An exploration of school leaders' decision-making to exclude a student from school:
What can we learn from their experiences?

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Abstract

Exclusion from school is an acknowledged problem. Outcomes for children and young people (CYP) who are excluded from school are poor, with over-representation in the criminal justice system, involvement with substance misuse, poorer health and anti-social behaviour. The aim of this study was to explore experiences of school leaders (SLs) decision-making to exclude a student from secondary schools, including what considerations and learning they take into account. The study was conducted with SLs from seven schools in one Local Authority in the South-East of England. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed using Thematic Analysis. Three key themes were found: challenges with creating cultural change; challenges with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion; and the need for specific personal and leadership skills. The findings suggest: i) decision-making to exclude is strongly influenced by organisational culture and, therefore, SLs need to engage at a whole school level to create an environment where the need to exclude is reduced. ii) Systems to support decision-making were often implemented too rigidly. When SLs were able to use these systems flexibly it led to greater consideration of alternatives to exclusion. A lack of alternatives to exclusion was also a key finding. iii) Specific leadership skills and personal qualities are identified that SLs utilised to help with their decision-making. Implications from the findings include: the need for schools to regularly review their whole school culture/ethos; regular professional development on intervention with, and responses to, CYP at risk of exclusion; greater co-ordination with special educational needs systems; policy guidance focusing on preventative approaches; greater support for SLs in their roles and the use of systemic theory to understand organisational change. The implications for educational psychology practice are also considered.

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List of Abbreviations

BESD	Behaviour Emotional and social difficulties
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Program
CYP	Children and Young Person/People
DfCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Family
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DOH	Department of Health
EP	Educational Psychologist
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KS3	Key stage 3
KS4	Key stage 4
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
MI	Motivational Interviewing
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
RQ	Research Question
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SL	School Leader(s)
TA	Thematic Analysis
UK	United Kingdom

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The intention of this chapter is to introduce the phenomena of exclusion and to argue that it is a worthy area for study, giving examples from research of the negative impact that exclusion has on children and young people's (CYP) long-term life chances. Exclusion data is summarised to show the long-term prevalence of fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates including trends both nationally and locally. Linking with the prevalence of exclusion, policy guidance that school leaders (SL) utilise to inform practice is critically appraised. In addition, this chapter will present the researcher's position and interest in this field and provide the reader with a short summary of the content of each chapter of thesis.

1.2 The impact of school exclusion

Researchers and educators have long been interested in the impact that exclusion has on CYP. During the 1990s, as the number of permanent exclusions increased, concerns were raised not only about the impact exclusion has on CYP but the long-term cost to society (Blyth & Miller, 1996). Blyth and Miller (1996) argued that the Education Reform Act in 1988 was the starting point of a differentially/stratified state education system, where schools could make decisions on which groups of CYP they would educate. They viewed the impact of this new approach to education, as multi-layered, with associated social disadvantage, alongside national policies and issues related to school organisation, resulting in more CYP being excluded from school.

Excluded pupils have been found to be at an increased risk of entering the care system (Bennathan,1992) and a greater risk of entering the criminal justice system (Prison Reform Trust, 2010). A survey by the Audit Commission (1996) found that 42 per cent

of young offenders had been excluded from school. Cullingford and Morrison (1996) surveyed 25 offenders, between the ages of 16 and 21 years, and found that all had experienced some form of school exclusion. Furthermore, prior to being excluded, they reported feelings of psychological exclusion, and a lack of belonging to school.

There have also been links made between school exclusion and both substance misuse and anti-social behaviours. McCrystal, Percy and Higgins, (2007) found that CYP, who are excluded from school, are more likely to be at increased risk of drug use, anti-social behaviour and later associated marginalisation from society. McGue and Iacono (2005) found that teenagers with problem behaviour, including exclusion, especially before the age of 15, are at a higher risk of problems with their health in adulthood and of being involved in wider social problems.

Therefore, evidence from research into exclusion suggest that it has a negative impact on outcomes for CYP. Subsequently, it can be argued that this is a worthy area for study. The next section will explore the prevalence and trends in exclusion rates over the last 20 years. Analysis of this data will demonstrate that there have been challenges for a number of years with high incidences of use of exclusion as a sanction, with vulnerable groups being adversely affected. This further highlights the importance of research into exclusion and the necessity to reduce the use of it as a sanction/consequence.

1.3 Prevalence and trends in exclusion data

Exclusion is used in schools, in the UK, as a method to tackle the most severe forms of student misbehaviour. Exclusion from school can be both permanent and fixed-term.

The Department for Education (DfE) 2017[1] guidance to schools, on exclusion, offers the following definitions of permanent and fixed-term exclusion:

Permanent exclusion: refers to a pupil who is excluded and who will not come back to that school (unless the exclusion is overturned).

Fixed-term exclusion: refers to a pupil, who is excluded from a school for a set term of time. A fixed-term exclusion can involve part of the school day and it does not have to be for a continuous term. A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed-terms up to a maximum of 45 days in a single academic year (DfE, 2017, p.8).

The DfE (2017) guidance refers to the government supporting Headteachers, using exclusion as a sanction where it is warranted. However, permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort. Nevertheless, the guidance does not give an indication of what types of behaviours would warrant an exclusion. In addition, the term exclusion from school, either permanent or fixed term, does not capture other forms of exclusion, which can be classed as 'hidden'[2] (House of Commons, 2018). This study intends to focus on official rather than hidden forms of fixed-term or permanent exclusion.

Prior to 1990/91 there was no data collected nationally on exclusion from schools. Since this date there has been closer monitoring, initially of permanent exclusions and subsequently fixed-term exclusions. Annually, the DfE releases a National Statistics report on permanent and fixed-term exclusions for state-funded primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units. The data can be analysed in a variety of ways including: by LA; region; age; gender; ethnicity and reason for exclusion, as well as other vulnerable characteristics, for example, being identified with special educational

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[1] Updated July 2017, published June 2012
[2] These can include children being sent home, part-time timetables, seclusion units, isolation.

needs and disability (SEND). The data can, therefore, be used to analyse trends for vulnerable groups or patterns in exclusions, including across each LA.

Analysis of exclusion data is useful to identify trends and demographics, both at a national and local level, including the LA, where this research was conducted. Analysis shows that exclusion for both permanent and fixed-term exclusion is increasing in England. For the identified LA, it shows that there are higher rates of fixed-term exclusion at the secondary phase of education when compared to national data.

Historically, the exclusion statistics via the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1999) showed that there were substantial increases in the numbers of permanently excluded pupils; rising from 2900 in 1990/91 to a peak of 12,605 in 1996/97, representing an increase of over 300 per cent in less than six years. At the time, some concerns were raised about the accurate recording of the data, as well as, the negative impact of permanent exclusion and the support needed to reduce this (Blyth & Miller, 1996).

Analysis of exclusion data for the period 1997/98 – 2016/17 shows two distinct trends. Firstly, that rates were in decline for both permanent and fixed-term exclusion, to an all-time low rate of 0.06 per cent (permanent exclusion) and 3.52 per cent (fixed-term exclusion) in 2012/13 (see Table 1). Secondly, the data for 2016/17 shows that, for both fixed-term and permanent exclusion, there is an increase compared to 2012/13 showing a concerning upturn in exclusion rates.

Table 1: The percentage of the school population experiencing both permanent and fixed-term exclusion from school in England (1997/98 to 2016/17):

Exclusion	1997/8	2003/04	2006/07	2012/13	2016/17
Permanent % of school population	0.16%	0.13%	0.12%	0.06%	0.10%
Fixed term % of school population	N/A	4.49%	5.66%	3.52%	4.76%

Closer examination of the latest exclusion data available at the start of this study was 2015/16 to 2016/17 (DfE, 2018). Analysis of this data shows an increase in both permanent and fixed-term rate of exclusions compared to the previous year 2015/16. Table 2 shows the yearly changes in exclusion rates for the last five years for all schools and solely for secondary schools where compared to all schools the exclusion rate is higher.

Table 2: Comparison of fixed-term exclusion and permanent exclusion in England (State-funded: primary, secondary and special schools)

State-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of schools	21,157	21,193	21,234	21,245	21,319
Number of pupils	7,616,870	7,698,310	7,799,055	7,916,255	8,025,075
Number of permanent exclusions	4,630	4,950	5,795	6,685	7,720
Permanent exclusion rate	**0.06**	**0.06**	**0.07**	**0.08**	**0.10**
Number of fixed-term exclusions	267,520	269,475	302,975	339,360	381,865
Fixed-term exclusion rate	**3.51**	**3.50**	**3.88**	**4.29**	**4.76**

State-funded secondary schools	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of schools	3,302	3,339	3,404	3,409	3,451
Number of pupils	3,210,120	3,181,360	3,184,730	3,193,420	3,223,090
Number of permanent exclusions	3,905	4,005	4,785	5,445	6,385
Permanent exclusion rate	**0.12**	**0.13**	**0.15**	**0.17**	**0.20**
Number of fixed-term exclusions	215,560	210,580	239,240	270,135	302,890
Fixed-term exclusion rate	**6.72**	**6.62**	**7.51**	**8.46**	**9.40**

To summarise, the trend data 2012-2017 for both permanent and fixed-term rates of exclusion for all schools and for secondary schools show a year on year increase. This is further supported by analysis of the trend data for the last 10 years from 2006/07 to 2016/17 showing that the level of exclusion both for permanent and fixed-term exclusion by type of school and total. The data shows that the current exclusion rate for both permanent and fixed-term has nearly increased back to the level experienced in 2006/07. Please see trend graphs in figure 1 and 2 below:

Figure 1: The number and rate of permanent exclusions in England 2006/07-2016/17
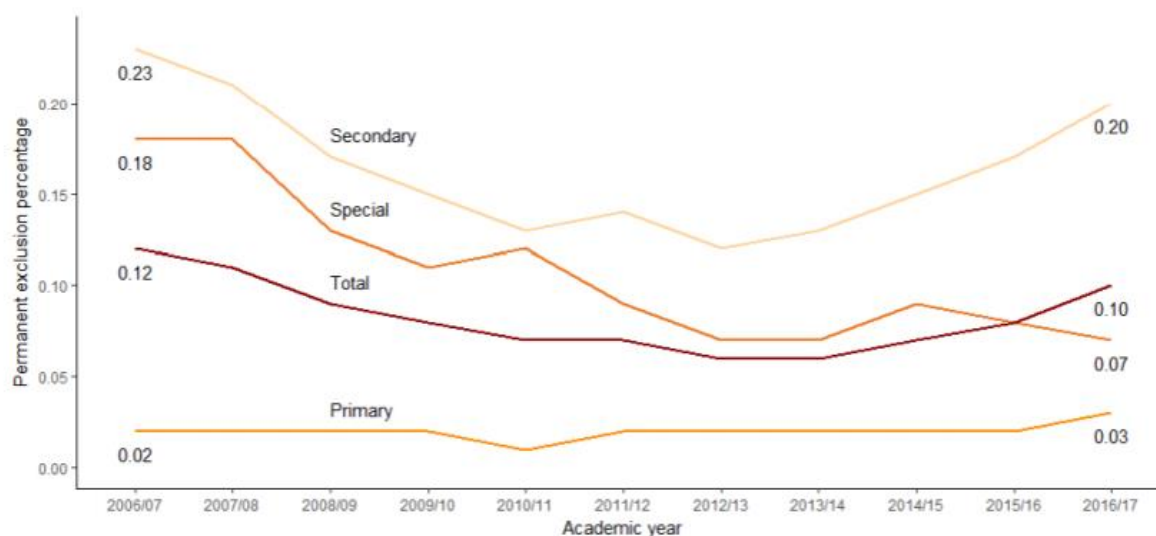
Figure 2: The number and rate of fixed-term exclusions in England 2006/07-2016/17
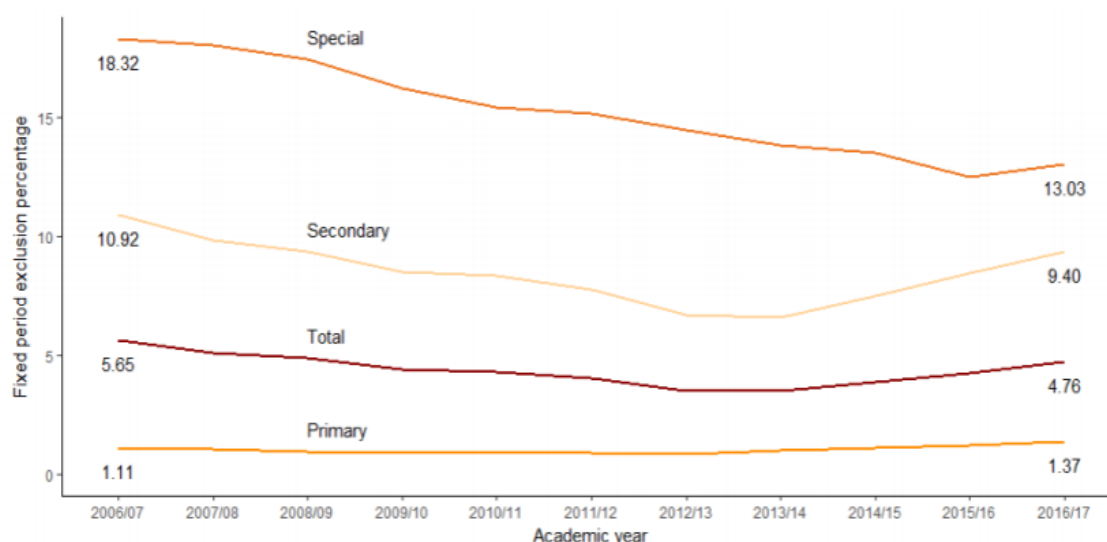
In summary, the data demonstrates that over the 10 years from 2006/07 to 2016/17, exclusion rates have initially reduced before increasing to a similar overall level to that of 2006/07.

The most common reason for permanent exclusion in state funded primary, secondary and special schools (35.7 per cent of all permanent exclusions in 2016/17) was persistent disruptive behaviour (DfE, 2018). This was also the main reason for fixed-term exclusions. This implies that exclusions are occurring due to behavioural

difficulties and that there are challenges with managing behaviour in schools. If as a society, we can have a better understanding of this phenomena and what works to cope with challenging behaviour, there could be less need to exclude.

The DfE Statistical Release (2018) analyses exclusion data by pupil characteristics. It reports, for the year 2016/17, that the majority of exclusions both fixed and permanent occur in Year 9 and above and that boys are excluded more frequently than girls, in a ratio of 3:1. Other key vulnerable characteristics include: eligibility for free school meals (36.7% of fixed-term exclusion) and having a special educational need (44.9% of fixed-term exclusion). Furthermore, pupils of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller or Irish Heritage ethnic groups had the highest rates of both permanent and fixed-term exclusions, but as this population is relatively small these figures should be treated with caution. Nonetheless, ethnicity does appear to play a role in exclusion rates: in 2016/17 Black Caribbean pupils had a permanent exclusion rate nearly three times higher than the school population. Researchers have also recently suggested that pupils with mental health conditions, including maternal mental health issues, have higher rates of exclusion (Pirrie et al 2011; Parker & Ford 2013; Cole, 2015; Paget et al, 2018).

The DfE Statistical Data Release (2018) states there is considerable variation in the permanent and fixed-term exclusion rate at LA level[3]. The LA identified for this research is located in the South-East region. Table 3 presents summary data comparing this LA with the south-east region, a statistical neighbour[4] and national level data for 2016/17 rates of exclusion. Analysis of the data for the identified LA shows that,

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[3] The regions with the highest rates of permanent exclusions across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools are the West Midlands and North-West (at 0.14 per cent). The regions with the lowest rates are the South-East (at 0.06 per cent) and Yorkshire and the Humber (0.07 per cent). The region with the highest fixed-term rate is Yorkshire and the Humber (at 7.22 per cent) whilst the lowest rate was in Outer London (3.49 per cent). These regions also had the highest and lowest rates of exclusion in the previous academic year.
[4] local authority with a similar profile

although the average rate of permanent exclusion is lower than both the national level and south-east region, the average rate of fixed-term exclusions is higher than both other areas. Comparisons with the statistical neighbour, show that the rate of permanent exclusions were similar. However, fixed-term exclusion was higher for the statistical neighbour LA. When focusing only on exclusions for secondary education, fixed-term exclusions were lower in the statistical neighbour LA (9.58%) compared to the identified LA (12.05%). The data analysed demonstrates that exclusions are more common in secondary education, suggesting that a focus on this educational phase in the identified LA, might help understand the reasons for the higher rate of fixed-term exclusion.

Table 3: Summary of all State funded Schools by LA, South East Region, South East Benchmark and National, then by Secondary phase of education (2016/17)

State Funded Schools and Special Schools	Number of Permanent exclusions	Permanent exclusion rate	Number of fixed-term exclusions	Fixed-term exclusion rate	Number of pupil enrolments with one or more fixed-term exclusion	One or more fixed-term exclusion rate
LA (Identified) (all schools)	**17**	**0.05**	**1,769**	**5.49**	**761**	**2.36**
South East (all Schools)	810	0.06	55,055	4.41	26,860	2.15
South East (Bench marker)	13	0.05	1,824	7.18	622	2.45
National	7,720	0.10	381,865	4.76	183,475	2.29
LA (Identified) (Secondary)	**17**	**0.14**	**1,455**	**12.05**	**630**	**5.22**
South East (Secondary)	665	0.13	39,870	7.90	20,695	4.10
South East (Bench marker)	9	0.10	824	9.58	391	4.54
National (Secondary)	6,385	0.20	302,890	9.40	148,820	4.62

1.3.1 Local Context

This study was conducted in a unitary authority in the South-East of England where it is estimated that in 2011 there were between 58,600 and 62,000 CYP under 19 years living in the city with approximately 22 percent of these CYP being from BME non-White UK/British backgrounds (City Snapshot, summary of statistics, 2014). This snapshot estimates that close to 20 percent of children in the city are living in poverty, which is similar to the national figure but above the regional figure. The proportion of

children in the city receiving free school meals in 2013 was 16.1 per cent and is similar for the whole of England (15.1 per cent) but significantly higher than the South-East region (10.1 percent). There are higher rates of children in need, in care and with child protection plans compared to the national and South-East region. The number of CYP in 2019 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan is above the national and statistical neighbours at 3.3 percent (National, 3.1 percent, Statistical Neighbours, 2.9 percent) with increases in primary need captured by EHCPs as a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. The LA has 10 secondary schools, 52 Primary Schools and 3 special school hubs.

1.4 National policy and guidance on exclusion

Exclusion is affected by national policy (Blyth & Miller, 1996). The DfE (2017) produces Statutory Guidance to schools in relation to exclusion and acknowledges the use of exclusion by Headteachers as a sanction where it is warranted. The guidance recommends that permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort and that schools have a statutory duty not to discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, such as, disability or race, and that they should give particular consideration to the fair treatment of pupils from groups, who are vulnerable to exclusion. Nevertheless, the data analysed in section 1.3 appears to contradict this policy recommendation, showing that CYPs from ethnic minority groups or with special educational needs are more likely to experience fixed-term exclusions. The guidance recommends that, for vulnerable groups, schools should consider what they need to implement to address and identify the needs of these CYP to reduce their risk of exclusion, including early intervention and multi-agency assessment. It is unclear,

however, what the process should be for monitoring or challenging schools where there are CYP from vulnerable groups experiencing higher levels of exclusion.

The guidance can mainly be interpreted as a statement of legal duties and it is not helpful in offering alternatives to exclusion but instead having an overemphasis on process (Cole, 2015). The lack of guidance or importance placed on positive strategies is disappointing, especially given the government's expert advisor (Charlie Taylor) produced a document in 2011 incorporating a behaviour checklist to promote positive approaches, which has not been included in the overall guidance. The lack of guidance to schools, on how to work preventatively to not exclude, has also been highlighted by Connolly (2012) who led an inquiry into school exclusions. He found that because there was no guidance for schools, on good practice in managing or commissioning provision for pupils with challenging behaviour, that provision differed markedly and was of varying quality.

In comparison, earlier guidance to schools about exclusion from The Department for Children, Schools and Family (DfCSF, 2008) had numerous examples of measures that schools can consider, including: engaging with parents; curriculum alternatives; restorative justice and consideration of SEND. It also recommended that CYP should be encouraged and included in the exclusion process. If the national guidance is of helpful quality, it could be assumed strategies will be employed by schools to reduce the need to exclude. Indeed, following the publication of the DfCSF (2008) guidance, there was a decrease in the use of exclusion until 2012/13, when new guidance was released, (by the new coalition political leadership, following 10 years of a Labour government).

It can therefore be argued that school exclusion is linked to wider socio-political decision-making. Cole (2015) completed a review of government policy, practice and research pertaining to mental health difficulties and CYP at risk of exclusion. As part of his review, he focused on the period 1997-2015 and observed a link between the nature of government policy and the political party in power, finding greater use of preventative support under a Labour administration and a more sanction focused approach under a Conservative regime. Similarly, Parsons (2005) noted the influence of the political climate and that more punitive approaches are evident under a Conservative leadership. Support for these contentions is found through an examination of the exclusion rate data. By 2006/07 (see Table 1 above), the exclusion rate under the Labour leadership had reduced to 0.12 per cent for permanent exclusion and by 2012/13, before the coalition government provided their new guidance, the figure was even lower at 0.06 per cent. Although the fixed-term exclusion rate had increased during the Labour administration, by 2012/13 there had been an overall reduction to 3.52% compared to 4.49% in 2003/04. As Table 1 shows, since the change to a coalition government and subsequent Conservative administration, exclusions rates have increased.

It is worth exploring the policies that were in place during the Labour administration from 1997-2010 that led to an overall reduction in the exclusion rate. A number of strategies to reduce exclusion were implemented, including: comprehensive and multi-agency behaviour support plans (DFEE, 1998), and the Behaviour Improvement Programme (Hallam et al, 2005), which emphasised early intervention in line with the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper (DFES, 2003), promoting emotional health and wellbeing through the National Healthy School Standard' (DFES/DOH, 2004). Hallam et al. (2005) analysed the Behaviour Improvement Programme and found the greatest

improvements in behaviour occurred when: i) support had not only been offered at the individual level, but also at the school and community level; ii) preventative rather than reactive approaches were in place; iii) there was multi-agency response; and iv) there was strong leadership within a school, with audits in place to measure change and build on existing provision (Hallam et al, 2005).

In 2006/07, although permanent and fixed-term exclusions had decreased, they were still considered to be too high and new guidance was issued on discipline and behaviour (DfES, 2007). Again, it promoted positive behaviour management and early intervention, but also made it a school's responsibility to arrange full-time education for pupils excluded for a fixed-term from the sixth day of exclusion, with LAs being responsible from the sixth day of a permanent exclusion. The guidance is detailed and in contrast to more recent guidance suggests alternatives to exclusion, such as, restorative justice; mediation; managed moves and internal exclusion. Alongside the guidance, there was the expectation that teachers would be offered training to improve their effectiveness when responding to disruptive behaviour. These strategies demonstrate how the Labour administration were attempting to reduce the use of exclusions through early interventions and inclusive policies.

Reflecting on the Labour administration, Garner (2013) refers to the years from 1997-2010 as a time of enlightenment, where there was policy enactment that sought to tackle the social dimensions of learning, alongside wellbeing, and had a focus on positive approaches to behaviour management. However, the coalition, and then Conservative administration from 2010-2015, inherited financial difficulties, meaning that spending on the public sector was reviewed. Consequently, the 'Department for Children, Schools and Families' changed to 'The Department for Education', losing the interconnectedness of multi-agency working. Furthermore, Cole (2015) argues there

was a reduction in terminology linked to 'every child matters' and 'inclusion'. Training materials that had been developed for the National Specialist Behaviour and Attendance programme were de-commissioned and no longer available for newly qualified teachers to access. As Garner (2013) asserts, there was a 'back to basics' approach and a sense that schools were educators, and CYP were there to be controlled and disciplined. New guidance on dealing with pupil behaviour (DFE, 2011b) was stripped bare of reference to relationship building and social and emotional aspects of learning. In this context of punitive education policy, the increases in exclusion rates that occurred during this period make sense.

The way educators are expected to respond to CYP, who are at risk of being excluded, is determined by the different policies implemented by different political leaderships. The Labour government showed a commitment to inclusive education, which was also seen in the revised 'SEN Code of Practice' (2001). It moved away from the notion of emotional, behavioural difficulties to the term 'behaviour and emotional/social difficulties', recognising the role of environmental and social factors on CYP's behaviour. Whereas the coalition government's green paper 'Support and Aspiration: a new approach to SEN' (DfE, 2011a), attempted to place emphasis on the underlying needs of children and focused on assessment to ascertain whether there were undiagnosed learning difficulties, speech and language or mental health needs. More recent guidance, issued in the 'special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0-25 years' (2014), demonstrates another shift in terminology away from 'behaviour and emotional/social difficulties' to 'social, emotional and mental health' difficulties. Terminology, such as, 'undiagnosed' and 'root cause' as well as removing the term 'behaviour' appears to suggest a medicalised approach to diagnosis of mental health, rather than understanding that a presenting behavioural need may be linked to an

emotional or mental health component. Cunningham (2016) adds that whilst the intention might have been to encourage staff to see beyond the behaviour, to understand a CYP, the terminology used leads to a greater sense that the issue is within them rather than an interaction between internal and external factors.

Norwich and Eaton (2015) reviewed the literature in relation to policy and practice and agreed that there had been many initiatives that followed the Labour Government's commitment to social inclusion. However, despite this, the inclusion policies were of less importance than the standards agenda. Paliokosta and Blandford (2010) criticised the emphasis on the terminology of inclusion, claiming that it is unclear what this means and that it can be misinterpreted. However, Norwich and Eaton (2015) argue that the move to the coalition and then Conservative administration saw a shift from the language of inclusion towards a greater emphasis on outcomes and an understanding of need from within the CYP, rather than wider systems and this could negatively impact exclusion rates.

More recently (Timpson, 2019), the Conservative government published a review of exclusion practice. Two of its key findings are that: exclusion practice varies between schools; and that certain groups of CYP are more likely to experience exclusion. It can, therefore, be argued that considering the impact that exclusion can have for CYP, the data and policy guidance over the last 20 years and that exclusion figures are increasing, further research in this area is necessary. This will allow for greater understanding on how exclusion can be addressed and hopefully lead to a reduction in the need to exclude CYP from school.

1.5 Personal reflections

As well as exploring a gap in our current understanding of the practice of school exclusion, this research is driven from personal experience of over 25 years working in the field of education as a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) in a secondary school, as an Educational Psychologist (EP), an interim lead for an Educational Psychology Team and as an Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist. For all of these roles, I have been fortunate to work with CYP who have experienced exclusion, to hear their stories, and hold a strategic position in a LA focusing on the delivery of services to meet the needs of CYP with SEMH needs. These experiences led me to reflect on the journey that CYP, who are at risk of exclusion, take and how this might be improved. Perusal of the research in this area highlighted perspectives on exclusion including CYP, parents and school/LA. It was deemed important to explore the literature from these different perspectives to gain an understanding of their voices and what we can learn. This research is also informed by a social constructionist understanding of the world where, *'social properties are constructed through interactions between people, rather than having a separate existence'* (Robson, 2011, p.24). Therefore, taking a social constructionist perspective on this phenomena was deemed important.

A review of the literature identified a gap in terms of the voice of SLs' experiences of excluding a CYP and their decision-making. This seemed to be a fruitful and pivotal area as these SLs were often responsible for behaviour policies and overseeing the ethos and decision-making to exclude.

1.6 Overview of Chapters

Chapter Two (Literature Review) summarises the previous literature on exclusion from the different perspectives of CYP, parents, schools and the LA. It presents research showing that a range of recommendations have been suggested over the years to reduce exclusions, including a focus on relationships, pastoral systems, transition from primary to secondary school and considerations of the ethos/culture of the school environment. Despite this research, there has not been sustainable improvements in exclusion rates. A review of the literature found no studies that centrally explored SLs perspectives or their decision-making to exclude a student from school. Therefore, this became of central interest to explore the views and learning from SLs experiences of excluding a student from school.

Chapter Three (Methodology) discusses the ontological and epistemological stance and describes the methodology of Thematic Analysis (TA) used for this study. Chapter Three also outlines the sampling strategy, selection and recruitment of participants, and the process of data collection and analysis. It includes a discussion of ethics and reflexivity, particularly how the research was conducted to meet the objectives of trustworthiness, validity and reliability.

Chapter Four (Findings) outlines the findings from the research, suggesting that decision-making on exclusion cannot be separated from SLs experiences of their leadership role, a role which aims to improve the school ethos and to include all CYP. The SLs had a dual responsibility for whole school behaviour, as well as leading on systems to support CYP at risk of exclusion. The findings highlight the challenges that SLs had with agreeing approaches, at a whole school level, to improve practice and reduce exclusion. They noted how classroom teachers often seek an exclusion. They

also discussed how pastoral or inclusion teams support CYP with presenting behaviour needs without early linking with SEND teams in their schools. The role of personal and leadership qualities of SLs also appeared to be influential. SLs ability to manage and cope with their role, be assertive, empathic, collaborative and flexible in their decisions about exclusion are explored.

Chapter Five (Discussion) argues that unless a systemic perspective is taken to understanding the phenomena of school exclusion, then other strategies, that have been shown to be partly effective, will only have variable impact. This research demonstrates that the ethos and culture of the school are a central determinant of the practice of school exclusion. Time for SLs to work with staff on the ethos, vision and policies around school exclusions can help create ownership from all staff. Systems in schools to identify and support CYP at risk of exclusion, including links with SEND and accessing support need improving. CYP are often accessing support too late and SLs experience challenges in being able to prioritise CYP at risk of exclusion within their SEND school systems. Where SLs experienced improved co-ordination with SEND, this led to improvements in early intervention. An implication of the findings is that all schools improve their links between SEND and pastoral systems. In addition, confidence with de-escalating situations with CYP without resorting to the formalised discipline system was highlighted by SLs as successful. Opportunities to build a relationship of trust with a CYP also appeared to reduce the need to exclude and potentially helped the CYP feel a sense of belonging. This implies that wider staff training on how to have effective conversations, which reduce exclusions and are reparative in busy classrooms, needs further consideration. Lastly, leadership skills and personal qualities were highlighted, especially in terms of the determination of SLs to find an alternative to exclusion as a solution. Their persistence and determination to

continue to do this should not be under-estimated. SLs need resilience so that they can promote their personal values to reduce exclusions and, especially when other staff might feel differently, suggest that this group of professionals require supervision for their roles that is separate to performance management. Implications for national policies and LA practice, including educational psychology are also discussed

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the rationale for studying exclusion in terms of the impacts that exclusion has on CYP and analysed the prevalence and trends in relation to the data on exclusions, showing that this has been a persistent issue for a number of years with vulnerable groups being adversely affected. The identified LA is described in terms of demographics, comparisons with statistical neighbours, national data on exclusions implicating that research into this phenomenon will be fruitful. It is argued that exclusion rates are a socio-political issue linked to which political party is in power, which in turn, influences DfE guidance issued to schools about exclusion. The researcher's personal and professional position in relation to this research area is described and a summary provided of each chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The purpose of this research is to explore SLs' experiences when deciding to exclude a student from school. The study aims to consider the unique perspective of SLs[5], who are the named lead for behaviour in their school. To explore this, a review of the existing literature on school exclusion was conducted, particularly using a systemic lens to this review. This was to enable a structure to this extensive area of research but also to approach this search from a social constructionist ontological position. This being the position that the researcher adopted initially. Coyle (2016) discusses a researcher's own ontological position as having relevance to research. The social constructionist position believes that exploring the different perspectives can help to gain new understanding. Therefore, this search explored the different perspectives on exclusion to understand these and to illuminate gaps in this field of research. The intention was to complete a scoping of the previous research, using a systemic lens, and to inform gaps in potential knowledge.

The questions that guided the literature search were:

- What does current research tell us about school exclusion, specifically the different perspectives on exclusion and what approaches have been successful?
- What are the gaps in the research and what would be helpful to add to this field of knowledge?

This chapter will, therefore, examine the literature on school exclusion, specifically, the different perspectives/approaches from CYP, parent, teachers, whole school and

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[5] The Headteacher will usually delegate decision-making in relation to exclusion to this professional who not only will be the lead for deciding on permanent or fixed-term exclusions but also is the senior teacher responsible for whole school behaviour and the requirements entailed in the Ofsted judgement category of 'personal development, behaviour and welfare'.

LA. There will be a critical appraisal of this literature before identifying current gaps that can further inform practice in this area.

2.2 Previous research

To conduct a scoping of the research on exclusion, initially the topic of exclusion was generally explored. The researcher had papers on this subject from it being an area of interest for several years. This initial appraisal of the literature found that exclusion research is often framed from perspectives of CYP, parent/carer, teaching staff, implementation of a whole school approach and the influence of the LA. Therefore, these different perspectives/approaches were used to summarise the key research in this area. In addition, to the hand search of papers, a series of searches were carried out using a range of keywords and databases. These included: psycArticles; psycBOOKs; psycPEP; Psychology and behavioural sciences; educational source; ERIC; discovery and Google Scholar as well as references from key papers, which were hand-searched. Appendix A provides a summary of these searches.

2.2.1 Perspectives of CYP

The first area of research reviewed explores CYP perspectives. Many of these studies found that it is important to listen to the perspectives of CYP to help inform interventions in relation to exclusion (Williamson & Cullingford, 2003; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Sellman, 2009; O'Connor, M et al, 2011; Pirrie et al, 2011; Flynn, 2014 and Farouk, 2016).

Flynn (2014) explored the experiences of students with behavioural difficulties in a mainstream secondary school, where listening to students was a key finding. The students commented that they were only noticed when they had done something wrong, but when positive recognition was made, this was valued. The study also

acknowledged the importance of the teacher-student relationship. Flynn (2014) found that when students experienced their voices being heard there were greater feelings of empowerment and subsequent transformation in their behaviour. Importantly, having a better relationship with one or even two teachers made a difference to how these students felt about being included in school. The study not only listened to CYP, but also found how listening can be transformative and help empower CYP. Critical appraisal of this study also found that the Headteacher appears to have been influential in terms of creating an environment, which listened to and supported CYP, reflecting that, in students at risk of exclusion, seeing the leadership was transformative. Although, this research was conducted in the Republic of Ireland it has applicability to thinking and practice in the UK.

Research with CYP has found that transition from primary school to secondary school can be difficult to navigate and this is where behavioural problems can begin (Princes Trust, 2002). This offers support for the data analysed in section 1.3, which demonstrated exclusions are more likely to occur in secondary education. The transition to this stage of education, can affect CYP's perceptions of expectations about behaviour and adaptation to the rules (Farouk, 2016). A survey of CYP by the Princes Trust (2002), found that the greater anonymity of secondary school, the lack of specific attention and less parental engagement with education, can lead to disengagement for CYP. Other research suggests that secondary school teachers are more focused on their teaching than linking with the individual needs of students and building relationships (Cole 2003; Daniels et al, 2003). It is suggested that this may also be influential in generating more behaviour issues and subsequent exclusions.

Similar to Flynn (2014), the importance of investing in building positive relationships between teacher and student has been found to be key (Pirrie et al, 2011; Michael &

Frederickson, 2013). The Ofsted report 'Managing Challenging Behaviour' (2005) also found that CYP valued the importance of a key member of staff who they trusted and could turn to in difficult times; having a quiet place to go to when needed; teachers who respected pupils; and lessons that were interesting and fun. In contrast, inconsistency from teachers in their practice and expectations, style of teaching, including shouting and seldom praising pupils, were identified by CYP as not helpful.

To summarise, the research from CYP points to the value of understanding the issues from their perspective. It also helps to explain the reasons for the increase in the rate of exclusion in the secondary phase of education with the importance of relationships and a focus on transition being particularly highlighted as significant. Researchers have identified that listening to CYP is the first step for schools, other professionals and their parent/carer to help create change and avoid exclusion (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). However, despite being aware of this research, and even perhaps aiming to achieve this, rates of exclusion are still concerning and currently increasing.

