EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

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Abstract

Research has shown that in order for inclusion to be successful, the individuals involved in its implementation must be in favour of it. However, professionals within the field do not agree on how inclusion should be defined or implemented in practice. Furthermore, research with EPs, who play a vital role in the education of learners with SEND, shows that although most EPs are pro-inclusion, very few favour 'full inclusion', and preference for placement depends on the type of need a child has. The present study used semi-structured interviews with 4 EPs in England to explore their perceptions of inclusion. The EPs had different ways of decribing inclusion, and recognised that the lack of a clear, unified definition in the legislation may impact negatively on inclusive practice. The EPs also differed in the extent to which they believed it was possible to include children with SEND; only one was in favour of 'full inclusion', while the others perceived there to be cases where mainstream placement might not be suitable for a particular child. When asked about potential barriers to successful inclusion, the EPs identified a range of barriers, including attitudes of schools staff and parents, the views of EPs themselves, the academisation movement, and the individual needs of the child. In order to overcome these barriers, training for both school staff, parents and EPs should be improved to better educate individuals about the aims, philosophy and practice of inclusion. In addition, several EPs recognised the need for changes at a wider societal level, and suggested changes to legislation to achieve this.

Glossary of Abbreviations:

- SEND – Special educational needs and/or disabilities
- SEN – Special educational needs
- EBD – Emotional and behavioural difficulties
- MLD – Moderate learning disabilities
- SLD – Severe learning disabilities
- PMLD – Profound and multiple learning disabilities
- ASD – Autism spectrum disorder
- EP – Educational Psychologist
- LEA – Local Education Authority
- OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education

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Contents

1   Introduction

In this chapter the research is introduced by first putting it into the historical context of special and inclusive education in England. Key terms relating to the field of inclusive education are defined and discussed. An outline of the present study is given, including the research aims. Finally, the origins of the researcher's interest in the area, and motivations for carrying out the current research, are summarised.

1.1 History of Special and Inclusive Education in England

In England, there has been a long history of educating children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in separate provisions away from their peers (Hodkinson, 2010). The first 'special school' for the blind was established in Scotland in 1760, with one opening in England the following year. This started a new trend, and by the mid-1800s, specialist provisions had opened throughout the country for a wide range of intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities (Hodkinson, 2015). The rationale behind these provisions was the underlying view at the time that children with disabilities were somehow different from 'normal' individuals, and so their place was in separate institutions with others who had had similar needs. Thus, this time period saw the beginnings of segregated, special schooling as standard practice (Hodkinson, 2015). The government policies at the time only served to support segregated schooling - the 1944 Education Act recommended placement in units within mainstream schools only in cases where disabilities were 'not serious', with all other children sent to special schools (Hodkinson, 2015). Furthermore, until 1970, society still viewed some children with disabilities as 'uneducable' and not suitable for any type of formal schooling (Hodkinson, 2009).

During the 1960s and onwards, the concept of special education began to be fiercely challenged, with activists arguing that 'continued segregation could no longer be justified from either a research or a rights perspective' (Frederickson & Cline, 2002, p. 68). At this time, there appeared to be a shift in society's views of disability, and more people recognised the value of an education system which helped integrate children with SEND into society, rather than segregate them, and enabled them to participate in everyday activities (Frederickson & Cline, 2002). One influential document in this inclusive movement is the

Warnock Report (DfES, 1978). Originally commissioned to investigate the current state of educational provision in England in Wales, the report concluded that up to 98% of pupils with special needs could have their needs met in a mainstream school alongside their peers. The report also claimed that as many as 20% of children would, at some point, experience some form of learning difficulty; therefore, classification of SEND into categories of handicap was outdated, and special needs should instead be judged on a changeable continuum, and that assessment of needs be done by a multidisciplinary team of professionals (Armstrong, 2007).

Following the report, a wealth of policy changes emerged – the term 'special educational needs' was enshrined in legislation, and from the 1981 Education Act onwards it became a statutory requirement for Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to place all children into mainstream provision except under specific circumstances. A period of 'integration' began. Integration, as it was defined then, simply meant placing children with SEND into mainstream classrooms (Farrell, 2004) and could be practiced to varying degrees; 'functional integration' described a child being in a mainstream school all the time, while 'locational integration' referred to placement of children into special units or classrooms within mainstream (Hegarty, 1991). Integration also encompassed the practice of a child visiting a mainstream school regularly, while still receiving the majority of their education in a special placement (Farrell, 2004). One resounding criticism of the integration approach was that it was based on children's physical presence in the classroom alone, and paid no attention to the quality of education that the children were receiving within those classrooms (Farrell, 2004). There was often a lack of necessary adjustments being made to the curriculum in order to enable successful learning (Humphrey, 2008), and some theorists argued that integration in a unit was not necessarily less segregating than education in a special school (Jupp, 1992). This prompted a proposal by disability activists to replace 'integration' with 'inclusion', and since the 1990s this term has been favoured (Farrell, 2004).

In 1994, England, alongside 91 other countries, participated in a World Conference on Special Needs Education. Their aim was to discuss how to further the Education for All agenda by ensuring that children with special needs also received adequate schooling (UNESCO, 1994). The new Statement (hereafter referred to as the Salamanca Statement) was pivotal in the move towards inclusive education, recommending that all children with SEND have access to mainstream education, and promoting inclusion as the most effective practice for educating children. Governments were encouraged to automatically enroll all children into mainstream schools regardless of their needs or disabilities, except in exceptional

circumstances – a stark contrast to the segregated schooling practice which dominated England's education system in the past. The Statement also addressed previous criticisms of integration models by emphasising that mainstream schools were required to accommodate the varying needs of learners with SEND 'within a child-centered pedagogy' (UNESCO, 1994, p. 8) and alter their teaching practices in order to meet the needs of each child, rather than expecting the child to 'fit in' to the existing school environment.

In the last few decades since the Warnock Report and the signing of the Salamanca Statement, England has continued to see rapid development in the area of special and inclusive education (Hodkinson, 2010). This is reflected primarily in the wealth of current policy relating to individuals with SEND – amendments to the 1996 Education Act prevented any school from refusing a child placement on the basis of their special need or disability, and the Equality Act of 2010 further reinforced the responsibility of schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities so that they were able to attend mainstream provisions. Nevertheless, England is still far away from an education system that could be called 'fully inclusive' (Hornby, 2002) and the option of educating learners with SEND in special schools still remains. Hodkinson (2010) has argued that the policy promoting inclusion does not necessarily reflect practice, and that more must be done to investigate what may be preventing these learners from accessing mainstream education.

1.2 Key Terms

1.2.1 Definition of SEND

Under the 2015 SEND Code of Practice, a child is defined as having special educational needs (SEN) 'if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.' (DfE, 2015, p. 15). A learning difficulty or disability is when the child 'has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age' or 'has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions' (p. 16). The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as when a child or young person has '…a physical or mental impairment' which 'has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [their] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' (p.4). Sensory impairments, such as visual or hearing impairments, are included under this definition, as well as long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes,

epilepsy, and cancer. The definition of disability is separate to the definition of SEN; however, it is acknowledged that there is a significant overlap between the two in many cases. Identification and assessment of whether a child has a SEND results from multi-disciplinary assessment which involves a range of professionals, notably including EPs.

1.2.2 Definition of Inclusion

The term 'inclusion' originated from educational research carried out in the USA (O'Brien et al., 1989; Thomazet, 2009) and has steadily spread throughout the Western world (Vislie, 2003). However, since this time, issues with defining inclusion have been well documented (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014), with researchers arguing that there is a lack of a clear, unified definition of what 'inclusion' really is (Hodkinson, 2010). Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) went so far as to say ''inclusion' means different things to people who wish different things from it.' (p. 299). Broadly speaking, 'inclusion' has been defined in England as having pupils with disabilities educated in the same classrooms as their non-disabled peers (Hodkinson, 2010; Hodkinson, 2015); however, this definition is narrow and based primarily on physical placement, which is not truly indicative of inclusion (Thomazet, 2009).

Alternative, broader definitions instead define inclusion as every child being fully welcomed, accommodated, educated and valued in a mainstream environment, regardless of any differences (Farrell, 2004; Hodkinson, 2010), and recognise the existence of different elements that may make up inclusion. For example, the 'four pronged' definition by Booth & Ainscow (2000), proposes that 4 main elements are equally necessary for a child to be fully included within a mainstream setting: presence in the classroom, active participation in learning, acceptance by peers and teachers and academic achievement.The definitions of inclusion given by the Salamanca Statement were even broader in that they recognised inclusion was relevant not only for children with SEND, but also other disadvantaged children, such as those coming from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds. To add potentially more confusion to the matter, 'inclusion' is not even limited to the educational context; the conceptual analysis by Göransson and Nilholm (2014) revealed that inclusion can be defined in a broader sense as the creation of whole communities in which diversity and individual differences are embraced, and that these communities encompass society at large, as opposed to just the mainstream classrooms (Booth & Ainscow, 2000). These definitions are useful in recognising that the inclusion of individuals with SEND does not simply stop when they leave education, but goes beyond schools and into society in general.

In the present study, the researcher conceptualizes inclusion as being made up of the following elements:

- Placement of a child with SEND within a local, mainstream school.

- The school making necessary adaptations to ensure successful participation and learning (eg. Physical modifications, curriculum changes).

- Social inclusion by both peers and staff.

- Acceptance by, and participation in, the wider community.

In acknowledging the broad range of existing definitions, the researcher also recognises that the participants in this study may have differing perceptions from the researcher, and each other, of what inclusion is. For this reason, the researcher chose to create a research question investigating how each EP described inclusion – this would help frame any further discussion about the topic within the definition provided by the participant, rather than viewing the participant's answers from the researcher's own perspective.

1.2.3 Definition of Placement

In England, all children aged between 5 and 16 can attend a state-funded school. In addition to state schools, there are various other types of school placement available to children. These include: special schools, which are set up specifically to cater for the needs of pupils with SEND; academies, which are independent of the local authority and do not have to teach the national curriculum; faith schools, which are free to teach religious studies as they wish; boarding schools; free schools, and private schools, which are registered with the Government but run on fees rather than Government funding ("Types of Schools" 2016). The term 'educational placement' refers to the placement of a child within one of these schools.

1.3 Introduction to the Research

In the last decade, inclusion has grown significantly in both policy and practice (Farrell, 2004). This drive towards achieving an inclusive education system has been reflected by global initiatives such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and by government legislation and policies in England (DfEE 1997). However, there are still many potential barriers to the process of inclusion, and one area of research within the field has looked at

identifying these barriers and making suggestions for how they may be overcome. The author of the present study is interested in one particular barrier which has been identified: the views and perceptions of key stakeholders involved in the education of learners with SEND. If individuals involved in the implementation of inclusive education are not favourable towards it, then the practice is less likely to be successful (Avradmidis & Norwich, 2002).

To date, much research has focused on the attitudes or perceptions of teachers towards inclusion, as they are the individuals ultimately responsible for its implementation; significantly less research has focused on the perceptions of other stakeholders, such as EPs. The profession of Educational Psychology has been closely linked with provision of education to learners with SEND throughout history; presently in England, EPs play a key role in the statutory assessment of children, recommending suitable provision for them, and consultation with schools and families to try to resolve difficulties and either maintain a child's current placement or find an alternative, suitable provision (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Farrell et al., 2005). With the general shift towards inclusive rather than special schooling, it can be argued that EPs therefore play a fundamental role in implementing inclusive education. For this reason, they are not a population to be overlooked by research, and the present study aims to shed some light on their views into what is a complex and ever-changing field.

1.4 Rationale for the Present Study

Thus far, only a handful of studies have explored the topic of how EPs perceive inclusion, and the extent to which they are in favour of the concept. The research that has been done has primarily used quantitative methods in order to explore EPs' attitudes, and what they perceive to be the ideal educational setting for children with various SEND (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Hardman & Worthington, 2000). One study did use interviews with both EPs and parents, but focused solely on perceptions of dual placements, and was therefore limited in scope as it did not go in-depth into perceptions about the other types of provision that are available to children with SEND (Burton, 2012). Therefore, this research aims to address a gap in the current literature by using in-depth, semi-structured interviews to shed light on how EPs describe inclusion, their perceptions of inclusion and any factors which might potentially hinder, or promote, it, and what future steps could be taken to increase the inclusion of children with SEND into mainstream schools, and the community at large.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions were as follows:

1. How do Educational Psychologists describe inclusion?

2. To what extent do Educational Psychologists believe children with SEND can be included in mainstream schools, and why?

3. What more do Educational Psychologists think could be done in the future to promote inclusion?

1.6 Origin of Researcher's Interest in Topic

The researcher's interest in the field originates from their experience of working within a specialist provision for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Employed as part of the school's therapy team, the researcher was involved in the auditing of Statements of SEN for the pupils in the school, and later in the process of transitioning these to the new Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The role also involved working closely with a named EP for the school, who delivered supervision and consultation to the therapy team. This work highlighted the vital role that EPs play in recommending provision for pupils with SEND, which can influence what setting they are placed in. Following on from that work, the researcher embarked on a Master's degree, which placed a greater focus on inclusive schooling, and it was during the course of this program that the researcher came to understand more about the debates within the field of education over what type of provision is most suitable for children with SEND. The researcher was surprised to find a wealth of literature on this topic exploring the perceptions of teachers, parents and school leaders, but relatively little which explored the views of EPs. For this reason, the researcher chose to investigate this and the current research has been completed as part of the requirements for completion of the Master's Degree.

2 Literature Review

In this chapter, the role of EPs is introduced, and an explanation given of how it is crucial in facilitating the education of learners with SEND. Next, the current literature on EPs' perceptions of inclusion is reviewed. Due to the limited number of studies in this field, the research is described in detail, and finally, the existing findings are discussed in the context of the current debates which still exist within the field of special and inclusive education.

2.1 The Role of Educational Psychologists in England

Educational Psychologists have, throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, played an integral role in the education of children with SEND. The 1944 Education Act made testing for 11-year-olds compulsory, with a view that the results from standardised tests could inform LEAs about whether children had any additional needs that would warrant special schooling, and what was the best educational provision for them (Galloway, Armstrong & Tomlinson, 1994). At the time, these tests were administered by medical professionals, partly due to the overwhelming prevalence of the medical model of disability during this time, and partly because there were simply not enough EPs employed to assess all children. Hence, the role of EPs was still primarily in advice-giving. However, in the following decades, EPs began to question whether standardised assessments should be delivered by medical professionals; this skepticism was supported by a recommendation from the Department of Education in 1974 that assessments be carried out by a multidisciplinary team, and not one professional (Galloway et al., 1994). From 1975 onwards there was a notable shift in the role of EPs, as they took on the responsibility of assessing children suspected of having SEND, and making recommendations to the LEAs about suitable placement for them.

To this day, EPs still have a varied job role. In 2000, the Government defined the EP role as 'to promote child development and learning through the application of psychology by working with individuals and groups of children, teachers, and other adults in schools, families, other LEA officers, health and social service and other agencies' (DfEE, 2000, p. 5). EPs fulfill this role through a range of tasks, including assessment of pupils with SEND (Ashton & Roberts, 2006), recommendation of suitable resources (Farrell & Kalambouka,

2000) consultation and advice-giving in schools on how to manage children with SEND (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Farrell et al., 2005) and contributing to the process of placing children with SEND into an appropriate educational setting (Burton, 2012). Although all aspects of the EPs job role may arguably contribute towards inclusion, it is the latter one which could most significantly determine the course of a child's education - as Farrell (2004) writes: 'school psychologists can … help to maintain segregated provision for pupils with special needs or they can recommend more inclusive arrangements' (p. 6). Despite this, there is a notable lack of literature on the attitudes or perceptions of EPs towards inclusion. If EPs hold individual biases regarding whether children with SEND should be placed in mainstream or special schools, then this aspect of their job role might be affected (Burton, 2012).

2.2 Perceptions of Inclusion: Current Research

Perceptions of Ideal Placement for Children with SEND

To date, a handful of studies have directly investigated the perceptions of EPs towards inclusion. In 2002, Hardman and Worthington administered questionnaires to 144 EPs from England in order to investigate both their orientations towards inclusion, and their perceptions of what was the most ideal school setting in which to place children with varying special needs and/or disabilities. This was done by providing 22 vignettes which described the 11 main categories of SEND: profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), severe learning disabilities (SLD), moderate learning disabilities (MLD), mild learning disabilities, emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), physical learning difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, speech and language difficulties, medical needs, and specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). The EPs were asked to respond, based on each vignette, what placement they would most likely recommend for that child: a mainstream school, mainstream school with additional support, mainstream school with special unit attached, or a special school. By removing all labels, and only providing a brief description of the child's behaviours or difficulties, the researchers hoped to overcome some of the potential, pre-existing biases towards certain special needs.

On the whole, the EPs were more in favour of children with SEND attending mainstream-based placements over segregated ones; in nearly 50% of the vignettes, a form of mainstream provision with additional support was chosen as the most appropriate setting, while special schools were selected by the EPs for only 10% of the scenarios. The type of

placement seemed to depend on the type of SEND presented – although labels were removed, each scenario did describe typical presentations and behaviours associated with a specific category of need, and different placements were favoured more for different categories. For example, mainstream schools were preferred on the whole for pupils with physical impairments, EBD, mild to moderate learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties and medical conditions. Special Units in mainstream schools were preferred for SLD, and children who had sensory impairments. Special schools were mostly chosen as the ideal placement for children with PMLD. Therefore, even without the explicit use of labels, it does appear that EPs' decision making about where children with SEND should be educated is influenced by the category of need they have, which arguably still subscribes to the medical model of disability; the root of individuals' impairments is placed very much within the person rather than within society (Haegele & Hodge, 2016) and so the responsibility may be taken off the mainstream school to be able to cater for every type of SEND.

There were some findings in Hardman and Worthington's study which contradicted similar studies done with other educational professionals: many EPs still opted for a mainstream placement for children described in the scenarios as having EBD, even though this group of learners have been traditionally seen by teachers as the hardest group of pupils to include (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). This difference in opinion could reflect the difference in job role between the two groups; EPs are involved in assessment and consultation whereas teachers are very much at the forefront of implementing inclusive education in the classrooms, working with the pupils on a daily basis, and this may present its own challenges. Teachers often cited reasons such as lack of adequate support, and pressure from other parents, as reasons for why these children are harder to include in mainstream classrooms, as opposed to being unfavourable towards inclusion generally (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Another contrasting finding between Hardman & Worthington's study and previous research is that demographic factors such as the age, gender, locality and years of experience of the EPs did not have a significant impact on their decisions about where to place children with SEND.

