP2 to date.
YP1:_I have met YP1 once when he transferred to School A. I discussed with him the advice & recommendations made by his previous VI teacher from his primary school. I observed him in class & gave advice to teachers. He was keen to meet up with other VI students in the school so this was arranged. I will visit him termly._____

YP2:_I visit half termly. Working closely with the senior TA, we have put in place better resources (technology) & raised awareness with teachers of the need to ensure that work is enlarged & emailed to YP2 prior to lessons. We have encouraged YP2 to use his laptop for most lessons where initially he felt embarrassed. (He felt conspicuous). He now says he wishes he had used it sooner as where he used to feel he was falling behind his class he now feels his is working ahead of them. TA's now know how to source electronic books. Braille lessons have been set up for him. The opportunity to meet with other students in the school has been arranged at their request.

9) Please describe your work with their parents/carers to date.
YP1:_Visit records are sent to parents via the school & school informs parents of my visit. So far no direct contact_____

YP2: As above and I met YP2's Uncle at the his annual review.

10) How are their visual needs likely to change in the future (e.g. reach a period of stability or continue to deteriorate)?

YP1: Should remain stable.

YP2: will gradually deteriorate over time. He will continue to lose his peripheral vision, which will results in tunnel vision. There is a possibility that he may lose his sight altogether although no time frame has been given.

11) What other professionals do you work with to support YP1 and YP2?

Mobility officer, VI teacher who teaches him Braille & social worker (YP2 only)

12) What other post holders in school do you work with to support YP1 and YP2?

SENCo (both) TA (YP2 only) and discussion with class teachers

13) Are there any further comments you would like to make e.g. your views on the impact of YP1's and YP2's VI upon their social inclusion, the impact of your support?

YP1: I have only visited YP1 once this term. He had settled quite well. He was keen to meet the other boys in the school with visual impairments so I discussed with a TA & she arranged for them all to meet over drinks & biscuits. They all appeared to get quite a lot out of it and want to meet up regularly.

YP2: TA's have said they appreciate the work I have done for S in raising awareness of his visual difficulties which has resulted in more proactive support for him. E.g. technology. YP2 said 'wicked' when I told him I would be working with him for another term or two so I assume from this that he feels he gets some positive input from me. YP2 does not appear to have any difficulties with social inclusion (in my experience quite unusual). He is popular with other students & is probably seen as quite cool, particularly around his achievements in athletics. He is the fastest sprinter in the school!

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. If you would be prepared to discuss your comments further please indicate below.

| x | Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion. |

(I can be contacted via telephone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮)

| | No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion. |

Appendix 3: Example of a coded transcript

>Is there any other equipment that you use now?

>Yeah, I still use my laptop for typing and it's easier cos I can just e-mail my work to the teachers and they will e-mail it back and it's faster cos I can type faster than I can write. And like, if I wanted to revise at home, I could just blow it up and read it or get my laptop to read it to me.

>Yeah, that's true. Ah, so your laptop has voice activated software does it?

>Yeah.

>And how do you feel about using that?

>Um, I don't mind. Like, if it was just me, I don't mind, but then when other people come in and they're like "that's funny, why do you do that?" it's like "shut up!" [laughs].

Lisa Plaskett
Difference (re: equipment) pointed out by sighted peers.

Lisa Plaskett
Uncomfortable using equipment in front of sighted peers.

>It feels awkward like doing it when other people are around, but if it's just me on my own, I don't mind doing it.

Lisa Plaskett
Comfortable using equipment when on own.

>So it's something that you use at home rather than at school really?

>Yeah.

>Ok, so you said it feels awkward using the voice activated software in class. How does it feel using the camera and laptop in class?

>It makes me feel quite anxious using it. Like cos you know you always think, 'what are my friends gonna think?' But then after a while you start...losing that feeling. I just realised, 'so what if they think that, I don't care'. But then, the camera, even though it was really expensive, it didn't help me as much as I wanted...like I thought it would. It just didn't feel right [laughs], I dunno. Cos even though it zoomed in to the board, like the writing was still thin and I didn't feel like I could...like I'm actually grasping it.

Lisa Plaskett
Equipment use creates feeling of anxiety.

Lisa Plaskett
Concerned about peers perceptions.

Lisa Plaskett
Passing of time leads to reduced anxiety re: equipment use.

Lisa Plaskett
Equipment (camera) did not meet expectations.

>So, like you described before, it sounds like help is there but somehow it doesn't seem to make quite the difference you hope it will...

>Yep.

>And where do you normally sit in class now?

Lisa Plaskett
Sits at front of class.

>At the front.

>And who decides that?

Lisa Plaskett
Seating position decided by teacher.

>Er, my teacher.

>So how do you feel about sitting at the front?

>I don't see the point of sitting at the front. Cos even if I did sit at the front, I'm not gonna be looking at the board, cos I've got my camera and I've got my helper to read it out. So they're just like "sit at the front"…"why do you want me to sit at the front?" [laughs]. I mean I can hear you clearly cos my hearing's…I can hear things more cos I use…sometimes I just close my eyes and just listen so…

>So, with your camera, it makes no difference where you sit?