2.2.2 Perspectives of parents/carers

The second area of research identified was parent/carer perspectives. Less adult engagement at secondary schools was identified as a key factor (The Princes Trust, 2002). Similar to the research with CYPs, Ofsted (2005) found that parents/carers reported the transition to secondary education was a particularly concerning time for them and that there was insufficient liaison between external professionals and school. More recent research has found that improved communication between schools and parents is perceived to have a positive effect and creates less need to exclude (Parker et al, 2016).

2.2.3 Perspectives of teaching staff

The third area of research identified explored the teacher's role in reducing exclusion. The pressure that teachers are under for academic achievement can affect their ability to meet the emotional needs of CYP (Bennathan, 1996). However, Rogers (2000) stresses the importance of the role of teacher in reducing the need to exclude, highlighting the careful use of appropriate language, balancing correction with encouragement, linking behaviours to consequences, separating the behaviour from the person, using private rather than public reprimands and re-establishing the relationship after 'correction' as appropriate strategies to create an inclusive educational environment. Nevertheless, it is not just about the role of the teacher, but the ethos that a school promotes to include all CYP (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Therefore, a fourth area of research explores the role of whole school approaches to reducing exclusion.

2.2.4 Whole School Approaches

Imich (1994) found that a small number of schools in one LA accounted for the majority of exclusions indicating that school factors may be a more significant predictor of pupil exclusion than the actual behaviour of pupils or individual teachers. Osler (2000) also found that some schools managed to keep exclusion of pupils to a minimum despite similar challenging circumstances. The above studies show the importance of not only teacher perceptions, but also whole school approaches in reducing exclusion rates.

Indeed, a whole school approach has been deemed to be effective in reducing exclusion. Jones and Smith (2004) found that by involving all staff, fixed-term exclusions decreased significantly in one secondary school. They noted the importance of

involving both pupil and staff, specifically in relation to policy review, and that having their perspectives helps to create more inclusive schools. Turner and Waterhouse (2003) also found that by involving staff, strategies were developed to reduce exclusion, improve behaviour and academic success. Strategies targeted early identification, intervention and encouragement of discussion across departments and an inclusive discourse. They found a reduction in exclusion, which was attributed to a move away from punishment to a more supportive ethos.

Munn et al (2000) also advocated that changing the ethos of a school by altering the values and beliefs that underpin practices could be important in sustaining change in the use of exclusions. They interviewed school staff, parents, pupils and education professionals in schools with high or low rates of exclusion, examining how school ethos may prevent exclusions. The study identified the following as key for school ethos: school leadership and a belief in teachers that they are there to educate all pupils; a flexible curriculum; differentiated and inclusive personal and social development; relationships with parents; and decisions about exclusions being influenced by flexible systems informed by a number of staff, rather than a rigid hierarchy of sanctions. Similarly, Parsons (1999) found that the conditions to meet the needs of children at risk of exclusion were: good teaching; an appropriate curriculum; an effective behaviour policy; effective leadership; a core dedicated group of staff who promote the value and ethos of the school; reflective staff; and understanding of the nature of emotional and behavioural needs in CYP.

The review of the literature in terms of provision to meet CYP at risk of exclusion, also found that the setting up of inclusion units, when implemented in a planned way, resourced and with a consultative approach, have been successful (Gilmore, 2013). However, Obsuth et al. (2017) found that other initiatives involving outside specialists

offering an intervention in a range of schools for students at risk of exclusion did not have an impact. They concluded that short-term school-based interventions that are not well-integrated into school provision or are external to the school are unlikely to be successful in changing students' behaviour. They recommended that the focus should be on developing teacher-pupil relationships and improving school environments.

Similarly, Head et al (2003) explored the effects of a group of secondary schools employing a behaviour support teacher to support managing behaviour. They found that the schools utilised the teacher to work one-to-one or in small groups with CYP. When the focus was on the support that the CYP needed to change to fit in with the school, it was not perceived as the most successful intervention. Nonetheless, co-operative teaching, where the behaviour support teacher facilitated the classroom teacher to understand the adaptations needed for the curriculum to meet the needs of the CYP, was perceived as more successful. This study demonstrated that the change or problem did not lie within the CYP, but more within school systems.

From the research reviewed, the importance of a whole school approach appears to be crucial for successfully tackling exclusion. Leggett (2000) found that the most influential change in working with CYP, who had been excluded from school, was environmental factors, including curriculum adaptation, school policies, home-school liaison and the approach from SLs, rather than within child factors. There has also been evidence of training in restorative approaches being successful at reducing exclusions (Healy et al, 2005; Martin & Hopkins, 2010).

2.2.5 Local Authority Influence

The influence of the LA is also another factor that can affect exclusion rates. Ainscow et al (1999) explored Local Education Authorities (LEA) policies and practices on

inclusion. They advocated that inclusion needs to be a 'corporate' priority by the LA supported by councillors and integrated within other professional groups and services. Burton et al (2009) recognised the oscillation between policymakers' discourses around inclusion and exclusion. They explored the contradictory messages that were given at policy level in one LA at the secondary phase of education. They concluded that pressures on LAs and SLs to effect academic achievement at the highest grades may be a priority at the expense of meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Moreover, they strongly asserted that if the narrowness of the performance agenda is pursued, CYP with challenging behaviour will be let down by the system and will remain on the margins of education and inevitably society. Norwich and Eaton (2015) also states that despite the Labour government's initiatives and commitment to inclusion, there continued to be other initiatives and priorities towards the standards agenda that caused uncertainty in the field and ambivalence towards inclusive practices.

However, working at the LA level has been shown to be successful. Parsons (2009) explored the influence of LAs on exclusions by comparing three LAs with low rates and three with high rates of exclusion. In the low excluding LAs, Parsons (2009) found that these LAs had built trust with their schools, responded quickly and had a range of non-punitive support/provision which was well co-ordinated. Parsons (2009) highlights the importance of behaviour policies in determining exclusion rates. There is a clear difference where the blame and responsibility is located within the CYP as opposed to schools focusing on relationships. They also argued the same is true where government guidance has focused on management of the behaviour and the individualisation of the problem rather than viewing behaviour as an outcome of an interaction.

2.2.6 Conclusions

It is clear from the literature review that exclusion from school is a multi-dimensional problem with no single cause or solution. The voice of CYP is important to help determine factors that help support them to be included, for example a relationship with key adults; including parents/carers with good communication from home to school; the importance of schools working at a whole school level to include all their staff in developing the ethos/culture of the school; and finally the LA influence on schools in relation to policy, guidance and provision. Despite this wealth of research on exclusion, rates of exclusion are currently increasing and there has been limited impact of this research on the exclusion figures. The next section will consider reasons for this and outline a rationale for the current study.

2.3 Rationale for the current study

An examination of the current field of research has revealed that there has been extensive research into exclusions. However, exclusion figures are still deemed to be too high. There is evidence of policy influences on exclusion figures, yet, irrespective of which political leadership is in power the use of exclusion is sanctioned. A range of research has advised that it is important to hear the views of CYP, consider the ethos or culture of the school, the contribution of strong leadership, training, relationships and a focus on supporting transition from primary to secondary education. Despite the wealth of research, practice differs across LAs (Timpson, 2019), and exclusion rates are rising.

The key appears to be that not one approach will suffice to reduce exclusions. There is little policy guidance on this area. Schools are given the power to decide whether to exclude and practice varies between schools (Timpson 2019). Therefore, it must be

important to examine exactly how schools make the decision to exclude. Therefore, a systematic literature search was carried out to consider what is known about how and what considerations are discussed when deciding to exclude a student from school. This review is focused on secondary schools due to the prevalence of exclusion in this phase.

To search for literature in this area, databases available via the EBSCOhost Tavistock and Portman Library were used, these included: psycINFO, psycArticles, psycbooks, psycPEP, Psychology and behavioural sciences, educational source, ERIC and discovery. Using the search term 'decision-making' in relation to school exclusion met with no relevant results. The search terms were, therefore, broadened to include research either about perspectives or experiences of teachers in relation to excluding a CYP. The terminology and searches completed are detailed in Appendix B. The results of the searches revealed no studies that exclusively explored the experiences of professionals in school decision-making about whether to exclude a CYP. Therefore, it was decided to further extend the search results to include studies that had elements of teacher views in relation to exclusion.

Analysis of the studies selected and use of 'The Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP): Qualitative Research' (2010) framework to evaluate the studies is in Appendix C. This is a methodological checklist which provides key criteria relevant to qualitative research studies. Although, not all the research was entirely qualitative, the CASP was an effective tool to use as all studies had a qualitative element. The CASP gives an overall score for each study in terms of research design, recruitment strategy, data collection, data analysis, ethical issues and the relationship between the researcher and participants.

Each study will be described below with a critique based on the CASP analysis, followed by a consideration of themes and limitations of the current available research before further outlining the rationale for the current study.

Perceptions of behaviour and patterns of exclusion: Gypsy Traveller students in English secondary schools
Chris Derrington (2005)

This longitudinal study followed Year Six gypsy traveller students transition to secondary school by interviewing them pre and post transition to learn about their experiences and about what works to reduce the need to exclude. The study also interviewed teachers from the primary school and the secondary school to gain their perceptions. The study was broad involving 15 LAs with the intention of interviewing the students three times from Year Six to Year Nine. The sampling was purposive with the author gaining participants via contacts with specialists in the field. The significant finding, for this vulnerable group, was that only half of the original sample (18) remained in secondary education and one third of the students had received a fixed-term exclusion, during the research. The methodology was a mix of interviews and questionnaires, which were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Findings are drawn from the research and illustrated well with quotes in terms of the value of relationships with teachers, a key trusted adult, unidentified learning needs and communication styles in reducing the need to exclude. Two important findings, from the teachers, were that their responses were positive about the students and that behavioural issues started to become apparent during Year Seven. However, these findings are not fully explored and there are no clear implications or suggestions for improvements from the findings. The perceptions of school staff were secondary to those of CYP and the study is not clear in presenting a coherent account of their views.

The findings from this study, although about a specific group of students' experiences, would have transferability and learning for other groups of excluded students.

What's so inclusive about an inclusion room? Staff perspectives on student participation, diversity and equality in an English secondary school.
Gwen Gilmore (2012)

Similar to the study above, the design for this research was longitudinal over five years. The author states the rationale for the study and clearly articulates the RQs. The research explored how an inclusion room reduces fixed-term exclusion in one secondary school from 10 percent to 0.01 percent over five years. The study employed mixed methods with students and staff views being sought as well as other documents. In addition to questionnaires completed by staff, nine members of staff were interviewed. The staff were selected purposively. Two were identified because of their influence over discipline in the inclusion room. It is not clear if these were teachers or support staff or if they held management positions. The views of the teachers found that the inclusion room worked well, as an alternative to exclusion, because the children were still learning. It was also stated that the ethos of the school was promoted as one of developing inclusion, aspiration and respect but it did not detail how this was achieved. Similar to the study by Derrington (2005), the views of teaching staff, although captured, were only part of the overall study, and it is hard to draw conclusions about their unique perspective.

Disciplinary exclusion: the influence of school ethos
Lucy Ann Hatton (2013)

Hatton (2013) explored school ethos in relation to the use of exclusion/inclusion focusing on 20 primary schools with a high level of deprivation in the North of England. She also employed a mixed method approach, including focus groups and interviews, following the analysis of these with a questionnaire. The study found that

in schools with low exclusion there was: consistency and clarity in the understanding of the school behaviour policy; a whole school shared responsibility for all children and a fostering of inclusion; greater emphasis on whole school preventative approaches to behaviour, rather than reactive responses to individuals and a greater use of rewards; recognition of both social and academic goals in relationships with pupils was deemed to be important, including taking their views into account; and staff belief in inclusion was about seeing behaviour as similar to learning needs and being able to meet it. In high excluding schools, the perception was that CYP needs would be better met in specialist provision. However, there was also the belief that they could meet some of the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion. These differences were interpreted in terms of 'a professed position' and 'a lived position' (Argyris & Schon, 1992). The study, although of primary schools, is interesting in terms of transferability to secondary school systems and the themes that are identified as important in low excluding schools. The methodology was rigorous in terms of the range of perceptions and methods employed to gather data. Limitations of the study were identified, including the impact of a change of senior leadership in some of the schools, lack of pupil perceptions and caution about generalisability of the findings.

Reasons for exclusion from school
Audrey Osler, Rob Watling, Hugh Busher, Ted Cole and Andy White (2001)

The aims and RQs of this study were clearly articulated in terms of understanding the reasons for fixed-term or permanent exclusions from school. The researchers explored different perspectives between school staff and LA staff for reasons for exclusion; how the sanction of exclusion fitted into the life of a school; and how LAs effectively support schools in achieving their targets for a reduction in school exclusion. A range of interviews were conducted, including LA officers and teachers in 26 schools across both primary and secondary phases, as well as analysis of documentary evidence. The

findings from this study emphasised the role of leadership in determining the school's approach to exclusion. Inclusive schools were found to be sensitive to difference and diversity, and identifying a need for early intervention, having a flexible curriculum and appropriate staff training.

Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city (2015)
Dave Trotman, Stanley Tucker and Madeline Martyn

Trotman et al (2015) completed research commissioned by a consortium of schools, who were concerned about the increase in negative pupil behaviour and exclusion at secondary schools, which was resulting in fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The researchers interviewed pupil and behaviour co-ordinators about their perceptions of exclusion. The study found that the greatest factor affecting negative behaviour was planning for transition from primary to secondary school. There was also recognition of the difficulty of transition from KS3 to KS4 and that behaviour co-ordinators valued robust pastoral systems in reducing the need for exclusion. The importance of relationships was also highlighted by the pupils. The researchers recommended particular attention be paid to the KS3 and KS4 transition to improve management of behaviour and reduce exclusions. They commented on a commitment from behaviour coordinators in wanting to gain a clearer understanding of the challenges and concluded that change can only be achieved in schools that are willing to reflect critically on how they deliver successful educational experiences for CYP. Trotman et al (2015), through their research, enabled a triangulation of views from teachers and CYP to inform next steps.

2.3.1 Themes, strengths and limitations

A review of the studies shows that it is not easy to compare across the research for commonalities in findings due to the varied aims of the research and the different

methodologies. The study by Derrington (2005) found that: building relationships, the role of a trusted adult, communication and processes to identify a learning need, were important. Whilst Trotman et al (2015) also found relationships to be important, they identified supporting the transition from primary school to secondary school and from KS3 to KS4 to be the most important factors in reducing the need to exclude. Trotman et al (2015) also noted that strong pastoral systems were influential. Contrastingly, Hatton (2013) found that an overarching approach is needed, paying attention to the ethos of the school, with a shared understanding from all staff towards inclusion and policy with use of positive approaches and proactive forms of intervention. Similarly, Osler et al (2001) found that a focus on inclusion had benefits, but they also found that early intervention, flexible curriculum and training to be of importance. Whereas, Gilmore (2012) focused her research on alternatives to exclusion and the role of an inclusion facility, finding that this helped reduce exclusion because CYP are still learning and because this can reflect a sense of belonging.

Reviewing the literature, it was challenging to find studies that involved solely teachers or any that included SLs reflecting on their decision-making to exclude a CYP from school. Most of the studies used mixed methods and one of the studies was mainly pupil focused (Derrington, 2005). Although, the Derrington study interviewed adults, the sampling process lacked clarity. The key weakness of the study by Hatton (2013) is that it is based on a primary school and transferability of the findings to another school or to the secondary phase is unknown.

A review of the literature has identified a clear gap in our current understanding. There is no research that focuses on the decision-making of SLs in relation to exclusion. The findings from the research are varied and although offer helpful insights about the process of exclusion from the perspectives of teachers, they are limited in their lack of

commonality. This could be explained by exclusion being viewed as a multi-layered issue. School research has often focused on more than one perspective, which has potentially led to confirmation of previous findings, for example, that transition is a key factor that affects children's ability to navigate to secondary school successfully. There are no studies that have concentrated on one professional group to elicit their experience of decision-making on school exclusion.

This study intends to solely explore the role of the lead in a secondary school, who makes the decision to exclude and leads on behaviour systems. This is usually a member of the Senior Leadership Team. It is anticipated that this study will provide a greater understanding of this role, the process which leads to exclusion, and the challenges schools face in reducing the need to exclude CYP. The study focuses on the experiences of secondary SLs, as this is an area where fixed-term exclusion is higher for the identified LA when compared to national and statistical neighbours. The focus of the research will, therefore, be exploring the experiences of SLs decision-making around excluding a student from secondary schools.

2.4 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature on exclusion and to identify a focus for the current research that will help develop our understanding of this phenomenon. A range of research has advised that it is important to hear the views of CYP, consider the ethos or culture of the school, the contribution of strong leadership, training, relationships and a focus on supporting transition from primary to secondary education. It has been found that current research has paid limited attention to the role of the SL with responsibility for all CYP's behaviour and exclusions. Furthermore, there is no sole study which, explores their perceptions. The current study will explore the experiences of this group of professionals in relation to their decision-making when

excluding a CYP. The study was conducted in one LA where the secondary phase of education had higher than average rates of fixed-term exclusion. The overarching RQ is: What experiences do SLs bring to their decision- making to exclude a student from school?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the aims and purpose of this research. It includes consideration of the ontological and epistemological positions for this study and the rationale for using thematic analysis (TA) to analyse the data. The research strategy is described including the recruitment of participants, interview procedure and data analysis process. Ethical issues and an evaluation of the study in terms of trustworthiness, validity and robustness are provided.

3.2 Purpose of the Study

As Chapter Two argued, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of SLs decision-making to exclude a student from school. This is a group of professionals, who are under researched in the literature, but have influence on the decision-making process. The research aims to gain an understanding of the phenomena from their unique perspective and to consider what we can learn from their experiences of using exclusion; to improve practice and reduce the need to exclude CYP. The RQ explored is: What experiences do SLs bring to their decision- making to exclude a student from school?

3.3 Qualitative research

Baden and Major (2013) define qualitative research as being an exploration of 'wicked' problems that do not have one correct solution and therefore we need to find new ways of conceptualising them. The intention is therefore to conceptualise exclusion from this perspective as a 'wicked' problem that has been troubling society for several years. This research is an exploratory study interested in the unique perspectives of SLs and their experiences when excluding CYP from school. Qualitative research lends itself to this type of inquiry more than quantitative because it can use a range of

methodologies including interviews, focus groups or diaries which tend to provide richer and more in-depth data. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) describe qualitative research as having the power to explore human existence in detail. It can give access to human experience, allowing researchers to explore detailed aspects of people's social world and lead to new thinking about human behaviour. In addition, Kidder and Fine (1997) believe that qualitative researchers are characterised and motivated by their commitment to facilitating change. Indeed, the aim of this research is to provide insights into the experiences and decision-making processes that underlie exclusions in secondary schools from the perspective of SLs to help further our understanding of barriers and potential solutions to reducing exclusions, thereby fitting with a qualitative approach.

3.4 Ontological and epistemological position

Greenbank (2003) argues that when researchers are deciding what research methods to adopt, they will inevitably be influenced by their own underlying ontological and epistemological position. However, it is important to consider these in light of how best to address the RQ. The ontological position relates to our assumptions about reality. Ontology can be viewed as a continuum (Creswell, 2009), at one end of the continuum is realism, which fits with a positivist position where objects are seen to have a cause and effect relationship and can be thought of as a stable reality. At the other end of the continuum is relativism, which focuses more on the meaning attributed by individuals to an experience that is less stable and so reality is socially constructed. The RQ is aiming to explore the individual experiences of SLs decision-making to exclude CYP from school and therefore the ontological position initially adopted for this study was relativist. This believes that individual's socially construct reality through their interpretation of their experience and that there is not one correct way of

viewing this. However, re-evaluating the ontological position after data collection revealed that the data generated from all the participants provided useful knowledge, which led to a change in the ontological position to align more with a critical realist position. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it is not unusual for the ontological position to be re-visited after data analysis and re-considered. The change in ontology allowed a more critical realist stance to share broader learning from the participants' experiences to improve practice and so reduce the need to exclude. This research therefore took a critical realist ontological position believing that some authentic reality exists to produce knowledge that might make a difference. (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997).

Epistemology refers to the belief systems about how knowledge about the world is discovered and, like ontology, can be understood as a continuum from positivist to constructionism (Willig, 2008). The positivist stance believes that causal links can help increase knowledge about a certain area. At the other end of the continuum, knowledge is created by social interaction between individuals in society. Social constructionists emphasise the influences of culture, language and society on individual's attribution of meaning to their experiences. As such, qualitative interviews allow us to reveal the meanings attributed to experiences.

This study also acknowledges the interactional nature of behaviour and impact of society on our behaviour in terms of policy direction and how this, in turn, influences the experience of a phenomena. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledge, similarly to ontology, that this may shift during the analysis phase. They use the term 'contextualist' which acknowledges the way individuals make meaning of their experience and in turn the ways the broader social context impacts on those meanings, whilst retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'. The RQ for this

study is: What experiences do SLs bring to their decision- making to exclude a student from school? The initial intention was to explore this question from a more phenomenological stance with an epistemology that reflects social constructionism. However, after data collection the experiences of SLs fitted more within a 'contextualist' epistemology that Braun and Clarke (2006) describe, allowing a more pragmatic position that enabled facilitating of change in the real-world context.

3.5 Description and Rationale for Thematic Analysis

The original intention was to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data. IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of participants' experiences and how they make sense of them (Smith, 2011). However, once the data had been collected, the analysis revealed rich data in terms of themes relating to not only the individual participant's experience of the phenomena, but also themes that the participants thought would help reduce the need to use exclusion in their practice. It was decided that the content of these findings would be better suited to TA which allows for content as well as experiential themes to be identified. The content themes were considered important to help answer the RQ and to capture potential future transferable findings when trying to reduce the need to exclude.

TA is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes and patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA can be viewed as a flexible tool (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and has greater flexibility than other qualitative methodologies such as IPA. Although, TA is also a systematic approach, with analysis involving coding, it is recognised that there are many different approaches that are considered to fit broadly within TA (Clarke & Braun, 2016), making it more flexible. The aim of coding in TA is to provide a plausible and coherent categorisation of the data from which a number of different

analyses could be developed (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2016) describe 'Reliability and Trustworthiness' in TA stemming from a systematic and scholarly approach to analysis not just from checking the accuracy of the coding. More recently, Braun and Clarke (2019) have re-defined their TA as 'reflexive TA' arguing that their approach to TA emphasises the researcher's role as central for knowledge production because there needs to be theoretical knowingness and transparency, with philosophical sensibility and theoretical assumptions informing the use of TA.

Both IPA and TA focus on making sense of individual experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) but TA places a stronger emphasis on locating individual experiences within a sociocultural context and so, as the analysis progressed, it became apparent that TA was an increasingly more appropriate methodology for answering this RQ and understanding the experiences of SLs within the social context.

Braun and Clarke (2016) recommend a sample of at least six participants because of the emphasis on patterned meaning across cases rather than idiographic meaning. Within their approach to TA there are two types: 'semantic' which captures the meaning of the data remaining close to the participants' perspectives; and 'latent' which examines the assumptions and logic frameworks underpinning the surface meanings. Therefore, TA can be used to not only describe and summarise data but also to interpret and interrogate it.

TA can also be described as either inductive or deductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive refers to the identification of themes being linked strongly to the data itself, emerging from them, and has been termed 'bottom up'. The data might not have a strong relation to the questions being asked or be driven by a theoretical framework but pays attention to the participants' themes and direction of discussion. Whereas

deductive refers to a 'top down' approach, themes having a stronger link to the RQ and is led more from the perspective of the researcher. For this study, inductive TA was used to ensure that the findings are not limited to the researcher's pre-conceptions and represented the perspectives and experiences of participants. The analysis phase drew on all the data to help answer the RQ. The researcher was flexible with the theoretical framework to allow for the rich data and ideas generated from the participants to be used to not only illustrate their experiences of the decision-making process to exclude a student from school, but also to consider the learning from this and how it related to existing knowledge and understanding.

Therefore, for this study, the ontological and epistemological positions were the theoretical framework and the analysis was conducted via Braun and Clarke's description of 'Reflexive TA'. An inductive approach to the data analysis was taken to allow for greater flexibility and fluidity to the overall process, using both semantic and latent meanings in order to go beyond describing the data to also interpret it. Braun and Clarke (2016) state that most analyses do contain both semantic and latent analysis.

3.6 Participants and sample size

The research took place in a LA in the South-East of England, in which the researcher was employed as an Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist (APEP). Participants were selected using non-probability sampling techniques: purposive and convenience. Purposive required participants to only be selected for the study if they were able to shed light on the RQ, that is, they had experience with leading the school exclusion process. Furthermore, the sample is a convenience sample in that is it made up of participants who were available at the time of recruitment to take part in the study. All

participants were selected from one LA and had responsibility for leading on behaviour in their school.

Details of the study were given via a Behaviour and Attendance Partnership meeting that all SLs and the APEP regularly attended. Following this SLs were emailed individually about the study and expressions of interest were sought. All SLs responded to the expression of interest with 8/10 volunteering to be involved in the research. In response, participants were sent a participant information sheet (Appendix D) and consent form (Appendix E). Following this, 7/10 participants agreed to take part in the research.

The seven participants included five females and two males. They had a range of experience as leaders from one year to over 20 years. Pseudonyms were given to the participants to protect their identities (Amber, Bella, Clara, Daniel, Eleanor, Frank and Georgia). Each participant taught in a different mainstream secondary school in the same LA.

3.7 Data collection

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The tool chosen to collect the data was a semi-structured interview. This method was chosen because it gave access to the participants on an individual basis to discuss their experiences of exclusion. The sensitivity of the topic suggested that an interview would enable confidentiality for participants and allow for prompting and probing to help gain in-depth and rich data.

Conducting the interviews required the researcher to closely listen and respond to the participant '*attempting to understand the world from the subject's point of view to unfold the meaning of their experiences and to uncover their lived world'* (Brinkmann

& Kvale, 2015 p. 3). Some of the participants were known to the interviewer through their professional working relationship so to increase validity 'bracketing off' (Smith & Osburn, 2008) was used. The interviewer also paid attention to their role to remain curious, sensitive and critical of their own presuppositions/hypotheses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Conducting the interviews needed a high level of skill. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) note how the interviewer needs to be knowledgeable about the topic and familiar with the method, as well as understanding the conceptual issues of producing knowledge through conversation. To enable this to happen the interview schedule was trialled with professionals and feedback taken on length and order of questions. Thoughts and feelings following the interviews were captured in a reflexive diary by the researcher.

Oxley (2016) discusses the idea of 'deliberate naivety' during an interview, allowing the researcher to remain receptive to the participants description of their reality without too many prior assumptions. The interviewer needs to be listening carefully to the responses from the participant as there might be ambiguity when a response can imply several interpretations or provide contradictory statements during the interview. Reflecting back to the participant was a technique that the researcher used during the interview process to check for ambiguities and interpretations.

3.7.2 The Interview Process

All interviews took place between July 2017 and January 2018 and were arranged by mutual agreement with each participant for time and venue. The place for the interview was dependent on the participant's preference, but most occurred at the participant's school. When agreeing date, time and venue for interview, the participant information sheet and consent form were re-sent.

At the beginning of the interview, the participant information sheet and consent form were discussed and then signed by both the interviewee and researcher prior to the interview beginning. The interviewer informed the participant about confidentiality and sharing of data and reassured them that there was no right or wrong answer to the interview questions. Agreement was sought for recording of the interview and confidentially was explained.

The length of interviews varied from 50 minutes to 1 hour 40 mins. Most were concluded within one sitting. Two interviews required a short break and a further one needed two separate interviews due to unforeseen circumstances at the participant's school.

The interview schedule (Appendix F) was designed carefully regarding the number of questions, probes and the order of questions to help gain an understanding of the participant's experience. The interview schedule was shared with fellow doctorate students for feedback and suggestions for amendments. To help fulfil the flow of the interview, the schedule was learnt.

The interview schedule was used flexibly, however, all interviews began with simple factual questions about current role, length of time at current school and any training undertaken for the role. This was followed by a broader question about the participant's experience of excluding students. Then progression of the interview was largely determined by the responses the participant gave, whilst keeping in mind the broader RQ. This was in keeping with a TA approach that is 'inductive' (Braun & Clarke, 2016). However, the researcher needed to be mindful that the interview did not move too far away from the intended purpose.

After each interview, explanations were given of the next steps, how to make contact, if needed and the timeline for the research to be completed. Shortly after each interview, recorded initial impressions were captured in a reflexive diary (Appendix N). This included reflection on the approach that the researcher had taken to the interview and any thoughts and feelings. This is in keeping with 'reflexive TA' (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3.8 Data Analysis:

TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the data and the following phases were followed:

Table 4: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77)

1.Familarise yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5. Defining and naming the themes	On-going analysis to refine the specific of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis to the RQ and literature, producing a report of the analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend the above as a guide but, to allow flexibility in answering the RQ, not to be applied too rigidly. For this study the following process was completed:

(i) **Data Familiarisation** following the data being transcribed, the recording of the interview was listened to and transcription read simultaneously to check for accuracy of recording and to become familiar with the data. Initial thoughts about the interview or phrases of interest were highlighted. Braun

and Clarke (2006) describe how immersing yourself in this way allows the researcher to be familiar with the depth and breadth of the content.

(ii)   **Generating initial codes** following initial familiarisation with the data, the coding had a more systematic focus, involving working through the data in segments, developing codes. A code is a succinct label or word or short phrase that captures the analytical idea in the data that is of potential interest to the RQ. Data coding is not just about capturing the surface meaning of the data but also captures the interpretation of it. To complete the data coding phase, the researcher read the transcripts three separate times to make notes of interest. The first reading focused on semantic understanding of the transcript, the second reading focused on any interesting use of language and the third reading focused on concepts or meaning in the data. For each of these sets of initial coding, the interview was simultaneously listened to whilst making notes in segments of three to seven minutes.

The next phase was to look at the initial notes and generate themes from the coding for each interview. For this study, the researcher wanted to apply a rigorous interrogation of the data set to ensure that any coding and theme generation were from the analysis and not from other known conversations that the interviewer might have had with the interviewee outside of the interview process. An example of initial coding is in Appendix G.

During the coding phase the researcher also paid close attention to each participant's unique experience of exclusion before looking across cases for

comparisons. This again was to help with objectivity and to not make quick assumptions about the data set, which has been a criticism of some practices in TA (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The researcher also used a reflexive diary to capture thoughts and comments during the analysis process to help maintain objectivity.

(iii) **Data Coding (theme generation)**

Following coding each interview, the initial codes were analysed to generate themes for each participant. Appendix H illustrates the initial themes for one participant (Daniel). All central organising concepts, themes and data extracts identified for this participant are shown in Appendix I.

Following the generation of codes and themes for the first participant's interview, these were then re-analysed to capture a code that encapsulated a number of themes in the data for each participant. Braun and Clarke (2016) use the term 'central organising concept' to describe capturing a number of themes. See Appendix H for an example of central organising concepts and themes for Daniel, showing these and quotes from script. Appendix J also adds a 'pen portrait' for Daniel demonstrating the richness of the account that was generated.

The above process was then repeated for each of the seven interviews. Once the central organising concepts and themes had been generated for all participants, the data set as a whole was analysed. Central organising concepts and sub-themes from all the participants were collated (Appendix

K) to capture both the diversity of perspectives and pattern of meaning in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The researcher was mindful of Braun and Clarke's (2016) recommendation to code anything that might be relevant to the RQ. Subsequently, this resulted in a number of themes being generated for each participant. The process of re-analysing, from the coding of initial thoughts to theme generation allowed a rigorous analysis and avoided 'coding drift' (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The process of analysis was iterative/recursive, involving moving backwards and forwards through the data, checking and labelling for patterns in the data.

Braun and Clarke (2016) recommend asking the following of the themes that are generated:

- Is this theme centrally relevant to answering my RQ?

- Is this theme evident across more than one participant's data set?

- Can a central organising concept be generated for each candidate's theme?

For each individual participant, a central organising concept was generated to capture the themes generated (please see Appendix L)

(iv)   Reviewing Themes

The next phase involved analysing all the central organising concepts/themes across the whole data set to search for commonalities and

differences of perspectives. The first stage involved re-visiting the coding of the previous phase to see if the codes fit with the themes. This involved checking for each participant that the themes were a good fit for the code and then checking the themes against the whole data set. This process included discarding themes, combining themes and keeping in mind what will be helpful in answering the RQ.

Developing the analysis at this stage involved providing an account that was not too broad and thin, but also one that was not too thick that it lacked coherence and depth. Appendix M provides a summary of the themes for all participants and the process of collating themes that were similar to give a new name to a theme. TA is not as prescriptive a methodology as other methodologies like IPA and it can allow for greater creativity in the presentation of the findings, including the labelling of themes to help the reader navigate the story of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Once all of the participants' themes had been generated and collated, consideration was given to the story that the data was telling and how to present and label the themes to answer the RQ.

(v)   Defining and naming the themes

The advantage of TA for the whole data set is the flexibility that it can offer for presentation of the findings and viewing the overall findings more fluidly. Producing the report entails identifying the story each theme is telling and how it fits within the broader story and the RQ. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that themes in TA should be concise, punchy and

immediate and give the reader a sense of what the theme is about. Braun and Clarke (2016) recommend between two and six themes.

(vi)   Writing up thematic analysis

The final phase of the process involves presenting the findings with a narrative, to explain, locate and contextualise the analysis in relation to existing theory and research. Chapter 4 (Findings) and Chapter 5 (Discussion) provides this.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the research, ethical approval was gained from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust ethics committee (see Appendix O) and the LA where the research was conducted. The initial consent was for an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study but discussion with the researcher's supervisor suggested that a change to TA would not constitute an ethical issue.

The study adhered to the Code of Ethics (2018) of the British Psychological Society (BPS) of which the researcher is a member. The Code contains the professional standards that members of the Society should uphold. The Code provides guidelines for psychologists to practise ethically but it states it should not replace professionals own ethical judgement.

Creswell (2009) identifies the following ethical considerations when undertaking research: protecting and not disclosing participants identities by assigning aliases to them and obtaining informed consent through clarifying the purpose and procedure of the research prior to it starting. To address these, participants' identities in the current study were protected through the assignment of pseudonyms and all identifiable school or provision names were changed to generic terms. Furthermore, participants' data was

stored securely. To obtain informed consent, participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet and a consent form to sign so that they could confirm their decision to participate was fully informed. Immediately before the interview, participants were reminded of the aims of the study, confidentiality, data security, any questions they had, if they were happy to proceed with the interview and their right to withdraw from the study.

The BPS Code highlights that *'ethical reasoning is often subject to various biases. Maintaining awareness of such biases is important when trying to think through ethical challenges'* (BPS, 2018, P.2). The biases that the BPS recommends for ethical consideration are: salience (how readily something comes to mind), confirmation bias (the human tendency to look for evidence that confirms their belief and to ignore other evidence), loss aversion (behaviour to avoid loss), beliefs about disclosure (tendency to be more honest when they believe their actions will be known by others) and dissonance reduction (acting to maintain consistent beliefs). The above list was considered when conducting the research and was especially important because the research was undertaken in the LA where the researcher worked as an Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist. The researcher utilised a term from IPA when conducting the research; 'to bracket off'. This means to eliminate or discount prior understanding and learning from previous interactions with each participant and ensure that any emergent themes that were generated were grounded in the experience of the participant. The researcher also needed to consider which statements they were drawn towards and the reasons for this as this could be considered as bias. This necessitated the analysis stage to be carefully considered and checked via peer reviews and continually questioning one's own labelling. The BPS Code of Ethics draws attention

to the importance of both context and character, being mindful of this to behave in the most ethical way.

The Code is based on four ethical Principles, which constitute the main domains of responsibility within which ethical issues are considered. These are: respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. These are outlined below in terms of their consideration for the current research.