Perceptions of 'Full Inclusion'

Although the questionnaires revealed positive overall attitudes towards inclusion by EPs, some EPs still argued that special schools should remain an option for children with SEND. Currently, England operates a 'twin-track' education system (Barton, 2003) which

means that pupils with special needs can be educated either in mainstream provisions, or in segregated special schools where they are preferred by the parents, or to prevent the disruption of other children's learning (Norwich, 2008). By endorsing the maintenance of special schools, it could be argued that the EPs in Hardman and Worthington's study showed, to some extent, a resistance to the concept of 'full inclusion' which would see all children placed in mainstream settings regardless of their level of ability (Hornby, 2002). The research used questionnaires, which, while allowing for responses to be collected from a larger sample, did not allow much in-depth analysis of why the EPs preferred particular placements for particular categories of need, or why they still felt that special schools should remain open to children with SEND.

There was further evidence for varying attitudes towards 'full inclusion' from a study by Evans & Lunt (2002). The researchers collected questionnaires from 60 Principal EPs in England and Wales to gain information about where pupils with statements were placed in each LEA, what were the LEA's policies on inclusion, and how the EPs perceived inclusion and the potential barriers to it. In their sample, over 50% of pupils with a statement of SEN were receiving education in a mainstream provision, versus only 1.37% in special schools. There was evidence of inclusive practice, in varying degrees, in all of the LEAs surveyed. However, it was often in the form of what the authors deemed 'weak' inclusion, requiring minimal adaptation from the mainstream schools, and was performed on an individual case-by-case basis; few attempts were made at whole-school changes to help foster a more inclusive ethos. In addition, not all LEAs had clear policies on inclusion, which Evans and Lunt (2002) argued might indicate that inclusion was not being seen as a priority. The EPs also reported large numbers of pupils who had been permanently excluded from mainstream schools as a result of their behaviour. There has been a trend in England for court decisions to favour the exclusion, rather than inclusion, of students with EBD (Lewis, Chard & Scott., 1994). Therefore, although the figures indicate a relatively small number of children in special education, this does not necessarily indicate that LEAs are actively practicing and promoting inclusion, and still falls short of fully including all children in mainstream schools.

Potential Barriers to 'Full Inclusion'

At an individual level, the responses from the EPs in relation to the inclusiveness of their local authority did shed some light on what might be the potential barriers to including all pupils with SEND into mainstream schools. Generally, the EPs believed that the aim of

'full inclusion' was an unrealistic one. Closer analysis of the responses could explain the findings in terms several barriers to the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream schools: the attitudes of school staff, the individual characteristics of the child, difficulties with resourcing, inadequacy of mainstream school facilities and the attitudes of parents.

The primary reason given for why EPs perceived there to be difficulties in including children with SEND in their local authorities was the 'attitudes and beliefs held by staff in schools' (p. 7). There were several reasons why the attitudes may prove to be a barrier, including beliefs by the teachers that some children's needs were simply too severe to manage within a mainstream environment, and that education of children with SEND was not their responsibility. These attitudes have been echoed in other research carried out directly with teachers; teachers are more accepting of pupils with physical or mild intellectual disabilities (Forlin, 1995), and the success of inclusive programmes has also been linked to teaching styles and teacher efficacy (Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998). Finally, there were also concerns by the EPs that parent attitudes hindered inclusion within mainstream schools. Some parents might prefer their child to be educated in a specialist provision (Elkins, van Kraayenoord & Jobling, 2003), especially those with severe disabilities (Palmer et al., 2001), and would take their cases to a tribunal in order to secure a place in a special school. Therefore, it may be that even if EPs' perceptions of inclusion are positive, the negative perceptions of other individuals involved in the child's education may prevent the EP from recommending a mainstream placement, or lead the child to be placed in special schooling despite the EPs' recommendation.

With regards to the individual characteristics of the child, some EPs in Evans and Lunt's study perceived some SEND as more difficult to include than others. This included emotional and behavioural difficulties, PMLD, SLD, autism and those with complex health needs. Children with physical and sensory difficulties, MLD, specific learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties were deemed easier to include. Unanimously, the EPs agreed that children who exhibited challenging behaviour were hardest to include into mainstream schools; however, as the data was collected using a questionnaire, and the EPs were not included in the subsequent focus groups carried out by Evans and Lunt, more detailed information on why this was the case was not provided. Nevertheless, research conducted with the teachers themselves does shed some light on why this may be so. Placement of a child with EBD into mainstream classrooms is still considered by teachers to be more stressful than placement of other types of SEND (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000), and

the teachers in that study reported a desire for more training on how to manage challenging behaviour. In a similar study in the USA the previous year (Heflin & Bullock, 1999), teachers again reported that the most common problem in facilitating inclusion was lack of adequate support and training, and for this reason they schools were unable to fully include pupils with EBD. This lack of knowledge on how to manage children with EBD may therefore be at the core of why many teachers are averse to their inclusion, and their perceptions may be influencing the views of the EPs also.

The findings from questionnaires, therefore, show conflicting ideas about the inclusion of this particular group of learners; EPs recognise that, due to a range of factors, children with EBD are difficult to include within mainstream classrooms (Evans & Lunt, 2002). Despite this, in an 'ideal' scenario, mainstream schools are still the preferred type of placement for them (Hardman & Worthington, 2000). In this regard, it seems that the difficulties do not stem from the attitudes of the EPs themselves, but from other barriers which are likely to emerge later on in the process of trying to place these children into a mainstream school. Therefore, in order to aid inclusion, these barriers would need to be overcome. Although Evans & Lunt's (2002) study revealed some of these potential barriers, as perceived by the EPs, the field could benefit from a more in-depth analysis of this to ascertain what the key barriers are, whether the EPs feel more could be done to remove these barriers and promote inclusion, and whether this might influence their views on 'full inclusion' as a goal.

Although the concept of 'full inclusion' may not be seen as the ideal by all EPs, the two quantitative studies thus far reveal that EPs would choose mainstream placements for most children with SEND. However, current government figures show that roughly only 25.5% and 23.5% of children with SEND are currently receiving their education within mainstream primary and secondary schools respectively (DfE, 2016b), while 42.9% are in special schools. In addition, there have been increases in the numbers of children excluded from mainstream schools for challenging behaviour (Parsons, 2000). There appears to be a difference then between where EPs ideally want children with SEND to be educated, and the actual practice that is taking place. When questioning why this may be, it is important to consider the role of EPs within the wider context of the education system in England. EPs are employed by a particular LEA and will work with designated schools within that locality to carry out assessments and provide consultation for particular children who are suspected of, or identified as having, additional needs. What this means is that very often, EPs may find themselves in a position where the views and wishes of the school, parents, and the LEA are

conflicting, and this could have an impact on what recommendations are made regarding provision and placement (Galloway et al., 1994). There is a strong link still between assessment of SEND and access to resources, and the limited nature of these resources might influence the choices that EPs make in terms of educational placement. This could explain some of the variation in inclusive practice between different LEAs, as the funding available may be different in different regions. Furthermore, government reports in the 1990s highlighted that, at the time, some mainstream schools sought to use the results of EP assessments as a means of removing challenging children from their classrooms (Galloway et al., 1994) and this might place extra pressure on an EP to recommend that a particular child attends a special school instead. Although the inclusive education movement has gained momentum in the last 20 years, it may be possible that EPs are still facing issues such as these. Therefore, although many EPs would prefer to place the majority of children with SEND into mainstream provision, they may be unable to due to the constraints placed upon them by their various 'clients'.

There is some evidence, however, suggesting that not all EPs necessarily view mainstream placements as the ideal for children with SEND, and this could also impact upon practice and influence whether children with SEND are included or not. Burton (2012) conducted interviews with 8 EPs who had used dual-placements (one where the child attends both a mainstream school and an alternative provision) in order to explore attitudes towards the practice, and the relative advantages and disadvantages of dual-placements over mainstream only or special only ones. The EPs did agree that, for children with SEND, placement in a mainstream setting for at least some of the time was helpful in terms of their social development. However, some of the EPs favoured dual placements over a single-setting placement, believing that dual placements are a 'best of both' scenario in which children with SEND are able to access the specialist skills and resources provided by an alternative placement, while still having some time in a mainstream environment to socialise with their mainstream peers and model appropriate skills and behaviours. Therefore, a dual placement was seen as having some significant advantages over single-setting placements.

EPs also saw dual-placements as a good middle-ground for parents who had not 'come to terms' (Burton, 20120, p. 117) with their child having needs that were potentially too difficult to be catered for in a mainstream setting. As Burton (2012) wrote: 'a dual educational placement may offer a transition period for parents to accept their child's SEN and experience what an alternative placement has to offer' (p. 117). From this, however, there is a sense of

parents having to accept the notion of special schooling for their child even if that is not what they would prefer - one EP was quoted as saying 'It's probably been where there is a parent who has been struggling with the notion that it's going to be special forever and have wanted mainstream in the first place' (p. 117). Thus, they need the transition period in order to adjust to this new reality. This appears to go against the philosophy of inclusion, which would place the onus on the mainstream schools of removing potential barriers to ensure that the children's needs could be managed within a mainstream environment; however, EPs still viewed this aspect of dual placements as an advantage. If EPs are not actively challenging the notion that dual or special schooling is the most beneficial for a child with SEND, then it may strongly influence the recommendations that are made to parents, and ultimately the decision of where that child is placed.

Furthermore, as with other research, choice of placement was very much dependent on the individual needs of the child, and there was some evidence that the category of need might influence the decision on whether dual placements were appropriate or not. For example, in cases where the child had ASD, one parent and several of the EPs argued that a single placement setting may be preferable due to the child's need for stability and routine, which a dual placement would disrupt. Some research has argued that, for children with a diagnosis of ASD, their difficulties with social understanding may lead to social exclusion within mainstream schools and, as a result, special schools may be a more suitable setting for them (Buckton, 2000, cited in Burton, 2012). If there is a view amongst some researchers, parents and EPs that special schools are a more suitable environment for children with ASD, and that single setting placements are more appropriate than dual placements, this may contribute to why pupils with ASD make up the largest percentage (25.6%) of all children who attend state funded special schools in England (DfE 2016b).

2.3 Current Debates within Inclusive Education

What has emerged from the existing literature is some evidence of variation both in the individual attitudes of EPs towards including children with SEND, and in the inclusive practices between different local authorities in England. This variation between one sub-group of individuals is potentially unsurprising given the much wider debate that still exists within the field of inclusive education on where children with SEND should be educated. It was following the Warnock report (DfES, 1978) that the government introduced new policy which stated all children with SEND should be receive their education in a mainstream school, and

there are a number of perceived advantages of full, mainstream placements over segregated, special schooling which have prompted the drive for more inclusion. For example, inclusion is shown to improve both academic and social outcomes for pupils with SEND (Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Wiener & Tardif, 2004). However, the placement of children with SEND into mainstream schools was, and still is, subject to conditions such as support of the parent, and whether it will disrupt the learning of other peers. The result of this is that some children are still placed in less inclusive settings if it is deemed more appropriate. England currently offers a 'continuum of provision' (Norwich, 2008, p. 136) which ranges from full-time placement in a general education classroom (the most inclusive solution) to full time placement in a residential special school (the most separate type of provision). Thus, one issue which has been raised is whether the Government in England, by maintaining this continuum of provision, is promoting inclusion in terms of having all children with SEND educated in mainstream classrooms, or whether they still advocate that children can spend part of their time outside of them (Norwich, 2008).

Another issue within the field of special and inclusive education is that not everyone believes that inclusion should mean all children educated in mainstream classrooms together. Mary Warnock, who was the initial author of the 1978 report, argued that inclusion has now potentially gone too far, and children with SEND are being placed in mainstream settings for the sake of inclusion, and not because it is necessarily the best place for them (2005). She went on to argue that inclusion should be about children learning 'wherever they learn best' (Warnock, 2005, p. 14), and that this may not necessarily be a mainstream classroom all of the time. In fact, some teachers have argued that in order for children with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers, there may need to be some withdrawal sessions (Norwich, 2007) and that this withdrawal, rather than representing a form of exclusion, is in fact helping the students to maintain the mainstream placement. There is also evidence that some policy-makers and teachers still believe there is a future for special schools in England, although there is a preference for these schools to be located alongside, and linked with, mainstream schools (Norwich, 2008). Special schools were also seen to hold some significant advantages themselves, such as more specialized provision for those with severe disabilities, better resources and better trained staff.

Therefore, it is evident that there is not currently an agreement within the field that full-time, mainstream placements are the best setting for children with SEND. There is a recognition among policy-makers, educators and other professionals that this debate is

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ongoing, and as a result it is perhaps unsurprising that there is a lack of consistency among EPs on the matter also. Previous work with other professionals has sought to identify why they do not feel that 'full inclusion' is a realistic goal, and why they still see benefits to England offering a continuum of provision which includes special schools that are linked to mainstream ones, withdrawal groups within mainstream schools and varied and flexible curriculums. The present research seeks to add to this debate by asking EPs how they define inclusion, whether they believe that all children with SEND can be educated within mainstream schools, and the various factors that might influence this belief. As Norwich (2008) gave some suggestions for how this debate could be resolved, the present study also provides some suggestions, based on the responses of the EPs, of what more could be done in future to improve successful inclusion.

3   Research Methodology

In this chapter the research methods used in this study are presented. First, the design of the study, and the rationale behind it, are discussed. The researcher then gives an overview of the participants who took part in the research, including demographic data, and the sampling procedures used to recruit them. Next, the processes by which the interview schedule was devised and piloted, and the data were transcribed and analysed, are discussed, before a summary is given of the relevant ethical considerations associated with conducting the research. Finally, the researcher acknowledges any methodological limitations and gives some suggestions for how they might be overcome in future research.

3.1 Design

The aim of the present study is to explore individual EPs' perceptions and experiences of inclusion. Previous research in the field has used quantitative data, and yielded findings from a larger number of participants on what they perceived to be the most suitable placements for children with SEND, and what might be preventing the inclusion of all children into mainstream settings (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Hardman & Worthington, 2000). The present study aims to look deeper at the perceptions of EPs, and try to shed light on why they hold these perceptions by using a qualitative design, which aims to explore and describe the concepts, rather than quantifying and measuring them (Kumar, 2011). A semi-structured interview was selected for the present research to enable the researcher to collect 'detailed narratives and stories' from the participants (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 317) while also maintaining some level of control over the direction of the interview process. While unstructured interviews carry the risk of gathering data which are not relevant to the original research questions, by having a set of pre-determined questions, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to gather information on a specific set of themes relevant to the research questions (Rabionet, 2011).

3.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 5 EPs recruited from a range of localities in England. As the interview aimed to explore EPs' views on specific aspects of their job role, only qualified EPs (those who had completed the required Doctoral Training provided by DECAP, as opposed to

Trainee EPs) were included in the sample. Only EPs who worked in England were recruited due to potential differences between the education systems between England and other countries. No other exclusion criteria applied. Relevant demographic information for the sample is shown in the table below.

	Alias	Age	Gender	Locality	Type of Interview
P1	'Marc'	29	M	London	Face-to-face, Pilot (not used in analysis)
P2	'Judy'	55	F	South-West England	Skype
P3	'Greg'	64	M	South-East England	Face-to-face
P4	'Claire'	36	F	London	Face-to-face
P5	'Simon'	59	M	East Midlands	Skype

Table 1: Demographic data of sample

Initial contact was made through two methods: information letters (see Appendix A) were emailed or delivered in person to the Educational Psychology Service in each London borough, and EPs were encouraged to contact the researcher using the details provided if interested in participating. The researcher also contacted EPs via the EPNET mailing list, which allowed a much wider audience to be reached. In this instance, EPs who were interested in taking part replied to the email and made contact with the researcher to set up interviews. EPs were offered the option of face-to-face interviews, or interviews over Skype if it was more convenient.

3.3 Research Instrument

The researcher devised their own interview schedule which contained a set of pre-determined questions related to the overall research questions, as well as potential prompts and probes to use during the interviews to elicit more information from the participants. The researcher used knowledge of previous literature on the topic to come up with several broad areas to investigate. From these, three research questions were developed relating to three theoretical concepts: descriptions of inclusion, the inclusion of children with SEND into

mainstream schools and potential barriers to the process, and future directions to help promote successful inclusion. A theoretical description of these concepts was developed based on previous literature. Next, a more concrete, operationalized definition of each concept, in the form of the interview questions and prompts, was developed in order to collect information on each of the theoretical perspectives. In this way, the researcher strengthened the concept validity of the research instrument. The researcher acknowledged that another way of strengthening the interview questions, and their concept validity, is to seek the opinion of an expert within the field (Rabionet, 2011); however, due to time constraints this was not possible.

3.3.1 Pilot Interview and Modifications

A pilot interview was conducted with one EP. The researcher wanted to determine if the number of pre-determined interview questions was sufficient, and to gain a sense of whether the order or wording of the questions was eliciting rich enough data. The researcher also received feedback from the participant themselves on the interview process. In total, the pilot interview lasted 47:40 minutes, which fell within the intended range of 45-60 minutes, and the researcher chose to keep roughly the same number of questions for the rest of the interviews. However, some significant changes to the questions were made. Firstly, the researcher chose to re-word the question on definitions of inclusion so that participants were asked to 'describe' rather than 'define' inclusion. The rationale for the change was that participants may have felt pressured to recall an official 'definition' of the term, rather than sharing their own personal perceptions of what it meant for someone to be included. In addition, following comments from the first participant, the question was moved from the beginning of the interview schedule to nearer the end, as the participant remarked that having the question very near the start of the interview might lead to more of a discussion around definitions and the theoretical concept of inclusion rather than the practicalities of inclusion in their day-to-day work. In subsequent interviews, the question on describing inclusion was asked at different points, and depended very much on how the discussion was shaped by each participant.

Secondly, the question about recommendation of educational placement was incorporated into a broader set of questions about the EPs' job role and what they felt were the most significant aspects of that role. There was a recognition by the researcher that, although the EP in the pilot interview stated that naming specific schools was a significant

part of his role, this may not be the case for all EPs. Therefore, the researcher did not want to impose this view on the participants, and so whether EPs recommended a specific school, or a specific type of school, was included as a prompt in the revised interview schedule rather than a main question.