>Yeah.

>Do you feel you could say to someone that you don't think you need to be sitting at the front?

>They'd probably think I'm trying to be mischievous or something…and sit with my friends at the back!

>[laughed together]. Do you have a Teaching Assistant in all your classes now?

>Yeah. Every single one.

>Ok, so let's talk a bit more about this.

>So you said that now they're sat next to you in class, is that right?

>Yeah.

>And they are there just to work with you then presumably?

>Yeah.

>Do you have the same Teaching Assistant in all of your lessons, or do you have different Teaching Assistants?

>Most lessons it's the same ones. So yeah it's like…so let's say I've got four Teaching Assistants and they're split into like 25% of my lessons and 50%.

>Ok, so what does it feel like having a Teaching Assistant sat next to you in class?

>It doesn't work but it's too late [laughs]. It's like I've lost my sense of ability to think for myself in class, but it's too late to pull out of it, you see what I'm saying? Like in primary school…I was pretty clever in primary school and then when I came to high school, I had someone else there so they basically like started *thinking* for me, rather than *seeing* for me. I just kind of retreated away from it…and I think too much…and now I'm just in my zone and then…even though the teacher's talking, I still feel like, she's there [TA], she'll just tell me after. And I dunno, I felt [pffft], just lost [laughs].

>So do you feel like you switch off when the teacher's talking, because you feel that your Teaching Assistant will repeat it anyway?

>Yeah.

>Ok. Do you get any help at break or lunchtimes now?

>No. Nah I don't really need it cos I've got my friends and, well we don't really play football anymore, we just talk and things so it doesn't really matter as much.

Appendix 4: Detailed account of thematic analysis process

In accordance with the suggestions of Braun and Clarke (2006), six phases of analysis were followed and are described below. While phase one differed according to Ph1 and Ph2 of the research (noted below), thematic analysis thereafter followed the same process.

1. Familiarisation with data

Ph1

- After the interviews had been conducted, each was listened to again in order to become familiar with the data;

- I transcribed all interviews, taking notes of prominent features of the data to emerge during this process. Transcriptions were made verbatim in order to retain the information in a way that represented its original nature;

- Once transcribed, the transcripts were then read in an active way and notes were made that would later support the process of code generation. Segments of text of particular interest were highlighted.

Ph2

- Completed questionnaires were read individually upon receipt and again, collectively, prior to commencing phase two of the analytic process.

2. Generation of initial codes

- The coding process then began and was completed by hand. The segments of highlighted text were apportioned codes. Codes represented "units of meaningful text" (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and were more specific that the themes that emerged later in the process;

- Codes bearing resemblance to one another were then grouped together.

3. Searching for themes

- This stage of the process focused on organising codes into prominent themes. Codes were put on different coloured post-its in order that they could be moved around and grouped into themes and subthemes with ease. This method also allowed for re-evaluation;

- The creation of a thematic map also formed part of this process and themes – both superordinate and subordinate- were displayed visually;

- All coded data extracts were collated within themes, including a number of codes that did not seem to fit with other themes (labelled 'Other').

4. Reviewing themes

- All data belonging to superordinate and subordinate themes was reviewed to ensure that it fit together in a coherent manner. This was an ongoing, recursive process that enabled themes to be refined.

5. Defining and naming themes

- Names of themes were refined during this stage in order to ensure that they represented fully the quotes subsumed within them;

- Through the support of supervisors, names and meaning of themes were discussed and revised in order that meaning could be communicated most effectively in the thematic analysis.

6. Producing the report

- Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that the aim of reporting and discussing findings is to tell the story of your data, providing a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes" (p. 93);

- The size of the study meant that not all quotes representing themes could be included; instead quotes have been included that were deemed to represent themes most powerfully.

Interview schedule	School/code:	Date:	Person/code:

Setting notes *(important to get detailed contextual information):*
- Time of day (i.e. morning/afternoon, just after break/lunch, come from lesson);
- Physical setting (inc. pertinent features of room, seating arrangement, lighting);
- Emotional state of CYPSVI.

Introduction: • Ensure that CYPSVI has been given notice re: our meeting and has been told my name (important to identify self as early as possible) • Turn on recording device to test voice levels and allow CYPSVI to hear their voice back (may help build rapport)	Equipment *(inc. specific info):*

Speech/Script of introduction	Action
>**Hello X**, my name is Lisa. >**Thank** you so much for meeting with me today. >**I really** appreciate you giving up your time. >**I am** interested in the experiences of young people with visual needs that attend mainstream, secondary schools.	• Using a script will help the interviews to be conducted in as standardised way as possible. • Given the difficulties many CYPSVI experience with regard to language processing, it will be important to be mindful throughout of sentence length and to ensure frequent pauses occur within speech.