The first principle of respect refers to the *'inherent worth of all human beings, regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or any other such group-based characteristics'* (BPS, 2018, p.5). In applying this principle, psychologists should consider the following values: privacy and confidentiality; respect; communities and shared values within them; impacts on the broader environment; issues of power; consent; self-determination and the importance of compassionate care, including empathy, sympathy, generosity, openness, distress tolerance, commitment and courage. The researcher adhered to this principle by ensuring confidentiality for participants at all stages of the research. This involved using only the participants' pseudonym, storing data securely and deleting it once the data was no longer required. The spirit of the interview process was to engage and build a mutually respectful interaction to help the participant feel at ease. The researcher asked each participant at the end of their interview about any concerns with the process or their ability to return to their duties in school. The researcher also offered a follow up telephone or email contact for the same purposes.

The second principle of competence refers to the psychologist's ability to provide specialist knowledge, training, skills and experience to a requisite professional standard (BPS, 2018). Psychologists applying the principle of competence should consider:

possession, or otherwise, of appropriate skills and care needed to serve individuals; the limits of their competence and the potential need to refer to another professional; advance in the evidence base; the need to maintain technical and practical skills; matters of professional ethics and decision-making; any limitations to their competence to practice and taking mitigating actions as necessary with caution in making claims. To help meet this principle the researcher engaged in regular training and reflection with tutors and other students completing doctorate level research, accessing regular supervision and using other support mechanisms to ensure a level of proficiency in the research process, including navigating databases.

The third principle of responsibility refers to the awareness of the autonomous position of the psychologist's role and must demonstrate awareness of this to ensure that trust is not abused, power and influence is properly managed, and that duty towards others is always paramount (BPS, 2018). To apply this principle, psychologists should consider professional accountability, responsible use of their knowledge and skills, respect for the welfare of human, non-humans and the living world and potentially competing duties. For this research, awareness of the conflicting roles of the researcher in relation to the participants was held in mind and at the beginning of the interview it was explained that this would not influence the questioning or interpretation of the interview. During the analysis phase the researcher paid close attention to the words of the participants to ensure that any interpretation was grounded in the research and not from other interactions with the participants. The researcher was also mindful of the competing pressures on the SLs and to structure and give breaks if needed during the interview process.

The final principle refers to integrity which involves being honest, truthful, accurate and consistent in one's actions, words, decisions, methods and outcomes (BPS, 2018).

To apply this principle, psychologists should consider: honesty, openness and candour, accurate unbiased representation, fairness, avoidance of exploitation and conflicts of interest, maintaining personal and professional boundaries and addressing misconduct. As detailed above, the interviews were conducted within an agreed setting that suited the participant and was respectful of their daily duties and a need to take breaks. The engagement with the participants was transparent in terms of previous professional relationships. Keeping to the structure of the interviews helped the researcher not bring prior knowledge to the interview process. In addition, transcripts were edited to ensure confidentiality, redacting the school name or other specific names which would identify the school.

3.10 Trustworthiness, Validity and Reliability

Yardley (2008) defines 'validity' of research as the degree to which it is accepted as sound, legitimate and authoritative by people with an interest in research findings. Evaluating the validity of research involves making a judgement about how well the research has been carried out and whether the findings can be regarded as trustworthy and useful. Yardley (2008) states that evaluating the validity of qualitative research requires some core principles to be considered: i) sensitivity to context; ii) commitment and rigour; iii) coherence and transparency; and iv) impact and importance. These will be explored to demonstrate how this research met these principles.

Firstly, sensitivity to context involves the researcher demonstrating that they have given due consideration to their position (and how this might influence the participants), the setting for the research, the confidential nature of the data, what was said and what was not said. The researcher was mindful of these considerations, for example, during the interviews the role of the researcher was made distinct from any other relationship the participants had with the researcher. In addition, confidentiality

of the interview was given so that no quotes or description would identify the individual or the school. To achieve this, the researcher used generic terms in the analysis and findings sections. The researcher also used colleagues from the same Educational Psychology Service, who had already completed doctorate level study, to read the pen portraits of the participants to check for anonymity. This process yielded no connections that could be made from the findings to an individual or school.

Secondly, commitment and rigour refers to the researcher being able to show that they have completed a thorough data collection, breadth of analysis, shown methodological competence and in-depth engagement with the topic. Close attention was given to following the process of TA in terms of coding, labelling of themes and the central organising concepts. Critical questioning of the themes was also utilised.

Thirdly, coherence and transparency refers to how much the study makes sense as a consistent whole, including the researcher being able to justify the reasons for the research and choices made in terms of methodology and analysis. The exploration of SLs experiences of excluding a student from school was identified as a gap in the literature. The choice of qualitative interviewing was chosen to fit with the RQ to allow exploration of the phenomena with the participants to elicit their perspectives, ensuring richness and insights into this area that have not been considered. The findings section presents the analysis and illustrates this with quotes to justify and meet the requirement of transparency. In addition, transparency is demonstrated using a reflexive diary.

The impact and importance of this research, with implications for practice, is explored in the discussion chapter. It is intended that the findings will be shared with SLs, the LA and other relevant professional groups to consider thinking around this phenomenon, improving understanding and generating appropriate interventions. The

findings will provide insights into the experiences of the SLs in relation to school exclusion that has transferability as opposed to generalisability. Therefore, the importance of applying the learning from this research for both educational psychology and the teaching profession is planned through training and potential publication.

In terms of conducting TA, Braun and Clarke (2006) have produced a checklist for good TA (Table 5) which was used as a measure of standard.

Table 5: Fifteen-point checklist for a good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.96)

Process	No.	Criterion
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail and the transcripts have been checked against the recordings for accuracy.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach) but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme has been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed (interpreted, made sense of) rather than just paraphrased or re-described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other: the data extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	The analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately without rushing a phase or giving it a light 'once-over'.
Written report	12	The assumptions about and specific approach to thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do and what you show you have done that is, the described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes are not just said to have 'emerged'.

In terms of self-evaluating, the above checklist was utilised. Firstly, transcriptions, were checked by simultaneously listening and checking the transcripts at least four

times for accuracy of transcription and to support the coding process. Secondly, coding was completed in a systematic fashion considering each interview in its entirety before moving onto the next one and before consideration of differences and similarities across the whole data set. All parts of the data set were considered for analysis. Thirdly, there is a corresponding extract and narrative interpretation to demonstrate the analysis for each theme. Fourthly, the systematic process for each phase necessitated allocation of appropriate time and honouring of the individual interviews as well as to process and fully analyse the transcripts of each interview. The recursive nature of the process also meant that there were opportunities to re-visit labelling or to refine labels as part of the process. Lastly, the written report is clearly matched to the epistemological and ontological theoretical positions and the type of TA utilised for this study to satisfy the checklist for good TA.

3.11 Reflexivity

Braun and Clarke (2019) have recently re-defined their TA and prefer the term 'reflexive TA', emphasising the researcher's role as central for knowledge production. *'Reflexive TA needs to be implemented with theoretical knowingness and transparency, the researcher strives to be fully cognisant of the philosophical sensibility and theoretical assumptions informing their use of TA.'* (Braun & Clarke, 2019 p. 594)

Reflexivity is, therefore, an important part of the research process. For this research it included decisions about appropriate epistemology, ontology and methodology to best answer the RQ. Qualitative methods were deemed appropriate and initially IPA, as a methodology, was chosen. However, as the interviews progressed and analysis began, it was found that the data consisted of many rich relevant and interesting content-based themes and that a method that could capture a wider range of data was needed. TA was deemed a more appropriate method to analyse the data.

Further reflections were also given to the ontology and epistemology with these also being re-visited. These also changed slightly following data collection to fit more appropriately with the method and content-based themes that were found. These decisions were made to help answer the RQ more effectively in terms of future learning and new thinking on how to reduce school exclusion rates.

The interview method as a data collection tool allowed flexibility and using an inductive method of TA meant that there were opportunities within the schedule to follow the direction in which the participant was taking the interview whilst keeping the RQ in mind. This method allowed for a wider range of responses to the interview schedule and RQ.

There were challenges for the researcher when a more experiential and personal account of the SLs' experiences was not found when analysing the data. This was noted in the reflexive diary and reflected on in supervision sessions. One of the reasons for this reluctance might be where the interviews took place, which was mainly the participant's school during their working day. The role the SLs had in their schools meant that they were often 'on call'. This might have affected their ability to talk more openly about how excluding students can affect them personally.

The researcher was mindful of their position within the LA and how they could potentially influence the data collection and analysis. The adherence to a rigorous and structured process to the interviews and analysis helped to ameliorate this. In addition, a reflexive diary helped to consider the researcher's own position, potential biases and to also reflect on the methodology and the research process.

Therefore, maintaining a reflexive position was central to the process. Braun and Clarke (2019) describe qualitative research as being about '*meaning making and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling 'stories', about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the 'truth'........analysis is the product of deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something that is active and generative*' p. 591. The approach is encouraged to be rigorous and systematic but also allowing for fluidity and recursiveness. The research process of immersing oneself within the data and initially telling the story of the data from each individual participant's experience of exclusion, before consideration of the whole data set, took time but also gave depth to the analysis, which might not have been apparent if the whole data set had been analysed without consideration of the individual stories within the sample. The individual stories allowed for difference and individuality. One example is provided in Appendix J.

The challenges of working in the field of qualitative research is that researchers can fall into a common pitfall of wanting to report their findings in quantitative ways (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Being an experienced manager within the service and having worked within parameters where quantitative data is valued above qualitative data, mainly because numbers are more easily assimilated, was a challenge. The purpose of the study moved from being purely about the experience of the phenomenon to wanting to find out what would make a difference. This became a default position ignited by the researcher's work role rather than the role of a researcher. Therefore, there were challenges which are common for qualitative researchers when working within and reporting on epistemological and ontological frameworks. There is a temptation to slip

into a more quantitative paradigm which can dominate the discourse as to what is counted as good research.

Reflecting on the purpose and the learning for the individual participant's, the researcher was able to appreciate that the time that the participant's had given to the research process was in fact an intervention in itself and that, although they had given their time freely, the process of interviewing can be a positive experience for the participant and lead to new insights for them too (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the epistemological and ontological position for this research and justified a qualitative approach to answer the RQ. The method of data collection and choice of analysis has been detailed to show how it fits with the RQ. The process for completing the research, including recruitment of participants, conducting the research and analysing the data has been described. Consideration of ethical implications, reliability, validity and the application of reflexivity to the research process has been described. The aim of this research was to give voice to a group of professionals about their experiences of excluding CYP from school and to give further insight into how wider professional groups, as well as SLs and teachers, can work to reduce the need to exclude CYP. The findings of this research will be reported in the next chapter.

Chapter Four – Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings, answering the RQ: What experiences do SLs bring to their decision- making to exclude a student from school? Each central organising concept will be discussed and illustrated using quotes from participants to demonstrate commonalities and differences, highlighting their experience and/or learning from excluding a student. The findings will suggest that decision-making around school exclusion cannot be viewed in isolation from a school ethos/culture; that the current systems and support in mainstream schools are not providing enough options/alternatives to exclusion for SLs; and that being a SL in this role requires a high level of personal and professional resilience with necessary skills to mediate with a range of staff, parents/carers, professionals and CYP.

4.2. Central Organising Concepts and sub-themes

The analysis generated three **'**central organising concepts', these were:

- Challenges with creating a change of culture

- Challenges with providing support for CYP at risk of exclusion

- Having specific leadership skills and personal qualities for the SL role

For each of these central organising concepts a number of sub-themes were generated:

Central Organising Concept	Sub-Themes
Challenges with creating cultural change	Influencing the culture of the school Balancing the differing demands of the SL role
Challenges with providing support for CYP at risk of exclusion	Clear systems of support and an understanding of CYP's needs Limitations in current support/provision
Having specific leadership skills and personal qualities for the SL role	Confidence and reflection Care and compassion Persistence, resilience, flexibility and motivation Skills to understand the different perspectives Facilitate collaboration

Table 6 represents a thematic map of the 'central organising concepts' and sub-themes for the whole data set.

Table 6: Thematic Map: Central Organising Concepts with sub-themes
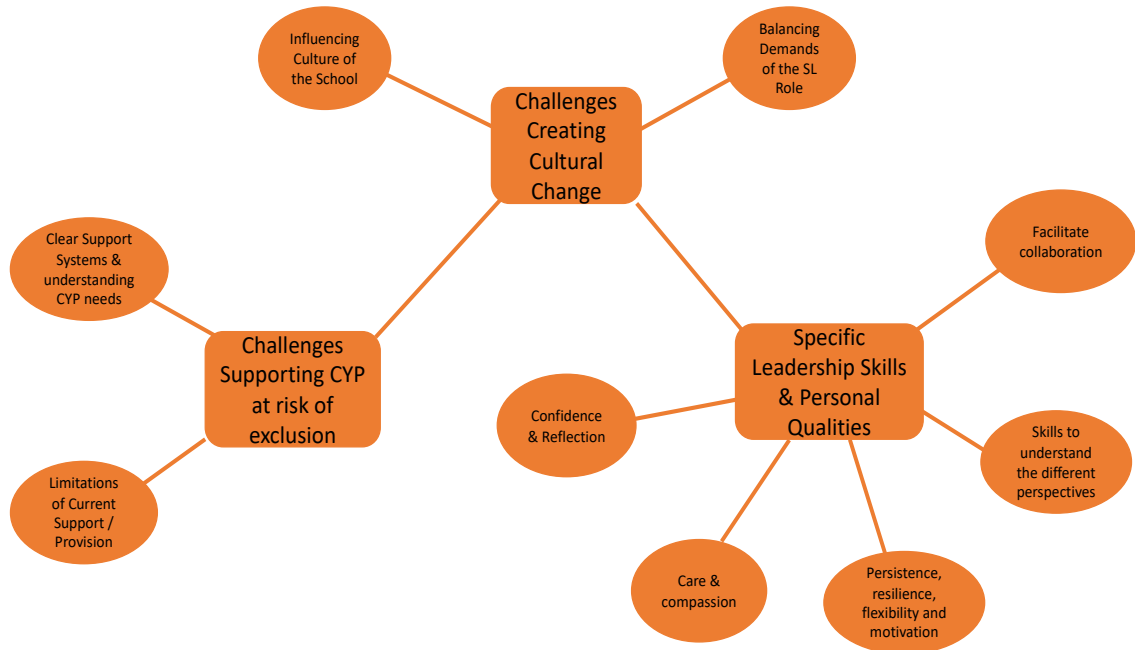
4.2.1. Challenges with creating cultural change

One of the main challenges for SLs was with creating a change of culture in their schools so that there was less need to exclude a student from school. This revolved around two key sub-themes: a) influencing the culture of the school; and b) balancing the differing demands of the role.

a) Influencing the culture of the school

The participants' experiences included descriptions of the influence of school culture on their decision-making to exclude a student. The importance of the school culture was illustrated by Bella, who was fairly new to her school: '*….it was a shock at this school to walk down/around the corridors and children were not talking to staff. It was*

like that was their area and I can remember quite early on a girl saying to me …….
"you've already said hello to me this morning, are you going to say hello to me every
time you see me?" And I said, "yes I am" and she went "oh ok" and I remember after
the first half-term of feeling completely exhausted but walking around the corridors as
children said "hello" and realising something had changed'. (Bella:456-466)

Bella was determined to create a more welcoming school environment and believed that this whole school approach would reduce the need to exclude a CYP: '*……we need to make the community so strong that when those children come in through the gates they visibly feel it so they get rid of whatever anger they've got or resentment or hurt or lack of safety or any of those things, if we could create staff ……… on the door "meeting and greeting", which is what I have asked them to do, but that's sort of the more you create the community fixed-term exclusions will diminish…'* (Bella:1079-1089).

In contrast, one of the SLs was concerned about the influence that some CYP would have creating a negative culture '*…a culture of behaviour..'* (Frank:159-161). He describes a '*tolerance point'* (Frank:873) in terms of a limit to the amount of CYP with behavioural needs that the school can cope with. Whereas Bella aims for a positive school culture, Frank is worried about too many CYP with behavioural needs creating a more negative school culture.

However, other SLs valued the role and the potential for it to influence whole school culture and reduce the need to exclude. Georgia's experience was similar to Bella's in terms of wanting to create '*a sense of belonging'* (Georgia:494) for all CYP. She viewed exclusion as unhelpful because '*they are out of a system you're trying to get them settled into'* (Georgia:1635-1636). Clara also reflected that exclusion is '… *going*

to emphasise that feeling of you don't belong here and very often a lot of those kids are already feeling like that about other aspects of their lives' (Clara:992-996). To create an inclusive environment, Georgia believed that there needs to be: '*a whole staff body behind it, it's got to be a culture, it's got to be an ethos'* (Georgia:1645-1647). In their experience, most of the SLs believed the ethos and culture of the school was important in creating an environment which could impact on exclusion rates.

Within the culture of a school, some of the SLs identified key points during the academic year when higher levels of exclusion were more likely: '*...I can almost guarantee that as the kids get tired and the staff get tired in November and December it (exclusions) tends to go up... so you know there is a real kind of hiatus of when it goes as real peaks and troughs, it's important that people understand the flow of the school..'* (Clara:195-213).

Other factors, such as, a re-structure can also have a negative impact on the culture of the school: '*children are incredibly receptive and perceptive to change in mood or atmosphere and as a staff if there's a lull....morale they pick up on that and that affects their mood and their behaviour, which further in turn affects the moods and behaviours of the staff...and you are in this constant downward spiral..'* (Daniel:363-366).

Nonetheless, Daniel found that a focus on whole school approaches in terms of staff engagement '*... made a significant difference, we've lowered behaviour last year'* (Daniel: 242) leading to an improvement in exclusion rates: '*this time last year we had 4.9 % of the school excluded .... this year we've had 2.7%'* (Daniel:1241-1244). Bella also experienced improvements in the school's exclusion rates as a result of a focus on whole school approaches: '*the last three years we have reduced exclusion'* (Bella:753-754).

The experiences of the SLs outlined here suggest that improving the culture of their school, and adopting a whole school approach to behaviour, can reduce the need to exclude.

b) Balancing the differing demands of the role

One of the challenges participants discussed with bringing about cultural change was how to influence the staff group. There were difficulties with making decisions to not exclude a student, especially when there were pressures from the staff. Daniel describes staff as wanting their *'pound of flesh'* (Daniel:708) by having a CYP excluded. Bella concurred: *...I'm fighting constantly the view, even from pastoral teams, that we should exclude, that we should get rid...'* (Bella:134-136).

The implication is that some staff can be quite rigid: '...*we expect children to conform to a system and I think sometimes teachers are a bit inflexible...'* (Clara:805-806). Decision-making is not always in the best interests of the CYP as Clara discussed '....*we need to put the child at the centre and sometimes we can put the teacher at the centre by accident...'* (Clara:1169-1172).

The dilemma for SLs is balancing the needs of the CYP and the needs of the wider staff. SLs experienced the challenges that they have with influencing staff to not exclude when trying to create cultural change. Bella gives an example from a training session: '.... *a member of staff walked out and said it is not about staff needing training, it's about the children... the criticism of me would be.... I'm not doing enough to make the children behave... There's an idea that you should be able to just sit in your classroom, tell children what to do and they behave...'* (Bella:606-614). SLs, therefore, feel pressure from their own staff to exclude, when in practice they are trying to reduce the need to exclude.

The SLs' experiences led them to reflect that perceptions of CYP are influenced by their role in school and that being in a SL role with responsibility for exclusions can change your perspective. Daniel explains it has '*changed dramatically since stepping into this world*' (Daniel: 807-808). Some participants noted there is a reluctance by classroom teachers to want to teach CYP with complex needs. However, SLs believed all CYP should be learning in the classroom: '*it's the responsibility of everybody to deal with behaviour to ensure that children can learn in a classroom setting*' (Bella: 1258-1260). The SLs noted how it was important for them to help staff create positive learning environments for all CYP. For example, Bella used her skills as a SL to improve the amount of CYP in lessons and learning: '*...when I came to my current school, there were loads of children out in the corridors all the time. What I've done is get those children into classrooms....*' (Bella:137-140). Bella reflects on how teachers in her school are struggling with her strategy and how to manage these CYP: '*I couldn't understand why staff weren't thanking me for it and then I realised they're not thanking me for it because if they weren't in the classroom before they didn't have to deal with them...*' (Bella:140-152). Therefore, bringing about a culture of change to reduce the need to exclude has challenges with how well teachers feel equipped to manage CYP in their classrooms.

There is a sense, therefore, from SLs of the challenges they experience with '*bringing the staff*' with them. Daniel predicted that the main barrier to changing the ethos and exclusion policy would be the staff: '*I knew they would be the sticking point*' (Daniel:233-234). The findings implied a level of energy needed for the role and how to balance the differing demands and perspectives on exclusion.

In addition to bringing staff with them, there were other demands experienced by SLs relating to a school's priorities around achievement. Some SLs were concerned that if

there were too many children with behavioural difficulties it would *'impede massively on progress and achievement'* (Frank:707-709). Georgia also discussed a *'cut-off point'* (Georgia: 92) and empathised with teachers who *'are accountable for the progress of the subject, that is going to be foremost in their minds'* (Georgia:995-996). To balance the perspective from SLs that CYPs should be taught in classrooms, there was clearly some understanding of the challenges this could bring for teachers. Frank was concerned that if there were too many CYP with behavioural difficulties in classrooms, it could affect staff retention as they look for *'the easy way to earn their money'* in schools that are less challenging (Frank:734).

There were also the competing demands from other initiatives or school priorities, affecting decision-making or progress with whole school behaviour. Daniel describes how his school needed to re-structure, making staff cuts, affecting the ethos: *'the jam was severely taken out of the doughnuts and our behaviour went again'* (Daniel:242-245). There was a sense of a delicate balance between progress with behaviour and other competing school priorities related to academic progress. Progress with keeping exclusions low is therefore affected by other priorities taking precedence: *'we have to show progress…. if we're not doing that Ofsted are going to tear us to pieces'* (Daniel:1589-1590).

Other influences on decision-making to exclude involved policy guidance. Daniel expressed frustration with these wider influences on school culture: *'the shocking reality of the constraints that are put on us, dare I say the school, that are put on us by the LA, that are put on the LA by the government..'* (Daniel:798-804). There was a concern that policymakers do not understand the reality of the situation: *'it's all well and good being one of the generals who sits at the top of the hill and directs and coordinates strategically how the battle should commence, it's a damn sight different*

to being in the front line in the trenches and understanding that' (Daniel:1649-1656).

Daniel alludes to a disconnect between policy and practice that is frustrating when SLs are attempting to balance the differing perspectives and demands of the school system. This disconnect inadvertently affected decisions on exclusion.

The experiences of the SLs demonstrate that the challenges with creating cultural change are made more difficult by contrasting staff perspectives, the need to demonstrate progress and implementing policy within wider school systems. However, a focus on a whole school approach, paying attention to a positive culture, can lead to a decrease in the need to exclude a CYP.

4.2.2 Challenges with providing support for the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion

There were also challenges with providing support to meet the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion. This issue revolved around two sub-themes: a) the need for clear systems of support and an understanding of CYP's needs; and b) the limitations in the current support/provision

a) **The need for clear systems of support and an understanding of CYP's needs**

In their experience, the SLs identified a need for systems in school to help manage decision-making about exclusions. However, as noted in the previous section, introducing change was challenging. Bella described being criticised when she implemented a new system: '*What I've done is create systems….so people know what to do…one of the biggest criticisms of me would be that I've taken away people's autonomy because Heads of Year believe that they should be able to fix-term exclude, Assistant Heads feel they should be able to fix-term exclude without consultation and I've changed that..'* (Bella:236-244).

Systems for decision-making can take time. Bella experienced criticism from her staff because of this, she emphasised that '*no child can be excluded until their account has been taken*' (Bella:863-865), delaying her decision-making. It was apparent that Bella believed in thoroughness in decision-making: '*……one of the criticisms of me by pastoral staff last year was that I took too long to decide... I take sometimes a day or overnight because people would bring stuff to me that looked pretty cut and dry and they haven't been completely honest…sometimes you have to go back to different children several times so making sure that their voice is heard … their version … is really key…*' (Bella:863-882). Therefore, the findings suggest that limiting the decision-making to the SL role, rationalising when to use exclusion and taking time to investigate properly can be key.

Clara also believed that a decision to exclude should be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly: '*…I am absolutely clear that these have to be investigated very, very carefully…*' (Clara:108-110*) '…it's a big issue for a child that we have the evidence to actually…take it forward…*' (Clara:177-181). Clara feels a sense of the responsibility with the decision and the implications for the CYP. Similarly, Georgia describes the '*weight*' of responsibility, '*you do have that weight, if you like, where you've got to make the right decision*' (Georgia:221-222). Georgia believed in systems that focused on '*keeping it simple for staff*' (Georgia: 436) and a '*simple build-up of those consequences*' (Georgia:403) implying a graduated response. Frank also aimed to '*go through the sanctions in order of less serious upwards*' (Frank:323-333).

Alternatives to exclusion discussed by SLs included use of 'isolation', but there was recognition of the negative connotations associated with that name and what this might imply. Some SLs wanted a space to provide reflection and restorative work and

therefore did not call it isolation: *'we are changing the name'* (Georgia:341-342). Another alternative mentioned was detentions, which were restorative conversations: *'the expectation is staff pick up students in detentions as well and talk to them and start to resolve issues'* (Georgia:381-384). However, despite these strategies, there is a sense that systems are not always meeting CYP's needs when a situation *'escalated very, very quickly'* (Georgia:1364), and whether there were *'things that we would have done differently'* (Georgia:1366-1367). There is a recognition that, although there are systems in place, this is not the only answer to resolve a need to exclude.

In making decisions, SLs acknowledged that understanding the context was important. Frank said: *look at a student's journey…if they've generally been ok…we will try and go for the lesser'* (Frank:311-316). Similarly, Daniel emphasised that *'it depends on context, it depends on situation, it depends on where we are with that child...'* (Daniel:682-685). Eleanor warned that there can be uncertainty about the context of an incident: *'we don't know what's led up to that particular incident…..we don't know whether they have been wound up…by staff'* (Eleanor:516-523). Therefore, SLs experienced uncertainty regarding the full details of incidents that might lead to a request to exclude, they recognised the importance of knowing the context for good decision-making.

There were indications that systems could be applied too rigidly, which was frustrating for SLs. Daniel gave an analogy to a referee in a football team: '*…it's like a referee, if you only have the cards to go to in a game, you'll immediately send the game into farce. If the first tackle that goes in is a bit dodgy, you immediately go for a yellow card where you set the precedent and now everything like that, you're going to yellow card and then you're going to be at red cards very quickly and the whole game descends into a farce..'* (Daniel:984-995). Through this analogy, Daniel is suggesting that responding

to all behaviours with a consequence is not helpful, however, avoiding this is not always easy for staff. SLs empathised with classroom teachers and acknowledged the need for flexibility before resorting to the formal *'consequence system'* (Georgia:1109-1111) but implementing this is *'very difficult to do when you're a class teacher'* (Georgia:1125-1126). This suggests it is important that decision-making in response to a potential exclusion is built on good practice and not solely reliant on increase of consequences.

Good practice including establishing relationships to support classroom management was highlighted as an important strategy prior to the formal consequence system: *'It's all about building up those relationships'* (Clara:642). Daniel discussed engaging a CYP with non-confrontational positive commenting : *'going over and having a quiet word, redirecting…and finding something positive they've done and talking to them about that…I did this with a young man and he completely changed, and I had him in the palm of my hand...'* (Daniel:1017-1025). Georgia found that CYP protect themselves with '*hard armour'* (Georgia:1532) and therefore investing in relationships can be useful when helping the CYP reflect on their behaviour. For Georgia, this worked better if the CYP had '*a particular relationship with …. a member of staff'* (Georgia:395-397). However, one SL felt that relationships can become *'too cosy'* (Eleanor:1202) and in this context they were *'not reforming the behaviour'* (Eleanor:1198). Therefore, an understanding of the purpose of building relationships is important and the impact this can have on engagement and subsequently on decisions to exclude a CYP.

Some SLs noted that clarity in the system helps with fairness when deciding on consequences. Frank strives for '*consistency and fairness'* (Frank:941) and to *'standardise behaviour'* (Frank:210-213). He believes '*it's very important …they*

[students] see fairness' (Frank:218-226). Amber also believes in the importance of fairness but she advocates treating CYP as individuals: *'It's about being fair to the rest of the CYP within the community but that doesn't always mean treating someone the same'* (Georgia:143-145). Amber alludes to flexibility being necessary when considering consequences. Clara agreed: *'..what you don't want is a child cornered and that actually you'll be the final person that can kind of you know do something to try and get that child out of the mess that they're in and how do you best do that..'* (Clara:587-592). The experience of remembering that the decision is going to affect the child and how to create alternatives are in Clara's mind: *'systems are there to be broken and I'm a great believer in breaking a system for a kid...'* (Clara:1145-1149).

Therefore, clear systems are helpful but need to be used with flexibility and an understanding of the needs of the CYP. Depending on how the systems are used these can either help or hinder the decision-making process. The SLs have shown that there are lower level strategies for example forming a relationship with a CYP and engaging with them that can be influential. Georgia found that decisions about whether to exclude a CYP required listening to students: *'we've avoided exclusions just purely by talking to students'* (Georgia:1069) and an understanding of a CYP's behaviour helps in knowing when to intervene: *'it's that red mist thing...I don't care because I am cross at the moment'* (Georgia:1091-1093). Therefore, an understanding of adolescent development/behaviour and implications help to time when to intervene with a CYP.

However, the findings acknowledged that for some CYP it was very challenging for SLs to engage with them, which can produce feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy for some SLs. Eleanor was frustrated that: *'Some of the children just will not accept...support...will not accept that we have the last word, they make it too easy in a way'* (Eleanor:425-428) and exasperated that *'you get to the point where you think*

actually…I don't know what else we can try' (Eleanor:563-565) and that because of the requirement to exclude *'we've got the power to say goodbye'* (Eleanor: 584). Similarly, Frank felt that some CYP often left the school with *'nowhere else to go'* (Frank:821-822) but exclude, reflecting that *'we'll come to an exclusion … because all the support is not even working or is just not having an impact, or we've just completely saturated everything we can offer'* (Frank:137-141). SLs who had experienced this situation expressed a feeling of hopelessness that nothing will work because of the saturation reached with the CYP, feeling that *'this is the end of the road'* (Eleanor:491). Because of the challenges of meeting the needs of these CYP, Frank discussed how he and staff feel relief if the CYP is moved to a different school: *'if they do move onto another school, even though we know mobility is not good for vulnerable students, they're quite pleased to see them go because of the challenges they face'* (Frank:629-635). Therefore, engaging with supporting a reduction in the need to exclude for some CYP can promote powerful feelings in SLs that sometimes might mean that exclusion happens because they feel they have no other choice.

Nevertheless, there was recognition of the complexity of need that CYP who might be excluded are dealing with. Eleanor noticed that CYP at risk of exclusion have a number of vulnerabilities: *'a massive correlation'* (Eleanor:1491). Georgia experienced *'a high percentage of students who have some form of child protection'* (Georgia:633-635). She discussed the challenges these vulnerabilities bring to the behaviour of the CYP: *'quite frankly this is probably the last place that is on their mind in the morning when they get up, still put their uniform, they still come in'* (Georgia:637-643). Clara also recognised the challenging situations some CYP faced: *'…for some of them … manage to come into school in some kind of uniform, that's a massive achievement and people… say well where's your shoes. And I'll just think, ah, they're here and you*

know for goodness sake that's fantastic.....there is still a black and white element for some people… so ...there ... needs to be reinforced with staff that actually you've got to try and unpick the whole picture with a child...' (Clara:820-830). Although SLs might be aware of CYP vulnerabilities and the flexibility needed in responding to them, it was not a shared understanding with the wider staff and exclusion was not always able to be avoided.

Demonstrating the necessity to be flexible with vulnerable CYP, Clara discussed adapting the consequence system to meet their needs: *'I've got a child on a child protection plan…… we need to do something different...'* (Clara:1012-1015). Daniel was also aware that excluding some CYP puts them: '*…into very vulnerable dangerous situations...'* (Daniel:722-723). However, they are still sometimes excluded. Georgia noted these can be *'the hardest ones to exclude'* (Georgia:693). Frank observed the challenges facing the teaching profession and commented that '*more and more children are born into instability and insecurity'* (Frank:599-600). Whilst SLs clearly felt their needs should be understood, they noted that some of them were still excluded: *'they've got everything stacked against them and we're chucking them out as well'* (Eleanor:1498-1500). SLs recognised that exclusion does not change behaviour and often once a child has experienced exclusion they can become *'repeat offenders'* (Eleanor:482-483). Frank noted: '*I can't remember a student who we last excluded who literally hadn't presented behaviour challenges in previous schools…they all fit the narrative'* (Frank:55-62). There was a sense that CYP with complex behaviours have a history of exclusion and that previous support/consequences have not been successful and a sense of hopelessness for the position that CYP are in.

SLs clearly expressed an understanding of the reasons for a vulnerable CYP presenting at risk of exclusion. Being aware of a CYP's vulnerable situation outside of school

helped some SLs in their decision-making, as Eleanor discussed: '*knowing what goes on in the lives of some of these children helps me understand*' (Eleanor:772-773). When Eleanor reflected on a CYP she had considered excluding, she said his life story was '*extremely sad*' (Eleanor:212) experiencing multiple losses. Eleanor added that the decision was made not to exclude and that, if they had permanently excluded, it would have been like '*throwing him to the wolves*' (Eleanor:296) and that not excluding was '*saving him*' (Eleanor:301-302). It was clear some SLs were aware of the seriousness of exclusion for a CYP.

Whilst, there is an understanding about why some CYP are more vulnerable and at risk of exclusion, there was also an expectation CYP need to show some ability to change: '*the child had a ball in their court to respond positively after more internal sanction*' (Frank:357-360). When Daniel reflected on a CYP that he did not exclude and the reasons for it, remorse was important: '*...he was mortified that he'd done this and that in itself helped.....he showed a great deal of remorse and wanted to remain here...*' (Daniel:1321-1325). However, if there is no change, there is, as Frank noted, a '*tolerance point*' (Frank:873) and '*they will lose their place because it's got to happen*' (Frank:891-892). From Frank's perspective, there is an inevitability that the CYP needs to fit into the school system and if they do not, they will be excluded from school. The challenges with supporting a CYP to be motivated to change is therefore an important aspect.

Participants discussed how strategies, such as an inclusion facility were not always able to reduce the need to exclude because of the requirement for CYP to show motivation to change. The aim of an inclusion facility, according to Eleanor was that: '*they'd go there for a fixed period…. we would reform their behaviour…and then come back and be perfectly fine*' (Eleanor:616-620). However, she also acknowledged that having '*all*

your highest kids in one place…isn't great' (Eleanor:623-625) and that developing an alternative to exclusion is *'a work in progress'* (Eleanor:637) but that having this intervention has *'stopped me excluding'* some CYP (Eleanor:1107-1109).

There was a suggestion that CYP at risk of exclusion could be better met with provision outside of school: '*really high-quality therapeutic places'* (Eleanor:1694-1700), with appropriately trained staff who '*aren't confrontational'* (Eleanor: 529). Eleanor described staff needing to have the right skills: *'the right sort of staff and enough of them'* (Eleanor:660-661). The implication is that training and appropriate resourcing of support is important.

There was, therefore, a dichotomy being managed by the SLs with on the one hand a desire from themselves to support inclusion of CYP, whereas their staff were often demanding an exclusion. This is described by Bella: *'…I realised that some of the very children that we were excluding were out on the streets if they had a fixed-term exclusion from school and actually I had to fight that because inclusion team didn't think that they should be doing internal exclusions and my view was who else should be because actually what you want to do is change children's behaviour..'* (Bella:103-110). From Bella's experience, there is a sense of needing to fight for the CYP at risk of exclusion to remain in school and for staff to recognise their role in supporting behaviour change.