Finally, one key change following the pilot interview was the rephrasing of the question of what type of placement EPs felt was 'ideal' for children with SEND. A comment was made by the participant after the interview had finished that he believed the majority of, if not all, EPs would answer that question by saying that the ideal placement for all children was a mainstream setting; however, it was often external barriers which prevented this from being a reality. The question was therefore rephrased to 'to what extend do you feel children can be included within mainstream schools?' as it allowed participants to discuss both their ideal scenarios, and also the reality of why this ideal might not always be possible. The pilot interview was also useful for helping the researcher expand the lists of prompts and probes that accompanied each question on the interview schedule, for example when asking about the different aspects of the EPs' roles, or about any potential barriers to inclusion they might have encountered. The final version of interview schedule was used in all subsequent interviews (see Appendix C). Nevertheless, in qualitative research it is difficult to separate the process of collecting the data from the process of analysing it and this may lead to further changes being made to the interview questions as the research goes on (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Even after the initial revisions from the pilot interview, there were times when the researcher still chose to alter some words or phrases in the interview questions.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Data Collection

Initially, a pilot interview was conducted with one EP who was working part time for two LEAs in London. Pilot interviews are a crucial stage of the interview process as they allow the researcher to practice the interviewing process if they are unfamiliar with it (Holloway, 1997), and help the researcher to ascertain whether the questions they have devised are eliciting enough data, or data which is relevant to the research questions (Rabionet, 2011). It was noted by the researcher that as the EP who participated in the pilot interview was known to the researcher beforehand, this might have influenced the nature of

the interview, and previous researchers have urged caution when selecting such individuals as participants (McEvoy, 2002).

A further 4 EPs were interviewed following the pilot. The present study used a combination of face-to-face and Skype interviews. Face-to-face interviews were selected as they hold several advantages over other methods of interviewing. Firstly, the nature of face-to-face interviews may enhance the process of building and maintaining rapport with the participant as the interaction is more natural than other interview methods, such as the telephone (Shuy, 2003). As a result, participants may feel more at ease and therefore more able to express their views in a natural and conversational manner. Furthermore, conducting interviews face-to-face means that both the researcher and the participant are able to pick up on each other's non-verbal cues. Ribbens (1989) argued that non-verbal cues are an equally rich source of data; communication takes place non-verbally as well as verbally (Fielding & Thomas, 2008), and so these cues may provide some insight into the emotional state of the participant or convey more subtle meanings. Equally, the non-verbal cues from the researcher could be encouraging for participants, and so help elicit more detailed responses. The interviews were recorded using a battery-operated Dictaphone, which is a common method for recording interview data (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) and often the most recommended technique (Rabionet, 2011). The use of a Dictaphone freed the researcher from continuous note-taking during the interview (only key points or perceptions were noted down on the interview schedule) and this enabled the researcher to be more attentive and fully engaged in the interview process (Whiting, 2008).

However, there was also a desire by the researcher to include participants from a range of different localities in England. This was to ensure that the sample was not biased, as views and experiences might be heavily influenced by locational factors such as local policy, population demographics, number and availability of different types of schools and geography, to name but a few. This meant that some participants were located some distance away and, for practical reasons, it was more feasible to conduct the interviews over Skype. Skype interviews have the benefit of being low-cost and eliminating the need to travel long distances (Hanna, 2012). The ability to download recording software, which will automatically record the audio of both researcher and participant, can also help overcome potential difficulties with using Dictaphones, which may yield poorer quality recordings as they are sensitive to background noise (Hanna, 2012). Furthermore, by conducting the long-distance interviews over Skype, rather than by telephone, the researcher retained some of the

face-to-face element of interviewing; the researcher and participant were able to see each other and so some of the disadvantages that have been reported following telephone interviewing, such as difficulty building rapport, lack of non-verbal cues and shorter interview duration (Fielding & Thomas, 2008; Gillham, 2005) were overcome. The researcher did, however, encounter some disadvantages to the use of Skype interviews; during one interview, a weak internet connection meant that audio quality on the side of the participant was poor and the researcher often had to ask the participant to repeat sentences that had not been heard. This could have affected the natural flow of the interview, and also potentially the rapport between the researcher and the participant. The audio quality also affected the later process of transcribing the interview, and the researcher feels that, in some cases, important details may have been missed as a result.

3.4.2 Transcription

One process that is crucial to the analysis and subsequent reporting of interview data is that of transcription (Davidson, 2009). Transcription is the process by which oral language, in the form of audio or audio-visual recordings, is transformed into written language (Kvale, 2008). Initially, the researcher went through the transcript and typed the questions and responses into a word processor. If there were any segments of audio which were unclear, these were highlighted within the document. Once the transcript had been completed, the researcher then went over the audio a further two times with the transcript to check for accuracy and attempt to fill in any gaps in the transcription. Where it was still not possible for the researcher to make out the audio, this has been signaled with '(inaudible)' and the relevant time in the audio recording has been noted.

The researcher in the present study chose to transcribe the recordings using a denaturalised transcription style (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005); this meant that certain non-verbal features were removed, such as 'uhms' and 'errs', as the researcher believed they interrupted the flow of the sentences, and they made interpretation of meaning more difficult rather than adding to it. For the same reason, 'fillers' such as 'you know', 'like' and 'I mean' were also removed in order to add a sense of coherence to the responses, and grammar was corrected. However, there are researchers who have suggested that certain non-verbal features of communication, such as pauses, silences and non-verbal gestures, also hold crucial information and should not be discounted during the analysis (Ribbens, 1989). Therefore, the researcher chose to include significant pauses (longer than 1 second) as it was felt they may

indicate something about the nature of the questions, for example if there were any questions that participants consistently took more time to answer. The transcriptions also included features which gave some indications of the participant's emotional state, such as laughs or when a participant became tearful or increasingly animated in their responses.

The act of transcribing interviews, and the choices made during the transcription process, are important as they may have an impact on the subsequent analysis of the data (Davidson, 2009). Despite this, researchers claim there is a distinct lack of acknowledgement by researchers of these choices and their impact on the research (Kvale, 2008). The researcher in the present study chose a de-naturalised style which meant that some features of speech were removed. Although the researcher attempted to keep crucial information about participants' emotional states during the interviews, and re-listened to the interviews several times alongside the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the transcribing, there is still a criticism that by using a de-naturalised style some information may be missed.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis. This type of analysis is used to report patterns or trends within the data set, which are called themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Generally, themes should 'capture something important in relation to the overall research question' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10) and are identified by their repeated occurrences throughout the data set. Braun & Clarke (2006) identified the following steps to be undertaken during thematic analysis, which were followed by the researcher:

1. **Familiarising yourself with your data** – the researcher read through the transcripts several times and began searching for patterns in the data and making notes of potential codes; however, Braun & Clarke (2006) advise not to begin coding until all data is read through at least once. The process of transcribing the interviews also played a key part in the familiarisation process, as it required the researcher to pay close attention to the data.

2. **Generating initial codes** – The researcher then went through the data set and began to assign codes to specific segments of data, organising the data into clusters or groups. This process was done manually by highlighting and annotating relevant sections of each transcript which related to a specific code. A table was created with the different codes, and one column was dedicated to each participant (see Appendix D). Key

information and quotes related to each code were inserted into the table, which made it easier to compare the participants' responses and identify any similar or conflicting views on a particular subject.

3. **Searching for themes** – The researcher then sorted the codes into potential themes. This was done by identifying potential relationships between different codes. In some cases, the researcher combined several codes together to create one theme (for example, one code which discussed useful interventions and processes in inclusive education was combined with the theme of possible future directions, as the researcher felt they were not too dissimilar from one another).

4. **Reviewing themes** – The initial themes and sub-themes were then refined based on several criteria: whether there was enough data to support their status as a theme, whether several themes could be combined into one theme, whether one theme may need to be broken down into separate themes, whether some may need to be discarded or whether new themes need to be created. During this reviewing process, the researcher created a 'thematic map' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.21) which was reviewed and refined until the researcher was satisfied with the final themes.

5. **Defining and naming themes** – Each of the themes was given a concrete name. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), 'names should be concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about' (p. 23). Alongside each theme the researcher also added a brief definition, which was brought together from relevant extracts in the data. See Table 2 for a list of the themes and sub-themes, and their descriptions.

6. **Producing the report** – Finally, the data were analysed by the researcher and the findings are presented in the following chapters of this paper. The researcher has provided evidence for the chosen themes through the use of relevant extracts and quotes from the data, and given an explanation of how these quotes were interpreted. The themes identified are presented and discussed in relation to the three original research questions, and the existing literature on the topic. Some suggestions for the future are made.

Theme and Sub-Themes	Definition
Describing Inclusion	How do EPs describe inclusion?
Sub-theme: Issues with Multiple Definitions	Whether EPs think inclusion could be described differently, and what is the impact of this
Inclusion of Children with SEND into Mainstream	How far do EPs think children with SEND can be included into mainstream schools, and reasons why they feel this way
Sub-theme: Advantages of Inclusion	Perceived advantages of including children with SEND
Sub-theme: Full Inclusion or Not?	Are EPs in favour of full inclusion, and why?
Sub-theme: Potential Barriers to Inclusion: Attitudes and Academisation of Schools in England	Any potential barriers identified by EPs which may be preventing successful inclusion of children
Future Directions	Suggestions what could be done in the future to overcome barriers and promote successful inclusion
Sub-theme: Training	How could training be improved for school staff and EPs
Sub-theme: Legislative Changes	Proposed changes to policy and inspections
Sub-theme: Interventions	What interventions have proved helpful in promoting inclusion to date, and evidence for this

Table 2: Table of themes and sub-themes

3.5 Ethical Considerations

All educational research conducted must be moral and ethical, and different bodies have developed strict ethical codes which researchers must follow. While carrying out the present study, the researcher has been following the guidelines for conducting educational research published by The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). The following ethical considerations have been taken into account:

3.5.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent requires participants to be provided with clear, accurate information on the study in order to make an informed decision about whether to participate or not. In addition, the participants must be competent to make the decision about participation (Hartas, 2010). As the present study involves an adult sample, informed consent was gained directly from the participants via the use of an information leaflet, sent to them prior to the interview taking place (see Appendix A), and a consent form (see Appendix B). The participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, with no fear of negative consequences.

3.5.2 Confidentiality

All research must be conducted in a way that does not compromise the privacy of the participants who take part (BERA, 2011). The respondents have not been referred to by their names or initials during the research process; to begin with, each participant was assigned an alphanumerical code instead. Any records of this code were stored securely by the researcher away from the data. Furthermore, during transcription of the interview recordings, any identifying information such as names of individuals, organisations, and geographical locations were removed so as not to indirectly identify the participants. Following analysis, each participant was assigned an alias which is used during the reporting of the findings. Information was provided to the participants on how their information was to be kept confidential in the information sheet.

3.5.3 Data handling and Storage

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, data was stored in a secure manner. Following each interview, the Dictaphone which held the interview recording was

stored in a locked drawer, to which only the researcher had access to, until the recordings were transferred to the researcher's laptop. The recordings were then deleted from the Dictaphone. The digital recordings were stored on the researcher's laptop, which was password protected. The consent forms were kept in a locked drawer away from the interview schedules so that the participants' responses could not be identified. Information on data storage and handling was communicated to the respondents in the information leaflet sent prior to the interview.

3.5.4 Reporting of Data

Researchers must never present data which are inaccurate - this includes falsifying or misrepresenting data, or altering findings by omission of data (BERA, 2011; Hartas, 2010). This also involves taking steps to avoid accidental misrepresentation of findings, such as qualitative data being interpreted in a way that does not actually reflect the views of the participants. The nature of qualitative research does raise questions of subjectivity, as it is arguably impossible for a researcher involved in the interview process, and extraction of themes from the data, to be completely removed from the research. Interpretation may therefore be biased by the researcher's pre-existing ideas and beliefs (Silverman, 2013). Throughout the research process, the researcher kept a reflective journal to document any of their own thoughts and feelings which arose during the process of interviewing, transcribing and analysis of the data. In order to make the researcher's analysis of the data transparent, direct quotations are used to support the analysis, and an explanation given to the reader of how those quotes were interpreted.

3.5.5 Considerations Associated with Interviewing

The researcher must consider ethical implications that are specific to the use of in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews may be a potential source of stress, for both researcher and participant, and measures were taken to account for this (Whiting, 2008). At the end of each interview, the researcher gave time for the participant to ask any questions, or voice any concerns they had as a result of the interview process. Similarly, the use of reflective note-taking allowed the researcher to acknowledge their own thoughts and feelings that arose during the interview process, for example times when the researcher may have felt a strong internal disagreement with the perceptions voiced by a participant.

3.5.6 Reliability and Validity

Researchers must ensure their work has both reliability and validity, and is therefore rigorous (Morse et al., 2002). In quantitative research, reliability is 'the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study' (Joppe, 2000; cited in Bashir et al., 2008, p. 36), while validity is 'the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure' (Polit & Hungler 1997, p. 656). As with other qualitative research, the small sample size in the present study would make the research less reliable than quantitative research (Long & Johnson, 2000). Nevertheless, various strategies can be used by qualitative researchers to maintain rigor, such as triangulation of data. Due to time constraints, only one method of data collection was used, although the researcher acknowledges that in future, multiple or mixed methods could be used to achieve triangulation of the data. Validity of the research instrument was established by conducting a preliminary interview with one EP to ascertain whether the predetermined questions were sufficient for answering the research questions; as a result of the pilot interview, changes to the interview schedule were made before the final interviews. The researcher also took steps to strengthen the concept validity of the research instrument.

3.6 Limitations

The researcher acknowledges several limitations to the methodology of the present study. Due to time constraints, only interviews were used to collect data; while they are a good method for exploring concepts in detail, there may be a need for future research which utilises multiple or mixed methods, such as interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and document analysis, to explore the topic further and determine whether the inferences made from the interview data are valid. There are also some limitations to the use of interviewing stemming from the experience of the researcher. During the researcher's reflective note-taking that followed each interview, it was noted that the quality of the interviewing did improve with each subsequent interview. This was due to the researcher gaining more confidence and becoming more skilled at building rapport and creating a natural, conversational interview style. Although van Teijlingen and Hundley (2002) note that this process of each interview being 'better' than the last is a normal one, the result is that the skill and experience of the researcher had some impact on the quality of the data which were collected from each participant, and this may have influenced the final analysis.

Furthermore, there are some potential issues relating to the sample used in the present study. The small sample size means that, although the data generated was rich and in-depth, findings cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the wider population (Kumar, 2011). In addition, the researcher relied on non-probability, convenience sampling, which required the participants to volunteer themselves for the research. As a result, one cannot guarantee that the views held by the EPs in the sample are representative of all EPs as it may be that only those who held particular views (for example, being in favour of inclusion) put themselves forward for the research. Research using other, more anonymous methods for data collection (such as questionnaires) could provide a wider range of responses.

Finally, the researcher acknowledges potential limitations in the use of thematic analysis as a means of analysing the data. Data analysis, far from being a passive process of merely noting down themes that 'emerge' from the data, involves the researcher actively identifying patterns and making choices about which patterns should be reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a result, interpretation of the data cannot be entirely removed from the researcher's own beliefs and theoretical position. As much as possible, the researcher has, during the discussion, used quotes and demonstrated to the reader how these were interpreted, in order to add some transparency to the analysis. In addition, the researcher acknowledges that, due to the volume of data collected from the interviews, not all of the findings could be reported in detail, and therefore only the most significant findings have been selected.

4 Presentation of Data and Discussion

The data were analysed and a number of themes and sub-themes developed (see Table 2). Some themes were common to all of the interviews, while others were spoken about by only a couple of participants. The themes were organized and grouped in relation to the three original research questions; they will now be presented and discussed in turn.

4.1 How do Educational Psychologists Describe Inclusion?

The first research questions related to how EPs describe inclusion. The key finding which emerged from the interviews was that EPs have a variety of different ways of describing inclusion, as evidenced by the range of responses given to the interview question.

Inclusion as a Multi-Dimensional Concept

'Claire's description of inclusion was broad, and focussed primarily on the role of other people in making individuals with SEND feel included, as opposed to placing the focus of the definition on the characteristics of the individual. For example, it was down to others to help make necessary adaptations and build relationships, and therefore help individuals with SEND to feel included.

> *"So inclusive education to me starts – and it may sound a bit soppy – but in the hearts and minds of people. So inclusive education is about people acknowledging others as other human beings, (pause) adapting the environment where possible, making a person have a sense of belonging, developing positive relationships and (pause) just (pause) being reasonable..." – 'Claire'*

By contrast, other EPs gave a much more concrete description which included specific elements of inclusion; 'Simon', for example, listed presence, participation and the ability to contribute as key aspects of his description.

> *"So inclusion, in my mind, is where every child is present in a mainstream, local, community school, and each child has an opportunity to participate – to be present, first, to be fully present and to be able to fully participate and contribute to the school that they're part of." – 'Simon'*

This description was much more in line with some of the current definitions in the literature, which have sought to move away from the merely locational definitions of inclusion that are used within government documentation (Hodkinson, 2005) and recognise that inclusion is made up of different key elements (Booth & Ainscow, 2000).

This concept that inclusion is made up of multiple elements was echoed by all 4 EPs; several referred to the need for both presence and participation in the classroom, as well as an adapted curriculum to facilitate inclusion. Social inclusion was also viewed as key, and EPs emphasized the need for 'having friendships' and 'building social networks'. This recognition that inclusion must contain a social, as well as an academic element, may reflect the widespread research which has shown how severe the consequences of social rejection can be - pupils who are rejected by their peers may view themselves as less socially competent and become isolated (Newton et al., 1996), experience greater feelings of loneliness (Pavri & Luftig, 2001) and have lower self-esteem, which is in turn negatively correlated with school performance (Dalgas-Pelish, 2006). Therefore, even if pupils with SEND are present in mainstream classrooms and accepted by the staff, lack of adequate peer relationships may prevent them from achieving and reaching their full academic potential.

Inclusion versus Integration

Another element common to most EPs' descriptions was an acknowledgement of the difference between 'inclusion' and 'integration'. Integration was common practice in England until a few decades ago (Farrell, 2004) and involved varying degrees of placing children with SEND into mainstream schools; children could be integrated within the mainstream classroom, within a special unit attached to the mainstream school, or be integrated for only short periods, spending the rest of their time in a special school (Farrell, 2004; Hegarty, 1991). Gradually, from the 1990s onwards there was a shift away from 'integration' and towards 'inclusion', which required children to be actively participating in school, achieving, and to be accepted by staff and peers (Booth & Ainscow, 2000), as well as being present. However, 'Greg' was clear that, in his mind, inclusion and integration should not be seen as two separate movements; rather, inclusion built upon (and arguably improved) the existing foundations of integration.

> *"About 20 years ago I was running a small project in S(b) county council and at that time it was about integration, as opposed to inclusion … and integration could be seen on different levels, but the whole business of being integrated in the institution, learning in the classroom, being engaged socially and – as well as ultimately outside of school as well – the whole package is what … came to be known as inclusion, within the education world. – 'Greg'*

Thus, inclusion can be viewed as a consequence of greater knowledge and experience surrounding the placement of pupils with SEND into mainstream schools.

