An Exploration of Designated Teachers' Work with Looked-After Children: What constrains and enables attachment-aware practice?

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Abstract

The research reported in the thesis explored the work of 'designated teachers' (hereafter referred to as DTs) who are responsible for supporting the education of looked-after children. Its specific focus is the extent to which the DTs employ attachment-aware practices because it has become increasingly accepted that this approach supports all children to feel safe and maximise their capacity for learning.

Research into the persistent low educational attainment of looked-after children (children who are cared for by the local authority) highlights the complexity of identifying which factors improve educational outcomes for this group, including the role which schools play. This thesis takes the view, in line with growing evidence about the benefits of training school staff in attachment-aware practice to support children who have unmet attachment needs, that adopting attachment-aware practice is a productive approach for schools and DTs to support looked-after children.

Introduced in 2000, the statutory role of the designated teacher for looked-after children is central to what schools offer to looked-after children to support their education. Yet, little is known about DTs and their work: that is, how they go about mitigating the effects of looked-after children's earlier attachment experiences and maximising their engagement with learning by using attachment-aware practice. The aim of this study therefore was to analyse the extent to which the DTs support the education of looked-after children using attachment-aware practice and in doing so what constrains and enables them.

The qualitative small-scale study takes a phenomenological lens to exploring the perceptions and experiences of seven DTs of looked-after children and their work with them. The study employs a theoretical framework with four elements for exploring what influences how DTs conceptualise and support looked-after children in school: it combines theories of attachment, teacher identity, emotional labour and policy enactment. The findings are discussed in two parts: (1) through the lens of attachment theory, an analysis of key policy documents provides insight into the policy context and the conditions within

which the DTs were working (2) seven semi-structured interviews with DTs in primary and secondary schools were analysed using attachment theory in combination with theories intended to reveal: the role of professional identity in shaping DTs' work; the role emotion plays in DTs' work for and with looked-after children; and, how policy shapes the DTs' work in relation to looked-after children.

The study found multiple contradictions within policy in relation to the construction of looked-after children and how DTs should support them in an attachment-aware way. In policy, assumptions are made that DTs receive adequate training and support and that schools are receptive to an attachment-aware approach. The DT interviews revealed variation in the DTs' knowledge and understanding of attachment theory and attachment-aware practice as a result of the training they had received which played out as variation in the extent to which their conceptualisations of looked-after children and their practice were attachment-aware. Nevertheless, the DTs had formed professional identities as emotion workers because of the much-needed and complex emotional regulation work that they carried out with looked-after children. Yet, they lacked appropriate support for their own emotional needs because policy and schools failed to understand their work as emotional labour.

The findings suggest that to enable DTs' attachment-aware practice, they need support and encouragement from schools, Virtual Schools and policy to participate in high-quality attachment training opportunities to develop expertise based on practical and theoretical knowledge; and, they need to be enabled to be influential within the school so that they can pass on their knowledge and understanding to others. Furthermore, a formal model of support for DTs' emotional needs is required to enable the DTs to maintain the emotional resilience to consistently and empathetically support looked-after children in an attachment-aware way. The thesis contributes to knowledge about DTs and attachment-aware practice by theorising what it is DTs need to be and do to be attachment-aware practitioners and by suggesting which policy and school conditions would be more likely to enable DTs and their practice to be attachment-aware.

Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is what constrains and enables DTs from supporting looked-after children using attachment-aware practice. To pursue this goal, I interviewed seven DTs to explore their perceptions and experiences in light of theories of attachment, teacher identity, emotional labour and policy enactment. These theories allowed an in-depth analysis of how DTs view looked-after children and their work which is key to understanding what influences how looked-after children are supported in school; and, whether the support on offer mitigates the negative effects of their experiences and maximises their engagement with learning. This Chapter unpacks aspects of the research problem. It then offers an extended discussion of how my personal and professional background developed my interest in the research topic. I end by introducing the research questions and offering an outline of the rest of the thesis.

Research Focus and Aims

As a result of growing evidence and efforts to inform schools and train school staff, it is becoming increasingly accepted that attachment-aware practice supports all children to feel safe and therefore be more likely to learn. Given my role as advisory teacher for DTs, I decided to focus on DTs and their practice from the perspective of attachment theory and attachment-aware practice.

My professional responsibility is to support DTs. So I started my research wanting to deepen my understanding of how DTs support looked-after children's education in schools; why they support the children in the ways they do; and, what influences the support they offer. My experience suggested that how DTs view looked-after children and their needs is key to how they approach supporting looked-after children's education so I wanted to understand what influences their conceptualisations of looked-after children, including the role of national and local policy; their school setting; and their personal background and experiences.

Concurrent with my EdD doctoral research, I was introduced to attachment theory in my professional role and became convinced that attachment-aware practice is key to understanding looked-after children's experiences and how to support the children in a way which mitigates the negative effects of their experiences and maximises their engagement with learning. This conviction prompted me to want to understand the extent to which DTs know about and apply attachment theory in their practice supporting looked-after children. Moreover, I wanted to understand what enables and constrains DTs from using attachment-aware practice to support looked-after children's education.

Three social theories informed my investigation. First, Christopher Day's theory about teacher identity because I wanted to explore how practice is shaped by how DTs view themselves both at work and at home (professionally and personally). Secondly, sociological theories about emotional labour to investigate how DTs manage their own emotions and those of the looked-after children: emotional regulation is key in attachment-aware practice. Thirdly, Stephen's Ball's theory on how education policy is enacted as it reaches levels of practice because I wanted to investigate how a large body of policy played out in actual practice.

Therefore, my research aims were:

1. To explore whether and how attachment theory and attachment-aware practice influence how DTs view looked-after children and how they approach their work.

2. To explore other influences on how DTs support looked-after children in school using theories about teacher identity, emotional labour and policy enactment.

3. To explore what constrains and enables DTs from supporting looked-after children using attachment-aware practice.

Formulating the Research Problem

There are three aspects to the research problem which will be discussed: firstly, looked-after children's low educational attainment to frame the discussion about the barriers to their educational success and how attachment-aware

practice can help looked-after children in schools; secondly, how policies which have addressed the children's poor attainment have had little impact, and how policy has led to wider pressures on schools and constrain and/or enable DTs and schools' support of children with difficulties, such as looked-after children; and, thirdly, how DTs' work, as one element of the policy approach, influences schools' cultures and how looked-after children are supported. As I introduce each element below, I indicate how the theories I use might shed light.

The Educational Low-achievement of Looked-After Children

Looked-after children are those children who are subject to a care order and placed in the care of the local authority or are accommodated by the local authority with their parents' voluntary agreement. Under the *Children Act 1989*, a care order is granted by a court when it is necessary for a child to be removed from her or his parents and taken into the local authority's care due to the child being at risk of or suffering significant harm. In 2018 there were 75,420 looked-after children in England (DfE 2018c); and the school census shows that there were 36,080 school-aged looked-after children in England's schools (DfE 2018a). Most children (63%) entered care under the category of 'abuse or neglect'[1].As well as abuse and neglect, this category encompasses the multiple and varied risk factors which looked-after children can experience including domestic violence; parental mental health difficulties; parental substance misuse and criminality; homelessness; unemployment; and significant bereavement (Berridge et al 2008; Cooper 2000; Lindsey 2000; Berridge et al 2015). Both research and experience suggest that looked-after children's pre-care backgrounds are often complex and living in such abusive environments influences the children long after they have been removed from them.

Most (73%) looked-after children lived with foster carers (DfE 2018c) and most (just under 70%) also experienced no placement moves during a year

[1] The category 'abuse or neglect' is a Department of Health (DfE 2015a) category of need descriptor used by social workers to identify the primary reason for a child being admitted into care based on their assessment of the child's situation.

(Children's Commissioner 2017, 2018)[2]. However, many looked-after children experienced instability over the longer-term with 60% of looked-after children moving home over the course of four years (ibid). Looked-after children who experience fewer home and school moves are more likely to achieve better GCSE results than their peers who enter care later and experience instability. Sebba et al (2015) carried out a large mixed-methods study into the relationship between looked-after children's individual features; their care backgrounds and their educational outcomes. The study included data analysis, and interviews with looked-after children and a range of professionals including social workers and DTs. Sebba et al's (ibid) is a significant study because it is the first study in England to provide an analysis of both educational and care datasets for looked-after children. The study (ibid) analysed the GCSE results of a cohort of 4849 year 11 looked-after children and concluded that the ideal care situation for educational outcomes is one which starts early enough in a child's life to have an impact and is stable and long-term. The 'Long-Term Early Entry'[3] group achieved better GCSE results than the 'Shorter-Term' group[4] by 64 key stage 4 points.[5] This suggests that it takes time for a stable placement to have a positive effect. As I will show in Chapter Three, stability is important for looked-after children because it allows them to build attachments to key people, but disrupting those attachments or frequent changes which prevent attachments from forming negatively influences the child's capacity to settle and learn in school.

Looked-after children's educational attainment has remained persistently low compared with children who are not in care. It might be expected that looked-after children's educational attainment would be better than that of children from a similar social profile such as children in need (CiN)[6] because educational risk factors such as poverty and poor school attendance which remain for CiN are removed for looked-after children so they are no longer 'in

[2] The Stability Index was introduced by the Office for the Children's Commissioner in 2017 and uses local authority and school data to measures the number of care and school placement moves looked-after children experience over the course of a year.
[3] Children who had been in care for longer than a year and were already in care by the end of primary school.
[4] Children who had been in care for less than a year at the end of year 11
[5] Each 6 Key Stage 4 points equates to a GCSE grade equating to 10 GCSE grades across 8 subjects.
[6] Children whose family circumstances warrant social care involvement.

need' or exposed to maltreatment. Looked-after children do perform slightly better than CiN at primary school: in 2018, 35% of looked-after children achieved the standard expected of a child at the end of their primary school education in reading, writing and maths compared to 34% of CiN and 65% of 'all other pupils' (DfE 2019). However, by year 11, 17.5% of looked-after children achieved the age-related academic expectation of achieving a GCSE grade 4 or above in English and maths compared to 18.7% of CiN and 59.4% of all other children (ibid). Moreover, looked-after children are more likely to have special educational needs: 55.5% compared to 45.7% of CiN and 14.6% of all children (ibid), and, 26.5% of looked-after children have a Statement of SEN or an education health care plan (EHCP)[7] compared to 21% of CiN and 2.9% of all children (ibid). For 46.3% of looked-after children with identified SEN, the primary type of their SEN is social, emotional and mental health (ibid). Furthermore, the group is over-represented in school exclusion figures: in 2018, 11.8% of looked-after children received at least one fixed term exclusion (ibid). The respective figures for CiN were 8.25% and 2.29% for all children (ibid).

The perspective on this problem that I have taken in this thesis derives from my understanding of attachment theory (developed in Chapter Three) which explains how children who have experienced unstable relationships with those who should care for them are likely to develop what is known as 'attachment difficulties' which result in an inability to trust adults around them and affects capacity to learn. To improve the children's educational chances it is necessary to understand the nature of their barriers: I use the evidence that attachment-aware practices can help looked-after children. Attachment theory explains the predicament of the looked-after child by showing how a child's experiences can influence how they behave and learn at school; and also how schools can mitigate the negative effects of their experiences by using attachment-aware practice to support the children. As I will show in Chapter Three, understanding why looked-after children's attainment is so low despite being in

[7] An education health care plan outlines a child's additional needs and the support that they require.

care and not being 'in need', and, how teachers can support them to improve their attainment is complex.

Policies to Support the Educational Achievement of Looked-After Children (1988 – 2018)

Since the late 1980s, there has been a steady trajectory of responses from the UK government to looked-after children's persistent low educational attainment. Sonia Jackson's (1987) seminal paper *The education of children in care* highlighted how looked-after children were being failed by the care and education systems because of social workers' lack of prioritisation of education and schools' lack of understanding of looked-after children's educational needs. This paper was followed by the *Children Act 1989* which stressed the local authority's role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children and was reinforced by the *Children Act 2004* and the 2014 *Children and Families Act*. William Utting's report *People like Us* (1997) again highlighted looked-after children's poor educational experiences raising concerns about how they were being cared for in children's residential homes. Many were not attending school and were consequently leaving school without any qualifications. The raising of these problems led to Qua*lity Protects* (DoH 1998) which emphasised improving the educational achievement of looked-after children to match that of their peers. It launched a three-year programme designed to improve the delivery of children's services and focused on raising professionals' expectations of looked-after children: 'The very reason why children will need to be looked after will bring some degree of disadvantage, but this must never be used as an excuse to lower aspirations.' (DoH 1998, p.14). Government targets were set: 'Improve the educational attainment of children looked after, by increasing to at least 50% by 2001 the proportion of children leaving care at 16 or later with a GCSE or GNVQ[8] qualification; and to 75% by 2003'.[9] The *2000 Children (Leaving Care) Act* followed which stipulated that local authorities should support care leavers with their education until they were 25 years old reflecting aspirations of further and higher

[8] General National Vocational Qualifications were abolished in 2007.

[9] The government no longer reports on how many looked-after children achieve one GCSE at the end of secondary school. The age-related expectation of this group reflects that of other children regarding achieving eight GCSEs including English and maths.

education for this group. However, 2018 figures show that these policy aspirations are far from the reality for most looked-after children: only 6% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in higher education; 20% were in education other than higher education; and, 39% of the group were not in education, employment or receiving training (DfE 2018c).

Two key elements of the government's approach to tackling this issue are pertinent to my research problem of looked-after children's poor educational achievement and how DTs support them in school: the role of the Virtual School Headteacher; and the role of DTs which I discuss separately and in more depth below because this is the focus of my research. The Virtual School Headteacher is a senior local authority officer who is responsible for promoting and supporting the educational achievement of the local authority's looked-after children as if they attended one school – hence the term Virtual School. The Virtual School Headteacher role was introduced in *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care* (2006) which proposed a Virtual School Headteacher pilot. An evaluation of the pilot by Berridge et al (2009) found that the role was effective at highlighting the educational issues for looked-after children and the 2014 *Children and Families Act* made it a statutory role. The Virtual School Headteacher both challenges and supports everyone who is involved in a looked-after child's life, such as schools and social workers. The role is pertinent to the work of DTs because it offers them a framework of support including training and advice about their role and responsibilities (DfE 2013a). The Virtual School Headteacher role is discussed further in Chapters Six and Nine.

