Institute of Education

UCL Institute of Education

Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent Psychology

Educational psychologists and youth offending services: Working together to improve the educational outcomes of young offenders.

An action research project

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Abstract

The poor educational outcomes of young people in the youth justice (YJ) system are well documented. In England, Youth Offending Services (YOSs) work with young offenders, and part of their remit is to engage them in education. Educational psychologists (EPs) aim to improve the educational outcomes of young people, using a range of psychological frameworks and tools. However, multi-agency practice between YOSs and EPs is under-developed.

This project aims to explore how EPs may support YOSs, by answering the following research questions: a) What are the challenges and opportunities to youth offender education, both identified by research and from the perspective of YOS staff? b) What YOS activities can help to build upon opportunities and overcome the challenges? c) Can these activities be compiled into an evidence-informed self-review framework which will be implemented to inform YOS practice? d) To what extent can an evidence-informed self-review influence practice development between EPs and YOSs?

An Action Research approach is taken. Following a review of relevant literature, to explore the perceived challenges and opportunities to youth offender education from the perspective of YOS staff, semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff (n=9) from an Inner London YOS. A Thematic Analysis was conducted. YOS and EPS case records were also analysed, to explore the extent to which EPs are involved with young people known to the YOS, and how much their involvement appears to impact on YOS practice.

The TA identified five superordinate themes, relating to descriptions of the ROLES they, or other professionals fulfil, the STRENGTHS they perceive in the work, descriptions of YOUNG PEOPLE FACTORS and SYSTEMIC FACTORS which impede or facilitate educational progress, and the perceived NEEDS of the service. The analysis of case records suggested that information-sharing between the YOS and the EPS was limited.

These findings were combined with a review of research into best practice in the education of young offenders, and used to create an evidence-informed self-evaluation framework. The framework allows YOSs to identify strengths and needs with regards to educational practice, and develop an action plan for improvement, including abstracting aspects of EP practice which may be helpful. The self-review process was piloted with the participating YOS, and reflections as to this experience and its utility, as well as recommendations for future practice, are provided.

Declaration

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

Word count (exclusive of appendices and list of references): 37,567

Table of Contents

Glossary of terms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AP	Alternative Provision
AR	Action Research
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
ASSET	The universal assessment tool used by YOSs, until 2016
AssetPlus	The universal assessment tool used by YOSs, from 2016
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ECM	Every Child Matters
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
ETE	Education, training and employment
KYPE	Keeping Young People Engaged
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSR	Pre-Sentence Report
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
SALT	Speech and Language Therapist
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SES	Socioeconomic Status
TA	Thematic Analysis

VSH	Virtual School Heads
YJ	Youth Justice
YJB	Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
YOI	Young Offenders Institution
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YOT	Youth Offending Team

List of tables and figures

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. Background and context

In the English context, young offenders may be defined as young people aged 10-17 who have been convicted of, or cautioned for one or more offences. This group are far more likely than their non-offending equivalents to have had poor experiences of education (HM Government, 2014) with low levels of literacy and numeracy compared with their non-offending peers (Brooks and Tarling, 2012). For these reasons, and others, it is widely accepted that offending behaviour by young people and difficulties in education are related, although the exact nature of the relationship is complex, and any causal link difficult to isolate (Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous and Tarling, 2001). Lending further support to such a relationship, research has shown that intervening at the level of an individual's education can have a positive effect on future offending behaviour (Lipsey, 1995; Hurry, Brazier and Moriarty, 2005; Machin, Marie and Vujic, 2011).

Youth Offending Teams or Services (YOTs or YOSs) were introduced to every local authority (LA) in England and Wales in 2000, following the implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). The central aim of a YOS is the prevention of re-offending by children and young people, by working with all young people aged 10-17 within the LA who have been convicted of, or are on bail for, criminal offences. Part of the remit of the YOS is to ensure the young people are attending education, training or employment (ETE) consistently. Given the complex needs of the young people, and the negative experiences they have often had of school, this presents a challenge.

Educational psychology 'is concerned with children and young people in educational and early years settings. Educational Psychologists (EPs) tackle challenges such as learning difficulties, social and emotional problems, issues around disability, as well as more complex developmental disorders' (British Psychological Society, 2016). EPs work in a variety of ways, including individual assessment, delivery of training, working with groups of parents, children or young people or professionals, observation and consultation (Farrell et al., 2006). The aim of the work of EPs is to 'help [...] children and young

people experiencing problems that can hinder their chance of learning' (British Psychological Society, 2016).

1.2 Research Problem

The information above would suggest that EPs are well placed to support YOSs to overcome the educational barriers the young people with whom they work may be facing. Despite this, there appears to be very little research into the ways in which EPs and YOSs may work effectively together, and my own experience of working within YJ suggests there is great variation in practice in different local authorities (LAs). In the LA in which I was training as an EP, no EP time was specifically allocated to working with young offenders, or alongside the YOS. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggested that there was very little communication between the YOS and the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) about particular young people, or in relation to the wider needs of this group of young people or staff.

The importance of education in reducing the risk of re-offending was a theme throughout Taylor's recent review of the YJ system, the findings of which were published in December 2016. He says:

> 'It is my view that education needs to be central to our response to youth offending. All children in England are required to be in education or training until their 18th birthday, but too often children in the YJ system have been out of school for long periods of time through truancy or following exclusion. […] Schools and colleges are crucial in preventing offending. If children are busy during the day, undertaking activity that is meaningful and that will help them to succeed in life, whether it be studying for exams, learning a trade or playing sport or music, they are much less likely to offend. Education and training are also the building blocks on which a life free from crime can be constructed.'
>
> (p. 3-4)

It is against this background that I judged that it would be relevant to the EP profession to explore the potential working relationship between EPs and a YOS.

Using McAteer's (2013) action research (AR) framework as a basis, the first three stages of an AR cycle were completed. McAteer describes these stages as: (i) starting off, and clarifying a research question; (ii) what is the situation at present? And how can I find out?; (iii) What changes can I make? Action steps.

First, I conducted a review of relevant literature regarding education and youth offending, with the aim of drawing tentative conclusions about factors contributing to effectively engaging young offenders in ETE. I evaluated the strengths and limitations of the research base as part of the review of literature. The arising review of literature is presented in chapter two of this thesis.

To contribute to knowledge in this area, and to develop an understanding of the situation at a local level, I subsequently judged that a useful next step would be to critically examine the needs and practise of the YOS in the LA where I was employed as a trainee EP. I completed semi-structured interviews with nine members of YOS staff, and analysed YOS and EPS case records. Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA).

The process of conducting the literature review, TA of interview data and case record analysis led me to reflect on the tentative conclusions I developed as an outcome of that process, regarding elements of YOS practice which may facilitate educational outcomes for young people. This led me to reflect on how information developed through research may inform practice within my LA, and more widely, and influenced the development the ensuing stage of the research, in McAteer's terms, the 'action steps'.

In considering these questions, I judged that the development and implementation of an evidence-informed self-review framework, which aimed to allow the YOS to assess its practice in relation to education with reference to the evidence base, would allow research to inform practice, and would contribute to a change in practice locally. I therefore abstracted areas of YOS educational practice research suggests may be helpful, both from the literature

reviewed and from the data developed as part of this project, and compiled this to create the self-review framework. For the participating YOS, I supported the self-review process through participation in two workshops with YOS managers. The self-review process informed the development of an action plan, which prioritised areas for improvement in educational practice, including areas of EP intervention which may be most helpful. Initial reflections on the perceived utility of the self-review framework, suggestions for EP practice and potential areas for further research were explored.

The research questions for this study are:

a) What are the challenges and opportunities to youth offender education, both identified by research and from the perspective of YOS staff?
b) What YOS activities can help to build upon opportunities and overcome the challenges?
c) Can these activities be compiled into an evidence-informed self-review framework which will be implemented to inform YOS practice?
d) To what extent can an evidence-informed self-review influence practice development between EPs and YOSs?

The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1: To draw tentative conclusions from the research base as to how a YOS may effectively support the educational needs of young offenders.

Objective 2: To describe the opportunities and challenges faced by the YOS in relation to the education of the young people with whom it is working.

Objective 3: To develop and pilot an evidence-informed YOS education self-review framework, documenting the process of development and implementation.

Objective 4: To provide some initial reflections as to whether the process of completing the self-review was perceived as helpful, and to make recommendations for future practice between EPs and YOSs.

1.3 Personal stance and background

My interest in the potential partnership between EPs and YOSs lies in the fact that prior to starting training as an EP, I spent 11 years working in London YOSs. There, I witnessed the educational difficulty many of the young people I worked with experienced, with very few achieving successes such as regular attendance or completion of qualifications. In both teams I worked in, a member of staff had a lead responsibility for education, but generally this was alongside other responsibilities, and often young people would complete their court orders having made little educational progress. The problems the young people were facing were often entrenched and despite their best efforts, the staff in the YOS faced a huge challenge in helping them to engage with education.

In the 11 years I worked in YJ, I never came into contact with an EP, and yet the challenges the young people were facing seem to be so relevant to their work. When I began my training as an EP, and spent time in different EPSs, this theme continued. Staff from EPSs and YOSs in different London authorities appeared to engage in very little collaborative working, and to know little about each other's roles.

I chose to work in a YOS 15 years ago, because of my view that young people in the YJ system are vulnerable, and that without effective support the problems they were facing in their adolescence were likely to continue into adulthood. The question I often considered was 'what could the YOS be doing differently to help these young people to succeed educationally?' I designed this project in the belief it might go some way to answering that question.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

To gain an understanding of the 'situation at present' (McAteer, 2013) it was judged to be important to critically evaluate the research base pertaining the educational needs of young offenders, and the associated practice implications. The concluding part of each section includes a summary of the practice implications, accompanied by numbers relating to the relevant indicator on the final self-review framework. This is intended to illustrate the process of abstraction of the evidence to inform the framework.

Section 2.2 details the strategies utilised to access relevant literature. In section 2.3, I explore the range of special educational needs which, research suggests, young offenders may experience. The characteristics of educational provision most likely to support young people in the youth justice system are discussed in section 2.4, as well the potential relationship between education and offending. Sections 2.5 and 2.6 describe the role and aims of YOS, both generally and in relation to educational practice, as well some of the challenges YOS staff have been demonstrated to face. Section 2.7 aims to critically evaluate desistance theory (McNeil, 2006) to improve understanding of the factors which may facilitate cessation of offending. Section 2.8 considers the available research base into the nature and implications of multi-agency practice between EPs and YOSs. The final section in this chapter aims to synthesise knowledge pertaining to the EP role at an organisational level, and the related dilemma of how research may effectively be harnessed to inform professional practice.

2.2 Literature search strategy

To ensure the following literature draws on an appropriately wide and relevant range of research, a variety of search strategies were employed. Initially, the university library's search engine was used. Search terms were entered in the following combinations, to identify literature which focused on young offenders and education. To limit the number of sources of information, the search was limited to the date range of 2006-2016 and to sources in the English language.

The initial search terms used are outlined in the table below:

Keyword 1:	Keyword 2:	Keyword 3:	Number of results yielded
Young	Offender	Education	276
Young	Offender	School	265
Youth	Offending	Education	608
'Youth offending team'	Education		99
'Youth offending service'	Education		89
'Young people'	Offending	School	206

Table 2.1: Initial literature search terms

As well as the university library search engine, these search terms were entered into 3 additional academic databases: Web of Science, Psychinfo and Education Research Complete (EBSCO). The databases were selected for their relevance to education, psychology and social sciences. Further searches were conducted using Google Scholar.

Following this initial search, additional inquiry took place by perusing the reference lists of relevant articles, to explore the sources of information used by their authors. Key literature was also provided by experts in the field, who were involved in the supervision of this project.

Websites of organisations with a role in research into this area, such as the YJ Board (YJB) were explored, and editions of two particularly relevant journals: *Youth Justice* and *Educational Psychology in Practice* from 2013-2016 were hand-searched.

2.3 The educational needs of young offenders

This section will consider the research base in relation to the educational needs and experiences of young people in the YJ system.

In England and Wales, 'young offender' refers to young people aged 10 (the age of criminal responsibility) to 17, who have received a substantive outcome for one or more offence. A substantive outcome is defined as a sentence given in court, or an out of court disposal such as a youth caution or youth conditional caution (Ministry of Justice, 2015).

Those aged 10-17 are more likely to offend than their adult counterparts (Barry, 2010). National survey data consisting of self-reports by young people in school between 2001 and 2005 indicated that 25% of young people will commit an offence within a 12 month period (MORI, 2006). This is significantly more than those receiving a conviction or caution and thus becoming a 'young offender' (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Young people who admit to offending are more likely to be male and aged 14-16. The most common age at which young people commit their first offence is between 11 and 12. There was little change in these figures over the 5 year period surveyed by MORI (2006). It is a limitation that the participants in these studies are all school-attenders which means that those excluded or detached from education are not represented.

Based on the above definition, 'young offender' refers to those young people caught for offences. Inclusion within the group is therefore affected by the practices of societal structures such as the police service and the courts, and is not arbitrary. It has been argued that the label can be unhelpful, particularly in an educational context where stigma on the part of education providers and other young people can exist. Interviews with professionals in the YJ arena have suggested that young people who offend could be seen as a 'risk' in terms of successfully completing a given training, and might be excluded from some courses in case they adversely affect the outcome targets (Cooper, Sutherland and Roberts, 2008). Furthermore, it has been argued that the label 'young offender' may lead to the development of a separate category of learners about which assumptions regarding learning needs may be made (Stephenson, 2006). For example, many young people who offend may also be part of the care system (Schofield, Biggart, Ward and Larsson, 2015), and yet individual and public policy responses are likely to be very different. In the main, explanations given for the low attainment of young people in the care system tend to focus on areas external to the young person, in contrast to young

offenders, for whom explanations tend to focus upon internal factors such as non-attendance or the attitudes of the young person (Stephenson, 2006).

The age range of 10-17 encompasses the developmental stage of adolescence, about which several psychological theories have been developed (eg. Piaget, 1947, Kohlberg, 1963). Theories differ in terms of how adolescence is defined and whether it is indeed a discrete stage. However, today it is widely recognised that adolescence is a cultural construct, which varies across societies (Coleman, 2011). Despite differing theories of adolescence, there is little disagreement that the period between childhood and adulthood is one of important transition, in which reflection and re-examination takes place. Young people at this stage are not only making the transition from childhood to adulthood but are also often making the transition from school to work, or an alternative educational environment. In England (but not Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland), young people are required to attend full-time education, an apprenticeship or traineeship or work or volunteer alongside part-time education or training until the age of 18 (Education Act, 2011). This is reflective of the fact that English society increasingly views young adults as taking longer to negotiate the transition between childhood and adulthood. The youth labour market has decreased which means that education and training have become increasingly important for young adults (Rogers, Hurry, Simonot and Wilson, 2014). This has implications for young people who may have had negative experiences of education and thus face attitudinal barriers in continuing engagement until the age of 18.

There is a substantial body of research supporting the relationship between offending behaviour and difficulties in education. Young offenders are overall very much below national reading levels (Brooks and Tarling, 2012), with over half of 15-17 year-olds in YOIs having literacy and numeracy levels expected of a 7-11 year-old (HM Government, 2014). They have often experienced significant difficulties in mainstream education including absenteeism, exclusions, or limited or part-time provision (YJB, 2006). One study found that 9 out of 10 young men in custody had been excluded from school, and over a third were under 14 when they last attended school (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013).

Hughes, Williams, Chitsabesan, Davies and Mounce, (2012) conducted an extensive structured literature review of research, drew on the expertise of an advisory group from a range of disciplines, and consulted young people and staff from a Young Offenders Institution (YOI). They defined a learning disability using three criteria: An IQ score of less than 70; significant difficulties with everyday tasks; and onset prior to adulthood. The researchers concluded that generalised learning disabilities are significantly more common in young people in custody, with a prevalence of 23-32% compared to 2-4% of the general population. They also suggested specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, are more prevalent than in the general population: 45-57% compared to around 10%. They concluded that, given many young offenders have a reading comprehension age below the age of criminal responsibility within England and Wales, they may have difficulty following the legal process. In addition, the study concluded that impairments in both expressive and receptive language were very high amongst young offenders, from 60-90%. Prevalence rates of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorders were all found to be higher amongst incarcerated young people than the general population, and are also likely to have an impact on learning and outcomes at school.

Although some of the constructs used within Hughes et al's paper (for example ADHD or IQ) may be contentious, and it can be argued that there are alternative ways of understanding the behaviour they describe (eg. Hill, 2005; Timimi, 2009), these findings do suggest that young people with unidentified neurodevelopmental disorders are at risk of being criminalised, and subsequently of experiencing difficulty understanding legal processes, and presenting appropriately in the criminal justice system, which may further exacerbate their opportunities.

An earlier literature review of the needs of adult prisoners suggested that between 20 and 30% of that population have a learning disability or similar impairments of intellect and/or functioning (Loucks, 2007). This is broadly consistent with a more recent report which concluded that 32% of adult prisoners either self-reported or were assessed as having a learning difficulty or disability (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Whilst estimates of prevalence of such difficulties, both within the general population and the prison population vary to

some extent, there is consensus that learning difficulties and disabilities are over-represented amongst offenders, leading one report to conclude that 'although a robust, comprehensive and current picture does not exist, there is sufficient ad-hoc evidence (both qualitative and quantitative) to note that a considerable proportion of young offenders enter the YJ system with unidentified Special Educational Needs' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009, p. 2).

In an attempt to clarify which aspects of education, training or employment (ETE) might be associated with the onset or continuation of offending by young people, Stephenson (2006) identified four main areas of risk. These are: detachment from mainstream education, training or employment; low educational attainment, particularly with respect to literacy and numeracy; the influence of the school organisation; and the impact of episodes in custody and in care. Clearly, any two or more of these four areas may be interrelated. It is particularly concerning that some of these issues may be more likely to be experienced by particular ethnic groups, given one study found that 100% of mixed race young people known to YOSs had been excluded from school, compared to 84% of the total sample (YJB, 2009).

Overall, research into the educational needs of young offenders, whilst plentiful, faces some methodological difficulties which impact upon the depth of knowledge in this area. Most research into the relationship between education and offending has focused upon risk factors (factors which increase the likelihood a young person will start, or continue, to offend). There is a relative lack of research into the role of protective factors (those which reduce this risk). Furthermore, samples usually include very small numbers of young women. Although this is consistent with the gender balance of young offenders generally, it may be that the views and experiences of young women have some unique aspects, which are missed in research. Data is often derived from self-reports by the young people themselves, which, whilst valuable, may be influenced by social desirability, their ability to complete questionnaires, and their ability to recall specific issues accurately in relation to their past experiences.

A significant proportion of research into the relationship between education and offending falls into two categories: cross-sectional studies, which aim to establish a relationship between different variables at a particular point in time; and longitudinal studies, which collect data over time. However, whilst cross-sectional studies may indicate relationships, for example between offending and non-attendance, they are not able to establish causal relationships. Longitudinal studies are limited by the fact that data has often been drawn from official record-keeping systems (for example of schools or the police) which may of questionable validity and may not explain other variables such as the family or peer relationships. Finally, whilst specific relationships such as that between school exclusion and offending have been established in research, little is known about the mechanisms underpinning them. For example, does exclusion from school lead to increased opportunity to engage with negative peer groups and commit offences? Or are young people who offend more likely to engage in problematic behaviour at school and become excluded? Does low attainment lead to disengagement and absence from school? Or does regular absence impede attainment? Or are both factors influenced by a third variable, for example poverty or parenting (Hurry, Brazier and Moriarty, 2005). Whilst these questions remain largely unanswered in the literature, it is likely that relationships are reciprocal. These issues mean that, whilst abundant, there are weaknesses in much of the research

Despite this, a previous chair of the YJB has said:

> 'It may be too much to say that if we reformed our schools, we would have no need of prisons. But if we better engaged our children and young people in education we would almost certainly have less need of prisons. Effective crime prevention has arguably more to do with education than sentencing policy.'

> (Morgan, 2009).

Summary and relevance to current study

Whilst the research into the educational needs of young offenders faces some methodological difficulties, tentative conclusions may be drawn regarding implications for practice for those working with young people in the YJ system.

The research reviewed suggests that the following areas would be helpful YOS staff to consider.

The high incidence of unidentified special educational needs amongst young people in the YJ system, suggests that assessment and identification of educational need is an important first step for those working to support the education of this group [4, 5][1].   Additionally, it is proposed that young offenders may experience stigma from education providers, and others, and be at increased risk of exclusion. This highlights a role for those working with them in developing strategies to challenge stigma and contribute towards reduced risk of exclusion for this group [16].   Research further suggests that young people aged 16-18 may have specific needs, given the requirement (in England) that they remain in ETE until the age of 18, despite potential barriers young offenders may experience, which has implications for YOSs supporting this age group [8]. Research supports the view that young people should have access to effective educational and speech and language assessment, given the high levels of undetected needs amongst this population [23]. Finally, any educational intervention should consider all four of the domains proposed by Stephenson (2006); detachment from mainstream ETE [13, 14]; low educational attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy [4, 5]; the influence of the school or organisation [16]; the impact of episodes in custody and in care [12].

2.4 What works when providing education?

Here, the existing researching into the characteristics of effective young offender education, and its potential impact on reoffending, will be critically examined.

It has been argued that young offenders are predisposed to school failure even before they enter the school system due to family background, and that failures on the part of schools contribute to low motivation and violence in some their pupils (Ashkar and Kenny, 2009). Although this may suggest it is too late to intervene once young people reach adolescence, a meta-analysis of nearly 400 studies explored the effectiveness of treatment for 'delinquency.'   It concluded

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[1] Related indicator on the self-review framework

that providing treatment relating to school participation (eg. attendance) yielded a 12% improvement in delinquency, and treatment relating to academic performance (eg. grades, achievement tests) yielded a 14% improvement (Lipsey, 1995). There are weaknesses in this meta-analysis, due to variability in the definitions and measures of 'delinquency,' and the nature of 'treatment' in the studies included, which may lead to over- or under-estimation of these effects.

A different meta-analysis of 372 studies calculated the correlates of six different risk factors in relation to crime. The author concluded that personal educational/vocational achievement accounted for only 1.4% of the variance in criminal conduct. (Andrews,1995). However, the more risk factors present in a young person's life, the higher the risk of them offending (Farrington, 1996). This suggests that it is simplistic to argue that intervening at the level of young peoples' education alone will be effective in reducing the risk of them re-offending.

However, there is evidence that intervening to engage young people in education, training or employment (ETE) is likely to be effective as part of a wider intervention package. Whilst Lipsey (1995) himself acknowledges the difficulties associated with identifying effectiveness with any degree of precision from such a large meta-analysis, he tentatively suggests that some types of programmes are more effective than others in reducing offending. These include those which focus on young people's behaviour and skills rather than their internal states, and those which target employment.

Whilst there is a growing body of evidence regarding successful early interventions with younger children considered to be at risk of offending, there is less research into the effectiveness of what is done with secondary school age offenders (Hayden, 2008). The research that does exist supports the view that 'approaches that enable young people ultimately to gain and sustain employment [are] one of the best ways of preventing offending' (YJB, 2006, p. 27). In particular, it has been suggested that interventions should be strongly linked to the objectives of attainment (particularly in literacy and numeracy) and reducing the risk of young people becoming detached from education. However, literacy, numeracy and language skills tend to be best developed

when learning is contextualised and embedded in real-life activities (Brazier, Hurry and Wilson, 2010). Interventions which aim to increase, for example, self-esteem, or which provide learning in a segregated or abnormal environment have been found to be ineffective (Lipsey, 1995). It has been suggested that young offenders are more likely to value work experience and vocational training than the 'worksheets' they associate with literacy and numeracy (Hurry, Brazier, Snapes and Wilson, 2005; Kennedy, 2013).

In terms of the first objective of improving literacy and numeracy, research has supported the view that developing the literacy and numeracy skills of young offenders can have an impact on re-offending (Hurry, Brazier and Moriarty, 2005). Some specific literacy development programmes have been evaluated with groups of young offenders, and evidence suggests they have contributed to improvements (Brooks, 2016). However, the effectiveness of the programme is improved by it being 'multi-modal;' that is, involving a range of activities, and being tailored as much as possible to the individual interests of the young people. Furthermore, it has been found that when young people become detached from mainstream education, they appear to make the best progress in alternative provision (AP) which provides one-to-one contact, adopts an adult approach and atmosphere, and provides an opportunity for certification (YJB, 2006). A review of the literature into effective educational programmes for young offenders concluded that the number of contact hours needed for a programme to be effective is likely to range from 75 to 150 (Brazier et al., 2010). Young people have also expressed that educational activities should be suitably challenging and they are put off by tasks resembling the work they associated with primary school (Hurry, Brazier and Wilson, 2008). A sample of early school leavers expressed similar aspirations for greater challenge in their work (Larkin, 2014).

A theoretical perspective on the underlying mechanisms by which improvements in education impact upon offending behaviour has been offered by Machin, Marie and Vujic (2011). They suggest three mechanisms by which engagement in education may reduce offending:

a) The **income effect** relates to the argument that opportunities to earn a legitimate wage reduce motivation to make financial gains illegally.

b) The **time effect** refers to the fact that time spent in education means that less time is available to young people to commit offences.

c) Finally, it is suggested that engagement in education improves **patience and risk aversion**, which in turn impacts on the weight given by young people to the potential punishment arising from committing crime.

A case study by Hayden (2008) explored the impact of an educational support project for young offenders. The project offered an extended programme of intervention and support to 29 young offenders, all of whom were assessed as having a range of special educational needs (SEN), for example dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD. The intervention aimed to improve reading, writing, maths, and behaviour, amongst other things, and the length of intervention depended on progress, which was assessed every six weeks. Most of the young people were assessed to be at medium-to-high risk of re-offending.

Overall, 17 of the 29 young people (57%) did not complete the programme, and 7 (24%) did not attend at all after the initial assessment. Barriers identified within this study included a lack of family support for education and substance misuse. Young people having their social care placements moved to another area of the UK, young people going missing, young people being sent to custody (six of the 29 were incarcerated after being accepted on the project) and difficulties ensuring continuity of provision when this happened, were also identified as barriers (Hayden, 2008). It is in recognition of difficulties such as these, that strategies to minimise the harm caused by transitions, for example 'transition documents' have been highlighted as examples of good practice for YOSs (YJB, 2007). The short-term nature of the funding for the project and insufficient individual support for the young people were also identified as contributing factors.

Hayden concluded that 'provision was not well planned, appropriately staffed, or of sufficient intensity and duration to make a significant difference to either the behaviour or the educational achievement of most of these young offenders' (Hayden, 2008, p. 30). It is a limitation of this case study that the views of the young people themselves were not sought, as their perceptions of the project and reasons for its apparent failure would have been enlightening. Other

studies have reported similar difficulties recruiting and retaining young offenders or early school leavers into educational programmes (Hurry, Brazier and Wilson, 2008; Larkin 2014) and although at times this may be due to problems with the programmes themselves, it must be acknowledged that the backgrounds and experiences of the young people are likely to mean these challenges exist, no matter how well-planned the provision.

Much of the research into the provision of education for young offenders has been influenced by the need to deliver 'evidence-based practice.' That is, in recent history there has been a drive for practitioners within the YJ system to deliver interventions which have been evaluated as reducing reoffending (Wilcox, 2014). However, some have argued that to apply the expectation for evidence-based practice to education in YJ is flawed. For example, the 'gold standard' methodological approach to generating evidence, the randomised controlled trial (RCT) does not apply neatly to research in this area for several reasons, including the fact that 'education is not a 'treatment; applied in dosages but a multi-faceted and prolonged social encounter involving a range of ideas, curricula and personnel' (Stephenson, Giller and Brown, 2011, p. 19). Furthermore, much of the research into effective education for offenders relates to education provided in custody (eg. Ministry of Justice, 2016; Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders and Miles, 2013) rather than in the community, and researchers have commented on a lack of robust data in the prison system (Ministry of Justice, 2016). These issues make research into effective education provision to young offenders particularly problematic.

Although research into effective ETE for young offenders may have limitations, it is helpful to consider theoretical frameworks, which could inform approaches to educating this group. In particular, theories of *motivation* and *engagement* may be pertinent. It can be argued that without these things, young people in the YJ system are unlikely to have positive educational outcomes, given research has suggested that engagement is a predictor of many things, including achievement, and is protective against delinquency, gang involvement and substance misuse (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). However, both motivation and engagement are complex constructs, and there are differences of opinion as to how they should be defined.

It has been suggested that *motivation* is a private, unobservable process, which comprises energy, purpose and durability (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Skinner and Pitzer (2012) draw on these ideas, and go on to suggest that *engagement* is the outward manifestation of motivation. They identify the outward manifestations of each aspect of motivation as follows:

Energy: effort, exertion, vigour, intensity, vitality, zest and enthusiasm

Purpose: interest, focus and concentration

Durability: absorption, determination and persistence

One model of motivation, which is grounded within self-determination theory, is called the Self-System Model of Motivational Development (Deci and Ryan, 1985). This model is of interest because it assumes that every person has intrinsic motivation. That is, they are innately curious and possess a desire to learn. It is further theorised that every person has basic needs, for *relatedness* (belonging), *competence* (experiencing oneself as effective) and *autonomy* (the need to present one's authentic self, and experience that self as a source of action) (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). It is argued that if these needs are met by social contexts or activities, people will engage constructively. However, when these needs are thwarted, people may become disengaged and disaffected.

With this perspective in mind, theorists suggest that schools influence the motivation, and therefore the engagement, of their pupils by either undermining or supporting their experiences as belonging in school (being related), competent to succeed and autonomous, self-determined learners. Engagement and motivation are theorised to be supported by warm and supportive relationships with teachers, parents and peers, and by opportunities to engage in intrinsically interesting academic work (which is suggested to be 'hands-on, heads-on, project-based, relevant, progressive and integrated across subject matter' (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012, p. 28-29)). However, research has suggested that this relationship is cyclical. For example, increased disaffection and failure by pupils can lead to more coercion from teachers, which in turn reduces autonomy.

It has been suggested that at some key periods during adolescence, for example around the transition to Junior High School in the States, the risk

increases that motivation, and therefore engagement, will decrease. It has further been argued that this potential decline in motivation may be underpinned by differences in a typical elementary (or primary) school classroom or school, and a typical junior high (or secondary) one (Eccles et al., 1993). If disaffection and disengagement from learning are understood as an indication that schools, are not nurturing the areas of relatedness, autonomy or competence to succeed (and perhaps secondary schools are less likely to do so), it may be argued that schools should therefore respond by increasing opportunities for warm, supportive interactions, autonomy and structure.