Inclusion as a Fundamental Human Right

'Greg's response revealed that he also did not perceive inclusion to be limited to the educational context, but that we can think about wider inclusion into society too:

> *"There's inclusion very broadly in society, and then there's inclusion for young children in schools. But essentially it's about trying to ensure that children and young people, and then eventually adults, are part of mainstream society" – 'Greg'*

This concept of viewing inclusion as a wider issue than just educating children with SEND in mainstream schools was also reflected in a later statement, in which 'Greg' focused on the origins of the term 'inclusion' within the education system in the USA. He argued that inclusion could be seen as one more in a string of several movements that have existed within our society in the past, including those movements for race equality and gender equality, which he argued were fundamentally about those individuals being included within society. Therefore, inclusion of children with SEND within mainstream society can be defined as a basic human right – a view that was also shared by 'Simon'. This concept of inclusion as a fundamental right has also been addressed in the literature on inclusion by Norwich (2008).

> *"So obviously the starter is the child's right – human right – to be there, to be present, and not to be segregated. The parallels being if the child was from a different culture, we wouldn't dream of saying "you have to go here because other children from that same culture go to that school." So I think there's a human rights parallel there, for starters." – 'Simon'*

Inclusion Concerns All

One potentially surprising finding was that only one EP ('Claire') related inclusion to more factors than just special needs and disabilities; in her mind, inclusion also applied to other individual characteristics such as race, religion and cultural differences.

> *"And inclusion is for all of these barriers and not just about having disabilities. We're talking about people with different race, different religions, (pause) different cultural identities." – 'Claire'*

Hardman & Worthington (2000) argued that in a fully inclusive education, every child has a right to attend a mainstream school, and the school must make adaptations in order to include them. In definitions such as this one, the term 'SEND' is expanded to include 'all children who are at a disadvantage, including the multiplicity of factors relating to disability, language, class, cultural background, gender or ethnic origin' (Hardman & Worthington, 2000, p. 350). There has also been an increase internationally in viewing inclusion as a process by which exclusion on the basis of 'race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability' is reduced (Ainscow, 2005, p. 2). In light of the increasing presence of definitions such as these, it is surprising that inclusion in the present study was, for all but one EP, limited to students with SEND.

When considering reasons for this difference in descriptions, it is important to consider the context within which the EPs were working. Definitions of inclusion can be subject to both cross-cultural and intra-cultural differences (that is, differences between different cultures and differences within one culture) (Foster et al., 2003). These differences may arise from a range of factors. In the interview, 'Claire' stated that she was working for an LEA in London which had high levels of immigration, where families might experience exclusion based on characteristics associated with their ethnicity, culture or language. As a result, she may have had more experiences of dealing with exclusion that arises from these factors, not just SEND.

> *"I think (pause) here people consider SEN and disabilities but they don't consider the other characteristics that a child may have that also may determine whether they are included or not. We have lots of migrant families that come to S, and so they can have experiences of social exclusion" – 'Claire'*

It is possible that the extent to which the different participants had similar experiences of addressing exclusion based on these cultural differences might explain why some tended to describe inclusion in terms of SEND alone. Similar research with trainee teachers showed that 42% defined inclusion as relating also to students' ethnicity, but only 21% believed it included gender, religion or beliefs, and only 15% included social class within their definitions of inclusion (Hodkinson, 2005). Hodkinson concluded that trainee teachers were able to conceptualise inclusion as preventing the exclusion of any individual with some form of difference, so their definitions were not overly narrow. Nevertheless, the present author would argue that the questions of why trainees had such diverse understandings of inclusion, and why relatively low percentages of the cohort related inclusion to factors outside of SEND, merits some investigation. Future research looking at the impact of individual experiences on definitions of inclusion may help shed some light on this.

4.1.1 Issues with Multiple Definitions

One topic which has gained frequent attention within the literature is the existence of many different definitions of inclusion (Feiler & Gibson, 1999; Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). Although there were some common features in the descriptions of inclusion given by the 4 EPs, there was nevertheless notable variation in the responses. In addition, all EPs agreed that there may be other ways of describing inclusion from the descriptions they had given; thus, there was a recognition that inclusion may indeed mean different things to different individuals (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). When questioned further about the existence of so many definitions of inclusion, 'Simon' spoke at length about the negative impact this may have on trying to implement inclusive practice. For example, he stated that he frequently encountered the term 'inclusive' being used by special schools to describe themselves, which goes against his philosophy of inclusion being all children educated in a local, mainstream school.

> *"I've quite commonly heard that, a special provision describing themselves as inclusive, because they say "well we welcome all the children." And you couldn't argue with them, they welcome children to their special setting, but it's not inclusion in the sense that I would – that I think we should be meaning, which is being part of your community and being part of your local mainstream school setting."- 'Simon'*

The impact of such varied and 'loose' interpretations of inclusion may be that schools in England claim they offer an inclusive provision when this is not, in fact, the case (Feiler &

Gibson, 1999). Feiler and Gibson (1999) went on to argue that 'lack of consistency in the definition and understanding of inclusion' (p. 147) is a threat to its success and has actively slowed down its progress over the last few decades.

As a possible solution to this issue 'Simon' stated it would be better to have one, unified definition of what inclusion is, that was legislated. As an example, 'Simon' gave the definition of inclusion used in the Salamanca Statement as one which England could take forward. There are some definite advantages to this definition. First, the concept of inclusive schooling is not limited to SEND, and instead ackowledges the full range of diversities that children may have. Secondly, it very firmly places the onus on the school to be flexible and adapt to meet the needs of all children, rather than requiring the children to adjust to existing systems. There could be, then, some benefit to 'Simon's suggestion of adopting the wording used by the Salamanca Statement at a local policy level within England. However, Feiler & Gibson (1999), although agreeing that a 'detailed and precise definition' of inclusion is needed (p. 148), argued that schools could interpret the guidelines in the Salamanca Statement in ways which do not necessarily lead to inclusion of all children, particular lower-ability ones; whether this is the best definition to be legislated within England's Code of Practice could be contested. Furthermore, other researchers have argued that rather focusing on creating a clear definition of inclusion, professionals within the field should instead simply try to promote the key values related to the concept (Coles & Hancock, 2002; Hodkinson, 2010).

4.2 To What Extent do EPs Think Children with SEND Can Be Included, and Why?

In light of previous literature on the topic which showed inconsistencies in EPs' perceptions of inclusion, and what was the ideal placement for children with various SEND, the second research question aimed to explore this further by asking EPs how far they believed inclusion was possible, and what factors influenced this view.

4.2.1 Perceived Advantages of Including Children with SEND

Of the 4 EPs interviewed, all of them expressed positive perceptions of inclusion as a concept and recognised a range of benefits to having children with SEND included within mainstream schools. These benefits could be grouped into two main categories: benefits to the child being included, and benefits to the peer group, and these will be discussed in turn.

Benefits to the Child: Academic Progress

Regarding the child with SEND, one benefit mentioned by all 4 EPs was improved development in a range of areas; in particular, 'Greg' and 'Simon' gave examples of the positive impact of inclusion on academic performance. 'Greg' had previously conducted research which found that there were small, yet significant, differences between the academic progress of pupils with SEND included in mainstream schools, and those educated in special schools. This evidence of improved academic performance in mainstream schools was also referred to by 'Simon' in a later interview.

> *"Well what the research that I worked at…is that, overall, in the American system at least, kids actually achieve more in the mainstream environment than they do in the special environment. And there weren't massive differences, but nonetheless there were significant differences over cohorts that were investigated quite rigorously." – 'Greg'*

Salend & Duhaney (1999) collated a range of studies which investigated the benefits of including students with learning disabilities (LD) in the USA. Students who took part in specific inclusion programmes were more likely to meet IEP targets and performed better on standardised tests. In particular, reading and writing skills improved at a rate that was comparable to their mainstream peers (Shinn et al., 1997; Waldron & McKlesky, 1998), and this improvement was significantly higher for children who were re-integrated into mainstream classrooms as opposed to those educated in resource room programs (Fuchs, Fuchs & Fernstrom, 1993). These gains are found across a range of different SEND also; in reviewing the literature on pupils with intellectual disabilities, Freeman & Alkin (2000) found that children who were included made just as much, or greater progress, compared to pupils educated in special schools. It also appeared that the more time spent in the general education classroom, the more progress was made. Therefore, it seems that inclusion does have a positive impact on the academic outcomes of pupils with varying levels of SEND.

There are various reasons why pupils with SEND may show more progress in mainstream schools as opposed to special schools. 'Simon' referred to the different processes by which children acquire new information, stating 'I think 80% of learning is by imitation'. Therefore, children educated in general education classrooms may progress better as they are able to imitate the successful learning styles of their non-disabled peers. By contrast, those in special schools are educated alongside pupils who also struggle with learning and therefore this ability to imitate successful learning is reduced.

> *"And the other issue is learning, and the fact that you're surrounded by children who find learning difficult, and if 80% of learning is imitation, you're going to imitate some pretty strange learning models. So other children who struggle with learning, with language, may have challenging behaviour, you're very likely to absorb that." – 'Simon'*

One of the earliest theories of social learning came from Albert Bandura, who proposed that learning can take place vicariously through witnessing the behaviour, and consequences of that behaviour, of others. This observational learning allows for knowledge to be gained without the need for each individual to go through 'tedious trial and error' (Bandura & Walters, 1977, p. 2). Evidence of children, and even newborns, modelling the behaviour of adults has been well documented (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963; Meltzoff & Moore, 1983). Therefore, it is plausible to assume that children placed in mainstream schools will model the learning behaviours of their peers, and thus pick up successful learning strategies, while children in special schools may model the unhelpful learning styles and challenging behaviour displayed by their peers.

One other reason why the academic progress of pupils in special schools may be slower is the expectations placed upon them, both by their teachers and by themselves; certainly, 'Greg' expressed concern over the so-called 'dumbing down' of expectations from both the pupils and the teachers in special education classrooms, as a result of being surrounded by pupils with learning difficulties.

> *"The reason – or sometimes the reason – why that seems to be is that if you get all the kids that aren't very bright together and stick them in a school together, they don't actually see anybody achieving, I think, and they don't have models of successful learning and achieving, within their own school, and so maybe they dumb down their expectations and also maybe the teachers dumb down their expectations… And so that issue about maybe dumbing down a bit is one that still merits investigation and people still need to think very hard about that." – 'Greg'*

The literature suggests that teachers' expectations of academic achievement can have a causal impact on a child's attainment, and that this impact can last up to several years after initial contact (Smith, Jussim & Eccles, 1999). Teachers' expectations about academic achievement can be influenced by various factors, including race, gender, class (Blau, 2004; Riley & Ungerleider, 2008; Wineburg, 1987) and diagnosis of SEND. Shifrer (2013) argued that

children who are labelled as having a learning disability are expected to achieve less by both their parents and their teachers. This leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby the children behave according to the expectations placed upon them. Thus, their academic performance does not reflect their true potential. Special schools educate children with a SEND diagnosis; if presence of a label has such an adverse effect on teacher expectations, and hence pupil progress, it may be that special school placement is detrimental for this reason. Investigation into whether teacher expectations for pupils with similar levels of need differ between mainstream and special education teachers may be useful to determine if this is the case.

Benefits to the Child: Social Development

In addition to academic performance, inclusion also has significant advantages for children's social development. There is evidence that specific interventions which aim to teach appropriate social behaviour through modelling are successful (Field et al., 2001), so children with SEND who are included into mainstream schools could imitate not only their peers' learning models, but also appropriate social skills. Furthermore, Wiener & Tardif (2004) found the more inclusive the setting, the better the outcomes are in terms of various aspects of social development, including social acceptance, loneliness, and number and quality of friendships. Children who received their education within the mainstream classroom were accepted more than those educated in separate classrooms. However, it is important to note that these findings became insignificant following corrections, and that some research has suggested the opposite effect of inclusion on social skills; children with SEND may be more likely to compare themselves to their mainstream peers and could experience low self-esteem and self-concept as a result (Bakker et al., 2007). Other research into the social effects of inclusion have found no significant differences between children who are included and those in special education (Lindsay, 2007). Therefore, it appears that the empirical evidence for social inclusion does not always support the anecdotal evidence provided by the EPs in the present study.

Several EPs, such as 'Judy', also spoke about the benefit of being part of their local community as a result of being included within mainstream schools.

> *"So I think that for a child, and for a family, to be a part of that local community, and to be included as part of that local community, is really important." – 'Judy'*

Crucially, this benefit was seen by 'Claire' to be lifelong, as her experience with adults with learning disabilities was that special schooling led to more isolation, and less belonging, later in life as an adult. There is evidence that inclusion can lead to more opportunities for friendships with local children (Nakken & Pijl, 2002) and this impacts positively on children's general social development. Therefore, a child who is able to form local friendships, and to participate and be visible within their community, is likely to have better outcomes, and these benefits may continue into adulthood.

Benefits to the Mainstream Peers

It was recognised by all of the EPs in the present study that inclusion benefits not only children with SEND, but also their mainstream peers; a notion supported by several studies done on this topic (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). This, coupled with findings that inclusion of students with even severe disabilities into mainstream classrooms does not have any adverse effect on the performance of non-disabled peers (Kalambouka et al., 2007), or reduce the amount of teacher attention and instruction received (Hollowood et al., 1994), presents a strong case for why pupils with SEND should be included in mainstream classrooms, not only for their sake, but for the sake of their non-disabled peers also. This benefit of inclusion is crucial as it follows children into their adult lives also; 'Simon' reflected on his childhood, and the negative impact that a lack of contact with disabled individuals had on his perceptions of disability as an adult:

> *"So the world is a better place when they meet those young people earlier on. I always say I was prejudiced in my up – almost disabled myself in my upbringing – because I didn't encounter disabled children at school, only much later as an adult. So the myths are still in your head, as an adult." – 'Simon'*

He was clear that, by not meeting individuals with SEND as a child, it could lead to the persistence of myths and stereotypes, and thus negative perceptions of disability in adults. 'Simon' went on to compare his experience with that of his children, who grew up in schools where inclusion was more commonplace; according to him, his children 'don't have the same issues at all' and therefore, in his view, there are clear, 'world-changing' and long-term benefits to non-disabled children encountering children with SEND from a young age.

4.2.2 'Full Inclusion' Vs Including 'Most Children'

Although the EPs were all positive about inclusion and its benefits for children with SEND, there was still a range of responses to the question of how far children can be included within mainstream schools; the majority of EPs felt that 'most' children could be included, and only 'Simon' strongly advocated the concept of 'full inclusion', whereby all children would be educated alongside their mainstream peers, with no exceptions.

> *"I - my personal view is I think most children with special needs can be included in a mainstream school" – 'Claire'*

> *"I would say all. That's exactly my answer. And I would say all means all, really." – 'Simon'*

This finding reflects previous quantitative studies (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Hardman & Worthington, 2000), which also showed variations in EPs' perceptions. Crucially, the type of SEND, and the individual needs of the child, often influenced the extent to which EPs felt inclusion was possible.

Impact of Type of SEND

The EPs in the present study gave the individual needs of the child as a key factor in their decision of whether they could be included or not. When asked if there were any cases which they felt were unsuitable for inclusion, 3 of the EPs ('Claire', 'Greg' and 'Judy') gave the example of children who were 'severely autistic' or experienced very high levels of sensory need.

> *"There are some children who have some real complex and sensory needs, that I feel a large busy environment isn't meeting their needs and so therefore if it's – if it makes them unhappy, and it doesn't suit them, then I feel that should be reconsidered and if we can have a smaller environment then that would be great." – 'Claire'*

> *"And also, kids who are severely autistic. I think that's very difficult for mainstream schools to manage unless they've got a targeted unit." – 'Greg'*

> *"I think working with our current system there can be real challenges – the one that I come across mostly is children who are on the autism spectrum who have really high levels of sensory needs, and any movement, noise around them can be really, really challenging ... So I think that's one area where it can be really challenging and young people and parents find it really hard to make that work."* – *'Judy'*

As evidenced by the quote from 'Judy', the very nature of mainstream schools, which are large and house large numbers of pupils, could lead to sensory overload; therefore, an inclusive placement may actually prove detrimental to some children. Even 'Simon', who favoured 'full inclusion', listed these as only cases where he'd been given 'pause for thought', and where parents had argued a strong case for a mainstream placement being the most appropriate setting. Some previous literature has also highlighted the potential difficulty of mainstream placement for these learners; in one case study of a boy with high-functioning autism and severe sensory needs, the parents argued that special education was, for him, 'a necessity and compromise for which [they] hold much regret' (McLaren, 2013, p. 32). The parents questioned whether the level of changes to mainstream classrooms necessary to support the education of these students is practical, when special education classrooms can provide the smaller and less busy environment needed to prevent sensory overload. It seems, therefore, that both parents and professionals perceive mainstream placements to be difficult for this particular type of SEND.

In the present study, 'Claire' raised the point that a solution to this may simply be to have smaller mainstream schools, thus reducing the sensory impact. However, these are not available as an option within the current education system, and for this reason placement options for these children are limited. This may be one area in which more work is needed to investigate how children with severe sensory needs can be educated in a way that does not segregate them from the mainstream community, but that also does not cause them unnecessary discomfort. 'Claire' also suggested that resource bases could provide an 'intermediate' for such children; however, schools would need to take care to ensure that the children still felt part of the whole-school community, and were not simply segregated within their own unit.

Another special need discussed by the majority of the EPs was EBD. In the present study, opinions differed on whether these pupils could be included into mainstream schools; 'Greg' believed that where children with EBD were 'violent' towards other children, and the

safety of their peers was a potential issue, a mainstream placement would not be suitable. By contrast, 'Claire' argued that, if the correct support systems were in place for a child with EBD, inclusion was very possible. These opposing views do, to some extent, reflect what has already been found in the literature; In Evans & Lunt's (2002) research, EBD was unanimously seen by EPs as the hardest type of SEN to include into mainstream schools. However, when Hardman and Worthington (2000) gave EPs vignettes of children with different presentations and asked them what setting they would ideally place each child in, some EPs still chose a mainstream placement for children described as having behavioural difficulties. One possible reason for the difference of opinion regarding the inclusion of pupils with EBD is the influence that other professionals might have on the EPs' decision-making. Research looking at the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion has found that teachers perceive students with EBD to be the most challenging to accommodate within their classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002), and this was reflected by 'Claire's response to the question of whether any types of SEND might be unsuitable for inclusion:

> *"Well (laughs) I know what my schools would say and it's those children with complex behavioural needs (pause) where they may harm or hurt other people or they just can't follow the school rules." – 'Claire'*

In this example, she made clear that it was not her personal view that students with EBD could not be included, but the view of the teachers she encountered in her designated schools. This was echoed by a statement from 'Greg', who had previously conducted research into the area of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion; in his cohort, teachers were more positive about having children with SLD or sensory impairments in their classrooms than students who displayed challenging behaviour. If teachers are less positive about the concept of including children with EBD, then EPs may come under pressure from some teachers to try to find alternative placements for these children, rather than attempt to maintain their mainstream placement.