Despite all the policy efforts, including that of the DT described below, looked-after children's educational attainment remains low. Stephen Ball's policy enactment theory allowed me to chart how policy is translated from document to actual practice in the wider professional and school contexts. In particular, it allowed me to see the consequences of policy in relation to DTs' capacity to promote attachment-aware practice. How education policy shapes DTs' contexts is discussed in-depth next.

Education Policy Shaping DTs' Contexts (1988 – 2018)

Here I discuss the English educational policy landscape to show how the context of wider pressures on schools constrain and/or enable schools' support of children with difficulties, such as looked-after children. Policies regulate regimes of assessment and testing for children; promote a performance culture in schools; govern the reduction of the influence of local authorities; and, encourage an enhanced focus on a punitive approach to discipline in schools. All these tendencies have implications for the schooling experiences of looked-after children and for the role of DTs. The sections below discuss these three effects of education legislation which has framed schools' responses to looked-after children. The implications of this policy context for looked-after children are explored further in Chapter Six which presents a detailed analysis of key policy documents linked to the DT role through the lens of attachment theory and practice, and Chapter Nine where policy enactment theory is used to show how policy enables and constrains the DTs' attachment-aware practice.

The performance culture of schools

The *Education Reform Act 1988* introduced several changes which have continued to shape the current educational landscape and developed what can be seen as a performance culture of schools. Firstly, it stipulated a National Curriculum[10] which was significant because it introduced mandatory content, identified skills for each curriculum subject, and outlined age-related attainment targets which children had to meet. Secondly, linked to the introduction of the National Curriculum, the government's Task Group on Assessment and Testing emerged from this Act which led to a regime of assessments and testing for children through standardised exams for pupils at the end of each school Key Stage[11]. The introduction of the National Curriculum and the framework of assessment and testing can be regarded as creating a positive policy climate by highlighting the need to raise standards in

[10] The National Curriculum is a curriculum of Core subjects (English, Maths and Science) and Foundation subjects (Technology, History, Geography, Art, Music, PE, Modern Foreign Languages) which children are taught in schools.

[11] The Task Group on Assessment and Testing led to the development of Statutory Assessment Tests and GCSEs which meant that children were tested at 7, 11, 14 and 16 years old.

schools and improve all children's educational achievement by providing consistency across schools by clearly defining what children should be taught, and outlining expectations for the levels of progress and attainment children should achieve at the end of each Key Stage.

On the other hand, there are also negative implications of the National Curriculum and the assessment framework because they offer a one-size-fits all-model with the expectation that all children have the capacity to and will achieve the same level of attainment at specific ages. The new curriculum and assessment framework does not take individual children's difficulties with learning into account and what affects children's capacity to learn, which is particularly pertinent for looked-after children who, as discussed previously, have lower attainment than their peers, and, as discussed in Chapter Three, can experience difficulties with learning at school. The special educational needs code of practice was introduced in the *Education Act 1993* to promote the practice of identifying and supporting children who needed additional support with their learning in school. Yet schools' main priority remains their pupils achieving their age-related expectations.

A further negative implication which emerged from the testing and assessment framework were school performance tables which exacerbated schools' focus on exams results and further developed a performance culture. As a result of the *Education Reform Acts 1998* and *1992*, school performance tables were introduced whereby each school's exam results are published for the public and each school is ranked according to their exam results. The purpose of publishing school performance tables was to improve all children's education attainment by enhancing schools' accountability, but often has the effect of distorting school policies and practices to secure a good place in the tables.

Secondary schools' GCSE exam results were first published in November 1992, and primary schools' Key Stage 2 results were published from 1996 (Leckie and Goldstein 2016). Secondary schools were initially judged by the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs grades A*-C including English and Maths, and primary schools were judged by the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths (DfE 2013b,

DfE 2016). A school's performance can be judged as underperforming when exam performance is below the government's floor standards. Floor standards are the government's minimum expectations of a school's performance which is measured by the percentage of students achieving age-related expectations in their end of Key Stage exams[12]. Falling below the government's floor standards can lead to unwanted scrutiny into the school's practices and performance from the Department for Education and from the local authority. Other far-reaching implications of poor school performance could include a negative Ofsted inspection grading for a school which could potentially lead to the school being forced to transform into an academy and join an academy trust (Leckie and Goldstein 2016) thus losing independence, and control.

School performance tables have been considered as unfair for schools and children because they can cause schools to concentrate their efforts on those pupils in their schools who are likely to achieve their age-related expectations at the end of their primary and secondary schooling (Leckie and Goldstein, 2016). Performance tables have also been observed to result in schools to become increasingly selective regarding wanting to attract and admit higher attaining children to their school. These trends present a problem for some looked-after children because, as discussed earlier, as a group, firstly, they are likely to have lower educational attainment compared to other children (the reasons for some looked-after children's difficulties at school are explored in Chapter Three); and, secondly, they have high mobility with regards to moving school during the school year. Looked-after children's high mobility is a problem if school heads do not want to admit looked-after children when they move schools because they are not perceived as the ideal, high attaining students needed to make a positive difference to school performance tables. *The School Admission Code 2003* and successive *School Admission Codes* in *2009*, *2012* and *2014* (DfE 2014b) reflect and attempt to address the problem of looked-after children experiencing drift and delay when it comes to being admitted into a new school by stipulating that looked-after children must be

[12] In 2016, the floor standard for primary schools was at least 65% of Key Stage 2 pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

prioritised in school admissions and admitted into schools quickly. However, despite the clear guidance presented in the *School Admission Code*, there is still delay in securing a school place for those looked-after children who move school in-year which is highlighted by the Office of the School's Adjudicator who is responsible for monitoring schools' practices regarding admissions (OSA 2018). This delayed admission to school is indicative of some schools' reluctance to admit looked-after children because they are perceived as children who are likely to struggle at school and as unlikely to be the ideal high attaining children which schools need to boost their overall performance.

Recent government changes to how a school's performance is measured has meant further pressures on schools to perform and be accountable. Schools have been set more challenging performance measures to achieve with the English Baccalaureate[13], Attainment 8, and Progress 8[14] which were introduced in the amended *School Information Regulations 2016*. The purpose of the new performance measures is to raise standards in schools by ensuring that schools offer a broad, academic curriculum by narrowing those subjects which count in the performance measures, and also by showing how children's attainment and progress has improved across their secondary schooling. But, these new performance measures are more difficult for schools to achieve because only certain subjects perceived by the government as more academic subjects (DfE 2010) count in the performance measures. Furthermore, the Progress 8 score uses a pupil's level of attainment at the start of secondary school to measure their progress over time in line with other pupils of the same ability nationally, but does not take the pupil's characteristics and background into account. A pupil's background and characteristics could include the educational risk factors found in the looked-after children population such as free school meal eligibility, special educational needs, high mobility, or poor school attendance (Sebba et al 2015). In addition, in 2019, 27% of looked-after children were

[13] The English Baccalaureate is a measurement of how pupils have performed in approved GCSE subjects: English, Maths, Sciences, a Modern Foreign Language, and History or Geography by achieving a grade 'C' or above.
[14] Attainment 8 is a pupil's total point score which is measured across eight approved GCSE subjects including English and Maths. Progress 8 is the measurement of how much progress a pupil makes in eight approved GCSE subjects compared to other pupils nationally with the same prior attainment.

taken into care between the ages of 10-15 (DfE 2020) which is undoubtably a stressful life event that is likely to affect a child's educational progress and attainment at secondary school.

The Progress 8 performance measure means that schools have had to move away from focusing on the group of children who were on the borderline of achieving five or more GCSEs grades A*-C including English and Maths from the previous performance measure to now focus on the performance of every student. For Progress 8, every individual student's exam performance across eight approved subjects has a significant impact on the school's overall Progress 8 score, and a school is considered to be underperforming if its Progress 8 score is half a grade below what is predicted which could result from a small group of pupils underperforming in their exams for reasons which are beyond the school's control. Therefore, the new performance measures have created a climate which makes headteachers even more reluctant to admit children to their school who are perceived as unlikely, for whatever reason, to make the expected progress throughout their secondary schooling. Looked-after children would be perceived as falling into this category because of their low attainment at the end of primary school compared to their peers (as discussed earlier) and their often complex circumstances and backgrounds.

Another key piece of education legislation which underpins the performance culture in schools is the *Education (schools) Act 1992* which introduced Ofsted[15]. There had been a government team of inspectors prior to this Act, but school inspections were not the sole focus of their work. The introduction of an Ofsted team of inspectors whose main purpose was inspecting schools led to a framework of school inspection which increased the frequency of schools' inspections and enhanced scrutiny of schools' policies, practices, and performance adding to the growing culture of enhanced accountability for schools. Today, Ofsted strongly influences schools' key priorities which include understanding what shapes Ofsted's current inspection grading

[15] The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills who inspect relevant services including schools.

decisions, and meeting the standards outlined in the current Ofsted school inspection handbook to achieve a grade 'Good' or 'Outstanding' [16]. Ofsted inspections are an enablement for looked-after children's education because Ofsted focus on the performance of 'disadvantaged pupils' which includes looked-after and previously looked after children, children eligible for free school meals, and children in need who have a social worker (Ofsted 2019). The 'disadvantaged children' group is constructed as a priority group by Ofsted on account of their vulnerability to underachievement and Ofsted focus on these children in inspections:

> Inspectors will take particular account of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils from their starting points. They will consider the progress made by the end of the key stage compared with that made nationally by other pupils with similar starting points (Ofsted 2018, p.59).

Nevertheless, Ofsted's focus is on the wider 'disadvantaged pupils' group where looked-after children are likely to be subsumed as they form a small group within individual schools. From 2009 to 2014, Ofsted did highlight looked-after children as a group who were vulnerable to low attainment and instructed their inspectors to 'pay particular attention to the achievement of looked-after children' (Ofsted 2014, p.27) where relevant; to consider the progress of looked-after children over the last 3 years; and their educational experiences (ibid). Since 2015, the Ofsted inspection framework no longer explicitly refers to the performance of looked-after children. This is not to say that Ofsted no longer questions schools about the performance of their looked-after children – they still evaluate the educational experiences of looked-after children through case studies provided by schools (Ofsted 2018). But, Ofsted no longer distinguish the progress and attainment of looked-after children as a separate priority for schools. Significantly, the Virtual School Headteacher role assumed a statutory footing in 2014 (DfE 2014a) arguably raising the educational profile of looked-after children with schools and potentially removing the need for Ofsted to prioritise them. It is, after all, the job of the Virtual School Headteacher to promote the educational achievement of looked-

[16] Ofsted currently inspect schools in the following areas: the quality of education; the behaviours and attitudes and personal development of the pupils; and the quality of leadership and management (Ofsted 2019).

after children with schools and other key professionals (DfE 2014a). However, it seems that the Virtual School Headteacher's influence over schools cannot be taken for granted in the current educational climate as discussed further below.

Chapter Nine explores in-depth the implications on DTs' work of the growth of targets and of data available to measure a school's performance. It includes discussion of how a performance culture can result in schools prioritising improving pupil attainment and securing a positive Ofsted inspection grading over everything else.

The reduction in local authority influence over schools

The *Education Reform Act 1988* also introduced grant maintained schools leading to the start of devolved power from the local education authorities regarding local management of schools: if a school became a grant maintained school then governors directly control the school's finances rather than the local education authority. This Act was followed by the *Education Act 1996* which proposed City Technology Colleges[17] and later by the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* which changed the City Technology Colleges to City Academies and led to the Academies Programme[18] which started in 2002. This policy approach was strengthened by successive legislation like the *Academies Act 2010* which meant that local authorities could not stop schools from becoming academies: schools judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted could fast-track to becoming academies; and, schools not judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' would be forced to become academies which created an increase in academy schools and, in turn, led to further reduction of the jurisdiction of local authorities. This gradual erosion of local authority control over schools over time is significant because it has made it increasingly difficult for local authorities to influence schools' practices which is pertinent for looked-after children because the Virtual School Headteacher post (described earlier) is held

[17] A city technology college is a school in an urban area which is independent from the local authority and can be partly funded by businesses to promote the teaching of technology and science.

[18] The programme focused on the establishment of academy schools to improve educational attainment in secondary schools in areas where educational attainment was low. An academy school is a school which is not managed by the local authority.

by a senior local authority officer. The Virtual School Headteacher role and their relationship with DTs and their schools is discussed further in Chapters Nine and Ten.

Enhanced focus on discipline in schools

The *Education Act 1997* encouraged a school culture of enhanced discipline with punitive responses for behaviours that disrupt teaching and learning because of schools' increased focus on exam performance. It did so by introducing further powers for teachers and schools to discipline children including being able to keep children after school without parents' consent, and by raising the number of fixed-term school exclusions which a child can receive in one school year from 15 to 45 days. This is significant for looked-after children because a disproportionate number of looked-after children have one or more fixed term exclusions from school which negatively impacts on their education (discussed earlier in this Chapter). Further education policy has reinforced key messages about schools maintaining standards of behaviour including the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* and the *Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014* which require all schools to have a behaviour policy outlining their expectations of pupils' behaviour and how discipline will be promoted in school. The tendency towards a more punitive culture in schools with expectations of compliance and emotional self-regulation is counterproductive for children with attachment difficulties, such as some looked-after children; moreover, it is not conducive to engendering an attachment-aware atmosphere in schools. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six with an analysis of what key policy documents state about how schools should manage looked-after children's behaviour.

In summary, gradually over the last 30 years English education policy has created a complex educational landscape for schools with multiple pressures from policy demands with high stakes targets; enhanced accountability for exam performance; and, an increase in self-management. The role of policy in shaping DTs' contexts and practice is explored in Chapter Six which offers an analysis of key policy documents linked to the DT role through the lens of attachment theory and practice; and in Chapter Nine which discusses whether

the current policy demands are aligned with promoting attachment-aware practice in schools.