>**I was** hoping that today we could talk a little about your visual needs?	
>**I was** also interested in the help you get in school.	• It will be important to remind CYPSVI throughout that, if there is anything they do not want to talk, they are not obliged to.
>**If you** could tell me how you feel about school that would be useful as well.	• Watch out for 'stressed behaviours'.
>**Q. Is it OK for me to record what we say so that I don't make any mistakes remembering it!**	• It is important to not only listen to what the CYPSVI say, but also *how* they say it. Can later engage in peer supervision in this regard.
Child answer: Yes (we hope)	
>**Thank** you.	
>**I will** use the tape to make a written record.	
>**Then** I will destroy the tape.	
>**I won't** put your name in the writing so no one will know what you said.	
>**Before** we start recording if there are any things you don't feel comfortable talking about, just say so.	
>**We won't** talk about them!	
>**You might** hear me turning paper over-that is my script so I don't forget to ask the questions!	
>X, **What I** haven't mentioned yet, is that I have visual needs too.	
>**I can** only see with one eye - my right eye.	
>**In my** right eye I can see about 70% of what fully sighted people can see.	
> **Sitting in** this chair, looking ahead, I can see everything on the right hand side of the room, but not the left.	
Link into Q1.	

Interview script			
Question (stem)	Prompt (if CYPSVI has difficulty understanding)	Extension (if something else is said that is useful)	Comments
1 What are you able to see?	• e.g. provided above. • When you look around, what can you see? • What shapes/colours/objects can you see? • What about people and faces? • So I am right in thinking that you can see ……..?		• Use self as an example to demonstrate a degree of empathic understanding. • Be aware that many CYPSVI have difficulty understanding concepts of left and right (and indeed many sighted children). • 'can' = positive reframing; not problematizing. • Personal testimony/experience of VI as described by parent and QTVI – triangulation. • Deepening understanding of personal experience of VI, including insight into their visual acuity/contrast/colour awareness. • Checking understanding of researcher.

2	What help did you get in your old/last/primary school?	• Intro: >Some people remember things about their last school. >Some people don't! >Q. Can you remember…*Q2*.		• Aware that I might get different responses from different age groups - e.g. likely to be harder for older children to remember. By 'seating' question in this way I will hopefully reduce any potential negative impact of this upon rapport. • Vision helps in the integration and recollection of memories so may be a difficult task. • Helping CYPSVI to focus. • Establishing a sense of provision in a primary setting. • Enables any similarities/differences with provision in current secondary setting to be identified. • If CYPSVI has difficulty in remembering, move through prompts in cascade fashion. • Areas covered in
		>Think about your primary school. • What special equipment did you use (such as a sloping desk or a camera)? • Was there a Teaching Assistant in your class? • Did they just work with you? • Were they with you all the time? • What was that like?/How did you feel about that? • Where did you sit in class? Did you get any help during break or lunchtimes?		

			prompts are those highlighted as pertinent within the literature.
			• Avoiding use of acronyms and technicalities as this may inhibit rapport and breadth of responses.
	• Did any adults from outside of school work with you sometimes? • Do you remember any of their names? • What were their jobs? • Who did you talk with about your visual needs in primary school? • How did you travel to and from your primary school? (Public transport Lift with parent/guardian Special travel arrangements) • When you changed school to come here what help did you get during the change? •		• Use info gathered from short questionnaires to triangulate and establish roles where necessary. • Cannot presume they will know the term 'counselling'. • Consider this in relation to access to school clubs. • May pick up issues of concern re: transition.

| 3 | What help do you get in school now? | • Intro:
> We have talked a bit about primary school.
> Lets now think about secondary school.
• What special equipment do you use (such as a sloping desk or a camera)?
• Where do you usually sit in class? Is there a Teaching Assistant in any of your classes?
• Do they just work with you?
• Are they with you in all lessons?
• (If yes to TA question) Where do they usually sit?
• What is that like?/how do you feel about that?
• Do you get any help during break or lunchtimes?
• Which members of staff do you have the most contact with?
• What does that involve?
• Do any adults from outside of school work with you sometimes?
• Can you remember their names? | | • Helping CYPSVI to re-focus.
• Establishing an overall sense of provision in current setting.

• Do they act as a barrier/facilitator of inclusion within the classroom?

• Linking to training of professionals specifically re: CYPSVI of secondary age. |

		• What are their jobs? • Who do you talk with about your visual needs? • What help are you given moving between lessons? • How do you travel to and from school? (Public transport Lift with parent/guardian Special travel arrangements) (If CYPSVI suggests nothing is done to help them): What do you think could be done that would be helpful for you?		• Triangulate with info from professionals and parents. • Consider this in relation to access to school clubs. • Eliciting child voice.

4	Thinking about the help you do get, do you feel you need it all the time?	• Do you find you need more help in:
		   • Lessons
		   • Break/lunch
		   • Morning/afternoon
		   • Going home time
		   • Other?
		
		• What are the times when you don't feel you need help?
		• What is done that you think is particularly helpful?
		• Is there anything done that you do not think is helpful?
				• Attempted to frame more positively.
				• Literature suggests e.g. transition between lessons and break/lunch times – is this reflected by the CYPSVI?
				