There was a sense that the EPs interviewed did sympathise with the difficulties that teachers faced in trying to include this particular group of learners, such as the significant disruption they could cause and the challenge of attempting to manage their behaviour within very large, mainstream classes. However, 'Claire' also believed that schools were sometimes quick to exclude learners with challenging behaviour, and this was potentially due to them being unaware of the negative consequences that exclusion might have for that child.

Excluded children may go on to be placed in special schools, or in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), and 'Claire' was clear that, in her mind, these settings may exacerbate the pupil's difficulties and cause even more challenging behaviour.

> *"I think if we had mainstream schools see what happens when a child with behavioural needs goes into a school that's full of children with behavioural needs, that they might appreciate that, actually, is it always the best option? From what could be low-level disruptive behaviour because of what's going on socially for them (pause) turning into criminal activity. (pause) I wonder if schools would always take that option as easily as they do sometimes."* – 'Claire'

Certainly, the evidence regarding the effectiveness of PRUs is mixed; although some research reported high pupil satisfaction within the units (Hill, 1997), other research, and the results from OFSTED reviews, has raised concerns over pupil outcomes and the quality of education provided in these settings (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Taylor, 2012). One possible solution to aid the inclusion of children with EBD may, therefore, be to carry out work with the teachers in mainstream schools around the benefits of maintained mainstream placements over education within alternative provisions. In addition, 'Greg' acknowledged that some teachers were 'able to manage that [challenging behaviour] better than others' and this could contribute to how positive they were about including pupils with EBD. In studies where teachers have been less positive about including children with EBD, many cited lack of adequate training or support as the main contributing factor to this view (Avramidis et al., 2000; Heflin & Bullock, 1999). If this is the case, then helping those teachers to develop and hone effective behaviour management strategies, and thus build confidence, could also aid inclusion.

4.2.3 Potential Barriers to Inclusion

Following the pilot interview, the researcher had some ideas for various barriers to inclusion that might be identified by the EPs in the study, and used some of the barriers identified by 'Marc' as prompts for later interviews. One example was the issue of resources. However, when the other EPs were asked about resources, this was not generally regarded as the most significant barrier – 'Claire' became passionate in her argument that, in fact, she believed some schools merely use lack of funding and resources as an 'excuse' for lack of adequate support. Similarly, in light of developments in technology, and with new schools

being built with disability and accessibility in mind, physical barriers were also not seen as always being a problem. Instead, two barriers that all EPs did speak about were attitudes towards disability and inclusion, and the current academisation movement in England. For this reason, only the latter two points are discussed in this paper.

Attitudes of Staff

As mentioned previously, the attitudes of school staff towards certain types of SEND could be one factor which influences the extent to which children are included in mainstream schools (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Avramidis et al., 2000). However, the EPs also identified that they sometimes encounter school staff who are not in favour of inclusion more generally. In these cases, it could often prove difficult to help teachers move past this view and begin to see inclusion in a more positive light. There are several possible reasons why teachers may be against including children with SEND, which have been reported both by the EPs in the present study, and in the literature. Firstly, in the EPs' experience, negative attitudes often arose out of lack of prior experience with inclusion. 'Judy' believed that where schools had previously encountered a particular need or disability, there was less 'fear' or anxiety surrounding it and so the schools were more open to accepting those children.

> *"It is very different for different schools, because a school might have had experience with students with certain difficulties or disabilities and therefore they are much more willing and open to cater for those needs, whereas others who might be anxious, they're a bit scared about it. So I think a lot of our work is helping people to overcome those fears, fears of the unknown." – 'Judy'*

This is supported by a Avramidis and Norwich's (2002) review of the current literature on teachers' attitudes towards integration, which found significant individual differences in attitudes. Of the teacher-related variables, teaching experience and prior contact with pupils with SEND were both found to significantly influence how positive teachers were towards inclusion. Teachers with more experience of having children with SEND in their classes had more positive attitudes than those with little or no experience (Leyser, Kapperman & Keller, 1994). In addition, initial teacher training programmes which have included a practical element of teaching a child with SEND were viewed very positively by the trainees that took part (Golder, Norwich & Bayliss, 2005), so adding a practical element to all training programmes may help teachers 'overcome those fears' at a much earlier stage.

Another finding was that younger teachers with fewer years of overall teaching experience were more pro-inclusion (Clough & Lindsay, 1991; Leyser, et al., 1994), although these findings were not always consistent (Avramidis et al., 2000). In the present study, 'Greg' gave an indication of why this may be the case, stating that teachers who had trained in the past may feel that educating children with SEND was not their responsibility, and that this view could, in some cases, be supported by influential bodies such as certain teachers' unions.

"You'll have read about it, I'm sure, that sometimes teachers feel "it's my job to include these kids as far as I can" and some teachers – certainly some of the ones who were trained when I was younger – don't think it's their job. And unions come into that as well, because there's one big teaching union that thinks it is their job and there's one big teaching union that thinks it probably wasn't their job, and they differ on that." – 'Greg'

The EPs in Evans and Lunt's (2002) study also encountered mainstream teachers believing they should not be responsible for teaching children with SEND. Therefore, teachers trained in the past, when segregated, special education was the norm, may still believe that this responsibility rests with the special schools.

When discussing the attitudes of school staff, the important role that school leadership play in inclusion was also highlighted. Several EPs, including 'Claire', believed that if a school's leadership team did not see inclusion as a priority, then this may influence how pro-inclusion the rest of the staff were.

"It has to come from leadership as well, the leaders of the school have to have an inclusive mind-set, and if they don't then it's not going to work." – 'Claire'

The evidence does show that, in order for changes within a school to succeed, the leadership must support them (Fullan, 1991); therefore, principals' attitudes could contribute to how successful inclusion is within a particular school. In light of this, it is potentially concerning that the literature shows less favourable attitudes towards inclusion from school principals than other professionals. In a survey of 408 elementary school principals, only 1 in 5 were positive about the concept of inclusion (Praisner, 2003), and these attitudes also depended very much on the category of need presented, with some types of need favoured more than others (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Praisner, 2003).

There are several reasons why principals may be less in favour of inclusion generally, and more in favour of including some types of learners than others. Wider societal issues may be influencing principals' views; 'Greg', 'Claire' and 'Simon' referred to the current system in England whereby 'league tables' judge schools according to the exam results obtained at the end of every academic year. By contrast, other achievements which may be more relevant for learners with SEND are not a priority. For this reason, a principal may be reluctant to adopt a philosophy of 'full inclusion' if concerned about the impact this may have on results.

> *"And (pause) the whole business around the way that exam results are reported, (pause) secondary schools are judged on the proportion of 5 grade A-Cs that the kids get, and everything, in their school. So there's nothing about, say, "you did a brilliant job for this kid who's got learning difficulties and he got three ASDAN qualifications." That doesn't really – that's not going to be reported." – 'Greg'*

> *"...and also the whole focus on results, the whole preoccupation with SAT results, league table results, all of that that we've put up with for the last 20 years, has put much, much more pressure on, and obstacles and barriers towards, children's effective inclusion." – 'Simon'*

> *"Senior (pause) leadership have a lot of pressure to ensure that they're getting certain results, so I often – and I do get that they've got to meet certain OFSTED requirements, and they've got to meet certain SATS results, and a child with SEN, with additional needs, could impact those results – so I get where a head-teacher's coming from when they say "okay, have a certain amount of students" or recognise the impact it has on their results." – 'Claire'*

Therefore, in order to facilitate a shift in the attitudes of school leaders towards inclusion, there may first need to be a wider attitudinal shift within England's education system – this is discussed in more detail later in this paper. In addition to this, experience with SEND is also linked to how positive principals' attitudes are, so in order to improve attitudes and move forwards, school principals need to be given the opportunity to have positive experiences with all different types of SEND (Praisner, 2003).

Attitudes of Parents

One other factor which might influence decisions on placement is the wishes of the parent or guardian. In England, parent choice has always been highly influential in determining where pupils with SEND are placed. The 1996 Education Act decreed that all children with a statement should be educated in a mainstream school, unless it would disrupt the education of peers or go against the wishes of the parent. In addition, the revised SEND Code of Practice 2015 places greater emphasis on pupil and parent choice during any decision-making about the child or young person's education. There is evidence that some parents prefer specialist settings for their children; parents of children with autism or Down's Syndrome, whose children were already in special education, were much less likely to endorse inclusive, mainstream placements (Kasari et al., 1999), while inclusion was favoured more by parents of younger children, or those with milder disabilities (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). In these cases, an EP may make recommendations that are more in line with the wishes of the parents, or feel they have a duty to support the parent in their decision – this was something a couple of the EPs felt strongly about:

> *"And in my job, and the people who actually make the decisions around which school does this kid go to – special needs officers who are all based in A in B – they've actually got to pay attention to the views of parents, because I do as well... that's another factor that can go for or against inclusion, is what the parents' views are." – 'Greg'*

> *"I think sometimes – so, actually, I should say first of all, I'm a strong advocate for inclusive education. I think all children should have the opportunity to go to mainstream if that's what the families believe that they would like. I equally believe that if a parent, or the child themselves, feel that special provision is more suited for their family needs, their belief systems, then I'll also support them through that process, ensuring that they understand that it's then difficult to sometimes come out of a special school and go back into mainstream." – 'Claire'*

'Claire' was clear that, regardless of her own stance on inclusion, it was her role as an EP to support the decision of the family or young person themselves, and that the decision should ultimately rest with them. In some cases, this meant helping to place the child into a specialist setting rather than a mainstream one. 'Greg' also acknowledged that individuals responsible for making decisions on placement in his LEA are required to take parents' views and wishes for their child into consideration, and that this can impact on whether that child is included.

It is apparent, therefore, that some EPs recognise that inclusion may be hindered by parents wanting special placement for their children, yet they feel unable to challenge these parents' views. 'Judy' was clear that her conversations with parents should remain 'value-free' and focus very specifically on each individual case. By contrast, 'Simon' disagreed that EPs should view parental opinion as paramount, as he felt the parents may have been influenced by other professionals who subscribed to a more medical model of disability, and would thus advocate special schooling over inclusion. Instead, 'Simon' argued that EPs were within their rights, and in fact had a professional duty, to contest this view:

> *"...say I met a parent who was very into special schools, special education, I would always have a very active dialogue with that family. I would never be passive about it. I would never be saying "oh well just, if the parents are strongly with that view then that's their decision". I think that has to be challenged and we have a professional responsibility to challenge the parent when they are committed to special education…"* – *'Simon'*

This difference of opinion does raise an important question regarding the role of EPs, and the extent to which professionals should remain neutral during the advice giving process, or seek to actively promote inclusive education to parents who are opposed to it.

In addition, some EPs discussed the impact of the attitudes of parents of other children. Although there is evidence that having children with disabilities included does not hinder the academic outcomes of mainstream peers (Hollowood et al., 1994; Kalambouka et al., 2007), the EPs still identified occasions where there may be adverse consequences:

> *"I know, especially for behaviour, some parents whose child may have been at the end of the child with behavioural and emotional issues, obviously the first thing they want is for the student to be excluded and not to be in the school. So inclusion can be really difficult then because that's often what head-teachers will say to me – "we've had complaints from other parents that don't want the child to be here, so actually we don't know if we can keep the child in the school"."* – *'Claire'*

From the quote, it was evident that 'Claire' had experienced cases where the attitudes of parents of the other children in the class might prompt schools to move towards exclusion, rather than inclusion, of children with SEND. 'Claire' also proposed that in order to overcome this barrier, some work may need to be done to educate the whole community, including the

families of mainstream children, on inclusion, and prevent schools from feeling under pressure to exclude children with SEND for this reason.

Attitudes of EPs

Finally, but also highly significant, were the attitudes and perceptions of the EPs themselves. The EP role involves, among other things, carrying out assessments of children and making recommendations for provision (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Burton, 2012). It was reflected on by two of the EPs in the present study that, traditionally, some EPs may have held views that all children with a particular type of need should go to a special school. For this reason, 'Simon' considered that EPs themselves have been 'part of the problem'. In addition, 'Claire' emphasized the dangers of EPs being viewed as 'experts', and the impact that this might have on the education of children with SEND, with their recommendations holding potentially more weight.

> *"I'm very much aware that as a psychologist if I said "Oh I think Joe Bloggs needs to go to this school" that may be taken for gospel, and those recommendations will be taken up. I am quite cautious that's a lifetime impact on the child and actually it should be a shared decision." – 'Claire'*

As a result of this, it was clearly stated by 'Claire' and 2 other EPs, that it was not a policy within their LEA to make a recommendation of what type of school a child should go to – they only made recommendations for the provisions the child would need.

> *"In terms of recommendations, we recommend provision, not placement. We're really clear about that in our authority." – 'Judy'*

> *"This local authority and most local authorities don't ask you to say whether you think the child should be in a specialist school or a mainstream school. What they want us to do is to describe the kind of provision…" – 'Greg'*

These findings contradict some of the previous literature which viewed recommending placement as a key aspect of the EP's job role (Burton, 2012). 'Claire' believed that this has been a recent shift, and that although EPs no longer advocate particular types of schooling for

children with different SEND, they may have done so in the past; this, in her view, led to EPs making 'bad decisions for some students'. The impact of the change is that the final decision on placement rests more with the family of the child and the LEA, which 'Claire' saw as a positive thing. Only 'Simon' stated that he would recommend a specific type of placement insofar as he believed that every child should go to a mainstream school, and that is what he would recommend to the parents.

The EPs also listed some advantages that they felt different types of educational placements may have over mainstream schools. Resourced provisions, or specialist 'units', were seen as advantageous by 'Judy' as they were able to provide smaller group environments if that was what the child needed, and 'Simon' recognised that, although not as inclusive as full mainstream placements, the units may be useful in maintaining a link to mainstream for children who would otherwise end up educated in special schools.

> *"It just means they've got the opportunity to have more time in a smaller group if they need it. But then some of them might not spend any time in that bit, with that peer support group who are also in that provision and might always be in there, but they're monitored and tracked and the expertise from the specialist staff is there to support them across the school." – 'Judy'*

> *"...thinking about the units within mainstream schools, resource bases, all the language around that, I think for some children they've been helpful as, again, a way of holding them in the mainstream world, who perhaps that wouldn't have happened." – 'Simon'*

'Claire' also spoke about how her LEA had previously used a system of dual placements, which she thought had been a successful approach because they provided a good balance for meeting that child's needs. This supports findings from a previous study (Burton, 2012) where both parents and EPs perceived there to be significant advantages of dual placements over single setting placements; namely, the special schools provided access to knowledge and expertise of special school staff, while the mainstream schools provided social gains from interacting with mainstream peers. 'Claire' also gave examples of how dual placements had helped school staff, as they gained experience of working with children with different needs. As a result, the EP perceived those schools to be more open to taking on future cases of children with SEND, where previously they may have viewed the child's needs as too challenging. Thus, there is some evidence of dual placements benefiting children

with SEND, their peers, and school staff. However, not all EPs agreed that dual placements feature the 'best of both' types of provision – in fact, 'Simon' referred to it as the 'worst of both worlds' and it was recognised that their high cost could be a deterrent also.

Some EPs in the study expressed there were cases where they believed special schooling may be the most suitable option for a child, despite recognising the wealth of benefits that inclusion has. A key concept which emerged in the interviews is whether there are identity benefits for children with SEND that come from being educated alongside peers with similar difficulties.

> *"I think sometimes young people want more of a sense of belonging. I'm thinking particularly of some of the young people I've worked with who have really severe, physical needs, and maybe mentally and intellectually they are able to work alongside their same-age peers, but actually they find it very isolating to not have contact with other people – I mean they might do socially and through community activities – but sometimes they, for their mental health, they would choose to choose to be in another type of setting, if that is available to them." – 'Judy'*

The quote from 'Judy' reveals that, for some groups of learners, mainstream placement may actually be more isolating than special placement; this was echoed by another EP ('Greg') who spoke about how young children with SEND may feel they are 'the only one' with that difficulty, and that this could impact negatively on them. However, 'Simon' felt that the argument for providing a sense of identity for the child did not necessarily justify the practice of segregated schooling, and thus should not be seen as a reason to take children out of mainstream placements. Thus, there is still disagreement within the profession over the advantages and disadvantages of special schools.

If EPs still see some merit in these types of placement, then this may be one factor preserving England's 'twin-track' system (Barton, 2003), with EPs sometimes recommending into the 'special world', as opposed to always attempting to move children with SEND out of it, and into mainstream. Of the EPs interviewed, only 'Simon' viewed mainstream education as the ideal for every child with SEND and stated that if a particular mainstream placement broke down, he would always prefer to look for an alternative mainstream school, rather than seek a special one. This question of whether there is some merit to keeping special school placements as an option is representative of a wider debate within the field of inclusive education, and is not just limited to EPs. Teachers and policy-makers from different countries,

including England, have expressed the opinion that there is still a place for special schools within the future of education (Norwich, 2008). In addition, parents, teachers and school leaders also continue to have differing opinions on the topic of whether children with SEND should be included, and to what extent. It could be argued that, as long as there is a lack of agreement on which direction inclusion should be taking, its progress will be slowed down.

Academisation of Schools in England

One idea which arose in all 4 interviews was that of the academisation movement currently taking place in England. Academies are independent schools which still receive Government funding (Machin & Vernoit, 2011). Originally, proposals were made to convert all state schools in England to academies by the year 2022 (DfE, 2016a); although this policy has since been abandoned, allowing schools to continue to choose for themselves whether they become academies or not, the EPs were clear that they still perceived there to be significant, negative effects of the academisation movement in terms of including children with SEND. Firstly, there was a clear consensus among the EPs that, although academies 'still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools' ("Types of School", 2016), some academies are less tolerant of learners with SEND, or simply do not set themselves up in a way which facilitates inclusion.

> *"I said with the way that the systems are developing currently in the political climate, with the academisation of secondary schools, we have noticed less tolerance and less willingness to continue inclusion…" – 'Judy'*

The EPs gave examples of various ways in which academies were, in their opinions, preventing successful inclusion from taking place. Both 'Simon' and 'Claire' believed that some academies prevent children from attending their schools in the first place. The result of this is that children with SEND whose needs were deemed too difficult by the academy end up being placed in other state-funded schools that are more open to inclusion, and these schools then became overwhelmed and unable to cope with the extra demand on staff and resources.