Summary and relevance to current study

In summary, when considering the available research base, and the above theoretical framework, the following are likely to be characteristics of effective education for young offenders:

- Education or training which targets literacy and numeracy by embedding it within real life, contextualised activities [10, 11][2].
- Work experience / vocational training.
- A structured and multi-modal approach, which incorporates a range of activities.
- Education or training which is tailored to individual needs.
- Opportunities for one-to-one contact.
- An 'adult approach' to learning in which learners are autonomous.
- Opportunities for certification.
- Contact hours in the range of 75-150 hours.
- Presence of warm and supportive relationships with teachers, parents and peers.
- Activities which are intrinsically interesting (relevant to real-life and integrated across subjects).
- Content which is perceived as sufficiently challenging and removed from a primary school curriculum.

Whilst YOSs do not habitually deliver ETE directly to young people, practitioners may wish to consider these characteristics whilst negotiating

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[2] Related indicator on the self-review framework

appropriate educational provision on behalf of young people. Furthermore, in some cases, YOSs deliver direct educational activity to young people, and in such instances these features, particularly the development of literacy and numeracy skills which research has suggested may have an influence on re-offending, are likely to be helpful. Some identified barriers, such as transitions between custody and the community [12], and a lack of family support [20,] may fall within the remit YOS influence.

2.5 The role of the Youth Offending Service

Here, the structure and practice of YOTs and YOSs are considered, both generally, and in relation to educational work. Strengths and limitations of the YOS model are explored.

The primary aim of the YJ system in England and Wales is to 'prevent offending by children and young persons' (HM Government, 1998, S37(1)). YOSs, which were established by every local authority in England and Wales following the implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act in 1998, are responsible for the practical realisation of this aim. YOSs were one of the early adopters of a multi-agency structure, in which professionals from disciplines such as the probation service, education, the police, social care and health operated from one physical locality and with the same central aim. It is a requirement stated within the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) that every YOS includes 'a person nominated by the chief education officer appointed by the local authority under section 532 of the Education Act 1996' (HMSO, 1998, p. 29). Therefore all YOSs must include a staff member with responsibility for education. Part of the brief of the YOS is to ensure that all young people known to them are receiving ETE consistently.

When a young person is convicted of an offence, they are referred by the court to the YOS in the LA in which they reside (or by which they are looked-after). There, they will be allocated to a case manager. All YOSs use a common assessment tool to assess young people coming into contact with them. Previously this was the ASSET assessment, but from 2016 a programme was put in place to replace the ASSET with AssetPlus in all YOSs in England and Wales.   Both the ASSET and AssetPlus require the assessor to record

information about each case, including the criminal history, care history, and analysis of the current offence. They are used to assess aspects of the young person's situation or personal characteristics, such as their living arrangements, family and personal relationships, ETE, neighbourhood, lifestyle, substance use, physical health and emotional and mental health.

However, studies have suggested that the completion of ASSET may be problematic, with categories of 'N/A' 'missing data' and 'Not known' all being used by assessors, and with a lack of clarity as to how these categories are defined by the various professionals using the system (O'Carroll, 2016). This is concerning considering the risk categories generated by ASSET are used to inform Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs), and therefore sentences recommended to the courts, as well as the dosage of intervention provided by the YOS. It has also been suggested that when thorough assessments *are* present, they do not always lead to high quality intervention planning (HMI Probation, Care Quality Commission, Estyn, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and Ofsted (2011), despite evidence suggesting that interventions should be matched to the risks and needs identified in the assessment (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

The ASSET was criticised for its emphasis on risk rather than protective factors, for the need to complete several separate documents, and for failing to take into consideration more recently established areas of risk (such as gang involvement or speech and language difficulty). The AssetPlus aims to address these issues, as it is 'designed to provide a holistic end-to-end assessment and intervention plan, allowing one record to follow a child or young person throughout their time in the YJ system' (YJB, 2014b, p.1). Based upon the work of, for example, Ward and Maruna (2007), the AssetPlus places a stronger emphasis on strengths than did its predecessor. It also introduces specific questions pertaining to the speech, language and communication needs of the young people, given research has suggested difficulties in this area are prevalent within the offending population (Bryan, Freer and Furling, 2007).

Following assessment, the role of the case manager is to create and oversee an intervention or pathway plan, designed to reduce those factors assessed to be most strongly linked to the risk of the young person re-offending. Referrals will be made to professionals within the team, for example drug and alcohol or

education workers, were necessary. The ASSET or AssetPlus assessment is supposed to be regularly reviewed to consider whether the risk of re-offending is increasing or decreasing (YJB, 2013). The case manager is also responsible for ensuring the young person is complying with their order, and returning the order to court for breach where necessary.

It is useful to consider that a YOS, being part of a LA, and therefore the 'state,' may influence the behaviour of young people. In his concept of 'state governance,' Bourdieu (1994) argued that rather than being a co-ordinated body in which the various parts work together, the 'state' in fact consists of competing agents and institutions. In particular, his notions of the 'left' and 'right' hands of the state are of interest. According to Bourdieu, the left hand covers the social functions, and is concerned with welfare and support. Conversely, the right hand is involved with financial matters and resourcing and in this way enforces 'economic discipline.'

It has been argued that the police, the courts and prison are components of the state's right hand (Lanskey, 2015). However, YOSs face the challenge of managing the tensions of both hands of the state, being made up of multi-disciplinary teams incorporating, for example, both social workers and police officers. The tension of meeting the welfare needs of young people, whilst penalising criminal behaviour, is a fundamental conflict present in YOSs. The same could be said for education providers, who may take punitive action, such as exclusion, when young people engage in offending behaviour.

A large-scale, national review of the YJ system in England and Wales has recently been undertaken. Several recommendations were made, including that YOSs, in their current form, will no longer be a requirement of LAs, and that YJ services become more devolved (Taylor, 2016). However, at the time of writing it is unclear to what extent these recommendations will be implemented, and YOSs in England and Wales are continuing to operate as outlined in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

Summary and relevance to current study

The preceding section summarises the role YOSs play in supporting young people to reduce offending. The difficulties identified with the assessment of

young peoples' educational needs lend further support to the argument that identification of needs is a key area YOSs wishing to improve their practice will need to consider [4, 5][3]. The research reviewed suggests related challenges with ensuring the planning of intervention is of a high quality and is targeted to address the risks and needs highlighted in the assessment process [7].

2.6 YOS intervention to support education

This section considers evidence in relation to what YOSs can do to support young peoples' educational progress, and some of the challenges that YOSs may face.

A range of difficulties has been identified with the provision of educational intervention in YOSs. A study by the YJB in 2004 aimed to explore the roles and responsibilities of health, education and substance misuse workers attached to YOSs. The project had three elements: analysis of YJ Plans and other written material from YOSs; a self-completion survey of health, education and substance misuse workers; and follow-up focus groups and telephone interviews with staff. The analysis of annual YJ Plans suggested that the level of financial commitment to education varied from over 10% of the total YOS budget to less than 1% across the London region. Furthermore, in the survey and follow up interviews, many staff members with responsibility for education expressed a pressure to undertake generic YOS casework, thus undermining their ability to focus upon educational needs (YJB, 2004).

The same report suggested that there was little consistent screening of educational needs, and that the decision to refer a young person to the education worker was made on a case-by-case basis. Education staff were less likely than other specialists to visit young people in, or have contact with, the secure estate, which is likely to impact on continuity of provision when young people are released from custody. Less than one in five of the education workers surveyed considered educational provision for young offenders to be good or very good, and almost half considered it to be poor or worse (YJB, 2004). Whilst surveys can be a helpful means of gathering the perceptions of a

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[3] Related indicator on the self-review framework

high number of respondents in relation to specific questions, it is a flaw of this research paper that there is a lack of transparency as to the proportion of YOS education staff who completed the survey, or indeed were interviewed, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions as to its robustness.

Whilst this study was conducted some twelve years ago, things do not seem to have improved. The recent review of YJ services by Taylor (2016) found that whilst education was prioritised in some YOSs:

> '…in other areas […] work with education services features much less prominently and there has not been sufficient effort to engage with schools, colleges and training providers. In many community sentences education does not feature as a requirement of the order, and there is sometimes a lack of confidence among YOT staff in working with providers. Too often there is an assumption made that children who offend are not capable of succeeding in education, even where there is real enthusiasm from the child.'

> p.9

The complexities education workers within YOSs face in balancing their educational roles with generic casework, as well as the intrinsic challenge of working with a vulnerable group such as young offenders, would suggest that high quality and reflective line management or clinical supervision would be vital. However, research which sought the views of YJ staff concluded that there was a lack of reflective supervision available, with the supervision provided tending to focus on process and task completion (Taylor, 2014). Furthermore, one survey concluded that only around half of YOS staff received training to help identify which young people may have particular difficulties (Talbot, 2010). This suggests that YOS staff may lack the skills and support to be able to identify and meet young peoples' educational needs.

When reviewing the evidence of effective practice in the provision of education to young offenders, the YJB (2006) identified that 'delays and poor communication between the education and YJ systems are a major constraint' to young people progressing in education (p. 27). This is despite the fact that

the development of a clear information sharing policy was highlighted as an element of effective practice for YOSs by the YJB (2008).

In 2002, the YJB secured government funding to establish the Keeping Young People Engaged (KYPE) initiative. This was a partnership project led by the Connexions (careers advice) service and the YJB, with a view to providing relevant ETE services to young offenders, particularly those serving intensive community or custodial sentences. In their evaluation of that project, Cooper et al. (2007) identified that forging links between the participating services presented a challenge initially, but that where positive relationships could be developed, this helped to form the basis from which procedures could be agreed, and that good relationships had a positive impact overall in terms of opportunities to share knowledge and information between practitioners.   Staff interviewed as part of the evaluation perceived that 'a strong foundation of co-operation between practitioners to exchange information and knowledge about provisions and services was […] vital' (Cooper et al., 2007, p. 56-57).

One large-scale study explored the education provision available through YOSs in England and Wales. It was found that those young offenders who were attending educational provision were more likely to be white, male and older than the national average (Hurry and Moriarty, 2004) suggesting some groups are less likely to access the available resources.

A study by Ball and Connolly in 2000, explored the use of school-based information given to the youth court, as well as the impact of the responses of courts and other agencies to school absenteeism. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from court registers, court files, pre-sentence and school reports, questionnaire responses from magistrates and supervising officers, group discussions with youth panel chairs and interviews with young offenders aged 10-15 and supervising officers. This was a fairly large-scale study (n=522), which used data from four different urban areas, and qualitative data relating to a sub-sample of 270 young people for whom PSRs had been requested.   However, interview data seeking the views of the young people themselves was more challenging to access, and only 30 young people were interviewed.

Following the analysis of pre-sentence and school reports, the researchers concluded that 'educational information…was sparse and often uninformative' and that 'educational situations were couched in terms that could best be described as vague, euphemistic or possibly misleading' (p. 601). It could be argued that the provision of inadequate information to the courts is likely to restrict the ability of the courts to put appropriate sentences in place. Furthermore, the authors concluded from these findings, and from their interviews with supervising officers, that there appeared to be denial amongst YJ workers as to the centrality of educational success in young people's life chances, and that workers tended to distance themselves from the educational circumstances of young offenders, both in PSRs and when supervising them (Ball and Connolly, 2000).

Young offenders are a group who may be seen as marginalised from society, and vulnerable, due to experiences such as bullying, family breakdown, mental health problems and bereavement (Harrington and Bailey, 2005; YJB, 2003). It has been found that only 35% of young people sampled lived with both biological parents (compared to 80% in the general populastion), around a quarter were or had been in care, around half were regular drug users and 80% had very disrupted school experiences (Hurry and Moriarty, 2004).

Given these are characteristics often seen in young people who have SEN or are vulnerable to disadvantage and social exclusion, it is perhaps unsurprising that the recent SEND code of practice (2015) set out expectations for LAs, YOSs, health commissioners and those in charge of relevant youth accommodation with regards to supporting young people in custody to have any special educational needs met. The code aims to achieve three principle aims for this population: that the detained person and parents are supported to participate in decisions relating to their individual support, by requiring the LA to have regard to their views, wishes and feelings and to provide them with advice and support; the timely assessment and identification of SEN, and provision of high quality support, whether or not they have an EHCP; greater collaboration between education, health and care with a focus on continuity of provision between custody and the community. Furthermore it is stated that for a detained young person with an EHCP, provision corresponding as closely as

possible with that set out in the plan must be arranged whilst in custody (DfE, 2015).

Summary and relevance to current study

The literature presented has implications for the role YOSs undertake in supporting the education of young people. The SEND code of practice requires that those working with detained young people have regard for their views and wishes and those of their carers [7, 16][4], as well as a focus on continuity of provision between custody and the community [12] and improved collaboration with other agencies. Research suggests that high levels of communication between ETE providers and the YJ system are important in promoting opportunities for information and knowledge to be shared [19, 21, 22]. YOS staff are required by the code to ensure that young people in custody with an EHCP are provided with provision identified within the plan [17].s

The quality and comprehensiveness of educational information provided to courts in pre-sentence reports is positioned as important in ensuring appropriate sentencing practices [6]. Additionally, it is suggested that the perceived centrality of education in reducing re-offending may influence professional practice, but that at times YOS staff are distanced from this [1]. A need for reflective supervision to support practitioners to consider barriers and facilitators to education for their young people has been identified [2].   Finally, the suggestion that staff in the YJ system may lack training in the identification of particular difficulties suggests a need for this [26].

2.7 Desistance theory

Desistance theory endeavours to explain the mechanisms in which persistent offenders step away from a life of crime (McNeil, 2006; Williams and Ariel, 2013). A description of this theory, as well as alternative perspectives, are presented here.

Research into desistance from crime attempts to increase understanding about

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[4] Related indicator on the self-review framework

the risk and protective factors which are linked to offending behaviour (eg. Farrington, 2007). The ASSET and AssetPlus assessments, used by YOS officers to assess all young people working with their service, are based upon such research, and include assessment of external factors such as ETE, and living arrangements, as well as internal factors such as perceptions of self and others, and thinking and behaviour (YJB, 2014a).

Research has historically focused on three main areas: *maturational reform* considers the relationship between age and certain criminal behaviours; *social bonds theory* considers the importance of ties to family, employment or educational programmes in early adulthood in explaining offending behaviour; and *narrative theories* have emerged more recently, and stress the importance of subjective changes in the person's sense of self and identity in contributing to desistance from offending (McNeill, 2006). It may therefore be argued that any support offered to young offenders should take account of all three of these areas and, indeed, the ways in which they inter-relate. For example, theory would suggest that increasing social capital will only contribute to an individual ceasing offending behaviour if they value it in a way which initiates a re-evaluation of their own life (Farrall, 2002).

It has been argued that people who offend are, like everyone else, trying to obtain primary human goods, such as a sense of belonging. If young people are struggling to achieve these outcomes through pro-social behaviour, they may try to obtain them through offending. Models such as the 'Good Lives Model' (Ward and Maruna, 2007) are based on the premise that providing young people with ways of achieving these human goods in a pro-social manner (ie. providing them with the ingredients for a 'good life') will reduce the need for offending behaviour. This is supported by a study by Barry (2010), in which young adults who had been involved in offending described similar conventional aspirations to those of young people more generally, namely a job, a house of their own and a family of their own. Times of transition appear to be particularly important, and the researcher in the above study suggests that 'the successful transition from the world of youth to that of adulthood is one of the culminating factors in reducing offending by young people' (Barry, 2010, p. 125).

It has been suggested that, to support desistance from crime, it is important that any intervention with young people is experienced in a meaningful way, and relationships with their supervising officers may be key in providing a meaningful experience. Although a study by Rex (1999) explored the experiences of adult offenders, many of them were aged 20 or under. The participants attributed changes in their behaviour to the commitment shown by their probation officers. McNeil (2006a) supports this view: 'The role of relationships in youthful desistance is likely to be particularly significant, not least because the relational experiences of most young people involved in offending are characterised by disconnection and violation' (p. 133).

Whilst historically, offending has been viewed as an activity chosen by a particular group of young people, increasingly in recent years it has been argued that structural constraints are likely to have a significant impact on this age group. For example, many young people are excluded from higher education (through a lack of qualifications or financial support), employment opportunities or housing. It is argued that to fully explain youth offending, both personal agency and structural influences must be considered (Barry, 2010). A related weakness of the research into desistance from offending is that it has lacked focus on the potential impact of cultural and structural influences, such as those at the school or societal level, which may impede opportunities for desistance.

Barry's (2010) study, which interviewed ex-offenders about their desistance from offending, found that they identified the risk of being incarcerated, and of losing the people close to them as reasons for stopping. The 'hassle factor' (getting caught, becoming tired and disillusioned or having a criminal record or reputation) was also described. Furthermore, the idea of no longer being the focus of police attention and no longer fearing imprisonment were cited as advantages to desistance. Interestingly, although securing employment has been cited in desistance literature as a major trigger to desisting, this sample did not cite securing a job as a significant factor, and in fact the majority of those who had ceased offending were unemployed (Barry, 2010). However, this was a small-scale, qualitative study and may therefore not be indicative of wider trends.

Overall, 'desistance is not a discrete event where an offender decides with finality to forever be a non-offender. Instead desistance reflects a gradual process where 'maturation, changing peer and relationship networks, and various life events impinge on the offending interests of offenders' (Delisi and Piquero, 2011, p. 291). The literature distinguishes between primary desistance (any break in the offending behaviour) and secondary desistance (the adoption of a new, non-offender identity) (YJB, 2014b).

Summary and relevance to current study

Desistance theory has implications for the way YOSs work with young people to increase the likelihood that they will desist from offending at an early stage, and furthermore, would need to be considered by an EP working in partnership with the YOS. Theory suggests that the development of supportive relationships with supervising officers may facilitate desistance. The successful management of life transitions, most importantly from the world of youth to adulthood, are also theorised to be influential [12]. The argument that structural influences, for example exclusion from the employment market or educational establishment, may impede desistance has implications for YOS practice in advocating for young people to challenge such exclusion [16].

2.8 Multi-agency practice between EPs and YOSs

This section seeks to define multi-agency practice, and then explores the research into how EPs and YOSs might work in partnership. Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic Model is provided as a framework through which to consider the impact EP and YOS practice may have on the lives of young people.

As a result of reforms brought about by the British government's 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2004), services provided to children and families were required to work much more closely together. This approach is based on the notion that 'joined up problems' such as poverty, poor housing, school exclusion, and family breakdown, required 'joined up solutions'' (Watson, 2006, p8). The intention of the reforms was to create 'more effective inter-agency liaison and 'adding value' through the sharing of resources, thereby promoting a move towards services, which place child and family needs at the centre' (Maxwell, 2013, p. 16). Although the ECM agenda has been replaced in

England, the emphasis on multi-agency practice remains.

Multi-agency partnership working has been defined as 'where practitioners from more than one agency work together jointly, sharing aims, information, tasks and responsibilities in order to intervene early to recent problems arising which may impact on children's learning and achievement (Chimonais, 2009, p. 4). Chimonais identifies a number of related concepts:

- **Inter-agency working** is where more than one agency work together in a planned and formal way.
- **Integrated working** is where practitioners work together, adopting common processes to deliver frontline services, co-ordinated and built around the needs of children and young people.
- **Multi-professional/multidisciplinary working** is where staff with different professional backgrounds and training work together.
- **Joint working** is when professionals from more than one agency work together on a specific project or initiative.
- **Partnership working** refers to the processes that build relationships between different groups of professionals and services at different levels, to get things done. It entails two or more organisations or groups of practitioners joining together to achieve something they could not do alone, sharing a common problems or issue and collectively taking responsibility for resolving it. Partnership therefore refers to a way of working as well as a form of organisation.

<div align="right">p. 5</div>

Chimonais notes that these terms are often used interchangeably, contributing to confusion and a lack of clarity about their meaning. It has been argued that the benefits of multi-agency practice are assumed, but some negative processes such as 'collaborative inertia' – where the performance of a group falls short of that of an individual - may be present in multi-agency teams (Hughes, 2006). Trainee EPs have reported tensions associated with collaborative working, for example differing timescales between referral and action by different services, differences in their guiding principles, and differing attitudes towards social inclusion (Jamieson, 2006).

An additional difficulty associated with multi-agency practice was highlighted

within Taylor's (2016) review of YJ services. Whilst Taylor acknowledged that 'a key strength of the YJ system has been the delivery through YOTs of local based, multi-disciplinary services for children who offend' (p.7), it was also recognised that an unintended consequence of the multi-agency structure of YOSs was that other agencies working with a young person may withdraw their services once a YOS became involved. This often resulted in YOSs working in a 'silo' having been alienated from other LA services. Therefore, despite the national emphasis on multi-agency working, a truly co-ordinated response to young people's offending is apparently lacking in many areas today.

Achieving truly integrated working has not been straightforward for EPs either. A national review of the function and contribution of EPs was a response to the introduction of ECM. The authors placed emphasis on the importance of EPs working within multi-agency contexts (Farrell et al., 2006). However, there does not appear to be consistent multi-agency practice between EPs and YOSs, and little research into this area appears to exist. In one study by Talbot (2010), 34% of YOS staff said they had access to an EP and a further 23% said that they had, but 'not directly' (ie. referrals were made via schools or other children's services). Only 23% of YOS staff surveyed in the same study stated that there was a member of staff in their YOS who was qualified in SEN. Whilst it is unclear how 'qualified in SEN' was defined in this study, the low figure is nevertheless concerning given the prevalence of such needs amongst the young people with whom staff are working.

In some areas, YOSs and EPs have established working relationships. In his 2006 paper, Ryrie, an EP, describes and reflects on his role in working in partnership with a YOS. He describes his unique contribution to be in the following areas:

- Individual casework, in cases where there were 'issues of an educational, psychological or developmental nature that were proving intractable or difficult to assess,' (p. 11). This led to consultation between the EP and YOS case holder about the individual case.
- Joint working, for example carrying out joint interviews with young people with complex patterns of offending, using psychological frameworks such as Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1991).

- Developmental and strategic work, for example developing groupwork materials, participation in multi-agency working groups, applying knowledge such as normal and atypical child development.
- Training, for example to community panel members or magistrates on subjects such as dyslexia or ADHD.

The national review of EP practice by Farrell et al. (2006) highlighted other examples of unique contributions EPs may make within YOSs. These included working alongside clinical psychologists, social workers, school SENCos and school staff in facilitating the engagement of young people who have offended within the education system, joint delivery of training in 'core problem solving skills' and the development and delivery of an anger management programme for youth workers and school staff. However, the same review concluded that 'a significant minority of educational psychology services currently work alongside youth offending teams and there is a willingness for considerable development of such work where it is not established' (Farrell et al., 2006, p. 10).

There appears to have been little change in this situation since the publication of the review, given a more recent study found that less than half of EPs surveyed had worked with a young offender within the last year, and of those only four out of twenty identified themselves as part of the multi-agency YOS (Hall, 2013). Furthermore, little research appears to exist into whether the EP contribution is perceived to be effective and useful by the YOS team members, or whether it contributes to any positive outcomes for the young people and families themselves.

One study by Wyton (2013) did attempt to explore the possible working relationship between an EP and a YOS. She explored the views of YOS staff in relation to their working practices, their knowledge with regards to SEN and their ideas regarding how an EPS might support them in their work, using focus groups. Wyton concluded that, although the views of the participants differed across different teams, there was a perception that knowledge of SEN within the service was limited. Participants expressed that they would find direct access to an EP useful, which led the researcher to pilot a small number of consultations between an EP and staff. Overall, the consultation service was perceived positively by participants. Whilst this study provides some useful

initial information regarding how an EP and a YOS might work together, there are limitations. For example, the risk exists that less articulate members of the group may have difficulty sharing their views in a focus group setting, or that power struggles or status may conflict with the process. Additionally, unlike the current study, the YOS which was the focus of this research had already started some initial multi-agency work with an EP, and therefore the responses of the staff may have been informed by their experiences in this regard. Finally, whilst the researcher explored one particular model of service delivery (consultation) there are many other ways in which an EP may support a YOS which are worthy of further research.

To fully consider the potential role of the EP in influencing young offenders' lives, it is useful to consider Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco-systemic model. This theoretical perspective is underpinned by the idea that a person's development is profoundly affected by a range of settings, including some in which the person is not even present. Considering offending behaviour through an eco-systemic lens will allow exploration of potential influences and opportunities for change at the levels of the young person, the family, the YOS or school (the microsystem), the wider community (the exosystem) and at a societal level (the macrosystem), as well as the ways in which these various systems might inter-relate (the mesosystem). Research has suggested ways in which the various social systems in which young people are operating may impact on their school functioning. For example, community factors such as access to resources and the achievements of other community members appear to impact on the aspirational goals of young people, and in turn, upon their academic achievement (Chung, Mulvey and Steinberg, 2011).

It has further been argued that by providing practical support to young offenders, YOS staff are able to establish loyalty and trust, which are vital for young people to start to change. 'In other words, effective YJ is likely to be at least as much about addressing social-structural disadvantage as it is about 'correcting deficits.' (McNeil, 2006a, p. 135). It is therefore likely that an EP working with the YOS will need to think beyond the individual young person, and apply systemic thinking to understand the wider social structures affecting young people. Furthermore, this theoretical perspective would suggest that, being part of the microsystem in which the young people are operating,

changes within the YOS itself are likely to affect the young people's development.

When asked what would help them in working with children and young people with mental health and learning difficulties, YOS staff's responses fell into four main areas:

- Specialist YOS workers and access to specialist service provision.
- Training and support for YOS staff.
- Early and more effective identification of children with impairments and difficulties.
- Adapted interventions; appropriate resources; greater flexibility.

(Talbot, 2010)

Many of the above areas form part of the routine work of EPs in other contexts (Farrell et al., 2006). In addition, EPs are skilled in supporting relationships, for example between schools and families or between services. As they are located within schools and colleges, they would be well-placed in particular to enhance communication between education providers and the YOS. In a recent study, fractured information-sharing with schools and other professionals was identified as a barrier facing YOS staff (O'Carroll, 2016).

Whilst there is a limited amount of published information available as to how an EP might support a YOS, information pertaining to the practices of EPs more generally would suggest that there are many ways their unique skills might be helpful. As a starting point, these may be:

- Facilitating relationships and communication between the YOS, education providers, parents, young people and other professionals.
- Assessment of individual young peoples' needs – providing a holistic perspective using a range of techniques such as observation, consultation and psychological assessment tools.
- Dissemination of up-to-date research in relation to legislation, specific educational needs, child development etc. to staff, stakeholders, young people and families. This may be via training, the creation of

accessible resources etc.

- Using a variety of psychological tools and frameworks to support change for young people, families and YOS staff, individually and in groups. These may include solution-focused techniques, Personal Construct Psychology, Psychodynamic approaches, or cognitive behavioural or therapeutic play techniques.
- Support in monitoring and reviewing young peoples' educational progress.
- Supporting young people to access resources in custody or community-based education through the statutory assessment process.
- Supporting the YOS at a systemic level, through the development of policies and protocols.
- Engaging the YOS in monitoring and evaluating its own practice in relation to education.
- Supporting young people and families to express their views and enhance their involvement in decision-making.

The potential role for EPs working with YOSs has been acknowledged by a recent Chief Executive of the YJB:

'I would love to see EPs embedded in Youth Offending Teams, advising on accessing appropriate educational placements and on interventions for children on the edges of offending behaviour. But I would also see EPs making a significant contribution to case planning work which should start from the first day a child or young person goes into custody and their pathway back to the community is planned. EPs can also influence local authorities around the provision which is made for young offenders and advise on the appropriate placements.'

(Hinnigan, 2014).

Summary and relevance to current study

Whilst there are examples in the literature of EPs working alongside YOSs, and descriptions of some of the work undertaken, there is little available research

exploring which aspects of EP work may be helpful, and the underdevelopment of multi-agency practice may indicate a lack of clarity amongst YJ practitioners as to the EP role [25]. It has been tentatively posited that YJ staff may value direct access to an EP, including the use of a consultation model [24]. However, challenges have been identified regarding the differing expectations placed upon EPs working in multiagency contexts [3]. It has further been suggested that YJ staff may value training, for example in the types of special educational needs commonly affecting young offenders [26]. Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory would suggest a role for EPs in a range of ecological systems beyond that of the individual young person.

2.9 Organisational development and EP practice

Since the 1970's in the UK, EP practice has developed to incorporate working to support organisational change in schools (Fox, 2009). An early indication of this shift can be seen in the rich description of Schools Systems Analysis provided by Burden (1978). Burden refers to the development of EPs as moving 'away from the more traditional role to that of school-based consultant' (p. 115) and offers examples of trainee EPs in the 1970's acting as 'consultants' to schools. However, he recognised that, at that time, there was little clarity regarding the rationale and theoretical structure through which organisational work by EPs may be understood. Around this time, descriptions of EPs working with schools as organisations were evident in other written sources (eg. Hart, 1979; Topping, 1979), reflecting a shift in EP practice. Against this backdrop, Burden sought to provide a framework for EPs working with organisations, which he termed Schools' Systems Analysis.

Since that time, two national reviews of the role and training of EPs in the UK have taken place, which provide insight into developments in the organisational practice of EPs . The first, in 2000, followed the publication of the 1997 government white paper 'Excellence in schools,' subsequent green paper 'Excellence for all children: meeting special educational needs' and follow up report 'Meeting special educational needs: A programme of action' (DfE, 2000). One aim of the review was to determine the current scope and balance of work of EP services in England. It was concluded following the review, that 'few schools reported having assistance from their educational psychologist in

bringing about organisational change' (DfE, 2000, p. 29), although the majority of EPSs reported they were undertaking this work. Schools surveyed identified school-based project work as an important area for future EP input. This may be interpreted to suggest that by 2000, the early signs of EPs undertaking work to promote organisational change described by Burden, were becoming more widespread, from the perspective of EPs themselves. However, this was not always recognised by schools, and organisational work continued to be identified as an area for EPs to develop.

The second national review of EP practice, which was undertaken in 2006, concluded that 'evidence from all respondents indicated that EPs are making an increasing contribution to [strategic work and capacity building] both in schools and elsewhere' (Farrell et al., 2006, p. 9).

The 2006 review led to a subsequent examination of EP training courses (DfE, 2011). The recent publication of 'practice placement development framework' (DfE, 2011) which was developed by the Initial Training of EP National Steering Group in England and is expected to be in place for all trainee EP placements, reflects a continued emphasis on trainees developing skills in supporting organisational change. It is an expectation set out within the framework that all trainee EPs undertake tasks such as 'evaluation or change projects within an organisation, protocol or policy development or practice development through training' (p. 11).