				• Tapping into perceived personal capabilities.
				• To what extent is pupil voice listened to?
				• Tapping into perceived barriers.

| 5 | We've talked mainly about work and lessons so far, can you tell me more about what you do at break/lunchtimes? | • Intro:
>We have talked a bit about how you feel about the help you get in school.
>There are different ways of talking about feelings.
>I would also be interested to know how your vision needs impact upon you personally.
• How do you feel about having visual needs?
• Have you always felt that way?
• Do you think adults/staff in school understand how it feels for you?
• Do you think other children understand how it feels for you/what it's like for you?
• What do you like to do at break/lunchtimes?
  • Games
  • Socialise
• Who do you normally do these things with?
• What do you like to do in your spare time? | | • Leaving it open as older children may not wish to play games.
• Triangulate info with IM/SENCo to establish if all friends are sighted, have any experience of VI or any other needs (drawing on social comparison literature).
• Possible gender difference e.g. boys and |

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			physical activities such as football.
			• Re: spare time question – aware that it is asking about a different context but used to deepen understanding/create richer picture of individual. Can link with future questions re: friendships.
	• Did you find it easy to make friends here? Do you have any friends that also have visual needs?		• Accessing differing info re: transition. What is the significance of this for them?
	• In your view, what makes someone a good friend?		
	• How do you think your friends would describe you?		• Exploring ideas around self-concept.
	• Are you always able to join in activities with your friends at break/lunchtimes?		• Re: shared interests literature.
	• (If so), what makes that possible?		
	• (If not), what activities can you not join in with?		
	• Are you part of any school clubs?		• Be sure to check with school that they offer clubs first.
	• (If so), what clubs have you		

	joined and when do they take place? • (If not), would you like to be? (If yes), what is stopping you from joining?		Does time of day have a role to play re: accessibility?o special travel arrangements have a role to play re: accessibility?

Speech/Closing script	Action
>**That** brings us to the end. >**I would** like to thank you again for meeting with me today. >**Thank** you for being so open and honest. >**I understand** that some of what we discussed might not have been easy for you. >**Q. Do you have any questions about what we have talked about?** >**I will** just remind you that I won't put your name in the writing so no one will know what you have said. >**The tape** I have been using will be destroyed. >**You** also have the right to withdraw. >**If you** later decide you do not want me to write about what we have discussed today, just let X know. >**Q. Do you understand?**	

>**It is** now X time. >**Q. What lesson do you have now?** >**Enjoy** the rest of your day. >**Thanks** again.	• As the CYPSVI leaves, observe what the staff do as it will reveal valuable contextual info.

Pupils with a Visual Impairment and Social Inclusion

Short Questionnaire for Parents/Guardians

Thank you for agreeing to answer the following questions in relation to (CYPSVI). Let me remind you that all the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and anonymised so that no-one will be able to trace the comments back to you. I do appreciate that there will be aspects of this questionnaire that you may find difficult; however I would be very grateful if you could please be as honest as possible. Once completed, please send your questionnaire back to me via post or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1) What is (CYPSVI)'s visual impairment (VI) e.g. nystagmus, cone-rod dystrophy, congenital cataracts?
   _____
   _____
   _____

2) What age was (CYPSVI) when his/her VI was detected?
   _____

3) How have (CYPSVI)'s vision needs changed as he/she has got older?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4) Prior to (CYPSVI)'s birth, had you had any experience in the area of VI?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5) When you realised (CYPSVI) had vision needs, what was your reaction? Please give details if you feel you can.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6) (CYPSVI) is currently in a mainstream placement; had you considered other types of setting (e.g. a special school for children with VI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7) Which professionals support you in relation to (CYPSVI)'s VI (e.g. QTVI, Habilitation Specialist, etc)?

_____
_____
_____

8) What sort of support do these other professionals give you in relation to (CYPSVI)'s VI?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9) Are there any other comments you would like to make (e.g. how [CYPSVI] gets to and from school, spends his/her time after school/on weekends, [CYPSVI]'s hobbies)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

__Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. If you would be prepared to discuss your comments further please indicate below.__

☐ Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion.

(I can be contacted via telephone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮)

☐ No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

Pupils with a Visual Impairment and Social Inclusion

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Short Questionnaire for Inclusion Managers and SENCOs

Please return your completed questionnaire to me via post or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1a) What are your the inclusion policies of your setting?

_____
_____
_____
_____

b) What are the key points of the inclusion strategy for your setting?

_____
_____
_____
_____

c) Would it be possible for me to see and read a copy of your inclusion strategy?

_____. If your answer is 'yes', thank you! I will contact you shortly.

2a) What, if any, training have you had relating to children and young people with a visual impairment (VI) in the secondary school age group?

_____
_____
_____
_____

b) In what other aspects of working with VI pupils would you like further training?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3) What involvement have you had with (CYPSVI) to date? (Please include both direct and indirect contact)

Direct (e.g. working one-to-one with a particular child or family)
_____
_____
_____

Indirect(e.g. organising support)
_____
_____
_____

4)   Are there any further comments you would like to make e.g. your views on the impact of support provide for (CYPSVI); their social interactions, friendships, hobbies and interests?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. If you would be prepared to discuss your comments further please indicate below.