The Role of the DT

The DT role was informally proposed in Circular 13/94 (DfE and DoH 1994), and because the role did not appear to be taken up by schools, the *Guidance on the education of children and young people in public care* (DfEE and DoH, 2000) outlined the role in detail and insisted that a DT is 'an important resource' for schools (ibid p.32). The DT policy specifies that each school should select a teacher who knows about the public care system and its impact on children to provide a main source of support for looked-after children; take responsibility for promoting their educational attainment; and, increase staff awareness of the children's circumstances and needs (DCSF 2009c).

More guidance about the DT role continued with the report: *A Better Education for Children in Care* (SEU 2003) which concluded: 'Many children in care have poor experiences of education and very low educational attainment' (p.9) and highlighted the variable effect of the DT role in schools because of lack of time and resources for the post. It recommended that DTs were given 'sufficient time and training to carry out their tasks effectively' (p.67) including their inter-professional work with social workers.

The issue of looked-after children's poor educational experiences, combined with the universal government unease following Laming's report into the death of Victoria Climbié[19] (2003) and the ensuing *Every Child Matters* green paper (DfES 2003) reinforced the importance of a person in school who prioritised information sharing with other agencies, such as social care and health, and ensured robust educational planning for vulnerable children. In 2006, the Green Paper, *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care* (DfES 2006), again stressed that the DT role was not carried out effectively in schools because some were unsure of their role and some lacked influence. The Paper proposed making the role statutory. A year later, the

[19] Victoria Climbié was a child who was murdered by her guardians in 2000. Her murder led to a public inquiry which highlighted the failings of agencies such as local authority children's services to protect Victoria and the need to strengthen the child protection systems and processes.

white paper *Care Matters: Time for Change* (2007) continued to call for the DT role to be statutory. These events and policy documents culminated in the requirement under the *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* for all schools to appoint a DT for looked-after children and was accompanied by guidance in 2009 on the role and how schools could improve their practices regarding looked-after children's education. In Chapter Six I present a documentary analysis of six key policy documents written between 2009 and 2018 which pertain to the DT role.

DTs are the main focus of my research because I work closely with them and, although they do not work in isolation and cannot be solely responsible for looked-after children's education, they mediate policies and reflect the culture of schools. Social workers and foster carers are also key professionals who support the education of looked-after children. But, I chose not to include social workers and foster carers as participants or focus on their practices in the research because there is little research on the role of the DT and I wanted to understand how to support DTs to enlighten my current role. There is a body of research exploring how social workers and foster carers support looked-after children's education. For example, the role of the foster carer in ensuring good academic progress for their foster children by showing an interest in their schooling, supporting them and working alongside school staff (Harker et al 2002 and 2004b, Jackson and Cameron 2012, Martin and Jackson 2002, Johansson and Hojer 2012, Social Exclusion Unit 2003, Berridge et al 2015, Fletcher-Campbell et al 2003). Research has also pointed to how social workers can support looked-after children's education by prioritising looked-after children's education and by displaying high educational aspirations, and completing their educational responsibilities including effective partnership working with DTs (Social Exclusion Unit 2003, Jackson and Cameron 2012, Francis 2000, Maclean and Gunion 2003, Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003, Hayden 2005). But, there is little research with a focus on schools and the effectiveness of DTs' practices. As a key figure in the field of education of looked-after children, Berridge (2007) suggests that the role of schools has not been investigated in-depth when exploring the causes for the historical lack of progress made by this group.

Therefore, because of my own role and the lack of research I have made DTs the central focus. Understanding what DTs say, do and are provides an insight into the support of looked-after children in schools: how the children and their educational needs are conceptualised and how their needs are being met, which, as I will show, is central to understanding what constrains and enables DTs from supporting looked-after children's education using attachment-aware practice. Christopher Day's (Day et al 2006) theory about teacher identity distinguishes between professional, situated and personal identity dimensions and this allowed me to show how the seven DTs I interviewed conceptualised the children and their work with them.

Personal, Professional Position in my Research

As mentioned above, my work is closely tied to those of the DTs and I too am part of the policy context and have developed a professional identity that connects me to looked-after children. In the sub-sections below, I explain how my experiences developed my interest in and my approach to the research.

Personal Position

My own childhood was challenging with several adverse experiences, including domestic violence, parental loss through separation and growing up in a single-parent family. Among this turmoil, school was a refuge for me: I enjoyed attending and achieving. As a 'disadvantaged' child, success at school made a positive difference to me in that I have had a better life than my parents. So, for me, the main purpose of education is social justice understood as enabling all children to live flourishing lives. My own teaching philosophy stresses the importance of education for equality of opportunity for all and I have always been interested in working with children with a high level of need; that is, with children with similar backgrounds to my own. And, as I will reveal, looked-after children are highly likely to have multiple needs which act as barriers to their educational achievement.

Professional Position

I started my career in education as an English teacher working in a large secondary school in Greater Manchester. I had not always wanted to be a

teacher and had started a career in marketing and public relations which I found disappointing. When searching for a new career, I realised that I had enjoyed volunteering at a primary school once a week during my final year of university and also my own school experience because of some inspirational English and History teachers. These were reasons enough for me to apply for a PGCE course to train as an English teacher.

Teaching quickly became a passion and I remained at the same school for 10 years where I was promoted to Head of Year and then Assistant Headteacher leading on achievement. Eventually, I wanted a new challenge and aspired to influence the education of more children than the population of just one school, so I applied for a job as a local authority school improvement consultant.

For the last seven years, the remit of my current role in Wood County[20] is to challenge and support schools to raise the attainment of groups of children who are vulnerable to underachievement such as looked-after children. Until I started in the role, my experience of looked-after children was limited to a few who I had taught and supported as a head of year in my previous school.

My Experiences of Looked-After Children

Jamie[21] from my English class had not been admitted to care until she was in year 10. The staff were aware that Jamie's parents were alcoholics: we had witnessed their drunken behaviour; Jamie's embarrassment at parents' evenings and other school events over the years; and, their behaviour in the local community was notorious. But, Jamie appeared composed at school – there were few signs of the chaos she was experiencing at home. She had a temper, but generally worked hard in class and wanted to achieve. However, when Jamie went into care her behaviours changed rapidly and dramatically. Her distress at her new-found situation and inability to make sense of it was evident to those staff members who, like myself, had also experienced trauma and shame, but other staff struggled to understand the source of her now defiant and disruptive behaviours. Their understanding was that Jamie was now in a better place than home, no longer neglected or having to act as the main

[20] The name of the local authority has been changed to ensure confidentiality.
[21] All the children's names have been changed to protect their identity.

carer for her younger siblings: surely her behaviour should improve not decline?

Some of Jamie's teachers responded by sending her out of class and putting her in detention, others pitied her and publicly treated her more favourably than other children in the class. Jamie did not respond well to either of these approaches, though she used her teachers' pity to her own advantage becoming passive in lessons by doing little work and chatting to her friends. I did not adopt either of those approaches, instead I tried to treat Jamie as I had done before. In my English lessons the expectations of her behaviour and her work remained the same and I reminded Jamie that she had my full support when required. By the middle of year 11, most of Jamie's teachers were refusing to have her in class because her behaviour was so uncontrollable, but she was always welcome in my class however she behaved. I saw her joy reading poems and novels and how writing and discussing other people and their lives was her escape from her grim reality: I would not take that away from her, this was how I had managed my own family trauma as a child. I knew that she needed to succeed in school by achieving her GCSEs to reduce the sense of shame that she felt about the rest of her life. Jamie did achieve grade 'C' in her GCSEs in English Language, English Literature and Maths, but did not achieve her potential in her other GCSEs.

And there was Matt, an angry, guarded little boy who had seen too much of the bad side of life by aged 11 and was exhausted by it. He was the first child I met who never made eye contact with anyone. He seemed to hate everyone and everything apart from his one friend, Rory, whose own background was similar. Matt appeared deeply sad, he was fiercely protective of his mother who had suffered from substance misuse for years which meant that Matt and his little brother were constantly in and out of the care system depending on his mum's success in drug rehabilitation. He was a difficult child to teach and support and few teachers appeared to like him. Like Jamie, he was not an easy child to have in the classroom. Some of his teachers said he made them feel uncomfortable; and, his abusive language and destructive behaviour meant that, as his head of year, he spent a lot of time with me. I felt there was little that I could do for Matt except let him sit quietly with me away from the busy

school environment with which he clearly could not cope. Like all staff at my school, I did not know about attachment theory or the impact of trauma and relational loss[22] and so was not able to use such knowledge to inform how I supported Matt. Matt was receiving all the support that the school could provide as well as support from relevant external bodies, but, upon reflection, I now realise that he was not receiving the level of support he needed to recover from his trauma.

His little brother, Joshua, joined the school a couple of years later. Completely differently from Matt, he appeared happy, compliant and desperate to please the adults around him. His death at 18 from suicide surprised many of his former teachers, but is indicative of the trauma he and his brother, Matt, had experienced during their childhood. I am now convinced that Jamie, Matt, and Joshua deserved and needed to be supported by the school staff in an attachment-aware way which, as I show in Chapter Three, enables such children to feel safe and secure in school so their engagement with learning is maximised. And failure to receive this support meant that sadly none of them achieved their potential at school or later in life.

Despite such experiences of looked-after children's education, I was surprised when I saw the GCSE statistics for looked-after children. Why was the achievement of these children so low? Why was the attainment gap between looked-after children and other children so large? My interest in the education of these children stemmed from wanting to understand why they so markedly underachieve, despite having a team of professionals who apparently put so much effort into supporting them. They had been removed from their difficult home situations so what was still influencing their educational trajectory? I wanted to understand what was going on and why schools were not making the difference for these children.

My Professional Positioning Regarding Attachment Theory

In the section above about looked-after children's low educational achievement, I stated that the thesis is underpinned by my assumption that

[22] I will be discussing attachment theory and the impact of trauma in Chapter Three.

attachment theory is powerfully explanatory of the problem; that it is not understood enough and that attachment-aware practice could improve matters. It is important, therefore, that I explain the basis of this assumption. My post with Wood County Virtual School means that I frequently work with teachers who are experiencing problems with looked-after children which are similar to my experiences with Jamie and Matt: underachieving looked-after children who are presenting with disruptive behaviours and risk of exclusion from school. My interest in understanding how to support these teachers and my research into why looked-after children underachieve led me to the work of Bombèr, Geddes and Bath Spa University[23] on attachment-aware practice which for me, like many teachers' experiences of working in a mainstream secondary school with few looked-after children, was a new approach. Learning about attachment-aware practice helped me grasp why school was so challenging for some looked-after children and what could be done to support them.

My perspective on attachment theory has evolved during my research journey. At the start of my research seven years ago, my understanding and confidence in how attachment theory could be applied in a school context was limited because I had not used attachment-aware practice as a teacher. I was initially reluctant to use attachment theory in my doctoral research because of the tensions when trying to introduce attachment-aware practice in schools in the relationship between my professional identity, my enactment of policy and my professional context which I will discuss in Chapter Five. My professional identity and role within the Virtual School positions me as an insider/outsider researcher: I am an 'insider' because I am enacting policy in my role as a 'policy manager' (Ball et al 2012) for the DTs by providing policy interpretation and supporting them to understand and put attachment theory into practice (their policy translation) which is discussed further in Chapter Nine. But, I am also an 'outsider' because I am not a DT and do not work in a school and, therefore, am subject to different influences which affect my interpretation and translation of policy.

[23] The work of Bombèr, Geddes and Bath Spa University is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

My professional identity, namely my understanding of my work and who I am at work, is influenced by my professional doctorate work and my previous experiences as a teacher which shape my perspective of attachment-aware practice as key to providing what looked-after children need in school. And, over the past five years, a way of thinking about how schools can use attachment-aware practice to improve the educational performance of looked-after children has emerged following the establishment of the Virtual School Headteacher role with its remit to raise the profile of looked-after children and improve their educational outcomes; coupled with the raised profile of children's attachment needs because of the 'Attachment Aware Schools' initiative and an increase in organisations offering attachment-aware training to local authorities and schools (discussed further in Chapter Three). This professional context together with my doctoral research on looked-after children's education has led to my developed knowledge of attachment theory, and my increased confidence in my ability to influence DTs to be attachment-aware. I am now convinced that attachment theory is key to exploring what is happening in schools for these children and what should be in place for them, and, therefore it has become a major theoretical lens for my research. My study has used attachment theory to shed new light on how DTs *should* support looked-after children to maximise their capacity to learn and achieve.

My Perceptions and Experiences of DTs

My advisory role is primarily to support DTs to support looked-after children. I have good working relationships with many DTs within my local authority which have developed over the past seven years. Like some other Virtual Schools (Rivers 2018), I provide them with the training needed for the role including arranging for specialist training from key practitioners in the field of attachment-aware practice including Kate Cairns[24] and Louise Bombèr's[25] associates. I also facilitate termly DT network meetings which are well attended. I stress to the DTs that they can contact me for advice or support.

[24] https://kca.training/?info=main
[25] https://touchbase.org.uk/

However, I have seen that the role is complex and demanding and is often not deployed effectively, or in the best interests of the children because of the DT's knowledge and experience and their school's context. I have observed the following problems:

- The DT is not the right person for the job because:
    - They have not attended any training for the role including the local authority training sessions and so lack knowledge of attachment theory and attachment-aware practice[26]. They are unsure what the role involves and struggle to understand the children's needs. Often DTs see this knowledge as being the realm of school counsellors and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) because they are not responsible for the children's mental health needs. As I will show, government policy indicates that they are wrong and that it is their responsibility now.
    - Some are both the DT and the 'Key Adult' (Bombèr 2015a) for looked-after children which, as I will show in Chapter Six, are two distinct roles in school. Therefore, they are too busy to carry out fully the role of 'Key Adult' (ibid) which involves being consistently available for the children and prioritising their needs; or to lead a whole-school response to meeting looked-after children's needs which is a key aspect of the DT role.
    - They can lack authority in the school, particularly if the DT is a member of the support staff, so they are unable to influence a whole-school response.

In many schools, the DT is perceived as the expert responsible for looked-after children's education. Therefore, DTs often work in isolation and, as I will

[26] The principles of attachment-aware practice are in Chapter Three.

show, do not always receive the support required to manage the role's demands.

Research Questions

My research addresses a gap by bringing together an understanding of what looked-after children need to support their education; how policies constrain and enable offering what is needed; and, how a DT as the main mediator for education might support the children.