One way in which an EP might engage in organisational work is through supporting the assimilation of research to inform practice within schools and other organisations. In the YJ sector, the YJB has developed a Workforce Development Strategy which has the overall vision of developing 'a YJ Workforce that is better equipped with skills and knowledge, which will enable them to be more effective in their work to prevent offending, enhance safeguarding and public protection, and to improve outcomes for young people' (YJB, 2015, p. 3). To achieve this vision, the strategy aims to:

- Empower the YJ workforce to become more highly skilled and knowledgeable of the YJ evidence base, monitoring and evaluation approaches which can inform their work and assist with effective commissioning. This will enable them to be more effective in preventing

offending, safeguarding young people and protecting the public.

- Train and support managers to develop their workforce to be more effective in preventing offending, safeguarding and protecting the public.

- Develop a YJ Resource Hub in conjunction with the YJB Social Research and Effective Practice Team, which will provide a one-stop shop of resources for YJ practitioners.

- Explore options for YJ professional pathways which are recognised by local authorities and employers.

- Develop a professional competency framework for the YOI Workforce and support the YOI reform programme.

p. 3-4

To achieve the first objective above, practitioners in the YJ field would need to acquire knowledge of the evolving evidence base in relation to their work.   This challenge of how research knowledge can be harnessed and used, to effect positive change is known as 'knowledge exchange and impact' (University College London, 2016). There are various ways in which the findings from research may be disseminated, and research exists as to which are most effective. For example, it has been suggested that the publication and circulation of written materials is unlikely to have an impact on practice (Freemantle et al., 2002). Furthermore, there is limited evidence to suggest that conferences, publications and handbooks consistently change practice in education (Nutley, Walter and Davies, 2007). However, a combination of approaches may be effective.

One model of dissemination suggests that there are four elements of effective dissemination:

SOURCE   Credibility of researcher

                Researcher's relationship with users

CONTENT   Quality of research

                Relevance and usefulness of research

MEDIUM   Timeliness

USER   User-friendliness

                Clarity and attractiveness

USER   Perceived relevance to needs

                Readiness to change

                Nature of information needed

(Nutley et al., 2007, p. 133, adapted from NCDDR, 1996).

This model suggests that, when communicating research findings to practitioners with a view to effecting a change in practice, these four domains should be considered. Furthermore, it has been suggested that:

- Dissemination alone is not widely effective in promoting uptake by practitioners.
- Dissemination can help increase awareness and knowledge.
- Research is more likely to be used if tailored to a targeted audience.
- Dissemination which includes discussion of findings between researchers and users is more likely to be effective

(Hurry and Vorhaus, 2012, p.7)

The 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) constitutes one approach to overcoming these difficulties, to promote research informing educational practice. Here, in response to an increase in exclusion practices and educational inequality, researchers harnessed evidence regarding strategies known to facilitate the participation of students who might previously have been marginalised, and regarding effective school improvement. They drew upon this evidence to create a review and development instrument, which consists of a series of 'indicators' which provide operational descriptors of what might be found in a school that is committed to developing inclusive practices (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2004). Booth and Ainscow (2002) define the index as 'a comprehensive document that can help everyone to find their own next steps in developing their setting' (p. 1).

Booth and Ainscow argue that a process of collaborative enquiry, in which practitioners are engaged in an open dialogue of critical review with 'outsiders'

(academics in this case), may reduce the gap between research and practice, and 'lead to understandings that can have an immediate and direct impact on the development of thinking and practice in the field' (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2004, p. 128). Collaboration between researchers and practitioners is therefore a fundamental element of this work and Ainscow, Booth and Dyson suggest that there is 'enormous potential for growth […] if collaboration can become creative in ways that lead to action and learning' (p. 134).

In other associated areas of educational practice, for example Safeguarding in Schools (NSPCC, 2014), and the education of LAC (Cameron et al., 2014), a similar approach is taken, in which a self-assessment audit tool has been developed by individuals or organisations with a position 'outside' schools themselves. As with the work of Booth and Ainscow, pre-existing research is used to define domains of good practice. Schools and other organisations are then supported to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the evidence base, and draw up a plan of action for improvement. In common with Booth and Ainscow, Cameron et al. emphasise the importance of collaboration between researchers and practitioners in improving collective understanding.

A criticism of frameworks such as these, is that in a climate of performance management and inspections, an external consultant collaborating with an organisation in a process of critical self-review, may be perceived as threatening by practitioners, which may impact upon extent to which those taking part may be open and honest about their strengths and limitations.

However, following an 3-year action research project to evaluate the Index for Inclusion, Booth and Ainscow concluded that 'the schools found that the materials helped them to identify issues for development that might otherwise have been overlooked and to put them into practice' (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p. 1) Furthermore, studies have suggested that schools which engage in a form of self-review are judged to be of higher quality (according to inspectorates) in a range of areas (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Participant evaluations of Cameron et al's (2014) audit process, suggested that access to a university led, evidence based programme, the audit tool, facilitation, and being given the autonomy to decide where to focus their efforts, were all valued.

Summary and relevance to current study

Over the last 50-60 years, the role of the EP has developed to include a function as 'external consultants' to schools and other organisations. In this way, EPs aim to contribute towards change at an organisational level, thus extending their influence beyond individual pupils. Examples of frameworks EPs may draw upon to influence organisational change include self-review processes (eg. Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Cameron et al., 2014) in which a series of indicators are developed against which organisations may measure themselves. In this way, practitioners are able to engage in a form of critical inquiry in collaboration with others who are external to the organisation. It is this thinking which informed the decision to develop and pilot such a framework as part of this thesis.

2.10 Summary and conclusions

In conclusion, it may be argued that there is a relatively robust research base into the educational needs of young offenders, establishing a relationship between educational difficulties and offending. However, the evidence into factors facilitating educational engagement for this group is less convincing. Despite this, the available research, as well as the application of theoretical frameworks such as motivation theory, tentatively suggest that intervening to improve educational attendance or attainment may contribute to a reduced risk of re-offending, and furthermore research has suggested some characteristics of educational provision and support which are likely to be helpful.

The current study aims to add to the research base by exploring the educational strengths and needs of a London YOS as perceived by a sample of practitioners, followed by the development and implementation of an evidence-informed self-review framework against which the YOS measured its practice. The self-review process informed the development of an action plan, which included the identification of areas for potential EP intervention.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This study used an AR approach to first examine the practice of an Inner London YOS, through interviews with practitioners and a brief analysis of YOS and EPS case records. A further aim of the project was to contribute to a change in practice, through the development and implementation of an evidence-informed self-review framework. Section 3.2 describes the AR approach. The research questions and objectives of this study, as well as a timeline outlining the various stages, are presented in section 3.3. Section 3.4 sets outs the epistemological position taken throughout this project, and 3.5 provides relevant descriptive information regarding the participating YOS. The position of the researcher is considered in section 3.6, and ethical considerations are set out in section 3.7. Finally, in section 3.8, a detailed critical description of the study design is presented. Section 3.9 constitutes a summary and conclusion arising from this chapter.

3.2 Action Research

Action research (AR) is located within particular historical and philosophical contexts and owes much to the work of Corey, Lewin, Elliot and Stenhouse in the 1940s to 1970s. It has its roots within education, and it was Elliot (1978) who suggested that teachers could carry out their own research, in an effort to understand 'the social situation in which the participant finds himself' (p. 355).

A working definition of AR has been offered by Reason and Bradbury (2003) as follows:

> 'Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world view which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.'

AR does not describe a particular methodology, but is rather an orientation to senquiry. Whilst there is some debate regarding the precise characteristics of an AR project, it is generally accepted that action researchers collaborate with those who are the focus of research with the central aims of improving practice. AR can be said to have the following basic characteristics:

- It is a practice-based approach
- It incorporates and builds on critical reflection on practice
- It is driven by a desire to improve (personal) practice
- It can contribute to the development of professional knowledge
- It is an iterative process, each cycle being subject to review and reflection
- It is intellectually and epistemologically defensible

(McAteer, 2013, p. 27-28)

AR has been described as incorporating the personal aim of the researcher to improve their learning and behaviours, and the social aim of contributing to others' learning to help them improve their behaviours (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). Both are viewed as equally important and interdependent. The emphasis on learning means that concrete behavioural 'outcomes' are not emphasised as they might be in alternative approaches to research.

One of the founding fathers of AR, Kurt Lewin, viewed AR as having four main stages: planning, acting, observing, reflecting (Lewin, 1946). However, despite differences between the various models, it may be argued that they possess the same core elements: exploring the current situation, planning a change, acting and then reflecting upon what happens as a result of the change.

3.3 Research questions

The research questions for this study are:

a) What are the challenges and opportunities to youth offender education, both identified by research and from the perspective of YOS staff?

b) What YOS activities can help to build upon opportunities and overcome the challenges?

c) Can these activities be compiled into an evidence-informed self-review framework which will be implemented to inform YOS practice?

d) To what extent can an evidence-informed self-review influence practice development between EPs and YOSs?

The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1: To draw tentative conclusions from the research base as to how a YOS may effectively support the educational needs of young offenders.

Objective 2: To describe the opportunities and challenges faced by the YOS in relation to the education of the young people with whom it is working.

Objective 3: To develop and pilot an evidence-informed YOS education self-review framework, documenting the process of development and implementation.

Objective 4: To provide some initial reflections as to whether the process of completing the self-review was perceived as helpful, and to make recommendations for future practice between EPs and YOSs.

A timeline summarising the activity undertaken as part of this research project is below.

May-Dec 15
- Review relevant literature in relation to the education of young offenders

Dec 15
- Meet with YOS managers to agree their involvement and scope and aims of the project

Jan 16
- Attend YOS offices to speak to potential participants for interviews

Feb-Apr 16
- Pilot, then conduct and analyse interviews x 9
- Analyse EPS case files, and relevant YOS ASSET assessments

Jul-Aug 16
- Re-review literature and use this, interview data and case analysis to draft a self-review framework and supporting document

Sept 16
- Attend YOS management meeting to discuss self-review and agree ways forward

Dec-Jan 16
- Facilitation of YOS managers / EP workshops x 2 to:
  - refine and complete the self-review framework
  - Co-create YOS action plan
  - Seek oral feedback from participants about the process

Feb-July 17
- Provide EP support to YOS on the basis of the action plan*
- Review progress of action plan*
- *outside the scope of this research

Figure 3.1: Research timeline

3.4 Epistemological position

Epistemology may be defined as 'a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that the researcher holds' (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). It may be argued that in contemporary research, four main epistemological positions are presented: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. These four positions differ in terms of their approach to knowledge, and what and how we come to 'know' about human behaviour.

Postpositivism usually refers to research methods which attempt to adapt the approaches of the natural sciences to social science research. Although there

is generally an acceptance amongst postpositivists that the background, hypotheses and values of the researcher have an influence on what is observed, they remain committed to objectivity. As such, postpositivist approaches generally rely heavily upon quantitative methods, testing theories to reach a universal 'truth' about the subject being studied.

Conversely, social constructivists take the view that social phenomena are constructed through interactions between people. Therefore, social constructivist research is usually interested in understanding how individuals construct and make sense of their world, rejecting the idea that there is an objective reality that can be known. In fact, subjectivity is considered to be integral to social constructivist research. Therefore, researchers from this position will be more likely to use qualitative methods, which will allow them to obtain multiple perspectives (Robson, 2011).

Some have argued that the two paradigms described above are incompatible, and researchers must commit to one position or the other. However, whilst the philosophical positions may themselves be very different, there is an argument that, when scrutinising research in the real world, many of the distinctions break down. For example, 'qualitative' studies may refer to numbers, and both qualitative and quantitative approaches may be concerned with people's views and actions. Acceptance that there is some common ground in research approaches has led to an increase in researchers taking a *pragmatic* worldview, and this is the case for this particular study.

Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality, and aims to take a practical approach to enquiry, seeking a middle ground between postpositivism and constructivism. Because of this, researchers are free to choose methods and research techniques which best suit their needs and purposes, whilst acknowledging that research always takes place in social, historical and other contexts. Knowledge 'is viewed as being both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in' (Robson, 2011). That is, a pragmatic approach rejects the dualism of a subjective *or* objective view of reality. Instead, knowledge is viewed as being socially reconstructed, but a reality which is separate from human interpretation also exists. A belief in

the certainty of knowledge is therefore not considered possible. Given this, a pragmatic approach lends itself to mixed methods studies.

This position has been criticised for being associated with a lack of rigour and an ad hoc approach to research strategies, which are selected for expedience and convenience rather than to ensure quality. However, developments in agreed quality assurance practices for particular methodological approaches help to counter this argument. Furthermore, a pragmatic approach lends itself well to an AR project, which is likely to draw on different methodological approaches as it develops.

As AR, this study also draws upon a participatory worldview, in that it takes a collaborative approach, which aims to provide a voice for the participants and seeks their involvement in the design and execution of the research. Ways in which this epistemological position influenced data collection and interpretation are explored, where relevant, within the methods sections of this report.

3.5 The local context

This study involved the YOS in the Inner London authority in which the researcher was on placement as a trainee EP. The LA is small and densely populated, with 34% of the population recorded as Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority and 33% having been born outside the UK. 44% and 51% of primary and secondary school pupils recorded English as a second language respectively[5]. It is a borough with great diversity in terms of poverty and affluence, with a widening gap between the top and bottom house prices (New Policy Institute, 2015).

The YOS is operating under difficult circumstances. Recent inspections have concluded that improvements are needed, with inspectors stating that 'work done to reduce reoffending was poor' (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2014). Whilst a 2016 inspection resulted in similar conclusions, it was also noted that 'the importance of education, training and employment (ETE) was recognised by the local authority and attention had successfully been paid to improving

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[5] These figures have been slightly amended to avoid identification of the participating LA.

outcomes in this area' and that 'some very good provision was available with placements that were engaging and managed complex risks and vulnerabilities. Inspectors found that staff were tenacious in supporting children and young people's participation in ETE' (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2016, p. 8).

There are significant concerns in the local community regarding the prevalence of gang-related knife crime, and several murders of young people had been committed in the borough, which have been reported in the national press. The previous Chief Executive of the YJB recently stated "we are very concerned that [LA] YOS's work to keep young people safe or protect the public remains poor, despite the efforts of the local authority with YJB support since 2014. It is particularly troubling that the YOS's poor oversight of young people involved in gangs or serious youth violence could put both themselves and others at risk" (YJB, 2016).

During the 18-month period in which the research took place, the YOS went through a period of significant change with several staff members leaving and new staff starting. A new Head of Service and Operations Manager were appointed, and the Assistant Manager with responsibility for education left temporarily, with a gap before cover was recruited. In part, such changes were influenced by the poor inspection results received by the service. For example, the new Head of Service was seconded from the YJB as a direct response to the inspections as a means of bringing about improvement. This relationship is likely to be bidirectional, in that high staff turnover can be assumed to impact negatively on service delivery and therefore inspection results.

As well as affecting the service received by the young people and families working with the YOS, factors such as poor inspection results and high turnover of staff provided a challenge for me in working alongside the service to conduct this research. For example, many of the participants in the interview stage were no longer employed in the service when subsequent stages of the research project were conducted and therefore themes could not be discussed and agreed with those specific individuals. After conducting the interviews and case analysis, the members of the management team who initially agreed to participate in the study were no longer in post, which meant the new team may not have been as motivated to take part. The loss of the Assistant Manager

(Education), who was the key contact in taking the research forward, led to uncertainty about whether someone would be able to fulfill her role in facilitating the remainder of the project.

3.6 Position of the researcher

AR differs from alternative research approaches in how researchers position themselves in relation to the participants. The person undertaking the research may be described as a 'practitioner researcher' (Robson, 2011). This refers to someone who undertakes systematic study of the area in which they work. AR 'is conducted by practitioners who regard themselves as researchers' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, p. 17). This means that it is 'insider research,' in that the researcher is inside the situation and acknowledges that they will have an influence upon what is happening by their very presence. However, it has been argued that the degree to which a practitioner is viewed as an insider is not clear-cut and will depend on many factors. In this case, the fact that I am located within the EPS and not the YOS influences the degree to which I may perceive myself, or be perceived by others, as an 'insider.' My status may also be influenced by the fact that I have experience of working within YOSs, perhaps aligning me more to a position as an 'insider.' It has been suggested that both positions have advantages and disadvantages (Mercer, 2007).

The idea of influence is integral to AR, in that a central aim of the research process is to influence change. This raises questions about the type of influence which might be exercised. This project adheres to the ethical standard that psychological knowledge should be generated and used for beneficial purposes. It is argued that in its aim to improve the practice of the individual participating YOS, and by providing a resource with which other services can examine and improve their practice, this project contributes to the 'common good' and therefore it is intended the influence is not harmful.

In AR, it has been suggested that one aim is to influence other people to become more critical. This may be achieved by engaging in critical reflection oneself, and in being transparent with others about this aim. Part of the personal critical reflection I undertook as part of this study involved the consideration of power dynamics. I have previous experience of working with

YOSs, at a manager level, in London LAs other than the one in this study. Furthermore, I am currently employed as a trainee EP in the same local authority as the YOS in this study. This may lead to particular dynamics taking place during the research process.

For example, being employed within the same LA as a trainee EP may affect the power dynamics within the interview sessions, as the label 'psychologist' may be associated with a level or focus of expertise and education which differs from that of YOS staff. For this reason, the development of rapport with staff was vital to maximise their input and increase the likelihood that the research would result in change which would be perceived to be positive. This was achieved in part through the participatory nature of the AR approach itself. That is, by putting practitioners in control of their own practices and involving them in the research process, it was hoped that power imbalances are minimised. Rapport was also developed through the researcher using the questioning and relationship-building skills, developed as part of EP training, during the interviews themselves.

Furthermore, I took the view that in order to be transparent, and to facilitate building rapport with the participants, it would be helpful to share the fact that I had worked in YOSs previously. However, this common experience may lead to assumed shared understandings, for example regarding jargon, which would have been more clearly communicated had the researcher been unfamiliar (Marshall, Medves, Docherty and Paterson, 2011). It was therefore important during the interview stage to overcome this by seeking clarification wherever possible.

Throughout the process of this research, I reflected on the fact that my experience of working within the YJ arena, as well as my personal experiences, influenced my approach to this study. I acknowledge that I hold particular values in relation to young offenders, and their status as a vulnerable group in need of support, which are not universal. I further acknowledge that my experiences, both positive and negative, of working with a YOS, are likely to have shaped the design of the interview schedule, and my interpretation of the data. For example, it is important to acknowledge my own pre-existing ideas as to what factors might, for example, be acting as barriers and facilitators to

the young people described by the interview participants making progress in education.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics refers to 'the branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality….Research ethics are concerned with moral behaviour in research contexts' (Wiles, 2013, p.4). Whilst individuals have their own moral outlook, which is shaped by their specific experiences and interactions, there is some agreement at a societal level regarding specific moral principles, and ethical frameworks exist. In the case of this study, ethical decisions were made with reference to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2014). The proposal for the project was agreed by the Ethics Committee within the UCL Institute of Education. However, consideration of ethical issues was an ongoing process, which did not stop after receiving ethical approval. Given the flexible design of this project, ethical decisions arose which could not have been predicted at the outset, and it is acknowledged by the BPS that 'no Code can replace the need for psychologists to use their professional and ethical judgement…Fundamentally, 'thinking is not optional'' (2014, p.4). The BPS sets out four key principles to which researchers are expected to adhere:

- Respect for autonomy and dignity of persons.
- Scientific value.
- Social responsibility.
- Maximising benefit and minimising harm.

In relation to the respect for autonomy and dignity of persons, I ensured participants had a clear understanding of the scope and nature of the research. I explained this individually to each participant, and provided them with a leaflet to which they could refer (attached at Appendix 1). The risk existed that, because it was the YOS management team who had agreed the service would take part in the study, participants may have felt coerced into taking part, or that there would be consequences in the workplace if they declined. This issue was therefore discussed with all participants and it was made clear that the YOS management team would not be informed whether individuals took part or not.

All participants signed a consent form (Appendix 2) and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, including for a 6-month period after the interviews had taken place. Practices to ensure confidentiality and the security of data were explained with a view to participants being fully informed. No rewards were provided for participation.

Respect for autonomy and dignity also relates to the consideration of the privacy of individuals. All interviews were recorded using an audio recording device and the audio data was protected by a passcode. Names were changed on all interview transcripts, and the actual names of participants were only kept on signed consent forms. Participants were given the opportunity to debrief after the interviews to explore any areas of the discussion which may have caused discomfort or which they felt warranted questioning. Steps were taken to minimise the chance the participating LA would be identified by readers of this thesis (for example small changes to statistical data and staff demographics).

Given the participants in this study are professionals, and interviews centred around an area of their practise, they are not considered to be vulnerable, nor exploring a sensitive topic. There was no need for deception or for information to be withheld in the execution of this project, and each stage was discussed and developed in collaboration with staff. Furthermore, by working to ensure individuals can not be identified, harm is unlikely to be caused by the writing up and disseminating of information. In this way I planned that benefits would be maximised and harm minimised.

Regarding the analysis of YOS and EPS case files, these are files that as a trainee EP in a multi-agency environment the researcher has access to. Names of the individual young people were not recorded and are not reported within this document, nor are any features which may potentially identify young people. Only broad numerical information is reported.

3.8 Study design

'Action research can take a different trajectory to that first imagined or planned. As such, it is a dynamic or responsive approach' (McAteer, 2013, p. 37). Therefore, consistent with this description, the design of this study was flexible,

and despite significant preliminary planning, the focus and nature of the study evolved as the research proceeded. This was necessary because critical reflection was an integral part of the process and later stages of the design were dependant on the information created in the earlier stages. Furthermore, to keep the research collaborative, it was necessary to consistently consult with the participating YOS and ensure the project was perceived as meeting their needs as it developed.

3.8.1 What is the situation at present? And how can I find out?

When starting this project, the problem I had identified through my own professional experience, concerned which elements of YOS practice may improve educational outcomes of young offenders, and to what extent an EP may be able to collaborate with a YOS to improve these outcomes. Reflecting upon these questions, it was evident that an in-depth understanding of the situation YOSs may be facing in relation to education, would be a necessary first step. In Popper's (1972) words, 'We must first get better acquainted with the problem' (p. 260). Therefore to progress towards this aim, I conducted a comprehensive and critical review of relevant literature, as presented in chapter 2 of this thesis.

As I was undertaking the literature review, it became apparent that, whilst there is a large evidence base in relation to the educational needs of young offenders, and the strengths and difficulties of the YOS model, there was a far less robust research picture of what might be done to support young offenders into education, and to impact upon re-offending. Furthermore, one of the aims of AR is to develop practice and facilitate change locally.

Given this backdrop, I hypothesised that it would be necessary to improve understanding of the perceived strengths and needs from the participating YOS through.

It was in response to these issues that I developed research question a)

a) What are the challenges and opportunities to youth offender education, both identified by research and from the perspective of YOS staff?

3.8.1.1 Approach to interviews

Following the review of literature, the initial stage of planning involved collaborating with the YOS management team in the study. I met with the team to discuss the objectives of the research and to agree ways forward. We considered a variety of data collection methods which might access the perceptions of YOS staff. We rejected a survey or questionnaire, as we felt they would not provide sufficiently rich information. We were concerned that in a focus group setting, some participants may dominate discussion, obscuring the views of others. We therefore concluded that semi-structured interviews would be an appropriate approach to data collection. The management team also suggested it would be helpful if I were to receive training and access to their database to allow me to analyse ASSET assessments in relation to a cohort of young people.

Semi-structured interviews have been defined by Rowley, Jones, Vassiliou and Hanna (2012) as interviews in which:

> '…the interviewer has a series of questions or topics to be covered, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in terms of how to reply. In addition, there is flexibility in the order in which questions may be asked, and the interviewer may ask additional questions in response to what she or he perceives to be significant or interesting comments from the interviewee.'
>
> p. 95

Rowley et al. (2012) go on to suggest that the use of interview techniques that are semi-structured 'facilitates the gathering of richer and more insightful data, while facilitating comparison between interviews conducted with different interviewees' (p. 95).

This approach was selected because I judged that allowing staff to speak freely and openly about the topic under investigation would be helpful, and would allow the space for new insights. This freedom of expression was balanced

with a need to maintain some control over the interview structure, to maximise the potential for the research question to be answered. It can be argued that a semi-structured interview is able to achieve this balance.

I developed an interview schedule, which was designed to give the best chance of interviewees' responses providing information relevant to the research question, and to facilitate the engagement of those being interviewed.

I took an inductive/deductive approach to the design of the interview schedule, in that the questions were informed both by previous theory and research and my experience of practice as both a trainee EP and a member of YOS staff (Rowley, 2008). For example, I included questions relating to role of the education lead manager based upon prior research suggesting challenges implicit within the role (YJB, 2004).   Conversely, items exploring perceptions of the role of the EP were based upon my experience of limited multi-agency practice between EPs and YOSs locally.

Once I had decided the areas to be explored, I gave careful consideration to the structure of the schedule. I judged that a design which commenced with questions relating to examples of specific young people with whom staff may have worked may enhance thinking, as this means that the questions develop from concrete to more abstract. This approach was designed to provide a 'warm-up' to the interviews, as suggested by Robson (2011) in his suggested sequence (outlined below).

Lazarsfeld (1954) discusses three principles within interview schedule design: specification (the focus of each question); division (the sequence and wording of the questions); and tacit assumption (the meanings behind the answers). Specification and division were resolved in this case through piloting the interview schedule. The majority of questions asked were descriptive, in that they prompted the interviewee to give a general account of 'what happens' from their perspective. Some evaluative questions, for example 'what is your view about [the range of educational provision]?' were asked, to elicit judgements as well as descriptions (Willig, 2001). Care was taken to keep questions open-ended, to avoid the use of jargon, and to avoid leading participants towards particular answers.

To address Lazarsfeld's issue of tacit assumption, clarifying questions were asked where the meaning underpinning what was being said appeared unclear, or where further information of interest to the research problem may be elicited. At times, I took a credulous stance, so that participants would be encouraged to 'state the obvious,' thus making explicit their otherwise-implicit assumptions and expectations.

Overall, the interview schedule was designed to follow Robson (2011)'s sequence of questions as follows:

1. *Introduction.* Interviewer introduces herself, explains purpose of the interview, assures of confidentiality, asks permission to tape…
2. *Warm-up.* Easy, non-threatening questions at the beginning to settle down both of you.
3. *Main body of interview.* Covering the main purpose…in what the interviewer considers to be logical progression…
4. *Cool-off.* Usually a few straightforward questions at the end to defuse any tension that might have built up.
5. *Closure.* Thank you and goodbye…

<div align="right">p. 284</div>

The final interview schedule was subject to 'internal testing' (Mann, 1985). That is, a preliminary assessment by the academics involved in the supervision of this project, in which any ambiguities, leading questions or criticisms were discussed and resolved.

The interview schedule is attached at Appendix 3.

Consideration was given to the way such an interview may be perceived within the culture of the YOS. Reflecting upon this led me to consider that YOS staff regularly interview the young people and families with whom they work, for example, when completing assessments with them. As professionals working within an LA they were likely to possess a level of verbal confidence, which would reduce the risk an interview would cause any discomfort or negative association.

Interviews took place within the YOS offices, in a confidential space. Time limits were not fixed, to allow all areas from the interview schedule to be covered despite additional probing questions being asked.

A limitation of semi-structured interviews as a means of data collection, relates to the need for rapport between interviewer and interviewee. If barriers exist to building rapport, meaningful data is unlikely to be elicited. Furthermore, the presence of a recording device may cause discomfort and therefore be a barrier to rapport and to participants feeling able to speak freely. I aimed to reduce the impact of this by being explicit about the recording and the use and storage of the data following the interview.

3.8.1.3 Interview participants

A range of criteria for staff members to be included within the sample were agreed as follows: they must work directly with parents or young people known to the YOS to address their educational and wider offending-related needs, and/or have some responsibility within their role for education.

Of the 35 staff members in the YOS, 19 met these criteria. Once staff members meeting these criteria had been identified, a purposive sampling procedure was conducted. This may be defined as a sample which 'enables the researcher to satisfy their specific needs in a project' (Robson, 2011, p. 275). In this case, the Assistant Manager (Education) initially suggested staff members who may be available to take part (n=9). I then approached them individually to explain the nature and purpose of the research, and to seek their consent to participate. All nine agreed to participate.

A potential limitation of this approach is that those who were not suggested by the YOS manager as potential participants may have had something different to offer the research, and a purposive approach omitted their views. As the manager had responsibility for education within the YOS, it is possible, for example, that the staff she selected were more engaged with the education of the young people they worked with than those who did not take part in the study. However, given the time demands of YOS staff and the potential difficulty in securing time with them for the interviews, I prioritised the need for pragmatism to ensure I collected sufficient data to inform a meaningful analysis.

Table 3.1 reports demographic information in relation to the participants.

Name	Gender	Job title	Age range
Sarah	F	Assistant Manager (Education)	18-29
Anna	F	Speech and Language Therapist	30-39
David	M	Case Manager	30-39
Michelle	F	Case Manager	18-29
Rosie	F	Case Manager (high risk team)	30-39
Kate	F	Student Social Worker	18-29
Belinda	F	Post-16 Careers Advisor	50-59
Pauline	F	Parenting Worker	50-59
Nick	M	Social Worker	30-39

Table 3.1: Participant demographic information

To protect the anonymity of participants, names have been changed and some other demographic information, for example job title, slightly amended. However, the main responsibilities of their roles have not been altered so that interview extracts can be read with respondent's professional position in mind, since this is likely to be an important influence on their views, perceptions, and expressions of these in an interview situation. With regards to ethnicity, two of the participants described themselves as Caribbean, four as White British, one as Black British, one White Other and one African. The number of years spent working within the YOS ranged from 6 months to 7 years.

3.8.1.4 Interview data analysis

Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA). This method of analysis was chosen in order to 'highlight the most salient constellations of meanings present in the data set' (Joffe, 2012, p.209). TA is a means of identifying patterns of content and is therefore a useful method for exploring

attitudes towards, and meanings given by the participants to the subject of the research.

Whilst TA is not aligned with any particular epistemological position, it is important to be explicit about assumptions made about the nature of 'truth' and how this may be reflected in the data. As mentioned previously, it is acknowledged that to conduct interviews is not as simple as 'giving voice' to the participants, who are describing an objective reality, which can be commonly understood. Instead, it is an assumption of this research that the ways in which individuals make meaning of their experiences will be affected by many factors, including their social and cultural contexts, and also that my own values, assumptions and approach to the interviews will influence responses and my interpretation of them.