☐ Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion.

(I can be contacted via telephone: ▓▓▓▓▓▓ or email: ▓▓▓▓▓▓)

☐ No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

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Short Questionnaire for Teaching Assistants

Please return your completed questionnaire back to me via or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1a) Are you the only Teaching Assistant (TA) working with (CYPSVI)?

Yes / No (please delete as appropriate)

b) If the answer is 'no' please name the other TAs.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) For how long have you been supporting CYPSVI?

_____

3) In which lessons do you currently support CYPSVI?

_____
_____
_____

4) In what ways do you support CYPSVI in class?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5) Where do you usually sit in class e.g. next to, behind CYPSVI?

_____
_____

6) What TA support (if any) does (CYPSVI) receive at break/lunchtimes?

_____
_____264
_____

7) What aspect of your support for (CYPSVI) do you think he/she finds most useful?

_____
_____
_____

8) Are there ever any times where you feel (CYPSVI) does not need TA support?

_____
_____
_____

9) What other professionals do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

10) What members of staff at (School X) do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

11a) What, if any, training have you had in working with children and young people with a visual impairment (VI) in the secondary school age group?

_____
_____
_____
_____

b) In what other aspects of working with VI pupils would you like further training?

_____
_____
_____
_____

12) Are there any other comments you would like to make e.g. your views on (CYPSVI)'s social interactions, friendships, hobbies and interests?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

__Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. If you would be prepared to discuss your comments further please indicate below.__

☐ Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion.

(I can be contacted via telephone: ██████████ or email: ██████████)

☐ No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

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Questionnaire for QTVI's

Please return your completed questionnaire to me via post or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1) Could you please describe your general training to date?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2) What VI training have you received specifically for pupils of secondary school age?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3) Which age group of pupils do you work with at the moment?

_____
_____
_____

4) What, specifically, did/do you do with each age group of a secondary school age?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5) Please describe (CYPSVI)'s VI.

_____
_____
_____

6a) In your view, would (CYPSVI)'s VI be classified as 'severe'? (Yes/No)

_____

b) Please state what you define 'severe' as being'?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7) What was the age of onset of (CYPSVI)'s VI?

_____

8) Please describe your work with (CYPSVI) to date.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9) Please describe your work with (CYPSVI)'s parents/carers to date.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10) How are (CYPSVI)'s visual needs likely to change in the future (e.g. reach a period of stability or continue to deteriorate)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

11) What other professionals do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____

12) What other post holders in school do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

13) Are there any further comments you would like to make e.g. your views on the impact of (CYPSVI)'s VI upon his/her social inclusion, the impact of your support?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. If you would be prepared to discuss your comments further please indicate below.

☐ Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion.

(I can be contacted via telephone: ████████ or email: ██████████)

☐ No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

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Short Questionnaire for Habilitation Worker's

Please could I ask that you send your completed questionnaire back to me via post or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1) Could you please describe the general training you have received to date?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2) What training have you received specifically for young people with a visual impairment (VI) of secondary age?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3) Which age group of pupils do you work with at the moment?

   _____
   _____
   _____

4) What, specifically, did/do you do with each age group of a secondary age?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5) Please describe your work with (CYPSVI) to date.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6) Please describe your work with their parents/carers to date.

_____
_____
_____
_____

7) How are his/her visual needs likely to change in the future (e.g. reach a period of stability or continue to deteriorate)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8) What other professionals do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9) What other post holders in school do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

__Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. There is a possibility that I may like to discuss some of the answers you have given above in more detail. Please may you indicate below whether or not you would be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.__

☐ Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion.

(I can be contacted via telephone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮)

☐ No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

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Short Questionnaire for Educational Psychologist working at School X

Please return your completed questionnaire to me via post or e-mail (whichever you prefer) using the details provided above.

1a) Where did you undertake your Educational Psychology Training?

_____

b) Was it a Masters or Doctoral programme?

_____

2) How long have you been qualified?

_____

3) As part of your course, what, if any, training did you receive regarding visual impairment (VI)?
_____
_____
_____

4) Since qualifying as an Educational Psychologist (EP) what, if any, VI training have you received?
_____
_____
_____

6a) Throughout your career as an EP, how many VI cases have you been involved in?

_____

b) Of these, how many of the children/young people had VI as their main presenting need with no additional needs?

_____

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7) Please describe your work with (CYPSVI) to date.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8) Please describe your work with (CYPSVI)'s parents/carers to date.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9) What other professionals do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

10) What other post holders in school do you work with to support (CYPSVI)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

11) Are there any further comments you would like to make e.g. your views on the impact of (CYPSVI)'s VI upon their social inclusion, the impact of your support?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire – it is truly appreciated. If you would be prepared to discuss your comments further please indicate below.

☐   Yes, I am happy to participate in a follow-up discussion.

      (I can be contacted via telephone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

☐   No, I would not be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion.