In terms of systems to help support the graduated response to behaviour, SLs also had responsibility for whole school systems; for improving all CYP's behaviour. Daniel described his dual role and that his priority was to have systems that deal with most CYP in the school not the minority. He described the problem of focusing on the minority: *'because our behaviour systems prior to that had all been set up to deal with*

the 5%, so the 95% went unchecked… and we had a lot of low levels of poor behaviour and they rose, their behaviour to be in line with the top end …there was hundreds of thousands of pounds thrown at this top end, but nothing given to the other 95%' (Daniel:1261-1277). This suggests a clarity is needed on what works for CYP across the spectrum of need and that it is not about just focusing on CYP with highest need. It could also suggest that focusing on the most challenging behaviours can be costly and it is not clear about the impact of this investment.

The challenges that some CYP's behaviour can present for teachers means that often teaching is affected. Eleanor reflects that there needs to be clear systems to help support teaching and learning so that *'teachers just teach'* (Eleanor:1235) and sometimes for those CYP at risk of exclusion it is minimising their presence, whether consciously or unconsciously: *'it is just about getting them out of the way because a lot of these kids cause mayhem for others, they cause mayhem in corridors, they cause mayhem in lessons…'* (Eleanor:1115-1119). The repetitive use of the word *'mayhem'* suggests the challenge that Eleanor has with meeting the needs of these CYP, leading to a decision to exclude because the school system finds it hard to cope with the behaviour of these CYP.

Similarly to Daniel, Frank believed that the minority of CYP at risk of exclusion can affect the behaviour of other students. Therefore, there needs to be processes in schools to manage this; *'behaviours will spread along the vulnerable continuum…like a toxin'* (Frank:148-155). From Frank's perspective, exclusion was justified *'to stop the spread down the vulnerable continuum and also to give a message.'* (Frank:168-170). This dual role of responsibility suggests that exclusion can offer a sacrifice to support other

students learning. Frank uses the word 'spread' to indicate that if poor behaviour is not stopped it is like a disease that can infect other CYP.

SLs dual responsibility can present a dilemma because it is difficult to meet both sets of needs at the same time. As Georgia noted, this leads to a conflict when making a decision to exclude a CYP: '*although we've got students that are excluded, we've also got the vast majority in our school of kids that are working really well…we've still got to keep them feeling as though they're part of it as well*' (Georgia:597-602). .

In terms of whole school systems and consideration of decision-making around exclusion, some of the SLs described a need for a balance between the consequence and rewards systems in school. There was concern that '*we're very quick at telling kids off, but we're not so quick at sort of saying wow*' (Clara:387-388). The importance of building a greater culture of positivity in a school was described by Bella: '*……it's that idea of you take any opportunity of the children enforced to be with you to build up that positivity so that's in assembly you build it up, if it's on the gate you build it up, in detention you praise them for being there on time, you say thank you, you smile at them when they come in, you make sure they've got work to do, even better if you sit next to them and help them with their work…..*' (Bella:1021-1029). Therefore, whole school systems to recognise positive achievements are important to impact on reducing the need to exclude.

The participants acknowledged that building up positivity was key: '*to look for an excuse to praise*' (Frank: 426-427). Bella described the new system she brought to her school '*you must praise children…. for doing the right thing*' (Bella:360-385). Daniel noted his systems were '*all about the positives*' (Daniel:1835-1836). He said that he was '*overhauling*' (Daniel:2133) the reward system because you can '*catch more with honey than vinegar*' (Daniel:2163-2164). Daniel demonstrates a willingness to strive

to improve positive systems for all CYP and deliberately seeking examples of good behaviour: '*….to find children being good, reiterate any positives, give achievement points, but also pick up any difficulties…. we stopped having these pupils roaming…*' (Daniel:1210-1217). Rewards were viewed in tandem with consequences *'the flip side is that we're trying to build up the rewards system'* (Georgia:403-405). Georgia conceded that *'we don't do enough on the positive side'* (Georgia:498-499). Whilst Eleanor reflected that she *'spends very little time thinking about rewards to be honest'* (Eleanor:1301-1302) indicating that it is not automatic to link positivity with a reduction in exclusions.

Furthermore, SLs discussed how the use of rewards needs careful consideration, it is not the same as building up positivity. For example, Daniel reflected on the use of *'golden tickets'* as an incentive but noted how *'70% of golden tickets…aren't handed in because they don't want to get up to receive them in assembly'* (Daniel:2219). This implies that public praise is not something that many CYP find motivating. Whereas Georgia found that simply using *'praise points'* can be effective: *'I put them in just to see how they would be received…. it's been really positive'* (Georgia:518-523).

SLs discussed how their links with the SEND systems in schools were not always clear and often these pathways were not as developed as they could be. Some SLs noted how this caused confusion over roles and responsibilities. Frank recalled the SENCO saying, *'I don't deal with behaviour'* (Frank:55-62). This could lead to the CYP at risk of exclusion not being able to access support. Georgia discussed an alternative provision in her school that could be accessed by CYP regardless of their SEND status: *'we try to keep just for SEND students, but we occasionally have a student or may decide this would be the thing to re-engage'* (Georgia:384-389). There appeared to be a lack of clarity and confusion about when a CYP, who was presenting with behaviours

at risk of exclusion, would be identified with SEND and be able to access resources and support.

Often SLs described a division between the SENCO, who has responsibility for SEND students, and Inclusion which have responsibility for behaviour. Bella suggested that there is a need for a closer working relationship between SEND and Inclusion '*in the future we need SEND and Inclusion to be working more closely together*' (Bella:690-692). Clara experienced a similar division between SEND and Inclusion, but more recently had noticed an improvement: '*I have been painfully aware that they're not linked as well as they need to be, and we need to work on that. I'm really glad that in the last year my SENCO has become far more involved in looking at behaviour and exclusions and sits on the wellbeing team. And I'd say the planning meetings she tends to hold, it feels far more normal, at one stage it felt a bit alien and it felt like a big cavern*' (Clara:753-763). Here, Clara described the journey that her school have been on to bring SEND and Inclusion into the same arena. This has reduced the feeling of the SEND system being '*a bit alien*' and a '*cavern*'. She further describes the journey as a work in progress: '*.....we've got a journey to go through, which is fine. I can see that and where we need to go with that....I think in the past SEND have been over there and behaviour has been over there and well of course they're linked, absolutely ridiculous that they're not…*' (Clara:772-779).

In addition to the above, Amber discussed her frustration at being the lead for behaviour and the challenges of liaising with the SENCO for her CYP to access support: '*I do find it a barrier to have to go through someone else and in a sense I feel like I'm competing with trying to get students, who I think are SEMH students' assessments*' (Amber:633-636). This could mean that vulnerable CYP at risk of exclusion are not

being prioritised for support, especially at an early stage to help prevention in the escalation of difficulties. However, sometimes SLs believed that the exclusion process can *'activate support'* (Frank:117). Therefore, there are also challenges with understanding how CYP with SEMH or at risk of exclusion gain access to early support without the need to exclude.

Often the SEND process can appear bureaucratic to the SLs, Daniel described his frustration at the SEND assessment process as *'hoops that we've had to jump through'* (Daniel:823-825). However, in Daniel's case, there were successful examples of collaboration between pastoral and SEND systems for a CYP when deciding if to exclude. He described it as being clear cut, initially as an exclusion, but with joint work with the SENCO they were able to co-ordinate a package of support for the CYP to remain in school: *'....I saw the knife and went right that's where we draw the line, we draw the line there because if we don't draw the line here, where do we draw the line? But we did take into account his SEND and his EHCP and so we put a massive amount of support in...it worked; he's reintegrated...'* (Daniel:1329-1346). This incident clearly caused difficulties for the SL about what was a boundary for an exclusion and without the support of the SENCO, this would have likely led to the CYP being excluded. Therefore, successful co-ordination with the SENCO can lead to decisions to not exclude.

In relation to accessing additional guidance or support from external agencies, SLs also identified two external sources of support: social services and educational psychology. Daniel discussed how his experience with social services was unsatisfactory and ineffective: *'impossible to contact them....impossible to get a meeting with them'* (Daniel:1715-1716). He believed their ability to make any difference was negligible: *'they're going to be virtually ineffective because they are spinning 40-50 plates'*

(Daniel:1718-1720). Even if contact is made, Daniel noted the CYP '*don't tend to engage'* (Daniel:583). There is a sense of hopelessness about the support from external agencies experienced by Daniel.

Daniel also discussed how he perceived EPs as: *'massively overstretched and overworked'* (Daniel:1725-1726), but he recognised their value: *'you need more EPs and you need more time, more money and you need the ability to be in schools more'* (Daniel:1939-1943). Bella suggested that the EP role could be improved: *'...having more of a role to do with behaviour rather than just SEND is obviously key, but I also think bringing the EP more into the culture of the school so that anything they suggest is doable and workable for the teachers..'* (Bella:1174-1180). Some SLs expressed concern about accessing the EP and the timescale involved: '*a student is displaying quite high levels of challenging behaviour; everyone says gosh they need an EP assessment. There's a wait time for that. In the meantime, they continue with the behaviours they are displaying and then by the time we get a report with some suggested strategies, actually that student is sort of way beyond you know whatever strategy'.* (Amber:580-586). However, Clara discussed how the EP offered support for her: '*...it's that clarity of thinking, so when I'm kind of hitting my head against a brick wall she comes in.....the EP is just that strategic thinking and clearing of debris....to really think about what the issues are..'* (Clara:680-688). Clara clearly valued the support she received from her EP: *'...the EP is the biggest important person.....I can so easily get bogged down in....itsy bitsy things and...I just need to have someone there with me that will just clear as I say the debris of ordinary life...'* (Clara:701-707). This gives an indication of the challenges of the role for SLs, including getting *'bogged down'* and how effective EPs support could potentially be.

Another area that the SLs discussed in relation to their decision-making to exclude a CYP was concerns about the skills of teachers to manage behaviour effectively. Daniel believed he observed poor quality lessons, generating poor behaviour: '*80% of behaviour is… down to boredom and if your lessons aren't engaging and they're boring and they're not differentiated….you can expect issues*' (Daniel:917-923) and '*…if they employ the same strategies ….with their top sets…they struggle quite significantly..*' (Daniel:935-938). Georgia also discussed how she advises staff on how to approach students '*giving him time on his own…. saying to staff don't engage*' (Georgia:1074-1075).

These findings led to concern about staff training to deal with challenging behaviour. Bella commented that staff need an '*adult mental set*' to be able to understand the situation from the child's perspective (Bella:1044, 1057). However, Clara suggested that staff do not have the time to reflect: '*…. [time] to reflect is gold dust time in school, it doesn't really happen….*' (Clara:1145-1147) implying that understanding of the CYP's situation and the decision-making process is not always thought through carefully, due to the lack of time that staff have for this. The implication being that there was a need for staff training and more time for reflection on responses that class teachers were employing to engage with CYP at risk of exclusion.

In addition, to systems of training for staff, there was a lack of training for the SLs in their roles. Eleanor felt that she drew on '*common sense and life experience*' (Eleanor:955). When asked how they cope with their role, the stresses were evident: '*horrible*' (Georgia:201), '*stressful*' (Daniel:126). Georgia gave an example: '*sometimes I will come across as sounding very cold and very hard, when I'm going "but it's going to cost money"…at the end of the day I'm still accountable for that….whereas actually what I want to be able to do is say "yeah no problem"*'

(Georgia:1272-1280). There was a sense of the enormity of the role and the inherent stress of decision-making. Eleanor admitted that the role had: *'tipped me over the edge in terms of work life balance'* (Eleanor:763) and it *'takes its toll, it does take its toll mentally, its tiring, it's difficult to remember everything, you know, one of the stresses is having to keep so much in your head'* (Eleanor:776-783). When asked about access to support, Eleanor described informal support from a colleague but she was also wary about asking for support because of a fear of it being seen as a weakness *'you have to be careful...because you are maintaining...an air of everything is fine, everything's under control'* (Eleanor:849-853). In terms of what would be helpful, Eleanor identified *'some level of supervision'* (Eleanor:895).

The findings discussed in this section suggest that CYP at risk of exclusion present a dilemma for SLs who also have responsibility for the behaviour of the whole school. The normal consequence systems in schools can be inadequate to address this unless used flexibly with an understanding of the CYP's context and willingness to engage with them. The findings also suggest that there are insufficient links with SEND systems and access to external professionals, which could result in CYP at risk of exclusion not accessing appropriate support. Whole school culture, in terms of positive approaches and reward systems, were seen as influential, but SLs suggested extrinsic rewards need to be carefully handled. Furthermore, training and supervision for the role of SLs and for teaching staff was recognised as important for understanding and supporting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion.

b) Limitations of the current support/provision

This section presents findings which suggest the SLs may have limited options for CYP who are at risk of exclusion and they have no alternative but to resort to a decision to exclude. There was a sense of powerlessness described by Eleanor when relaying a

conversation with a parent that the school could not offer an alternative because the list had been exhausted: the CYP '*has had everything we've got….to offer, which isn't much you know. This is a mainstream school we have limited access to…resources*' (Eleanor:547-553). Daniel talked about his frustration at the provision available and described it as *'imploding' and that 'what is happening is not sustainable'* (Daniel:1670-1672). He described his school's attempts to keep afloat: '*……we've been thrown into a large swimming pool with our hands tied behind our back and we are treading ... water, but people are starting to go under now….*' (Daniel:1730b-1730f). The use of this metaphor suggests there is a relentlessness, '*treading water*' but also a bleakness to the suggestion of *'going under'* and a sense of cruelty of *'hands tied',* suggesting helplessness. Despite Daniel believing that all CYP cannot have their needs met within mainstream schools, he also believes that having all children with SEMH in the same provision is not the answer. He described this as creating a *'champions league of SEMH'* (Daniel:1809-1810) and creating *'super villain gangs'* (Daniel: 1882).

A dilemma was, therefore, created where SLs feel that the in-school provision cannot meet all CYP's needs, but also the provision outside of school is not appropriate. There was a belief that exclusions do not work, but an inevitability of using them with a lack of alternatives: '*we know exclusions don't work. Statistically they don't work. There are very few children who get excluded and go ooh and they are mortified*' (Daniel:1135-1139).

However, the SLs did not resort to excluding without consideration of the alternatives available: *'you just get to a point where you know the measure you're trying and when you've gone through numerous people'* (Georgia:81-84). The experience of working with a CYP to avoid exclusion may be reached over a length of time: '*run up has been*

months' (Georgia:240) and a decision to exclude *'is a last resort'* (Georgia:251-252). Georgia stated that *'you're not going to keep having these rubber boundaries, at some point there is a dead end'* (Georgia:1173-1176). The general consensus amongst the SLs was eventually there would be a *'lack of options'* (Amber:209) other than to exclude and a sense of hopelessness to finding alternatives. Frank acknowledged that access to support is limited: *'...support isn't a magic bullet, it isn't unlimited in terms of its capacity, so there'll always be limitations to what we can offer'* (Frank:119-122). This links with whether a CYP was deemed appropriately placed in a mainstream school.

Subsequently, questioning whether the needs of some CYP can be met in their schools: *'we are a mainstream school at the end of the day'* (Georgia:1407-1408). There was a belief that not all CYP can have their needs met in this context *'there are some that, it's not the right place'* (Georgia:274-276). Similarly, Frank expressed that: '*the right provision for the right CYP and the mainstream secondary school will not fit every CYP...utterly arrogant and narrow minded to think that the mainstream model will fit every CYP'* (Frank:1010-1018). SLs gave the impression of certainty about their belief that mainstream schools cannot meet the diverse needs of all CYP. As Daniel asserted: *'...we need small nurturing environments where these students...who get excluded cannot manage in a large mainstream environment.....they cannot do it, they will never do it, it doesn't matter how you do it....they will bounce back out...'* (Daniel:1950-1959). The implication here is that mainstream schools cannot meet all the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion and this might influence the decision-making of SLs.

Nevertheless, there were alternatives to exclusion that SLs discussed: '*we might isolate for 2 or 3 days instead and then we might...use our inclusion staff...to RJ the situation.'* (Daniel:686-690). Daniel considered that students at his school are '*very, very high*

tariff' (Daniel:1257-1258) *'and the other schools wouldn't take him'* (Daniel:1442-1443) suggesting that some of the CYP that Daniel has in his mainstream school might not manage in other mainstream schools. This also suggests there could be inconsistency with consequences and thresholds for exclusions used between different schools depending on the needs of their CYP.

However, there was concern about the range of provision for CYP at risk of exclusion suggesting a more flexible approach is needed: *'there's a big, big gap in the middle and it's that gap that I think is an opportunity for something'* (Georgia:921-924). There was also some element of concern about alternatives, including managed moves or Pupil Referral Unit (PRU): *'it's a massive move…. because there isn't anywhere else for them to go* (Georgia:930-934). However, Amber believes that schools are too late at '*putting preventions into place'* (Amber:573) and described the positive transition process at her school where provision can be put in place *'from the word go'* (Amber:575). Early prevention and identification maybe important, as well as greater flexibility needed within mainstream schools to offer choice.

This additional flexibility and choice would require consideration in terms of resourcing. The findings suggest that there was pressure on funding for alternatives: '*huge financial expenditure'* (Daniel:2082) and in the current climate where *'government are making all these cuts…it filters down'* (Daniel:1921-1926). Daniel describe staff cuts in his department moving from thirteen to three members of staff with the same size caseload (Daniel:1487-1490), affecting their ability to offer preventative work: *'since September I have not had a full team at any point…they've been running around covering and they've not been able to do some of the supportive pastorally type work we want them to do because they are constantly covering things'*

(Daniel:348-355). From Daniel's experience, there is a sense of firefighting, reacting to situations rather than being preventative.

Georgia also felt that if there was more money, the school might not need to exclude *'if we were more set up for dealing with that situation then we wouldn't exclude, if we had the resources to deal with that'* (Georgia: 694-698). Georgia was also frustrated and desired to have more support *'I'd love to bring more things in, but the constraints ...of ...accountability and finances mean there are things that you just can't do'* (Georgia:788-792). Georgia believed that special schools '*..can change things so quickly'* (Georgia:724-725) and that in mainstream schools *'we're not set up to deal with some of the behaviours that those CYP display'* (Georgia:710-712). These findings suggest, with better resourcing, that mainstream schools could meet the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion.

In addition to the resourcing of additional provision, there was a sense that flexibility was key. Sometimes additional costs are short-term and it was not always easy to manage this financially and organisationally: *'all your alternatives are [about] bringing people in, funding and it may be something you don't need all the time'* (Georgia:262-265). *'They need alternative provision…modified timetable…a member of staff with them….'* (Georgia:1216-1223). There were further challenges noted with inconsistency from a CYP when: *'they don't come in'* (Georgia:804-805), *'you lose that consistency…it feels adhoc'* (Georgia:815-816. Therefore, support for the CYP was hard to plan and to make progress with to avoid excluding.

Amber linked a lack of educational policy guidance and resources to support alternatives to exclusion as the reason that she resorts to exclusion. She believed: *'...we are working within a system that has limited scope for anything different to exclusion. So, I think it is a wider issue within our society and our government educational policy*

and I guess I'm extremely concerned that in recent times there is a kind of collapsing and reduction of funding for alternative provision...' (Amber:705-710)

Alternative pressures, including the standards agenda were also perceived to indirectly have an impact on SLs decision-making. The pressure on schools to demonstrate progress for all students means that a full curriculum is not always appropriate and unlikely to meet expectation for '*progress 8'* (Daniel 1967). What some SLs identified would be more appropriate is that *'they need to learn English, Maths, they need to learn social skills'* (Daniel:1967). Georgia concurred…. *'they just need that space to be able to come away and do some basic work'* (Georgia:868-870).

As this section demonstrated, there were a number of reasons for alternatives to exclusion being identified as not being successful by the SLs. They discussed funding for alternatives, the inconsistency of support, the lack of guidance and provision outside of school, as well as how mainstream schools are not able to offer flexibility required to meet the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion.

4.2.3 The need for specific personal and leadership skills

The SLs noted how there were personal qualities and/or leadership skills that they drew on when completing their role, specifically when discussing their decision-making to exclude a student. They discussed how the role required leadership with: a) confidence and reflection; b) care and compassion; c) persistence, resilience, flexibility and motivation; d) skills to understand the different perspectives, and e) skills to facilitate collaboration.

a) Leading with confidence and reflection

To enable effective decision-making, SLs drew on leadership skills of confidence and reflection. Amber discussed the use of restorative practices at her school and how her confidence has improved since using this approach, she had noted the impact it can have: '*…it feels like they're able to make a direct link with their sanction and the incident because it's specific to that lesson...*' (Amber:243-249). Confidence can also come from length of service in the role as a teacher, especially if it is in different schools, resulting in a greater understanding of context when Daniel compares two schools he worked in and how different the environments were: '*you need to walk a mile in my shoes….whereas I have walked many miles in yours and I know where that school is at…it's a very different context*' (Daniel:849-853). With experience, Daniel expressed a confidence that difficulties can be overcome: '*there's a couple of teething problems…. but you know we'll get there, we'll iron those issues out*' (Daniel:1611-1613).

Amber discussed how through her experience, her confidence in decision-making improved: '*….I'm getting better and better at doing that and being able to gauge ooh hang on a minute we're going to need to put quite a bit of support in place here…..and so there's quite a few times more recently where that's happened and seemed to be far more successful..*' (Amber:608-612). She shows the importance of being able to reflect on one's decision-making and how experience has built her confidence in her approach and her '*ability to gauge and read people*' (Amber:348-349). She added that the ability to reflect on potential bias in decision-making was important: '*……constantly questioning one's own bias and subjectivity is vital…whatever the situation people do tend to feel differently having been able to reflect on it… I constantly have to question*

myself and encourage my team to play devil's advocate when we have conversations about exclusions.' (Amber:125-133).

b) Leading with care and compassion

Earlier, it was discussed how SLs empathised with the position of teaching staff and as Daniel suggested *'... the anxiety about teaching a certain child....'* (Daniel:780-785), In doing so, Daniel expresses empathy for the class teacher role. Clara also felt empathy: *'..I'm not a teacher...that is going from one lesson to another and I recognise that particularly with Heads of Year, who are rushed off their feet and beyond sometimes they just look deranged...'* (Clara:541-545).

The importance of calmness in decision-making is also key allowing for compassion and care. This allowed for decisions to be made that were not deemed: *'knee jerk'* (Clara:1129): ....*'I can sometimes see the frustration on my staffs' faces when I say well I'll think about it tonight and we'll talk about it tomorrow....you don't have to decide immediately it's not a sign of weakness that you're not coming to a conclusion and I think there's a real art there with people just to, say, calm it down and think about it'....* (Clara:526-551).

Similarly, Frank takes a non-emotive and calm approach to decision-making: *'.... you've got to be very thick skinned, so they don't get emotionally attached, so can stay pragmatic and non-emotional with your decision-making'* (Frank:977-981). He further reflects that his approach can be misinterpreted by staff and he can appear as not caring: *'......skill in your mindset of not being emotionally connected and so you can come across to kids and staff as quite callous and not caring'* (Frank:1078-1081). The SLs highlighted how their role required skills to approach decision-making in a caring and compassionate way, as well as conveying a non-emotive response.

c) Skills of motivation, persistence, flexibility and resilience

The findings indicated that the SLs drew on a range of skills and beliefs about what they viewed as the correct approach for CYP at risk of exclusion: '*I still have to believe, I do believe that there is a right way to do behaviour, morally ethically right way which is trying to turn CYP's behaviour around rather than just kick them out*' (Bella:474-477). Bella's beliefs helped to drive her leadership skills. However, Georgia described the challenge of achieving this within the context of her school and how it provokes feelings of discomfort when her personal view is different to the professional view of: '*my personal [opinion] which conflicts with my professional [opinion] is it (exclusion) doesn't do the CYP any favours at all. My professional [opinion] is you have to have an end point…*' (Georgia:1700-1706). For Georgia, she wanted another alternative to exclusion '*something robust in the middle*' (Georgia:1708-1710) to help meet with her personal belief system that exclusion is not helpful. Georgia is motivated to find a solution for these CYP but a decision to exclude might happen because '*at the end of the day, my job is to give that CYP a chance….if we put everything in place and it doesn't work, I know I can sleep easy at night*' (Georgia:1356-1359). There is a sense of the complexity entailed for Georgia of being able to manage these competing personal and professional values when making decisions on whether to exclude a CYP from school.

Many SLs discussed how they were determined to improve systems. For example, Daniel reminded himself that '*I've got a note … speak to one of my colleagues…we're revisiting the behaviour working party, we want fresh faces…..we've got to look at rewards…*' (Daniel:2238-2247). There were other examples of when SLs had given attention to a CYP and persistence which led to a CYP trusting them: '*he ended up in floods of tears…it was a big front…he had enough experience of exclusion to know this*

was me being excluded' (Georgia:1467-1469) when this did not result in an exclusion *'...it took the wind out of his sails; we've not had anything since'* (Georgia:1482-1483). The time that Georgia invested in this CYP showed the depth of the support and determination to not exclude. When exploring Georgia's motivation not to exclude she described how she believed the CYP was *'salvageable'* (Georgia:1486). There is an element of subjectivity to her decision-making *'you can look at some children and you can see that they are going to make it.... a little chink or something'* (Georgia:1573-1588) this helps her to be motivated to support a CYP.

Motivation and a belief that a CYP can change, in combination with creative and flexible approaches, were key strategies. Georgia used a variety of strategies including helping a CYP visualise walking back to the classroom to avoid an exclusion: *'walking the right way'* (Georgia:1178-1179). This was also illustrated when Georgia spent time with a CYP to reflect on her choices: *'her friend had the bottle to get up and walk back in say no it's not what I want'* (Georgia:1144-1146). This shows that by giving time to talk to these CYP that Georgia was able to help them be motivated to change but also, she showed a belief in their ability to change. Therefore, Georgia demonstrated a determination to think flexibly and work with CYP to not exclude, believing that investing in relationships are key: if *'you don't have that relationship'* (Georgia:1147-1149), it is harder.

This element of persistence with CYP is also described by Bella: *'...I dealt with him a lot because he would refuse the Head, so the Head would come and get me...I remained relentlessly positive and cheerful even when he was saying no I'm not going to do this and just kept going and kept going and one day he came into my office...and he said can I talk to you and I sat next to him and he just burst into tears....gradually he began to trust that we weren't out to hurt him'* (Bella:956-975). In Bella's experience

persistence, positivity and sensitivity paid off and it helps build trusting relationships with CYP.

SLs also discussed the skills of flexibility in decision-making; that there's not a *'defined route'* (Georgia:1524). Frank reflected on this when asked about how he copes with his role: '*…you just do it as best you can…. if there's a serious incident then that wipes your diary.'* (Frank:437-440). This ability to cope with change and the unexpected is therefore key to good decision-making around exclusions.

Bella also showed signs of her skills with determination and resilience when she discussed how the Head '*lost faith in me'* (Bella:561). Her response was '*I'm going to sort this; I'm going to resolve this'* (Bella:565). She used the phrase *'grist to the mill'* (Bella:743-744) when an OFSTED inspector noticed that exclusions were from one catchment area and wanting to sort this out.

Bella also noted how she needed to be resilient with her approach to bringing cultural change into the school: '*….I was trying to do some quick wins whilst also trying to send a long-term change, had to try and get staff on board, including the pastoral staff and that was difficult because I didn't directly line manage them. …. I used all the personal skills that I had to be relentlessly positive around colleagues who maybe didn't like what I was doing as well as everybody else. I had to use a lot of resilience…'* (Bella:441-451)

d) Skills in understanding the different perspectives

SLs discussed how they often adopted the role of mediator and needed to draw on a number of skills to listen: '*…..you've got to have an ability to listen to make sure that people are onboard with you and behind your decision-making process…'*

(Amber:362-364) and to use: '*.... a high level of emotional intelligence……. to appease all stakeholders...'* (Amber:455-458).

Despite Amber's aspiration to not exclude, she emphasised fairness in decision-making, balancing different viewpoints: '*There's so many factors to consider in an incident…we've got to factor in students' additional needs……. keep it consistent so that its fair for the young people and the members of the community..'* (Amber:377-394).

Amber described competing perspectives and the impact her decision might have on those involved when considering whether to exclude: '*...it's about ...if a member of staff has been on the receiving end ... to make sure they feel the incident has been taken seriously but then equally we have a duty of care to think about if it's the right thing for that CYP and what kind of impact is it [the exclusion] going to have on their learning ... so there's a real sort of mixture of things to consider both for the school and the individual that's being excluded'* (Amber:106-114). Amber described this balancing of the different perspectives as *'quite tricky'* (Amber:123-124).

For Georgia, the CYP being at the centre was important in her decision-making: '*....you've got to make the right decision for the CYP, ... the parent…the other students…..you've got to do the things that allows you to be able to sleep at night...'* (Georgia:222-232). The mental juggling of the different perspectives and the sense of responsibility affecting SLs beyond the hours of work is highlighted by Georgia.

There is also the skill of being able to take account of the other CYP's views: *'it's about being fair to the rest of the CYP within the community'* (Amber:143-144). Daniel has experienced complaints from other CYP: *'we've got the right to learn it's not fair that small groups of other pupils are stopping us'* (Daniel:1163-1166). Some of the SLs

therefore are balancing the differing perspectives of all the CYP in the school and the challenge of meeting all their needs.

The differing perspectives on whether to exclude can also be seen in the experiences of internal discussions. Daniel reflected that: '*I have brought the Head back from permanents. The Head has talked me down…I've talked the Head down……..and we've said look we can do this…*' (Daniel:398-403). Daniel believes that decision-making should be a *'collaboration'* (Daniel:406) and that he has a *'good team'* (Daniel: 426) to help with this.

Daniel described a situation with a CYP with SEND where there were different perspectives on the decision-making and how he needed to work collaboratively but also that risks are inherent in the decision-making. The perspective of the CYP was important: '*…he did everything he could to ensure that he could prove to us that he was, and we've never had any reason to doubt or worry about him since...*' (Daniel:1348-1350). However, decisions to exclude or not can vary: '*….I was very uncomfortable [to not exclude]to start with and I made that very clear. I think if he had not had an EHCP there would have been a different discussion…*' (Daniel:1366). An EHCP protected this CYP whereas a similar situation with a CYP without an EHCP might have ended with exclusion. This shows variation in decision-making and room for subjectivity as well as individual circumstances affecting decision-making. Daniel's experience is that SEND support offered protection to manage risk. Daniel is aware that this decision was significant for the CYP: it *'saved his school career'* (Daniel:1370). The use of the words *'made that very clear'* in the quotes above gives an indication that Daniel was not happy to look at alternatives and that this was not a joint decision but on reflection he does realise that it helped this child to be *'saved'*. Therefore, time for collaboration and understanding of different perspective is key.

SLs also discussed how parental perspective is considered when making decisions on exclusion. Daniel experienced frustration with parents: '*...concerned but not so concerned that they engage with the support services, the referrals or made the CYP engage...*' (Daniel:553-556). There was also concern about a lack of care from parents. Daniel stated that CYP need: '*...that comfort blanket around them and that support...*' (Daniel: 650). Daniel reflected that he needs to work with parents more: '*it's not the CYP I need to work with it's the parents*' (Daniel:747-749). Daniel improved parental engagement at parent/carer consultations when he linked these with achievement points, he saw a '*30% increase*' (Daniel: 2147).

e) To facilitate collaboration

SLs also discussed skills they needed to collaborate and listen to the different perspectives, to mediate and problem solve effectively. In Amber's experience this led teachers to be '*open to other options to exclusion*' (Amber:321). However, this can take time '*.... there was a negotiation there and ... a lot of time... to make sure that everyone felt happy with ... it not being a fixed-term exclusion...*' (Amber:333-334). There was a sense of delicacy to these discussions to successfully negotiate alternatives to exclusion.

Eleanor also experienced the need for collaboration and support for staff to consider alternatives to exclusion: '*I listen to what the Year Heads say*' (Eleanor:64-65), she continues: '*after discussion we all agreed.... was probably in the best interest of the boy*' (Eleanor:262-264) to not exclude. The impression is that this collaboration created a shared ownership, which Eleanor noted '*I like it when people offer me...an alternative solution*' (Eleanor:397-398). Frank also reflects on the importance of shared ownership with other staff in decision-making: '*it put some responsibility on to*

them, they are then far more reflective in terms of what their decision will be'
(Frank:196-201).

Georgia also reflected that '*trying to get them (teachers) to join in the middle so that you've got a compromise'* (Georgia:186-188). She discussed how her collaborative skills are helped if she empathises with the differing perspectives of classroom teachers and pastoral leads: '*you see the CYP in the classroom and you see that CYP affecting your subject ... when you're in the pastoral side you see the home life'* (Georgia:156-161). The balancing of these perspectives in decision-making can be experienced as '*horrible',* (Georgia:201) giving an indication of the daily strain on the SLs role.

The SLs discussed how collaboration can be helpful when using alternatives to exclusion such as restorative approaches. Amber experienced the positive effects of using this approach in her school. The collaborative nature of the approach enables '*… emotional learning for the adults as well as the CYP and having a level of empathy where we need to understand, as adults, that a student might have had a really bad morning and might be coming to us at a point where they're going to need some cool down time..'* (Amber:432-436). However, Amber experienced a lack of collaboration in 'return from exclusion' meetings where she describes them as '*disconnected'* (Amber:251) and not conducted in a collaborative way.

Clara experienced positive collaboration with contacting parents at the earliest stage: '*I'm a great believer in instant contact and just saying they have let themselves down'* (Clara:362-366). She will also warn parents that she is considering exclusion but tells parents: '*I'm not going to make up my mind about what I am going to do until tomorrow because I want you to talk to them first and see what you think..'* (Clara:483-486).

There is a sense of collaborating with the parent, although ultimately the decision whether to exclude or not will be the schools.

Frank also *'actively encourages staff'* (Frank:190) as a *'preventative measure'* (Frank:189) to invite parents to meetings. His experience is that this is important in forming a relationship with parents so that they hear *'good news'* (Frank:551) and this can help if there needs to be a more negative conversation. Frank has experienced a *'direct positive impact'* (Frank:560) when this approach is taken. Clara has also contacted parents directly to relay how *'proud'* the school is (Clara:478). However, Eleanor has experienced frustration with parents: *'...there's no awareness there in that family, mum...didn't appear in the meetings that we've had with her to be overly empowered'* (Eleanor:345-349). There is this sense that collaborating with parents is variable depending on how this is received and affects change for the CYP.

Furthermore, in Eleanor's experience: *'parents of secondary school pupils are so separate from the school'* (Eleanor:1156-1157). She noted that working in collaboration with parents could be a *'golden opportunity'* (Eleanor:1055), but that, in her experience, *'parents are at a loss to what to do...because they are struggling themselves to manage'* (Eleanor:1072-1075). There are also difficulties experienced by SLs when collaborating with parents and they can feel that their position and support is not appreciated: *'....I never get used to the indignity of feeling well I'm working my socks off here and this is how you treat me'* (Eleanor:827-829). There is a sense of the amount of work that Eleanor gives to the role *'working my socks off'* but she also shares the stress that working with parents can cause *'the parents are quite a big strain'* (Eleanor:803). Similarly, to Eleanor, Georgia has also struggled to collaborate with parents, with parents not understanding the seriousness of a decision to exclude. Parents have responded quite defensively: *'look at me I didn't get my .....exams and*

I'm doing fine' (Georgia:317-319) but she believes there *'needs to be some responsibility from parents'* (Georgia:1705-1706). From the experiences the SLs discussed it was clear that collaboration was not always easy.

Collaborating with outside agencies has also had its challenges. Frank experienced distrust as he believes that they have not always responded in a way that is *'totally transparent'* (Frank:765) and have unrealistic expectations for schools expecting a *'magic wand or silver bullet'* (Frank:1033). He describes agencies as holding schools to an '*emotional ransom'* (Frank:1020) implying unreasonable expectations on them to meet a CYP's needs.