For the purpose of this research, the entire data set (9 individual interview transcripts) was analysed to identify themes. In this context, a 'theme' may be defined as a part of the data, which 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set' (Braun and Clark, 2006, p. 82). Usually, there will be several instances of a particular theme across the data set, but this does not have to be the case. Researcher judgement is needed to identify which parts of the data capture something significant in relation to the research questions, and should therefore be considered a theme. For this reason, prevalence of themes (ie. the number of instances they appear across the data set) is not reported in this paper, although Braun and Clarke identify that further debate is needed about how, or indeed whether, prevalence of themes should be represented.

An inductive approach was taken to the TA. This means that data was analysed without a particular theoretical perspective or pre-developed coding frame in mind. Themes are therefore strongly linked to the data set itself, rather than a pre-existing theory. Because of this, the entire data set was analysed rather than specific areas of interest. This is in contrast to a deductive approach, in which a particular theory or area of interest is mapped onto the data to guide the analysis.   A deductive approach can allow for particular aspects of the data to be analysed with more complexity and depth; something

which is inevitably compromised when analysing all of the data. Despite an inductive approach having been taken, TA can never take place in a theoretical vacuum with the researcher's perspective completely removed, due to the active engagement of the researcher in developing and refining themes.

For the purpose of this study, themes were identified at a semantic level. That is, the themes were identified 'within the explicit or surface meanings of the data.' This is in contrast to a latent analysis, in which the researcher starts to identify the underlying ideas and assumptions that they theorise are influencing the content of the data. Despite this, of course, some interpretation of the data was a necessary aspect of examining the themes to consider their broader meaning and relevance (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke identify that projects which consider semantic themes across the whole data set tend to sit alongside an epistemological position more in line with realism than social constructivism.

TA, as described by Braun and Clark (2006), is a relatively simple method of identifying themes in interview data. It is argued that this level of analysis is suitable for this study given the interview data constitutes just one aspect of the research, and therefore a much more in-depth analysis such as Interpretive Phenomonological Analysis (IPA) does not appear to be suitable. This research project does not seek to penetrate and build theory about a particular phenomenon (Goulding, 2010), hence Grounded Theory was discarded as a method of data analysis. Furthermore, IPA and other possible methods of analysing interview data, such as Grounded Theory or Discourse Analysis are bound to a particular theoretical perspective (such as social constructivism), which TA is not (Braun and Clark, 2006). However, TA does have some limitations, in that any sense of the contradictions or continuity within one particular interview are lost. In addition, particularly in the case of a semantic approach such as this, the analysis does not pay attention to the subtleties and function of talk.

The process of completing the TA followed five phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows:

1. Familiarising yourself with your data.

I transcribed and analysed the interview data, as a first step in becoming familiar with the data. I decided to transcribe the spoken words, without endeavouring to record non-verbal information such as pauses or laughter. This level of transcription was sufficient for the method of data analysis used in this case, however, it is of note that an interview transcript will differ from the interview itself, as it involves translation of the spoken word into written form. It is therefore not an exact replica of the interview, in that non-verbal cues which may have been useful in understanding responses, did not form part of the data corpus.

Within a pragmatic epistemological position, interview data is seen as providing insight into motivations and experiences in a relatively direct way, although as mentioned previously, the context of the interviews themselves as well as the contexts in which the participants were living and working, are seen as influencing the data.

I subsequently re-read each transcript several times as part of the familiarisation process.

2. Generating initial codes.

The next stage of the analysis involved developing margin notes, which remained very close to the words of the participant. Examples of margin notes are set out below, and in the annotated transcript extract at Appendix 4.

| Sarah: | Ok, so it's a young person who has just come out of custody, having been in for just under 12 months. He is a looked after child from another London borough and he was moved to [our borough] on his release, um, into foster placement, um because there were fears for his safety going back to [borough] where he is originally from. Um, prior to going into custody he was in a mainstream school, however, his attendance and behaviour and attendance started to slip towards…he is now in Year 11…um, so towards the end of year 9 his behaviour and attendance were starting to slip and that's when he started getting involved in gangs and offending behaviour. But | Just come out of custody

LAC moving borough

Fears for safety

Attendance problems

Behaviour problems |

nevertheless he wasn't excluded and he remained at mainstream school until going into custody.

Started getting into gangs

3. Searching for themes.

Subsequently, through the process of making margin notes, I looked for areas of commonality across the extracts, to start to develop themes.

Sarah: Ok, so it's a young person who has just come out of custody, having been in for just under 12 months. He is a looked after child from another London borough and he was moved to [our borough] on his release, um, into foster placement, um because there were fears for his safety going back to [borough] where he is originally from. Um, prior to going into custody he was in a mainstream school, however, his attendance and behaviour and attendance started to slip towards…he is now in Year 11…um, so towards the end of year 9 his behaviour and attendance were starting to slip and that's when he started getting involved in gangs and offending behaviour. But nevertheless he wasn't excluded and he remained at mainstream school until going into custody.

| Margin notes	Theme
Just come out of custody	**TRANSITION/ CUSTODY TRANSITION/AREAS**
LAC moving borough	
Fears for safety	**VULNERABLE**
Attendance problems Behaviour problems	**ATTENDANCE BEHAVIOUR**
Started getting into gangs	**GANGS**

An interview extract demonstrating theme development is appended at Appendix 5.

4. Reviewing themes

The above process led to the development of a large number of themes, which I began to cluster together with the aim of producing a coherent coding frame. At this stage, I utilised research supervision sessions to discuss and refine themes. An early example of a thematic map, which was later modified following reflection and discussion, is attached at Appendix 6. One example of a refinement, following discussion with my supervisors, was the collapsing of sub-ordinate themes into each other. In the below example, it was agreed that the theme 'gather and provide information' could capture descriptions of participants undertaking this work in a range of contexts, including descriptions of the problems they encountered, without a need for distinct subordinate themes.
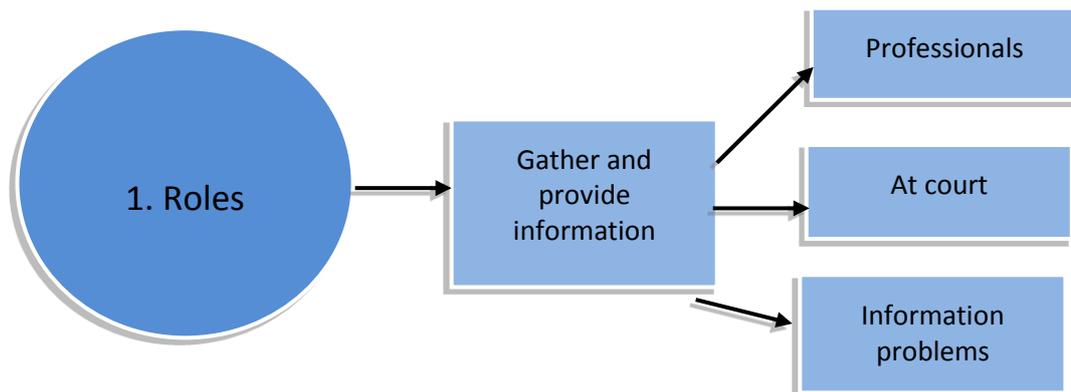
The above structure was simplified as follows:
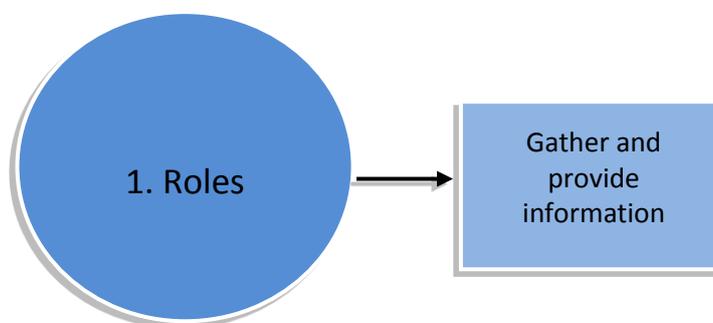
5. Defining and naming themes

At this stage, I developed definitions of each theme with the aim of capturing the content of the data contained within it. Where possible, I named themes using the language of the YOS practitioners. I then systematically analysed each interview transcript again, and developed a detailed coding frame by compiling every extract which could be included within each theme. An example of this coding frame is attached at Appendix 7. A second coder (a trainee EP who had received teaching and training in TA) used the coding frame independently to code 5 pages each of two of the interview transcripts (10 pages in total). This allowed for comparison of the coding process both vertically, within the same transcript, and horizontally, across both transcripts. Whilst there were some differences of opinion as to the inclusion of specific extracts within themes, there was agreement that the coding frame accurately represented the data overall. Any differences of opinion about specific extracts were discussed and resolved.

Ways in which qualitative research may be judged are less well-established than they are for a quantitative research project. Spencer and Ritchie (2012) offer three criteria against which qualitative research may be evaluated:

1) Contribution

Contribution refers broadly to 'the value and relevance of research evidence.' (Spencer and Ritchie, 2012, p. 229): that is, to what extent do the findings enhance existing understanding? Related to the concept of contribution is the expectation for external validity, or transferability, which may be defined as the extent to which the findings can be said to have relevance beyond the participants or context of the study itself. In this case, the project took place with one inner London YOS. The extent to which the issues identified are common to other YOSs, particularly those operating within significantly different contexts (for example in rural areas) has not been established. It is likely that some will resonate, and others will not and some factors important in different contexts will not have surfaced here. It is for this reason that the final creation

of the self-review framework should be a combination of the interview data and wider research base. The inclusion of exemplars within the supporting document referred to the final self-review, made possible by the interviews, was intended to make the self-review framework more concrete and authentic than relying on research evidence alone, though these examplars may benefit from amendment, addition or replacement in other contexts. However, it has been argued that generalisability is beyond the scope of qualitative research (Spencer and Ritchie, 2012).

2) Credibility and 3) Rigour

Credibility relates to 'the defensibility and plausibility of claims made by research' (Spencer and Ritchie, 2012, p. 230). Rigour is related to this, and is concerned with the appropriateness of research decisions and dependability of evidence. It is hoped that by, for example, providing transparency with regard to the process of data analysis, including raw data within this report, triangulating the qualitative data with other sources (written case records), and discussing and agreeing themes with a second coder, this project may be judged positively in these areas.

3.8.1.2 Case record analysis

Alongside the interviews, a brief analysis of YOS and EPS case records was conducted. To provide further information pertaining to the practice of the EPS in relation to young offenders, the YOS provided a case list of all young people on statutory orders open to the YOS on a given date (02.02.16). Young people who had been given out of court disposals were removed from the cohort, as they were unlikely to have been fully assessed by the YOS.   The final list (n=99) comprised a cohort of young people for whom computerised records could be analysed.

In the EPS of the participating LA, individual case records are kept within a shared computer drive which can be accessed by members of the EPS and other support staff. An individual file is created for any child or young person who has had contact with an EP. Copies of all referral forms and EP reports should be stored in this locality. I therefore perused the alphabetised shared drive specifically searching for details of young people from the cohort of 99

YOS cases. Where young people on the YOS caseload were also known to the EPS (n=19), I read all referral forms and EP reports, and recorded the key learning needs which had been identified in the reports. The aim of this was to provide a snapshot of some of the needs of the young people known to the YOS, and to provide support, or otherwise, for some of the themes which were created from the interview data.

Following perusal of the EPS case records, I then accessed the YOS assessments for the 19 young people who were identified as having been known to both the YOS and the EPS. I read the 'Education, training and employment' section of the initial ASSET assessments related to the current order of this cohort of young people. Here, the aim was to explore whether having been previously involved with the EPS was taken into account in YOS assessments. More specifically, I investigated whether, if SEN had been identified by an EP, this information was captured in YOS assessments, within the 'tick box' sections of ASSET. This is underpinned by previous research, which has suggested that 'effective assessment of need, planning and review appears to be compromised within the YJ system by the paucity of educational information' (YJB, 2006, p.103). It therefore appeared pertinent to investigate whether this was the case locally, or whether existing relationships between the EPS and YOS were informing YOS assessment, and it was anticipated that this information would either support or contradict the qualitative information provided in the interviews. However, an in-depth analysis of the information provided within EPS documents or ASSET was not within the scope of this research

Figure 3.2 shows the relevant parts of the ETE section of the ASSET, which should be completed by YOS practitioners for all young people on statutory court orders. Whilst this has now been replaced by AssetPlus, at the time the case analysis was conducted for this study, AssetPlus had not yet been introduced and therefore ASSET was the universal assessment tool used by the participating YOS.

Educational attainment   Yes   No   Don't know

Does s/he have any educational qualifications?   ☐   ☐   ☐

Does s/he have vocational/practical qualifications?   ☐   ☐   ☐

*Have special needs (SEN) been identified?   ☐   ☐   ☐

  If 'yes', does s/he have a statement of SEN?   N/A ☐   ☐   ☐

Does s/he have difficulties with literacy?   ☐   ☐   ☐

Does s/he have difficulties with numeracy?   ☐   ☐   ☐

Does s/he have difficulties caused by a severe lack of English
(or Welsh, if applicable) language skills?   ☐   ☐   ☐

Other factors relating to engagement in ETE   Yes   No   Don't know

Negative attitudes towards ETE   ☐   ☐   ☐

Lack of attachment to current ETE provision (e.g. wants to
leave, cannot see benefits of learning)   ☐   ☐   ☐

*Bullied   ☐   ☐   ☐

*Bullies others   ☐   ☐   ☐

Poor relationships with most teachers/tutors/employers/colleagues ☐   ☐   ☐

Negative parental/carer attitudes towards education/training or
employment   ☐   ☐   ☐

Other problems (e.g. frequent changes of school/educational
placement, school is unchallenging/boring, disability, lack of
stable address meaning difficulties securing work, no money to ☐   ☐   ☐
buy books/tools/equipment).

Figure 3.2: Extract from ASSET assessment (YJB, 2014a)

For each of the 19 case files of young people who had been known to both the YOS and the EPS, cross referencing was undertaken between the EPS and YOS case files to establish whether the needs identified by EPs were reflected within the YOS assessments. For example, if an EP had been involved, would the response be 'Yes' to the 'Have special needs (SEN) been identified?" question on ASSET?

This process makes particular assumptions about the nature of information contained within the assessments. For example, it is assumed that there is a common understanding of constructs such as 'literacy difficulties' or 'numeracy difficulties' which are in fact open to interpretation. Despite this, it is assumed that if an EP has defined particular areas of need, it would be helpful for the YOS to have access to this information so that it would have potential to inform the delivery and planning of interventions within the YOS.

3.8.2 What changes can I make? Action steps

Following the completion of the TA and the case record analysis I reflected on the practical implications which could tentatively be drawn from both pre-existing research and the data derived from the TA and case record analysis. I contemplated the extent to which research informs practice. I undertook some additional reading in this area, which is presented in section 2.9 of this thesis, and this led me to reflect on the characteristics of effective knowledge exchange, and specifically to draw upon the principles and actions described by those who had developed instruments which encourage critical reflection through by abstracting research evidence to create a self-review instrument (eg. Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Cameron et al., 2004). I drew upon this practice when making the judgement that the development and implementation of an evidence-informed self-review framework may facilitate effective knowledge exchange and allow the YOS to review practice against a series of indicator, and to subsequently identify actions for improvement. This thinking informed the following research questions:

b) What YOS activities can help to build upon opportunities and overcome the challenges?
c) Can these activities be compiled into an evidence-informed self-review framework which will be implemented to inform YOS practice?
d) To what extent can an evidence-informed self-review influence practice development between EPs and YOSs?

I developed the evidence-informed self-review framework with reference to both the TA and case record analysis conducted as part of this project, and pre-existing research into good practice regarding the education of young offenders, and in collaboration with the management team of the participating YOS.

The framework is designed to alert YOS staff to the many domains of educational practice which appear to support the achievement and engagement of young offenders, and to allow them to identify where they might focus practice development.

In developing the self-review framework, I first revisited the literature reviewed at the inception of this project. I systematically searched for information relating to practice which research suggests may impede or promote the educational progress for young people in the YJ system. I then started to develop an initial draft framework designed to incorporate all of the educational factors identified as influential.

As a next step, I reviewed the themes developed in the earlier stage of this project, and considered the practical implications arising from the TA. I considered which of the themes were supported within the existing literature, and identified those which may have practical implications but were not supported within wider literature. I judged that it was important to include areas identified only within the data from this project, to place value on the experiences and perceptions of the participants and increase the possibility of them being used to inform practice.

Finally in the development of the draft framework, I drew upon my employment experience within YOSs and literature describing the role of YOS practitioners, to reflect upon which aspects of practice were likely to be within the remit of YOS staff, and which were beyond their control. For example, I reduced the number of markers relating to the features of effective education for young offenders, as YOSs rarely provide education themselves. However, I judged that the factors most strongly demonstrated to be associated with a reduction in offending (for example literacy and numeracy gains) would be helpful to include. Conclusions drawn from the case record analysis also informed some of the items in the framework. I then categorised the individual markers of good practice into seven areas for ease of reference.
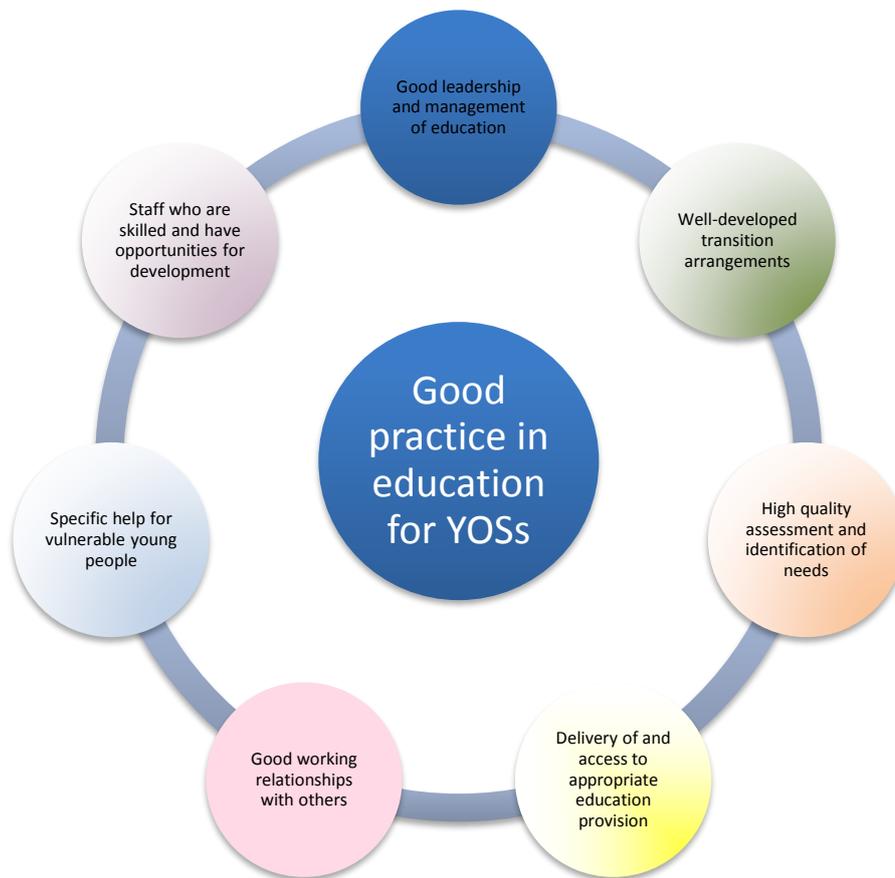
Figure 3.3: Diagram of 7 identified areas of good practice in relation to YOS education

Those factors which were identified in both interviews and other research were judged to be the strongest areas for inclusion in the framework. This relates to 19 of the 27 individual items. The case record analysis also informed two of the items. The final areas were identified in either the interview data or pre-existing research alone, and this constitutes the remaining eight items.

Following the development of a final draft, the self-review framework was discussed and refined with a team of managers (n=3-5) from the participating YOS through the facilitation of two workshops.

To inform the discussions in the workshop, a guidance document (extract attached at Appendix 9) was also developed. The purpose of the document was to provide the context and reasons for the inclusion of each domain, and this was created by selecting an interview quote or academic reference which I judged best represented each of the 27 markers of good practice and compiling these into a document.

The aims of the workshops with the YOS management team were as follows:

- to co-complete the self-review with YOS managers;
- to co-create an action plan based on the needs identified in the self-review process;
- to seek some initial reflections from the participants as to the experience of completing the self-review.

A session plan for the workshops is appended at Appendix 10.

Examples of amendments made in collaboration with the YOS managers include the addition of timescales for the regularity with which cases are reviewed. One item relating to the 'preparing for adulthood' agenda, which aims to support young people with SEND to achieve outcomes of employment, good health, independent living and friends, relationships and community inclusion (DfE, 2017), was removed, as the YOS team considered this was not within their remit.

Two examples detailing how the research reviewed and data generated as part of this thesis were harnessed to develop the self-review framework follow:

Area of practice identified from research/data:	The quality and timeliness of YOS educational assessment can be inconsistent, with high levels of unidentified educational needs.
Sources:	Interview data incorporating descriptions of young people perceived as having a special educational need but who had not had access to an assessment; Loucks (2007) concluded that 20-30% of adult prisoners has a learning disability or similar impairment; Stephenson (2006) suggests that Assets indicate that YOS staff often under-estimate how far behind YPs may be in relation to peers. Talbot (2010) reported that YOT staff reported they would find specialist educational assessment helpful; YJB (2006) identified a lack of support and specialist help for young people with SEN; O'Carroll (2016) reported incomplete data on ASSET.

| Indicator, as agreed with YOS managers: | 4. Within the first six weeks of an Order, the YOS has a clear assessment of each young person's educational needs in place, which is reviewed 3 monthly, or when there is a significant change in a young person's circumstances. |

| Area of practice identified from research/data: | Transitions between custody and the community, educational and care placements, have been shown to constitute a barrier to young people making educational progress. |

| Sources: | Interview data describing young people experiencing difficulty due to such moves; Stephenson (2006) identified the impact of custody as a barrier to educational progress; DfE (2013) sets out in the SEND codes of practice, that for young people in custody, the LA must provide info regarding assessments/EHCPs to YOT within 5 days of request so that this can be forwarded to secure establishment; YJB (2007) suggested that 'transition documents' were a model of good practice during the KYPE evaluation. However, they concluded that there is still a need for better info sharing between custody and YOS; YJB (2006) identified that there is a lack of continuity between custody and the community; |

| Indicator, as agreed with YOS managers: | 12. Effective transition arrangements are in place for all young people moving between education providers, geographical areas, between adult and children's services or between the secure estate and the community. |

The final framework consists of 27 individual markers of good practice, identified from the literature, interviews and case files.

The final, completed self-review framework for the participating YOS is attached as Appendix 8.

It is important to note that the research evidence is not sufficiently clear and robust to provide certainty as to how each YOS should practise in relation to education. However, the instrument is designed to provide a focus for rich and structured discussion, and to constitute a starting point for future development.

The action plan developed as part of the self-review is appended at Appendix 12.

The final sections of each of the workshops involved gathering some initial reflections from the participants, by asking open-ended questions about their experiences of the self-review and its perceived utility. Questions were asked in a group interview setting, and recorded using an audio recording device. I then transcribed the interview data and provide brief extracts in section 4.2.1 of this thesis. The schedule of questions is provided at Appendix 11.

Time constraints, and the very small sample size, for this part of the research, impeded an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the self-review framework and the implementation and any long-term impact of its completion. This process is therefore intended to provide initial reflections only.

3.9 Summary and conclusions

In summary, this study takes an AR approach, which suggests a central aim of influencing a change in practice between EPs and a YOS. Initially, a detailed understanding of the problem was developed through a comprehensive literature review, a thematic analysis of data developed through semi-structured interviews with YOS practitioners, and a brief analysis of YOS and EPS case records. Subsequently, the conclusions drawn from this process were used to inform the development of an evidence-informed self-review framework, which was piloted with a sample of YOS managers. Initial reflections as to the experience of self-review were gathered.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The following section explores, in McAteer's terms, 'what is the situation at present? And how can I find out?' through presentation of the themes and subordinate themes developed from the interview data. This is achieved through the inclusion of a table consisting of an example interview extract chosen to illustrate each sub-theme. There follow further examples from, and discussion of, those sub-themes judged to be particularly interesting, surprising or pertinent to the research questions (for example those which informed the development of the self-review framework). This is followed by presentation of the key numerical data derived from the analysis of case files, and then by presentation of key themes arising from self-review process during the workshops with YOS managers. Initial reflections from YOS managers regarding perceptions of the self-review process are included.

4.2 What is the situation at present? And how can I find out?

4.2.1 Thematic analysis of interview data

The aim of the interviews was to explore the professional and personal experiences of those working within the YOS in relation to the education of the young people with whom they work. A total of five superordinate themes was developed from the interview data, with several subordinate themes related to each. Figure 4.1 comprises a thematic map of the superordinate and subordinate themes. They are also summarised in Table 4.1 below.   All names have been changed, and some job titles slightly amended.

Theme	Sub theme	Example from interview
1. Roles Descriptions of the roles staff currently undertake within the YOS, or perceive	Provide specialist perspective / advice	Anna (Speech and Language Therapist): I wrote a report and gave advice to his school, his mum, his YOS worker, and to him, and I've been seeing him for some sessions, and to advise him on strategies that he can use to support his auditory memory, um, and his listening and understanding, um and then strategies that he can use to improve his speech clarity.

others as undertaking	Working with others	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): What we've done at [local authority] YOT is we have presented his case to the securing education board, which is a panel made up of um, senior members of staff in the education department, school improvement service, headteachers, as well as social care.
	Role of the EP	Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team): I've only ever seen it from the, kind of, cognitive functioning, testing side as opposed to anything else. That's the honest truth.
	Advocate and support	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): We then accompanied him to his interviews and went to the admissions panel to advocate on his behalf, act as a reference um, and since he's been in college, we are….we're speaking to him…we've seen him once and spoken to him two or three times this week, his first week, just to make sure he's ok and he's settling in.
	Gather and provide information	Michelle (Case Manager): Well, it's really helpful to get those initial, kind of, background, sort of, information, because it just helps to have a sense of how the young person has engaged at school. And if they're at school, you know, how often are they going in, kind of thing,
	Education delivery	David (Case Manager): We do have the summer arts project what has been going quite successfully for, I think this summer, say if it goes ahead this summer, this summer I think will be the fourth year. And a very successful summer arts programme.
	Monitoring	David (Case Manager): We look at attendance, punctuality, how they engage with peers, how they engage with members of staff, has there been a change? And we use that as a monitoring process.
2. Strengths References to areas participants felt the service did well.	Speech and language provision	Michelle (Case Manager): I did some work with [name] the speech and language therapist and she did some assessment on the young person around her communication and she wasn't really able to, like…if she was annoyed or anything her reaction was, like, to shout and whatever at, like, school. So it was quite helpful to do that assessment around her communication.
	Relationships	David (Case Manager): Um, personal strength, I think it's engagement with the young people. Building up that trust. And once you build that up you get a lot more out of the young people.

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	Access to provision and services.	Michelle (Case Manager): But there's lots of, you know, sort of, stuff available for them. It's just finding something that they're interested in, something they're willing to go to. Something they're willing to travel to, and where they can go.
	Education high up on the agenda	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): I think education is becoming higher up on the caseworkers' agendas now, in that they're starting to value it more, and see the importance of young people going.
3. Young people factors Descriptions of factors which were perceived as impacting positively or negatively upon individual young people's progress in education.	Young people as vulnerable	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): And a lot of the time it's not their fault, it's their learning needs, it's their anxieties. Gang issues affect a huge proportion of young people in [LA]. So being in a big school has…walking to and from…it does have its problems for them and they are genuinely scared sometimes.
	Unmet or identified needs	David (Case Manager): There's another kid that I'm working with and he hasn't been assessed, in the slightest. And you can tell within 10 seconds of meeting the kid, that 'you do have some form of learning difficulties.' There's no doubt about it.
	Attendance	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): he's only been known to us for about 3 or 4 months but he hasn't actually been in school for nearly 3 years. He's now a Year 10 student and even prior to that his attendance was never above 80%, even through primary school.
	Problems for a long time	David (Case Manager): He's in Year 9. He doesn't attend school at all. He's basically been kicked out of school since he was in Year 7. Er, I think it's before that, I think in Year 6, so he can't remember too much, but it's definitely….he's never experienced secondary school.
	They don't always want support	Michelle (Case Manager): And they can be quite…like, another young person who is very resistant to, like, even the idea of accepting any support with his learning. He, like, won't even consider having a, like. some kind of assessment or even conversation around it. [….] I don't quite know why, but a lot of young people they don't really want to always address it.

	Learning problems	Kate (Student Social Worker): Also more recently, only more recently has he been diagnosed as dyslexic, and he explains to me that sometimes he does struggle with understanding things in school.
	Motivation / interest	Anna (Speech and Language Therapist): Lots of young people just don't know what they're interested in, or what they…where they want to go, and he's one of the few young people who I've met who has clear interest and ability in that area, and is.,…yeah, so I think it's working out well for him.
	Money from offending	David (Case Manager): A prime example, if we're talking about mobile phone snatches, a young person could potentially make £500 doing mobile phone snatches in literally a couple of hours. And when you're offering, well, on an apprenticeship you get, £120 a week, like. Well, I could make £500 Friday, that's fine.
	Behaviour	Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team): He was in a mainstream school but because of his behaviour they were unable to contain him. The risk was too high. Er, mum would frequently get calls to say he'd got out of the classroom and was wandering around on the roof.
	Communication difficulties	Anna (Speech and Language Therapist): For some of those young people it might have been identified…unidentified speech and language needs even, because it's quite classic with this population, that they're quite typically more difficult to identify speech and language needs in those young people who also have social, emotional and mental health needs.
4. Systemic factors Descriptions of factors in the systems around young people which were perceived as impacting on their progress in education	Loss and change	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): My role now is a lot more limited than what it used to be. So I have to fit in education around everything else. It's not my main thing any more. So we don't have an education worker in this YOS.
	Family issues	Kate (Student Social Worker): I think families don't…some of the families I work with haven't necessarily excelled in education themselves, the parents. So they might not be as motivated to, to encourage their children to go to school when they're not going.