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e-mail: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the Institute of Education and working within the London Borough of Richmond-Upon-Thames. My academic supervisors are Dr Karl Wall and Dr Yvonne Griffiths. For my thesis I have chosen to conduct research with a focus on young people with visual impairments (VI) in secondary, mainstream settings. In particular, I am interested in exploring their experiences of social inclusion and listening to what the young people themselves consider social inclusion to be.

This research will primarily be carried out with young people with a VI between the ages of 12 and 16 years (Year 7 to Year 11), using semi-structured interviews. It is also my intention to gather information from Inclusion Managers/Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and parents of participating children. Hence I am contacting schools across several London Boroughs to see if they have any pupils with a VI, who may be willing to participate in the research study.

I have been in touch with (QTVI or Inclusion Manager/SENCO), who informs me that you have a pupil(s) with a VI in the school. I therefore wanted to contact you directly in order to provide you with an overview of my research aims and to enquire as to your willingness for this research to go ahead within your school. Full consent for participation in the research would be obtained from parents/guardians and the pupils themselves. All participating individuals and schools will remain anonymous in the research. I will have full ethical approval from the Institute of Education's Ethical Committee and, having a VI myself, interviews will be conducted as sensitively as possible. The data gathering phase will likely commence in **October of the Autumn term**.

I would be very grateful if you could respond to me directly, using the e-mail address provided above. I would be happy to come into the school to discuss this further if this would be helpful.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Plaskett

Pupils with a Visual Impairment and Social Inclusion

Psychology & Human Development
Institute of Education
25 Woburn Square
London
WC1H 0AA.

Tel. █████████
e-mail: █████████

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the Institute of Education and working within the London Borough of Richmond-Upon-Thames. For my thesis I have chosen to conduct research with a focus on young people with visual impairments (VI) in secondary, mainstream settings. In particular, I am interested in exploring their experiences of social inclusion in school and listening to what the young people themselves consider social inclusion to be.

During the Autumn term, I would like to interview your child in order to obtain valuable insights into this particular field of interest. Having a VI myself, I hope that the interview would be conducted as sensitively as possible. It would be necessary to make an audio recording of the interview with your child but can assure you that the recorded material will only be heard by myself, the researcher. The material will be transcribed and then the audio recording will be destroyed. All pupils will remain anonymous throughout the research and when findings are reported. All data, including the audio data, will be held in the strictest confidence and in accordance with data protection act regulations.

Please could I ask that the slip below is completed and returned to (QTVI or Inclusion Manger/SENCO) by **Date**. I have requested that both a parent/guardian and your child indicate whether or not you are happy for them to participate. If you have any questions or comments on the research or require further information please contact me using the e-mail address or telephone number given above.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Plaskett

…………………………..……………………………………………………………………

Please indicate whether or not you are happy for child to participate in this research project by completing the form below and returning it to (QTVI or Inclusion Manger/SENCO) by **Date.**

Parent

I, (insert your name) _____ being the Parent/ Guardian (delete as appropriate) of _____ (please insert child's name) in Class _____ at _____ School **DO/DO NOT** (delete as appropriate) give my permission for my child to participate in this research project into 'Visual Impairment and Social Inclusion'.

Child/Young Person

I, (insert your name) _____ in Class _____ at _____ School **DO/DO NOT** (delete as appropriate) am willing to participate in this research project into 'Visual Impairment and Social Inclusion'.

Appendix 7: Ethical Approval Form

Against the backdrop of the Warnock Report, (1978), The Education Act, (1981) and the Disability Discrimination Act, (2005), the term 'inclusion' has gathered momentum within the British education system. However, little is known of the impact of such legislation on people living with VI or indeed their experience of discrimination, (Dale, 2010). Further, Rodney, (2003), purports social inclusion to be a common goal for all. However, as Sacks, Wolfe and Tierney, (1998, as cited in Bailey, 2009), assert, if the eye is considered a social organ, education should seek to address the social consequences of blindness, rather than simply the physical/biological issues.

The Education Act, (1996), highlighted the Government's commitment to the inclusion of children with special educational needs, (SEN), in mainstream schools and it is clear that was has been deemed inclusive practice is that residing within a mainstream setting. Such government reforms have meant that many children with VI are educated in mainstream rather than specialist provisions for the visually impaired, (Gray, 2008), - a figure estimated to be around 60%, (Keil, 2003, as cited in Bailey, 2009). Of concern though is the level of specialist training within mainstream settings, without which it becomes increasingly possible that a child's opportunities to develop independence and self-mastery may be diminished, (Gray, 2008). Travel to schools may also have ramifications for social opportunities thus, arguably, further isolating children with VI from their peer group, (Bailey, 2009).

Stockley and Brooks, (1995, as cited in Bailey, 2009), suggest that emotional support is more likely to be needed for young people with VI: at the point of diagnosis, when their eyesight starts a new period of deterioration, or during a transition such as change of school. In a secondary school context, multiple peer groups and a greater teaching staff base increase opportunity for limited understanding of the implications of visual loss and it is important to recognise the challenge for children with VI in becoming socially competent in an increasingly complex environment, (Roe, 2008).