Therefore, SLs as facilitators of collaboration and understanding different perspectives is important. These skills can be utilised to reduce the need to exclude and consider alternatives to exclusion involving CYP, parents/carers and other professionals as appropriate. This can lead to feelings of frustration due to the challenges with co-ordinating the differing perspectives, unrealistic expectations and the ability to support change. Nevertheless, on balance the skills are important and can influence SLs decision-making in relation to exclusion, but this needs time and appreciation of the differing voices in the system.

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the research. The key findings discussed by SLs in relation to their decision-making to exclude a student were that decision-making is influenced by the culture of a school where creating a positive culture can reduce the need to exclude. One of the challenges that the SLs experienced was the differing views of subject teachers who were focused on teaching and learning. This meant that teachers might want a CYP excluded and find it difficult to accept

alternatives. Therefore, SLs experienced challenges with persuading other teachers to consider alternatives to exclusion. There were also concerns about the influence the CYP would have on other students and the potential for lowering behaviour across the whole school and affecting the ethos in a negative way.

In addition, SLs had a dual role within the school whereby they not only were responsible for deciding if an exclusion should be given, but also, they were responsible for whole school behaviour for all students and they often discussed how this can cause conflict for them. For example, when an SL wants to consider alternatives to exclusion there may be pressure to ensure that the learning and progression of other CYP is not affected by a small group of CYP with behavioural difficulties.

The findings suggested that it was important for SLs to have systems in schools with a graduated approach to consequences. However, some SLs discussed how these could be applied too rigidly requiring a more flexible approach taking in the context of the CYP. In addition, SLs emphasised how forming relationships, positive interactions with CYP and giving time to them helped reduce the need to exclude.

Regarding linking with the school SENCO, the links with the SEND systems were viewed as inconsistent and potentially underused with a simplistic understanding of behaviour. SLs experienced SENCOs as not viewing behaviour as an indicator of SEND and therefore finding it hard to gain access to support. Nevertheless, some SLs acknowledged that recently there have been improvements with examples of good practice and working more collaboratively with SENCOs.

SLs also discussed how 'in school' systems for rewards and consequences could be influential in reducing 'problem/disruptive' behaviour, although, public or extrinsic

rewards were not as successful as private and positive comments. However, some SLs had not considered the rewards system and how it could reduce the need to exclude. In addition, there were challenges for the SLs with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion and there was a sense of having exhausted all options before exclusion and a frustration that alternatives were not successful. Some SLs expressed disappointment with the limitations of alternatives and funding linked to these.

Finally, the SLs drew on a number of leadership skills and personal qualities to build their resilience for the role, these included: persistence; determination; motivation, ability to care and show compassion, skills for understanding differing perspectives, and valuing and facilitating collaboration. The findings suggest that SLs can experience the role as stressful and would value supervision for the SL. In addition, a need for wider training for school staff in relation to understanding and supporting CYP at risk of exclusion effectively was noted. In the next chapter, the implications of these findings will be discussed.

Chapter Five – Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This study explored the experiences of SLs' decision-making in relation to excluding a student from school. From exploring these experiences, it is hoped that there is learning on how we approach the phenomena of exclusion in the future. The findings highlighted three themes: challenges with creating cultural change; challenges with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion; and the need to have specific leadership skills and personal qualities for their role. This chapter will explore these findings, specifically in relation to previous theories/research/policy guidance and implications for future practice. The chapter concludes with strengths, limitations, reflections and possible future directions for research.

5.2 Key findings

This study sought to answer the RQ: What experiences do SLs bring to their decision-making to exclude a student from school? School exclusion has been a disciplinary tool available for SLs to utilise for a number of years. There has, as stated in the introduction chapter, been concerns about the prevalence and use of exclusion (1.3) and the negative impact it can have on outcomes for CYP (1.2). The hope for this study was to gain insights from SLs, who are responsible for 'behaviour management' in their schools, on not only their experiences on excluding a student but what would help to reduce the need to exclude.

Summaries of three main themes arising from the findings are:

1. **Challenges with creating cultural change** – the SLs recognised that if the culture of their school was more positive and inclusive then there was less need to exclude but they experienced challenges with influencing the

culture of the school and balancing the other demands of their role alongside other school priorities.

2. **Challenges with supporting CYP at risk of exclusion** – there was a general acceptance and understanding of the vulnerabilities of CYP at risk of exclusion. However, the SLs discussed how this was not always shared by wider staff and they felt pressurised by other staff to exclude. The SLs noted the importance of graduated pastoral systems in schools but also flexibility within these systems to take account of individual needs highlighting the challenges SLs experienced with provision to meet the complex needs of some CYP and applying alternatives to exclusion.

3. **The need for SLs to have specific leadership skills and personal qualities for their role** – the SL role had many challenges and at times they experienced their role as isolating when making decisions on exclusion. This led to a number of leadership skills and personal qualities emerging that SLs utilised. These involved the confidence to make decisions, especially alternatives to exclusion; ability to be able to reflect not only on decision-making about exclusion but also the pressures on the school system that are generating the consideration of exclusion; showing care and compassion towards CYP and other staff; having skills of persistence, resilience, flexibility and motivation in their decision-making. Additional key skills required for their role were: skills of being able to collaborate to make decisions and to understand the different perspectives. This led to consideration of the need for support for SLs in terms of supervision and training.

5.3 Application to psychological theory, policy guidance and existing educational research

This section will draw on psychological theories, policy guidance and existing educational research to interpret the findings. A key theory utilised to explore the findings is 'systems theory' (Campbell, 1988; Campbell & Kinsella, 1994; Rendall & Stuart, 2005; Campbell, 2006). This lens is specifically applied to the challenges that SLs have with influencing the ethos and culture of their school. Discipline systems in schools have traditionally relied on behaviourist approaches (Highfield & Pinsent, 1952; DfE (2016); Kohn, 1993). This theory will be explored with its relevance for our education systems but also how can it work in tandem with more relational-based practices and an understanding of CYP's needs. Finally, the specific personal qualities and skills of leadership will be explored in relation to practice and policy guidance. This section will be organised around the three centrally organised themes/concepts emerging from the thematic analysis: challenges creating cultural change; challenges with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion; and the need to have specific leadership skills and personal qualities for the role

5.3.1   Challenges creating cultural change

SLs recognised the importance of whole school approaches when considering their decision-making to exclude a student. From their perspective, if the ethos and culture of the school was more positive and inclusive, there was less need to exclude a student. This suggests that investing in working on a positive school ethos would result in a decrease in exclusions. Nevertheless, some SLs experienced challenges with promoting a more positive culture in their schools. This related not only to their ability to influence staff to develop more inclusive practices for all CYP but also the

competing priorities/demands on their role and other school priorities, for example, Ofsted judgement.

Applying systems theory to schools can be described as having a multi-layered lens (Rendall & Stuart, 2005), which includes '*the CYP's own inner world (a system comprising for example, personality, attribution, innate abilities), the family (a system comprising for example, culture, dynamics between family members, family structures, family scripts) and school (a system comprising, for example culture and ethos)'* (Rendall & Stuart, p.16). The interaction of these different systems can influence the dynamic and culture of the school, and help understand the school as an organisation and, more importantly, when to intervene. Therefore, a systemic lens will be helpful when considering how to reduce exclusions. To illustrate the findings from this research, systemic concepts will be utilised to explore how decision-making to exclude can be influenced by cultural practice in schools. The systemic concepts explored are: the life-cycle of an organisation; open and closed systems; homeostasis; feedback and punctuation.

Firstly, the systemic concept of the school as an organisation, as similar to the life-cycle of a family, will be explored. The findings suggested that there were times in the year when exclusions were more likely, one SL described the school year as having *'peaks and troughs'* inferring that schools have their own life cycle, similar, to life-cycle changes that families experience (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). Therefore, having an understanding of the life-cycle of a school system is important to predict challenges, plan to reduce the need to exclude and consider alternatives. One example, could be to share exclusion data with staff discussing and gaining feedback on trends and potential strategies that would reduce the need to exclude. Theories of behavioural

change indicate that raising awareness and giving information to clients can be the start of the change process (Miller & Rollnick, 2013)

A further systemic concept that is helpful to reflect on is 'homeostasis' (Burnham, 1986). This can be understood as an investment in maintaining the status quo. Teachers were sometimes described as *'inflexible'*, '*ungrateful'* and the *'sticking point'* when trying to implement changes to reduce the need to exclude. This could be reframed as these teachers feeling threatened as a result of their own homeostasis changing. The role of homeostasis is, therefore, important to consider when bringing about change in schools and particularly when considering the speed of change. Campbell and Huffington (1990) observed that if relationships and roles are changing too much, staff feel their connection to the stable organisation they have come to depend on is threatened. This can lead them to retreat into behaviour that bolsters personal security at the expense of the organisation and can lead to staff keeping their *'collective heads'* down (Boscolo & Bertrando, 1987). This was found when a school experienced a re-structure and the SL described that '*behaviour went again'*. Therefore, supporting SLs with understanding the term homeostasis and how best to support implementing changes to enable greater stability is important. For example, investing in staff engagement via sharing information can help reduce anxieties. It is important for SLs to consider the pace of change to bring staff on the journey. Nevertheless, a focus on the culture of school can reduce the need to exclude and one SL described this focus as being *'so strong….fixed-term exclusion will diminish'*. Previous research (Imich, 1994; Munn, 2000; Osler et al, 2001; Jones & Smith, 2004; Hatton, 2013) also found that a whole school approach with a focus on culture reduced the need to exclude.

It is, therefore, clear that SLs have a delicate role: balancing when and how to intervene to create cultural change with an awareness of the impact this has on staff morale and ultimately exclusion rates. This will necessitate SLs having the necessary skills to analyse complex organisational issues before implementing new strategies, this is further explored in section 5.3.3 below. This framework of understanding behaviour moves away from a 'within child' understanding of behaviour to one of understanding behaviour as an interaction with the culture and environment (Campbell, 1996).

If schools are, therefore, viewed as being influenced by the culture and ethos then it follows that this can be changed. Furthermore, Burr (1995) recognised the influence wider culture has on our own identity and behaviour: *'our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings'* (Burr, 1995, p.53). Therefore, work to improve a culture and ethos of a school will have an influence on staff behaviour within the school.

One example of how to put this into practice is described by Bennett (2017) who advocates that when SLs are creating cultures that they should be very clear about their vision and expectations. Vision statements that are transparent, involving the whole community in developing the culture, training and attention to detail are important. The implication is that influence at the whole school level can override personal beliefs and therefore energy in creating a positive culture will be worthwhile and can change some of the individual perceptions of teachers, who might not have shared the new direction (Burr, 1995). In the present study, one SL showed how it was possible to influence the culture of the school by modelling *'meet and greet'* to all students to overcome an 'us and them' culture. After about half a term of modelling, a difference was noticed in the school culture.

Nonetheless, there was an example, where one SL was concerned that too much negative influence from students would detrimentally affect the culture of the school. Students with challenging behaviour were described as *'toxins'* implying that if they were not controlled then they could damage the school system. This demonstrates how school culture can be negatively affected (Burr, 1995). There can also be instances where the power of one person could be described as an illegitimate use of power where one person's views could reflect the institution view (Fernando, 1996). This type of view can be addressed by strong leadership from the Headteacher in terms of their vision. But also, LA guidance can help with this in terms of being clear about their expectations, for example around inclusion.

There are other terms from systems thinking that can be applied to our understanding of SLs experiences of decision-making to exclude a CYP. One of these is whether schools can be described as 'open' or 'closed' systems (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). Reed and Palmer (1972) define an open system as depending for its survival and growth on an exchange of energy, materials, people and information within its environment. Closed systems are less able to do this, with greater use of boundaries between the different environments. There were examples of the SLs working within an open system when they discussed stepping in to give more flexibility to decision-making and to not see decisions as clear cut. Openness allows an ability to change within the environment and maintain a continual and ready state of equilibrium. Openness can be challenged when there is a re-structure enforced and this can feel more like a closed system and there can be feelings, as described by one of the SLs, of *'the jam was severely taken out of the doughnuts and our behaviour went again',* implying that the equilibrium of the school was under threat affecting the openness of the school and in turn leading to greater exclusions.

Understanding the benefits of communication and feedback is also important for development of systemic change. The complexity of interactions within the education system relies on communication, which is usually multi-faceted, taking place at both verbal and non-verbal levels and is sustained overtime and through feedback (Bateson, 1958). Understanding of this level of communication as circular, rather than linear with the feedback loop as integral, is helpful for SLs to appreciate their role and in identifying where, in the circularity of communication they are punctuating. How to improve exclusions at a whole school level, taking into account the communication from staff as part of the feedback loop, is therefore important. The feedback loop is continuous and can go back and forth between the players in the system, developing ideas. The interrelationships, therefore, help move away from linear explanations and a blame culture, to viewing behaviours as an interaction and understanding them as circular in explanation (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). This feedback has also been described as 'feedback responsibility' by Campbell (1996). He argues that *'feedback is truly the life blood of a systemic organisation and it does not just happen, but individuals must take the active responsibility to identify what is important to feedback and to whom should it be passed*' (Campbell, 1996, p.127). The use of staff consultation and opportunities for receiving feedback through surveys or via informal means are, therefore, important for leaders to consider for reducing exclusion. Turner and Waterhouse (2013) found that a focus on working with staff led to a reduction in the need to exclude. They discuss the importance of both encouragement of discussion across departments and an inclusive discourse, which one SL from this current research highlighted when reviewing the behaviour policy with a working party.

Another important systemic concept is 'punctuation' (Burnham, 1986), which relates to understanding patterns of communication and analysing it to enable intervention at

the level of the pattern instead of that of the individual. This can be illustrated by the SLs' experiences of fixed-term exclusion, which on first impression are '*pretty cut and dry',* and teachers wanting their *'pound of flesh'* or in other words an exclusion. However, exploration of the pattern of interactions can reveal that, where the decision-making had been punctuated was not correct. For example, statements from all the CYP have not been heard and there was a danger that decision-making could put the teacher at the centre instead of the CYP. The use of punctuation is, therefore, an important skill for SLs to be aware of and to utilise in their decision-making. The SLs were criticised by their staff for taking time to make a decision whether to exclude. This could be reframed as the SLs punctuating the pattern of communication to help clarify the situation to inform decision-making.

Meaning is, therefore, an important element of systems theory and being able to analyse the circular nature of interactions, to understand how problems are sustained and when and how to intervene, is useful. Campbell (1988) proposes that we behave as we do because we have certain beliefs about the context we are in and that our beliefs are supported or challenged by the feedback from our behaviour. This was further demonstrated when analysis of improving the culture of a school was not always welcomed because this meant that the CYP at risk of exclusion were in the classrooms where the teachers struggled to effectively teach due to the adaptations required with either the curriculum or the behaviour regulation strategies. This links back to the systemic concept of homeostasis and how to enable greater stability in times of organisational change.

Systems theory, because of its interactional nature, allows us to listen to the different voices within the organisation. Meaning does not exist in isolation but is socially constructed by human beings as they interact, engage and interpret the world (Robson,

2011). The voice of the teacher is one that was not a focus for this study but what was illuminated by the SLs was the challenges of working with them to create a different culture where exclusion was not accepted. Some SLs suggested that a priority for schools was their Ofsted rating, which required a focus on teaching and learning.   If this was not a focus, and instead behaviour was, then Ofsted '*will tear us apart'*. Therefore, there needs to be greater emphasis and recognition of schools which have low exclusion rates in Ofsted judgements. Indeed, Norwich and Eaton (2015) found that the standards agenda can cause uncertainty about inclusive practices. More recently, Timpson (2019) has argued that if there is concern about a school's approach to exclusions then this should result in an inadequate judgement for leadership and management.

This section has concentrated on exploring how a focus on the culture of the school is essential when trying to reduce the need to exclude: *'getting the culture right is pivotal, with the right culture the strategies that are used become less important'* (Dix, 2017, p.2). Consequently, it is argued that a focus on culture is the first step to reduce the need to exclude a CYP.

5.3.2   Challenges with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion

The second main finding suggested that there were challenges with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion. These were in terms of the systems that schools employed to respond to behaviour that was deemed challenging and the limitations of provision to meet those needs. These will be discussed below in relation to theory, research and policy guidance.

The dominant discourse around school discipline over the last few decades has related to ideas from behaviourist theories. There have been challenges to this simplistic understanding and managing of behaviour as not recognising the individual needs of

CYP. It is argued that school behavioural policies and government guidance is a reflection, too often, of a behaviourist approach. Indeed, the DfE guidance (2016) recommends a strong behaviour policy to manage behaviour, including the use of rewards and sanctions. This study found that too heavy a reliance on this guidance was not enough to meet the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion and that policies need to develop beyond a behaviourist approach. It can be argued that government policy guidance needs to move beyond a within child understanding of behaviour to an acknowledgement of its interactional nature. Cole et al (2019) criticised national policy on exclusions as not providing guidance on preventive approaches especially since 2010. They also criticised the different government departments publishing conflicting guidance on behaviour, mental health and SEND. There needs to be clear guidance targeted at how whole school systems can be improved to reduce exclusion and not solely reflect a behaviourist approach to discipline. This can then be reflected in school behaviour policies, which as Parsons (2009) found, need to consider more of a relationship-based approach.

Indeed Kohn (1993) advocated that schools need to create conditions for authentic motivation and not be lulled into a Skinnerian response to CYP with the use of rewards and punishments to control behaviour. Traditionally, behaviour management systems/policies operate on observable behaviours and how to change these without consideration for thoughts, emotions and feelings beneath the surface that are not observable but do influence behaviour. This influence was still apparent within this study, where SLs reported that teachers resorted to the consequence system too readily before using de-escalation techniques. It appears that the translation of policy guidance, which is rigid in its application, can lead to challenges. An example highlighted by one SL described a teacher wanting a list of behaviours each with an

appropriate consequence, naively not recognising the importance of context to the decision-making.

Understanding of context, was therefore an important finding that warranted a flexible response. Indeed, this was enhanced when less people could authorise an exclusion so SLs would have greater control on the decision-making process. One SL reflected that *'systems are there to be broken and I'm a great believer in breaking a system for a CYP'*. However, it is not clear whether this flexibility was truly reflected in the schools' behaviour policies or whether a range of de-escalation techniques are referenced. Brighton and Hove Local Authority (2018) have developed an Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy that moves beyond behaviourist approaches to one that understands the complexity of need for CYP, taking a relational-based approach. This guidance is helpful for schools when reviewing their behaviour policies to have a greater emphasis on relational based practice rather than behaviourist approaches.

Nevertheless, there were examples from this research of alternatives to exclusion, for example a restorative approach being utilised. However, this was not always viewed as a real alternative but reportedly issued alongside a detention. The findings suggested a need to further explore alternatives to exclusion that meet the needs of both the CYP and the affected teacher. SLs reported that teachers wanted responses which were punitive rather than restorative. As noted earlier, one SL described teachers wanting their '*pound of flesh'* for a misdemeanour. There was a lack of understanding implied with teachers finding it hard to empathise with a CYP situation and to take their individual context into account. This could be interpreted as teachers having pressures on them towards achieving academic standards such that they are not able to focus on the individual needs of each CYP in their classes.

There were also situations where instead of behaviours being de-escalated, they were escalated. This all points to further training for teachers on how to respond to the individual needs of CYP. There is a lack of reflection time for teachers and SLs recognised the challenges that teachers face and described being able to have time to reflect as *'gold dust'*. There needs to be consideration of how time for reflection can be built into teachers' roles. Therefore, wider systems of support for both teachers and SLs is needed. SLs often described their role as being: *'horrible, stressful, tipped me over the edge in terms of work life balance…. takes its toll mentally, its tiring'*. All these feelings suggest that there could be retention issues with this role unless consideration is given to the support SLs need, for example, training, problem solving/reflection on decision-making with a key adult. Therefore, wider systems of support for both teachers and SLs are needed to help reduce the need to exclude. Indeed, The Timpson (2019) Review of School Exclusion was commissioned by the government to explore Headteachers use of exclusion and why certain groups of students were more vulnerable. It highlighted the impact that poor behaviour can have on teachers with two-thirds having considered leaving the profession. Therefore, approaches that help support retention of teachers are important with regular training and supervision being beneficial to not only understand the needs of CYP but also reflect on how to reduce the need to exclude a CYP, from school.

This research also found that there was a recognition that despite behaviourist approaches being the dominant discourse within management systems in schools, that the use of consequences, unfortunately, appears to outweigh rewards or positive recognition. One SL reflected that *'we're very quick at telling CYP off, but we're not so quick at sort of saying wow!'* There is a need to build more positive feedback into systems, this will help engage and motivate a CYP but also help promote a nurturing

and inclusive environment. This approach could be viewed as part of the system of support that is promoted in schools that occurs alongside consequences to address behavioural needs. However, the use of rewards/positive comments was not always part of the role of the SL for behaviour. This could be incorporated into their role. Nonetheless, extrinsic rewards were not always found to be motivating. Therefore, systems to help promote positive feedback/use of rewards should be built on and feedback from CYP about what would be helpful incorporated into this. Incorporating the CYP view into strategies has been found to be transformational for engagement (Williamson & Cullingford, 2003; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Sellman, 2009; O'Connor et al, 2011; Pirrie et al, 2011; Flynn, 2014; Farouk, 2016).

As stated above, in the experiences of the SLs, teachers resorted to the consequence system too readily. An analogy of a football game was given when if the foul cards are used too early then the game becomes a *'farce'*. Indeed, Oxley (2018) found a reliance on structured behaviour management systems which were not effective in changing behaviour for those students with behavioural difficulties. It is suggested that there is a need for a bank of alternatives that teachers can readily use which are not consequences, but strategies to promote positive relationships with CYP. SLs gave examples of how they de-escalated situations without resorting to more formal processes. They included: finding time to listen to CYP, investing in positive relationships and privately prompting about expected behaviour in a supportive manner. One SL described how listening to CYP can help to avoid exclusions: *'we've avoided exclusions just purely by talking to students'*. A number of studies have also found that investing in relationships and building trust is important when reducing the need to exclude (Derrington, 2005; Pirrie et al, 2011; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Oxley, 2018). Bennett (2017) also discusses the importance of visible leaders, who

take time to learn all CYP names and create a sense of belonging for all can create successful schools. Therefore, promoting that investment in a relational approach can work both as a graduated approach but also at the cultural level when reducing the need to exclude.

As discussed earlier, there is a need to move beyond the implementation of behaviourist approaches to discipline and to incorporate an understanding of context to the decision-making. Dix (2017) found that increasing the tariff of consequences is not a motivating factor for students to change their behaviour. Exclusion can meet the needs of the adults in the classroom temporarily, but rarely meets the needs of the CYP (Dix, 2017). A heavy reliance on punitive systems can create an 'us' and 'them' culture where the power is inevitably with the adult. This was experienced as part of this research when SLs described the challenges of keeping the CYP at the centre of their decision- making rather than the teacher.

Behaviourist approaches are therefore not helpful to meet the needs of complex CYP who have experienced emotional trauma. Punishing them is not just unfair, but cruel (Dix, 2017). There was a recognition from the SLs that rigid systems were not meeting the needs of these CYP with complex needs. They could see that a CYP's behaviour was a form of protection. One SL described it as '*hard armour'* and building trust with them was more successful in managing their behaviour. It is therefore important, to not rely on rigid behaviour systems where CYP can escalate through the consequence system, in turn, becoming corrosive to the culture of the school (Dix, 2017).

This study also found that there was a search for a '*magic bullet'* to resolve issues and SLs discussed how often teachers would escalate issues in the hope that someone else would have the answer. Sometimes sanctions are applied without wider consideration

of what the CYP needs and can lead to them becoming caught up in a vicious perpetuating cycle of punishments. In addition, as discussed above we need to recognise the strategies, which are not consequences but are based on building positive relationships in our schools that can be recognised and implemented.

Dix (2017) suggests there is an over reliance on systems to control behaviour, whereas there needs to be greater investment at setting the culture and how the adults behave. This fits with the findings of this study where the culture is the first step in considering how to reduce the use of exclusion in our schools. Dix (2017) advocates that leadership involving a strong vision is important and simplification of policy is key. This also suggests the need for skills and qualities of leadership which will be discussed in the next section.

Subsequently, there is a need to move beyond behaviourist approaches to behaviour policy and this needs to be reflected on and broadened within the government guidance, actively implementing suggestions from reviews, for example the 2019 Timpson Review. The findings indicated that SLs were not using purely behaviourist approaches to their decision-making but were also trying to take into account a CYP's journey and needs when making decisions. There was a divide experienced by SLs between policy and practice which was described as a '*huge disconnect between infantry and generals'*. As suggested above, it was recognised that building relationships with CYP was important and having an empathic approach towards situations was helpful. One example of an approach that is gaining momentum in schools is emotion coaching (Gottman, 1997). The challenge is how to translate these ideas for teachers into strategies and guidance that fits within the school culture and becomes easily seen as part of the graduated approach to supporting all CYP. Dix (2017) uses the term 'botheredness' as a state that teachers need to show that they care and warns of not

giving up too quickly. Again, this study showed that building trust and a belief in CYP that adults care about them can enable behaviour change. The sense of patience, kindness and a '*drip effect*' of including positive recognition is advocated as opposed to a rigid extrinsic reward system. The findings suggest that when SLs were able to give time to a struggling CYP and build trust and a relationship this transformed situations for the CYP. Flynn (2014) found that when CYP were listened to that this correlated with feelings of empowerment and transformation in their behaviour.

Therefore, although behaviourist approaches have been the dominant discourse within education about how to address behaviour in our schools, there needs to be a move, towards a relationship-based model: of not only understanding some of the challenges that CYP are experiencing but also how to see beyond the presenting behaviour to communicate and make an emotional connection. This study also found early preventative approaches focusing on understanding CYP needs and building trusted relationships were perceived by the SLs as having potential to be successful. Similarly, Derrington (2005) also found that trusted adults and a focus on relationships were important

It can be argued that behaviourist approaches are not meeting the needs of CYP with complex need and that a focus more on the individual circumstances and vulnerabilities that CYP are living is required. SLs often knew that a CYP was on the child protection register or experiencing trauma or other SEND and could empathise with their lived experience. They also discussed how behaviour management strategies in their schools were limited in meeting the needs of these CYP. One SL described following the behaviour systems as '*throwing him to the wolves*' and that these CYP have '*everything stacked against them*'. Allowing SLs to explore more nurturing and supportive consequences for CYP is necessary.

The SLs indicated that sometimes their personal belief system was different to their professional. This links with their 'professed' and 'lived' experience (Argyris & Schon, 1992). One SL described wanting to help support inclusion for all CYP but not being able to do this within her role due to resource limitations. The lived experience of SLs was one of juggling resources to meet needs and highlighted challenges with providing the right intervention for CYP at risk of exclusion. To help problem solve situations, meetings were seen to have some value, as well as on-site facilities. The hope for the latter was to reform behaviour, which fits with a behaviourist understanding of behaviour. These facilities were noted as a *'work in progress'* and there was frustration from SLs with knowing what else to offer. There seemed to be a genuine sense of hopelessness and powerlessness about situations and the SLs' ability to find solutions. However, use of on-site facilities, that can provide alternatives to exclusion, have been successfully explored. Gilmore, (2012) recommends staff training as instrumental in the success of these.

In addition, to on-site facilities, SLs also described the need for more specialist nurturing schools to meet the needs of CYP with complex needs. However, there was also the recognition that having all CYP with complex SEMH needs in one school can bring its own challenges and was described as potentially creating a *'champion league of SEMH'* and *'super villain gangs'*. The study found that SLs perceived their schools as inadequate in terms of provision for complex need and hoped that there was a better alternative elsewhere. This idea that there is a better person or place to meet a CYP's needs links with Bion's (1961) theory of basic assumptions. One of the basic assumptions is that of dependency, which relates to the belief that there is someone or something elsewhere that can better meet the difficulty. This was seen also when SLs discussed a need for *'really high-quality therapeutic placements'*. These inner wishes

or drivers, which link to hope of a solution elsewhere, need to be made explicit. Thoughts and feelings associated with this need to be discussed so that strategies to support maintenance of placements and thereby reduce exclusion can be considered.

The SLs also described challenges with the curriculum offer and its adaptability to meet the needs of all CYP, alongside funding issues and cuts in staffing, that meant it is difficult to provide what is needed for CYP at risk of exclusion. Indeed, Cole et al (2019) found that the pressure of 'progress 8' has meant that SLs are having to make difficult decisions on how to prioritise their funding. In addition, Cole (2019) links the lack of flexibility of the curriculum to meet the needs of CYP with a rise in exclusions. The present study found that there was an indication that with more funds, more creative options could be considered.

A key issue highlighted by this research is that, in the SLs' experiences, the pastoral systems often did not link with other systems in the school, for example SEND. There was not an early recognition of behavioural needs being a SEND SEMH need. It could be argued that the change to the SEND Code of Practice (2014), where the term behaviour has been replaced by SEMH need has not helped with this recognition. The Timpson report (2019) recommends closer working relationships between pastoral and SEND, which is also supported by Cole et al (2019) who cite a lack of coordination between behaviour and SEND teams in schools which lead to unmet needs. In the present study, SLs found that there was a need for greater communication and liaison between pastoral and SEND, where this had started to happen there had been noticeable improvements. This can be achieved by having regular meetings to discuss CYP who potentially might need to be considered to have a SEND SEMH need. This would also help with accessing external agencies, for example the SENCO can be the gatekeeper to support services, including the EP. Earlier identification of SEND SEMH will help

this group of CYP have equality of access to external support when required. There were indications from the current study that this support was often accessed too late, however, when it was accessed it was valued. The SLs specifically discussed the value of EP input and how this can help both at an individual level but also at the strategic level and how it had really helped a SL reflect on their role. Although, there appeared to still be an expectation and desire for an EP to work with individual CYP, as a priority, rather than the wider systemic influences. This continues to be a challenge for the EP profession with an understanding of EPs working systemically being limited (Pellegrini, 2009; Fox, 2009).

5.3.3 The need for SLs to have specific leadership skills and personal qualities for their role

This next section will explore the finding that SLs needed to have specific leadership skills and personal qualities when making decisions about exclusions and how this relates to theory, research and policy guidance. These skills and qualities included: leading with confidence, reflection, care, compassion, motivation, persistence, flexibility, resilience and having the skills to understand the different perspectives as well as facilitate collaboration to problem solve situations. When faced with adversity from the other staff points of view on exclusion, the role could often be experienced as isolating in terms of them being a lone voice in their school when advocating alternatives to exclusion. Given these experiences, it was clear that they also needed determination to keep moving forward to achieve their goal.

However, despite the challenges the SLs experienced from other staff, they were able to respond with care and compassion, recognising the difficulties that staff have in the classroom, as well as all the demands placed on them as teachers. One SL noticed that

'Heads of Year….are rushed off their feet and beyond sometimes they just look deranged'. The consequences of this meant that teachers might make recommendations to exclude without investigating thoroughly. The SL discussed how they need to assess a situation and be able to step in with confidence to override other staff views and consider alternatives once investigations are properly completed. Development of leadership skills have been identified as important to support whole school approaches to increase inclusion and decrease the use of exclusion (Osler et al, 2001; Bennett, 2017).

In addition, Bion's (1961) theory of basic assumptions helps with an understanding of leadership especially when SLs are faced with adversity or staff. This can be understood in terms of 'fight' or 'flight' response, where with 'fight' there is resistance to the task. This was seen when SLs viewed the staff as a *'sticking point'* for change. 'Flight' was also experienced by the SLs when a student had *'enough experience of exclusion to know that was me being excluded'*, there is a sense of giving up and avoiding the task. SLs themselves also experienced these concepts when frustrated with CYP: *'will not accept …. support'*. An understanding of these concepts is helpful for leadership to consider how to intervene more effectively but also understand the leadership skills that might be needed for the differing positions. Rendall and Stuart (2005) describe schools where there is a greater amount of 'fight' as those that have a 'them and us' attitude. This was experienced when a SL first arrived at her school and noted *'It was like that was their area'*, the corridors were a space used by CYP. The work of Bion is, therefore important in helping us to understand the often-unconscious processes involved in patterns of behaviours and specifically, some of the more puzzling behaviours that SLs are consciously rationalising.

The findings suggest that the SLs were motivated to make a difference, they spoke of having a belief system and a right way to support CYP. SLs described a determination to do everything possible to support CYP so that they could *'sleep easy at night'* and if a CYP was excluded, they felt they would have done everything they could to avoid this. Bennett (2017) advocates that leaders need to have both a belief in CYP to change and determination. He outlines how leaders need to be stubborn but also flexible.

In addition to the above skills, the SLs showed the skill of collaboration in order to help with decision-making. This can be further explored by the work of Lang (1990) who described leaders as having different priorities, depending on which of the three domains (production, explanation or aesthetic) they were working within. The production domain suggests that objectivity exists and that there is a truth; rules govern our behaviour. Exclusion Guidance and Behaviour Policies could be examples of this where SLs refer to this guidance to help inform their decision-making. This could also relate to when SLs analyse exclusion figures and show persistence when implementing new vision/culture. The explanation domain has many versions of realities and all are equally valid, but not necessarily desirable. As such, there needs to be opportunities to discuss pros and cons of the different realities. This was experienced where the SLs collaborated and listened to the different points of view about a potential exclusion and were open to consultation. For example, a SL discussed a decision with his Headteacher and how he might be in a position of deciding to not exclude and how they might help support each other to make that decision. The 'aesthetic' domain relates to the emotional aspects of working and is respectful of the multiplicity of views. This links strongly to striving for fairness in decision-making and the time needed for collaboration and understanding the different perspectives. This domain was a key theme from this study. Lang discusses the challenges that arise if staff are working

within different domains for the same situation, which, in turn, can influence policies and workings in an organisation. There are examples from SLs of working at all three domains. For example, a SL demonstrated the production domain when noting the improvements in fixed-term exclusion rates, the explanation phase when trying to work out if to exclude a CYP and in the aesthetic phase when working with the SEND team and having empathy for the CYP's position and confidence not to exclude. Therefore, understanding of these different positions can help reflect on leadership skills and how to utilise them effectively.

Further to the work by Lang, the framework by Mason (1993) is helpful when considering leadership styles. He discusses the positions of 'uncertainty or certainty' that can be utilised to consider decision-making. Mason (1993) asserts that professionals will be either striving to work towards: 'safe certainty', 'safe uncertainty', 'unsafe uncertain' or 'unsafe certainty'. An understanding of these leadership positions is helpful when reflecting on decision-making to exclude a CYP. The draw of safe certainty positions is that they can be predictable, but this can lead to inflexibility and lack of creativity. However, when working with people there is no certainty, so Mason (1993) advocated working within safe uncertainty. This framework can be used to help understand the decision-making of the SLs. SLs had a number of competing demands on their time and the risks of not excluding a CYP could have repercussions in other areas of the school. They showed through their leadership that decisions on exclusion could be made flexibly and that *'rules were there to be broken'* so moving beyond a safe certain position of exclusion towards one of safe uncertainty, where the CYP is not excluded but the school considers other options. Other examples included avoiding a permanent exclusion through discussion of risks and the ultimate decision not to exclude was likened to the CYP being *'saved from*

being thrown to the wolves'. It is therefore important for SLs to have time to consider their responses within a safe uncertain position. Another similar position described was when a CYP had brought a knife into school and there was pressure to exclude (a safe certain position for the school), however, by collaborating with the SENCO, the school was able to move to a safe uncertain position and the CYP stayed in school. Supporting SLs to work within this position could be influential and beneficial for their decision-making about exclusions. In addition, implications for developing SLs confidence to make decisions within the safe uncertain domain can be helped by having reflection time, peer consultation and more formal supervision. Where this was able to be successful there were examples of CYP school placement being maintained successfully.