	Others' responses to offending	David (Case Manager): And once you say [to a school] 'youth offending services,' it's like 'what have they done?' And you don't really want to disclose it, but like, you feel you need to, especially when it's a safeguarding issue and potentially it puts them more at risk to being excluded or treated differently.
	It can vary	Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team): And once they're finished with statutory school, forget education. Forget it. There's no duress on them to do it beyond their order. So…and services aren't as, they're not as concerned. That's the truth of it, you know. There aren't the repercussions on services to make sure that people post 16 are in education.
	Provision problems	Nick (Social Worker): I went there [to education provision] a couple of times to visit her and I was just, it was very chaotic. So the fact she's getting D's in that learning environment shows a lot of potential – an incredible amount of potential.
	Peers and gangs	Nick (Social Worker): With that case that I spoke about the start, he's got a peer network that are gang related. They're older than him. […] He's now become sort of vulnerable to this group, the status they can offer him, the excitement, values or whatever, which he probably had anyway from growing up in this, sort of, environment.
	You don't have excessive amounts of time	Anna (Speech and Language Therapist): Because obviously, the whole package here is time bound, and also with the client group there is, um, you know, you don't have excessive amounts of time. […] So I'm always very aware of that and try to do as much as I can in a limited time.
	A hundred and one different professionals	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): By the time they've got to us they've had a hundred and one different assessments, with a hundred and one different professionals. They don't need another one and they're not that bothered by it.
	Exclusions	David (Case Manager): So he was in primary school and then his behaviour warranted…got him kicked out and then he ended up in a PRU […] and he got kicked out [of the PRU] as well. Um, so that's his experience of what he's told me about his schooling.

89

5. Needs References to areas in which the service is perceived as having needs.	Clarification of EP role	Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team): I'm not really sure [about the role of the EP], is the honest truth. Apart from, um, doing special educational needs statements, I don't really know. I haven't had much contact with educational psychologists.
	Resources	Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team): . I think, ultimately, it just comes down to resources. The amount of time, the amount of money, um, the amount of staff people have got to dedicate to individualising care really. The amount of opportunities out there is very limited.
	'Expertise,' understanding and advice	Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education): And also [we don't have] possibly the…the level of expertise here, in that, you know I can assume why these young people have anxiety and aren't going to school and all of that, but I'm not trained in assessing these young people as that.
	A fence at the top of the cliff	Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team): So I just think having those resources available from early on would be really, really good. It's kind of fence at the top of the cliff or ambulance at the bottom. You know, worse case scenario we'll have an ambulance at the bottom but it's better to put a fence up.
	Better work with others	Kate (Student Social Worker): I'd like to see better collaborative working between education departments and the youth offending team.
	EP on site	Kate (Student Social Worker): She's [Assistant Manager – Education is] able to obtain the information about how someone's doing at school but in regards to their development and concerns around that, I wouldn't be able to do that. So having someone on site that I can do that with would be really helpful, same way as I can with health, with the nurses.

Table 4.1: Summary of themes and subordinate themes developed from thematic analysis of interview data, with examples.

Figure 4.1: Thematic Map of Themes and Subordinate Themes

1. Roles
- Specialist perspective and advice
- Education delivery
- Working with others
- Advocate and support
- Role of the EP
- Monitoring
- Gather and provide information

2. Strengths
- Speech and language provision
- Relationships
- Access to provision and services
- Education high up on the agenda

3. Young people factors
- Problems for a long time
- Young people as vulnerable
- Attendance
- They don't always want support
- Motivation / interest
- Learning problems
- Behaviour
- Unmet or unidentified needs
- Communication difficulties
- Money from offending

4. Systemic factors
- Family issues
- You don't have excessive amounts of time
- It can vary
- Peers and gangs
- Other's responses to offending
- Provision problems
- Exclusions
- A hundred and one different professionals
- Loss and change

5. Needs
- Resources
- Clarification of EP role
- EP on site
- 'Expertise,' understanding and advice
- Better work with others
- A fence at the top of the cliff

91

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Roles

The participants described the roles staff undertake within the YOS, or that they perceived others as performing.

All of the interviewees described themselves as gathering information from a range of sources to inform their assessments, as well as many describing a role in providing educational information to others, such as the courts or the secure estate (the **gathering and providing information** sub-theme). Within this sub-theme, participants referred to their role in eliciting the voices of young people and their parents about any educational needs. Although staff perceived themselves as having a key role in pulling together information from various sources to inform their assessments, many references were made to difficulties staff faced in procuring information from other agencies.

> **Kate (Student Social Worker):** *"I find it difficult to get in contact with a lot of the colleges though, to be honest. Like I've had…been trying to get hold of one particular college for the last few months to try and speak to this particular teacher about my young person."*

The view was also expressed that when information is available, for example from a Statement of SEN, it may be out of date or not useful. Furthermore, staff acknowledged that young people and their carers are themselves often unsure of, or struggle to recollect, their learning needs. These issues contributed to staff feeling the need to use their own judgement, or 'personal opinion' to decide whether a young person may have a learning difficulty. This inconsistency of information would appear to be a factor which significantly impedes the quality of assessments YOS staff are able to develop.

Participants described their perceptions of the role of an EP (the **role of the EP** sub-theme*)*, and generally, these fell into two broad categories. The first related to perceptions of an EP as working at the level of individual young people, often relating to diagnosing young people with learning difficulties.

> **Anna (Speech and Language Therapist):** "*Things like dyslexia. Sort of diagnosing reading difficulties, or, yeah, identifying reading*

difficulties and describing those. […] I think that does come under the role. Um, and I think that that's helpful.

The second category related to perceptions of EPs working with the adults around young people.

> **Belinda (Post 16 Careers Advisor):** *"Work with the, to try and work with the family and other professionals to identify maybe some of the barriers that that young person will have and try to address them from a young age and put into place."*

However, all descriptions of EP work related to increasing understanding and support for individual young people. There was a strong tendency within the data to locate problems at the level of the individual (demonstrated by references to, for example, cognitive testing, diagnostic labels and neurological functioning). It was of note that no references were made to work EPs may do at a whole school or organisational level, for example staff training or policy development.

In relation to the education of young people, almost all YOS staff perceived themselves, as well as the Assistant Manager (Education), as having a role in advocating for young people and parents, and supporting them by accompanying them to interviews, appointments and education provision, as well as by representing their views and best interests at multi-agency meetings, and challenging other professionals (the ***advocate and support*** sub-theme).

> **Pauline (Parenting Worker):** *"Yeah, I go to school meetings with the parents a lot of times. Because when I'm supporting the parents, particularly around education, a lot of the parents will not attend the meetings and things because they feel intimidated by the language used, by the environment."*

Given the stigma such young people are perceived to face, both by the participants in this study, and in other research, as well as the significant barriers young people and their families may face in accessing education, this would appear to be a valuable role for YOS staff.

Participants also perceived themselves as having a role in ***monitoring*** the attendance and progress of young people in education, through regular contact with providers. This is seen as facilitating their ability to respond when there is a change, for example a decline in attendance. However, descriptions of the frequency of monitoring varied, with some participants saying they receive weekly feedback from education providers, and others saying they contact providers every 12 weeks when assessments are reviewed. The frequency with which staff obtain information about a young person's behaviour and attendance, will have implications for how quickly they are able to respond if difficulties arise. It may be argued that if contact with providers is taking place every 12 weeks, it impedes the ability of the service to be reflexive and to take swift action when a placement is at risk of breaking down. Similar delays may take place within other elements of the professional network involved in negotiating a solution to such problems, resulting in a cumulative effect. Furthermore, there may be a lack of clarity as to who is ultimately responsible for responding when a placement breaks down. Issues such as these may contribute to the existence of 'collaborative inertia,' as described by Hughes (2006).

Although most descriptions of participants' roles related to supporting and facilitating young peoples' engagement in education, they also gave some descriptions of education delivered directly to young people by the YOS (the ***education delivery*** sub-theme). These related to individual tuition by a volunteer teacher, which was generally positioned as a last resort when other educational opportunities had failed, and a summer arts project which is run by the YOS. Given the YOS are delivering education to young people themselves, it will be helpful for them to consider to what extent this is consistent with research into the effective education of young offenders.

Finally, within this theme, staff gave many descriptions of their multi-agency practice (the ***working with others*** sub-theme) through descriptions of attendance at multi-agency panels, contact with education providers and the courts, for example. Given YOSs were one of the early adopters of a multi-agency model, it is perhaps unsurprising that this was a strong theme throughout the data.

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Strengths

This theme relates to areas the participants described in positive terms, as strengths of the work that they, or others do.

Some staff expressed that they valued their seconded Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) highly (the **speech and language provision** sub-theme*). It was perceived as *"really helpful"* to have a SALT on site, who could assess young people's communication difficulties and provide a unique perspective on young peoples' needs. References were also made to the personal characteristics of the seconded SALT: for example, being flexible, calm and approachable, which were perceived as facilitating their work.

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** "*That's another real strength we've got here actually, is our speech and language therapist. She's brilliant. She's on hand for anything at a drop of a hat.*"

Positive descriptions of relationships with other professionals, young people or families were offered by most participants (the **relationships** sub-theme).

> **Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education):** *"What's a real strength is that we've got really good relationships with the majority of the schools and definitely alternative provision and the PRU in the borough. Really good relationships, really good communication flow around that."*

Staff particularly valued the role the Assistant Manager (Education) had in developing such relationships and facilitating the exchange of information with a range of education providers.

Participants also expressed that their ability to develop trusting relationships with young people and their families was a strength.

It was perceived by many of the participants that young people are able to access an appropriate range of services and educational provision, (the **access to services and provision** sub-theme). However, at times this was described with the proviso that, despite being available, the quality of provision may vary,

and barriers to young people engaging, for example geographical location, or not being aligned with the interests of the young person, exist.

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** "*I think we do have good access to services, whether they are hit and miss, but I think that's kind of everywhere really.*"

Some staff also valued the role of the Assistant Manager (Education) in keeping **education high up on the agenda** of the caseworkers, by ensuring it is prioritised in the work that they do, and that the importance of education is communicated to young people.

> **Pauline (Parenting Worker):** "*Education is high on the priority of things that they [case workers] look at. I mean, it's as high as any other issue.*"

Overall then, staff identified a range of characteristics which they perceived as contributing towards a high quality educational service.

4.1.1.3 Theme 3: Young people factors

This theme relates to descriptions of factors which were perceived as impacting, either positively or negatively, upon young peoples' educational progress, which may be described as being at the level of the individual.

Almost all staff described the ways in which young people working with the YOS were perceived as vulnerable (in the **young people as vulnerable** sub-theme). In particular, anxiety about going to school and gang involvement limiting the geographical areas young people could go to, were seen as barriers to young people's engagement in education.

> **Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education):** "*He has such anxiety around it that even a couple of weeks ago his caseworker tried to get a careers advisor to go to his house and meet with him. He got so anxious about that prospect that he actually punched his way through a glass door and ran away. Um, because he was just…the thought of anything to do with education was so overwhelming for him.*"

> **Michelle (Case Worker)** "*…and another issue is that, because in local authority there is, like, issues around gangs and things like that, he says*

96

he's, like, he doesn't want to leave his area. Which obviously then completely limits where he can go for any, like education, training or anything because he's not willing to go outside his area which is quite small."

It is possible that individuals who already position young offenders as vulnerable are drawn towards working in YJ, or that exposure to the complex backgrounds of young offenders through working them, supports the development of this view. The discussions and shared narratives which take place amongst YOS staff may also lead to a culture of understanding and empathy being fostered within the YOS, which is evident within this sub-theme. It is possible that this perception may limit the aspirations professionals such as YOS staff have for the young people with whom they work, given previous research has suggested that young offenders and early school leavers may perceive the educational activities they have access to as insufficiently challenging (Hurry, Brazier and Wilson, 2008; Larkin, 2014).

The majority of interviewees expressed the view that young people may have learning or other needs which have not been identified or addressed by others (***unmet or unidentified needs*** sub-theme). This may be because they have not been in education consistently enough to be assessed, or because there has been a focus on young people's behaviour rather than what might be underpinning it.

> **Pauline (Parenting Worker):** *"There are loads of young people that have gone through the system, clearly have educational needs and nothing's been done about it because the professionals around them, who should have taken responsibility for ensuring that something was done, haven't done it."*

Issues such as these may, like the lack of consistency described in monitoring young people's educational progress, demonstrate a lack of clarity about which professionals in a multi-agency context are responsible for taking action. They were also seen as contributing to the need for staff to use personal judgement, or 'assumptions' to decide whether or not a young person may have an additional educational need.

Poor attendance was perceived by almost all of the participants (in the **attendance** sub-theme) as a significant challenge facing them in their work. This issue was seen as contributing to young people's needs not being identified, as they were not in school regularly enough for assessment to take place. It was also constructed as contributing to a 'vicious cycle' in which young people stop attending regularly, they therefore become increasingly behind in their work, and therefore increasingly anxious about returning to school. Poor attendance was also seen as clouding understanding of a young person's educational needs, in that it may be difficult to ascertain whether they are behind due to missing or school, or due to some 'underlying' learning need.

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** *"He just wouldn't go. And then every single provision we tried since, just, he totally withdrew. Wouldn't engage. He'd say he'd go, he'd turn up, half an hour after arriving he'd disappear. We wouldn't be able to track him down. He was a constant battle."*

Factors which were generally perceived as internal and individual, such as **communication difficulties** and **learning problems** were also described as barriers. It is likely that the fact that the presence of a SALT within the team, contributed towards the understanding staff have about how a communication difficulty may impact upon a young person's development and therefore the descriptions of such difficulties within this sub-theme. Descriptions of literacy and numeracy difficulties as underpinning problematic **behaviour** were present within the data.

Several of the participants referred to the importance of a young person being interested in what they are learning, and having some internal motivation, in order to make progress in education (**motivation / interest** sub-theme).

At times, young people were described as highly motivated to participate in ETE, but being let down by the systems around them. One case description which highlights this issue, consisted of a young person from a different area (the 'home' LA) who had made good educational progress whilst in custody. He was then released into the locality of the participating YOS. The YOS were not informed of his presence in their area for several weeks, and then a lack of clear handover information from his original LA, and a range of other procedural

difficulties, resulted in the young person spending almost 3 months out of education after release from custody. This is particularly concerning given the vital need for a successful reintegration into the community immediately upon release from custody.

Given the importance of a young person being motivated, and interested in what they are learning was acknowledged, it is therefore a particular challenge for staff that they perceive that many young people don't see ETE as a priority, and lack specific interests, and therefore have very limited motivation to attend.

4.2.1.4 Theme 4: Systemic factors

Theme 4 relates to factors in the systems around young people, which the participants perceived as impacting on young people's progress in education.

Young people were described as experiencing **loss and change** and the impact this may have. Included within this theme are references to young people moving geographical location due to changes of care placements, or moves between custody and the community, as illustrated by the case example described above. Generally, these transitions, and some of the organisational and inter-agency issues around them, for example a lack of information-sharing between LAs, were seen as having a negative impact on young people's ability to engage with education. The transition from primary to secondary school was also described as a vulnerable time. However, at times, time in custody, when young people are contained and some of the barriers they face in the community are removed, was described as being related to a temporary period of educational progress.

> **Belinda (Post-16 Careers Advisor):** *"Also the fact that a lot of youngsters who are in care, looked after, then moved around so many times and that really causes a lot of disruption to their education. You know, sometimes I'm just amazed. There is a young boy now who I think has been to at least six different education."*

This theme also includes descriptions of loss and change within the YOS or education systems, for example loss of staff, or resources, which were given by

the majority of participants. The ever-changing landscape of the LA, and the YJ services within it, were seen as impacting on young people.

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** *"Actually if we could have got that support in earlier…but there isn't any early intervention any more. I mean, even from a YOT point of view, all our early intervention…we used to have an early intervention/prevention team who are gone. Disbanded. Never replaced."*

Almost all participants felt that *family issues,* which related to either instability in the family home, or parents' negative attitudes towards or experiences of education, were a barrier to young people making educational progress.

> **Belinda (Post-16 Careers Advisor):** "*I think it starts off mainly from, possibly the background. Disruptive families or parents that are unable to care for them. So they're already coming from a home where the education hasn't been supported."*

The reactions of education providers to young people's offending behaviour, for example their concern regarding the management of risk, or stigma associated with being involved in the YJ system, were seen by some participants as impacting upon young people (***others' responses to offending*** sub-theme). YOS staff generally perceived that offending behaviour which takes place outside of school time should not impact upon inclusion in education, and raised concern about how much information they should disclose to schools and education providers.

> **Kate (Student Social Worker);** *"I will say, like, with that one particular school, I did feel a bit cautious about how much I would say to them. And like, because I didn't want that to…because the young man was doing well on his order, I didn't want him to be punished for that, just his involvement with the youth offending team in school."*

A related issue of young people having experienced multiple *exclusions* was also identified.

> **Michelle (Case Manager):** *"A girl I'm working with at the moment, she is just consistently getting excluded from school."*

Within the ***it can vary*** sub-theme, some participants expressed that the practice of individual case workers, services within different LAs, or practices within individual services, can differ.

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** *"I think once you get into services you can get…it's luck of the draw with anything. You can get someone really great who just clicks with the young person and the family and can give them the information they need and can help us, they can feed into our work. Or you don't."*

Of particular interest was the view that the level of support young people receive when they are post-16, is inferior to that they receive when they are of statutory school age, and that this age group present with particular difficulties.

> **Sarah (Assistant Manager – Education):** *"By now they're 16…17…they don't have to engage. There isn't any onus on parents to make them engage. And, you know, they're even further down that line of becoming totally disaffected and, you know, disengaged from education, which is sad. So they're even harder to get into anything."*

Most staff described problems they associated with the range of educational provision available to their young people (in the ***provision problems*** sub-theme). The local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was perceived negatively by the majority of participants due to the mix of young people there. Issues such as a shortage of resources, and lack of structure and challenging work, were raised in relation to other alternative provisions.

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** *The other alternative provision I can think of are all, kind of, out of borough. And they….I don't know, maybe I'm judging harshly, but they all seem quite, kind of, chaotic to me. […] Not a huge amount of productive work or challenging work going on by the looks of it."*

The tight timescales and time-limited nature of YOS involvement was seen as a challenge by the majority of participants (***you don't have excessive amounts of time*** sub-theme).

> **Michelle (Case Manager):** "*So, you know, you might…so, for example I've got a young person at the moment who's only on a 3 month order, which is not a very long time. And to try and…and it's trying to prioritise what has to be done as well as, like, for them to actually finish their order and complete it but then also there are a lot of, you know, other needs as well.*"

An additional barrier noted by some interviewees relates to the number of different professionals young people are required to see both at the YOS, and prior to coming into contact with the YOS (the ***a hundred and one different professionals*** sub-theme). There was a view that young people with multiple problems will have worked with so many professionals over their lives, that this could lead to confusion and disengagement.

> **Pauline (Parenting Worker):** *"Our young people see so many different people. They have a task that children at home never have to do. No child at home has to deal with so many different people trying to help them. To me the system creates confusion for our young people. Because you've got sex education worker, speech therapist, you'll have an education psychologist, you have the AP [alternative provision] worker, you have a social worker, you've got the YOS officer and you might have a CAMHS worker. I get confused and I'm an adult, trying to work out."*

4.2.1.5 Theme 5: Needs

Theme 5 relates what needs the participants perceived themselves, or the service more generally, to have in relation to the education of its young people.

A view that it would be helpful if young people's special educational needs were identified and intervention put in place at an earlier stage of young people's development, was expressed by some participants (the ***fence at the top of the cliff*** sub-theme). It was suggested that to intervene in adolescence, at the time of YOS involvement, is often too late, and that potential problems could be identified and supported at a far earlier stage (even through antenatal services).

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** *"If I could change one thing for young people, it would be to have more pastoral care from an earlier stage in mainstream education."*

The ***clarification of EP role*** sub-theme includes descriptions by all participants of the limited contact they have had with EPs, or the lack of confidence they expressed in being able to describe what an EP does. The need for further clarity on the role and what type of support could be offered to the YOS was expressed by some staff.

> **Michelle (Case Manager):** *"I think it would be, um, we have, like, our, at our YOT we have these sessions on a Wednesday which are practice development for staff. So I think it would be helpful to have an educational psychologist come and present at that, to be like, 'this is what I do and could do, and how…' you know what I mean? To give us as workers more idea of what support would be able to be offered, or what…you know what I mean? Just to give us a better understanding of, like, what an educational psychologist does."*

> **Pauline (Parenting Worker):** *"I have no idea [about the role of the EP], other than that they do tests and they make assessments."*

Despite reporting to know little about the role of an EP, there was a view expressed by almost all participants that a clearer assessment of young peoples' educational needs, often perceived as being provided by an 'expert,' would be helpful (***'expertise,' understanding and advice*** sub-theme).

> **Rosie (Case Manager – High Risk Team):** *"Like, tell me what to do. I'm not saying I want a medical model, but I go to the Dr with a broken leg they'll put a cast on it and tell me not to put weight on it. I've got a young person who can't sit in a classroom for more than 30 minutes. What do I do? You know, give me an answer."*

Finally, whilst relationships with young people and other professionals were perceived as a strength, the view was also expressed that relationships with others could be improved. The majority of references to the need for improved relationships related to the need for better partnership working with parents and carers to meet the needs of their young people. This, like many of the needs

identified within this data, is an area in which an EP may be well-positioned to provide support.

4.2.2 Case record analysis

Of the 99 young people known to the YOS on 02.02.16, 19 (19%) had been previously known to the EPS. All of these young people were male. Figures 4.2-4.5 illustrate basic data relating to the cohort.

It is of note that of the 19 young people in this sample, the highest number, 7, (37%) were not in any education, training or employment at the time the YOS assessments were completed. All of these young people were post-16, and 4 of the 7 young people had a Statement of SEN or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
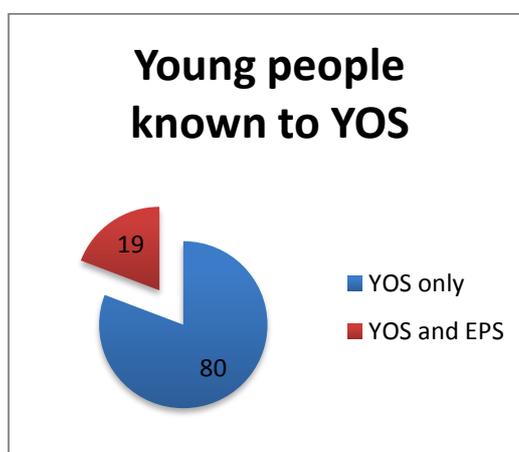
Figure 4.2: Numbers of young people known to YOS and EPS
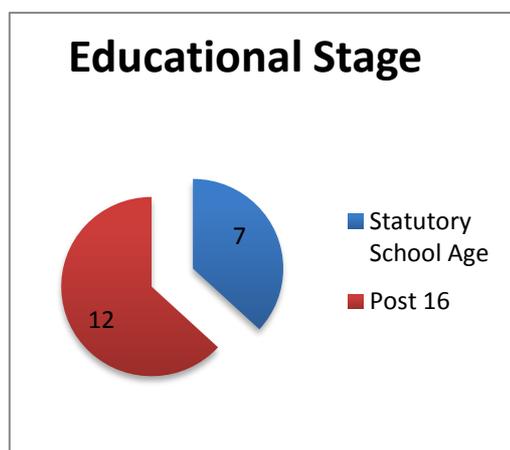
Figure 4.3: Educational stages of sample
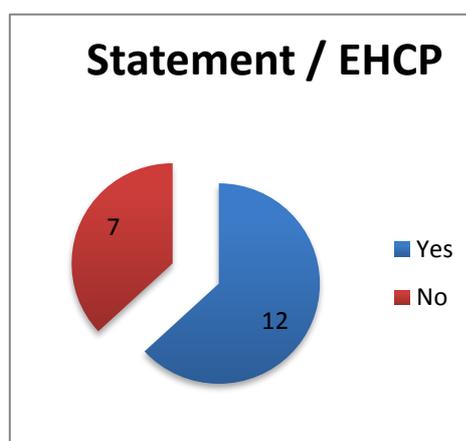
Figure 4.4: Proportion of sample with a statement or EHCP
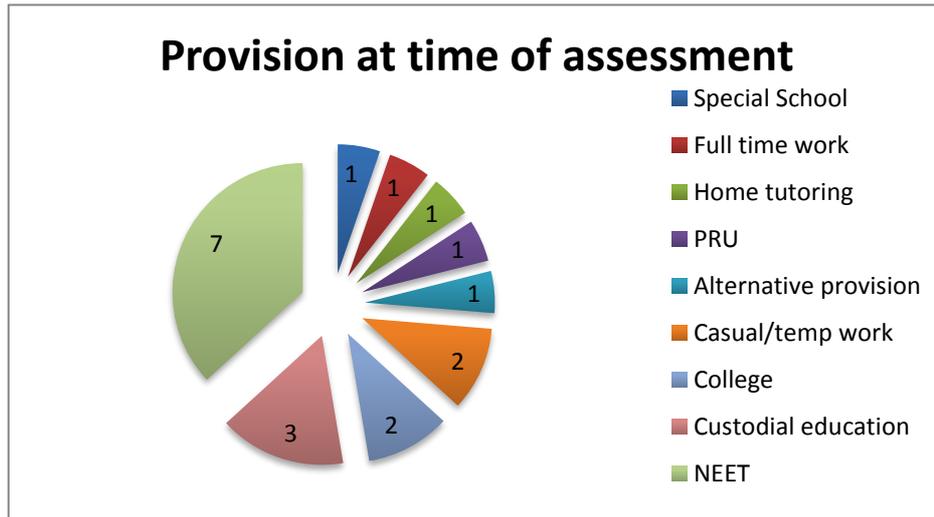
Figure 4.5: Provision attended at the time of YOS assessment, as indicated in ASSET

Figures 4.2-4.5: Basic data in relation to young people known to YOS and EPS.

In terms of consistency of information between the YOS and the EPS, of the 12 young people who had a Statement of SEN or EHCP, this was reflected in their ASSET assessments in 10 (83%) cases. Of the 19 young people known to both services, the YOS assessment reflected that an SEN had been identified in 12 (63%) cases. This means that in the remaining 7 cases, although the young person had been involved with an EP, the YOS assessment did not reflect that they might have educational difficulties.

In 14 cases (74%) either a literacy or numeracy difficulty, or both, were referred to within EPS reports or referral forms. In half of the 14 cases (50%), these difficulties were not reflected in the ASSET, in that the 'literacy difficulties' and 'numeracy difficulties' sections were either checked 'no' or left blank.

None of the ASSETs in the sample referred to a young person having been involved with the EPS, and in particular information-sharing appears to have been lacking when a young person may have an identified educational need, but did not have a Statement of SEN or EHCP.

It was of note that 11 of the 19 young people (58%) were assessed by YOS staff as having 'a negative attitude towards ETE' and that non-attendance was assessed to be a factor in 9 (47%) of the ASSETs.

4.3 What changes can I make? Action steps

4.3.1 The implementation of the self-review framework

The framework appeared to provide a helpful basis for discussion in supporting the team to identify some overarching issues affecting their work. In several areas of YOS practice (for example, the inclusion of education in young peoples' pathway plans, and the extent to which education is a focus in supervision), the participants felt that an indicator may have been met. However, they found that they were unable to evidence this and therefore concluded that an audit of case files, to ensure education was in fact being prioritised by case managers, would be helpful. Other themes identified during the workshops included:

- identifying that there was good attendance at multi-agency panels, however, a lack of clarity as to how the decisions of such panels could feed into the wider work of the YOS;
- issues around recording of data which meant the management team may not have had an accurate understanding of numbers of young people failing to access education;
- a lack of collaborative working with the EPS and a related low level of clarity about the role of EPs;
- a lack of evidence that the views of young people and families were being sought, and were informing the work of the YOS.

Whilst it was not possible, within the timeframe of this project, to evaluate the long-term impact of the self-review process, or of the actions identified in the plan, some examples of verbal feedback provided by the participants about the process of the self-review and action plan development are as follows:

Head of Service: *'[It was] incredibly useful. It's looking at it in a structured and in-depth way that we just wouldn't have found the time for otherwise.'*

Operations Manager: *'And I think that for new managers…, we are a relatively new management team and there's been so much focus on, well, I say obvious things, but things other people have pointed out.*

Education was one thing that had been identified as really improving, so I guess it, kind of, took our, not eyes off the focus - but we were focusing on other priorities, and actually this does show that although we are making huge progress and there's a lot of good work, there's also some little gaps that we do need to work on.'

Assistant Manager (Education): *'I think, for me, thinking about the transitions and partnership work [was helpful].'*

Operations Manager: *'And I like the references as well, because I'm not familiar with half of these, but it's useful. And again, if we're going to make a case to individuals that we need to be doing this, then actually, this is why."*

The timing of the workshops was identified as a potential barrier.

Operations Manager: "*The only thing I would say, and I know it's because we were busy and it was over Christmas, but when we did the first audit I felt like, not that I'd forgotten what we'd done last time. I think […] that if it had been a bit sooner for me I think it might have helped."*

Following the workshops, I considered the importance of a collaborative approach to critical self-inquiry. Given the difficult inspections the participating YOS had recently been subject to, it was important that the practitioners and managers were fully engaged in and committed to the process, to reduce any similarities it may have had to an external inspection. My position as external to the YOS could have impeded the ability of the YOS managers to be open and reflective about their practice. Therefore my repeated attendance at meetings with the managers to discuss and agree the AR process was a key aspect of the process.

I also reflected that, rather than providing a prescriptive and rigid self-review process, the framework appeared to constitute a starting point from which to generate discussion and action. It is for this reason that it was agreed that some indicators were written with a broad focus, so that they may prompt an area for discussion rather than prescribe specific actions.

4.3 Summary and conclusions

The data developed as part of this thesis highlights a range of barriers and facilitators to YOS practitioner's support for ETE, both from their perspective, and implicit within the analysis of case records.

Regarding the analysis of interview data, the range of themes and subordinate themes suggest a range of inter-related systems may influence the education of young offenders, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1969) ecosystemic theory. Characteristics of the young person, such as their age (whether they were school age or post-16), motivation and whether they have learning difficulties were identified. Within the microsystem, characteristics of the YOS, family issues, peers, gangs and care or custodial placements were seen as barriers or facilitators. At a macrosystemic level, issues such as the resources within the LA, the EPS, or presence or otherwise of early intervention services were discussed.