The research questions applied to a small group of seven DTs were designed to achieve my aims. The overarching research question, reflected in the title of the thesis was:

- What constraints and enablements influence how the DTs support the education of looked-after children using attachment-aware practice?

To answer this question the sub-research questions were:

- How do DTs conceptualise looked-after children and their needs? To what extent are their conceptualisations attachment-aware?

- How do DTs support looked-after children? To what extent is their work attachment-aware?

- What are the contradictions and gaps in policy concerning the education of looked-after children?

- What professional identity shapes the DTs' work for and with looked-after children and influences their attachment-aware practice?

- What role does emotion play in DTs' work for and with looked-after children and influence their attachment-aware practice?

- How does policy shape DTs' work with and for looked-after children and influence their attachment-aware practice?

I will show in subsequent chapters of the thesis how these research questions arose.

Outline of the Rest of the Thesis

Chapter Two draws on first-hand accounts and reports to allow looked-after children themselves to voice their experiences of life and education. The children (now adults) stress that their emotional needs should be met by schools and that they should not be punished for their behaviour, or made to feel isolated or excluded. The Chapter then confirms what looked-after children and care leavers themselves say from a research perspective. In the research, looked-after children describe how they required stability and empathetic carers; and how their school experiences were shaped by their teacher's level of understanding and skills for developing relationships with mistrustful children. The Chapter concludes that there are similarities between the research findings about the perspectives and experiences of looked-after children and care leavers, and the individual first-hand accounts of care leavers.

Chapter Three reviews literature relating to the education of looked-after children and argues that what looked-after children need to learn and achieve at school is underpinned by the principles of attachment theory, namely adults at school who understand and respond to their needs using attachment-aware practice. This Chapter also shows that there is limited research on DTs' work with looked-after children, and no research which considers DTs' practice in the light of theories of attachment, identity, emotional labour and policy enactment.

Chapter Four explains and justifies the theoretical framework that combines: 1) attachment theory and attachment-aware practice 2) professional identity 3) emotional labour 4) policy enactment to shed light on DTs' work and the extent to which it is attachment-aware; and what constrains and enables DTs as attachment-aware leads. In subsequent chapters, I critically analyse policy and the practices of a group of DTs from the perspectives of these four theories. The framework allows an in-depth analysis of DTs' lived reality by focusing on the influence of policy, their identity and their wider school contexts revealing the complexity of their experiences supporting looked-after

children, and how the different aspects can constrain and enable them in their work.

Chapter Five describes the research methodology and design. First, policy documents were analysed using a form of critical discourse analysis to explore the DTs' contexts and how policy documents conceptualise looked-after children and DTs and their work. Secondly, phenomenology justifies the validity of data based on the DTs' own accounts of their lived experiences, interviews allowed an in-depth insight into individual DTs' perceptions and experiences including who they are, and what they bring to their work and how policy influences them. This Chapter also discusses data analysis, the ethical conduct of the study; the limitations of the research and the data analysis process.

Chapter Six presents a critical discourse analysis of the proposals embedded in key policy documents in relation to the DT role. I aim to show from within an attachment-aware practice perspective the extent and implications of the multiple contradictions and gaps in policy for DTs and schools who are trying to support looked-after children's education. While the most recent documents imply attachment-aware practice, the Chapter shows that the documents also assume ideal policy conditions for DTs to enact the policy and prioritise looked-after children's needs in school. And that policy has not yet provided the accountability needed to enable DTs to carry out all aspects of their extended role such as their strategic attachment-aware work.

Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine analyse the findings from the seven DT interviews. Chapter Seven shows how the DTs accessed knowledge about attachment-aware theory and practice; and how their attachment-aware work is constrained by a lack of knowledge of attachment. Chapter Eight uses theories of professional identity and emotional labour to show how and why the DTs formed a professional identity as an emotion worker; and how and why most do not receive the support needed to manage their emotional labour. Chapter Nine uses policy enactment theory to show how policy shapes the DTs' work through determining school priorities; and how managing the multiple and

contradictory policy demands of different policies constrained the DTs' attachment-aware work.

Chapter Ten provides a conclusion to the thesis: it presents a summary of the main findings addressing the questions of what constrains and enables DTs' attachment-aware practice. The Chapter discusses the recommendations for policy and practice emerging from the main findings and my learning from the doctoral research process.

Chapter Two: The Voices of Looked-After Children

Introduction

Here I have drawn together the different aspects of being in care by combining a variety of sources to give a voice to care leavers[27] about their care experiences and to show how these experiences affect them psychologically, emotionally and socially and influence their educational success. Below, first-hand accounts of experiencing the care system are explored through care leavers' stories. These include: Jenny Molloy who has written three books about her own time in care: *Hackney Child* (2014), *Tainted Love* (2014)[28] and *Neglected* (2015); Lisa Cherry's autobiographical stories of nine care leavers including her own in *the Brightness of Stars: Stories of Adults Who Came Through the Care System* (2016); seventeen care leavers' accounts from *The Care Leavers' Stories Project* (SCIE 2013) carried out by the Social Care Institute for Excellence and the British Library based on digital recordings of interviews; and selected poetry from Lemn Sissy's[29], book *Morning Breaks in the Elevator* (1999).

The Chapter concludes by confirming what looked-after children themselves say from a research perspective adding weight to the first-hand accounts above from care leavers. The research base includes reports from different charities and organisations (described below) to capture the voices of both children who were looked-after when the research took place and care leavers. The aims of the research were: to explore the experiences of looked-after children, and the findings from the research were similar to the first-hand accounts of care leavers even though the research explored different aspects of the care experience with the looked-after children.

[27] Care leavers are adults who were previously looked-after children.
[28] Molloy co-wrote the first two books with her previous social worker, Morag Livingstone, under the pen name Hope Daniels.
[29] Lemn Sissay is a poet and author whose work includes his experiences of being a looked-after child.

Silent Voices: The Importance of Giving Looked-After Children a Voice

Although there are some systems in place for looked-after children to be consulted such as children in care councils[30], some care leavers feel that such consultation is inadequate because their views still do not appear to influence local authorities' practices. As care leavers, Lisa (Cherry 2016) and Byron (SCIE 2013) are clear that the government would benefit from listening to theirs and others' care experiences to inform policy regarding looked-after children: 'Policy makers still do not appear to ask for the views of those who have spent a lifetime dealing with the aftermath of the 'care experience'' (Cherry 2016, p.10). For Cherry, listening to care leavers' stories provides an opportunity to reflect on how policy and practice has influenced their lives with a view to improvement.

But, giving a voice to looked-after children to recount their care experiences presents challenges, for example, gaining access to looked-after children because of difficulties assuring confidentiality and getting consent from people like birth parents and local authority staff, which can result in low response rates and small groups of participants (Wilson et al 2004). There is also the difficulty of children raising painful, sensitive or traumatic events such as abuse and neglect or their poor treatment in the care system. A care leaver, Pav, explains:

> I have continued to struggle to find the voice to be able to tell my story about being in care on such candid terms that society might be ready to face up to what happens to looked after children, or how we – in society – so readily allow young people to slip out of the mainstream and face almost certain calamity in their personal and professional lives. (Cherry, 2016, p.159)

Such stories of being in care are not easy to tell or to hear, particularly when they reflect the failings of a system which is intended to protect vulnerable children rather than condemn them to lifelong suffering. Nevertheless, there is a small but growing body of literature which presents the voices of looked-after children and care leavers. The stories describe some positive experiences

[30] A group of looked-after children whose purpose is to provide feedback on local authority policy and practice regarding looked-after children.

which reflect what the care system should and can provide for looked-after children: a home away from home where they feel safe, cared for and even loved. But, there are also accounts of negative experiences which show that the care system has failed to live up to its expectations. The perspectives collated below are from comparatively few care leavers and so cannot be considered as representative of the experiences of *all* looked-after children. Nevertheless, there are definite themes which occur in many of the sources: the experience of living with foster carers; the psychological, emotional and social effects of being in care; and experiences at school. In the rest of this Chapter, I reveal what care leavers say about being in care and at school.

Experiences with Foster Carers

Care leavers explain how, following their traumatic pre-care experiences, their lives were enhanced by living with foster carers who made them feel safe and supported and embraced them as a member of the family. Amanda (SCIE 2013), describes her foster carers as 'angels' because of their: 'kindness, warmth, love, acceptance' which was 'crucial' to providing her with a sense of stability and belonging (p.21). And Colin (SCIE 2013) explains how living with foster carers made a significant difference to his life: 'I started to feel accepted and I started trusting people and to this day they're my family' (p.13). Like Amanda, feeling accepted is important to Colin because it mitigated his anxiety about being rejected and abandoned and so improved his emotional wellbeing. But, Colin experienced three placement breakdowns; life in a children's residential home; and, he engaged in drug and alcohol misuse before he moved in with his final set of foster carers and felt a sense of belonging in a family.

However, care leavers also recount negative relationships with foster carers. Byron explains how his carers made him and his brother feel excluded from their family:

> They treated us quite badly. We were treated like second class citizens in that house. We weren't allowed to use normal plates, we had to have like paper plates. We weren't even allowed to eat at the dining table with the rest of the

> family, we had our own little table in the kitchen. (Bryon, SCIE 2013, pp.-53)

Bryon failed to develop a positive relationship with his carers and unsurprisingly the placement broke down. As discussed in Chapter One, many looked-after children experience placement breakdowns during their care trajectory (Children's Commissioner 2018) therefore moving placement is a feature of all care leavers' accounts and the need for stability is highlighted as a priority. Their stories outline the emotional effects of a placement breakdown: how frequently moving home was a constraint in their lives because of the inevitable feelings of displacement and unfamiliarity; and, how experiencing yet another broken connection with a foster family negatively affected their emotional wellbeing (SCIE 2013, Cherry 2016, Molloy 2014).

Confusion arises from not knowing why the placement, and therefore the relationship with the carer, ended:

> 'I would have been probably eleven, twelve. And then literally for whatever reason they didn't want me anymore.' (SCIE 2013, Colin, p.34)

> 'And then randomly out the blue I just got told that I've got to move. And I'm like "What? What for this time?" You know, I'm quite – quite settled.' (SCIE, Matt, p.10)

And Lisa (Cherry 2016) describes moving to her second foster family in six months: 'The overwhelming sensation again is one of difference. I can't connect. I am disconnected' (p.57). She feels a huge sense of loss at leaving a family with whom she felt she had formed a connection. Therefore, being removed from your family to live with strangers coupled with instability caused by repeated home moves and disrupted relationships inevitably has a negative effect on looked-after children's psychological, emotional and social needs, discussed next.

Feelings about Being in Care

Many care leavers describe the strong feelings of rejection and shame which manifest as emotional dysregulation and self-harm as they struggled to make sense of their experiences. In his poem *Controlled Explosions,* Sissay (1999)

uses the metaphor of a suitcase abandoned on the conveyor belt of an airport to reflect the experience of a looked-after child. People temporarily take the suitcase, assume it as their own and rummage through, but then reject it: '/As time passes the suitcase becomes battered and bruised/'. The suitcase's condition represents the emotional damage inflicted on a looked-after child after a care placement breakdown. Eventually, the suitcase causes chaos at the airport by jamming the conveyor belt because no one wants to claim it, no family wants to accept the battered suitcase – it is ignored: '/Reminding families to grip their suitcases and step politely over/Before guilt or fear sets in/'. Some anonymous person in authority is then called and the suitcase is perceived to be dangerous to others and is secured away to protect people: '/This case is the lost cargo of international departures./It may explode, for all we know, at any time/Carefully, cordons are placed around the area/'. The poem ends with reference to an imminent controlled explosion: '/I've been reliably informed the controlled explosion shall begin shortly/'. The metaphorical exploding suitcase symbolises the looked-after child who inevitably experiences an explosion of their pent-up feelings caused by the rejection. The powerful effect of the children's emotional trauma is expressed and their inability to make sense of their experiences and regulate their emotions. These emotions which are associated with loss and abandonment are echoed by others (Cherry 2016).

Explosive feelings have effects if looked-after children and care leavers do not receive the care and skilled support that they need to recover from their traumatic experiences. Statistics show that looked-after children and care leavers are between four and five times more likely to self-harm than their peers (DoH 2012); and they are also approximately seven times more likely to die early in adulthood than other young adults who have not been in care (BBC 2017). The government does not capture data on the cause of death of care leavers, but the mental health issues and high incidence of self-harm among the care leaver population suggest that suicide and self-abuse through drug and alcohol misuse are likely causes of death in early adulthood (NAO, 2015).

Self-harm is a common feature of many of the care leavers' stories. Cherry (2016) explains her response to being in care and being separated from her negligent mother and everything that she knew: 'That sensation of isolation, of otherness and of loss of self ran so deep within me that I remember feeling like I couldn't breathe.' (p.59). She provides an insight into why looked-after children self-harm:

> The sense of not belonging to a group, a family, a school, an area alongside the differences experienced while being "looked after" can cause a number of responses. A child or young person may choose to self-exclude as a means of protection, retreat into 'another world', seek out others with the same issues and form meaningful but often damaging alliances, or learn to self-medicate on drugs and alcohol, for example, rather than live with the sensation of isolation or even feel suicidal. (Cherry, 2016, p.118)

Her own feelings of lack of belonging and rejection meant that she resorted to substance misuse to cope with her pain.

Matt (SCIE 2013) talks about self-harming because of struggling to manage his feelings and flashbacks of his abuse: 'It's been an emotional rollercoaster, the whole point of before coming into care, to being in care, to leaving care. When I came into care, I was meant to get counselling, support. None of it ever materialised ever'. He explains that he no longer self-harms because: 'I now have a sense of worth and belonging' (ibid, p.17). And Amanda (SCIE 2013) describes an overdose attempt when she took 'a couple of hundred paracetamol' (p.23) because she could not cope with yet another placement move and the overwhelming sense of rejection and loss.

Jenny started sniffing aerosols to escape: 'The whole world of worries floats away on an aerosol can. It sprays into the lid and all the crap floats away.' (Molloy 2014, p.162) and cutting herself – 'A knife placed alongside my thighs to release the tension that builds up with responsibility. A mechanism to cope with the fear and the complex emotions that I don't know how to handle.' (ibid, p.181) It is her coping mechanism: she explains that her only other option is suicide.