Mason (1993) uses the term 'authoritative doubt' to encompass both expertise and uncertainty, which he suggests includes the skills of never understanding too quickly and respectful curiosity. This links with the reflection and time to consider decisions that the SLs described. This also links with the systemic concept of homeostasis and trying to introduce new ideas in a manageable way: leading others '*within a mutually influencing process that introduces difference to the others in a way which allows them to become aware of distinctions which previously were outside the conscious experience*' (Mason, B. pp. 195). This sense of not understanding too quickly is important in the fast-paced environment of education decision-making. There was often pressure experienced by SLs to make quick decisions about whether to exclude but requiring them to slow the pace of decision-making to enable a thorough investigation. Again, the implications are that SLs need supervision to reflect on their decisions in-order to help them make more explicit their thought processes that are informing their decision-making.

The SLs also required resilience to move forward with decisions, to not exclude a CYP, and to be able to cope when others have potentially *'lost faith'* in you. One SL described having '*grist to her mill'* to their ability to demonstrate a reduction in exclusion. There was an acceptance that the SLs were using a lot of, not only their leadership skills, but personal qualities in their role. One SL reflected that they had to use *'all the personal skills that I had to be relentlessly positive around colleagues who maybe didn't like what I was doing as well as everybody else. I had to use lots of resilience.'* This again points to the potential feelings of isolation that this role can create. Without support around these SLs, for example in the form of supervision, this could lead to staff retention issues.

In addition to skills of resilience, reflection on decision-making is an important skill to have. This is so critical because there can be a power imbalance in the decision-making process where the SLs are viewed as holding authority and power. Rendall and Stuart (2005) describe authority as either being illegitimate or legitimate. Legitimate authority occurs in a context of an agreed role or task, whereas illegitimate authority is based solely on a person's status or personality. If authority is illegitimate, this can lead to feelings of unfairness and prejudice. The SLs were conscious of how their decision-making could be perceived and discussed how they strived for fairness. However, there were experiences that could be described as an illegitimate use of authority when frustrated '*oh gosh…that's it, he's going and that's not always been the right decision'.* The skills of being able to reflect on their decision-making and where it had also not always been deemed as correct were worthwhile in terms of future learning. When authority is used legitimately it is likely to be experienced as consistent, supportive and fostering a sense of trust and security. SLs described situations where they gave time to CYP to develop the trust in them and how this helped

to include them in the school. The SLs discussed the persistence that was needed to form positive relationships with CYP and the time that they needed for this. When successful they could see a *'chink'* that there was a breakthrough.

This idea of power and influence of authority can also be explored through the hierarchy in institutions and in whose voice is heard. The findings indicate that a skill the SLs demonstrated was one of being able to weigh up the different perspectives on exclusion, including parental and CYP. However, they need to be mindful of whose voice is 'warranted' (Gergen 1989, in Campbell 2000). As was found in this study, sometimes unintentionally, the voice of the teacher can become central instead of the needs of the CYP. Again, this suggests a need for reflection on decision-making and learning from exclusions to consider what could have happened differently. Case studies would be useful to reflect on and how, as a system, interventions could have been sought at an early stage to avoid the need for an exclusion.

Therefore, it has been demonstrated that key personal qualities as well as leadership skills are required for this role. Indeed, the development and support of SLs roles, specifically training and reflection, has been identified as part of the Timpson review (2019). This recognised that there was too much variation in exclusion figures between schools, recommending improvements in leadership. Osler (2001) and Daniels (1999) also found that strong leadership, including being able to clearly communicate expectations was important for reducing the need to exclude. However, their studies did not allude to the more personal qualities that leaders need to cope with their role.

5.4 Implications

Although, this was a small study in one LA and caution is needed when generalising the findings, there are implications from this research that will have relevance for

schools in similar contexts. Therefore, below are suggestions to be considered when looking at practice to create more inclusive schools, where the need to exclude is reduced:

(i) *The influence of a positive ethos and culture:* The research highlights the importance of improving whole school culture and ethos to reduce the need to exclude a CYP. When SLs can shift their understanding of behaviour from an individualist perspective to one of an interaction between individuals and the environment and their role to help support whole school change then the need to exclude can be reduced. It is suggested that this is a first step to improve exclusion rates. The Education Endowment Foundation (2019) publication 'Improving Behaviour in Schools' recommends starting at the whole school level as essential and has a range of strategies to help support this.

(ii) *A need for a greater understanding of the influence of systemic theory on organisational change:* The potential benefits of this theory is highlighted to allow SLs the ability to contextualise their roles. Specific ideas, for example the terms of working within 'safe certainty' or 'safe uncertainty' could be usefully explored with SLs to help reduce the need to exclude (Mason, 1993). Systemic concepts of punctuation, circularity, homeostasis and feedback can also be usefully applied to schools in supporting cultural change (Penn, 1982; Campbell & Groenbaek, 2006).

(iii) *Leaders co-producing vision and involving staff in school ethos:* SLs discussed how the implementation of policy needed to be

flexible and this was more successful when they involved staff in co-production, regularly building on and re-visiting this. This also links to the systemic term 'feedback responsibility' (Campbell, 1996)

(iv) *Guidance on exclusion:* the findings were critical of the policy guidance from government and the challenges with implementation. There were successful examples of the value of engagement with CYP to avoid exclusion. Opportunities to develop positive relationships with CYP, build trust and give time to help prevent use of the consequence system. Therefore, guidance needs to reflect good practice as well as procedural expectations in avoiding exclusion with co-ordination between the guidance published about areas such as: behaviour, SEND and mental health. In addition, links with positive/reward systems to help motivation needs to be linked with SL roles and detailed in school guidance. Brighton and Hove LA (2018) is one LA that has produced guidance on relationship-based behaviour regulation policy.

(v) *Early identification and support of CYP*: There needs to be improvements in the graduated approach to SEMH, specifically in relation to linking with SEND identification and support. Improving these links so that CYP at risk of exclusion can access support through the SEND systems is important. Consideration of approaches to de-escalate alongside alternatives to exclusion, for example, restorative approaches and how these are accessed needs to be considered. There were also a range of techniques that were

suggested that need to be embedded into behaviour policies that are not consequences but good practice for engagement and building positive relationships with CYP. These included: meet and greet, listening to CYP, acknowledgement of challenges etc. In addition, access to timely multi-agency support is also important.

(vi) *Access to support services:* there were challenges experienced with accessing support or valuing the support offered. It is recommended that systems for early identification, including regular opportunities to discuss with support services CYP at risk of exclusion and plan in a co-ordinated way. In addition, appreciating and understanding the wider role of educational psychology, in terms of supporting schools with systems and policy change, is also useful.

(vii) *Provision and support to meet the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion:* there was concern from the SLs that the provision for CYP was not appropriate. In addition, there was concern from SLs of a lack of funding in schools to meet needs. Therefore, it will be important to review at both a local and national level the range of support for CYP in the context of evidenced-based intervention and additional funding that could be provided to meet CYP who are at risk of exclusion. Where schools had invested in inclusion facilities, these need to be reviewed and evaluated to ensure they are working effectively to meet the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion. There also needs to be appropriate curriculum choice and differentiation for CYP to access mainstream lessons.

(viii)   *Training:* The SLs were often more able to intervene successfully with CYP at risk of exclusion than class teachers. However, there was limited discussion of theoretical frameworks that SLs were using to frame their support. Therefore, there is a need for on-going training to help inform how best to intervene with CYP at risk of exclusion. In addition, an understanding of how theories of change help promote positive outcomes with CYP would be useful. These might include: motivational interviewing, solution focused approaches, emotion coaching and restorative approaches.

(ix)   *Supervision:* SLs required a range of different personal qualities and skills to successfully navigate their role. SLs recognised challenges related to coping with their role and the stress it can create. SLs may not want to discuss their thoughts and feelings about their role with their line manager. There is a need for regular non-judgemental support which could be provided by an EP. Indeed, this is an important finding as since completing this research, less than 2 years ago, only, one of the seven participants are still in post. Although, it is not clear of the reasons for these changes, this appears a high turnover. It could further point to a need for supervision for this role.

The findings have suggested a range of implications above, which can be considered in a graduated way. The biggest impact can be seen to be achieved by having influence at the whole school level and so this should be where intervention starts. Figure 3 provides a visual framework to consider these implications:

Figure 3: Influencing culture, systems of support and leadership skills for reducing the need to exclude

Leadership Skills
Collaboration with team around CYP
Understanding different perspectives
Co-ordinating a multi-agency approach
Supervision for SLs

Systems of Support
Graduated approach to identification/support,
links with SEN and Pastoral systems,,
understanding of CYP individual needs, relational
approaches to behaviour regulation policies and
practice, Nurture/Inclusion Facilities

Influencing Culture
Positive shared ethos and vision, ownership of policies, staff
training/support, flexible and engaging curriculum, listening culture,
inclusion, sense of belonging, involvement with the whole school
community

5.5 Implications for educational psychology practice

The findings suggest that EPs have a role providing strategic support to schools on both their graduated approach to identification of SEMH and their whole school systems to improve the culture and ethos. In addition, the study particularly found that EPs can offer valuable reflection opportunities for SLs. Other researchers have also found that EPs can offer value at the systemic level (Dowling & Osborne, 1985; Stoker, 1992). However, it has also been found that schools tend to prefer utilising the EP role in its traditional sense, providing individual assessments rather than with whole school systems (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Dennison et al 2006). Indeed, it has been found that there is a dearth of EPs working at the systemic level (Fox, 2009; Pellegrini, 2009).

There is also the additional pressure that many Educational Psychology Services are working within a traded offer with schools, where it might be even more challenging to persuade schools of the value of using EP time for systemic work. However, as an

EP profession we need to be continuing to challenge these assumptions to help SLs and LAs value the contribution EPs can make at a systemic level to help reduce the need to exclude CYP from school. Indeed, EPs can also be influential at the LA level, providing guidance about how decisions are made on provision for CYP at risk of exclusion but also on LA policy and guidance to schools. Working at the LA level has influence, Parsons (2009) highlighted the effectiveness of LAs working with schools to develop inclusive practices.

This study also suggests that there is a need to consider not only systems development in terms of ethos and culture but also behaviour policies and training. EPs can support a review of guidance, specifically behaviour policies, and building in more relationship-based practice guidance. EPs are also well placed to support schools with training and embedding practice. Support for SLs to reflect on their role and receive supervision was also suggested as a role for the EP.

5.6 Strengths and Limitations

The following section will reflect on the strengths and limitations of this study. Although the sample is small, it is representative of the views and perceptions of seven SLs in this one LA at that point in time. Although the findings cannot be more widely generalised, there are insights and learning that appear plausible and transparent (Reid et al, 2005) whereby insights can be drawn and applied in similar contexts contributing to improved understanding of the phenomena and leading to positive changes.

One of the strengths of this study is the unique opportunity it has provided to hear and analyse the experiences of SLs in the role of behaviour leads for their schools. There is no other study that has uniquely focused on this group of professionals in schools. Another strength from this study was that working on a positive whole school culture

and ethos will impact on decreasing the need to exclude CYP. The application of systems theory to the analysis of a school offered utility.

The decision to use a qualitative methodology allowed flexibility of the interview process, allowing for richness in the gathering of participants' experiences and for them to explore the phenomena from their own unique perspectives. This led to a wide range of experiences being described to address the RQ. Many themes were generated from the initial coding, which were challenging to reduce to a manageable number without discounting a theme that would have importance when answering the RQ.

5.7 Reflections on the process

It was a privilege to have the opportunity to interview a group of SLs about their experiences of exclusion. The researcher was mindful of her dual role as an experienced professional working alongside the SLs and her role as a researcher. Extra efforts to apply the methodology rigidly, use of a reflexive diary and access to supervision/peer support, were implemented to limit unconscious bias so that the analysis and interpretation was driven by the interview content. However, despite this there was an unease when reducing the themes to a manageable form for the analysis and a concern that an important point might be overlooked. The analysis therefore took longer than expected, or intended, as re-checks of coding was completed to ensure reliability and validity of the research process.

The actual interview process was an enjoyable one and there was a recognition that the process of interviewing was in fact of value and could be interpreted as an intervention in itself. The experience as an EP who is practiced at interviewing or consulting with partners helped the process feel authentic and to build on responses from the interviewees.

However, there were challenges, with the chosen methodology. Initially, IPA had been chosen to answer the RQ with this relating well to gaining an understanding of the lived experience of SLs. However, the RQ was hoping to also illuminate ideas and areas of interest which might help us understand this phenomenon and how to reduce the need to exclude. As the interviews were conducted, the SLs were drawn to wanting to discuss more about their experiences in their decision-making to exclude and what helps. This led to the RQ focus shifting more to what we can learn from the experiences of SLs in relation to exclusion. This change in emphasis necessitated a revisiting of the initial methodology and switching to TA as a more appropriate analysis for the RQ.

This change was challenging as a lot of energy and time had been invested in applying IPA to the research as a whole and had been chosen initially not only to answer the RQ but also because of the rigidity of the interview process. However, when comparing the two analyses, the rigidity of the IPA interview process could be adapted within the TA and TA allowed for greater flexibility of the themes generated to include more content-based ones that were important to highlight from this research.

Further reflection on the reasons that SLs did not describe more of their lived experience might be that the interviews were conducted mainly within their schools and this setting was not right for a deeply emotive exploration of their personal feelings. As indicated in the systems theory section, we are often playing 'actors' in our work roles so a focus is required on our work role which might make it harder to reflect on more emotional aspects of the role in the work context.

Another reflection is the unconscious bias we might hold when completing research. One of the biases that drove this research was in wanting to interview this group of staff because they were viewed ultimately as the decision-makers in school, which was

viewed as a powerful position. As the research process progressed, it became clear that although this group do hold power, there is also power in other positions. For example, the teachers in the school held power in their determination to want a CYP excluded. Therefore, it is important to use reflexivity to challenge your own inner hypotheses and as well as to bring greater rigour to research.

In addition, the research process also required continual reflection on the interplay between the role of a researcher and the professional who worked alongside the participants. This dual role was considered within the ethics proposal for the study and actively reflected upon throughout the study as is demonstrated in the reflexive journal. The impact of this has been minimised but not eradicated because completing qualitative research is challenging, personal influences and interpretations cannot be completely erased from it (Creswell, 2009).

5.8 Future research

This research has added to our knowledge about the experiences of SLs regarding exclusions. Whilst it has provided many insights, it also points towards future directions for research. A whole school systemic approach to supporting SLs in effecting change is suggested and so the role of the EP in working successfully at this level could be further researched. SLs discussed the role of classroom teachers in the exclusion process. They suggested some teachers are not sure how to support CYP at risk of exclusion. This also warrants further research. The SLs also experienced frustration with resources to provide for the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion. It would be fruitful to explore an understanding of appropriate provision and what constitutes effective ingredients for this. Finally, another area for future research is on the perceptions of CYP, who have experienced exclusion and exploring their journey through the school system.

5.9 Conclusions

This study provided a unique in-depth exploration of the experiences of SLs decision-making when excluding a student from school. The participants were a group of SLs in schools who shared a common role with responsibility for behaviour and exclusions.

Being able to explore the perspectives of this group of professionals has helped to illuminate the paramount importance of creating a positive ethos and culture that limits the need to exclude. However, the importance of policy guidance relating more to practice and encouraging a relational-based approach was indicated. In addition, SLs and their support systems were highlighted as an area of need in terms of supervision and opportunities to reflect on decision-making.

This study advocates striving for a systemic approach to understanding school exclusion. Too often the complexity of exclusion is reduced to examining one part of the system: the CYP and their behaviour. This is a reductionist model and is not effective in addressing the complexities of human relationships. A more appropriate and meaningful approach is to find ways of understanding these complexities rather than reducing them (Rendall & Stuart, 2005), therefore systemic thinking has been helpful to examine this phenomenon.

Challenges were also presented by the graduated approach to behaviour, that exists in schools, being mistaken as a 'tick' list to escalate CYP through the system towards exclusion. There was confusion about and a lack of co-ordination with other leads in schools, including the SENCO, who could help identify and meet the needs of these CYP more effectively. However, the study also found that SLs' experiences of decision-making for CYP at risk of exclusion was challenged by a perceived lack of alternatives.

The findings suggested a need for flexible internal systems so that SLs were able to influence decision-making and avoid exclusions. Challenges were highlighted about working with staff to effect change because of the resistance from staff to agree alternatives to exclusion. It was also highlighted that there is a lack of guidance to help inform positive strategies including: relational-based practice and an understanding of CYP needs. Additionally, SLs have experienced reduced funding to meet CYP's needs. Furthermore, there was a discussion of the specific skills that SLs require to complete their role, for example, determination, persistence, resilience, compassion and the ability to be reflective. This emphasised the gap for both SLs and the wider staff in their continuous professional development.

The study has significance both at a local and national level. It can help better inform focus for interventions for meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion. It can also help improve policy and guidance to SLs in or preventing exclusions. This study also identifies a potential gap in the role of SENCOs, in particular their role in identifying and supporting CYP at risk of exclusion. There is also a clear need for EPs to work with SLs in a systemic approach to address reducing school exclusion.

5.10 Chapter summary

This chapter discusses the findings from the research highlighting the complexity of decision-making for SLs when considering exclusion for a CYP. The decision-making process was influenced by the ethos and culture of the school and found a more positive culture led to less need to exclude. In addition, it was explored that systems in schools are not always used effectively to create opportunities for early identification and support for CYP at risk of exclusion. For example, inconsistency can exist about whether a CYP should be considered to have an underlying need that fits with the SEND SEMH category of need. It was found that decision-making is influenced by

relationships and building a sense of trust with CYP, helping them to reflect on their situation and SLs believing that CYP want to change. Furthermore, the chapter explored a wide range of personal and leadership skills that helped when intervening and mediating emotionally sensitive situations. The importance of systemic theory has been applied to the findings with an emphasis on the influence of interactionist approach rather than a medicalised view of behaviour. The dominant behaviourist approach to behaviour has been considered when reflecting on the findings and how this can be extended to consider more relationship-based approaches to decrease the need to exclude. The chapter also explored the influence of policy guidance on practice and suggests that this is an important part of the process when wanting to reduce the use of exclusions. In addition, a number of implications have been recommended for SLs, EP practice and future research, taking into account strengths and limitations of the study.

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Appendix A: Process for the scoping of the literature on exclusion

This search was conducted in December 2017. The aim of this part of the research process was to consider the field of school exclusion and particularly explore the understanding of this phenomenon from different perspectives.

Search Number	Purpose of search	Search criteria applied	Number of results
1.	To gain an understanding of previous literature/research in the field and what we can learn from it	"Student perceptions" or "student voice" and "school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" and "research"; Date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Secondary Education	62
2.		"Parental perceptions" or "parental voice" and "school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" and "research", date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Education	35
3.		"Teachers perceptions" or "teacher voice" and "school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" and "research", date published 2000-2017; English Language; Academic Journal and Education	24
4.		"School exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" and "legislation" or "policy" and "implications" or "provision", date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Secondary Education	125

Following searches, each paper was considered and abstracts read. Further exclusions were applied if the study was not in the UK and if it was not related to school exclusion. A search of 'google scholar' and hand searches of other relevant articles or books was also completed. The results of these searches and relevant hand searching of papers are detailed below:

> **"Student perceptions" or "student voice" and "school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" and "research"; Date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Secondary Education**
> The searches found 5 papers of relevance, which the researcher read. Flynn (2014) was the one paper that had the most relevance and is detailed below. Other papers which were used for this part of the literature review came from hand searching of the original papers found and the additional ones found via the searches and examining the references they used for their research.

Farouk, S. (2016). My life as a pupil: the autobiographical memories of adolescents excluded from school. *Journal of Adolescence,* 55(2017), 16-23.

Flynn, P (2014) Empowerment and transformation for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties engaged with student voice research. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies,* 49 (2), 162-173.

Michael, S. & Frederickson, N. (2013). Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: pupil perspectives. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 18 (4), 407-422.

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O'Connor, M., Hodkinson, A., Burton D, & Torstensson. G. (2011). Pupil voice: listening to and hearing the educational experiences of young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties,* 16(3), 289-302.

Ofsted (2005). *Managing Challenging Behaviour*: London

Pirrie, A., MacLeod, G, Cullen M.A. & McClusky, G. (2011). What happens to pupils permanently excluded from special schools and pupil referral units in England? *British Educational Research Journal,* 37(3), 519-538.

The Prince's Trust (2002). *The Way it is: Young People on race, school exclusion and leaving care.* London: The Prince's Trust

Sellman (2009). Lessons learned: student voice at a school for pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and behavioural difficulties*, 14(1), 33-48.

Williamson, I. & Cullingford, C. (2003). 'Everybody's a Nobody in School': Excluded Students' Perceptions of the Threats to Autonomy in the English Secondary School *Nordic Journal of Youth Research,* 11(4):309–321.

"Parental perceptions" or "Parental voice" and "school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" or "behavioural problems" and "research", date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Education

The searches found 0 papers of relevance. However, following research above the papers below were chosen for relevance.

The Prince's Trust (2002). *The Way it is: Young People on race, school exclusion and leaving care.* London: The Prince's Trust

Parker, C., Marlow, R., Kastner, M., May, F., Mitrofan, O., Henley, W. & Ford, T. (2016). The supporting kids, avoiding problems (SKIP) study: relationships between school exclusion, psychopathology, development and attainment – a case control study. *Journal of children's services,* 11(2), 91-110.

"Teachers perceptions" or "teacher views" and "school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties" and "research" or "evaluation", date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Education

The searches found 4 papers of relevance, 3 of these papers had useful references which were used to find further papers. One paper from the original search is included below, Obsuth et al (2017). The other papers were found from hand searching.

Avramidis, E. & B. Norwich. (2002). Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: a review of the literature, *British Journal of Special Needs Education.* 17(2), 129-147.

Bennathan, M. (1996). Listening to children in schools, an empirical study. *Listening to children in education*, 102-106.

Gilmore, G. (2013) What's a fixed term exclusion, Miss? Students' perspectives on a disciplinary room in England. *British Journal of Special Education*. 40 (3) 106-113.

Imich, A.J. (1994). Exclusions from school: Current trends and issues. *Educational Research*, 36, 3–11.

Jones, J. & Smith, C. (2004). Reducing exclusions whilst developing effective intervention and inclusion for pupils with behaviour difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties,* 9(2), 115-129.

Leggett (2000). Supporting Secondary Schools to manage emotional and behaviour difficulties – an account in progress. *Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties*, 5(2), 18-20.

Munn P., Lloyd G. & Cullen M. (2000). Alternatives to Exclusion from School. London: Paul Chapman

Obsuth, I., Sutherland, A., Cope, A., Pilbeam, L. Murray, A. L. & Eisner, M. (2017). London Education and Inclusion Project (LEIP): Results from a cluster-randomised controlled trial of an

intervention to reduce school exclusion and antisocial behaviour. *Journal Youth Adolescence*, 2017:46, 538-557.

Head, G., Kane, J & Cogan, N. (2003). Behaviour support in secondary schools: what works for schools? *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, (8)1, 33-42.

Healy J, Gribben M & McCann (2005). School Restorative Conferencing. No.4 Policy and Practice Briefing. Northern Ireland: Barnardos.

Martin, M., & Hopkins, B. (2010). *Evaluating the impact of implementing restorative approaches in Barnet Primary Schools 2004-2010.* Annual Conference 2010, Barnet.

Osler, A. (2000). Children's rights, responsibilities and understanding of school discipline. *Research papers in education,* 15(1) 49-67.

Parsons, C. (1999). Social inclusion and school improvement. *Support for Learning.* 14(4), 179-183.

Rogers, E.M. (2000). *Behaviour Management: A whole school approach* (2nd Ed.). London: Paul Chapman

Turner, E. & Waterhouse, S. (2003). Toward inclusive schools. Sustaining normal in-school careers. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 8(1) 19-31.

"school exclusion" or "behavioural difficulties", "policy" or "legislation" and "implications" or "provision", date published 2000-2017; Great Britain; English Language; Academic Journal and Secondary Education

The searches found one paper of relevance, Norwich et al (2015) below. The other papers were found from hand searching.

Ainscow, M., Farrell, P., Tweddle, D. & Malki, G. (1999). Inclusive schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, *British Journal of Special Education*. 26(3), 136-140.

Burton, D.M., Bartless, S.J. & Anderson de Cuevas, R. (2009) Are the contradictions and tensions that have characterised educational provision for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties a persistent feature of current policy. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties,* 14(2), 141-155.

Norwich, B. & Eaton, A. (2015). The new special educational needs (SEN) legislation in England and implications for services for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and behavioural Difficulties*, 20(2), 117-132.

Parsons, C. (2009). *Promoting Strategic Alternatives to Exclusions from School: a development project*. Canterbury Christ Church.

Appendix B: Process for the literature review

The review of the literature was completed to examine research that had been conducted exploring the experiences of school leaders on their decision-making to exclude a student from school.

The searches were conducted in June 2019.

Step one: Generate a list of key terms

Exclusion	Excluded, fixed-period, school exclusion, exclu*, behaviour
School	Secondary, Primary, High, College,
Teacher	Headteacher, teaching assistant, school leader, senior leader
Experience	Perspective, view, exploration, decision-making

Step two: Decide on Inclusion and Exclusion criteria
Inclusion and exclusion criteria were generated to fit with the focus of the research

Inclusion	Exclusion
Primary and secondary*	Early years, post school age, special school
Studies in UK	Studies in other countries
Papers written in the English Language	Unpublished thesis

Originally the searches were restricted to the secondary phase of education, but exploration found that there were studies that either referred to both primary and secondary phases that were of importance or that the studies in relation to the primary phase were relevant for inclusion

Step three: Conducting the literature searches
The following databases were searched using EBSCOhost: psycINFO, psycArticles, psycbooks, psycPEP, Psychology and behavioural sciences, educational source, ERIC and discovery.

Database searched	Key terms/limiters	Results
PsycINFO	Exclu*, school lead*, experience*	21
	Exclu*, teacher*, experience	720
	Exclu*, teacher*, decision making	17
Psychology and Behaviour Sciences	Exclu*, school lead*, experience	3
	Exclu*, teacher*, experience	82
	Exclu*, teacher*, perception*	23
	Exclu*, teacher*, perception*	5
	Exclu*, teacher*, experience	64
Educational Source	Exclu*, teach*, experience* Limiters: 1990-2019, full text, secondary education	835
	Exclu*, school lead*, exploration	38
		33
ERIC	Exclu*, teach* experience*	983

	Limiters: Limiters: 1990-2019, full text, secondary education	81
PsyARTICLES	Exclu*, teach* experience*	21
	Exclu*, teach*, perception	15
PsyBOOKS	Exclu*, teach* experience*	13
PEParchive	Exclu*, school lead*, experience	0
All databases	Exclu*, teacher*, perception Limiters: 1990-2019, adolescence, secondary education	551
	Exclu*, teacher*, experience* Limiters: 1990-2019, adolescence, secondary education	30
	Teacher, decision-making, exclu* Limiters: 1990-2019, adolescence, secondary education	391

Each database was individually searched before completing a more general search, incorporating all the databases. Abstracts were read to consider relevance to the current study. These searches resulted in one relevant paper: Hatton, L.A. (2013). Disciplinary exclusion: the influence of school ethos. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 18 (2), 155-178.

Step four: Additional searches
In addition to the above searches, google scholar, hand searching all relevant papers and emailing authors to gain copies of relevant research papers was conducted.

Step Five: Relevant studies
Following this, 5 papers were identified for analysis to inform the current study. The papers selected were:

Derrington, C. (2005). Perceptions of behaviour and patterns of exclusion: Gypsy Traveller students in English secondary schools. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*. 5(2), 55-61.

Gilmore, G. (2012) What's so inclusive about an inclusion room? Staff perspectives on student participation, diversity and equality in an English secondary school. *British Journal of Special Education.* 39 (1) 39-48.

Hatton, L.A. (2013). Disciplinary exclusion: the influence of school ethos. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 18 (2), 155-178.

Osler, A., Watling, R, Busher, H. Cole, T. & White, A. (2001). Reasons for Exclusion from School. *Research Brief No. 244. DfEE*.

Trotman, D., Tucker, S. & Martyn, M. (2015). Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city. *Educational Research*. 57 (3), 237-253.

Appendix C: Selected studies for Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) qualitative analysis

	Derrington (2005)	Gilmore (2012)	Hatton (2013)	Osler, Watling, Busher, Cole & White (2001)	Trotman, Tucker & Martyn (2015)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	×	√	√	√	√
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	√	√	√	√	√
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	√	√	√	√	√
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the study?	√	Not mentioned	√	Not mentioned	√
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	√	√	√	√	√
Has the relationship between the researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	√
Have ethical issues been taken into account?	Not mentioned	√	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	√
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	√	√	√	√	√
Is there a clear statement of findings?	√	√	√	√	√
How valuable is the research?	√	√	√	√	√
Total	7	8	8	7	10

Appendix D:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Your rights as a research participant

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research or any other aspect of this research project, contact Paru Jeram, Trust Quality Assurance Officer pjeram@tavi-port.nhs.uk.

The researcher

The research is being carried out by Tracey Williams. I am one of the Educational Psychologists working for the local authority in xxxxxxxx. This study forms part of a doctoral qualification at the Tavistock Clinic, overseen by the University of Essex. I am happy to discuss, in total confidence, anything relating to this research and can be contacted on:

Email: tracey.williams@xxxxxxxxx.gov.uk or telephone: xxxxxxxx

Project Title

Exploring experiences of 'behaviour leads' decision-making in relation to student exclusion

Project Description

You are invited to participate in research into the experiences of 'leads for behaviour' in Secondary Schools decision making to exclude a student. This is an opportunity to give voice to your role and the decision making that occurs when deciding to exclude a student.

Why is this research being done?

Nationally the number of young people who experience fixed-term exclusion from school continues to be high with over three quarters occuring in Secondary Schools (DfE, 2015). For young people who have experienced exclusion, school is not a positive experience and they are not able to reach their potential (Hart, 2013). Blyth & Miller (1996) concluded that exclusion from school can have a devastating effect on young people and long term costs for society.

What is involved in the study?

If you decide to participate you will be asked to take part in 1 interview lasting approximately 1-1.5 hours. The interviewer will be Tracey Williams (Educational Psychologist). The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed so that it can be later analysed.

What are benefits of taking part in the study?

The research aims to explore your experience of decision-making around student exclusion and it is hoped that the opportunity to talk about this in a semi-structured way will also be useful. It is hoped that the research will highlight processes, strategies or support that is needed to help with your role and/or with students and their families who experience exclusion.

I will arrange to feedback my results to behaviour leads and other professional groups at the end of the research. I will use the results to help inform the development of policy and guidance in our local authority. I will publish my results nationally so that other professionals can draw upon them in their work. Others may, therefore, benefit in the future from the information I find in this study.

Confidentiality

I will take the following steps to keep information about you confidential, and to protect it:

- Your contribution will be anonymised and your name will not appear in any of the data. Once I have coded the data, there will be no way of linking statements to individual behaviour leads
- If you discuss any children, young people, staff or other professionals their names will be anonymised.
- All data will be kept on an encrypted laptop and audio-recordings erased once transcription has taken place.
- Following the study, the data will be kept for ten years on an encrypted memory stick and then erased in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.
- The results and any feedback will be set up as general themes and will seek to avoid including anything that might obviously identify an individual.
- All the data will be treated as confidential and will not be available to anyone except me.

Appendix E:

Consent Form

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

RESEARCH TITLE:

Exploring experiences of school 'behaviour leads' decision making in relation to student exclusion

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about this research study, as provided in the participant information sheet.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the study. I understand that this will involve participation in one interview lasting approximately 1 to 1.5 hours and that these will be audio-recorded. I agree to being audio-recorded.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw participation of unprocessed data at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me.	☐
6.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
7.	I, along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant:

_____   _____
_____

Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____
_____

Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

Appendix F

Interview Schedule

Exploring the experiences of 'behaviour leads' decision making in relation to student exclusion

Pre-amble for Interviewee

This interview style is about your experience and although I have some questions I will be led by your responses. This is because I am interested in your views and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers.

When responding please do take as much time as you need to think etc...

Caution for Interviewer

This is the participants world, pay attention to the participants words and responses
Curiosity, naïve questions etc
Do not interpret!
Rapport and first question are important to help interviewee relax into the interview
Take a few notes of key points you might want to follow up in the interview
Accounts to move from generic to personal and detailed

Structured questions:

Number of years teaching:
Number of years at current school:
Male/Female:
How long have you been a behaviour lead at your school?
What training have you accessed to be a behaviour lead at your school:
Where is the Behaviour Lead in the hierarchy of the school?

Themes

Experience of excluding a student
Decision making process which could link to other consequences considered
Thoughts and feelings of behaviour lead in relation to deciding to exclude
Whole school approaches to behaviour management
Local authority support
Parent/other staff views
Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Questions:

1. Can you tell me about a time when you excluded a young person?
   Possible prompts: what happened? What had the student done? What did you do? How did you feel about this? Is this a regular part of your role? How many students have you excluded?

2. What was the rationale you used to decide to exclude?
   Possible prompts: What were you thinking/feeling? What were you considering? Is this the same rationale you have used previously? How is it similar/different? Graduated approach

3. When making the decision to exclude the student what other consequences or sanctions were you considering?
   Possible prompts: other options, how were they discounted? How does that make you feel? What are the range of options in the school? How do you feel about that? What would you like? Are there consequences or rewards that you would like to bring into the school?

4. Tell me a bit more about how life had been for that student leading up to the exclusion both in and out of school?
   Possible prompts: views of others e.g. family, other support staff, how did parent/teaching assistant respond to the decision to exclude the student? Collecting student view?

5. Is there anything that you think could have helped this student to avoid exclusion?
   Possible prompts: external agencies support, training, curriculum, transition

6. What support would you need to avoid making the decision to exclude a student?
   Possible prompts: whole school approaches, processes, LA processes

7. Thinking back to that decision, is there anything else that you would do differently now?
   Possible prompts: If you could do something different to excluding this student what would it involve?

8. What do you believe is the role of exclusion as a tool? How helpful/useful is it to the student?
   Possible prompts: belief system, view on rewards,

9. Tell me a about a time that you were going to exclude a student and decided not to?

Possible prompts: what were you thinking/feeling? What happened as a consequence? Were you happy that you made that decision? What learning did it serve?

10. Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about your views around student exclusion?
Possible prompts: More generally around exclusion

Additional prompts:

How? Why?
Can you tell me more about that?
What do you mean by?
Can you tell me what you were thinking?
How did that make you feel?