The themes discussed within the preceding chapter were selected because they have implications for practice, and were abstracted to inform the indicators in the self-review framework. For example, YOS practitioners identified difficulties with regard to fractured and problematic information-sharing, and therefore an examination of information-sharing processes was included within the self-review framework. Conclusions drawn from the data analysis also contributed towards indicators within the framework. For example, the suggestion of particular difficulties facing young people aged 16-18 informed the inclusion of an indicator pertaining to careers support for this age group. In this way, it is intended that the data developed may influence practice, both locally, and through the availability of the self-review framework, more widely.

Whilst YOS managers recognised some initial benefits to the review process, it appeared to be important that the review remained a collaborative and supportive endeavour, in which the framework provides a basis for structured discussion and critical self-analysis.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

By taking an AR approach, this study aimed to move beyond seeking participant voices and generating theory, to influence change. The desired change was for the YOS staff to have a clearer understanding of the service's educational strengths and needs, and for this improved understanding to clarify which areas they may develop, and which aspects of EP practice might be helpful in supporting them.

A sample of YOS staff was interviewed to explore their needs and experiences of working to support young people's education, and the interview data was triangulated with a brief analysis of EPS and YOS assessments.

The themes arising from the interviews, information gained from the analysis of case records, and existing research into good practice in the education of young offenders, were then used to develop a self-review framework. The final frameowrk consists of 27 markers of good practice across seven domains, against which the management team of the participating YOS measured itself. Finally, the YOS management team, in collaboration with the researcher, developed an action plan from the completed self-review. The plan included details of where EP support might be helpful. Initial feedback from the participating YOS managers was sought.

The following section considers the outcomes of this project, and how they relate to previous research.

5.2 Analysis of interview data and case records

Many of the themes identified within the interview data are consistent with existing research. A range of barriers and facilitators to young people's educational progress were identified both at the level of the young people themselves, and the systems in which they operate. Stephenson (2006) suggested that there are four inter-related areas of risk in relation to the education of young offenders. It may be argued that some of themes

developed as part of this project relate to the four areas identified by Stephenson:

1) The influence of the school or organisation

In the **exclusions** sub-theme, references were made to the young people known to the YOS having been excluded from mainstream education, in many cases from several different provisions. 'Fixed term' and 'permanent' exclusions were introduced in England by the Education Act (1986), with the caveat that exclusion should only be employed as a 'last resort.' Following the introduction of this legislation, school exclusion increased dramatically in the 1990s (Blyth and Milner, 1996) but following the creation of the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997, there was a decrease. However, this decrease coincided with numbers of pupils being educated in PRUs doubling between 1997 and 2007 (Centre for Social Justice, 2011). Furthermore, the characteristics of those young people being excluded from education have remained consistent over the last decade. Risk factors include SEN, gender, ethnic minority status, socioeconomic status and other social indicators such as living in care (Bagley, 2013). It is no surprise, given the high numbers of excluded young people in the YJ system, that many of these factors also present a risk for offending.

Stephenson (2006) suggests that in an educational context, exclusion is largely taken to mean 'formal disciplinary exclusion from school and focuses on the behaviour of individuals rather than an examination of wider processes that restrict access, participation and progression in mainstream education' (p. 39). That is, it may be argued that the practice of exclusion locates the problem within individual pupils, rather than taking into account structural influences, for example experiences of social disadvantage young people may have faced, which may impact upon their behaviour (Stephenson, 2006). However, it is important to acknowledge that the behaviour of young offenders often provides challenges to those working with them, and that easy solutions to including them in educational settings, whilst minimising the impact their behaviour may have on others, can be elusive.

The participants' descriptions of young offenders who have experienced multiple exclusions, are consistent with the view expressed in Cooper, Sutherland and Roberts' (2008) paper, that education providers may

demonstrate negative attitudes towards young offenders. Specifically, these researchers argued that young offenders may be seen as a 'risk' through the limited potential to successfully complete a given course, and are therefore more likely to be excluded.

The interviewees suggested that young people could be discriminated against, when others become aware of their offending, and this presents a conflict in their work as to how, and indeed whetheand to share information about a young person's conviction(s). However, within the **behaviour** sub-theme, it was acknowledged that this group of young people often present a challenge to those working with them, and exclusion would be seen by some as a legitimate response to the impact such behaviour can have on others.

Participants expressed negative perceptions of some educational provisions in the **provision problems** sub-theme. Problems included the social mix within PRUs, or a lack of structure and organisation within some alternative provisions. The views expressed about the negative influence of peers within PRUs may lend support to the argument that a model based upon the virtual schools for LAC may be helpful for young offenders. The presence of a senior designated person within the LA, with responsibility for the education of all young offenders, who are placed within a range of different provisions rather than together, may be helpful, given the apparent positive impact this has had on the educational outcomes of LAC.

The fact that the transition from primary to secondary school was identified within the interview data as a vulnerable time for pupils in the **loss and change** sub-theme, may further illustrate the iinfluence of the school environment on a young person's behaviour. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) have argued that to support motivation and engagement, schools must provide opportunities for pupils to feel a sense of *relatedness, competence* and *autonomy*. It has further been argued that differences in the primary and secondary school environment may contribute towards an increase in disengagement from learning at secondary school (Eccles et al, 1993), which may, in turn, suggest that secondary schools are less likely than primary schools to meet a pupil's needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy. These issues may, in part, underpin the many descriptions within the data of young people for whom

educational difficulties became apparent early in secondary school, and who had disengaged or been excluded in Year 7. Whilst this may not have implications for YOS practitioners, who rarely work with young people at the age of transition, this does have implications for EPs and schools in supporting this transition.

Overall then, participants described a range of ways in which the educational environment may hinder young people's progress.

2) Low attainment and 3) Detachment from mainstream education

Participants described themselves gathering historical information about a young person's educational experiences, to inform their assessments and intervention planning, in the **gathering and providing information** sub-theme. However, they also described a lack of consistent screening of educational needs, difficulties in obtaining accurate and up-to-date information from ETE providers and other agencies, and therefore using their 'personal opinion' about a young person's engagement to make decisions as to whether the individual may have a 'learning difficulty.' These issues, relating to the identification of needs, are consistent with other studies (YJB, 2004; YJB, 2006).

Given the prevalence of SEN identified within the offending population (eg. Hughes et al, 2012; Loucks, 2007), it is not surprising that interviewees reported that young people may often have **learning problems**, emotional problems such as anxiety (in the **young people as vulnerable** sub-theme), or **communication difficulties,** which had not been identified, or adequately supported. However, it would appear from the perusal of ASSET that even if needs had been identified by an EP in the past, this was not reflected in YOS assessments, due to inconsistencies in information sharing. The lack of information sharing with schools and colleges is likely to be even more problematic where communication with the YOS is poor, as was reported to be the case in some interviews.

Descriptions of young people as having an 'underlying' learning or communication difficulty, appear to be consistent with Stephenson's assertion that explanations for the low of attainment of young offenders often tend to focus upon the young person's characteristics, for example poor attendance or

a negative attitude. This argument is further supported by the data from the ASSET assessments, given 58% of the sample were assessed as having a negative attitude towards ETE, and non-attendance was assessed as a factor in 47% of cases. In fact, the very design of ASSET in including 'negative attitudes towards ETE' and 'evidence of non-attendance' as categories, may be seen as failing to acknowledge the wider structural influences which may impede young offenders' educational progress. It is perhaps for these reasons that on the AssetPlus, which replaced the ASSET in England and Wales in 2016, these categories have been replaced with others, including 'complex history, eg. moves, disruptions, previous exclusions' which appear to acknowledge to some extent, that these factors may not be in the control of the young person.

4) The impact of episodes in custody or care

Within the ***loss and change*** sub-theme, transitions, for example between custody and the community and between care placements, were seen as barriers to young people achieving educational success, as was identified in the case study of an educational project conducted by Hayden (2008). Young people having their social care placements moved to another area, and six of the 29 young people in his study being incarcerated after being accepted onto the project, eroded the potential success of the project in Hayden's study. It would appear from the interview data that nine years on, there is a perception that little has changed in this respect.

Multi-agency practice and the perceived role of the EP and the YOS

Although it has been suggested that often YJ workers are distanced from the importance of education (Ball and Connolly, 2000), the participants in the study identified a key strength of the management team, and in particular the Assistant Manager (Education), in keeping ***education high up on the agenda***. It was felt that ETE was viewed as a priority within their service and that staff were generally engaged in the need to support young people's educational needs.

The 'tenacious' attempts by staff to engage young people in education or training were acknowledged within the recent YOS inspection report (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2016). However, in the ***loss and change*** sub-

theme, it was revealed that the Assistant Manager (Education) no longer has responsibility for education alone, having recently been given a range of other responsibilities. This is consistent with other research (YJB, 2004) which concluded that education lead staff are more likely than other specialists to be asked to undertake other tasks, unrelated to their area of specialism.

Relationships with others were seen as a strength in the work of the YOS. Many examples of perceived positive working relationships, for example with education providers or services, or through multi-agency panels, were offered, and ***access to provision and services*** for young people was also perceived positively. Within the ***relationships*** sub-theme, it was identified as a particular strength that the Assistant Manager (Education) had developed strong links with education providers. It appears that the concerns raised by Taylor (2016) that the multi-agency structure of YOSs can mean that they operate in a 'silo' and other services withdraw once the YOS are involved, were not apparent within the data. However, the data did suggest that inconsistencies in practice and perhaps a lack of clarity as to who is responsible for particular actions to address a young person's educational needs, may contribute to difficulties such as 'collaborative inertia' (Hughes, 2006) in the multi-agency system.

In the ***clarification of EP*** role sub-theme, the lack of confidence expressed in relation to the role of the EP is consistent with other research in which EPs reported little collaborative working with YOSs (Talbot, 2010). Participants generally reported that they had either no, or very brief, contact with an EP. This was supported by the analysis of YOS ASSET assessments, none of which included a reference to an EP having been involved with a young person, despite the fact that all 19 young people had had contact with an EP.

In the ***role of the EP*** sub-theme, participants perceived the role of the EP to be positioned in relation to individual young people, including identifying or supporting those with diagnostic labels such as dyslexia, and assessment using standardised tests. References were made to EPs working with those in the system around the young person, for example teachers or adults, with a view to reducing any environmental barriers the young person may be facing. Given this perspective, it is logical that it was considered that a helpful role for the EP in supporting the YOS may be to provide *'**expertise', understanding and***

114

advice in relation to a young person's learning needs. Overall, these descriptions are consistent with some aspects of the individual casework undertaken by EPs.

Whilst individual casework does form a significant part of EPs' day-to-day work (Farrell et al., 2006; Ryrie, 2006), since the 1970s there has been an acceptance within the EP profession that facilitating organisational change within schools is vital for EPs (Fox, 2009). This reflects an understanding that schools as organisations make a difference to pupils' development (Eccles et al., 1993; Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). By working at an organisational level, (for example providing staff training, developing policy, supporting the provision of SEN support across schools), EPs aim to affect a far greater number of pupils than they could through individual referrals. However, the perception of EPs as working organisationally was not reflected within the interview data. A need for further clarity about the role of EPs amongst YOS staff was therefore identified within this project.

Despite these issues, the interview data demonstrates that participants understand, in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic terms, that a range of related systems are likely to impact upon the lives of young offenders. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, the mesosystem, or relationships between these different systems, for example between schools and the family, or between the YOS and EPS will have an impact on young peoples' development. It is with this theory in mind that it is hoped that the development of relationships between the EPS and YOS as part of this project will contribute towards change for young people.

Support for SEN

YOS staff perceived differences in the level of support and range of services available to young people who are of statutory school age, compared to those who are post-16. The analysis of case records revealed that the largest proportion of the sample of young people were not in ETE at the time of assessment, and that all of these young people were over statutory school age. The data suggests that, despite the Education Act (2011) requiring young people to remain in education, training or employment until they are 18, there may be barriers in the systems which impede this. Staff considered that there

was less emphasis on the LA to ensure young people over 16 have suitable educational provision, and also fewer sanctions for parents if young people do not attend. For these reasons, the post-16 cohort of young people were perceived by staff as particularly challenging to engage in ETE.

In the *motivation/interest* sub-theme, staff generally acknowledged the importance of young people's motivation in influencing their educational progress. With reference to Skinner and Pitzer's (2012) theory of motivation and engagement, this has implications for the way YOSs can support ETE providers to increase the opportunities young people have for relatedness, competence and autonomy, for example by providing warm and supportive relationships with others, and opportunities to engage with intrinsically interesting academic work or education clearly relevant to young people's occupational objectives.

In terms of Bourdieu's concept of state governance, staff perceived themselves as comprising the 'left hand' of the state, through their concern with the welfare of young people. They suggested it was their role to *advocate and support* young people. Descriptions of *young people as vulnerable* to peer or gang influence, or anxiety are also examples of the 'left handed' role of the YOS.

It may be argued that descriptions staff gave of *monitoring* the attendance of young people in education, are more in line with the 'right hand' hand of the state, representing actions which are done 'to' young people without their consent, and aligning more closely with social control. References to young people receiving multiple *exclusions* also position schools as a component of the 'right hand' of the state. Overall, the tensions YOS staff face in their complex positioning in this regard were evident.

5.3 The practice of self-review in YOSs

This section explores the self-review process during the piloting phase, as well as some suggested strengths and limitations of the resource itself. Areas of potential EP practice which were identified as a result of its completion are also explored.

5.3.1 Themes arising from the piloting of the self-review framework

The framework was developed by harnessing themes identified from interview data, existing literature, and the case analysis. It was then discussed, refined, and completed with a team of YOS managers at two workshops. Feedback from the managers who participated in the workshops suggested it gave an in-depth and structured opportunity to examine their educational practice. Similar positive feedback is reported by the NSPCC in relation to their Safeguarding in Education audit tool (NSPCC, 2014).

The discussions generated by the structured resource appeared to allow the participants to focus on specific aspects of practice. For example, when considering whether all young people's pathway plans contain an educational component, participants identified a lack of oversight by managers to ensure that this was the case. A similar lack of oversight was identified in relation to whether plans are informed by the perspective of young people and their families. Previous research has suggested that even when a thorough assessment of needs is in place, this does not always lead to effective intervention planning (HM Inspectorate of Probation et al, 2011).

Given the emphasis within the SEND codes of practice (DfE, 2014) on ensuring the young person is at the centre of any educational planning, the auditing of case files to explore whether young people's views were consistently sought and reflected in plans, was an agreed action. However, discussion focused on the fact that, as this particular YOS had had several areas of improvement identified through external inspection, creating additional audit processes would not be helpful, and might be perceived negatively by staff. Therefore, the introduction of an educational element into existing auditing processes was agreed.

Other areas of practice highlighted within the workshops included the function and purpose of supervision. Whilst supervision was taking place within the YOS, the level to which education was a focus, and whether adequate space was provided for reflection, was less clear. This is consistent with Taylor's (2014) finding that supervision in the YOS can focus on process and task completion rather than providing a reflective space.

Consistent with prior research (Hayden, 2008; YJB, 2007), and with the interview data, transitions were identified during the workshops as presenting a particular challenge. Specifically, discussion focussed on the transition from custody to the community for LAC, for whom an address in the community is often secured very late. This impedes the ability of the YOS to ensure adequate planning prior to release, as they do not have information as to where the young person will live. Given the vulnerability of this group, the established gap between the attainment of LAC and their peers (DfE, 2014a) and the governmental drive to reduce this gap and raise attainment (DfE, 2014b) this is concerning. As a response, it was agreed that a thematic management board to explore transitions would be arranged. Additionally, managers agreed to review their service protocol with children's social care, to include specific timescales for an address to be secured for young people prior to their release from custody.

5.3.2 Implications for EP practice

This research aimed to generate insight into the potential role of the EP in working with a YOS.   The findings suggest that it might be beneficial for the evidence-informed self-review framework and supporting document to be disseminated to YOSs in England and Wales, to enable them to identify their strengths and needs in relation to their educational practice. The process of reviewing YOS's educational practice may be a helpful starting point for EPs commencing work with YOSs, to identify how their time may best be spent.

EPs may wish to complete a similar AR project with their YOS, which would allow interviews with local staff to inform the development of a more individualised self-review framework.   This may be helpful, given the inclusion of the voices of colleagues in influencing the framework and supporting document appeared to facilitate the engagement and understanding of those completing it. However, as the majority of the themes which were used to inform the development of the framework are consistent with existing research, it is likely that there is some degree of consistency amongst YOSs as to the barriers and facilitators to educational practice they face, which suggests the self-review framework developed as part of this project may be helpful in other areas.

Many of the themes arising from the interviews have implications for EPs working with YOSs in future. For example, the perception that young people in the YJ system have often seen *a hundred and one different professionals*, and that this impedes engagement, may suggest that EP input within the YOS system, rather than direct work with individual young people would be most helpful. The conception of *young people as vulnerable* and experiencing anxiety in relation to education, may have implications for EPs in supporting the YOS to work with young people therapeutically in relation to anxiety to overcome this barrier. Many EPs have developed specialisms in therapeutic work, for example therapeutic play, cognitive behavioural or solution-focused approaches.

The suggestion that the attitudes and experiences of parents may be a key barrier to young peoples' educational progress, suggests that EPs may work at the level of the family. This may include eliciting the voices of young people and their families and placing them at the heart of any YOS work. The eliciting of the voices of young people and adults with a range of needs forms a core element of the EP role (Beaver, 2011) and is a key tenet of the recent SEND codes of practice (DfE, 2014).

It may be argued that, given the recognition within the interviews that families have often had negative educational experiences themselves, EPs, with their knowledge of school systems, are well placed to support home/school relationships. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that engaging parents in education positively influences pupil achievement and attainment (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003), and behaviour (Harris and Goodall, 2007). Evidence suggests that engagement of parents in *learning* at school and at home, rather than in general school activities, is important (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2004). This may involve the delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes or developing parents' capacity to engage with the learning of their children, through the development of flexible and supportive communication systems with parents. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic theory, such relationships are as important for young people's development as the direct learning environment they are placed within.

The lack of knowledge expressed by YOS staff in relation to the role of the EP and their conceptualisation of learning difficulties as being located within individual young people, suggests a need for EPs to provide training to YOS staff in relation to their role. The lack of information sharing between the YOS and EPS, identified within the case data analysis, suggests it may be helpful to introduce a system for the EPS to provide information to the YOS regarding previous assessment of young people known to them.

Workshop discussions supported previous research, which suggested that there is little consistent screening of educational needs in YOSs, and that decisions to refer a young person to the education worker were made on a case-by-case basis (YJB, 2004). However, YOS managers expressed that they felt that this approach was, in fact, appropriate, in cases where no previous formal assessment of a young person's needs was available through other agencies. In this circumstance, it was felt that it is preferable to allow time to build rapport with a young person, and use their professional judgement as to whether a young person may need additional assessment, than to consistently screen young people for educational needs. This is because it was perceived that the completion of a multitude of screening tools at the outset of working with a young person may be prohibitive to engagement, and unlikely to yield helpful results before relationships have been developed. Given it has been suggested that relationships are significant in supporting desistance from crime (McNeil, 2006; Rex, 1999) the acceptance that time is needed to develop relationships, and therefore to elicit meaningful information from young people, appears to be reasonable.

However, given the interviews, as well as previous research (Hughes et al, 2012) have exposed difficulties with the identification of, and therefore support for, young people's educational needs, there remains a need for assessment in some cases. The timing of this for individual young people, as well as the ways in which young people are engaged in the process, require careful consideration. One area in which individual assessment may be particularly helpful, given the difficulties identified relating to the transition from custody to the community, particularly in relation to LAC, is for incarcerated young people. Direct assessment with an EP at this time may facilitate an appropriate educational placement, and understanding of needs prior to release.

A helpful role for an EP working with a YOS may be in providing training to staff to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the types of SEND which are prevalent amongst young offenders. Previous research has suggested that only around half of YOS staff surveyed had received training to help identify which young people may have difficulties (Talbot, 2010). A training approach would be consistent with the YJB's Workforce Development Strategy (2015), which highlights the need for training and support to 'be more effective in preventing offending, safeguarding and protecting the public (p. 3). Such training was included within the action plan as part of this project.

As research has suggested there is a lack of reflective supervision in the YJ field, the provision of such supervision by EPs may be an additional potential role.

As well as implications for the practice of EPs working alongside YOSs, these findings have implications for EPs more widely.

For example, descriptions of young people's educational difficulties becoming apparent shortly after the transition from primary to secondary school lends support to the view that EPs may play a vital role in supporting effective primary-secondary transitions. One study by Evangelou, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons and Siraj-Blatchford (2008) identified five aspects of a successful transition:

- Developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence;
- Having settled so well into school life that they caused no concerns to their parents;
- Showing an increasing interest in school and school work;
- Getting used to their new routines and school organisation;
- Experiencing curriculum continuity.

<div align="center">p.2</div>

It is likely that young people who go on to offend, many of whom are from deprived backgrounds, may have difficulty achieving these outcomes. This view is supported by the fact that in Evangelou et al's (2008) study, 72% of pupils surveyed from low socioeconomic status (SES) homes did not get used to new

routines with great ease, and 58% did not did not settle very well. This was compared to 50% and 39% of children defined as being from high SES backgrounds. EPs could intervene in any of the five areas mentioned above, either at individual or whole school levels, to increase the likelihood of successful transition for vulnerable children.

The data from this study would suggest that post-16 education is another key area for EPs to intervene, especially given the extension of the remit of EPs from 0-19 to 0-25 is relatively new (DfE, 2014). It has been suggested that examples of EPs applying psychology in post-16 settings are relatively small in number (Arnold and Baker, 2012). The ASSET data in this project suggested that all of the young people recorded as not in education, training or employment (NEET) were post-16, and it may be argued that this vulnerable group should be prioritised by EPs in their practice. Evidence suggests that, as well as a lack of qualifications and poor employment prospects, NEET young people are more likely to experience poor mental health, drug use, commit crime and have a shorter life expectancy than those entering ETE after age 16 (Arnold and Baker, 2012). Arnold and Baker assert that young people can be screened to assess the risk they will become NEET, and then offered careers support as a preventative measure.   It has further been suggested that, as intergenerational factors are a strong influence on NEET status, intervening to increase positive parenting, address family breakdown and raise aspirations may be helpful starting places to reduce the risk of young people becoming NEET (Pemberton, 2008).

Therefore, this project has yielded a number of ways EPs could intervene, both with young offenders and other vulnerable groups, to improve educational outcomes.

5.3.3 Strengths and limitations of the evidence-informed self-review framework

It appeared to be helpful in the piloting of the self-review framework, that many of the items were developed from interviews with staff from the participating YOS. The inclusion of quotes from staff within the supporting document, allowed the managers to hear the voices of their colleagues, which appeared to

support their engagement with the process and facilitate the perceived relevance of the items being discussed.

The design and piloting of the framework aimed to take into account previous findings as to the effective dissemination of research to inform practice, and meets the criteria identified by Hurry and Vorhaus (2012):

- Dissemination alone is not widely effective in promoting uptake by practitioners.
- Dissemination can help increase awareness and knowledge.
- Research is more likely to be used if tailored to a targeted audience.
- Dissemination which includes discussion of findings between researchers and users is more likely to be effective

<div align="right">p.7</div>

Consideration was also given to Nutley et al's summary of effective dissemination of research, for example in developing a resource which aimed to be user-friendly and attractive, and by discussing these characteristics with the participants for whom it is intended to be used.

A limitation of the self-review framework was its length. It took two workshops, approximately 4.5 hours in total, to discuss and complete the process, which may be prohibitive for some time-poor services, who have competing priorities. Some services may wish to commit to complete a part of the document in a particular timeframe. It was vital to include a review date following the initial self-review and action planning phase, to increase the chance the actions identified would be completed, and to provide an opportunity to problem-solve if this was not the case.

Overall, whilst it was not within the scope of this project to evaluate the impact of completing the self-review, the information gathered in the piloting stage is promising in terms of it providing a focus for discussion, and facilitating the identification of strengths and needs in relation to the educational practice of YOSs more widely.

5.4 Limitations of the study

Some of the research drawn upon to inform the development of the self-review framework includes the voices of young offenders. However, the voices of young people and families are not included within this project itself. Their experiences and perspectives in relation to ETE, and how they wish the YOS to support them, would be likely to provide valuable information. Seeking their views to inform practice is also likely to empower this often disempowered group. This is a limitation of this research.

Timescales meant that a full AR cycle was not possible, which means that an evaluation of the self-review framework has not been conducted. At the time of writing, therefore, whilst there are positive initial signs that the process of completing the self-review has been perceived as helpful, the extent to which it will contribute to change remains unknown. It is also possible, as the voices of young people and families are missing from this research, that change may take place at the level of the YOS system, but will not have the desired outcomes for the young people themselves. This is an area which could be addressed in future research.

An additional limitation relates to the analysis of YOS and EPS case files. The aim of the analysis was to provide support, or otherwise, for the interview data. Initially, a more thorough exploration of the characteristics of the young people, as recorded in case records, was intended. However, a lack of consistent recording, for example of educational history and experiences, by both YOS caseworkers and EPs rendered this impossible. This is consistent with other studies, which have found large quantities of missing or inconsistent data in ASSET (O'Carroll, 2016). A related issue was the replacement of ASSET with AssetPlus over the course of this project, which means the issues identified in ASSET assessment may no longer be present, and different recording difficulties may have arisen with the introduction of the new assessment framework. This remains unknown. Finally, the small number of cases with whom both the YOS and EPS had worked (16) is a limitation.

The YJ field is constantly evolving, as demonstrated by the recent review by Taylor, which proposed significant reforms. If these, or other changes, are

implemented, the needs and experiences of those working with young offenders may change significantly, which may mean a framework such as that developed as part of this project would become less relevant or require amendment.

5.4 Areas for future research

It was not within the scope of this study to evaluate the impact of the completion of the self-review and resulting work between the EPS and the YOS. To do so would be a useful next step.

Future research in relation to the use of AssetPlus and the impact the new universal assessment tool has on YOS staff's ability to assess the educational needs of young offenders usefully would also be helpful. The experiences of YOS staff in completing the new assessment may inform future developments of assessment in YJ. Furthermore, given the relatively new legislation relating to the allocation of resources to young people in custody who have an EHCP (HM Government, 2014) further research into effective ways of providing such provision in custody would help to shape practice.

Finally, at the time of the completion of this project, a programme called the 'YJ SEND Bubble' was launched. This was developed by national education charity, Achievement for All, the Association of Youth Offending Team Managers and Manchester Metropolitan University. The programme provides an online training programme in relation young people in the YJ system with SEND (YJB, 2017). Part of the project involves YOSs showcasing innovative and effective multi-agency working with colleagues, and this research project has been included as an example to share nationally (example from the online resource is attached at Appendix 13). The findings and evidence-informed self-review framework will also be disseminated to the local YOS and EPS, and trainee EPs. In this way, it is hoped that the project will have an impact on practice beyond the participating LA.

5.5 Summary and conclusions

Research suggests that intervening to support young offenders to engage with education has a positive impact on offending. It is further suggested that EPs

may have a useful role to play in supporting YOSs to achieve this goal. However, it is suggested that the available research base does not always inform practice, and further that there is a paucity of research as to how EPs may most helpfully work alongside YOSs.

This project aimed to contribute towards overcoming these difficulties, by interviewing YOS staff and analysing case records to explore the challenges and opportunities to youth offender education. The information gained was then used alongside existing research to develop an evidence-informed self-review framework, which allows YOSs to identify their educational strengths and weaknesses. The self-review was completed with the management team of the participating YOS, and an action plan was developed. The following tentative conclusions may be drawn.

Through these activities, this thesis provides an example of an EP working at an organisational level to facilitate a change in educational practice in a YOS. By harnessing the available evidence base to create a self-review framework which will be disseminated to other YOS practitioners, this work aims to support EPs and YOSs in engaging in collaborative critical self-review and thus developing EP and YOS practice beyond the LA which took part in this study.

Further research would be helpful to ascertain the extent to which the self-review process contributes to change over time.

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Page 1

UCL Institute of Education

Educational Psychologists and Youth Offending Teams: Working Together to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Young Offenders

A research project

February 2016-May 2017

Please will you help with my research?

My name is Hannah Parnes. I am a student on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the UCL Institute of Education. Before starting this course, I spent 11 years working for YOTs in the London area.

This leaflet tells you about my research. I hope it will be useful, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

Why is this research being done?

It is well known that young offenders have often had a disjointed and problematic experience of education. Research has suggested that their literacy levels are well below the national average, they are likely to have experienced absenteeism, exclusion, and part-time or limited provision. Whilst YOT's work hard to overcome some of these difficulties and do a great job, barriers exist which means some young people continue to experience failure with regards to education.

Page 2

Part of the role of an Educational Psychologist (EP) is to support young people, families and YOS staff to overcome some of these barriers. I would therefore like to understand some of the challenges faced within your YOS with regards to young people accessing full-time and appropriate education, and also to think about how an EP may be able to support the team.

The project will consist of two main phases: the aim of the first phase is to find out more about the issues and challenges faced by staff in the team, as well as by the young people themselves. The second phase will involve planning and implementing some EP support and reflecting together about whether it was helpful.

Who will be in the project?

Approximately 8-10 YOS staff members who have direct involvement either in case management, or in education.

What will happen during the research?

Each staff member who agrees to take part will attend an interview at the Youth Offending Team offices, which will last approximately 45 minutes. Staff may bring a supporter along to the interview if they wish.

What questions will be asked?

Questions will focus on the successes, issues and challenges you face in your work with regards to the education of your young people, and what might be helpful to you in terms of support.

Page 3

What will happen to you if you take part?

If you agree, I will tape record the interview, and type it up later. I am not looking for right or wrong answers, only for what you really think.

Could there be problems for you if you take part?

I hope you will enjoy talking to me. If you decide at any time you do not wish to take part, we can stop the interview. If you have any problems with the project, please tell me or Karen Majors, Institute of Education, 020 7612 6283.

Will doing the research help you?

I hope you will enjoy helping me. At this stage, the research will collect ideas, which may help your YOT and EP service to work more closely together, as well as other similar teams around the country.

Who will know that you have been in the research?

Myself, and my two supervisors (Karen Majors and Jane Hurry) and your line manager at your Youth Offending Team may know you have taken part. We will not tell anyone else, and all of the notes of the interviews will be kept without your name on. I will not tell your line manager or anyone else what you tell me.

I will keep tapes and notes in a safe place, and will change all the names in my reports – and the name of the Youth Offending Team, so that no one knows who said what.

Do you have to take part?

You decide if you want to take part and, even if you say 'yes', you can drop out at any time or say that you don't want to answer some questions.   Even after you have done the interview, you can change your mind and decide you do not want yours included in the research, as long as you let me know by 1st May 2016.

You can tell me that you will take part by signing the consent form.