The care leavers' stories describe the emotional experience of being in care and separated from family and how they resorted to self-harm to deal with these painful experiences when what they needed was the support of caring, skilled professionals who understood how to help them, but too often this close relationship with an adult is missing from their stories. For Lisa, this adult would build an emotional connection with a traumatised child:

> Real change comes when all professionals and carers in children's lives are given the emotional intelligence training to understand how to be emotionally available and connected to the young people in their care. They also need the time and space to deliver their services effectively. (Cherry 2016, p.41)

She recognises that a lot is required from those adults to help looked-after children make sense of their experiences, but is unapologetic. Such children can appear badly-behaved, even frightening, but, continues Cherry, the child needs to be seen and treated as an individual, and have their emotions accepted. They should not be punished for their explosive response to trauma, but rather receive understanding and be cared for so they feel emotionally connected. As the focus of my research is looked-after children's education, the next section focuses on the care leavers' interaction and relationships with their teachers and how this influenced their educational experiences.

Experiences at School

Positive Relationships with Teachers

Some care leavers describe positive school experiences which reveal close connections with their teachers that enabled their success (Cherry 2016). Khadija describes the positive influence of specific teachers who engaged and encouraged her in her learning through developing a relationship with her: 'So the teachers that did push me are the ones that I'd had good, very good, relationships with in terms of just generally though they knew I was in care and my overall experience' (SCIE, 2013, p.58). For Khadija, those teachers who encouraged her academically were those who took an interest in her and were aware of her background and needs.

For Pav, it is his relationships with his teachers and their support and encouragement which taught him how to be resilient in the face of adversity and led to his great success in life describing himself as a 'precocious, Oxbridge-educated prima donna, rolling in privilege' (Cherry 2016, p.155). He graduated from university and went on to have a successful career which is against the odds for most care leavers (DfE 2018c). He explains that his educational achievements are because of his teachers: 'What I'm certain of is that none of it would have been possible without my teachers' (p.159).
And for Colin (SCIE 2013), it was important that teachers recognised that, like many looked-after children, his priority was feeling safe in school before he could engage with learning (Bombèr 2011). He refers to his primary school teachers as **'**angels in my childhood' (SCIE, 2013, p.21) because they made him feel safe: **'**I loved going to primary school, it was like a haven 'cause the teachers were caring and took care of me' (ibid, p.6). He describes his teachers' kind gestures such as giving him clean clothes and taking him to visit new foster carers which made him feel cared for. He trusted them to look after him: 'I mean I did feel safe in primary school, that's it, nowhere else' (p. 47). Primary school was a positive experience for him because of the security provided by the relationships.

Teachers' Understanding of Looked-After Children's Experiences and Behaviours

On the other hand, many care leavers describe poor interaction and relationships with teachers. They recount how when the negative effects of their experiences presented at school, their behaviour was perceived as disruptive by teachers who did not understand how such behaviour was a manifestation of the explosive feelings triggered by the negative experiences of being in care described earlier. Teachers' lack of understanding prevented trusting relationships from developing between the looked-after children and their teachers. Thus, many care leavers describe how attending school was an unhappy experience characterised by feelings of exclusion and isolation because of how they were treated at school. Byron explains why his behaviour was perceived as disruptive by teachers:

> Their expectation of me was that I was a troubled kid. I was in care, but when I used to act out because of issues at home, they just said, "Oh, you know, ph, don't worry about him". They never really got to the root of the reason why. (SCIE 2013, p.19)

His perception is that the school had no interest in identifying the causes of his poor behaviours and supporting him, he was punished instead.

Colin also explains how teachers' lack of understanding of how looked-after children's experiences affects their behaviour and their capacity to learn. His school failed to recognise that he needed additional support to achieve his academic potential:

> It was accepted that you got in trouble at school, you know, you didn't have Virtual Headteachers like you have now and OFSTED checking the outcomes for children in care, that didn't exist. In them days it was like children in care, trouble makers, take them out, put them in a unit, you know. And I had – I was – I loved learning and I had a lot of potential as a young person. And it still makes me angry today because I've kind of done a lot of research and the statistics and outcomes for young people in care around education are disgusting, absolutely disgusting. So it kind of – it saddens me to think that twenty-five years later the improvement is slight. (SCIE 2013, p. 43-44)

For Colin, sadly, too little has changed for looked-after children despite the apparent closer monitoring of their educational outcomes.

The care leavers describe the different ways that they were isolated at school. Some were literally segregated from other children because teachers did not know how to manage their angry responses to their traumatic experiences or they were punished for their behaviours (SCIE 2013, Cherry 2016). Others were made to feel different because of teachers' lack of understanding about their situation which compounded their feelings of isolation. (SCIE 2013, Cherry 2016). Lisa did not enjoy school because she was isolated from the other children as a punishment for her behaviours such as 'shouting matches with teachers' (Cherry 2016, p.63) which was her response to dealing with the trauma in her life of being emotionally neglected by her mother and then rejected by the adults at school. She explains: 'Most lessons are spent in

isolation. I have no desire to be a part of this hateful community and I want to die.' (Cherry, 2016, p.61). The effect of being isolated from other children when in school and being formally excluded from school was profound:

> Being in secondary school was one of the most unhappy times of my life and that system caused me as much danger as all the other systems that I was engaged in – to me they were all systems of exclusion, of ignorance, of rejection. When I think about school, I think about the word exclusion. Not only because that's invariably what happened to me in the end, but because that's the way I felt. (Cherry, 2016, p.67)

Too many home and school moves coupled with a sense of shame for being in care and low self-esteem and a lack of understanding and acceptance from her teachers led to Lisa lacking a sense of belonging at school. Lisa felt isolated at the very time when she needed to feel emotionally connected. This led to her non-engagement and non-attendance of school and then eventually: 'My education had been reduced to a tutor and playing computer games at a special unit' (Cherry, 2016, p.72). She received a pitiful education after being permanently excluded from school for her disruptive behaviours which were misunderstood by teachers.

Carrie also describes a negative school experience where she felt stigmatised and unsupported by her teachers:

> My school knew that I was a Looked-After Child as I was on a 'special' list, yet from the supposed support I received from the school, you wouldn't have known. They told me that they didn't expect me to pass any of my A Levels, and that they weren't bothered if I went to the classes and did no work, but I had to attend the lessons or they wouldn't get paid for me. This meeting happened because I had not been going to my lessons or doing as much work as I should as I was deeply depressed and was dealing with my mother attempting suicide on Boxing Day because 'she had nothing to live for'. I made them aware of what had happened and no support was offered, just an ultimatum given. (Cherry 2016, pp.135-136)

This insensitive response is a symptom of lack of empathy for Carrie's situation and a lack of understanding about her emotional needs; as well as low expectations of Carrie's capacity to learn. Fortunately, this response motivated

Carrie to pass her A Levels and then to graduate from university showing remarkable resilience and is not the usual outcome of such experiences.

Cherry (2016) states that professionals often lack the skills, experience and resources to emotionally connect with looked-after children, yet as I show in Chapter Six, the DT role was introduced to improve looked-after children's educational experiences and achievement. The DT is meant to act as a trusted adult in school for looked-after children, and enhance staff's understanding of looked-after children's experiences and how to appropriately support them (DfE 2018a). There is little reference to DTs in the care leavers' accounts which is perhaps unsurprising from the older care leavers because the DT role is a comparatively recent educational policy initiative (DfEE 2000, DCSF 2009c). Only one of the care leavers, Matt, (SCIE 2013) the youngest care leaver, briefly refers to how the DTs changed frequently, like all professionals in his life. He does not describe how the DTs supported him in school. Therefore, the care leavers' stories do not provide an insight into how DTs are supporting looked-after children in school, but the introduction of DTs increases the likelihood of looked-after children experiencing more positive relationships with school staff. Whether this is so will be explored further in Chapter Eight which discusses the interviews with DTs.

Looked-After Children's Perspectives and Experiences from a Research Perspective

This section presents what scholarly research offers about the perspectives of looked-after children setting out what the research has found. While there is a large body of research which involves looked-after children as participants, here a selection of research literature where looked-after children's or care leavers' voices about their experiences are distinct and easy to distinguish from the voices of other participants such as social workers and foster carers are discussed. And some quotations from the interviews carried out with looked-after children and care leavers are included in this section to illustrate the similarities in thoughts and feelings and experiences to the care leavers' first-hand accounts discussed earlier. The research base is wide-ranging and includes studies from leading figures in research about looked-after children

such as Sonia Jackson, and David Berridge; as well as studies from charities which advocate for looked-after children: YoungMinds; Become; and Coram Voice. It discusses the perspectives of children captured in interviews, surveys and focus groups who were the focus of this body of literature and were or recently were looked-after about the themes of living with foster carers, feelings about being in care and school experiences. While there are overlaps in the studies' findings about the children's experiences, individual studies emphasise different aspects of their experiences which are drawn throughout this section. The section concludes that there are similarities between the research findings about the perspectives and experiences of looked-after children and care leavers, and the individual first-hand accounts of care leavers.

Experiences with Foster Carers

Like the first-hand care leavers' accounts discussed above, in research literature looked-after children and care leavers, who were still in care or recently left care when surveyed or interviewed, described both positive and negative experiences living with foster carers which are discussed below. The research describes looked-after children's positive experiences where foster carers were caring so looked-after children trusted them and felt safe, and carers supported them with their education. But, the research literature also describes looked-after children's negative experiences with foster carers where care and school placements ended resulting in looked-after children feeling unsettled and displaced.

Positive Experiences with Foster Carers

Two Coram Voice[31] and University of Bristol studies provide insight into looked-after children's relationships and experiences with their carers[32] (Selwyn and Briheim-Crookall 2017, Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018) which are discussed below. The initial study involved 611 looked-after

[31] *Coram Voice* is a charity which advocates for looked-after children.
[32] Seventy percent of the participants lived with foster carers and 8% lived in children's residential homes.

children who completed the Bright Spots 'Your Life, Your Care' survey[33] in 2016 (Selwyn and Briheim-Crookall 2017), and then a second larger study of 2,263 looked-after children aged between four to eighteen years old from 16 local authorities who completed the same survey in 2017 (Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018). The purpose of the survey was to explore the subjective wellbeing of looked-after children including their relationships with others at home and school. The two studies found that trust of foster carers was key for the looked-after children. When they trusted their carer, they felt safe in their placement and therefore had a positive relationship. And feeling trusted by your carers was linked to feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance as part of the foster carer's family: 'Care would be better [if] your carer treats you the same as their children and doesn't treat you any different." (Selwyn and Briheim-Crookall 2017, p.13).

When looked-after children trusted their carers, they felt that carers cared about them and how they were feeling, and felt able to share their feelings with them. Most looked-after children felt that their carers were empathetic with 92% of 11-18 year olds reporting that their carers were sensitive to their feelings (Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018). And the children stressed that they could be dealing with some very strong feelings: 'Foster carers have to remember that we have several things going through our minds that is unimaginable, as well as the everyday struggles of growing up' (ibid, p.32).

Trusting your carers also meant feeling safe living with your carers, and most of the looked-after children did feel safe: 84% of 11-18 year olds reported that they 'always' felt safe in their placement (Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018). But, 2% of looked-after children said that they did not feel safe in their placement leading the researchers to conclude that the children's lack of security could reflect what the children had experienced previously both pre-care and in care. For example, some children mentioned that carers who shouted made them feel unsafe (ibid).

[33] The 'You Life, Your Care' research focuses on capturing what is important to children and young people living in care in their own words and reveals what is working well and what needs to be improved in local authorities' children's services.

In addition, having foster carers who support you with your education is a key feature of many looked-after children's experiences reported in the research. Two studies involving interviews with between 15-17 looked-after children found that looked-after children appreciated having carers who encouraged them to attend school, provided appropriate resources at home so they could study, and supported them to complete their homework (Darmody et al 2013, Hedin, Höjer and Brunnberg 2011). Harker et al describe how in their initial study with 80 (2002), and then 56 looked-after children in a follow-up study (2004), the looked-after children described in their interviews how support from their carers with schooling led to them feeling confident about school and wanting to do well – it boosted their educational aspirations (Harker et al 2002 and 2004). Dearden (2004) highlights how six of her 15 interviewed looked-after children who had been refusing to attend school started to attend school full-time after being placed with supportive foster carers who supported them to attend school. And in Martin and Jackson's (2002) study, 74% of their 38 high achieving care leavers stressed in their interviews that encouragement from their carer or their parents was key to their academic success.

Looked-after children's positive experiences with foster carers included living with trusting, empathetic carers who provided a safe, caring home environment and supported them with their education.

Negative Experiences with Foster Carers

On the other hand, looked-after children also described negative experiences with foster carers. Like the care leavers, moving care placement also featured strongly in research about looked-after children's experiences. In the Coram Voice studies, 40% of children who had been in care for 1-2 years had 2-4 placements, but after being in care for over five years only 21% of looked-after children still lived with their original carer (Selwyn and Briheim-Crookall 2017). Despite placement instability, most children felt settled in their placements with 4% of children aged 11-18 'hardly ever' or 'never' feeling settled in their placement (Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018).

Looked-after children's feelings of displacement were linked to multiple home moves that provoked feelings of helplessness. The abnormality of moving to

live with strangers and the emotional impact of placement breakdowns including the destruction of friendships was described by some looked-after children:

> I just keep being moved around. I have moved I think 7 times in the last 6 months. This makes me confused and scared. It has been dark and scary when I move, and I am told where [I am going], as we drive. I never meet the people beforehand and my things take time to catch up with me. (Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018, p.31)

> I have so many foster carers. I move nearly every week. It is not fair. I can't see my friends at school or go to clubs because the school is too far away. (ibid, p.20)

The Children's Commissioner for England[34] carried out a study involving interviews with 22 looked-after children and young people to capture their experiences of instability which revealed how moving placement severely impacted some looked-after children's emotional wellbeing: they felt angry, disappointed, overwhelmed, sad and simply exhausted (Children's Commissioner 2019):

> I think it [moving placements] just had an impact on … how I act, how I controlled my emotions. If I felt angry now, I'd just hold it in but then I would just lash out. (ibid, p.2)

> I was going through a lot of instability at the time… and I was making decisions that I probably wouldn't rationally make normally, like running away from school and things like that. Yeah, they well and truly were [due to the instability], and it I guess it was a coping mechanism. (ibid, p.2)

Furthermore, for some children, moving home also meant moving school which was an additional stressful life event for looked-after children to manage. Many looked-after children reported having to change school and described the negative implications of starting at a new school such as the disruption to their educational progress (Johansson and Höjer 2012, Harker et al 2004); and how school attendance stopped while waiting to start at a new

[34] The Children's Commissioner's role includes identifying children's wishes and feelings about things which affect them and advocating for children with policy makers to take children's perspectives and experiences into account.

school (Dearden 2004). In Altshuler's (2003) study, the seven looked-after children in her focus group discussed the challenging experience of 'new student syndrome': having to get used to new school systems and processes and teachers, and make new friends (p.60).