Appendix G: Example of initial coding – Daniel

Theme generation	Line number	I/P	Transcription	Code: Description	Code: Language/Linguistics	Code: Conceptual
	1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035	I	So, as a leader for behaviour in the school what opportunities do you have to talk to the whole school staff about that (exclusions) and the strategies			
Training for staff (102) Prescriptive to staff in expectations (103) Rules and reinforcement (104)	1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1041 1042 1043 1044 1045 1046 1047 1048 1049 1050 1051 1052 1053 1054 1055 1056 1057 1058 1059 1060	P	So we had *masses* last year last year specifically we had *masses* um because we as a school it was the number 1 priority behaviour it was one of the main things that was flagged up by Ofsted rightly so um and there are we've put in some *non-negotiables* for staff we expect every single lesson that they do so for example they *meet and greet* every class um you know we've listened to staff, staff were complaining about all the coats and jackets and the length of time students were spending in the corridors taking off their so we've as a number of schools in the city have done we've banned outdoor clothing indoors you can bring a coat to school you can bring your hoodie but you can't wear it when you're in the school building so as soon as you enter the school building there's an expectation that you're taking it off and 97% of the school do that every single day without any reminder, out of that 3% that's left probably 80% of them need a bit of a nudge and the final 20% are the hardcore that *consistently* we have to	There were masses of whole school training or talking to staff last year about behaviour. It was the number 1 priority flagged by Ofsted and that was quite rightly so. The school put in non-negotiables there was the expectation that for every single lesson, staff meet and greet every class. The staff were listened to when they complained about coats and jackets and the length of time students were in corridor. The school banned outdoor clothing indoors. So, children can bring hoodie, but you cannot wear it indoors. There is an expectation that as you enter the school building you take outdoor clothing off. This is working for 97% of school, out	Question about training – extreme language 'masses' as if used to having to defend position especially with Ofsted but also with the staff Number 1 priority – one of main reasons flagged by Ofsted Non-negotiables Detail to response – as if the detail will produce the change? Percentages again as if know your data Very small % are 'hardcore' Consistently	Training – leadership Prescriptive and directive? Rules

162

	1061		have a word with you have to put in a	of the 3% left – 80% do it with		
	1062		sanction you end up confiscating the coat	a reminder and then there is the		
Small group of	1063		you know that sort of thing and you know	hardcore 20% who consistently		
students who	1064		they fall foul of that system but again	you need to have a word, put in		
will consistently	1065		when you look at those 20% they're also	a sanction, confiscate the coat.	'fall foul' of the warn etc.	
challenge (105)	1066		the group of children who fall foul of the	These can fall foul of the		
	1067		warn move remove system the exclusion	system. They are also the same	Small % they are saying they	
	1068		system the isolation system they are pupils	group who fall foul of the warn,	cannot meet need?	
	1069		who constantly put themselves at a point	move and remove system, the		
	1070		of conflict *quite often on purpose to test*	exclusion system, the isolation	View is that these pupils	
	1071		*barriers* but yeah I had a lot of time with	system.	'constantly put themselves at	
Working with	1072		staff last year we did huge whole schools		point of conflict' –	
staff (106)	1073		stuff I did a speed dating for wanting a	They are pupils who constantly	deliberate?? On purpose to	
	1074		better way of putting it exercise in the hall	put themselves at a point of	test barriers	CYP testing system
	1075		where we looked at the different aspects of	conflict quite often on purpose		
	1076		what we did a SWOT analysis staff with	to test barriers	This could relate to his	Training – bring
	1077		the whole staff they pointed out the areas		experience of school and	staff with you
	1078		they felt needed improving we looked at	Last we did a huge whole	what he did?	
	1079		that we picked specific areas we went	school speed dating exercise		Listening to staff,
Risks were high	1080		away as a working party of 15 to 20 of us	where we looked at different		communication
so needed detail	1081		worked on those came back to the main	aspect, a SWOT analysis was		
in planning	1082		hall in January February time set up um 7	completed. Staff pointed out		
(107)	1083		desks for 14 we had 7 on each side of the	the areas that they thought		Attention to detail?
	1084		hall we then even grouped all the staff we	needed improving.		
	1085		looked at the dynamic of the staff and you			
	1086		know our 'pooh' management so to speak	The working party went away		
	1087		the eeyores the wise owls and the so who	and worked on this and came		
	1088		are stubborn eeyores who are our wise	back and discussions were had	Pooh Management strategy	Analogies –
	1089		owls who are our tiggers and want to do	in the hall. We specifically	to getting staff on board	creative?
	1090		everything and we tried to put them and	looked at the dynamic of the		
	1091		move them around we split SLT and we	staff, the eyoree, the wise owls		Articulate
	1092		spread them amongst the groups we put	and the tiggers and grouped		
	1093		our at the time heads of department and	them carefully. We spread		
	1094		spread them amongst the groups we didn't	SLT, HoD amongst the groups.		Attention to detail
	1095		have a group of head of departments and a	Strategic thinking was used to		
Leadership with	1096		um then we were quite *strategic* with who	whom led the table.		
whole staff	1097		was leading the table so you would turn up			
training (108)	1098		at a table and lets say the detention system	The detention system was		
	1099		so we didn't have a detention system at the	everyone did their own thing.		

Strategic planning (109)	1100 1101 1102 1103 1104 1105		school everybody was left to do their own detentions so everyone did them on a Thursday night so as a difficult child myself I could work out so I can mess about in every single lesson and the worst I'm going to have to do one detention and	So, you could have a situation where a pupil was being asked to go to a detention for a teacher in more than one lesson at the same time. The BL reflected on	Detail – DT system not working, so analytical but also a problem solver	Strategic leadership
Identification with the student (110)	1106 1107 1108 1109 1110 1111 1112		if I don't turn up to it there is no follow up so I don't even have to go right so all of these things you know weren't conducive now detentions we know statistically with the top end they don't work we know that but actually you do need something like that within a school for a consequence	being a difficult child himself and realising that a child could mess about in every single lesson and at worst could have one detention and if you did not turn up, there was no follow up.	Use of the word statistically again weighing up of averages	Reflective/solution focused
Flexibility in response to the minority (111)	1113 1114 1115 1116 1117 1118		system for the vast majority that minority again you have to be bespoke you have to work and you have to come up and you have to you have lateral thinking in order to solve but now we know exclusions don't work statistically they don't work	With the top end detentions don't work but you do need a system for detentions in the school, you do need a consequence system for the vast majority. With the minority you have to be bespoke. You have	We are also here for the whole school	Need consequence system
Need for a consequence system (112)	1119 1120 1121 1122 1123 1124 1125		there are very few children who get excluded and go oohh and they are mortified and their parents and you know it's the children who repeatedly you know and we talk about that at behaviour meetings and it makes little to no difference you know the permanent	to put in thinking to solve problems. Exclusions don't work, there are very few children who get excluded and then their parents are mortified. The children are repeatedly being excluded and we discuss them at behaviour	Statistically again	
Exclusions don't work (113)	1126 1127 1128 1129 1130		exclusion the exclusions that came before the um isolation the reports	meetings, and it makes little or no difference.		Hope for the small percentage? Belief that anything will work??
Role of behaviour lead for whole school not just those at risk of exclusion (114)	1131 1132 1133 1134					

Appendix H: List of all the themes generated for Daniel

Daniel – List of all themes following initial coding

1. Experienced Teacher
2. Experienced behaviour lead
3. Breadth of behaviour lead role
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Importance of behaviour in relation to progress
6. Experimentation with new ideas
7. Roles and responsibilities
8. Career progression/ambitious
9. Status of behaviour lead
10. Clarity in communication
11. Roles and responsibilities
12. Predictability of behaviour
13. Unpredictability of when behaviour happens
14. Strategic analysis
15. Links with SEMH – SEN Code of practice
16. Data analysis to inform intervention
17. Stress
18. Coping with change
19. Whole school development
20. Time pressure
21. Strategic planning
22. Detail to plan
23. Leadership
24. Bringing staff with you
25. Stakes are high
26. Juggling all the balls in the air
27. Detail to planning
28. Noticing impact
29. Sense of belonging
30. Uncertainty for the future
31. Ethos and culture
32. Staff morale
33. Analysis of data
34. Context dependent
35. Resilience
36. Coping with stress
37. Leadership and influence
38. Communication skills
39. Predictability of exclusions
40. Analytical skills
41. Staff wellbeing
42. Resilience
43. Hard working
44. Positivity
45. Staffing/resourcing
46. Vision/belief in change
47. Sense of belonging
48. Feedback
49. Collaboration
50. Evidenced based decision making
51. Leadership – collaboration in decision making
52. Evidenced based decision making
53. Reflective practice
54. Attention to detail
55. Evidence based practice
56. Confidence with Leadership
57. Attention to detail
58. Self-efficacy/belief in change
59. Challenges of working with pre-thinkers
60. Working with support services

61. Vulnerability of our children and schools
62. Need to protect
63. Need to control
64. Nurturing parent
65. Confidence with data
66. Exclusion is context dependent
67. Alternatives to exclusion
68. Behaviour Thresholds
69. Leadership – staff management
70. Influencing staff
71. Diplomacy
72. Reflective practice
73. Home/school partnership
74. Nurturing parent
75. Anger with parents
76. Empathy with staff
77. Confidence and competence with students
78. Government policy influences actions
79. Exclusions don't work
80. Belief in change
81. Hierarchy of pressure
82. Risk management
83. Confidence as a leader
84. Staff expectations
85. Proactive in seeking out opportunities to learn
86. Find your own way
87. Relationships are key
88. Presence
89. Reflective practice
90. Own story influences practice
91. Engaging lessons or quality first teaching
92. Adaptability in teaching practice
93. Classroom management strategies
94. Instinctive practice to identifying issues
95. Ethos and culture of the school
96. Graduated approach
97. Support for staff
98. Creativity with strategies
99. Support for staff
100. Potential for chaos
101. Positive behaviour management strategies
102. Training for staff
103. Prescriptive to staff of expectations
104. Rules and reinforcement
105. Small group of students who will consistently challenge
106. Working with staff
107. Risks were high so needed detail in planning
108. Leadership with whole staff training
109. Strategic planning
110. Identification with the student
111. Flexibility in response to the minority
112. Need for a consequence system
113. Exclusions don't work
114. Role of the behaviour lead for the whole school not just those at risk of exclusion
115. The effect of a small minority can have on the majority
116. Schools for all or inclusion
117. Listening to students' views
118. Analysis of data to inform practice
119. Systems to improve behaviour
120. Impact of changes
121. Links with behaviour and quality first teaching
122. Noticing and celebrating small changes
123. Pressure to show changes
124. Challenges that this school has
125. Enormity of the task
126. Systems for the majority not the minority
127. Expectations are higher

128. The pressure is to meet the needs of the 95%
129. There is little that will help with the 5% of student who are higher level of need
130. Thresholds of behaviour – there is inconsistency across schools in the city
131. Links with SEN are not well established
132. When the child wants to change the school is more willing to support
133. The child needs to go above and beyond to prove themselves to the school
134. Responsibility of the behaviour lead
135. Support for inclusion
136. Clear, structured plan with expectations
137. Intrinsic motivation
138. Behaviour lead influence on decision making
139. Collaboration in decision making
140. Importance of the graduated approach
141. Belief that inclusion can be the best for a child
142. Risk management – weighing up the pros and cons
143. City wide thresholds for behaviour
144. Challenging peer
145. Context taken into account
146. Supporting inclusion
147. Feedback is helpful to motivate
148. Role of governors and support services
149. Commitment to inclusion
150. More for less
151. Staffing stress and pressure
152. Alternatives to exclusion are limited
153. Pressure to exclude and to send a message that this is not acceptable
154. Teamwork
155. Sense of belonging
156. Belief in change for the school
157. The evil of Ofsted
158. Determination to succeed and to show the world
159. Visionary and hopeful about the future
160. Exclusions as a last resort
161. Alternatives to exclusion
162. Role of parents
163. Reflection on own childhood
164. Pressure for progress to be made
165. Confidence to problem solve and find solutions
166. Policy makers understanding what it is like on the front line
167. Working are peddling hard, but it is unsustainable
168. There is not the belief that this current support is going to work
169. Children are at risk of having less sense of belonging
170. Lack of alternatives in the city for students
171. Grass is greener in other cities where there is better provision
172. All support services are overstretched and understaffed
173. Support services are ineffective because they have too much to do and are under resourced
174. Future is bleak
175. There is no support outside of schools that can make a difference
176. Feedback from LA
177. Fairness in the system with the support offered
178. Partnership working with colleagues in other schools
179. Segregation of all students with SEMH does not work
180. A unitary authority should be looked at differently due to the smaller nature and the link students have across the city
181. Visiting other schools to learn about behaviour
182. Positives make a difference to behaviour management
183. Students self-evaluating is important
184. Flexibility and ease of rewards and consequences systems
185. Networks of children knowing each other can cause issues
186. Geographical nature of a unitary meant that it is challenging to offer alternatives to exclusion
187. Reflection
188. There is a limit with challenging children
189. Putting all children together in one place with a multitude of need is not the answer
190. Government cuts are affecting the services offered to children and young people
191. Support services need to be in schools more to offer advice
192. There needs to be smaller, more nurturing provision for children/young people who need it
193. Some children will never manage in a mainstream school

194. There needs to be greater flexibility in the curriculum for children and young people with SEMH
195. Schools will need to use the provision offered by LA to deal with their most complex children and young people
196. Pressure of progress data trumps exclusion data
197. Students don't attend the local SEMH school
198. Putting all students with similar needs in a special school does not work
199. Finance can drive decision making instead of children's' needs
200. Smaller nurturing environments are what is needed
201. Smaller nurturing environments that offer flexibility
202. Always will be a small percentage of students who will need a smaller more nurturing environment
203. Value for money for interventions focused on SEMH
204. Is it worth intervening with the top end because what is the evidence it will make a difference?
205. There is still a lot of work to do with rewards in the school
206. Students can be motivated by the right rewards
207. Parent partnership can improve from communication about rewards
208. Rewards are a better motivator than consequences
209. Leaders as problem solvers with staff
210. Reward systems that are easy to administer
211. Reflection on what works
212. Reflective and evaluative with how schools needs to develop
213. Proactive in taking responsibility for leading
214. Leadership with staff and welcoming of new staff views
215. Clear and strategic in thinking and advising staff
216. Increase expectations with staff about what the children can do
217. Rules are important
218. Staff support is crucial in change management
219. Rewards are about raising students' self-esteem and belief in themselves
220. Creativity with ideas for motivating students
221. Analysis of data to inform decision making
222. Persistence in finding solutions

Appendix I: Example of Central Organising Concepts, Sub-themes and data extracts (Daniel)

Mainstream schools cannot meet all children's needs
- The role of self-efficacy with exclusion
- Exclusions/sanctions don't work

Current support systems are failing vulnerable students
- Graduated response to exclusion
- Schools need rules, consequences, positives and rewards
- Support services are under resources and stretched
- There are hoops to jump through to get children's needs met
- Quality first teaching is important to address behaviour
- Decision to exclude is context dependent

Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making
- Government and local policy do not help support the inclusion of children and young people

Balancing the demands of the role
- Ethos and culture of a school
- A pressure to improve behaviour

Personal/professional qualities
- Aspirational about leadership, determination and resilience as personal qualities of leadership
- Experienced leader who proactively looks for best practice and is solution focused
- Clarity in communicating ideas
- Relationships are key
- Own narrative influences decision making around exclusion

Credibility and influence as a leader
- Evaluative and reflective about impact
- Empathy/understanding
- Ability to influence staff/systems change
- Support for staff
- Roles and responsibilities
- Strategic planning and analysis

Balancing the different stakeholders' views on exclusions
- Evidenced based decision making when considering exclusion
- The knife's edge of decision making – collaborative decision making
- Pupil voice in response to challenging behaviour
- Working collaboratively with parents/carers

Central organising concept/themes – linked to line number and key words

1. **Mainstream schools cannot meet all CYP's needs**

The role of self-efficacy with exclusions

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Challenges of working with pre-thinkers (59)	568-569	Heavily involved are not going to (rep. of heavily)
	578-579	The ones we have significant concerns over
	583	They don't tend to engage
Small group of students who will consistently challenge (105)	1065-1066	Hardcore that consistently we have to have a word with
Role of behaviour lead for whole school not just for those at risk of exclusion (114)	1137-1139f	Exclusions don't change behaviour; sanctions make no difference
Are the 5% unchecked belief that they can change? (129)	1275-1279	Focus on the 95% and this has had an impact
Child wants to change (132)	1321-1323	Child was mortified and this in itself helped
Child had to go above and beyond for the school to accept (133)	1328	He had a lot of convincing to do
Intrinsic motivation (137)	1348-1350	He did everything he could to ensure that he could prove to us….
Belief in change for the school (156)	1515-1517	Very optimistic about the future
Determination to succeed (158)	1528-1529	We will be a good school
Visionary and hopeful about the future (159)	1531	Could push towards an outstanding school
There is not the belief that the current support is going to work (168)	1670-1672	We're imploding, what is happening is not sustainable, what is happening to the PRU etc is the answer
Some children will never manage in mainstream schools (192)	1950-1956	Need small nurturing envts, 99% cannot manage in large mainstream schools
Always will be a small percentage of students who will need a smaller nurturing environment (201)	2085-2086b	Smaller % that will always need smaller more nurturing provision
Value for money for interventions focused on SEMH (202)

Is it worth intervening at the top need because does it make a difference? (203) | 2115-2116 | Statistically made no impact no matter how the data is spun. |

Exclusions/sanctions don't work

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Exclusions don't work (79)	807	Exclusions don't work
Flexibility in the response to the minority (111)	1124-1125	DTs with top end don't work
Exclusions don't work (113)	1135	We know exclusions don't work
Alternatives to exclusion are limit (152)	1504	Restorative approaches don't work

2. Current support systems are failing vulnerable students

Schools need rules, consequences, positives and rewards

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Positive behaviour management systems (101)	1017-1020	Quiet word, redirecting, find something positive and talk to them about that
Rules and reinforcement (104)	1055-1062	Banned outdoor clothes,
Small group of students who will consistently challenge (105)	1070-1074	Fall foul of the warn, move, remove system
Need for a consequence system (112)	1129-130	A consequence system for the vast majority and a bespoke one for the minority
Systems for the majority not the minority (126)	1262-1263	Behaviour system to reflect the 95%
Expectations are higher (127)	1270-1272	Previously systems aimed at the 5%, 95% went unchecked and had low levels of behaviour that rose
Pressure to exclude to send a message that this is not acceptable (153)	1505-1506	Message to send to parents, staff and pupils
Positives make a difference to behaviour management (182)	1835-1841	It is all about the positives, all about rewards
Flexibility and ease of rewards and consequence systems (184)	1848-1856c	Flexibility of offer of rewards and punishment is that they do nothing
There is still a lot of work to do with rewards in the school (204) Students can be motivated by the right rewards (205)	2132-2134 2138-2140	Currently overhauling our reward system The kids did not buy into it
Rewards are better motivators than consequences (207)	2163-2164 2172-2173	Catch more with honey than vinegar Praise really works
Reward system that is easy to administer (209)	2182-2184	Click a button and it will email all the parents quickly
Rules are important (216)	2265 2274-2275	Banned mobile phones Phone out immediately taken/confiscated

There are hoops to jump through to get children's needs met/links with SEN/support services

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Links with SEMH – SEN Code of Practice	140-151	Old school behaviours that fall under that heading
Hierarchy of pressure (81)	823-825	Exclusion is a hoop we have to jump through to get a child's needs met either at PRU or an EHCP
Support for inclusion (135)	1336-1337	Massive amount of support
Clear structured plan with expectations (136)	1346	It's worked he is reintegrated

Support services are working with the wrong families? Or under resourced and stretched, hopelessness that no one else can help??

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words

Working with support services (60)	575-579	The ones we really want them to work with ae the ones we have significant concerns for
More for less (150)	1489-1490	13 to 3 members of staff
Children are at risk of having less sense of belonging (169)	1685-1689	Children ricocheting around the city, there is no provision
Lack of alternative in the city for students (170)	1693	Alternative schools there
Grass is greener in other cities and they have more provision (171)	1704	Open mouthed at what resources we have
Belief that all services are understaffed (172)	1706-1708	Massively overworked and hugely understaffed
There is no support outside of school that can make a difference (176)	1749-1750	PRU saying they don't know what they are going to do
Support services need to be in schools more to offer advice (190)	1939-1943	You need more EPs, you need more time, more money, in schools more

Quality first teaching is important to address behaviour

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Importance of behaviour in relation to progress (5)	47-51	Data manager oversees year 11 because this is the most impt. progress data
Engaging lessons or quality first teaching (91)	921-924	One size fits all does not work
Adaptability in teaching practice (92)	927-928	Staff who teach in a particular way
Classroom management strategies (93)	936-938	If employ the same strategies, they will struggle
Links with behaviour and quality first teaching (121)	1219-1220	All the emphasis this year is on quality first teaching
Pressure of progress data trumps exclusion data (195)	1985-1989a	Move children off roll with no data coming back you are going to do that

Decision to exclude is context dependent/noticing when inclusion happens

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Exclusion is context dependent (66)	682-684	Depends on context
Alternatives to exclusion (67)	686-687	We might isolate
Leadership and staff management (69)	708	Pounds of flesh
Diplomacy (71)	717-718	Listening to staff, need to go?
Reflective practice (72)	721-723	Sending them to very vulnerable dangerous situations
Challenges that this school has (124)	1255-1258	Very high tariff – highest in the city
Context taken into account (145) Supporting inclusion (146)	1442	Other schools would reject him
Feedback is helpful about support (147)	1451	Panel was very complimentary about the support offered

Graduated response to exclusion

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Behaviour thresholds (68)	697-698	Context and level of ferocity

Graduated approach (96)	973-980	Follow consequence system and then it is ok for child not to be in your lesson
Creativity with strategies (98)	984-995	Sporting analogy with yellow and red cards
Potential for chaos (100)	1001-1006	If only strategy is warn, remove system then you will put a lot of children on moves
Exclusion as a last resort (160)	1537	Alternative school day, we do everything we can to avoid exclusion
Alternatives to exclusion (161)	1539 1547	Alternative school day Restorative conversations

3. Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making

Government/local policy does not help support the inclusion of CYP

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Govt policy influences actions (78)	799-804	Shocking reality of the constraints put on us by the school, LA and govt.
City wide thresholds for behaviour (143)	1393	Differences in schools in the city – listen to other schools
Challenging peers (144)	1409	Should have challenged that permanent exclusion
Policy makers having an idea of what it is like on the front line (166)	1649-1656 1661-1662	Generals on the hill directs and how different it is in the trenches Huge disconnect between your generals and your infantry
Fairness in the system with the support offered (178)	1759-1762	Other schools don't put in the support we do because they don't have to
Partnership working with colleagues in other schools (179)	1774-1777	Some schools pick up more than others, popularity of schools, use of word constantly
Segregation of all students with SEMH does not work (180)	1798-1811	Not to put all SEMH together, champions league of SEMH
A unitary authority needs to be looked at differently due to the links all students have across the city (181)	1814-1820	Comparison of unitary vs LA
Network of children knowing each other can cause issues (185)	1865-1866 1874 1878-1879	Shipped in from a huge area Throw a stone and all know each other. They are all intertwined
Geographical nature of a small unitary means that it is challenging to offer alternatives to exclusion (186)	1875-1876 1882	All children know each other so moving around the city is challenging Putting at PRU create a super villain gang
Putting all children together in one place with a multitude of need is not the answer (188)	1904-1904b	Hats off to him I wouldn't do it
Government cuts are affecting the services offered to CYP (189)	1918-1922 1927-1929	Need more money, govt cuts Such a disconnect – generals in Westminster
There needs to be greater flexibility in the curriculum for CYP with SEMH (193)	1966-1967d	Do they need progress 8 do they hell, then need Ma, En and social skills

Schools will need to use the provision offered by the LA to deal with their most complex CYP (194)	1985-1986	Offload 4 children
Students don't attend the local SEMH Special School (196)	2009-2013	Don't attend and meet and create a super villain gang
Putting all students with similar needs in a special school for SEMH does not work (197)	2019-2023	Create a film with all the super villains analogy
Finance can drive decision making instead of children's needs (198) Smaller nurturing environments are what is needed (199)	2044-2049	Money saving to have one building Need more smaller units
Smaller nurturing environments that offer flexibility (200)	2061-2065	Lots of smaller units that can offer flexibility, similar offer with some bespoke

4. Balancing the demands of the role

A pressure to improve behaviour

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Predictability of behaviour (12)	127-128	If you can predict you can solve it
Stress (17)	172-175	4 HTs and re-wrote the whole behaviour strategy
Coping with change (18)	172-177	New behaviour strategy, new HT
Stakes are high (25)	219-221	Might try to say this is not our responsibility
Juggling all the balls in the air (26)	230	Placement of union reps
Uncertainty of future (30)	242a 242h-242i	Re-structure button hit Jam severely taken out of the doughnut
Staff morale (32)	263-264	Constant downward spiral
Staff wellbeing (41)	346-348	Staff absences
Resilience (42)	351	Covering for each other
Risk management (82)	838-843	Game to play, we are where we are as a school
Pressure to show changes (123)	1241-1244	Significantly lowered *extreme language to make a point?*
The evil of Ofsted (157)	1522-1525	Don't need a xxxxx, highly unfair
Pressure for progress to be made (164)	1590-1590c	We have to make progress if not Ofsted is going to tear us apart

Ethos and culture of a school (life cycle of a school)

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Ethos and culture (31)	254-255	Incredibly receptive and perceptive to any changes in mood
Analysis of data (33)	267-268c	Permanent exclusions links to illness and behaviour spike
Context dependent (34)	255-256	Changes in mood and atmosphere
Predictability of exclusions (39)	313-316 330-331	Christmas and 2-week half term Out of rhythm

Vision/belief in change (46)	363-366c	Turning as a school, community etc.
Feedback (48)	372	Smile on my face
Vulnerability of our children and school (61)	629-631	Dealers target our areas, our school
Need to protect (62)	632	we need to keep them safe
Ethos and culture of the school (95)	953-966	Changed the culture of the school, it is ok to use the consequence system, previously would have been on a list of alerting staff for the Head……Santa's naughty list

5. **Personal and professional qualities**

Aspirational about leadership, determination and resilience as personal qualities of leadership

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Career progression (8)	74-75	Want to move towards DHT
Status of behaviour lead (9)	76	Remit is way too narrow
Leadership – confidence (56)	510-511	We searched them
Confidence as a leader (83)	844-848	Don't sit and tell me you need more space at this provision than I do
Find your own way (86)	874- 877	Learnt on the job, no exam like for a SENCo
Instinctive practice to identifying issues (94)	939-944	Been one of those students know where the hot spots are

Experienced leader who proactively looks for best practice and is solution focused or leader who can be quite judgemental and negative about other services?

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Experienced teacher (1)	8	18 years teaching
Experienced behaviour lead (2)	16-17	BL at previous school for 3 years and so 7 years total
Leadership (23)	201-202	Visit another local school who were in a similar position
Proactive in seeking out opportunities to learn (85)	866-871	Wheedle myself onto about behaviour and behaviour management
Confidence to problem solve and to find solutions (165)	1613-1613a	We will iron those issues out
Catastrophising the concern so much that it is believable (173)	1713	Only 10 of them and they have thousands of cases (tone of voice)
Support services are ineffective because they have too much to do and are under resourced (174)	1719-1722 1725-1728	Spinning plates and they are going to crash You guys are massively overworked and unable to do what you love
Future is bleak (175)	1730b-1730f	Swimming pool with hands tied behind back and treading water but some people are starting to go under now
Visiting other schools to learn about behaviour (182)	1831-1832	Gleam some information from other schools

Clarity in communicating ideas

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Clarity in communication (10)	95 - 96	Explaining who does which year group
Attention to detail (57)	528-531d	Substances and describing what did

Relationships are key

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Relationships are key (87)	886	Good at building relationships

Own narrative influences decision making around exclusion

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Own story influences practice (90)	910-917	Top set and got bored, Behaviour is due to boredom
Identification with the student (110)	1117-1119	As a difficult child myself I could work out that I could mess around in every lesson and the worse I could get was one DT
Reflection on own childhood (163)	1557-1562	I was excluded as a child, permanently excluded twice. Knew it would be a bad experience at home

6. Credibility and influence as a leader

Evaluative and reflective about impact

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Noticing impact (27)	239-240	Made a significant difference
Reflective practice (53)	443-445	Too rigorous because can waste time
Noticing and celebrating small changes (123)	1241-1243 1235-1237	It is going to get better Analysis of data to show how it mounts up *something about commitment??*
Students self-evaluating is important (183)	1845-1846	Children set their own targets
Reflection (187) There is a limit with challenging children (188)	1892-1897	We cannot manage you anymore, at times drive to the edge
Reflection on what works – rewards that are private (210)	2206 2218-2219h	Juries out as to whether they are successful Children don't want to get up and be on stage, mortifying 70% of golden tickets not handed in
Reflective and evaluative about how school needs to develop (211)	2223-2224	A lot that needs revamping

Ability to influence staff/systems change

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Bringing the staff with you (24)	215-216	Thought about the dynamic of these groups
Sense of belonging (29)	238-239 242f-242g	Staff felt part of the process All the staff were very positive
Positivity (44)	356-358	Still down where we were
Staff expectations (84)	856b-856f	Not been in pastoral roles, staff don't understand the pressures
Support for staff (97)	981-982	Need to put in some coaching for some staff
Systems to improve behaviour (119)	1203-1204	Walk throughs, positives
Impact of changes	1214	How quiet the corridors were
Commitment to inclusion (149)	1468e	Governors surprised at behaviour and potential sanction
Leaders as problem solvers with staff (208)	2171-2175	All the staff that turned up said praise really works, sending postcards home works
Proactive with taking responsibility for leading (212) Leadership with staff and welcoming of staff views (213)	2243-2244	Revisiting the behaviour working party, fresh faces
Clear and strategic in thinking and advising staff (214)	2246-2250 2261	Going to look at rewards we have a behaviour system we know it works, hold colleagues accountable
Increase expectations with the staff about what the children can do (215)	2276-2282	Everyone said the children would kick off with a ban on mobile phones All 120 members of staff went we can do this

Roles and responsibilities

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Breadth of behaviour lead role (3)	20-21	Move away from just being behaviour
Roles and responsibilities (4)	27-31	Changed more and more
Experimentation (6)	59-62	Not got that far yet…
Roles and responsibilities (7)	70	I was in charge of everything
Roles and responsibilities (11)	100-105	Explaining who does what for each year team, streamlined…
Responsibility of behaviour lead (134)	1330	I saw knife and went right that is where we draw the line
Role of governors and support services (148)	1468	Nowhere near the top of the tree

Strategic Planning and Analysis

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Strategic analysis (14)	134-136	Lot of strategic thinking

Data analysis to inform intervention (16)	163a-163e	Year 11s responsible for 60% of behaviour
Whole school development (19)	179-181	working party
Strategic planning (21)	186-188	Where the weaknesses were
Time pressure (20)	189-190	Spent half a year working on this
Detail to plan (22)	194	Went to visit schools
Detail to planning (27)	233-235	I knew that would be the sticking point
Analytical skills (40)	323-325	Behaviour jumped
Attention to detail (54)	449-450	Statements from anyone who was there
Confidence with data (65)	664	Verbal abuse is the main reason for exclusion
Strategic Planning (109)	1109-1110	We were quite strategic Detentions not working so a working group
Analysis of data to inform practice (118)	1194-1201	Removal of students and data to back up claims

Empathic understanding /credibility

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Influencing staff (70)	712	I was there…. that has changed dramatically since stepping into this role
Empathy with staff (76)	780	I've been in their shoes
Confidence and competence with students (77)	783-786	I understand the anxiety of teaching although I've been quite confident…….
Presence (88)	892-892a	Pupils behaviour will alter
Reflective practice (89)	907-910	I would have been at our focus centre, very difficult very challenging

Support for staff

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Training for staff (102)	1036-1039	Masses because number 1 priority
Prescriptive for staff in expectations (103)	1043-1045	Non-negotiables for staff, meet and greet
Working with staff (106)	1076-1078	Students who put themselves at a point of conflict quite often to test barriers
Risks were high so needed detail in planning (107)	1084	SWOT analysis, speed dating, detail in planning of groupings
Leadership with whole staff training (108)	1097	'Pooh' management – analogy with eeyores, wise owls, taking ownership

7. Balancing the different stakeholders' views

Pupil voice in response to challenging behaviour

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
The affect a small minority can have on the majority (115)	1163-1166	We have the right to learn and it is not fair that a small group of students are stopping us

Working collaboratively with parents/carers

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Self-efficacy – belief in change (58)	551-553	Number of services working with parents/family
Need to control (63)	633-641	School cannot control outside of school and parents are putting their children in vulnerable positions
Nurturing parent (64)	650a-650c	Children need a comfort blanket around them
Home school partnership (73)	727	No structure or boundaries at home
Anger with parents (75)	743 748	Inconvenience Need to work with the parents
Role of parents (167)	1555-1556	Guarantee that there is no structure
Parent partnership can improve from communication about rewards (206)	2147-2148	30% increase in parents evening attendance

The knife's edge of decision making - Collaborative decision making

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Collaboration (49)	398-400 406	Brought Head back from permanents and she has talked me down from them Work collaboratively
Leadership – collaboration in decision making (51)	426-429	Good team, talk exclusion through
Thresholds of behaviour (130) Links with SEN (131)	1309-1311	It was a knife Sigt SEN, work through with SEN
Behaviour lead influence, did SEN override? (138)	1362	Very uncomfortable with decision to begin with and if not had an EHCP could have been different
Collaborative and persuasive (139)	1368-1370	Level of support saved his school career
Risk management – weighing up the pros and cons (142)	1387	Decision that this was a one off

Evidenced based decision making when considering exclusion

Themes (theme number)	Line Number	Key words
Evidenced based decision making (50)	419-420c	Lay out all the statements
Evidenced based decision making (52)	432-435	Really rigorous system
Evidenced based practice (55)	459-461	Rather than hearsay

Appendix J: Example of a Pen Portrait - Daniel's experience

From Daniel's experience there were seven main themes. These are:
- Mainstream schools cannot meet all CYP's needs
- Support systems are failing vulnerable students
- Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making
- Balancing the demands of the role
- Personal/professional qualities
- Credibility and influence as a leader
- Balancing the different stakeholders' views

Each theme will be discussed illustrated from the interview with quotes.

Theme 1: Mainstream schools cannot meet all CYP's needs
Daniel is a senior lead in a school that has a high number of students who have experienced exclusion. There is pressure on Daniel to improve the behaviour of all the students in the school. Daniel talks about his experience of trying to improve the behaviour of children at his school: '*....the final 20% are the hardcore that consistently we have to have a word with ..'* *(Line: 1065-1067).* He talks about the challenges that there are with referring to external agencies and that some students: '*.... they don't tend to engage…'* *(Line: 583a).* From *Daniel's experience* he does not think exclusions work: '*……we know exclusions don't work statistically they don't work there are very few children who get excluded and go ooh and they are mortified….' (Line: 1135-1139).* Daniel experiences the challenges of being able to make a difference with these CYP and how exclusion does not change behaviours. The use of the word *'mortified'* in the context of this quote implies that exclusion is not having an impact in terms of changing CYP's behaviour.

The dual role of being a senior leader in the school for both CYP at risk of exclusion and having responsibility for all CYPs behaviour can cause conflict. There is experience where all the effort has been targeted at the 5% of most concerning CYP with limited success: '*……we wanted our behaviour system to reflect the 95%... our mantra was this is for the 95%, the 95% who don't get detentions, the 95% who come in and function in school… our behaviour systems prior to that had all been set up to deal with the 5% so the 95% went unchecked and we had a lot of very low levels of poor behaviour and they rose their behaviours to be in line with the top end and there was hundreds of thousands thrown at this top end but nothing given to the other 95%...' (Line: 1261-1277)*

Daniel's belief is that not all CYP's needs can '*be met in a large mainstream'* (Line: 1955-1956) school and would be more suited to '*small nurturing environment'* (Line: 2080-2081). Daniel's experience is that he has had to focus on improving whole school behaviour and his belief is that exclusions do not work but actually just focusing on the most challenging students in the school will not create change. There is a sense of a belief that he is not sure what will create change for these students.