Will you know about the research results?

I will send you a short report to the YOT by June 2017 when the research is complete, and will also share some of the ideas as we go along and work together.

Who is funding the research?

This is not funded research, although the Doctor in Educational Psychology is funded by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

The project has been reviewed by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for reading this leaflet.

Hannah Parnes, hannah.parnes.14@ucl.ac.uk 077888138538

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way
London
WC1H 0AL

Consent form

Educational Psychologists and Youth Offending Teams: Working Together to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Young Offenders

February 2016 – May 2017

I have read the information leaflet about the research. ☐ (please tick)

I agree to take part in the research ☐ (please tick)

I agree to the session on 05.12.16 being audio recorded ☐ (please tick)

Name _____

Signed _____   date _____

Researcher's name _____

Signed _____   date _____

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Preamble: we are going to talk about the young people you work with, with a focus on education. Reason for interview, confidentiality, right to withdraw.

1. Case example:

   a. Please can you tell me about a young person you are working with at the moment who has problems with education?

      i. Can you tell me about their experiences of education before coming into the YOS?

      ii. Can you tell me about their current situation?

      iii. Can you describe what you or the YOS has done to support their education?

2. General processes:

   a. How do you/the YOS assess young people's educational needs?

      i. what is the process of completing ASSET in relation to a yp's educational needs?

      ii. how do you gather information?

   b. How do you/the YOS support young people with education?

      i. tell me about any contact you have with schools/education providers.

   c. What do you see as your role in helping young people with regards to their education?

   d. What is the role of the education lead?

      i. How would you decide whether to refer someone to the education lead?

   e. What are the main barriers to young people doing well in education?

   f. What are the main barriers you face in helping them?

   g. And what are the strengths, or things which help?

h. What is your understanding of the term Special Educational Needs?

i. How might you know, or assess, whether a young person has special educational needs?

3. Local provision:

a. Can you tell me about the types of education provision which are available to your young people?

b. What are your views about them?

c. What is your experience of working with them?

d. Does the YOS run any education activities itself and if so what?

4. Profile of young people:

a. What do you see as the main issues the young people you are working with face with regards to education?

b. What kinds of experiences have they had?

5. Role of EP

a. What do you see as the role of an educational psychologist?

b. Can you describe any contact you might have had with an EP?

c. How do you think an EP might be able to work with you on some of the issues we have discussed?

d. What might help this happen?

e. What might some of the barriers be?

f. If you could change one thing to make everything we have talked about better, what would it be?

g. In a perfect world, what type of support would you like, in terms of multi-agency support for education?

001: Sarah

Comments:

Interviewer:	Ok, so you know that the focus of the interview is generally to, kind of, think about the young people the YOT works with, and in particular with a focus on education.
Sarah:	Yep.
I:	So if we just start by thinking about a particular young person, who you might be working with at the moment, or that you know quite well, can you just generally tell me about them, this particular case?
Sarah:	Ok, so it's a young person who has just come out of custody, having been in for just under 12 months. He is a looked after child from another London borough and he was moved to [our borough] on his release, um, into foster placement, um because there were fears for his safety going back to [borough] where he is originally from. Um, prior to going into custody he was in a mainstream school, however, his attendance and behaviour and attendance started to slip towards…he is now in Year 11…um, so towards the end of year 9 his behaviour and attendance were starting to slip and that's when he started getting involved in gangs and offending behaviour. But nevertheless he wasn't excluded and he remained at mainstream school until going into custody. When in custody he was in a secure children' home, and he did exceptionally well in there. He sat two of his GCSE's, um, and his functional skills level 3, and so, just really excelled in education. A very very motivated young man and very keen to continue with his learning. However, due to one reason or another, when he was released back into [our borough] there wasn't a prompt handover from his home local authority, and we didn't know about him until he'd been here for about 3 weeks. Um, he was also out of education at this point, nothing had been arranged for him. We had to follow the [local authority] protocol of going to a fair access panel and that sort of thing. We didn't have any information from the home YOT to support our applications to [local authority] schools so this all dragged on. The young person during this time was very proactive and he tried to enroll himself at two different colleges. But because of

Comments column:

- Just come out of custody
- LAC moving borough
- Fears for safety
- Attendance problems
- Behaviour problems
- Started getting into gangs
- Did exceptionally well in custody
- Very motivated
- Poor handover from other LA
- Nothing arranged when came out of custody
- Poor handover from other LA
- Very motivated
- Very motivated

his age they said no because he was still Year 11. He also got himself under a Princes Trust programme, you know, all of that. He was doing really, really well. But things were still dragging on. Then, after Christmas we were starting to get a bit of progress in terms of getting him allocated a school, receiving information from where we need it. However, the young person, his motivation, understandably, was…was, kind of, dropping by the day. There were concerns about him smoking cannabis again, mixing with old peers, all of that. So, we worked very, like, very closely with [our local authority] education department and the home local authority where he was from weren't being very helpful. So we put a lot of pressure on [our local authority] and eventually he was accepted by alternative provision and he had two success…he had an interview and then an admissions panel due to the seriousness of his offence. And he started at [name of college] doing a construction course on Monday this week. So, it's been…it sounds a positive outcome, but he is a young person, um, who's spent the whole, um, nearly 3 months being out of education. You know, I'm hoping that he will stick to it now that he's got…he's getting up and going somewhere every day is a bit of a shock to the system, and he's finding other pupils in his class very immature.

	Motivation dropping
	Smoking cannabis
	Influence of peer group
	Work closely with education dept
	Poor handover from other LA
	Alternative provision
	Construction course
	Time out of education
	Getting up and going somewhere very day is a shock

I: Ah ok. Just going back a bit, to his experiences of education before he came here, you said he was in mainstream school, but that that was deteriorating a bit, tell me a bit more about his history, if you know it.

Attachment issues

Sarah Um, his history was that he had a lot of attachment issues I believe, from quite a young age, in that his mum died, his biological mum died, and he was brought up by another woman who he calls mum, but who wasn't his real mum. And, dad, he has, um , an on/off relationship with dad, and he started to get into offending when he was about 13 and all of his offences were where he was coerced by older gang members. So, his index offence which he was in custody for was

Traumatic experiences

Inconsistent family relationships

Gang involvement

001: Sarah

Interviewer:	Ok, so you know that the focus of the interview is generally to, kind of, think about the young people the YOT works with, and in particular with a focus on education.		
Sarah:			
I:	Yep.		
Sarah:	So if we just start by thinking about a particular young person, who you might be working with at the moment, or that you know quite well, can you just generally tell me about them, this particular case?		

Ok, so it's a young person who has just come out of custody, having been in for just under 12 months. He is a looked after child from another London borough and he was moved to [our borough] on his release, um, into foster placement, um because there were fears for his safety going back to [borough] where he is originally from. Um, prior to going into custody he was in a mainstream school, however, his attendance and behaviour and attendance started to slip towards…he is now in Year 11…um, so towards the end of year 9 his behaviour and attendance were starting to slip and that's when he started getting involved in gangs and offending behaviour. But nevertheless he wasn't excluded and he remained at mainstream school until going into custody. When in custody he was in a secure children' home, and he did exceptionally well in there.

Code	Theme
Just come out of custody	**TRANSITION/ CUSTODY**
LAC moving borough	**TRANSITION/AREAS**
Fears for safety	**VULNERABLE**
Attendance problems	**ATTENDANCE**
Behaviour problems	**BEHAVIOUR**
Started getting into gangs	**GANGS**
Did exceptionally well in custody	

I:

Sarah   He sat two of his GCSE's, um, and his functional skills level 3, and so, just really excelled in education. A very very motivated young man and very keen to continue with his learning. However, due to one reason or another, when he was released back into [our borough] there wasn't a prompt handover from his home local authority, and we didn't know about him until he'd been here for about 3 weeks. Um, he was also out of education at this point, nothing had been arranged for him. We had to follow the [local authority] protocol of going to a fair access panel and that sort of thing. We didn't have any information from the home YOT to support our applications to [local authority] schools so this all dragged on. The young person during this time was very proactive and he tried to enroll himself at two different colleges. But because of his age they said no because he was still Year 11. He also got himself under a Princes Trust programme, you know, all of that. He was doing really, really well. But things were still dragging on. Then, after Christmas we were starting to get a bit of progress in terms of getting him allocated a school, receiving information from where we need it. However, the young person, his motivation, understandably, was…was, kind of, dropping by the day. There were concerns about him smoking cannabis again, mixing with old peers, all of that. So, we worked very, like, very closely with [our local authority] education department and the home local authority where he

Annotation	Category
Very motivated	MOTIVATION
Poor handover from other LA	TRANSITION/ CUSTODY INFO PROBLEMS
Nothing arranged when came out of custody	TRANSITION/ CUSTODY
Poor handover from other LA	INFO PROBLEMS
Very motivated	MOTIVATION
Very motivated	MOTIVATION
Motivation dropping	MOTIVATION
Smoking cannabis	DRUG USE
Influence of peer group	PEERS
Work closely with education dept	WORKING TOGETHER
Poor handover from other LA	WORKING TOGETHER

was from weren't being very helpful. So we put a lot of pressure on [our local authority] and eventually he was accepted by alternative provision and he had two success…he had an interview and then an admissions panel due to the seriousness of his offence. And he started at [name of college] doing a construction course on Monday this week. So, it's been…it sounds a positive outcome, but he is a young person, um, who's spent the whole, um, nearly 3 months being out of education. You know, I'm hoping that he will stick to it now that he's got…he's getting up and going somewhere every day is a bit of a shock to the system, and he's finding other pupils in his class very immature.

Ah ok. Just going back a bit, to his experiences of education before he came here, you said he was in mainstream school, but that that was deteriorating a bit, tell me a bit more about his history, if you know it.

Um, his history was that he had a lot of attachment issues I believe, from quite a young age, in that his mum died, his biological mum died, and he was brought up by another woman who he calls mum, but who wasn't his real mum. And, dad, he has, um , an on/off relationship with dad, and he started to get into offending when he was about 13 and all of his offences were where he was coerced by older gang members. So, his index offence which he was in custody for was

Annotations	Themes
Alternative provision	
Construction course	
Time out of education	PROBLEMS FOR A LONG TIME
Getting up and going somewhere very day is a shock	NEW ROUTINES
Attachment issues	FAMILY PROBLEMS
Traumatic experiences	
Inconsistent family relationships	FAMILY PROBLEMS
Gang involvement	GANGS

150

APPENDIX 6: THEMATIC MAP BEFORE MODIFICATION

Coding frame diagram
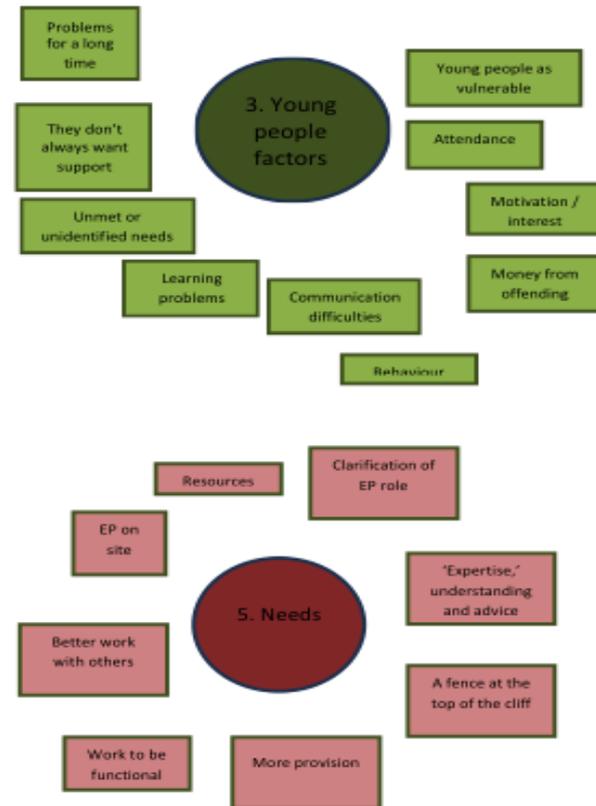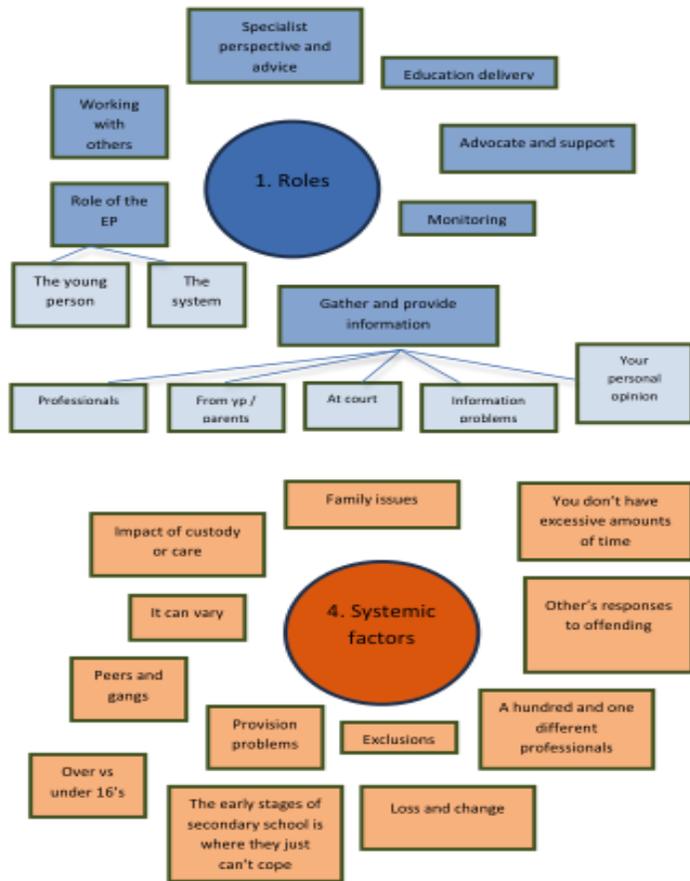
APPENDIX 7: EXTRACT FROM FINAL CODING FRAME

Theme	Sub theme	Description of sub-theme	Examples
3. Young people factors Descriptions of factors which were perceived as impacting positively or negatively upon individual young people's progress in education.	Young people as vulnerable	Perceptions of young people in the YJ system as vulnerable, for example to anxiety about school or having fears for their safety in moving around their local area.	**Sarah**: there were fears for his safety going back to [borough] where he is originally from. **Sarah**: But when you peel it back and look into it, he was told he had to carry it, or…and there were death threats made, and…all sorts, threats against his family, his house, that sort of thing. So he felt he didn't have a choice but to carry it. **Sarah**: he's new here he's quite vulnerable…to put him in that situation, **Sarah**: …such as reduced timetables to get them back in…starting later, leaving earlier if they have anxiety around walking to and from school because of the location, that sort of thing **Sarah**: And then it's a vicious circle because they've missed out on education so academically they're behind, they then get anxiety about being behind, **Sarah**: And a lot of the time it's not their fault, it's their learning needs, it's their anxieties,…gang issues affect a huge proportion of young people in [LA]. So being in a big school has…walking to and from…it does have its problems for them and they are genuinely scared sometime. **Sarah**: they're seen as on a par with looked after children in terms of vulnerability, which I think is really really important because they are very vulnerable young people **Sarah**: is it because there's more deep rooted issues whether it's anxiety, fear of failing, um, you know, learning, just anything like that. **Sarah**: Because he has not accessed education in so long, and he's very vulnerable. His mental state is very very concerning. **Sarah**: he has such anxiety around it that even a couple of weeks ago his caseworker tried to get a careers advisor to go to his house and meet with him. He got so anxious about that prospect that he actually punched his way through a glass door and ran away. Um, because he was just…the thought of anything to do with education was so overwhelming for him. **Anna**: I think there's, obviously for some it's sort of, a fear, I think, that's, kind of, expressed, maybe, in inappropriate ways, for some of them. **David**: it could be that where it's located they don't feel safe,

			David: Now that person doesn't feel safe at all, and goes, 'right, I'm not going to school at all. I'm not engaging with nothing at all.
			David: And that specific young person is making his own decisions, but is quite vulnerable because of his needs. But his needs hasn't been identified
			David: an issue is that a lot of kids don't like to leave the borough because it's like I have got to go into someone else's territory and I'm not willing to do that so I'd rather just stick with [name of provision] and then start again when I get into college
			Michelle: And another issue is that, because in local authority there is, like, issues around gangs and things like that, he says he's, like, he doesn't want to leave his area. Which obviously then completely limits where he can go for any, like education, training or anything because he's not willing to go outside his area which is quite small,
			Michelle: then the other issue, like I mentioned before, is that he, he doesn't want to go outside of his area because he doesn't feel that safe or comfortable, so…but we've sort of, we've built that into his plan to try and look at stuff within his area.
			Michelle: a lot of young people can't go to every location we have.
			Michelle: there are a few places that wouldn't be as safe for her.
			Rosie: and then he had a horrendous time when he was in custody because obviously he couldn't understand how or why he'd got there. Um, so there was a lot of self-harm issues. There was a lot…it was a big, big issue. A really big issue with him.
			Kate: he says he has some anxiety about going to school
			Kate: I think he's very nervous about getting things wrong, and being viewed as, like, not capable. And being, like, having a label, almost, as well. So I think he feels safer sometimes by himself, which is why he likes to be out of the classroom.
			Kate: my young man, he's got anxiety about going to school.
			Belinda: he said he couldn't go there because of, um, he was concerned about his safety. So again more and more we're having problems of where youngsters, how they access these opportunities because of locations, and regarding their safety concerns, yeah.
			Belinda: I think, because a lot of youngsters now, sadly, or possibly in gangs all that, you know it's caused a lot of problems as to where they go

| | | | and where they go, how they can get there. Yeah, they just live in fear of who they're going to run into. And I think it is, and since coming back to the YOS it is such a major problem, you know. And having to be able to… There are many opportunities but a lot of times they can't access it if they want to because of location. So for example we have, oh I can't remember, there is a bike training just in [name of road] [name of provider]. So many youngsters want to do [name of provider] but they just would not access it because of the location.
Nick: Well, with [LA] a lot of it is…it's not really YOT specific but there's, [LA] is a tiny borough. They can't cross certain streets. So the amount of education provisions within 10, 20, 30 streets is tiny. So once they've, once they've fallen out of that one, we can't place them in other areas in [LA] because they've got problems with other young people. |
| | Unmet or identified needs | The view that young people may have learning or other needs which have not been identified or addressed by others. | **Sarah**: A lot of them undiagnosed and have communication needs…. But also because they've missed out on so much they've slipped through the nets of being assessed for anything, or they're school hoppers who have been at so many different schools, alternative provision, which don't have the resources to necessarily pick up on learning needs.
Anna: he, kind of, had not had any input to receive support for those [speech and language difficulties] previously, and he just…er…just residual errors from when he was young.
Anna: Um, and for some of those young people it might have been identified…unidentified speech and language needs even, because it's quite classic with this population, that they're quite typically more difficult to identify speech and language needs in those young people who also have social, emotional and mental health needs. So I think a long period of, kind of, unmet needs, um, has led to them becoming disaffected.
David: it's just um, low end literacy, numeracy, um but he's never been diag…to my knowledge he's never been diagnosed. So he's just on the periphery, where the teacher's most likely saying 'if you do this, if you push yourself harder, you could increase your grades. Where he feels…says…where he's quite open he says he finds it very difficult. So, I don't know what, you know, other symptoms could be out there.
David: there's another kid that I'm working with and he hasn't been assessed, in the slightest. And you can tell within 10 seconds of meeting |

the kid, that 'you do have some form of learning difficulties.' There's no doubt about it.

David: Um, he hasn't had the opportunity to be assessed yet. I don't know the reason around it, because to my knowledge most of the young people is done within the education itself and if it's not picked up at an early age,

David: And that, and he's a prime example, it just hasn't been picked up. David: Um, well when they're not assessed, you don't really know what you're working with. And that's one of the main things. So, it's all based on assumptions.

David: And that specific young person is making his own decisions, but is quite vulnerable because of his needs. But his needs hasn't been identified

Michelle: He hasn't really had any, like, support with that, especially over the last year just in terms of the fact that he hasn't been in any like education or anything.

Kate: because of his lack of attendance they've struggled to identify whether he's..the fact that he's quite behind is because of the lack of attendance or whether it's because he's got some underlying learning issue.

Kate: So it's only more recently that assessments have started to happen around whether he's had any learning issues.

Kate: still I'm advocating for the fact that he may need some more assessment to look into his learning and, you know, see if there's anything else going on there that hasn't been picked up yet.

Kate: That's down to the fact that he may have some underlying learning needs that haven't yet been fully identified.

Pauline: it's not until they're 14 or 15 and they come to YOT and they might have an assessment with the speech and language therapist that they realize that there's a communication difficulty. But I'm, like, if the parent knew that early on, they could have been taught how to adjust the way they talk to enable that young person to communicate effectively.

Pauline: there are loads of young people that have gone through the system, clearly have educational needs and nothing's been done about it because the professionals around them, who should have taken responsibility for ensuring that something was done, haven't done it.

			Pauline: I've seen children who they've said have behavioural problems. And it's not behavioural problems, they've had eating disorders, which…do you see what I'm saying? **Nick**: He hasn't engaged enough for anyone to do an assessment of his needs.
	Attendance	The identification of attendance problems as a factor impeding progress in education.	**Sarah**: his attendance and behaviour and attendance started to slip towards…he is now in Year 11…um, so towards the end of year 9 his behaviour and attendance were starting to slip **Sarah**: it sounds a positive outcome, but he is a young person, um, who's spent the whole, um, nearly 3 months being out of education. **Sarah**: Um, his attendance got very low **Sarah**: it has been an awfully long time that he's been out of mainstream education. **Sarah**: Um, he's only been known to us for about 3 or 4 months but he hasn't actually been in school for nearly 3 years. He's now a year 10 student and even prior to that his attendance was never above 80%, even through primary school…Um, he, well, sort of every excuse under the sun to not go to school. **Sarah**: It's not going very well. He's only attended 2 out of the 14 or 15 sessions offered to him. Um, however, it's 2 more sessions than he's done in the whole 3 years. Sarah: So, when it gets to the point where they come to us and their non-attendance…attendance is the biggest issue we have in [local authority]. **Sarah**: about 80% if not more, 90% possibly, are persistent absentees. So not attending more than 90% of the time at school. **Sarah**: It's attendance, is our biggest, biggest problem. And I think by the time they get to us they haven't been attending for some time Sarah: And I know it's not all to do with attendance, but that's the main goal, is to get young people engaging and attending education, for us anyway. **Sarah**: is a young person who again hasn't been in school for a long time, pretty much since he was permanently excluded in year 7 or year 8. **Sarah**: Sarah: And then it's a vicious circle because they've missed out on education so academically they're behind, they then get anxiety about being behind,

			David: he just stopped going because he doesn't like it., at all, he finds it very boring and that's it. He doesn't say what he doesn't like, he just says he finds it boring. **Michelle**: I think the last year when he would have been in, like, year 11 he is, like, attendance just dropped right down. So he wasn't really going in **Michelle**: I think when you're working the older end of the young people, like, 16, 17 if they haven't…I think if they haven't been in education for, you know, a year or longer, even if, even shorter as well. So even if they've been in education but just not going in, or really doing anything…getting anything out of it, I think that's quite difficult to then try and reengage them into, **Rosie**: He just wouldn't go. And then every single provision we tried since, just, he totally withdrew. Wouldn't engage. He'd say he'd go, he'd turn up, half an hour after arriving he'd disappear. We wouldn't be able to track him down. He was a constant battle **Kate**: I've got a young man who's 15, his attendance is currently 54% **Kate**: because of his lack of attendance they've struggled to identify whether he's..the fact that he's quite behind is because of the lack of attendance or whether it's because he's got some underlying learning issue. **Belinda**: also, as well, we've got the, some youngsters who drop out early. So they miss things like careers fairs, they miss things like, I don't know, you know, even before you choose your work experience or volunteering opportunities, they missed that advice on the importance that probably placed on future [inaudible]. Also they miss things like, um, they just miss quite a lot of opportunities to do company visits or that sort of thing. **Pauline**: 3 of the children attend school and one hasn't attended school regularly from primary, like, actually pre-school. **Nick**: Two placements, one in [neighbouring area], the latter one in [neighbouring area] and um he hasn't attended since September. So he's been, his attendance is about 8%. **Nick**: And he's got an 8% attendance.

APPENDIX 8: FINAL COMPLETED YOS SELF-REVIEW FRAMEWORK

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
PART 1: Good leadership and management of education				
1.	The management team and/or education lead practitioner ensure education is kept high on the agenda within the YOS. Education is included within the YOS's strategic annual plan.	**Interviews** (Education high up on the agenda sub-theme) **Ball and Connolly (2000):** YJ workers were often distanced from the importance of education	GREEN	• The strategic plan for next year will be developed in January and will include an education element. • The management team are considering the introduction of a local target of ensuring all young people are engaged in education for 25 hours per week, and reviewing every 3 months. • Currently education is kept on the agenda through Education Lead and post-16 careers advisors raising issues at team meetings, and under AOB in management meetings. • Discussed whether education should be a standing item on management board or management team meeting minutes – currently issues. • Discussed the idea of performance data, which has previously been submitted to the board, being discussed in a management meeting. **Current evidence:** team meeting minutes, strategic annual plan.
2.	The education of individual young people is regularly discussed and reflected upon in line management supervision.	**Taylor (2014):** There is a lack of reflective supervision in YJ	AMBER	• 'Stat Wednesdays' have been introduced to reduce monitoring of tasks being such a focus of supervision. • Supervision policy has recently been revised, but doesn't specifically include discussions around education – but this would be incorporated in case discussions with focus on strengths and needs. • The Forensic Psychologist manages case practice discussions, which are reflective. **Current evidence:** supervision notes, case practice discussion notes.
3.	A written protocol is in place for partnership working between the YOS and education partners such as the Educational Psychology Service, and reviewed annually.	**Jamieson (2006):** trainee EPs experienced tension with differing timescales, expectations etc of service **YJB (2006):** Agreed protocols between agencies are often absent or ineffective and may not be followed. **Case perusal** – suggested a lack of partnership working	AMBER	• An SLA exists between YOS and SALT. However, is it accessible to everyone? No protocol or SLA exists between YOS and EPS or education providers in custody. • Line management of health staff is worthy of further exploration as they are currently line managed by TYS, and TYS and YOS could be more integrated. • Protocols could be developed with education providers (in custody and the community) and other organisations coming on board, such as Leap. **Current evidence:** SLA between YOS and SALT.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
PART 2: High quality assessment and identification of needs				
4.	Within the first six weeks of an Order, the YOS has a clear assessment of each young person's educational needs in place, which is reviewed 3 monthly, or when there is a significant change in a young person's circumstances.	**Interviews:** (unmet or unidentified needs theme) **Loucks (2007):** 20-30% of adult prisoners has a learning disability or similar impairment **Stephenson (2006):** Assets indicate that YOS staff often under-estimate how far behind YPs may be in relation to peers. **Interviews** (a fence at the top of a cliff sub-theme) – need for early identification and intervention **Talbot (2010):** YOT staff reported they would find this helpful **YJB (2006):** lack of support and specialist help for young people with SEN **O'Carroll (2016):** incomplete data on ASSET **Interviews:** (you don't' have excessive amounts of time sub-theme) **Interviews:** (learning problems sub-theme)	GREEN	• Systems are in place to identify needs if they are already known, particularly if there is an EHCP or diagnosis. For example: -Liaison and diversion nurse in police custody will check needs. - The Education Lead checks education database for each new case. - Young people are screened using tools designed to identify SL&C and social communication needs at PSR stage or within 15 working days of sentence. - If caseworkers have concerned, case will be discussed at YOS Education Panel. • If needs have not been identified, staff feel time is needed to get to know the young person before assessing whether there might be a learning need, therefore rated as green. **Current evidence:** case notes on Childview, highlighting checks made.
5.	To inform assessment, current and historical information about each young person is sought from the LA education dept, relevant education providers and the Educational Psychology Service at the beginning of an order.	**Interviews** (Gather and provide information sub-theme) **Case perusal** - suggestion information not sought from EPS **YJB (2006):** YOSs often receive poor information about the educational situation of YPs hampering effective assessment of need	AMBER	• The Education Lead has a system for gathering information from education providers for school age yps. • This is less well-established for yps in alt. provision (often out of borough) or post-16 education. • Discussion around what is done with that information even if it is identified. • If EPs have been involved but yp doesn't have a plan, or assessments have taken place in custody or out of borough YOS, may not know. **Current evidence:** Education information forms on shared drive, case notes on Childview.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
6.	Detailed educational information is provided to courts within pre-sentence reports. This includes information from a range of sources, as detailed above, and is based on strengths as well as needs.	**Ball and Connolly (2000):** Educational information in PSRs was often sparse and uninformative. **Interviews** (Gather and provide information sub-theme)	*(amber/yellow)*	• Information such as name of provision, attendance levels, etc. is routinely included in reports. • However, there is a drive to focus more on the potential and aspirations of the yp and to make them less deficit-based. • Managers haven't reviewed PSRs enough recently to ensure focus is strength focused. However, those that have been QAd were promising. • Is there clarity about what is a baseline level of information to provide in a PSR? **Current evidence:** PSRs, feedback forms from magistrates.
PART 3: Delivery of and access to appropriate education provision				
7.	Pathway plans are in place for each young person, and include an education element where appropriate. They explain how YOS intervention may be tailored to meet individual needs and include the views and interests of the young person.	**Ministry of Justice (2013):** Importance of interventions being matched to risks and needs. **HMI Probation et al (2011):** thorough assessments, but didn't always lead to correct intervention planning. **Interviews:** Motivation / interest sub-theme)	*(amber/yellow)*	• Education requirements are included in every RO contract. • It is less clear whether it is routinely included in every Pathway Plan for YROs, although initial signs are good. • The extent to which young people's views and interests are at the heart of their plans is an area for development. • There was a discussion around the use of AMBIT cards or other methods of engaging young people in planning. **Current evidence:** Pathway plans, RO contracts.
8.	The YOS provides appropriate targeted, ongoing careers advice to young people who are post-16, which is incorporated into Pathway Plans and reviewed 3-monthly.	**Interviews** (it can vary sub-theme) **Stephenson (2006):** careers guidance has been a major weakness in YPs accessing vocational education.	*(amber/yellow)*	• There are two pathways for post 16-yp's careers advisor = more educational, seconded New Horizons worker = more vocational/flexible. • The Education Lead manager decides which route young people may be referred to, depending on their needs. • To what extent the specialists plan with yps in line with their interests and needs, and clearly feed into Pathway plans, is unknown. • Education Lead manager is provided with data on NEET young people so she can follow up – but is data on Childview accurate? **Current evidence:** Pathway Plans, case notes of appts with specialists.
9.	YOS staff support and advocate for young people in education with the aim of reducing the risk of disengagement or exclusion.	**Interviews** (advocate and support sub-theme) **HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2013):** 9 out of 10 young people in custody had been excluded. **Interviews:** (exclusions sub-theme)	*(green)*	• YOS staff advocate for yps at the YOS Education Panel, which is a management level panel. • Staff routinely meet young people at education placements, and are aware they can escalate to the Education Lead manager if they have any concerns. **Current evidence:** case notes on Childview, YOS education panel minutes.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
10.	Whilst taking into account individual need, where appropriate, the YOS prioritises access to educational programmes which develop numeracy, literacy in practical ways, and employable skills rather than focusing on internal states such as self-esteem.	**Lipsey (1995)** – improvements in academic performance were related to a reduction in offending. **YJB (2006)** **Stephenson (2006)** **Interviews:** (provision problems sub-theme) **Interviews:** (access to provision and services sub-theme)		• ISS sessional staff incorporate literacy and numeracy into sessions, but is this by appropriately trained staff, and are the activities embedded within practical sessions? • Issue discussed as to whether case workers have knowledge of the full range of provision available. • This is a management level issue in terms of what education provision is commissioned in the borough. **Current evidence:** ISS session plans.
11.	Any education provided within the YOS targets literacy and numeracy and is tailored as much as possible to the interests and goals of the young person.	**YJB (2006):** more effective if tailored to interests of young people **Hurry, Brazier, Wilson and Snapes (2010):** gains in literacy and numeracy can improve reoffending **Brooks (2016)** – evidence based literacy programmes for young people who are offending **Interviews:** (motivation/ interest sub theme) **Interviews:** (Education delivery sub-theme)		• Currently the YOS provides little education directly. • A volunteer teacher provides some homework and exam support. • Discussion around the possible introduction of Rapid English programme for ISS cohort – to be explored. **Current evidence:** Tutor's session plans / case notes