Therefore, moving home and school and the lack of stability continued to influence some looked-after children's behaviour and compromised their feelings of safety with some looked-after children feeling that they were not appropriately supported through their multiple placement moves. The effect on their emotional wellbeing was not recognised by the adults around them:

> [You're] very on edge for a good couple of months if not a few years … It took me a good year to settle in, to actually feel safe, and that had a really big impact on my life, because it just makes it difficult to make me feel safe with friends, and just makes me nervous whenever I go to meet anyone really, it makes me really nervous still. (Children's Commissioner 2019, p.3)

> My behaviour got a bit uncontrollable [when moved placement to another town]. It's because I still wasn't given the help I want, I needed… Like I needed therapeutic help and I didn't get it. And then when I moved to [new town following another placement move], I finally got it … It [therapy] made me get rid of all my anger … I haven't kicked off as often as I used to. (ibid, p.3)

Some looked-after children in the research reported engaging in risky behaviours such as substance misuse because, like the care leavers described in their first-hand accounts, they do not understand why they have been moved and often think that it is their fault (Become 2017).

In sum, in many research studies looked-after children describe positive aspects of living with foster carers when they had relationships of trust, safety, warmth and care. But, the children also described experiences with carers where feelings of displacement and anxiety were apparent, particularly when frequently moving to live with new carers or to new schools. So the research with looked-after children chimes with the first-hand accounts of care leavers. The next section explores looked-after children's feelings about being looked-after.

Feelings about Being in Care

In some of the studies, looked-after children described the other care experiences which provoked strong emotions: firstly, the stigma of being in care causes feelings of shame which leads to some looked-after children wanting to keep their care status a secret. Secondly, the challenges of managing complex feelings and needing someone to speak to about those feelings. The key findings about looked-after children's feelings about being in care are discussed below.

The Stigma of Being in Care

Different explanations for feeling ashamed about being in care were offered by the looked-after children in the research literature ranging from negative reactions from others when they previously disclosed their care status to being negatively stereotyped by other people.

Madigan et al (2013) interviewed nine looked-after children aged 12-16 years old about whether being in care made them feel the same or different to other children. They found that six of their looked-after children worried about other people knowing they were in care due to their past experiences where other children had made fun of them because they were looked-after. These looked-after children described how they now kept themselves safe by controlling who knew they were in care because they feared what would happen if people knew. Two other studies report looked-after children's experiences of being negatively stereotyped by others as being in care because of their criminal or anti-social behaviour thereby being made to feel that it was their fault that they were looked-after thus exacerbating their already low self-esteem (Martin and Jackson 2002, Harker et al 2002). A study by Become[35] describes the impact for looked-after children of being negatively stereotyped in-depth. The study involved forty-nine looked-after children and 61 care leavers who completed an online survey, and 60 looked-after children and care leavers who attended seven focus groups (Become 2017). Some of their participants describe how they felt they were stereotyped as being 'trouble', for example, as from a criminal background, addicted to alcohol or drugs, or emotionally unstable.

[35] *Become* is a charity for looked-after children and care leavers which was *Who Cares? Trust.*

And the looked-after children and care leavers worried that people knowing they were in care would lead to their being treated differently or rejected by their friends. They worried that they and their families might be judged, or their personal lives pried into, or they might be pitied. Such worries were linked to feelings of shame.

The Become (2017) study also found that some of their looked-after children linked their fear of being stigmatised to a very popular children's book, Jacqueline Wilson's novel, *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991), and two spin-off children's TV programmes. The book features a fictional looked-after child, Tracy Beaker, who lives in a children's residential home because nobody wants to foster her. The impact of Wilson's creation, Tracy Beaker, is evident in complaints from looked-after children in both the Become (2017) study and another study by YoungMinds (2012) about how their peers constantly compare them and their lives in care to Tracy Beaker. The YoungMinds[36] report (2012) describes the perspectives and experiences of over 50 looked-after children regarding mental health. YoungMinds ran a series of workshops for looked-after children exploring the key areas of education, care placements, and the support services available to looked-after children. In exploring looked-after children's mental health, the looked-after children discussed how the stigma of being linked to Tracy Beaker had a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing:

> Participants repeatedly stated that the only representation of children in care that others know is the TV character Tracy Beaker and that they are tired of telling peers that they are 'not like Tracey Beaker.' (YoungMinds, 2012, p.19)

In the Become (2017) study, some looked-after children described how their friends thought that, like Tracy Beaker, they lived in a large children's residential home with lots of other children which they felt led to their friends pitying them because of their home life, or thinking that they behaved like Tracy Beaker: 'People think you're bad, trouble, no good, going to steal stuff … basically, they think 'Tracy Beaker'!' (ibid, p.10). Many looked-after

[36] *YoungMinds* is a children's charity which champions children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.

children were unhappy that Tracy Beaker gives a negative, unrealistic portrayal of what being in care is like for looked-after children[37].

The stigma of being in care was a feature of many looked-after children's experiences reported in the research studies, which had negative implications for looked-after children's emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, and their relationships with others, particularly their peers. The next section discusses what the research studies show about how looked-after children manage those strong emotions resulting from the stigma.

Managing Complex Feelings

The carer leavers' first-hand accounts in the previous section candidly described how they tried to make sense of the 'explosive' feelings arising from their traumatic experiences including resorting to self-harm and substance misuse. The care leavers' accounts are distinct, retrospective reflections as adults on how they managed the emotions resulting from their care experiences when they were children. But, self-harm and substance misuse were not key features of looked-after children's accounts in the research studies. This is potentially because the research reports on looked-after children and care leavers who are in situ - still in care or recently left care and so is less retrospective. And it is likely that researchers would not want to probe such sensitive issues as self-harm and substance misuse with looked-after children and young people. Nevertheless, although the research reports little about self-harm, there are still remarkable similarities between the research and care leavers' accounts regarding the same kinds of emotions looked-after children experience now and those the care leavers describe experiencing retrospectively (Madigan et al 2013, Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018, YoungMinds 2012, Selwyn and Briheim-Crookall 2017).

Madigan et al (2013) describe how almost all of the nine looked-after children in their study felt 'different' to other children because they were in care. Five looked-after children described how their alternative family life such as not living with their parents and being picked up from school by someone other

[37] Most looked-after children live with foster carers, not in children's residential homes.

than your birth family made them seem and feel different to their peers. And seven children from the study described how they were alienated from their peers including through being bullied. The strong, negative emotions described by the children included: 'powerlessness, sadness, anger, jealousy, hopelessness, feeling 'weird' and out of place' (ibid, p.399). Ultimately, the children felt that they did not want to be viewed or treated differently to other children. Madigan et al (2013) recommend that looked-after children are supported by foster carers and mental health specialists to both develop positive feelings about themselves as being and feeling different to other children, and to manage people's responses to their care status.

And a study by Coram Voice also highlights looked-after children's struggles to manage their feelings with 60% of their 2,263 participants aged 4-18 years reporting that they worried about their behaviour and their feelings 'sometimes' or 'most of the time' (Selwyn, Magnus, and Stuifzand 2018). The study (ibid) also revealed that 10% of 8 – 10 and 22% of 11-18 year olds thought they were not getting any or enough help with their worries.

Yet, the YoungMinds (2012) study found that many looked-after children were reluctant to engage with specialist mental health services such as CAMHS because of the stigma around mental health, preferring instead to speak to their birth family, foster carers, or other professionals about their emotional wellbeing. Again, there are similarities with the care leavers' first-hand accounts discussed earlier which stressed the importance of having a trusted adult to support them and help make sense of their experiences. A Coram Voice study reported that 85% of looked-after children aged 11-18 years old felt that they had a trusted person in their lives (Selwyn and Briheim-Crookall 2017). If looked-after children are reluctant to engage with specialist services like CAMHS, even if they are sharing their emotions with a trusted person this is possibly not sufficient for some looked-after children. They may need a more skilled and experienced person from CAMHS to build up their trust of others, and help them make sense of and recover from their experiences.

The challenges for looked-after children of managing complex feelings such as feeling different to other children due to their different experiences and family

arrangements was reported in the research studies, as well as the difficulty for the children in trusting an adult enough to share their feelings with them. Looked-after children's experiences at school are discussed in the next section.

Experiences at School

Like the care leavers' individual accounts, the school experiences of looked-after children captured in the research are both positive and negative featuring both supportive teachers, and teachers who lacked understanding of looked-after children's experiences and behaviours, as well as negative experiences of exclusion from school, and bullying by peers. All are discussed in turn below.

How Teachers Support Looked-After Children

Many research studies report looked-after children's positive experiences at school because of supportive teachers who helped them to manage the challenges of school (Harker et al 2002 and 2004, Darmody et al 2013, Dearden 2004, Johansson and Hojer 2012, Hedin, Höjer and Brunnberg 2011, Berridge 2017). Teachers were described by the looked-after children as being supportive for a number of different reasons: they provided both academic and emotional support (Harker et al 2002 and 2004); they engaged with the children and made them feel safe and cared for by listening to them and talking to them about their interests and lives, checking in with them that they were okay and helping them to feel like a valued member of the school (Dearden 2004, Darmody et al 2013). In Johansson and Höjer's (2012) study of 33 care leavers selected because of their educational achievements, they found that almost all of the care leavers said they had at least one trusted adult in school including teachers and that this encouragement helped in their educational success as well as school being 'a stable, predictable and safe social environment' (p.1139) for them.

Although Berridge's (2017) study shows that even where teachers were supportive of looked-after children, not all looked-after children choose to accept and engage with the support on offer. Berridge (2017) conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 looked-after children aged 17-18, who had varied GCSE exam results ranging from some who achieved few GCSES to others

who achieved 12 or 13 grade A and A*s, to capture their schooling experiences including whether teachers were supportive. His study reveals how there is variation in how looked-after children respond to the support offered by school staff. The children were categorised into five groups:

- 'stressed/unresolved': Five children described as struggling to concentrate in school because they had stressful life events to deal with relating to their birth family which, for some, negatively affected their GCSE performance. For example, worrying about siblings who had remained at home in an abusive environment with parents, or family bereavements.
- 'committed/trusted support': Six children who did well in their GCSES had supportive teachers and supportive carers.
- 'private/self-reliant': Twelve children described as 'very independent' criticised the support on offer including, for some, the lack of support from their teachers.
- 'disengaged': Four boys who under-performed in their exams took responsibility for their under-performance. The boys admitted that they were offered support at school, but chose not to engage.

This categorisation is useful for showing both that the looked-after children who achieved educational success perceived that they had supportive teachers, and that other factors affected their educational performance such as stressful life events and carers' support. Berridge (2017) concludes that the looked-after children in his study showed evidence of exercising agency in that they chose whether or not to engage with the support on offer in schools. He adds that some of the looked-after children failed to understand how their experiences had affected their behaviour and capacity to learn because they lacked the support of experienced staff to help them understand and mitigate the effects of their experiences. He explains how some teachers supported looked-after children well: 'They did this by understanding pupils' social and emotional problems; exercising confidentiality and sensitivity in the classroom; and taking into account individual learning styles with flexibility' (ibid, p.92). For the looked-after children in his study, an individual approach to their issues and needs was required: a one-size-fits-all approach did not work (ibid). This study

is relevant to my research because it illustrates the flexibility which school staff need to show to effectively support looked-after children and meet their needs.

Teachers' Lack of Understanding of Looked-After Children's Experiences and Behaviours

On the other hand, many looked-after children and care leavers in the research literature describe experiences with teachers who are unsupportive, and who did not understand what being in care meant and what their life was like, and how their pre-care and care experiences impacted their behaviour in school and ability to learn (Berridge 2017, Become 2017, Wood and Selwyn 2015, YoungMinds 2012, Jackson and Cameron 2012). For example, only 24% of looked-after children in the Become (2017) study felt that their teachers understood what their life in the care system was like. A literature review conducted by Coram Voice and the University of Bristol on looked-after children's views about their care experiences illustrates looked-after children's concerns:

> The young people felt that there was little recognition within schools of the complexities they faced in their lives and the extra resources and input they might need. Some young people suggested that teachers needed additional training to know how to support looked after children. (Wood and Selwyn 2015, p.12)

Some looked-after children described how they felt that they were negatively stereotyped by their teachers because of their care status (YoungMinds 2012, Harker et al 2002, Martin and Jackson 2002, Altshuler 2003). Firstly, with regards to their behaviour:

> Looked after children thought that teachers and peers mistakenly assumed that children were placed in care due to their own poor behaviour, or they failed to appreciate the difficulties faced by children before entering care and the effects of this on their behaviour. Thus, children were labelled or blamed for their own behaviour. (Wood and Selwyn, 2015, p.11)

The implications of the negative stereotyping meant that some of the children describe poor relationships with their teachers due to feeling judged by their

teachers for their disruptive behaviour with teachers lacking empathy about how their experiences were related to their difficulties with emotionally self-regulating in school (Jackson and Cameron 2012, YoungMinds 2012). This prevented the children from trusting them, opening up to them and hence developing relationships with them (ibid). Whereas other looked-after children felt that they were allowed to get away with things at school such as truanting which had negative consequences for their educational success (Martin and Jackson 2002). And the research shows that some looked-after children were excluded because of their behaviours at school. Almost half of the 27 looked-after children in one study were excluded from school (Francis 2000), and 43% of the looked-after children in another study experienced at least one exclusion from school (Harker et al 2002).