The need to research young people with VI in mainstream settings has been highlighted. Given the psycho-social impact of VI and the heightened feelings of disempowerment in adolescence, it seems particularly pertinent to focus on those of secondary age. Further, since social and emotional aspects of learning are said to be the key through which to unlock a child's learning potential and set a child on a trajectory for life, it is deemed extremely pertinent to explore the factors pertaining to social inclusion and emotional well-being.

The present study is of an exploratory nature. According to Robson (2002), exploratory studies enable a researcher to deepen understanding, in a little understood area, as well as generate ideas and hypotheses for future research. This study aims to add to the understanding of how young people with a VI experience social inclusion. In particular, it wants to unearth how these young people construe social inclusion in order that a comparison may be drawn with adult constructions of social inclusion, as per that purported within legislation. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, as yet this remains an un-researched area, thus it is hoped that the current study will provide new insights into the experiences of this population and inform future practice with regard to their social inclusion. This research also aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of adults around the child in an endeavour to glean a well-rounded picture of social inclusion.

Appendix 7: BPS Ethical Approval Form

DEdPsy (Y2) STUDENT RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM
Psychology & Human Development

This form should be completed with reference to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct – available online from www.bps.org.uk

On which course are you registered? Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

Title of project: Young People with Visual Impairments and their Social Inclusion in Secondary Mainstream Settings: exploring perspectives of the young people, their parents and key professionals

Name of researcher(s): Lisa Plaskett

Name of supervisors (for student research): Karl Wall/Yvonne Griffiths and Maureen Hennessy

Date: 12th July 2013 _____ Intended start date of data collection (month and year only): Oct 2013

1. Summary of planned research (please provide the following details: project title, purpose of project, its academic rationale and research questions, a brief description of methods and measurements; participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria; estimated start date and duration of project). It's expected that this will take approx. 200-300 words, though you may write more if you feel it is necessary. Please also give further details here if this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee.

Project Title: Young People with Visual Impairments and their Social Inclusion in Secondary Mainstream Settings: exploring perspectives of the young people, their parents and key professionals

Estimated Start Date: 03.09.13   Estimated Duration of the Project: 8 months

Purpose of Project: Although described as a low incidence disorder, 25, 000 children under the age of 16 are visually impaired, (VI; Fight for Sight, 2012). Noteworthy is the significant impact of a VI on the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of the young person. It is argued that even the language and terminology used in relation to VI, such as 'blindness', perpetuates prejudice, (Dodds,1993, as cited in Bailey, 2009), and has implications for the development of self-perception and self-esteem in young people with VI. Rodney, (2003), asserts that, although terms such as 'blindness' refer mainly to biological aetiology or absence of vision, the eye should in fact be considered a social organ. Interesting too are his claims that socialisation and cultural inclusion are capable of overriding the physical impairment, with the goal of an inclusive school to be one of overcoming such difficulties. The psycho-social effects of sight loss should not be underestimated and, if not addressed, can be a real threat to maintaining social inclusion and emotional well-being.

Research Questions:

1) How do young people with a VI in secondary mainstream settings construe their experiences of social inclusion?

2) How do adults/professionals working with young people with a VI in secondary mainstream settings construe their social inclusion?

3) How is the EP role implicated in facilitating the social inclusion of young people with a VI in secondary mainstream settings?

Methods and Measurements: This study will adopt a qualitative research design, utilising semi-structured interviews through which to obtain the perspectives of the participants, (Smith, 1995). Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research and believed to be particularly well suited to exploratory studies such as this, (Willig, 2001). Although it will be important to effectively investigate issues relating to the research questions, the interview schedule will enable the flexibility in order to explore additional comments/issues raised by participants, (Patton, 2002), or probe responses further, (Robson, 2002). Ideas from 'The Mosaic Approach' (Clark and Moss, 2001) research framework will be utilised – including observations and photography – in order to gain a more detailed picture of the young people's lives.

Participants: This study will utilise purposive sampling techniques. Specialists in the field, e.g. Qualified Teachers of VI, will be approached and provided with the inclusion criteria above in order to identify potential participants nationally as they will be well placed to access this information. The school and parents will then be contacted either directly by the researcher or through a more familiar professional and their willingness to participate in the study ascertained. If school and parents are willing, written consent will then be obtained from the young people upon entering their school for data collection. EPs will be contacted directly by the researcher and their willingness to participate in the study ascertained.

It is hoped that up to 10 young people with SVI, (according to the definition and inclusion criteria above), aged between 12 and 16 years, will participate in the study, together with (perhaps a sub-sample of) their parents, Inclusion Managers and EPs. There is a growing consensus that purposeful selection and smaller sample sizes are superior for a qualitative methodology. ((Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Although issues of geographical variation and ethnic variation are acknowledged, it is felt that conducting the research across London Boroughs will create a richer picture across different contexts and climates of understanding. In addition the range of participants – in terms of age and ethnicity – will further contribute to the acquisition of information-rich material, (Patton, 2002), providing a wider representation of pupils with VI.