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
PART 4: Well-developed transition and monitoring arrangements				
12.	Effective transition arrangements are in place for all young people moving between education providers, geographical areas, between adult and children's services or between the secure estate and the community.	**Interviews** (loss and change sub-theme) **Stephenson (2006)**: impact of custody and care **Hayden (2008)**: **SEND codes of practice** re. YPs in custody – LA must provide info re. assessments/EHCPs etc to YOT within 5 days of request so that this can be forwarded to secure establishment. **YJB (2007)**: 'transition documents' were a model of good practice during KYPE evaluation. Still a need for better info sharing between custody and YOS **YJB (2006)**: there is a lack of continuity between custody and the community **Eccles et al (1993)**: decline in student engagement during transition to junior high school. **Interviews**: (Working with others sub-theme)	RED	• Issue of speed of placements changing making it difficult to track and ensure educational placements are provided. • Also social care placements being confirmed very late when yps are released from custody is a barrier to this. • YPs movements are tracked at the monthly YOS education panel, which includes social care representative, but is monthly regularly enough? • Reoffending tracking tool is also used. • The YOS / Social Care protocol is being updated, and will include a timescale of 14 days before release for social care to secure placements. • Resettlement meetings take place in custody 3 months prior to release – education pathway is looked at there. But if address isn't confirmed this is a barrier. • Could transitions be a theme at a management board meeting? • New Horizons seconded worker can work outside the borough if someone is educated elsewhere. • Social care are reviewing their accommodation provided and have sought feedback from the YOS, • Temporary release on licence may be introduced nationally, which allows YPs to attend interviews at college, exams, day courses etc. • Movement within the secure estate is also an issue. • Careers advisor and New Horizons worker can support YPs between YP and adult services. But no careers advice through probation. • Transitions may be first theme at Management Board. **Current evidence:** Resettlement planning meeting minutes, YOS education panel minutes.
13.	The YOS regularly monitors the educational progress of the young people though contact with providers.	**Interviews**: (monitoring sub-theme)	GREEN	• Contact is made with providers to inform the monthly YOS education panel, as well as the 3 monthly case reviews. • Is monthly regularly enough? **Current evidence:** Notes from reviews, minutes from YOS education panel.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
14.	The YOS has a clear policy in place for a quick response when a young person ceases attending a provision or becomes NEET., which includes systems for education, training and employment providers to notify them if a placement breaks down or there are attendance difficulties.	**Interviews:** (attendance sub-theme) **Interviews:** (relationships sub-theme)	AMBER	• Discussed the idea of introducing a policy for education providers to notify the YOS if a yp doesn't attend for a week, and what should take place following this. • This may particularly be an issue for post-16 ETE providers who are currently less likely to inform the YOS.
PART 5: Specific help for vulnerable young people				
15.	The YOS delivers or has access to intervention to help young people to manage anxiety in relation to education.	**Interviews:** (young people as vulnerable sub-theme) **Interviews:** (Access to provision and services sub-theme)	GREEN	• YPs can be assessed by the liaison and diversion worker, nurse or Forensic Psychologist if staff have concerns about anxiety. • Case practice discussions, facilitated by the Forensic Psychologist help identify needs. She can also work with individual young people. • New Horizons worker can accompany yps to education to overcome confidence issues, and taster sessions are run there. **Current evidence:** case notes on Childview of staff accompanying yps, notes from case practice discussions, Forensic Psychologist, liaison and diversion worker, or nurse's case notes.
16.	The YOS has strategies in place to challenge the stigma young offenders may experience in the educational environment.	**Interviews:** (others responses to offending sub-theme) **Stephenson (2006):** schools which categorise YPs who behave poorly or have low attendance as deviant are ineffective **Cooper, Sutherland and Roberts (2007):** providers were reported as demonstrating negative attitudes toward the target group	AMBER	• There is anecdotal evidence of case workers influencing education providers not to exclude a yp. • They are aware of need to escalate to Education Lead manager if there is a concern about discrimination. • The service is hoping to introduce RJ interventions for yps prior to exclusion as a means of reducing exclusions. • This is a strength for some individual case managers, but is there consistent practice and evidence that this is happening? **Current evidence:** case records, evidence of presence on multi-agency forums
17.	The YOS has systems in place to support young people with a statement of SEN or EHCP accessing appropriate provision whilst in custody.	**SEND codes of practice (2014)**	GREEN	• It has been agreed the LA will fund additional support in custody. • A protocol is in place to ensure education providers in custody receive copies of EHCPs. But are case managers aware of it? • Whilst issues facing custodial education (eg. management of risk, yps spending 11 hours per day in their cells) are a barrier, this is beyond the remit of the YOS. **Current evidence:** Protocol between custodial establishments and YOS.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
PART 6: Good working relationships with others				
18.	Young people and parents/carers are regularly consulted in relation to education provision.	**SEND codes of practice (2014)** **YJB (2006)**: more effective if tailored to interests of young people **Stephenson (2006):** involvement of parents/carers in YPs education a significant factor in strengthening attachment to school and learning (p. 174) **Interviews:** (Better work with others sub-theme)	AMBER (yellow)	• Currently this happens at the assessment stage, and then through home visits which take place every two months. • YOS can initiate TAF meetings where parents can and young people can express views. • Review meetings take place every 3 months (for high risk/vulnerability and RO's) or 6 months. Are parents/carers consistently invited to reviews? • Do parent/carer and yp's views inform discussion at the YOS education panel? Perhaps this could be formalised. Eg. AssetPlus which include views of family, casenotes of home visits, YOS education panel minute.
19.	The YOS has developed relationships with education, training and employment providers and has systems in place for communicating with them.	**Interviews** (relationships sub-theme) **Cooper, Sutherland and Roberts (2007):** good relationships were identified as key to success in relation to KYPE **O'Carroll (2016) :** fractured relationships with schools theme	GREEN	• Lots of good communication is taking place. • PRU and AP, as well as Head of Admissions/Children out of School, attend the monthly YOS education panel and then disseminate information to schools. • AP's provide weekly updates to the panel. • YOS SALT liaises with PRU SALT and same for YOS Forensic Psychologist and CAMHS. • YOS Education Lead Manager attends the Securing Education Board and has regular communication with schools. **Current evidence:** Case records indicating contact with providers, minutes of securing Education Board and YOS Education Panel.
20.	The YOS supports parents/carers to reduce any barriers they may experience in relation to education.	**Interviews:** (advocate and support sub-theme) **Interviews:** (family issues sub-theme) **Interviews:** (Better work with others sub-theme) **Hayden (2008):** a lack of family support was a barrier to the success of the project	AMBER (yellow)	• If attendance is an issue, there is a family support worker involved with the family who fulfil this role. • Interventions provided by the parenting worker are currently being developed and will include this. **Current evidence:** Parenting worker's case notes.
21.	YOS staff are represented on multi-agency panels in relation to education.	**Interviews** (working with others sub-theme)	GREEN	YOS are represented on YOS education panel, Securing Education Board. **Current evidence:** Minutes of these panels.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
22.	The YOS has a policy in place for the sharing of information, for example to support education providers in managing risk.	**YJ Board (2008):** Highlighted as an element of effective practice. **Interviews:** (others' responses to offending sub-theme)	RED	• There is not currently an education-sharing policy. • Information is shared at the YOS panel and Securing Education Board, however, systems for how schools know a YP is known to the YOS, how risk information is communicated etc. requires further investigation. **Current evidence:** Minutes of above panels.
23.	The YOS has established relationships with the Speech and Language Therapy service to support young people accessing the service.	**Interviews** (Strengths: speech and language provision sub-theme) **Bryan, Freer and Furlong (2007):** 66-90% of young people in custody had below average language skills. **Interviews:** (Communication difficulties sub-theme)	GREEN	• The YOS has a seconded SALT two days a week. • It was felt that her assessments feed into school, but this is worthy of confirming. **Current evidence:** SLA with SALT service, copies of her assessments and materials.
24.	The YOS has established relationships with the Educational Psychology service to support young people accessing the service. YOS staff have direct access to an EP.	**Interviews** (unmet and unidentified needs sub-theme) **Wyton (2013)**	RED	• There is currently no direct contact between EPS and YOS and no link EP for the YOS. • Both YOS and EPS are represented on Securing Education Board, therefore some opportunities for information sharing there. **Current evidence:** copies of SEB minutes.
PART 7: Staff who are skilled and have opportunities for development				
25.	YOS staff have a clear understanding of the role of Educational Psychologists.	**Interviews** (clarification of EP role sub-theme) **Interviews:** (Role of the EP sub-theme) **Ryrie (2006):** 'Most YOT workers had had little or no previous knowledge of the work of an EP and so tended to display a number of commonly occurring misconceptions of the role.'	RED	• Staff interviews suggest this is currently not the case.

	Statement	References	RED AMBER GREEN	How do you know? / Evidence
26.	YOS staff and panel members have received training in relation to the types of Special Educational Needs which commonly affect young offenders.	**Talbot (2010):** only 23% of YOT staff reported there was a member of staff qualified in SEN. **Wyton (2013):** staff had little confidence in this area. **YJB (2004)** 43% of survey responses suggested education workers are unsatisfied with the training provided by the YOS (compared to 67% satisfied) **Interviews:** (Needs - 'expertise, understanding and advice sub-theme)		• A new set of RO Panel Members are currently being recruited. • A training plan for staff is being developed. • SALT has delivered some training on speech and language difficulties, and some other difficulties such as dyspraxia. • Discussed inclusion of educational needs training in staff training plan and panel member training programme – discussion needed as to who will deliver this. **Current evidence:** SALT training materials.
27.	Systems are in place for key education providers to receive training in YJ and how to meet the learning needs of young people who offend.	**YJB (2006):** many staff in secondary and further education lack sufficient knowledge in these areas.		• PRU and AP have been funded by YOS to receive training in Trauma informed Practice. • Possibility discussed of adding section onto this about the role of the YOS. • Discussed need for more structure at a strategic levels for YOS and providers to share practice – for example quarterly meetings between YOS Head of Service and Heads of PRU/AP. **Current evidence:** Training materials and attendance notes.

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APPENDIX 9: EXTRACT FROM SUPPORTING DOCUMENT FOR WORKSHOPS

Supporting information for the YOS education self-review framework

<u>Introduction</u>

Young people in the youth justice system are much more likely than their peers to have poor experiences of education. They may have literacy, numeracy or communication difficulties, or have encountered exclusions or absenteeism. However, research suggests that supporting young people to achieve in education can have a positive impact in their offending behaviour, and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) states that 'engagement in ETE (education, training and employment) may be a key factor in reducing offending and re-offending' (2006). Staff in Youth Offending Services (YOSs) throughout England and Wales work very hard to support these young people to achieve in education, and they have a target that 90% of young offenders are in suitable full-time (25 hours per week) ETE. However, there is little guidance on how YOSs should go about achieving this aim.

With this in mind, the YOS education self-review framework has been designed to allow YOSs to identify their strengths and needs with regards to how they support the education of their young people. The framework is divided into the following seven areas:

Good leadership and management of education

High quality assessment and identification of needs

Delivery of and access to appropriate education provision

Well-developed transition and monitoring arrangements

Specific help for vulnerable young people

Good working relationships with others

Staff who are skilled and have opportunities for development

Across these seven areas, a total of 27 individual markers of good practice have been identified. These items were developed from the research that exists about what may work in the education of young people in the youth

justice system[6]. The framework was also informed by a series of interviews, which were conducted with staff from an Inner London YOS about the strengths and needs they face in their work[7]. Each of the 27 items within the framework is outlined below, with supporting evidence for its inclusion.

PART 1: GOOD LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION

This section highlights which aspects of YOS management are suggested in research in the staff interviews to be good practice.

1. The management team and/or education lead practitioner ensure education is kept high on the agenda within the YOS. Education is included within the YOS's strategic annual plan.

"…and I think education is becoming higher up on the caseworkers' agendas now, in that they're starting to value it more, and see the importance of young people going."

"I think [the YOS has helped my young person by] making [education] a priority, so it's always part of the plan to look at what's happening"

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[6] Examples from research are indicated by a box.
[7] Extracts from staff interviews are illustrated by a speech bubble.

2. The education of individual young people is regularly discussed and reflected upon in line management supervision.

A paper by Taylor (2014) explored content and level of reflection in the supervision of youth offending service practitioners. The findings suggested that whilst supervision was well-embedded, it largely focused on the management function (ie. completing tasks and paperwork) and there was a lack of reflective supervision. The study also raised concerns about the how much impact such a style of supervision may have on practitioners.

3. A written protocol is in place for partnership working between the YOS and education partners such as the Educational Psychology Service, and reviewed annually.

The YJ Board (2006) found in one study that there was a lack of agreed protocols between agencies, or that they were ineffective or may not be followed. This can lead to a lack of clarity with regard to working relationships, and Jamieson (2006) found that trainee Educational Psychologists working with different agencies experienced tension regarding the differing timescales, expectations etc. of the various services. One participant in a study by Talbot (2010) said 'If I had a magic wand, top managers would secure service level agreements for mental health and learning disabilities' (p. 57).

PART 2: HIGH QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

This section considers the evidence regards to ensuring educational needs are identified by the YOS and its partners.

4. Within the first six weeks of an Order, the YOS has a clear assessment of each young person's educational needs in place, which is reviewed regularly

"There's another kid that I'm working with and he hasn't been assessed, in the slightest. And you can tell within 10 seconds of meeting the kid, that 'you do have some form of learning difficulties.' There's no doubt about it."

It was suggested by Loucks (2007) that 20-30% of adult prisoners had a learning disability or similar impairment. However, Stephenson (2006) suggested that ASSETs indicate that staff often under-estimate how far behind young people may be in relation to their peers. In her survey of YOS staff, Talbot (2010) reported that several participants recommended early and better identification of children with difficulties, including screening at the point of arrest, at the start of orders and while children were still at school.

5. To inform assessment, current and historical information about each young person is sought from the LA education dept, relevant education providers and the Educational Psychology Service at the beginning of an order.

"Well, it's really helpful to get those initial, kind of, background, sort of, information, because it just helps to have a sense of how the young person has engaged at school. And if they're at school, you know, how often are they going in, kind of thing."

The YJB concluded in 2006 that YOSs often receive poor information about the education situation of young people, hampering effective assessment of need. Furthermore in a survey of YOS staff by Talbot (2010), some participants said they do not receive information from SEN departments, or that it is often difficult or time-consuming to get.

6. Detailed educational information is provided to courts within pre-sentence reports. This includes information from a range of sources, as above.

Ball and Connolly (2000) analysed PSRs, and concluded that 'educational information…was sparse and often uninformative' and that 'educational situations were couched in terms that could best be described as vague, euphemistic or possibly misleading' (p. 601).

PART 3: DELIVERY OF AND ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE EDUCATION PROVISION

Part 3 relates to the evidence and views of staff in relation to what effective education for young offenders looks like.

7. Pathway plans are in place for each young person and include an education element where appropriate. They explain how YOS intervention may be tailored to meet individual needs, and include the views and interests of the young person.

The Ministry of Justice (2013) discusses the importance of interventions being matched to risks and needs, and cited previous research, which suggested this was not always the case. For example, a study by HMI Probation et. al in 2011 found that thorough assessments 'did not always lead to clear planning and delivery of the right interventions with the right individuals in the right way at the right time (p.3).

8. The YOS provides appropriate targeted, ongoing careers advice to young people who are post-16, which is incorporated into Pathway Plans and reviewed 3-monthly.

"The majority of our post-16's are NEET, so about 50%, um, and so she [the careers advisor] is very very stretched in the amount of support she can provide."

"They tend to be, kind of, 16, like, coming up, so I've been getting young people now who should be sitting their GCSEs this year. So it's the real, real tail end of statutory schooling and then up to 18. And once they're finished with statutory school, forget education. Forget it. There's no duress on them to do it beyond their order. So…and services aren't as, they're not as concerned. That's the truth of it, you know. There aren't the repercussions on services to make sure that people post 16 are in education. So choices are limited."

9. YOS staff support and advocate for young people in education with the aim of reducing the risk of disengagement or exclusion.

"We then accompanied him to his interviews and went to the admissions panel to advocate on his behalf, act as a reference um, and since he's been in college, we are….we're speaking to him…we've seen him once and spoken to him two or three times this week, his first week, just to make sure he's ok and he's settling in."
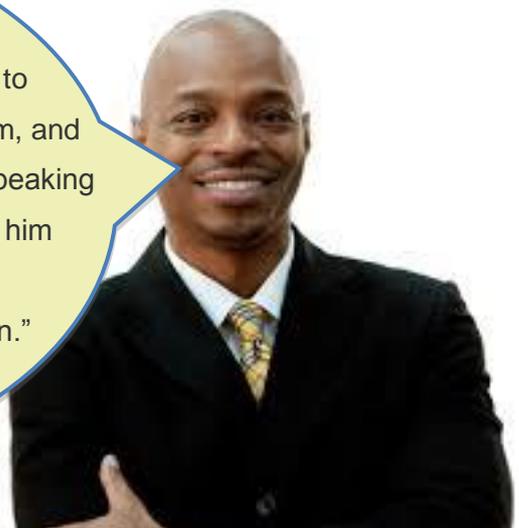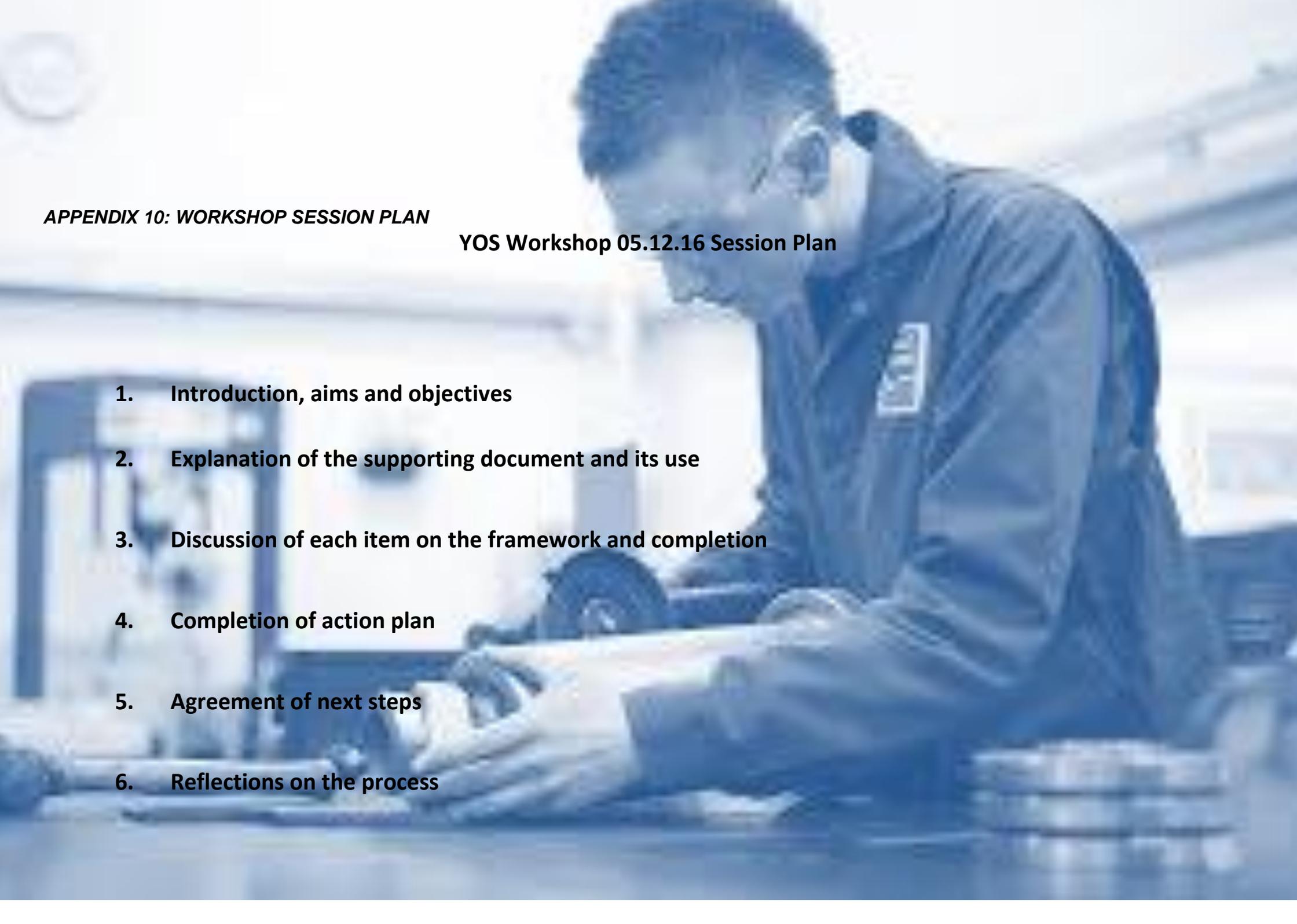
APPENDIX 10: WORKSHOP SESSION PLAN

YOS Workshop 05.12.16 Session Plan

1. **Introduction, aims and objectives**

2. **Explanation of the supporting document and its use**

3. **Discussion of each item on the framework and completion**

4. **Completion of action plan**

5. **Agreement of next steps**

6. **Reflections on the process**
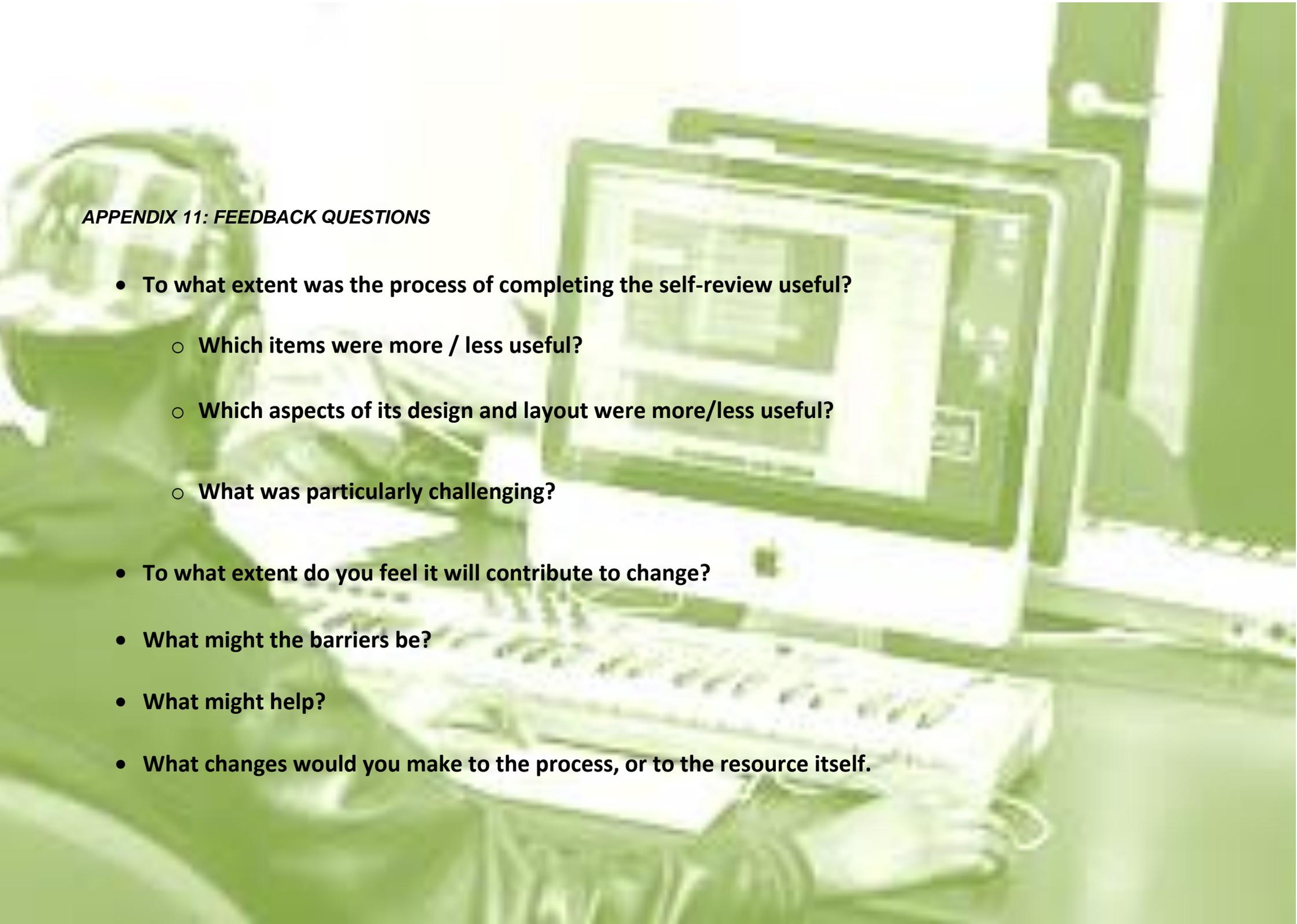
APPENDIX 11: FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

- **To what extent was the process of completing the self-review useful?**

  - **Which items were more / less useful?**

  - **Which aspects of its design and layout were more/less useful?**

  - **What was particularly challenging?**

- **To what extent do you feel it will contribute to change?**

- **What might the barriers be?**

- **What might help?**

- **What changes would you make to the process, or to the resource itself.**

APPENDIX 12: FINAL COMPLETED ACTION PLAN

YOS Education Action Plan Jan 2017 (developed from the YOS Education Self-Review)

No.	Outcome	How achieved	By Whom	By When	Achieved?
1	Parents/carers and young people will have better opportunities to have their say about educational provision and to support existing provision.	Target of home visits every two months will be formalised, communicated to staff and implemented. Ways for the views of parents/carers and yps to feed into the YOS Education Panel will be explored.	-- --	Mid-March Mid-March	
2	A system will be in place to share information (for example about YOS involvement and risk) with schools.	Discuss at a HT meeting. Agree an information-sharing policy.	-- / --	End July	
3	There will be better communication between the YOS and EPS.	YOS will have a link EP to contact with queries (HP initially). This may involve attendance at YOS education panels, attendance at case discussion forums, involvement in joint training session (below), support monitoring the progress of this plan.	--	Approx 5 visits between now and July.	
4	The YOS and EPS will have a better understanding of each other's roles.	A two-way training session will be planned to exchange information.	-- / --	End July.	

| 5 | Panel members and staff will have an understanding of the main SEN which affect young offenders. | A training plan for new panel members will be developed.

This information will be given at induction stage. | -- / -- | End July | |
| 6 | Education providers will have a better understanding of the role of the YOS. | A session on the role of the YOS may be added onto Trauma Informed Practice Training.

Regular meetings between managers of PRU, AP and YOS to be introduced. | -- | End July | |
| 7 | Young people will have opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills. | YOS will explore introduction of Rapid English for ISS cohort.

Greg Books – What Works for Children and Young People with Literacy Difficulties will be consulted for other ideas. | -- | End July | |
| 8 | Some of the barriers to ETE, particularly around transitions, will be reduced. | Reoffending data and transitions will be discussed at the Management Board, with the possible development of a working party or future thematic Management Board. | -- | End July | |
| 9 | ETE will be consistently included, where relevant, in plans. | Education will be added into existing audits. | -- | End July | |

Review date: 02.05.17 at 2pm at YOS offices

APPENDIX 13: EXTRACT FROM YOUTH JUSTICE SEND BUBBLE

DEVELOPING CLOSER LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE AND YOS

Presented here is the account from one of the ████████████████████████████

"A strength of ███████YOS has been joint working, however it was identified that there was little partnership working between the Educational Psychology Service and the YOS. To address this, the Educational Psychology Service and the YOS wanted to ascertain the YOSs strengths and needs with regards to educational practice to inform how educational psychologists could support them.

"Together we co-created an audit tool, which highlights **27 areas of good educational practice for YOSs**. The tool is based on interviews with YOS staff, data from ASSET assessments and educational psychology reports, and existing research into good practice in the education of young offenders.

CLICK ON IMAGE to download copy of audit tool and/or supporting guidance information

"The YOS team, with support from the Educational Psychology Service, completed the audit, and created an action plan from it. The action plan includes ways in which the YOS could improve its practice, including ways in which educational psychologists could better support the team.

"Examples of actions included educational psychologists providing training to YOS staff, and attending reflective case discussions, as well as the YOS introducing regular meetings with key education providers."