In some studies, looked-after children reported that this negative stereotyping led to their teachers having lower expectations of their educational attainment because they were looked-after (Become June 2017, YoungMinds 2012, Wood and Selwyn 2015, Jackson and Cameron 2012). Only 48% of looked-after children in the Become study felt that their teachers had high expectations of their academic achievement (Become 2017). And Jackson and Cameron (2012) report that in their joint international study with colleagues involving interviews with 170 care leavers from five different European countries[38], they found a lack of educational aspirations for looked-after children and young people from professionals such as school staff. This included a tendency for looked-after children or care leavers to be encouraged onto vocational pathways rather than academic pathways. And these low aspirations were exacerbated by some schools' failure to provide appropriate catch-up academic support for those looked-after children who were academically behind their peers.

Some looked-after children stressed that they wanted their teachers to treat them the same as other children and not to patronise them, or allow them to get away with things (Martin and Jackson 2002, Altshuler 2003, Madigan et al 2013):

[38] The countries included England, Denmark, Spain, Sweden, and Hungary.

> You know there are those teachers in school that just want to treat you differently or they act nicer than they have to act and I don't like it because you want to be treated as everyone else, you don't want to seem different or some kid may say ah she's getting that because she's in care blah blah blah. (Become 2017, p.6)

The children did not want to be singled out by teachers, or made to feel different to other children, but equally they wanted teachers to use their knowledge of individual looked-after children and their circumstances and experiences to shape an appropriate, empathetic response to looked-after children's behaviours (Martin and Jackson 2002, Altshuler 2003, Madigan et al 2013). The care leavers interviewed in Johansson and Höjer's study (2012) explained that looked-after children should receive sensitive support whereby educational needs should be met, but they should not be withdrawn from class or experience other interventions which reflected 'marginalization and exclusion', instead they should experience 'normalization and inclusion' (p.1139) in school.

Unfortunately, looked-after children being bullied at school by other children was also a key feature of many research studies (Rao and Simkiss 2007, Jackson and Cameron 2012, Dearden 2004, Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003, Darmody et al 2013). Rao and Simkiss (2007) describe how 44% of the looked-after children aged 10-16 years surveyed in their study had spoken to a teacher about being bullied at school. Also, Dearden (2004) explains that over half of the looked-after children in her study said they had been bullied with most reporting that school staff did little to stop the bullying which led to many of the looked-after children refusing to attend school.

In summary, in the research literature looked-after children described positive schooling experiences with supportive, attentive teachers who helped them to feel a sense of belonging at school. Equally, the research studies describe looked-after children's negative school experiences with unsupportive and ill-informed teachers, and other negative experiences such as exclusion from school and bullying by peers which they perceived as barriers to their school attendance and educational progress.

Summary: Looked-After Children's Perspectives and Experiences from a Research Perspective

The research on looked-after children's perceptions and experiences of being in care describes the children's varied experiences of living with carers who made them safe and cared for, and how multiple placement moves left children feeling sad, angry and displaced. The looked-after children explained how being looked-after affected their emotional wellbeing including the stigma associated with being in care and how the fear of stigmatisation affected their willingness to engage with others including their peers. And the looked-after children described how they struggled to make sense of the complex emotions arising from their experiences, particularly when they lacked the support of a trusted, skilled adult to help them make sense of their feelings and consequent behaviours.

Regarding school experiences, the looked-after children's accounts feature both experiences with supportive teachers, but also experiences with teachers who lacked understanding and empathy regarding their background and needs. DTs, who are key to influencing school staff's understanding of looked-after children, hardly feature in the care leavers' first-hand stories because the DT role is a recent educational initiative. However, some research has explored looked-after children's views on the role of the DT and how they support them in school, and this is explored in-depth in Chapter Three in relation to the DTs' work.

Conclusion

This Chapter has explored care experiences by way of the first-hand accounts of a group of care leavers who describe how, at home, they needed a stable care placement where they felt safe and accepted by their carers and did not endure the experience of ruptured relationships. It revealed how the care leavers' traumatic pre-care and care experiences affected them psychologically, emotionally and socially including resorting to self-harm; and how their behaviour and academic performance at school were shaped by staff's lack of understanding of their experiences and failure to meet their emotional needs.

To confirm these accounts, the Chapter has also explored looked-after children's care experiences from a research perspective. In the research, looked-after children describe how they required stability and empathetic carers in order to trust people and feel safe. The looked-after children's accounts show how they struggled with how others stigmatised them because of their care status and how to manage their strong emotions when adults' support was lacking. Furthermore, the looked-after children described how their experiences at school were shaped by their teacher's level of understanding and skills for developing relationships with mistrustful children as well as looked-after children's relationships with other children.

These research findings chime with the first-hand accounts of the care leavers particularly regarding experiences of school where little appears to have changed in relation to how looked-after children are perceived and supported in school. Why looked-after children continue to struggle at school and what can be done about it is explored in-depth in the rest of the thesis.

While the care leavers' and looked-after children's experiences described above cannot be assumed to be representative of all looked-after children, the next chapter discusses what research reveals about how and why the negative effects of the experiences described are likely to be similar for most looked-after children.

Chapter Three: Literature Review: Justifying the Attachment Theory Lens in DTs' Work

Introduction

This Chapter draws on a range of academic and professional literatures to provide a background to the study of how the DT role supports the education of looked-after children, to establish a mandate for the research and to justify and clarify the research questions. In the last chapter, I discussed looked-after children's care experiences in and out of school, including from their own perspectives. In this Chapter, I explore research which discusses how these experiences affect looked-after children's educational performance. The Chapter is in three parts: the first part discusses how neuroscience explains why children who have experienced trauma have problems in school and considers the research on looked-after children's mental health needs. While neuroscientific and mental health research explain how children's experiences can affect their functioning in school, not all looked-after children are recovering from trauma or mental health difficulties. Therefore, the second part of the Chapter uses attachment theory to provide an alternative, more general explanation for looked-after children's educational underachievement and what schools can do about it.

I draw attention to how viewing looked-after children's educational experiences from an attachment-aware perspective is different to other perspectives and I argue why theoretically attachment-aware practices might be more effective than previous efforts to improve looked-after children's educational outcomes. The second part is in two sections: first it expands on attachment theory, defining what it is and how it explains the children's academic difficulties. I then discuss what work is being done in schools that is attachment-aware and how this work can improve schools' support of looked-after children.

Finally, in the third part, I discuss literature about DTs who are the focus of my study because they are a central plank of the government's policy to address the problem of looked-after children's low educational achievement, and are key to implementing attachment-aware practice in schools.

The Explanations for Looked-After Children's Low Educational Achievement

> [Children] are not slates from which the past can be rubbed by a duster or sponge, but human beings who carry their previous experiences with them and whose behaviour in the present is profoundly affected by what has gone before. (Bowlby, 1951, p.113-114)

In this thesis, I argue that looked-after children are inevitably affected by their pre-care experiences which manifest in their behaviours at school, but that this is often not fully appreciated by the adults around them. I start by examining the explanations for looked-after children's poor educational performance: first the explanation offered from neuroscientific research which demonstrates that traumatic experiences stimulates changes in the brain which explain behaviour and capacity to learn in school; and, secondly, explanations from the mental health literature which focuses on how specific mental health problems arise from care experiences.

The Neuroscientific Explanation for Looked-After Children's Poor Academic Performance

There is evidence from neuroscience that experiences of neglect, abuse of all kinds, chaos, threat and fear affect the brains and behaviours of children in ways which are highly likely to detrimentally influence their capacity for education. Harvard psychiatrist and neuroscientist Teicher and colleagues (2000) found that abuse can cause hormonal changes leading to a reduction in areas of the brain, such as the left hippocampus, associated with verbal memory. A further study compared 51 children admitted to hospital on psychiatric grounds with a control group of 115 children (Teicher et al 2003). They found that of the 51 children, the 28 children who had been abused (boys had experienced neglect and the girls sexual abuse) had a significantly reduced corpus callosum which connects the two hemispheres of the brain, the left side regulates language and logical and analytical thought and the right side perception and expression of emotion (ibid). When the two sides do not connect there can be multiple problems including cognitive, communication, and self-regulation difficulties affecting capacity to learn.

Moreover, it appears that abusive environments affect response to stress. American psychiatrist Bruce Perry from the Child Trauma Academy has extensive clinical experience working with traumatised children. In 1995 he studied 175 children who had experienced severe trauma. He found that stress responses become under-regulated because the normal response to a threat is repeatedly activated in the abusive environment eventually impairing normal response so that the children are in a perpetual state of responding to threat even when there is no danger.

Perry (2004) explains how being in a permanently aroused state affects children's capacity to learn:

> Children in a state of fear retrieve information from the world differently than children who feel calm. In a state of calm, we use the higher, more complex parts of our brain to process and act on information. In a state of fear, we use the lower, more primitive parts of our brain.[39]

This affects a child's capacity for learning cognitive content because s/he struggles to concentrate or listen to the teacher. The more aroused a child is, the more emotional and reactive s/he is (Perry 2004, Supin 2015). Such children have a low 'Window of Tolerance' **(**Siegel 1999)[40] meaning events which are ordinary stresses for children with a well-regulated stress response like completing difficult schoolwork tasks are extraordinary stresses for them (Supin 2015).

Such findings from neuroscience might lead to the belief that these children's brains are permanently damaged and nothing can be done to reverse it, but Perry (2004) stresses that: '[T]he brain altered in destructive ways by trauma and neglect can also be altered in reparative, healing ways […] developmentally appropriate experiences is the key.'[41] And schools can offer those 'developmentally appropriate experiences' by thinking about the environment from a traumatised child's perspective.

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[39] http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mccain/perry.pdf
[40] https://www.attachment-and-trauma-treatment-centre-for-healing.com/blogs/understanding-and-working-with-the-window-of-tolerance
[41] http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mccain/perry.pdf

Teicher et al (2000) also show that not all abused children are affected to the same extent depending on factors like the child's age when they are abused, and the duration of the abuse because different areas of the brain are susceptible to impairment at different ages. Moreover, clinical psychologist Woolgar (2013) offers the concept of 'differential susceptibility' to explain that all children do not react to abuse and neglect in the same way because their responses are dependent on several factors such as genetic and physiological makeup and their experiences.

Maltreatment can affect a child on different levels and to different extents and can manifest in different ways. While there might be patterns to looked-after children's behaviour, each is also unique. Neuroscientific explanations for behaviour and educational underachievement provide scientific evidence of the influence of children's experiences; and a way of understanding the children's presentation in school. But, not all looked-after children will have experienced brain altering trauma pre-entry to care therefore this explanation is not applicable to all children.

The Mental Health Explanation for Looked-After Children's Poor Academic Performance

Another explanation for looked-after children's low attainment is offered by ideas about how their mental health is affected by traumatic experiences. The literature indicates that about half of the looked-after children population suffer from mental health difficulties. Since 2009, local authorities have captured data on looked-after children's emotional and behavioural health through requesting carers to complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman and Goodman 2012). In 2018, 49% of looked-after children had a 'normal' SDQ score; 39% had scores which were a 'cause for concern'; and, 12% had emotional and behavioural health that was considered 'borderline' (DfE 2018c). The SDQ national completion rate was 78% and shows variation in completion rates between different age groups so cannot be considered representative of all looked-after children (ibid). Nevertheless, the SDQ is a respected screening instrument used in other studies involving looked-after children to diagnose potential psychiatric disorders (Luke et al 2014; Mount Lister and Bennun 2004; Beck 2006; Meltzer et al 2003; Ford et al 2007).

Relevant to teachers, Sebba et al (2015) found that a high SDQ score was predictive of poor GCSE results. This suggests that GCSE outcomes could be depressed for some looked-after children with abnormal SDQ scores, but does not explain why the 49% of children with 'normal' SDQ scores may also perform poorly at school because, as discussed in Chapter One, only 17.5% of looked-after children achieved the age-related academic expectation at the end of secondary school (DfE 2019).

Two significant UK studies using datasets of looked-after children are Meltzer et al (2003) and Ford et al (2007). Meltzer et al's (2003) important study was requested by the Department of Health following concerns about mental health provision for looked-after children. This study involved a sample of 1039 looked-after children aged 5 –17 from 134 English local authorities. The study's multiple informant design included a structured interview with the carer and child (if aged 11 or older) and a postal questionnaire for teachers. It used reliable and valid standardised screening instruments such as the Development and Wellbeing Assessment[42] and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman et al 2000; Goodman and Goodman 2012). A case vignette approach was also used to diagnose the disorders rather than a computer-generated diagnosis. The study found that 45% of the looked-after children participating in the study were assessed by Meltzer and his colleagues as having a mental disorder of whom 37% had clinically significant conduct disorders; and 12% had emotional disorders including anxiety and depression; all these problems can lead to difficulties at school. In an earlier study involving 11-15 year olds from the general population, Meltzer et al (2000, 2003) found that 11% were assessed as having a mental disorder compared to 49% of looked-after children.

In a second large-scale study, Ford et al (2007) offer a secondary analysis of the large data sets collated by Meltzer et al (2003, 2004a, 2004b) of 1543 looked-after children in England, Wales and Scotland. Ford and her colleagues found that 46.4% of looked-after children had at least one psychiatric disorder of whom 38.9% had a behavioural disorder. This remains the largest study of

[42] Used to diagnose psychiatric disorders in children.

the mental health of looked-after children in the UK to date although consultation on a new survey of looked-after children's mental health was being carried out between March and June 2019 (NHS Digital 2019).

This research shows how looked-after children's experiences can affect their mental health but unlike attachment theory, which is discussed next, it does not provide a framework for DTs to use to mitigate the effects of looked-after children's experiences and promote their educational achievement.

Attachment Theory: An Alternative Explanation for Looked-After Children's Low Educational Achievement

In this part, I will show that attachment theory offers an understanding of 1) looked-after children's experiences; 2) how their experiences affect them in school; and 3) how schools can mitigate the effects of such experiences. Attachment theory is relevant to DTs, the focus of my study, because policy states that DTs' work in schools should involve attachment-aware practice (DfE 2018a). Below I define attachment theory and then discuss how it explains the children's academic difficulties in school.