> *"The impact of that as well is that I've noticed, in the group of schools I have, the academies that are silently saying that the child needs to go somewhere else or are not as accepting of children with special needs, these children are going to other local schools who are more willing and open, and actually what happens is that they get lots of children with additional needs, and ... they're struggling with having a large number of children with additional needs." – 'Claire'*

'Claire' went on to say that this could have an even further knock-on effect on the quality of education in the more inclusive local schools – due to lack of funding, resources may be limited, and there may be a lack of quality teaching as teachers also feel overwhelmed and are therefore unwilling to teach in that school.

Secondly, several EPs raised concerns about how the process of academisation has led to LEAs having less power to influence or monitor those schools. Even EPs, according to 'Simon', could be prevented from entering academies.

> *"So they could support, and invest, but if the school just throws up the walls and closes the door, people can't go in. So I'm working with certain authorities where psychologists haven't been visiting secondary academies for many years, and so that's kind of worrying, isn't it really?" – 'Simon'*

'Claire' was clear that this lack of monitoring was potentially increasing the exclusion of children with SEND; although academies are required to follow similar entry requirements as state-funded schools ("Types of Schools", 2016), she felt that 'there aren't people auditing that as much as…they should be', and that this was to the detriment of pupils with SEND. In the interview, she provided anecdotal evidence of two cases in which academies in her LEA had told parents to 'find another school' for their children, although an official exclusion never took place; this led to the children being unable to access education for some period of time.

Nevertheless, despite an overwhelmingly negative response from EPs to the academisation movement, it was recognised that there could be potential benefits to inclusion. Some empirical studies found that students with SEND, or English as an additional language, made significant gains in maths and reading in one particular academy (Angrist et al., 2010). Academies are not required to follow the National Curriculum, and so are allowed to set their own curriculum. This flexibility of the curriculum could, at times, be beneficial to children

with SEND. Therefore, if academies could be encouraged to take on learners with SEND and adopt a flexible curriculum to suit their needs, and if their methods could still be subject to adequate monitoring by external agencies, then academies could prove a benefit, rather than a hindrance, to the inclusive movement.

4.3 What More Do EPs Think Could Be Done in the Future to Promote Inclusion?

4.3.1 Training

When asked about what could be done to overcome the identified barriers to inclusion, a common suggestion was to improve levels of training for educational professionals. Many teacher training programmes in England include some modules on SEND, but they may not be adequate to prepare them for teaching in inclusive classrooms. 'Judy', for example, expressed that if the training only discusses different types of SEND, then teachers will fail to emerge from their initial training with a broader understanding of what inclusion is, how to implement it successfully, and the debates around it.

> *"Can I just say, there's one more thing and I think that's about teacher training. And I know it's meant to be including more – more information in special educational needs is going to be included in teacher training. I haven't seen what that looks like but I think that it will be teaching about autism, teaching about ADHD, teaching about dyslexia, but not about the philosophy. And we need to look at a broader understanding - the concept of inclusion. My hope would be that it would look at "understand what inclusion might be, let's look at the debates around it" so that people would get a better understanding about special educational needs in a much broader sense of inclusion, rather than "these are the sorts of special educational needs, this is what you do for that one, this is what you do for the other one". – 'Judy'*

In addition, many modules in current teacher training are theoretical only (Hodkinson, 2009). PGCE courses which have included initiatives to specifically improve knowledge, skills and attitudes of trainees towards SEND have been well received by the trainees (Golder et al., 2005); the University of Exeter's programme, which included all trainees working 1:1 with a pupil with SEND under supervision of the SENCo in their placement school, went on to be recommended to all other providers of teacher training by the UK Government (Hodkinson, 2009). If this trend continues, and trainee teachers are helped to feel more prepared for

practice within inclusive classrooms, then it is possible their perceptions will in turn become more positive.

Furthermore, with regards to teacher training, 'Claire' and 'Greg' also spoke about the need for training to be refreshed consistently as part of continuing professional development for teachers.

> *"I think training's the big one, (pause) trying to encourage schools to ensure that they access training, (pause) and to do refreshers as well. Sometimes I think people assume they know, so they read up on a website about autism, for example, and then that's it, they don't need to do any more." – 'Claire'*

> *"But we need to have a lot more on-the-job training for special needs. I think it should – it should be compulsory, and there shouldn't be any opting out." – 'Greg'*

Research shows that knowledge and experience of SEND do contribute to the attitudes of staff (Leyser et al., 1994; Praisner, 2003) – therefore, if teachers, as well as other staff such as school leaders, receive regular and ongoing training regarding inclusion and SEND, it may help them to overcome some anxieties around the teaching of pupils with SEND, and help foster a more inclusive ethos within the school.

Given the tendency of some, modern definitions of inclusion to look beyond SEND, and consider a wide range of individual characteristics and differences (UNESCO, 1994), training on inclusion may also need to capture this element. 'Claire', who worked in a borough which had high levels of immigration, said she did training around immigration and cultural differences in her work, as certain schools would find themselves with high numbers of pupils coming from a particular cultural background. If future training on inclusion included these wider definitions, it may influence the perceptions of school staff, and the community as a whole, and lead to inclusion being seen as a means of preventing exclusion based on any differences, not just SEND (Hodkinson, 2005). It may also help to improve practice if some LEAs, or individual EPs, perceive themselves to be less prepared to address issues relating to ethnicity, culture, language, or class.

In addition to extra training for teachers, 'Claire' also spoke about the training that EPs receive, and how this might be improved to have a more positive impact on inclusion.

Specifically, she reflected upon her training, and the assumption within the training that inclusion was a vision shared by everyone, when the reality was far from this.

> *"I think (pause) not to assume inclusion is everybody's ideal and actually to really explore it. I think my training touched on it, but how much we really looked at whether people – what their idea of inclusion was, and how they felt that it was possible – I don't know how much that was explored and so when you then get into the real word of being an EP, and you come across those challenges … I don't know how much grounding people have to feel confident enough to challenge or question that, or the evidence base to support it otherwise. (pause) Yeah, I just think it's something that should be more specifically spoken about, rather than assumed…" – 'Claire'*

As a result of this not being explicitly addressed, 'Claire' felt that she, and other EPs, may have felt unprepared to initially challenge teachers or other school staff when they were unwilling to include children with SEND. If this aspect of the training were improved, it may help EPs to challenge schools which were less committed to inclusion, and might possibly result in more children with SEND accessing mainstream education.

4.3.2 Legislative Changes and Inspection Frameworks

There was a sense from the EPs interviewed that in order to promote successful inclusion, changes may need to take place at a much broader level within the whole education system. 'Simon' spoke about a desire to see Government legislation which made inclusion a priority, and also made exclusion of children from mainstream schools more difficult.

> *"So I think, yeah, that legislation that made it virtually impossible for a school to exclude, legislation that made inspections absolutely focussed on inclusive provision within schools and made that mandatory, so that schools really would be bending over backwards to make sure that was a top priority. Legislation that … made inclusion, and inclusive education, relationship-building, top priority rather than last priority, which is how it feels. So at the moment we've got all the academic stuff at the top, I would flip that and have relationships, friendships, nurture, those other things, much, much higher on the agenda, really." – 'Simon'*

A reduced focus on attainment and academic performance could, in his view, prevent schools from being reluctant to accept learners with SEND on the basis that they may affect academic results, and thus the ranking and reputation of the school. 'Simon' also suggested that by monitoring statistics such as the number of children with SEND attending each mainstream

school, and holding schools to account if they failed to be inclusive, might provide some motivation for schools to improve their policy and practice. This change would need to translate also into how schools were inspected by external bodies; some of the EPs believed that current criteria by which OFSTED inspect schools do not promote inclusive practice. However, 'Judy' mentioned the introduction of new local-area SEND inspections, which would force comparisons between neighbouring schools on their inclusive practice. This, in her opinion, seems to be a step in the right direction.

4.3.3 Interventions

Finally, the EPs spoke about the benefits of various interventions in improving inclusive practice and helping maintain children's mainstream placements, and how increasing the use of these would help strengthen inclusion within schools.

Peer Support and 'Circle of Friends' Approach

The first intervention, which was spoken about by 'Simon', and briefly 'Claire', was the use of peer-support.

> *"And I think also the peer support (pause) I recently heard a nice quote that was along the lines of "children go to school (pause) to be included by their peers, they don't go to school to be included by the adults, or anybody else… And when children are reluctant to go to school, one of the only motivators sometimes is, well, "because of the other children there, I might see my friends there, that's why I want to be there really"." – 'Simon'*

'Simon' was clear that one motivator for children to attend school was the presence of friends, and acceptance by peers was spoken about by all EPs as a key element of what it is to be 'included' within a school in the first place. Therefore, there is great value in children with SEND having these social relationships within mainstream schools. Nevertheless, some children with SEND may be lacking in appropriate social skills, or display age-inappropriate behaviour, which makes it difficult to form friendships (Pijl, Frostad & Flem, 2008); in cases such as these, using an approach which deliberately helps to build up a social network of peers around that child could overcome this barrier, and help that child to feel more included within the mainstream setting. One example of such an approach which was named by 'Simon' is the 'Circle of Friends' Approach.

> *"So, actively tapping into peer support – potentially tapping into peer support – using approaches like Circle of Friends, training peer mentors, peer mediators – but particularly the Circle of Friends idea – we've found really helpful, not only for the adults because it takes some of the heat away, and helps some creativity come into the system, but coming from the children. It certainly seems to have helped that child get a sense of belonging."* – *'Simon'*

The Circle of Friends is a relatively recent development, originally from Canada, which purposefully aims to build up a friendship group around a child who may be experiencing social isolation (Barrett & Randall, 2004). Through an initial whole-class meeting, and then subsequent weekly meetings in a smaller, volunteer group, children with SEND are helped to share and overcome their problems and meet their weekly targets (Frederickson, Warren & Turner, 2005).

There is evidence that 'Circle of Friends' can be a successful intervention for children and young people with SEND. In a study of nursery-aged children with ASD, Kalyva & Avramidis (2005) found that weekly, 30-minute sessions significantly improved social interaction with peers relative to the control group. The approach has also been applied to children with EBD, and shown to have positive effects on social acceptance, although other measures such as self-perceived social acceptance, and behavioural conduct, remained unchanged (Frederickson & Turner, 2003). 'Simon' also perceived the Circle of Friends intervention to not only benefit the child with SEND, but also the mainstream peers who participated in the circle. So while children with SEND benefit from increased social inclusion and social acceptance by their peers, the peer group gain a better understanding of individual differences and disabilities, which can be a positive experience for them.

However, not all research on the approach has yielded wholly positive results. A study which investigated the medium term impacts on 14 primary aged children found that, although the initial whole-class meeting did succeed in increasing social inclusion for children with a range of SEND, there were no further improvements in terms of social acceptance, or reduced rejection, for 13 of the 14 children as a result of the weekly meetings (Frederickson, Warren & Turner., 2005). The authors argued that it is possible that the changes in attitude by the peers as a result of the initial meeting cannot be sustained if there is no behavioural change from the focus child; where there was improvement over time, the peers' perception of the child's behaviour had also become more positive. Therefore, it is important that

approaches such as Circle of Friends, which aim to challenge peer attitudes, are used alongside programmes which address the behaviour of the focus child, in order to ensure any positive gains are maintained.

'Person-Centered Planning'

The other intervention that was mentioned by 'Simon' was that of person-centered planning and practice, which he felt was 'very useful for strengthening inclusive practice'. Originating in the USA, person-centered planning is an umbrella term encompassing a range of techniques that are highly tailored to the needs and circumstances of an individual with SEND. Much of the work on person-centered planning has focused on individuals with an intellectual disability (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2004). Person centered-planning aims to use the resources and social network around an individual in order to help them to achieve their goals. This process, according to 'Simon', could be carried out both within schools, and at a wider community level, to ensure that the child was also included within the community.

> *"I think person-centered planning I would definitely name as one of those processes that really is a good underpinning for inclusive practice. So a good person-centered plan, followed up by inclusion facilitation, done at a school level or a community level by somebody following through on what's actually on there, or a team following through on what's been named in the plan, that can really strengthen inclusion."* – 'Simon'

There is not a significant evidence base to support the use of person-centered planning, at least with individuals with intellectual disabilities (Rudkin & Rowe, 1999). Some parents or guardians rate person-centered planning as a valuable approach (Miner & Bates, 1997), but Kinsella (2000) stated that, overall, it had not been proven to be more effective than any other approach. However, there have been some suggestions made for why individualised plans do not always succeed. For example, if the goals set are vague and hard to measure, this may make it harder to record progress (Shaddock & Bramston, 1991). Furthermore, Mansell & Beadle-Brown (2004) highlighted that there is often an 'implementation gap' (p. 10) when it comes to individual plans, in which meetings occur, and targets are set, but the plans are not then put into practice. In the above quote, 'Simon' emphasized the need for a dedicated inclusion team to 'follow through' on the individual plan to ensure that implementation takes place, and this practice may help to address one of the possible barriers to progress.

Therefore, one final way of increasing how inclusive schools are would be to increase their use of specific, tailored interventions that address the difficulties faced by children with SEND in mainstream schools, using a combination of approaches. The interventions should address any behaviour displayed by the child which might be challenging, or lead to a rejection by their peers, and enlist the help of mainstream peers to foster social inclusion and improve the child's ability to interact socially. Finally, it is important to create a collaboration between the schools and the young person, their family and carers, and other key individuals, in order to create specific, measurable goals which are carried through and then closely monitored by dedicated teams of experts who have experience in implementing inclusive programmes.

5 Conclusion

The objectives of the present study were to explore the perceptions of Educational Psychologists, who play a pivotal role in the education of learners with SEND. The present study used semi-structured interviews with 4 EPs to gain a more in-depth understanding of three key topics: how the EPs described inclusion, their perceptions of including children with SEND into mainstream schools, and any barriers which might prevent this from happening, and what more could be done in the future to promote successful inclusion.

5.1 How do Educational Psychologists Describe Inclusion?

One key issue within the field, which was confirmed by the findings of the present study, is the lack of a clear, unified definition of what inclusion is, which researchers argue is detrimental to its implication. There were some similarities in the EPs' descriptions, such as a recognition that inclusion is made up of multiple elements; however, there was also variation with regards to whether inclusion relates only to SEND, or other factors such as ethnicity, language and background also. Some EPs also chose to focus on inclusion as a human rights issue, which echoes more international definitions. All EPs were aware of the presence of multiple descriptions of inclusion, and this was perceived to be a negative thing. It was proposed that having one clear, legislated definition, such as the one used in the Salamanca Statement, might eliminate confusion and strengthen inclusive practice within schools. However, deciding on which definition to include may come with its own challenges; not all professionals agree with the concept of 'full inclusion', and argue that it is an example of inclusion gone too far, and may therefore object to such strong definitions of the term being set down in legislation.

5.2 To What Extent do EPs Think Children with SEND Can Be Included, and Why?

The second key finding from the present study was that the majority of EPs believed that most, but not all, children could be included; only one EP advocated the notion that every child should be in a mainstream school, regardless of their level of need. This supports previous research in which EPs viewed 'full inclusion' as an unrealistic aim. The belief about

whether children could be included depended on two main factors: the type of need, and the perceptions of other individuals. Firstly, children with high sensory needs were perceived to be the hardest group of learners to include as a result of the overwhelming sensory impact that a large, mainstream environment would have. Some, but not all, EPs also mentioned children with EBD as another potentially challenging group to include, which supports some of the previous literature. If EPs do not perceive all children as suitable for inclusion, they may continue to recommend specialist placement for some groups of learners. Academic and social progress is slower in special schools versus mainstream ones, so if special provisions are still recommended by the EPs, and these recommendations taken up, there may be a negative impact on these learners.

Secondly, another major influence on EPs' beliefs was the opinions of other individuals, which impacted on the EPs' decision making. Some SEND, such as EBD, are viewed as unsuitable for inclusion by teachers, and this might influence recommendations for provision. The support of school leaders is equally crucial for the success of new initiatives; however, the EPs recognised that school leaders may have conflicting interests as they also feel under pressure to meet OFSTED requirements and to increase the achievement on standardised tests. The implication of such a focus on attainment and results is that some school leaders may reject pupils with SEND who would lower these scores. One EP spoke also about the pressures from parents of mainstream peers, and suggested that adequate training for parents, of both SEND and mainstream children, may, in the long run, help overcome negative attitudes and create more tolerance.

The third and final barrier to emerge in the present study is that of the academisation movement. Due to a recent, country-wide initiative to convert all state-funded schools into academies, the number of academies in England has been steadily increasing. However, EPs viewed this process as detrimental to inclusion for a number of reasons. They provided anecdotal evidence that some academies are not accepting children with SEND, or excluding them once they are admitted, which places more pressure on the inclusive mainstream schools. Furthermore, there is a lack of monitoring which means that some academies do not necessarily engage in good, inclusive practices when they do accept children with SEND. Although the initiative to make all schools into academies is no longer running, the effects are still being felt by the EPs; suggestions for the future were made, and it may be that greater monitoring is needed to ensure academies are following the same rules regarding admission of pupils with SEND.

5.3 What More Do EPs Think Could Be Done in the Future to Promote Inclusion?

The last finding relates to EPs' perceptions of how to overcome the barriers identified. All EPs suggested that initial teacher training programs could be improved; if the SEND modules focused less on each individual category of need, and more on broader issues relating to inclusion, this may foster a more inclusive mindset from the beginning, rather than medicalising SEND. This could help to overcome the barrier of mainstream school teachers holding negative views of inclusion. Initial teacher training programs which have trialed a practical element of working alongside a pupil with SEND were well received, and this practice could be expanded to all teacher training programs across England. In addition to addressing attitudes at an individual level, there may need to be a wider attitudinal shift within England's education system away from judging schools based on their exam results, and towards holding them accountable for their inclusive practices. New local area OFSTED inspections will go some way to motivating schools to increase inclusion; however, a greater emphasis on inclusive practice within inspection frameworks, whilst monitoring of this, might prevent schools from rejecting pupils with SEND based on a fear of negative results. Finally, increasing the use of evidence-based interventions could also promote inclusive practice.

5.4 Limitations

The researcher would like to note several limitations in the present study. Primary is the small sample size, which may limit the extent to which findings can be generalized to the wider population; however, the aim of the present study was to complement existing, quantitative literature in the field and the researcher believes the interview data support the findings from previous surveys and questionnaires. Further research could use multiple or mixed methods to ensure triangulation of the data and increase the reliability of the findings. Secondly, the researcher acknowledges that, due to the method of data collection, a large quantity of data was collected which could not all be reported. Therefore, the researcher made an active decision on which parts of the data to report, leading to some researcher bias in terms of the analysis and discussion of findings, and the decision on what findings were most important.