The key criteria for inclusion of child participants within the study sample are:
1. Individuals with a diagnosis of SVI (severe visual impairment) that is persistent and not acquired through injury, nor should their diagnosis be co-morbid with a complex/profound condition (participants with ASC/SCLN may be accepted);
2. Attending school in a secondary, mainstream educational provision;
3. Willing to participate, voluntarily, in the study (together with parental consent).

The key criteria for adult participants to be included in the study will be:
1. Parents of the young people identified according to the criteria above;

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2. Inclusion Managers within the school in which the young person with SVI attends;
3. EPs attached to the school in which the young person with SVI attends.

2. **Specific ethical issues** (Please outline the main ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research, and how they will be addressed. It's expected that this will require approx. 200–300 words, though you may write more if you feel it is necessary. You will find information in the notes about answering this question).

General overview

- The researcher anticipates no risk to participants, the researcher or anyone else as a consequence of this project.
- Child participants will be under the age of 18 and the researcher will have access to them without another adult present. The researcher has, however, been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check.
- Financial incentives will not be offered at any stage of the project and the researcher will not offer to meet participants' expenses.
- No data will be collected outside of the UK.

Participation, confidentiality and anonymity

- Both child and adult participants will be provided with information outlining the purpose of the study and intentions of the researcher prior to the commencement of any research work. From this information it will be possible for them to make an informed decision about their willingness to participate.
- Participating young people be required to sign a consent form upon receipt of a full explanation of the study.
- Both child and adult participants will be made aware that they may withdraw from the study at any time. They will be reminded of this throughout the interview process as well as their ability to refuse to answer any questions for any reason.
- Both child and adult participants will be provided with written and verbal assurances of the full confidentiality and anonymity of their identity and any data gathered as a result of their involvement.
- Interviews will be recorded for the purpose of analysis. Recordings will be securely stored to ensure confidentiality and anonymity and, upon completion of the study, recordings will be deleted. Participants will be informed that they can obtain a copy of their recorded interview if so desired.
- In order to ensure anonymity of participants, pseudonyms will be created for each participant and transcription of interviews will be conducted by the researcher.

Debriefing/sharing of findings

- Findings from this research will form part of coursework for the Doctorate in Professional Child, Adolescent and Educational Psychology.
- Both child and adult participants will be debriefed upon completion of the research project and informed of key findings. They will also be made aware that they can request a full copy of the completed research project if so desired.
- As the current study is an exploratory study into perspectives of pupils with VI and their teachers regarding social inclusion, findings may be used to inform possible future directions of research by the current researcher.

Specifics pertinent to Section 3 (below) notes

There is an obligation on the Student and their advisory panel to bring to the attention of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

4. Attachments

Please attach the following items to this form:

- Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee, if applicable
- Where available, information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research.

5. Declaration

This form (and any attachments) should be signed by the Trainee, Academic and EP Supervisors and then submitted to Lorraine Fernandes in the Programme Office. You will be informed when it has been approved. If there are concerns that this research may not meet BPS ethical guidelines then it will be considered by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. If your application is incomplete, it will be returned to you.

For completion by students

I am familiar with the BPS Guidelines for ethical practices in psychological research (and have discussed them in relation to my specific project with members of my advisory panel). I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Signed   Lisa Plaskett.............Print Name   Lisa Plaskett   Date......19.07.13.........
(Trainee Educational Psychologist)

For completion by supervisors/ advisory panel

We consider that this project meets the BPS ethics guidelines on conducting research and does not need to be referred to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Signed   Y. M. Griffith.............Print Name Yvonne Griffiths................Date. 30/7/13.........
(Academic Research Supervisor)

Signed   ....Print Name Maureen Hennessy.................Date..31/7/13.........
(EP Supervisor)

FREC use
Date considered:_____   Reference:_____

| Approved and filed ☐ | Referred back to applicant ☐ | Referred to RGEC ☐ |

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3. Further details

Please answer the following questions.

#		YES	NO	N/A
1	Will you describe the exactly what is involved in the research to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	x		
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	x		
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	x		
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	x		
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	x		
6	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	x		x
7	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	x		
8	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)?	x		

If you have ticked No to any of Q1-8, please ensure further details are given in section 2 above.

#		YES	NO	N/A
9	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?		x	
10	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If Yes, give details on a separate sheet and state what you will tell them to do if they should experience any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help).		x	
11	Will your project involve human participants as a secondary source of data (e.g. using existing data sets)?	x		

If you have ticked Yes to any of 9 - 11, please provide a full explanation in section 2 above.

#		YES	NO	N/A
12	Does your project involve working with any of the following special groups?			
	Animals		x	
	School age children (under 16 years of age)		x	
	Young people of 17-18 years of age		x	
	People with learning or communication difficulties	x		
	Patients		x	
	People in custody		x	
	People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug-taking)		x	

If you have ticked Yes to 12, please refer to BPS guidelines, and provide full details in sections 1 and 2 above. Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students).