Theme 2: Support systems are failing vulnerable students
Daniel described a perceived lack of support for children at risk of exclusion. These came from a range of areas he had experienced. These included pressure from staff to exclude. He describes staff wanting their '*.... pound of flesh..' (Line: 708)* in terms of a sanction. Daniel

reflects that he had similar feelings before he moved to this role: *'.... that's changed dramatically since stepping into this world…' (Line: 714-716).* Daniel has already described his experience of exclusion and sanctions as not working: *'.... exclusions don't work detentions don't work….' (Line: 807-808).* Daniel also reflects on the use of the behaviour system in the school and that, if this is followed rigidly, it can be ineffective. He describes the behaviour system as similar to a yellow and red card situation in a football game: *'....it's like a referee if you only have the cards to go to in a game you'll immediately send the game into farce if the first tackle that goes in is a bit dodgy you immediately go for a yellow card where you set the precedent and now everything like that you're going to yellow card and then you're going to be at red cards very quickly and the whole game descends into a farce…' (Line: 984-995).* Daniel is therefore implying that a rigid behaviour system does not work for these young people. Although he recognises that whole school behaviour systems can work for the 95% of the school population and that he needs to be thinking of this group. The alternatives that Daniel employs to engage with young people appear to be to engage with the young person at a personal level: *'....going over and having a quiet word redirecting….and finding something positive they've done and talking to them about that……I did this with a young man and it completely changed him and I had him in the palm of my hand…' (Line: 1017-1025)*

It is clear from Daniel's experience he is able to use this strategy effectively but whether this is reflected in the school behaviour policy is unknown. It is also possible that, if school staff are mainly using graduated responses through a consequence system without consideration of engaging the individual or emphasising the positives, then systems will be failing young people. Daniel discusses his frustration with being able to provide a graduated response for 95% of the children in the school but that there are challenges with the remainder. He knows from visiting other schools that *'.it's all about the positives…' (Line: 1835-1836)*

And to this end Daniel describes that he is involved in *'overhauling' (Line: 2133)* the reward system. He uses the analogy of *'catch more with honey than vinegar' (Line: 2163-2164)* as his motivation to do this. So, although, Daniel is aware that positives work it does not appear from his experience to date at this school that this has been his focus.

But there is also a dilemma in his role with being responsible for whole school behaviour and a pressure to achieve a higher Ofsted rating. He describes a certain pressure to send a message to other students about exclusion and behaviour that will be tolerated in the school: *'.....when it comes to exclusions I don't like them…..but ultimately we don't have anywhere to go sometimes….the message sometimes that needs to be sent is that this is not ok to other pupils to staff and our parents..' (Line: 1499-1508).*

In terms of the support that is needed for student's at risk of exclusion, in Daniel's experience there are *'hoops that we've had to jump through' (Line: 823-825)* in relation to access to Education, Health and Care Plans or a Pupil Referral Placement. Daniel discusses the level of complexity that there are to some of the children at the school and the necessary multi-agency involvement needed but also how he can change his mind about a student if the right kind of support is provided: *'…I saw the knife and went right that's where we draw the line, we draw the line there because if we don't draw the line here where do we draw the line but we did take into account his SEN and his EHCP so and we put a massive amount of support in ……it worked, he's reintegrated…' (Line: 1329-1346)*

This idea of pupil self-efficacy is also important for Daniel and to whether or not to give a child a chance: *'....he was mortified that he'd done this and that in itself helped....he showed a great deal of remorse and wanted to remain here....'* (Line: 1321-1325)

There is also the belief that the children that need the support of the PRU cannot manage in a mainstream school: *'....we need small nurturing environments where these students....who get excluded cannot manage in a large mainstream environment....they cannot do it, they will never do it, it doesn't matter how you do it....they will bounce back out....'* (Line: 1950-1959)

In terms of a graduated approach, in Daniel's experience he is aware that it all starts with quality first teaching. He described his experience of behaviour issues linking to boredom: *'....80% of behaviour is due down to boredom and if your lessons aren't engaging and they're boring and they're not differentiated....you can expect issues...'* (Line: 917-923)

There is this sense from Daniel that to be a 'good' teacher that you need to employ different strategies with different groups: *'...if they employ the same strategies that they do with their top sets...they struggle quite significantly...'* (Line: 935-938)

In terms of decision making around exclusion, Daniel outlines the different variables that would be taken into account: *'......it depends on context, it depends on situation, it depends on where we are with that child...'* (Line: 682-685). Daniel is also aware of the vulnerabilities of some students: *'....if you send them home, you're sending them....into very vulnerable dangerous situations...'* (Line: 720-723)

So there is flexibility from Daniel when making decisions to exclude. He continues to outline a range of alternatives that he might consider: *'.....we might isolate for 2 or 3 days instead and then we might ....use our inclusion staff...to RJ the situation....'* (Line: 686-690). There is also the challenge for Daniel that he believes that other schools will not take their pupils, he describes the students at his school as: *'....very, very high tariff'* (1257-1258) and *'the other schools wouldn't take him'* (Line: 1442-1443).

There are lots of references from Daniel to a lack of funding and he has experienced this himself in his Inclusion Department: *'...when I arrived here....I had 13 members of staff I now have 3..I've got the same level of need...'* (Line: 1487-1490). He also refers to the impact that absences can have *'Since September I've not had a full team at any point....they've been running around covering and they've not been able to do some of the supportive pastorally type work we want them to do because they are constantly covering things..'* (Line: 348-355).

Theme 3: Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making
Daniel's experience and practice is limited by wider policy making decisions. He uses quite emotive language to refer to this during the interview: *'....I learnt quite quickly the shocking reality of the constraints that are put on us by, dare I say, the school? That are put on us by the Local Authority, that are put on the local authority by the government...'* (Line: 798-804).

There is this sense of a parameter to practice that is out of Daniel's control and therefore there are limitations to what he is able to offer. The limitations are also experienced within the Local Authority partnership, where one school might exclude for a behaviour whilst another would not. Daniel describes an experience where a colleague was challenged about a permanent exclusion but it was upheld. He contacted the person who challenged afterwards: *'.....to say*

sorry I should have backed you up that's ridiculous we should have challenged that permanent exclusion….' (Line: 1406-1410)

Daniel talks about the thresholds and how we can have consistency across a local area if one school is deciding to exclude for behaviours where another school would not do this. However, in Daniel's experience it is not just the other schools but the Local Authority that can make decisions that are not helpful. Daniel talks about policy makers not really understanding the situation in schools. He gives an analogy of a battlefield: *'……it's all well and good being one of the generals who sits at the top of the hill and directs and coordinates strategically how the battle should commence it's a damn sight different to being in the front line in the trenches and understanding that…' (Line: 1649-1656)*

Daniel discusses the wider provision in the city and the next steps suggested with a new SEMH Hub being developed but he does not believe this will help. He uses the term *'imploding' (Line: 1671)* to describe the current situation within the authority. However, when asked about his views on whether all children with SEMH should be placed in the same provision he gave the analogy of the *'champions league of children with SEMH' (Line: 1809-1810)* and asked a rhetorical question *'what do you expect to happen?' (Line: 1812-1813).* He further describes the children put together in these provisions as *'super villain gang' (Line: 1882).* There is this contradiction within Daniel that he thinks that a small percentage of children need a more nurturing environment but putting all children with SEMH in the same provision is also not the answer. The challenge for mainstream schools is that there is an expectation of *'progress 8'* (Line: 1967), Daniel's view is that they do not need this but a more limited curriculum *'they need to learn English, Maths they need to learn social skills' (Line: 1967).* There is then the issue of finance that Daniel views as a challenge *'government are making all these cuts…..it filters down' (Line: 1921-1926).* His solution is still that there is a need for smaller nurturing units but would see this as a *'huge financial expenditure' (Line: 2082).*

Theme 4: Balancing the demands of the role
There are other competing demands on Daniel's role and a pressure to improve because *'we've had X Headteachers and …..Ofsted……..we rewrote the whole behaviour strategy…' (Line: 172-177).* He describes the challenges he has experienced with implementing a whole school review to behaviour and his ability to predict concerns from staff: *'I knew they would be the sticking point' (Line: 233 – 234).* Daniel describes his strategy to bring staff on board with a working group and consideration of the groupings for maximum productivity. As an outcome of this work he says that staff felt part of the process: *'I believe it made a significant difference, we've lowered behaviour last year' (Line: 239-241).* However, all this good work was soon to be destabilised by *'the restructure button' (Line: 242).* There was a new whole school strategy to improve behaviour that had been received positively and would therefore have an indirect impact on exclusion. This is dependent on the behaviour of all staff also improving but once the 'restructure button' had been hit, Daniel describes this as *'the jam was severely taken out of the doughnuts and out behaviour went again..' (Line: 242-245).* There is a sense of how easily the balance can change, that staff can be affected by concerns about their role, which will inevitably affect management of behaviour and inevitably exclusion rates.

It is these ebbs and flows of school life and the pressures to focus on the majority of the children and not the minority, who might be receiving exclusion, that affects exclusion levels. Daniel has also experienced pressure from staff absences and staff that are *'constantly covering things'*

(Line: 354) and that there has not been a full team of support staff at *'any point' (Line: 349).* There is a sense of fire-fighting situations whilst juggling several metaphorical balls. However, despite this Daniel is determined and motivated to improve behaviour and demonstrate improvements: *'this time last year we had 4.9% of the school excluded……this year we've had 2.7% (Line: 1244).* The main pressure for Daniel appears to be Ofsted and this becomes a driver for all the changes: *'we have to show progress….if we're not doing that Ofsted are going to tear us to pieces' (Line: 1589-1590).*

The use of words in this theme: *'severely', 'constantly', 'significantly', 'tear us to pieces'* give an indication of the crisis that is being experienced by Daniel and how there is a pressure in his role despite this to make improvements. This will result in an effect on the decision making to exclude in the context of attempting to balance the needs of the individual with the whole school. The changes that Daniel is trying to implement, to improve the school's behaviour, is also linked to developing the ethos and culture of the school. Daniel discusses the ebb and flow of the school life and how the mood of the school can affect exclusions: *'…children are incredibly receptive and perceptive to change in mood or atmosphere and as a staff if there's a lull… they pick up on that and that affects their mood and their behaviour, which further, in turn, affects the moods and behaviours of the staff….and you are in this constant downward spiral…' (Line: 253-264).*

Daniel has noticed a link with the downward spiral and an increase in challenging behaviour. The perception of the school is important to the ethos and having self-belief in change as well as more positive publicity which is described by Daniel as helping: *'we are turning as a school we are definitely….the talk around the city….amongst parents within the school it is a very different school to where we were 3-4 years ago.' (Line: 363-366).*

Theme 5: **Personal/professional qualities**
For Daniel there is a sense of drive, to want to create change and to have confidence to do this: *'…there's a couple of teething problems…. but you know we'll get there we'll iron those issues out' (Line: 1611-1613).* He uses language in a confident manner; use of the words '*we'll iron those issues out*' implies that solutions will be sorted. When asked about the training he has had for his role, he talks about some short courses but mainly *'I've learnt on the job'* (*Line: 874)* but he also implies that there is more to this, with relationships being key *'I've always been quite good at building relationships with kids' (Line: 885-886).* There is also the idea that being a behaviour lead is not necessarily a choice but a role that is good to do, especially if you are ambitious and would like to be a Deputy Head: *'I would like to expand my role at some point. I would like to move towards deputy headship and currently my remit is too narrow' (Line: 72-76).* He also shows his experience of being a leader and the confidence he, therefore, has with decision making, when deciding on places at the local PRU, he has strong views on other schools representation: *'you need to walk a mile in my shoes…..whereas I have walked many miles in yours and I know where that school is at…it's a very different context' (Line: 849-853).*

Daniel refers to his experience of being a teacher for xx years and that he has held the current post in 2 schools. This, in itself, appears to give Daniel confidence in the strategies that he employs. He shows proactivity; seeking out support to learn how best to change a system: *'researching going to other schools' Line: 191-192.*

However, there is a lack of looking to outside agencies for others to help support his drive and ambition to create change. When talking about social services his experience of them is that it is going to be *'impossible to contact them….impossible to get a meeting with them' (Line: 1715-1716)* and even if you do manage a meeting *'they're going to be virtually ineffective because they are spinning 40-50 plates' (Line: 1718-1720).* Even when talking about the Educational Psychology Service, he uses words *'massively overstretched and overworked' (Line: 1725-1726)* to describe his perception of the service. Later he does offer a solution to the issues with support services: '*…you need more educational psychologists and you need more time, more money and you need the ability to be in schools more…' (Line: 1939-1943)*

From Daniel's experience he is worried about the future for children in the city: '*we're imploding, what is happening is not sustainable..' (Line: 1670-1672).* He is quite definite again about solutions and the role of the Local Authority. He believes that *'there is no provision in the city for what we need' (Line: 1688-1689).* Daniel has used the words '*imploding*', '*ineffective*' and '*impossible*' to describe his experience. These words are quite emotive and give a sense that Daniel is working within a system where he is trying to do his best with the resources he has. He describes a bleak future: '*….we've been thrown into a large swimming pool with our hands tied behind our back and we are treading and treading water, but people are starting to go under now…' (Line: 1730b – 1730f).*

Theme 6: Credibility and influence as a leader
Daniel has already shown his leadership skills above with the working party to review the behaviour strategy. There are a number of experiences that Daniel described which showed his credibility and influence as a leader. Daniel demonstrates his reflective thinking when evaluating the school system of taking statements from students which is describes as: *'really rigorous' (Line: 434).* But he evaluates this further on with a consideration of this could be *'waste some time' (Line: 444).* So, they are currently looking at changing this system. He also shows his evaluation skills when looking at the current reward system where there is a public reward assembly where the students are recognised for their achievements. Daniel has noticed that: '*70% of the golden ticket…aren't handed in because they don't want to get up' (Line: 2219).* There are many examples of where Daniel is showing his empathy for the class teacher and an understanding of their position which he uses to help strategize. When asked about how he copes when a teacher wants an exclusion, his first response is to empathise with their position: *'I've been in their shoes I get it so I understand where they're walking and the path….and sometimes the anxiety of teaching a certain child…' (Line: 780-785).*

As a leader, it is important to be able to influence staff. Daniel demonstrated that he brought all the staff together to review the behaviour policy. He was also able to share the details of his planning to reduce the number of children who were removed from lessons and the roles that Senior Leads had in the school with expanded 'on duty' time. The duty involved popping into lessons and walking through: *'…to find children being good reiterate any positives, give achievement points but also pick up any difficulties…..we stopped having these pupils roaming..' (Line: 1210-1217)*

Towards the end of the interview, Daniel is fired up with his next task: *'…you've reminded me I've got a note on here to do today to speak to one of my colleagues…..we're revisiting the behaviour working party, we want fresh faces…we've got to look at rewards….' (Line: 2238-2247)*

Training is part of the development with staff, to ensure that they are able to manage classrooms. In terms of the school's position with Ofsted, Daniel identified that the school had: *'masses last year, last year, specifically, we had masses because we, as a school, it was the number 1 priority, behaviour it was the one of the main things that was flagged by Ofsted.' (Line: 1036-1041).*

Daniel talks about there being some *'non negotiables' (Line: 1043)* in terms of staff being expected to meet and greet children every lesson. The training for staff was managed by considering the make-up of the groups. Daniel used the analogy of *'Pooh Management' (Line: 1097).* He worked out who were the potential 'eeyores' and 'wise owls' spreading them amongst the group: *'we were quite strategic about who was leading the table' (Line: 1109-1110).* The roles and responsibilities that Daniel referred to are very broad and much wider than exclusion. *'I've got a wide, a much wider remit now with regard to what I do' (Line: 33-34).* He has also *'streamlined' (Line: 112)* the pastoral lead roles so that there are less Senior staff that they report to. Throughout his interview, Daniel confidently used data to demonstrate his point: *'last year our year 11s were responsible for nearly 60% of our total behaviour' (Line: 163).* When asked about what it is like to be a behaviour lead, his first response was *'stressful (Line: 126)* but he quickly followed this up with *'there's a lot of strategy' (Line: 134-136).* It is both this analysis of data but also strategizing that helps to create an image of a credible leader who has influence.

Theme 7: Balancing the different stakeholders' views on exclusions
When deciding to make an exclusion, the behaviour lead describes his experience as wanting to make sure to gather statements about the incident from a range of people. This is to inform decisions and not rely on *'hearsay' (Line: 459).* This is also to help with communication with parents: *'...inevitably you've got to answer to that with the parents..' (Line: 461-462).* From Daniel's experience the decision-making process can waiver and discussion is important. In the quote below he is summarising a discussion with his Headteacher: *'I have brought the Head back from permanents, she's talked me down.....I've talked her down from 5-10 days to whatever and we've said look we can do this….' (Line: 398-403).* Daniel talks about the decision making being a *'collaboration' (Line: 406).* Daniel also describes his team as a *'good team'* (Line 426) and that discussion and looking at the data helps to inform the decision. Daniel gives an example of when he was sure the decision would be an exclusion but, through collaborative planning with SEN and putting in support, the student was able to stay in the school. The important person here was the child and his perspective in helping to persuade the behaviour lead to not exclude: *He did everything he could to ensure that he could prove to us that he was and we've never had any reason to doubt or worry about him since…' (Line: 1348-1350).* Reflection time and joint problem solving appears to help reduce the need to exclude. However, when the lead further reflected on the decision, he linked the reason for not excluding to the student's level of SEN and the support that this attracted: *'I was very uncomfortable to start with and I made that very clear I think that if he not had a EHCP there would have been a different discussion..' (Line: 1366-1366).* This implies that the behaviour lead has a great influence over decision making. But he also gives an indication of the damage that exclusion can have for young people: *'saved his school career' (Line: 1370).* There is an element of weighing up the pros and cons of an exclusion and for some other students this would not have stopped the exclusion: *'some of our other students, there would be a greater risk looking at*

their history and their connections…..there will be a different conversation'. (Line: 1378-1383).

In the above example, learner voice was important in terms of a decision not to exclude but the behaviour lead has to sometimes take into account the pupil voice of the majority of the students in the school. When he asked students for their views they said: '*we've got the right to learn it's not fair that small groups of children, other pupils are stopping us' (Line: 1163-1166).* This is a dilemma that behaviour leads have. They are trying to keep exclusions low, but they do have the whole school community and behaviour to consider too.

The behaviour lead's experience of working with parents is variable. There is a frustration to his concerns that parents are not accepting help for their children. He discusses a child and the support that the family have accessed over the years. He describes the family as '*…concerned but not so concerned that they engaged with the support service, the referrals or made the child engage'* (Line: 553-556). Engagement with parents is therefore a challenge for this lead when making decisions to exclude. He goes onto describe a lack of parenting for many of the children and describes children needing: *'that comfort blanket around them and that support...'* (Line: 650). The concern about his links with parents is that exclusion is not seen as a sanction by the parents: *'there's no structure at home and, when we send them off for an exclusion, they sit on the Xbox watch Netflix all day and then they eat….' (Line: 727-730).* He reflects on this with: '*I've often said that actually it's not the children I need to work with it's the parents' (Line: 747-749)*

There is a judgement that the behaviour that warrants an exclusion can be explained by the parenting the children receive. He says that when children go home: *'I absolutely guarantee there is no structure' (Line: 1555-1556).* However, Daniel has already tried to increase the school's parent partnership work by linking it with the Year 11 parents' consultation evening through achievement points for parental attendance. He has seen *'30% increase' (Line: 2147)* in parent attendance.

The role of the governing body as important influencers in terms of exclusions is also noted. Daniel described a young person, whose case study was represented to the governing body. Daniel's perception of the governors was that they believed this CYP's behaviour should warrant a permanent exclusion. However, his Headteacher expressed to the governors that *'if we permanently exclude this young man, we're probably permanently excluding another 20 because he's nowhere near the top of the tree' (Line: 1464-1468).* Similar to the way in which he describes the Local Authority's decisions over policy, governors do not know the level of behaviours that schools are dealing with.

Appendix K: Summary of Data Set (Central Organising Concepts and associated sub-themes) – All Participants

Participant	Central Organising Concept	Sub-themes
Amber	Feeling of competence as a leader	Accountability and judgement in role Influence on other staff Ability to self-reflect Fairness and consistency in decision making
	Importance of fairness and collaboration in decision making	Importance of consultation and negotiating skills to inform decision making Voice of the child Caring and compassionate response to decision making
	Balancing different perspectives on exclusion	Moral duty to care and teach students what is right and what is wrong Balancing the whole school needs vs individual needs Exclusion has a negative impact on student's long-term education Influences of national context
	Reflecting on alternatives to exclusion	Clear and fair graduated approach to behaviour management Restorative approaches as an intervention Exclusion and SEN links Prevention
Bella	Creating schools that are about 'Inclusion and Achievement' for all children	Promoting inclusion for all children Creating schools that have a sense of belonging
	To have a vision for improving behaviour which understands the culture of the school and to implement new processes that are evaluated with staff	Creating a vision for change and implementing it Evaluative, reflective and noticing change Understanding of the culture of the school to implement change Leadership Small changes lead to larger ones
	Responding in a caring, positive and compassionate way	Encourage behaviour change in children
	Personal drive, resilience and persistence	Personal drive, resilience and persistence
	Clear systems which reflect a graduated approach for supporting children	Support to manage children with social, emotional and mental health needs Communication with parents
Clara	Influential, reflective and experienced leader	Experienced influential school leader Behaviour leadership is shared responsibility Reflective practice/time Strategic thinking time Power to make decisions Investigations into exclusions need to be thorough
	A calm, empathic and considered approach to decision making	A calm, empathic and considered approach

	Working collaboratively with parents/carers	Working collaboratively with parent/carers
	Clear systems that are easy to implement to support the process of exclusion	There needs to be clear systems to the support the process of exclusion Rewards and consequences that are easy to implement
	Understanding the needs of CYP needs to be at the heart of decision making	Psychology of CYP at the centre Communication of decision making Exclusions can have serious consequences of a CYP
Daniel	Mainstream schools cannot meet all CYP's needs	The role of self-efficacy with exclusion Exclusions/sanctions don't work
	Current support systems are failing vulnerable students	Graduated response to exclusion Schools need rules, consequences, positive and rewards Support services are under resourced and stretched There are hoops to jump through to get children's needs met Quality first teaching is important to address behaviour Decision to exclude is context dependent
	Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making	Government and local policy do not help support the inclusion of CYP
	Balancing the demands of the role	Ethos and culture of a school A pressure to improve behaviour
	Personal/professional qualities	Aspirational leadership, determination and resilience as personal qualities of leadership Experienced leader who proactively looks for best practice and is solution focused Clarity in communicating ideas Relationships are key Own narrative influences decision making around exclusion
	Credibility and influence as a leader	Evaluative and reflective about impact Empathy/understanding Ability to influence staff/systems change Support for staff Roles and responsibilities Strategic planning and analysis
	Balancing the different stakeholders' views	Evidence based decision making when considering exclusion The knife's edge of decision making – collaboration Pupil voice in response to challenging behaviour Working collaboratively with parent/carers
Eleanor	Consistency in approach to behaviour management	Priority of the role is to lead on whole school behaviour systems Specific characteristics that help with doing the role
	A need for greater understanding of children's individual circumstances	Awareness of the need for understanding of children's needs, specialist support and training Awareness that exclusion can have a negative impact for a child Challenges with helping children to accept help and recognise the seriousness of their behaviour

	Working in collaboration	Working collaboratively with parents can be challenging
	The value of supervision for the role	There are no opportunities for reflection
Frank	The importance of clarity in whole school behaviour systems	Need to balance rewards and sanctions Consistency and fairness Understanding of the needs of a CYP
	The culture and ultimately the success of a school can be affected by having too many students with challenging behaviour	Too many CYP in one school can affect exam results Culture can be affected by too many CYP with challenging behaviour Staff retention issues
	Key characteristics that are important for a behaviour led: adaptability, flexibility and unemotive decision making	
	Feeling that there is no alternative that to exclude	Lack of alternatives Limitations of resources Need to exclude to send a message
	Collaborating with staff, parents and other professionals in decision making	Early engagement with parents Problem solving with staff Challenges with working with support services
	History of need understood by social factors as well as within child factors	Challenges with linking with SEN CYP needs to show capacity to change Impact of home situation on CYP's behaviour
Georgia	A desire to create a sense of belonging for all CYP	Creating a sense of belonging for all CYP Not all CYP can have their needs met within a mainstream school A sense of responsibility to all students in the school not just those at risk of exclusion
	A personal motivation to support CYP at risk of exclusion	A motivation and desire to support children at risk of exclusion
	It is important to have clarify in behaviour management systems	A frustration with the lack of provision/resources to meet CYP's needs Graduated approach towards supporting CYP before resorting to exclusion A child's behaviour needs to be understood within a context Clarity in behaviour management systems
	A willingness to collaborate and understand the different roles, perspectives within schools,	A need to understand the different roles and responsibilities of staff within a school Ability to consult and collaborate with others

	outside of school and CYP/parents	
	Importance to be able to reflect on decision making	A willingness to reflect and re-visit decisions

Appendix L: Whole Data Set (Central Organising Concepts) – grouping

Amber	Bella	Clara	Daniel	Eleanor	Frank	Georgia
Feeling of competence as a leader	Schools that are about 'Inclusion and Achievement' for all CYP	Influential, reflective and experienced leader	Mainstream schools cannot meet all children's needs.	Consistency in approach to behaviour management	Importance of clarity in whole school behaviour systems	A desire to create a sense of belonging for all CYP
Importance of fairness and collaboration	Vision for improving behaviour which understands the culture of the school & to implement changes and including staff	A calm, empathic and considered approach to decision making	Current support systems are failing vulnerable students	A need for greater understanding of individual children's circumstances	Culture and success of a school can be affected by students with challenging behaviour	A personal motivation to support children at risk of exclusion
Balancing the differing perspectives	Respond in a caring, positive and compassionate way	Work collaboratively with parents/carers	Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making	Working in collaboration	Leadership skills in adaptability, flexibility and being unemotive	It is important to have clarity in behaviour management systems
Reflecting on alternative approaches	Importance of having personal drive, resilience and persistence	Clear systems that are easy to implement	Balancing the demands of other priorities	The value of supervision for the role	Feeling that there is no alternative than to exclude	Ability to collaborate and understand the different roles inside and outside of school
	Clear systems which reflect a graduated approach	Understanding the needs of CYP to be at the centre of decision making	Personal/professional qualities		Collaborating with staff, parents and other professionals in decision making	Important to be able to reflect on decision making
			Credibility and influence as a leader		There is a history of behaviour needs understood by social/environmental factors as well as within child needs	
			Balancing stakeholders' views			

Appendix M: Thematic Map (Data Trail) Central Organising Concepts and Theme Generation

RQ: What experiences do SLs bring to their decision- making to exclude a student from school?

Central Organising Concept	Super-theme	Theme	Sub-theme
Challenges with creating cultural change	Influencing the culture of the school	Creating schools that are about 'Inclusion and Achievement' for all children (B)	Promoting inclusion for all children Creating schools that have a sense of belonging
		To have a vision for improving behaviour which understands the culture of the school and to implement new processes that are evaluated with staff (B)	Creating a vision for change and implementing it Evaluative, reflective and noticing change Understanding of the culture of the school to implement change Leadership Small changes lead to larger ones
	Balancing the differing demands of the role	Understanding the needs of CYP needs to be at the heart of decision making (C)	Psychology of CYP at the centre Communication of decision making Exclusions can have serious consequences of a CYP
		Practice is constrained by wider policy decision making (D)	Government and local policy do not help support the inclusion of CYP
		Balancing the demands of the role (D)	Ethos and culture of a school A pressure to improve behaviour
		The culture and ultimately the success of a school can be affected by having too many students with challenging behaviour (F)	Too many CYP in one school can affect exam results Culture can be affected by too many CYP with challenging behaviour Staff retention issues
		A desire to create a sense of belonging for all CYP (G)	Creating a sense of belonging for all CYP Not all CYP can have their needs met within a mainstream school A sense of responsibility to all students in the school not just those at risk of exclusion

Challenges with meeting the needs of CYP at risk of exclusion	Clear systems of support and an understanding of student's needs	Reflecting on alternatives to exclusion (A)	Clear and fair graduated approach to behaviour management Restorative approaches as an intervention Exclusion and SEN links Prevention
	Limitations of the current support/provision	Clear systems which reflect a graduated approach for supporting children (B)	Support to manage children with social, emotional and mental health needs Communication with parents
		Clear systems that are easy to implement to support the process of exclusion (C)	There needs to be clear systems to the support the process of exclusion Rewards and consequences that are easy to implement
		Mainstream schools cannot meet all CYP's needs (D)	The role of self-efficacy with exclusion Exclusions/sanctions don't work
		Current support systems are failing vulnerable students (D)	Graduated response to exclusion Schools need rules, consequences, positive and rewards Support services are under resourced and stretched There are hoops to jump through to get children's needs met Quality first teaching is important to address behaviour Decision to exclude is context dependent
		Consistency in approach to behaviour management (E)	Priority of the role is to lead on whole school behaviour systems Specific characteristics that help with doing the role
		A need for greater understanding of children's individual circumstances (E)	Awareness of the need for understanding of children's needs, specialist support and training Awareness that exclusion can have a negative impact for a child Challenges with helping children to accept help and recognise the seriousness of their behaviour
		The value of supervision for the role (E)	There are no opportunities for reflection
		The importance of clarity in whole school behaviour systems (F)	Need to balance rewards and sanctions Consistency and fairness Understanding of the needs of a CYP

		Feeling that there is no alternative that to exclude (F)	Lack of alternatives Limitations of resources Need to exclude to send a message
		It is important to have clarify in behaviour management systems (G)	A frustration with the lack of provision/resources to meet CYP's needs Graduated approach towards supporting CYP before resorting to exclusion A child's behaviour needs to be understood within a context Clarity in behaviour management systems
Needing to have specific personal and leadership skills	Leading with confidence and reflection	Competence as a leader (A)	Judgement in role (A) Ability to influence staff (A) Self-reflection (A) Fairness and consistency in decision-making (A)
	Leading with care and compassion	Importance of fairness and collaboration in decision-making (A)	Importance of consultation and negotiating skills to inform decision-making (A) Voice of the child (A) Caring and compassionate (A) response to decision making (A)
	Skills of persistence, resilience and motivation	Balancing the different perspectives on exclusion (A)	Moral duty to care and teach students what is right and what is wrong (A) Balancing the whole school (A) needs vs individual needs (A) Exclusion has a negative impact (A) Influence of national context (A)
	Skills of understanding the different perspectives	Responding in a caring, positive and compassionate way (B)	Encourage behaviour change in children
	To facilitate collaboration	Personal drive, resilience and persistence (B)	Personal drive, resilience and persistence
		Influential, reflective and experienced leader (C)	Experienced influential school leader Behaviour leadership is shared responsibility Reflective practice/time Strategic thinking time Power to make decisions Investigations into exclusions need to be thorough

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		A calm, empathic and considered approach to decision making (c)	A calm, empathic and considered approach
		Working collaboratively with parents/carers (C)	Working collaboratively with parent/carers
		Personal/professional qualities (D)	Aspirational leadership, determination and resilience as personal qualities of leadership Experienced leader who proactively looks for best practice and is solution focused Clarity in communicating ideas Relationships are key Own narrative influences decision making around exclusion
		Credibility and influence as a leader (D)	Evaluative and reflective about impact Empathy/understanding Ability to influence staff/systems change Support for staff Roles and responsibilities Strategic planning and analysis
		Balancing the different stakeholders' views (D)	Evidence based decision making when considering exclusion The knife's edge of decision making – collaboration Pupil voice in response to challenging behaviour Working collaboratively with parent/carers
		Working in collaboration (E)	Working collaboratively with parents can be challenging
		The value of supervision for the role (E)	There are no opportunities for reflection
		Key characteristics that are important for a behaviour led: adaptability, flexibility and unemotive decision making (F)	
		Collaborating with staff, parents and other professionals in decision making (F)	Early engagement with parents Problem solving with staff Challenges with working with support services
		History of need understood by social factors as well as within child factors (F) A personal motivation to support CYP at risk of exclusion (G)	Challenges with linking with SEN CYP needs to show capacity to change Impact of home situation on CYP's behaviour

		A willingness to collaborate and understand the different roles, perspectives within schools, outside of school and CYP/parents (G) Importance to be able to reflect on decision making (G)	A motivation and desire to support children at risk of exclusion A need to understand the different roles and responsibilities of staff within a school Ability to consult and collaborate with others A willingness to reflect and re-visit decisions

Appendix N: Extracts from reflective log

Extracts from log: Initial notes completed after interviews

23rd July 2017 Amber	Listened to first interview and struck by the balance of skills needed to be a behaviour lead. The level of listening for the role and empathy required. The decision making that needs to happen and the wish for early support, but recognition of wider systems influences. There was a lack of CYP or pupil view
1st August 2017 Bella	What is the role of the behaviour lead in school? Is it the same in each school? Do we talk and share discussions about exclusion and what it means? There are challenges with the expectations of the classroom teachers. Bella found it hard to respond to questions about how situations made her feel e.g. how do you cope with that? What skills did you need to draw on?
31st August 2017 Clara	Drawn to calmness of SL. Reflective in her approach. Importance of awareness of exclusion figures but need to give time and space to make decisions. Challenges of making decisions especially if behaviour off-site. Role of supporting others to work with CYP – empathic style. Found that I needed to bracket off my prior knowledge of the school and resist temptation to have a joint discussion and create a shared view
22nd November 2017 Daniel	Aware of my position as a LA worker and criticism of LA being suggested by Daniel. Struggled with neutrality during this interview, used bracketing off and reassurance of confidentiality was acknowledged. Aware of the conflict of my professional role and insight I have from being an EP in the LA. Strong views from Daniel and inclusion. Sense of there not being fairness across all the schools with decision making about exclusion.
8th December 2017 Eleanor	Eleanor found it harder to relax and I wondered why? Did the recording affect her? At time it felt that she was responding with what I wanted to hear. There was a slight defensiveness with my position and freely responding. Her role discussed the whole school position. She seemed to relax more when the recording was turned off.
18th December 2017 Frank	Although said he was pressured for time was able to offer lots of insights and was quite frank in his views. He was honest about his view that the school had the power to make a decision. He also drew on information from outside of the meeting that I was involved in relating to SEN and Behaviour and how this had not been the case in his school where they were kept separate. He surprised me by his views that actually we should be seeing all the CYP as our children.
8th January 2018 Georgia	Sincerity of wanting to take the CYP home with her and passionate about wanting to change the support for CYP at her school. Sense of frustration with parents/carers and life situations for these CYP and aspirations. Conflict in her role as school leader and balancing budgets and wanting to help support these CYP

Extracts from log: Analysis phase

28th May 2018 Bella	Importance of re-listening to the recording, to connect with Bella's experience of the phenomena. Are my super-ordinate themes based on Bella's experience? Need to be wary of content vs experience of the phenomena
10th June 2018 Clara	Reflections on the use of rewards in schools and how consequences seem to be overused? Are there links with political parties and policies and guidance on exclusion? Struck by Clara's wanting to put the child at the centre, but we sometimes put the teacher at the centre of decision making.
2nd August 2018	Reading about IPA and wanting to bring more experience to the SLs role and not content - needing to delve deep to interpret their experience of the role and immerse myself in their lived experience
17th August 2018	Recognising the role of the hermeneutic circle as I go back and forth through the data from the part to the whole
17th September 2018	Feeling of being overwhelmed by the number of emergent themes generated by the interview with Daniel and concern about reducing it to the essence
1st October 2018	Challenge of going from the individual to the whole and re-grouping and re-labelling. Concern about losing the individuality of experience
27th October 2018	Am I being neutral, is my LA role affecting my interpretation? Am I being bias to SEN? Need to keep close to the words used by the SLs. Need to bracket off. Need to dive into the world of the SLs to make sense of it
28th October 2018 Eleanor	Feels as if this is content analysis – is this a problem with my RQ? My question is a what question – need to look at other IPA studies are they how questions? Need to keep trying to engage with the experience
3rd November 2018	Is there an over reliance on common sense and life experience to work with the most challenging CYP
25th November 2018	What are SENCos role on exclusions and their role? How does it feel to be interviewed by me as a white middle-aged female? what would be the experience if the same interviews were had with primary school leads?
2nd December 2018	Wanting to continue to immerse myself in the data, am I doing it justice, am I going to miss something. Remind myself of the RQ?
26th January 2019	Pen portraits very long and detailed, did I need to filter more at the analysis stage? Too many quotes – need to amplify with less – less is more

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**

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Tracey Williams

By Email

Re: Research Ethics Application

Title: ***Exploring the experiences of school 'behaviour leads' decision making in relation to student exclusion***

Dear Tracey,

I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.
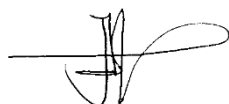
If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Best regards,

Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
T: 020 938 2699
E: pjeram@tavi-Port.nhs.uk

cc.   Adam Styles, Course Lead