5.5 Implications

Despite the limitations, the present study does still have important implications for the future. The EPs all perceived inclusion to be important, but in order for this practice to be consistent across England, a more unified definition is needed. Future studies may need to investigate why there is such variation in the definitions of inclusion, both amongst EPs and other professionals; such research may be useful in understanding wider issues relating to defining inclusion, and could help with the decision of what definition should be used in the legislation in England. This study has also shown that there may be a gap in individuals' experience and knowledge regarding inclusion and SEND, which may contribute to negative attitudes from staff and parents. Improved training for schools and families would help both the school staff, peers and other parents be more accepting of inclusion, in the eyes of the EPs, so future work may need to look at creating and trialing compulsory, country-wide training for schools on these areas. In addition, there is evidence that specific interventions can help improve inclusive practice, and building up the implementation of evidence-based practice at a school-level, potentially through a national initiative, could help promote inclusion. It is now strongly recommended by the researcher that future work in the field be carried out to help create a productive framework in which EPs can continue to support the education and inclusion of learners.

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Appendices

Contents

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the study

I would like you to participate in my research, which is looking at the perceptions of Educational Psychologists towards inclusive education, and the placement of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities into schools.

What is the purpose of the study?

The research is being carried out as part of my Master's Degree in Special and Inclusive Education, which is a joint programme run by the University of Roehampton (London), University of Oslo (Oslo) and Charles University (Prague).

The research aims to gain a better understanding of how Educational Psychologists might perceive inclusive education, and any potential barriers to the process. You have been invited to participate due to your status as a qualified Educational Psychologist.

What would participation involve?

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be invited for one interview with myself. Prior to conducting the interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to taking part in the study. You are however free to change your mind at any point during the interview process.

The interview will be conducted either face-to-face, at a location that is convenient for you – for example in your workplace – or over Skype. It will last approximately 1 hour.

The interview will take place during the months of July, August and September 2016.

Are there any possible disadvantages of participating?

There are not any known risks or disadvantages to participating in this research. If you choose to take part, your confidentiality will be assured throughout the study; identifying data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all other data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and accessed by myself only. No names or identifying information will be mentioned during the reporting of the findings.

The research has been approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Oslo.

Are there any possible advantages of participating?

Once the study is complete it could provide useful information to professionals and other researchers working within the field of inclusive education.

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Do you have to take part?

You do not have to take part in the study if you do not wish to. If you choose to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. However, you may withdraw your consent at any point during the process, without having to give a reason, and with no negative consequences.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact myself using the details below and we will arrange a date and time for the interview to take place.

Lynn De La Fosse
delafosl@roehampton.ac.uk
07958576036

What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns or queries during the process, please contact my supervisor using the contact details below:

Steinar Theie
steinar.theie@isp.uio.no
+47-22858058

Researcher: Lynn De La Fosse, Postgraduate Student, University of Roehampton/University of Oslo.

Supervisor: Steinar Theie, Associate Professor, University of Oslo.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

"Educational Psychologists' Perceptions of Inclusive Education"

Name of Researcher:

Lynn De La Fosse, Postgraduate Student, University of Roehampton/University of Oslo.

Contact Details:

Lynn De La Fosse
delafosl@roehampton.ac.uk
07958576036

By signing below, you agree with the following statements:

a) You have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. You have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about participation in the study and the answers you received were satisfactory.
b) You consent to the interviews being recorded using a digital recording device (all digital recordings will be erased following completion of the research on 31.12.16).
c) You are aware that your data will be treated confidentially and anonymised, and the research will only report data that does not identify you. You consent to the reporting of this anonymised data.
d) You are aware of any possible risks associated with participation in the study.
e) Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you understand that you are free to withdraw at any time.

_____
Participant's Name (Printed)

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Name (Printed)   Researcher's Signature

<u>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</u>

PRE-AMBLE

> So, just to repeat for the record, I'm interested in looking at the perceptions of Educational Psychologists towards inclusion. I'm going to ask you a few questions to do with the work you do, with a focus on inclusion, and placement of pupils with SEN into schools. The interview shouldn't last more than 1 hour. Are you okay for this to be recorded? Do you have any questions before we start?

EP ROLE AND PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION / IDEAL SCHOOL

1. How long have you been working as a qualified EP?	• *When/where did you complete your training?* • *Experience / job changed over time*
2. And you currently work… / your current role is…	• *Probes: Could you describe some typical aspects of your role?* • *How long have you worked in this role?* • *What did you do before?* • *Prompts: Okay, so typically within your role you would be …. (prompt with examples)*
3. What is the most significant part of your job role?	• *Key Words:* • *Assessments* • *Reports – "what would go in these reports / would you be making recommendations?"* • *Meetings with parents / teachers* • *Training* • *Recommendations for interventions* • *Recommendations for placement* • *Other?* • *Prompts: So in your experience, the biggest part of your role is…* • *Any other aspects that are important?* • *We've talked a lot about … can we now touch upon …*

PLACEMENT

4. You've mentioned that … / Is recommending a suitable educational setting for children with SEN something that you do within your role?

- *Probes: So what sort of recommendations might you make?*
- *Do these recommendations go in the report?*
- *What potential educational settings might children be placed in?*
- *Mainstream / mainstream with separate special unit / special school?*
- *What might influence recommendation?*

5. And thinking specifically about this aspect of the job role, what sort of an impact do you feel it has? For example on the child, or the school or..

- *Prompts: Impact on the child?*
- *Eg. Being in class, peers, social and academic abilities, being included.*
- *Impact on the peers?*
- *Eg. Positive/negative, potential disruption, potential learning and acceptance/tolerance, rewards*
- *Impact on the school?*
- *Eg. Teachers, policies, tests, results, infrastructure, ethos, resources, funding*
- *Impact on the parents?*
- *Positive/negative, community, resources, money and funding,*

6. To what extent do you feel that children with SEN can be included within / placed into mainstream settings?

- *Prompts: Tell me more about why you feel that…*
- *Probes: Best location, eg. mainstream schools, special units attached to mainstream schools, special schools etc.*
- *Advantages and disadvantages of inclusion*

So, to clarify, where do you feel that children with SEN should be placed?

- *Prompts: Tell me more about why you feel that…*
- *What might influence your decision about placement?*

7. Based on your experience, are there any situations / cases where you feel that mainstream placement would be unsuitable for a child with SEN?	• *Probes: Where do you think would be the ideal setting for them?* • *Where might you ideally place a child with X (name SEN)? Why?* • *What advantages does x placement have over a mainstream one?* • *Might any other placements be suitable?*

INCLUSION – POTENTIAL BARRIERS / SUCCESS

1. Do you feel there are any (other) potential barriers which may prevent children with SEN/D from attending mainstream schools?	• *Probes: How do they hinder inclusion?* • *Could anything more be done to remove these barriers?* • *Key words:* • *Staffing* • *Resources* • *Attitudes of staff / parents / management* • *Infrastructure* • *Environment / physical barriers* • *Child related factors eg. Individual needs*
2. What do you feel would promote successful inclusion of children with special needs and / or disabilities into mainstream classrooms?	• *Probes: How can this be done more in practice?*
3. Anything specific to English context?	• *Policy changes* • *EHCPs vs Statements, collaborative working – does it feel less like decision of EP?*

DEFINITIONS

1. Could I ask you how would you describe 'inclusion', as it relates to education / the context you work in?

- *Prompts: So you define it as ....*
- *Okay, is there anything more you'd like to add to that?*
- *Key Words:*
- *Locational (in / out of classroom)*
- *Acceptance by peers / teachers*
- *Context*
- *Participation / active vs passive role in classroom*
- *Support received*
- *Probes: Do you think other people might describe it in different ways?*

CLOSING OF INTERVIEW

Okay, so those were all the questions I had for you today.

1. Was there anything else you would like to add, which you feel hasn't been covered?

2. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

3. And just to ask, due to the nature of qualitative research sometimes there might be other things that come up over the course of the research that we maybe didn't cover today – if that's the case, would you be happy for me to contact you again to have another short discussion?

Table of Codes / Emerging Themes

THEME	P2	P3	P4	P5
1. Description of 'inclusion/inclusive education' • Range of responses given from EPs in response to question on how they would describe inclusion / inclusive education • Similarities in the sense of recognising that there were different elements to a child being 'included' eg. "sense of belonging", "participating", "engaging that child fully" and "social inclusion" • Majority (?/?) of EPs identified difference between 'inclusion' and 'integration' – simply having a child located in mainstream class or school does not necessarily mean they are included • Idea of there being multiple definitions recognised by EPs- *"I think that lots of people have lots of different understandings of it themselves"* and the issues surrounding this.	• *"I think it means lots of different things."* • *"But there's the social inclusion aspect as well I guess – we're talking about educational inclusion, how inclusive is the curriculum, how inclusive is the structure, how inclusive is the attitude of the staff and the students, but then we've got the social inclusion aspect as well."* • Dilemma of what is inclusion? If a child is in mainstream school, but still having mostly individual lessons, are they included? • People have many	• *"There's inclusion very broadly in society, and then there's inclusion for young children in schools. But essentially it's about trying to ensure that children and young people, and then eventually adults, are part of mainstream society"* • Broadly speaking about being in a mainstream school, having friendships and building social networks, and being able to learn in school. • Inclusion vs integration – more than just being in the school • Idea of inclusion as a human right, and links between	• *"So inclusive education to me starts ... in the hearts and minds of people."* • Inclusion about the attitudes of society towards SEN. • Must include elements of empathy, relationship building, and making adaptations. • Schools may view inclusion differently - *"So sometimes you're working with schools and I feel they're doing what's called integration, rather than inclusion, and that means just having the child present and not actually engaging that child fully."* • At other times,	• *"So inclusion, in my mind, is where every child is present in a mainstream, local, community school, and each child has an opportunity to participate – to be present, first, to be fully present and to be able to fully participate and contribute to the school that they're part of."* • Importance of participation and contribution – not simply presence alone • Integration is just being located within the classroom/school. A child can be integrated, but not included.

	different understandings of what inclusion is • Historically, encountered an initial aversion to inclusion from people – belief that it was an EU initiative, misunderstanding of Salamanca Statement.	inclusive movement and previous movements (race, gender equality) • *"So certainly a lot of people would discuss inclusion in terms of children's rights … For a lot of people it's "well I've got the right to be part of a mainstream". Which is something I agree with"* • Believed other people may describe inclusion differently	schools are only willing to include if the children accommodate to the school environment; school won't accommodate to child. • One EP looked at inclusion as an issue that extended beyond just SEND – *"And inclusion is for all of these barriers and not just about disabilities. We're talking about people with different race, different religions, different cultural identities"* • Issue of migrant families in S who may be excluded because of factors related to that as well • "Segregation makes people ignorant"	• There are a "worrying" number of different definitions of inclusion • Term is used "loosely" – for example, special schools describing themselves as inclusive. • Having so many definitions is unhelpful to making inclusion happen • A single, unified definition that was legislated may prevent some of the issues surrounding definitions
2. Role of EPs • Key aspects of roles included:	• Working as a Senior EP, specialising in work	• Advice to schools, consultation • Assessments	• Working with mainstream / special schools to support	• Working outside of Local Authority for an independent

statutory assessment, meeting with parents, consultation with schools and families, training, • Concept of recommending type of educational placement - majority of EPs stated that they did not recommend PLACEMENT, only PROVISION. • Impact of this – recognition of their authority and expertise	with secondary schools • Supervision of trainee EPs • Named EP link for 5 secondary mainstream schools, 1 special school and one PRU • Providing advice and consultation to schools, usually regarding individual students • Supporting inclusion of those students • Giving recommendations – *"In terms of recommendations, we recommend provision, not placement. We're really clear about that in our authority."* • Discussing available options with parents • Training	• Attending tribunals • Case-work with individual children • Training • Advice on provisions • Managerial role – actively involved in discussions over whether children would get assessment / where they should be placed • Supervision of EPs • Managing budget	pupils • Individual vs group / whole school • Statutory Assessment • Writing reports – makes recommendations for provision. Would not recommend particular placement, believes EPs used to do this and it was a mistake. • *"I'm very much aware that as a psychologist if I said "Oh I think Joe Bloggs needs to go to this school" that may be taken for gospel, and those recommendations will be taken up. I am quite cautious that's a lifetime impact on the child and actually it should be a shared decision."* • *"So 30, 20 years ago – and actually I can't say because I feel it does happen still*	consultancy. • Main aspect of role is training with parents, teachers etc. • Person-centred planning big element of work • Some casework with individual children – this involves attending tribunals, meeting parents/school staff, writing reports and giving recommendations • Idea of trying to work together to discover what is needed for child to succeed in mainstream • Said they believed every child should go to mainstream and so would challenge parents who felt a specialist provision might be more suitable for their

			maybe in some parts of the country – we were in the position of saying whether a child went to a mainstream or a special school. I'm hoping we've moved on and we don't take on that expert role as much as we used to, because I think we made bad decisions for some students, based on political and environmental reasons, ... and our own perceptions." • Would note parent/child preferences in report • Home-school consultations • Training, eg. On psychological approaches or specific types of SEN	child. • *"Say I met a parent who was very into special schools, special education, I would always have a very active dialogue with that family. I would never be passive about it...I think that has to be challenged and we have a professional responsibility to challenge the parent when they are committed to special education, because they've probably been influenced by the medical model, by who they've had contact with in the medical world, probably for the first five years of life. So I'm not neutral, I wouldn't say it was down to the family"*

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				• Therefore, would recommend a type of placement insofar as mainstream would be recommended for all cases • May work with children who are already in special education to try to get them back into mainstream
3. Inclusion of Children with SEND into Mainstream • All EPs generally pro-inclusion when asked to what extent they felt children could be included into mainstream. • Cases where children might not necessarily be suitable for inclusion into mainstream: ASD, EBD (according to schools – P4 and P3) and those with high sensory needs who might be "overwhelmed" by environment. • Primary vs secondary models and impact on inclusion. May be easier to facilitate inclusion in primary settings?	• Would personally like to make mainstream as inclusive as possible • However, in discussions with parents would try to leave personal views aside and remain neutral • LA has high number of special school placements due to historical factors • Views of parents influence inclusion	• Claimed that would always try to find the most inclusive placement possible for a child, as a principle • Views of parents had strong influence of recommendations for type of provision • Also considering views of the child – idea that some children prefer special school placement – *"But a lot of those kids … they actually prefer*	• Referred to self as "strong advocate for inclusion", belief that all children have right to access mainstream education • Perceived negative impacts of special schooling from interactions with adults who had been in ss. • Responsibility is on schools to change in order to facilitate inclusion • Pro-inclusion,	• Would argue a child is always entitled to a mainstream education • Child has a human right to be included and not segregated • We don't segregate due to other characteristics, so why SEN? • Willing to challenge the views of parents who want special schooling • Believes that all

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	• One case where inclusion is challenging is with children on the autism spectrum who have high sensory needs. • *"I think working with our current system there can be real challenges – the one that I come across mostly is children who are on the autism spectrum who have really high levels of sensory needs, and any movement, noise around them can be really, really challenging… So I think that's one area where it can be really challenging and young people and parents find it really hard to make that work."* • Some children with severe physical	*being in a small group environment, they find that easier to manage given the levels of stress they have, for whatever reason. Sometimes you actually think 'we probably aren't doing you a favour if we try and get you back to mainstream'"* • Type of SEN may impact on inclusion. Idea that special schooling may be right choice if a child has complex health needs eg. Untreatable epilepsy. • Some types of SEN harder for the school to manage, including "severe autism" and "children whose violence can't be tamed". • *"some kids are so difficult it's very hard to see them coping in a*	however would always consider parent/child views. Decision is not ultimately down to the EP. • Special schools may be more appropriate for some needs, eg. Severe sensory needs. Mainstream is too overwhelming. • Schools feel that mainstream is not suitable for EBD, however this is not personal belief: • *"Well (laughs) I know what my schools would say and it's those children with complex behavioural needs"* • *"And I try to do work with my mainstream schools on considering those and once we have key people and they do feel a sense of belonging and they*	children can be included into mainstream – *"I would say all means all, really"* • *"I've been working over 30 years as an Ed Psych now …I think I've seen now almost every possibility of a young person with every kind of severe impairment, severely challenging behaviour, I've seen the whole range, and somewhere in the world, I've seen one of those children included. So I know it's possible."* • Sometimes a particular mainstream placement may not be suitable for a child, but in that case would try to

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	needs may prefer to be with peers with similar needs – ". *I'm thinking particularly of some of the young people I've worked with who have really severe, physical needs, and maybe mentally and intellectually they are able to work alongside their same-age peers, but actually they find it very isolating to not have contact with other people – I mean they might do socially and through community activities - but sometimes they, for their mental health, they would choose to choose to be in another type of setting, if that is available to them."* • Primary and secondary transition	*mainstream environment"* • Point about EBD – idea of EBD being harder to include comes from the teachers – *"the biggest difficulty – certainly when I did my doctoral research… the biggest difficulty that teachers perceived was behaviour."* • Also idea that it is "unethical" for an EP to place a child into mainstream if they are not going to be able to manage it, just because they are advocates for inclusion – *"you can't allow kids to go into an environment where it's likely they'll fail"* • Two-way street – even if children are placed in special schools, would still try to get them back	*do develop positive attachments with those students, we can be successful in including those children better. However, it's a lot easier to say "this isn't working and they need to go somewhere else".* • Considered negative impact of pupils with EBD going to schools with pupils with similar difficulties (see quote in PRU section) • However, recognition that an ideal might be to have smaller mainstream schools to provide a quieter, less noisy and busy environment, but this options does not exist and perhaps that is why they are being sent to special schools? • *"I think our options*	find a different mainstream placement rather than a special one • Has had "pause for thought" in cases where child has "overwhelming autism" and severe sensory needs • In this case would still want to try to make it work in mainstream • General belief that numbers of children included has not changed in last few decades, for various reasons • However, better understanding now of what inclusion is so quality of inclusion is better

	can be challenging, eg. Secondary school can't put a year 7 child in a lower class because there isn't one • LA has transition plans but success depends on implementation	into mainstream.	*are quite limited in that we could have smaller, mainstream-type schools that were able to accommodate these children but we don't … we have the two extremes"* • Sometimes inclusion can be hard for teachers and school staff to manage. • Other factors which may influence inclusion – many children in S from migrant families, impact of this? Language barriers, cultural differences. • Must recognise that exclusion could happen for a range of reasons and consider everything going on around that child and family • EPs may be pressured into trying to find alternative placements if schools	

			are hostile, they just want to help the parent etc. • Some EPs may feel they have no authority to challenge mainstream schools who are not inclusive	
4. Pros / Cons of Different Placements for Children with SEND: Mainstream Schools • All EPs recognised the value of educating children with SEND in mainstream settings. • Advantages of mainstream placement were: • Better performance and academic outcomes • Social inclusion • Benefits for the peers of children with SEND • Cons of mainstream placement: • Difficult for teachers • Financial issues • Isolation or lack of sense of belonging for child	• Pros: • Being part of the local community, people with special needs are visible rather than invisible • Other children have positive experiences of living and playing alongside others with different needs • Benefit for teachers as they gain expertise. • Sometimes teachers may have "self-imposed boundaries" regarding their ability to teach children with SEN	• Pros: • Helps prepare children for life in mainstream society • Ability to make friends – social inclusion • Children with SEN learn appropriate social skills from peers • Mainstream peers benefit from being around children with SEN as they learn to understand and interact with them • Cons: • Embarrassment for parents if there is the only child misbehaving.	• Cons: • Children with SEN can be hard for teachers to manage.	• Pros: • A lot of learning occurs by imitation, so children with SEN able to learn from non-SEN peers • Building social relationships is easier if children are in local schools • Inclusion in mainstream leads to better academic performance • Benefits mainstream children to encounter children with SEN at an early age • *"So the world is a*

	– inclusion provides experience to challenge those • More expertise from teachers on subjects, larger departments • Cons: • Child may be "included" in mainstream but still have mostly individual lessons to help them catch up.	• Children with SEND feeling isolated, they might think they are the only one with SEND		*better place when they meet those young people earlier on. I always say I was prejudiced in my up – almost disabled myself in my upbringing – because I didn't encounter disabled children at school, only much later as an adult. So the myths are still in your head, as an adult."* • Disabilities and SEN are present in society so having children included in schools makes the schools a "microcosm" of the wider world • Cons: • It can be hard and challenging to achieve inclusion
5. Pros / Cons of Different Placements for Children with	• Pros: • Provides sense of	• Pros: • More specialist		• Pros: • Recognition that

SEND: Special Schools	identity for children with SEN – some children "very much identify with a small niche" • A lot of resources to help with differentiation • Some children like to be in special schooling for short time before transitioning back to mainstream • Cons: • Do not always differentiate better than mainstream schools do • Not always more expertise • Training in special schools very much on-the-job • Risk of isolation, especially if there is a lack of interaction between schools • Mainstream and special schools must work together for benefit of	• Children may feel more comfortable in that setting – some children state they prefer the smaller-scale environment • Parents may benefit is they are embarrassed by challenging behaviour, or having to explain child's SEN to other parents • There are still options to link with mainstream schools so that there is not total segregation • Cons: • Special schools can cost a lot of money – *"okay, take one girl who's at this school…, national centre for young people with epilepsy. (pause) £175,000 a year for one child. Literally, the cost of these placements are mega, absolutely mega."*		there is an argument for special schools providing some benefit in terms of sense of identity • However, would argue this is not strong enough to justify segregation • Cons: • Children are segregated • Children surrounded by peers who also have learning difficulties, so they will imitate and learn unhelpful behaviour as opposed to imitating helpful learning styles • Could pick up challenging behaviour • Body posture • Development generally is slower in special schools vs mainstream

	community	• Academic and social progress not as good as that of children in mainstream placements. • Lack of helpful modelling • Children may place lower expectations on themselves • Teachers may place lower expectations on children also		• Hard to move back out of special schools and into mainstream again, particularly for adolescents • Reduced opportunities for friendships, especially with residential placements
6. **Pros / Cons of Different Placements for Children with SEND: Units / Resourced Provisions**	• Don't use the term "unit", instead call them "enhanced provisions" • Pros: • Benefit of being able to spend time in smaller groups when needed • Children still encouraged to access as much of school provision as possible - some children may not need to be in unit at all • Expertise from	• Pros: • Advantages of both mainstream and special placements • May be easier to provide for health needs, for example regular physiotherapy. • Financial benefits to units as it may be cheaper for NHS to provide provisions, eg therapies, in units rather than mainstream schools • A school with a unit may be more willing		• Pros: • May be useful for maintaining a link to mainstream schooling and avoiding special • Allows for some more flexibility. Good units are ones which are flexible • Could be useful for very challenging behaviour, or profound autism for example • Could be used as a stepping stone

	specialist staff	to take on children they otherwise would not accept. • *"the unit provision also allows schools to push the boundaries a bit."* • Less chance of isolation for the child, or feeling like they are the only one with difficulties		back into wider inclusion • Cons: • Child may get "stuck" in that unit and still not be included within wider school community • Still not preferable to full inclusion
7. **Pros / Cons of Different Placements for Children with SEND: Dual-Placements**			• Pros: • Child spends some time in special school and some time in mainstream. • Good balance for meeting child's needs • Mainstream children welcomed SEN children when they were there • Mainstream peers had better understanding of differences and individual needs. • Also taught skills, for example mainstream	• Pros: • Only advantage to having them is as a means of "keeping a foot in the door" of mainstream when a child is definitely moving to special • Cons: • In own experience, dual placements have not gone well • Considers them to be the "worst of both worlds" and not better than single school placements

			peers learning to sign, or learning PECS. • Helped staff in mainstream school be more confident in managing different need - may be more willing to take on children with SEN in the future. • Cons: • Costly – not seen very commonly anymore	
8. **Pros / Cons of Different Placements for Children with SEND: PRUs**	• Provides alternative provision to children • Most children attending PRUs have SEN • PRU in their LA was largest in the country.		• Cons: • Can make bad behaviour worse if child with EBD is placed into a school full of other children with EBD • *"I think if we had mainstream schools see what happens when a child with behavioural needs goes into a school that's full of children with behavioural needs, that they*	

			might appreciate that, actually, is it always the best option? From what could be low-level disruptive behaviour because of what's going on socially for them (pause) turning into criminal activity. (pause) I wonder if schools would always take that option as easily as they do sometimes."	
9. Potential Barriers to Inclusion: Attitudes • Some key barriers identified by EPS, including: • Attitudes of teachers/ school leaders within the mainstream schools. • Also attitudes of other professionals – two EPs noted cases where paediatricians were recommending types of placement to the children and this may have influenced parents' views, thus leading them to demand a special school	• Recognition that attitudes may be due to "fear of the unknown" and lack of experience with SEN – *"a school might have had experience with students with certain difficulties or disabilities and therefore they are much more willing and open to cater for those needs, whereas others who*	• Attitudes of schools – a school needs to be willing to take a risk and try. • Teachers have a big impact. Some teachers may think "it's not their job" to include children. Idea that different Unions support each position. • Teacher's negative attitudes towards inclusion may be due to their lack of prior	• Inclusion is about changing people's mindsets – connecting heart to mind. • Attitudes of senior leaders are key, however they are frequently pre-occupied with results and meeting inspection requirements • Mixed attitudes from teachers – some are very flexible and	• Main barrier to inclusion is attitudes • Society's attitudes towards inclusion, and the emphasis on league tables and results, makes it harder to achieve effective inclusion • Attitudes in schools start from leadership - if school leaders also have this preoccupation with

placement over a mainstream one.	*might be anxious, they're a bit scared about it. So I think a lot of our work is helping people to overcome those fears"* • Some teachers may believe it's not their job to teach children with SEN, but the job of special schools • Different schools have different approaches to inclusion – some more willing to include than others • Attitudes of parents – some are adamant they want special schools, while others adamant they want mainstream. • Parents may find it hard to make decisions, and their perceptions could be influenced by myths • Views of young	experience. • Attitudes of other professionals involved in the process, such as social workers, paediatricians, medical professionals etc. • *"the social workers, they're very medical model so they – the social workers (pause) they don't understand – as far as I'm concerned a lot of them don't understand about inclusion"* • *"the parents were absolutely convinced – in fact they were convinced by the paediatrician – that their child needed residential provision"* • Medical model vs social model of learning • Parents' attitudes towards inclusion as	creative • If staff have negative views of inclusion it can be difficult to change that thinking • Importance of support for school staff – if support is not there, this may be when problems occur • Views inclusion as extending beyond just disabilities and SEN to other factors. May be exclusion based on these grounds as well as the child having additional learning needs. Other risk factors such as trauma, domestic violence etc. • Staff may have negative attitudes related to these other factors which need working on. • Parent's views are crucial. Idea that some parents view special schools as a	results, then the focus of the school will be more on that • General mindset needs to shift to be thinking more about being creative, and doing what is needed to include every child • Society's views are very much influenced by the medical model • This can affect parents' perceptions as well • Ed Psychs have been part of the problem – within the profession, some have held views that all children with a particular need should go to special schools • Psychometrics and the deterministic impact of that – if you have a certain

	people themselves are key • Views are captured during EHCP process but sometimes hard to know what is really child's voice – could be influence from parents or staff member • Some children may prefer sense of identity gained from being in special school alongside peers with similar difficulties • Other students want to be treated the same as everybody else • Attitudes within the communities of individuals with SEN, eg. People with hearing impairments. • Some problems come from other parents who feel	well impact on decisions about placement. Can be influenced by other factors, eg. The other professionals. • Changing attitudes in society – examples of pub and upcoming Paralympics.	"cure" for child's SEN and so ar every positive towards special schooling. • Alternatively, other parents believe child would progress more in mainstream. • Idea that parents' views should be paramount • EP's perceptions may also have impact on inclusion – idea that EPs used to make specific recommendations for special vs mainstream schooling, taking on "expert role" and this was a problem. • Demographics of an area can also influence the attitudes of parents and professionals – differences between S and S(b) • Also differences within one borough – individual attitudes	score, then you are destined for special schooling • EPs may not hold these beliefs to start with, but slowly their thinking will shift to reflect practice • *"So if you're doing a lot of – spend a lot of time recommending special school, you didn't want to to start with, you didn't really believe in it, but in the end you start then rationalising your belief system."*

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	child with SEN is disrupting their child's learning. • Need to educate those parents on inclusion and broader issues – they may never have had children with disabilities in their schools		of the schools towards inclusion	
10. Potential Barriers to Inclusion: Resources / Staffing	• Clear guidelines in LA about resourcing and the money schools get and process for accessing additional funding • May be some lack of understanding about funding/resources from parents • Personal budgets as one aspect of funding and resources, to help with health and social aspects – not so good at it at the moment.	• Sometimes cost of needing to make adaptations is so great there is an argument it isn't practical. • Sometimes staffing issues cause problems, eg. Not having enough EPs to provide the support needed. • Lack of specialist teachers – not automatically provided by LA. New funding means that money delegated to schools rather than the LAs so schools	• Recognition that funding for SEN is limited • Question of whether funding may sometimes be used "as an excuse" for not including children with SEN • *"I've been in situations where the school have been insistent that they've got to apply for an Education Health Care Plan, they get delegated funding which means they don't get any more money than they had*	• Some people may argue that resources are a big barrier but they are not

| | | have to buy back in the services of specialist teachers etc. Some schools choose not to do this.
• Cost of special school placements is very high. | *before, but they have the state- the education health care plan and then miraculously this child starts to make improvement, and actually you've got the same amount of funding so it wasn't about funding, it was about you being focussed about what you were doing with the child."*
• *"Here I think we use money too much as an excuse to say that things can't happen and actually, if we were resourceful enough, they could."*
• Inclusion around the world – countries that have less money are forced to be more creative with their solutions and do manage successful inclusion | |

| 11. Potential Barriers to Inclusion: Physical Barriers | • Some physical barriers such as lack of lifts.
• Most schools have access ramps.
• Example of one issue around toileting for a girl with complex needs – this was one reason why she ended up moving to a special school. Question of, had this been resolved sooner, could she have stayed included?
• Loss of trust by parents – impact of schools not making adjustments? | • Physical geography of area P3 worked in meant that schools were built on hills and this made physical barriers | • Issue of schools being in old buildings that are not necessarily accessible.
• More purpose-built schools now which are built with accessibility in mind. This has had a positive impact on improving access.
• However, flipside of this is that the newer, purpose built schools may be overwhelmed by having all of the children in wheelchairs etc wanting to attend there.
• Physical barreirs not limited to wheelchair ramps etc. Issues with trying to install hearing loops in schools.
• Sometimes the process gets drawn out by issues such as funding – this is possibly a barrier | • Some schools are not fully accessible
• Purpose built schools that are accessible sometimes are not child-friendly or welcoming, as they have more of a medical feel
• Classroom design does not help the learning of most students |

| 12. Potential Barriers to Inclusion: Other | • Believes central Government does not have a strong agenda for inclusion
• Local drivers for inclusion also not very good – *"so again we haven't got a particularly strong, local driver for inclusion, we've got a strong local driver to reduce exclusion, which is a different thing, and that impacts on it."* | • Focus on results detrimental to inclusion.
• Effort and resources go to improving grades of "borderline C/D grade, because it bumps them up"
• *"If you can get a C, you're in the statistics, if you get a D you're not. So there's a lot of kids like that, that schools put resources into that rather than into, more broadly, into raising the levels of achievement for all kids"* | • Issues with standardised assessments – the discourse around them is often quite negative and too focussed on the child's deficits and not their strengths.
• *"When you think about standardised assessments and the terminology that can be used out of those assessments to describe children, which often then may lead to the child then going to a special school, (pause) it makes me question (pause) are we being inclusive with (long pause) ... I don't know, there's something about the process of how we assess children that I think we have to be very wary of, and how that impacts on inclusion. And often* | |

			when we're talking to (pause) schools (pause) how we communicate what the child's difficulties are and do we make sure we have a balance of the child's strengths."	
13. Academisation of Schools in England • All 5 EPs interviewed mentioned the current process in England of schools being converted into Academies. • All EPs spoke of the negative impact of this process in relation to inclusion. • Several EPs mentioned the idea that some academies seem less willing to include children with special needs – one EP even said that children were not being "officially excluded" but that academies were telling parents to find alternative provisions for them.	• Education system in England is changing rapidly • *"With the way that the systems are developing currently in the political climate, with the academisation of secondary schools, we have noticed less tolerance and less willingness to continue inclusion"* • In context that LA has a large PRU which is willing to provide an alternative to those pupils with SEN	• Believed that movement is having a negative impact on inclusion.	• *"Although academies are meant to follow the rules like everybody else, there aren't people auditing that as much as I think they should be ... I think some children are being excluded more easily than they would have"* • Academies can make decisions outside of the influence of the LEA if they don't agree with LEA's position • Feels that due to academy movement, some children are being excluded more	• Rigidity of education system associated with the move towards academisation • More focus on profit – *"some children I've heard described as "high cost, low value" and those kinds of awful exp- awful language around children who are the most complex."* • Some children are being prevented from attending school entirely • Academies do not always set themselves up to

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			easily	support inclusion and make provisions for children with SEN
			• Examples of parents of children being told to find other placements even though exclusion was not official – impact of this on child's education?	• LAs no longer have authority to challenge
			• Several impacts of this – more children with special needs then attending the local mainstream schools still run by local authority, which puts pressure on them and they may struggle to cope with extra demand on them.	• May be leading lack of LAs challenging generally as they are worried more schools will then become academies
			• Secondly, impact in terms of employing teachers – may be less willing to attend a school which has a reputation for having many children with additional needs, and is "really difficult" to work in.	• Lack of monitoring in academies by EPs and other professionals
			• On the other side,	

			academies can help facilitate inclusion by having creative curriculums • Higher expectations for pupils with SEN – this can have both positive and negative impacts • Some academies may now be realising they can't not be inclusive	
14. Future Directions? • Several EPs citing the need for more, better quality or more frequent/refreshed training in schools. • Training could take different forms / be targeted at different professionals, eg. Teachers or the EPs themselves (link this to evidence of where more inclusive modules have been used in ITT schemes – positive reception) • Need for more space for teachers to reflect on their practice? • Peer support and how useful it can be in helping inclusion.	• Value in peer support – schools must make sure children are being educated in PSHE about SEND • Government needs to be clearer on what it wants regarding provisions • Government also needs to listen to experts and take notice of research findings which show benefits of inclusive schooling • *"What I would*	• Regarding ITT, thought that trying to put training on special needs into, for example, 1 year PGCSEs was unrealistic. • Instead, more on-the-job training needed. • Cited old training initiatives such as the Inclusion Development Programme.	• More frequent training for staff, especially to refresh knowledge. • Own role as EP includes delivering training • Some elements of the EP training itself could be improved – EPs must be prepared for reality that not everyone feels positively about inclusion. • At the moment, some EPs may not feel confident enough to challenge those	• Would like to see legislation changes that make it harder for schools to exclude children, and that prioritise inclusion and different aspects of education • Different inspection frameworks – more of a focus on friendships etc. and not just academic progress • Schools should be monitored on number of children

Specific interventions using or addressing this – needs to be taken advantage of more?	*really hope for would be listening to expert voices and looking at the research, and the majority of research, certainly that I'm aware of, is very much that inclusive schools are a better school for everybody."* • Teacher training needs to be more explicitly focussed on inclusion, particularly the concept and philosophy of inclusion, and not just teaching about particular types of SEN • Changes to Ofsted inspections – new local-area SEND inspections may improve things, comparison between LAs • Used to be good tools for measuring		views, so if this was dealt with more explicitly in training it might help • *"And sometimes when you're interacting with the school, they don't want to talk about the strengths, they just want you to put out what's so difficult, and "these are the reasons why we can't meet this child's need" and that's really challenging to deal with on a daily basis when you're interacting with a school"*	with SEN attending to give incentive for them to be more inclusive • Schools must be supported to achieve inclusion. Could have dedicated "inclusion facilitation teams" to go in and help schools • Links between schools, sharing of knowledge • More training needed, for example on different types of SEN • *"I think the other big problem would be training, really high quality training … Big gaps around people's understanding of just recurrent conditions like*

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	inclusion such as "Inclusion Index" – more of this needed.			*autism, for instance, severe learning difficulties, emotional difficulties and so on. There's very thin levels of understanding. And thus fear and prejudice around those areas, really."* • Contributions from disabled individuals to the training – involving them more
15. Other				• Importance of person-centred thinking and planning in improving inclusion • PATH / MAPS interventions – build up a picture and plan around the child involving key people in their

				life
				• EPs need to be involved in helping schools problem solve and come up with creative solutions to problems
				• More peer support needed in schools. Sometimes, having friends in school is only motivator for child to attend
				• Can do this with approaches such as Circle of Friends
				• Benefits to the child with SEN, mainstream peers and the teacher