The Theory of Attachment

John Bowlby (1951, 1997) pioneered attachment theory which was further developed by Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues (1978). Attachment theory starts with the strong emotional bond between a baby and its primary caregiver (often the mother) which both need because of the baby's biological predisposition to be close to their mother so they can be protected and survive, and of the mother to protect her baby (Bowlby 1951, 1997). The theory explains how the attachment develops between the baby and their primary caregiver or 'attachment figure' and the behaviours which the baby presents to achieve 'proximity, contact and interaction' so that they feel safe (Ainsworth et al 1978, p.16). For example, babies crying if they do not feel safe or are hungry. These behaviours are referred to as 'attachment behaviours' and manifest from six to nine months by when a baby shows preference for selected individuals when seeking comfort, becomes distressed by separation from them, and is wary of strangers (NCCMH 2015). The baby needs its

attachment figure to be consistently available and responsive to them and the attachment figure identifies the baby's needs through their behavioural cues and responds accordingly to meet their needs and comfort them (Bowlby 1997, Ainsworth et al 1978, Schore 2000).

Attachment behaviours are guided by strong emotions, both positive and negative, and the attachment figure should be attuned to the baby's emotional states (Bowlby 1997). The baby can feel love, pleasure and security when its attachment figure responds sensitively towards them. Alternatively, if the baby is stressed and crying and the attachment figure offers an inappropriate response such as ignoring or shouting instead of picking up and cuddling them, s/he can feel fearful and angry (Ainsworth et al 1978). The attachment figure is a co-regulator helping the baby to learn how to self-regulate through responding empathetically to the baby's emotional state and comforting them so the baby becomes emotionally self-regulated. If the attachment figure is responsive and the baby's needs are consistently met then the baby learns that adults are trustworthy and that the world is a safe place. Children who have a secure attachment to their primary caregiver develop resilience when confronted with stressful situations and so can flexibly self-regulate their emotional states whereas insecurely attached children lack capacity to self-regulate (Schore 2000). Hence, looked-after children who are unlikely to have a secure attachment to a primary caregiver are also likely to struggle with self-regulation although providing a secure attachment to another adult can mitigate the effects.

Internal working model of future relationships

The primary caregiver's response towards the baby, whether they are responsive and attuned to the baby's needs, influences the baby's formation of an 'internal working model' of their attachment figure. This influences their future expectations of adults and whether they can be trusted to meet their needs and make them feel safe. These unconscious internal working models are linked to the autonomic nervous system: if previous experience has taught children that adults are untrustworthy then their stress response will be activated when they are with adults (Schore 2000). An internal working model

also influences whether people find forming relationships easy or hard (ibid). This has implications not only for babies but also for older children and adults if early internal working models are not revised by positive changes in the care being given by a primary caregiver (Groh et al 2014, NCCMH 2015). Thus, internal working models can affect school-age children and their relationship with their teacher and peers. Where the child has a secure attachment to their primary caregiver, they develop a 'sense of worth, a belief in the helpfulness of others, and a favourable model on which to build future relationships' (Bowlby, 1997, p.378).

The attachment figure as a secure base

When a child feels secure, it is in a calm state and can explore what is around it providing an opportunity for learning. The child is secure in the knowledge that its attachment figure is still accessible and responsive to them even if it is away from them. Their attachment figure is a secure base that they can return to when needed (Bowlby 1997, Ainsworth et al 1978). Therefore, the child learns that it is safe to explore unfamiliar environments and people.

Types of attachment behaviours

In 1969, Mary Ainsworth and Barbara Wittig devised the 'Strange Situation Procedure' to investigate how infants formed an attachment to their mother. The procedure consists of eight different episodes in the setting of a room which is unfamiliar to the baby, allowing for observation of the baby's reaction to: the mother leaving and re-entering the room; a stranger entering and leaving the room; and, whether the baby explores the toys in the room when the mother is absent. The study involved 106 one-year old babies and their mothers. This age was chosen because attachment behaviour patterns generally emerge and can be assessed at one year of age (NCCMH 2015). Ainsworth et al (1978) identified the specific pattern of behaviours the children manifested during the experiment and developed categories to describe the different attachment behaviours: 'secure', 'insecure avoidant', and 'insecure ambivalent/resistant' (see below). They found that 65% of the babies were securely attached to their mothers; 21% had an avoidant attachment; and 13% had a resistant attachment.

The ‘secure’ babies enjoyed more positive interaction with their mothers and so were more compliant and cooperative with her and with the stranger. They were less likely than the babies in the other groups to cry when their mother left the room because her responsiveness to their needs showed that she was still accessible to them and they expressed happiness when she returned. Therefore, their mother was a secure base while they explored the unfamiliar environment of the room. Thus, Ainsworth et al (1978) concluded that these children ‘enjoy an advantage in various aspects of social and cognitive development’ (p.314).

But, the insecurely attached babies were emotionally dysregulated: the ‘resistant’ babies cried when their mother left and were not easily comforted when she returned because her erratic responses led them to lack confidence in her accessibility and responsiveness. Their lack of security meant that they had no secure base from which to explore the room and they were uncomfortable with the stranger in the room. Likewise, ‘avoidant’ babies lacked confidence in their mother’s attunement to their needs perhaps resulting from their mothers’ rejecting response towards them and so mainly avoided the mother upon her return. This avoidance of their mother coupled with them being both comfortable with the stranger and able to continue their exploration of the room without their mother being present suggested that these babies presented as ‘pseudo-independent’. Ainsworth et al (1978) reported that this was unusual behaviour for such young children and concluded that this avoidant response showed frustration and anger towards the mother.

Ainsworth et al’s (1978) research tells us much about the attachment relationship between a child and their primary caregiver. However, despite the large body of research including the above which propounds attachment theory, there is also research that offers criticisms of attachment theory which is discussed below.

Criticisms of Attachment Theory

I will deal with three main criticisms of attachment theory. First, is the insistence that the primary caregiver must be the mother which underplays the

importance of relationships with other adults in making a child feel secure. Second is that attachment theory essentialises the looked-after child and their experiences as always wholly negative, which both in clinical practice, education and in research, can lead to predicting and expecting negative future behaviours and outcomes without sufficient evidence. Third, is that an over-reliance on attachment theory as explanatory can lead to under-identifying more pertinent explanations such as disorders common in the looked-after children population, for example, conduct and hyperkinetic disorders.

The primary caregiver must be the mother

In his report *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, Bowlby (1951) claimed that a person's mental health would be compromised if they lacked their mother's attention and love. He thought that the mother-baby relationship is the most important relationship because she feeds, cleans and comforts the baby (not the father). Some years later, Michael Rutter (1972) responded by arguing that Bowlby's conceptualisation of maternal deprivation was simplistic because it suggests such extreme problems stemming solely from the lack of attachment to a maternal figure. In Rutter's view if another adult, or multiple adults, provide the baby with a secure attachment and the associated social and cognitive experiences, then the baby's development would not be impaired.

Feminist critiques of attachment theory point to the theory's claim that mothers leaving their babies in the care of others while they go to work cause their babies emotional and social harm (Franzblau 1999), and such claims sustain the oppression of women:

> The notion that there is some inherent glue that unites mother and child, simplifies, depoliticizes and removes from historical review the exploitative and oppressive conditions under which most women reproduce and mother. (ibid, p.29).

Therefore, in accordance with these perspectives, in this thesis it is not stipulated that the attachment figure must be the mother, but that a baby needs a secure attachment to at least one adult.

Essentialising the looked-after child and their experiences

Attachment theory risks being used to essentialise the looked-after child and their experiences and difficulties as always negative and the child as deficit because of 'limited and frozen' development, struggling with self-regulation and social interaction (Barth et al 2005, p.264). Critics highlight how attachment theory underemphasises an individual's differences when similar attachment experiences can play out differently in individuals' lives, they point to:

> [T]he simplification of early adverse experiences into common or average experiences, at the expense of individuality, and sometimes without considering individual level vulnerability and resilience factors. (Woolgar and Simmonds, 2019, p.244-245)

Essentialising a looked-after child's experience in such a way leads to attachment theory being used by researchers and practitioners to predict future behaviours and outcomes, especially with forming secure attachments throughout life. Critics identify problems with doing this. The theory extrapolates the evidence from what is known about babies' attachment which, it is argued, does not provide sufficient evidence to enable such predictions about other stages of life (Thompson and Raikes 2003). How and why attachment changes throughout a person's life span should be considered, in particular, the influence of life experiences and other on-going relationships.

A study carried out in Minnesota, USA over three decades showed both how and why attachment security or insecurity can be subject to change for some people, but can be consistent for others through infancy into adulthood; and revealed how early experience including attachment history can exert an ongoing influence throughout a person's life (Sroufe et al 2009). The seminal, longitudinal study of 240[43] children and their families, primarily their mothers[44], started three months before the child's birth and followed the children through adulthood until they were 28 years old. The study involved

[43] The study started with 240 participants, but the number of participants varied over the course of the study as participants left the study.
[44] The mothers were aged between 12 and 34 years and 80% of the participants were White European.

multiple informants: the children, their parents, teachers, counsellors at a summer camp, and their peers; and comprised of multiple methods including tests, interviews, questionnaires, direct observations, and using drawings and stories. Key features of the research included a multitude of age-by-age assessments[45]; measuring the same things at multiple points in time and across different areas, for example, the child's attachment relationship with their mother, behaviour problems, and their social competence with peers; and analysing data on the developmental context of the child.[46]

One key finding was about the stability of attachment over time. The Strange Situations Procedure (described earlier in this Chapter) was carried out with the infants at 12 and 18 months old to assess the infants' attachment security with their mothers. At 12 months, 212 babies' attachment was assessed as the following: 55% were secure, 23% of the babies were anxious-resistant and 22% were assessed as anxious-avoidant. At 18 months, 189 babies' attachment was assessed as: 61% secure, 17% anxious-resistant, 22% were anxious-avoidant. Of the 189 babies assessed at both 12 and 18 months: 74% remained secure, 45% remained avoidant and 37% remained anxious-resistant. This shows that attachment security or insecurity can be subject to change:

> [A]ttachment security derives from experience. Infants are confident regarding the availability of their caregivers and have positive expectations regarding the availability of their caregivers and have positive experiences about their responsiveness precisely because, in their experience, their caregivers have been reliably responsive…It may change from secure to anxious when parents become more overwhelmed and therefore provide less responsive care, or it may change from anxious to secure with the same parent when circumstances improve. (Sroufe et al 2009, p.103)

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[45] This included assessments from nurses at the new-borns' hospital nursery; assessments at home when the baby was seven and 10 days old; 11 separate assessments when child was aged between three and 30 months; four assessments before the child's entry to school; annual assessments until the child was 13; then follow up assessments at 16, 17 ½ , 19, 21, 23, 26 and 28 years of age.

[46] This included parental characteristics. e.g. socioeconomic background and IQ, interview with the mother about her living arrangements, the support she received from family and others and any problems raising the baby, the mother's own experiences of care including abuse, and what was happening for the family at different time points e.g. evaluating mother's life stress.

Following analysis of the babies' developmental context, the researchers attributed positive changes in the infants' attachment security to a reduction of stressful situations in the mother's life which led to positive changes in the mother's caregiving.

On the other hand, the study also reported a consistency in attachment security for many of the children which influenced their development and functioning throughout childhood and even into adulthood. For example, the groups of children who had shown stable attachment (whether insecure or secure) at 12 and 18 months were observed at 3 ½ years of age with their mother in problem-solving activities and were assessed for patterns of attachment behaviours. There was consistency in predicting child functioning from attachment history: children who were secure at 18 months were the most competent in problem solving tasks observed at age 3 ½. There were also strong findings about how early attachment history influenced insecure children and adolescents' capacity to develop relationships with their peers and later in romantic relationships. And the influence of infant attachment history was discernible in 'numerous aspects of intimate relationship functioning in adult relationships' at age 21 relating to conflict resolution, emotional tone, and support (Sroufe et al, 2009 p.203).
The researchers conclude that:

> Variations in early attachment lead individuals to frame subsequent experiences differently, and for this reason, insecure attachment does compromise development. But if circumstances change enough, experience changes and so, too, do the inner frames that guide subsequent functioning. (ibid p.241)

Hence, a person's development and functioning are not just about their attachment history alone or the early care they received, but 'is the cumulative history of the individual' (ibid p.241) over their lifespan. Overall, this study shows both that a person's attachment insecurity can be subject to change under the right conditions and in the right environment; and that having insecure attachments as a baby can reverberate on through childhood and beyond (Sroufe et al 2009).

Another study reveals why it is difficult to assess attachment security/insecurity beyond infancy because the patterns of secure and insecure attachment behaviours observable and assessed in infants are not the same attachment behaviours observable in older children and adults on account of the changing objectives of the attachment relationship as people mature (Thompson and Raikes 2003). For example, a baby relies on their primary caregiver for survival therefore the objective of a baby's attachment relationship with their primary caregiver is close proximity and consistent interaction from the primary caregiver to ensure they are cared for and protected which is evident in their behaviours, such as crying, to get the caregiver's attention and keep them close (Carlson et al 2003). Whereas the purpose of an adolescent or adult's attachment relationship is different to a baby's, requiring some dependency and emotional availability, but not as much physical and emotional availability as a baby requires which is more difficult to observe and assess (Thompson and Raikes 2003).

Allen et al (2003) carried out a study to develop an understanding of how to assess adolescent attachment security within the mother–adolescent relationship. The study involved 126 adolescents in 9th and 10th grade[47] (64 male and 62 female) aged from 14 to 18 years and their mothers[48]. The multi-method study involved the use of several assessments[49] to capture data about the mother-adolescent relationship including interviews, observations of interactions between the mother and adolescent, and self reports from the adolescent. Because of the changing objectives of the mother-adolescent relationship, an adolescent uses their mother as a secure base like a baby: they still need their mother to be attuned to them and supportive so that they are confident enough to exercise their autonomy and independence. But an adolescent does not need their mother's attention in the same way.

[47] Equivalent to year 10 and 11 in English schools

[48] The sample was socioeconomically and ethically diverse with diverse family incomes and parents' education level. Participants were 62% European American, 37% African American, and 1% with other backgrounds.

[49] The following standardised assessment tools were used in the study: Adult Attachment Interview and Q-set, Adolescent Self-Perception Profile, Mother–Father–Peer Scale, and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment.

Roisman et al's (2002) study is part of the Minnesota study described above, but their study is about a subsample of the 170 children who were followed into adulthood. The study shows the complexities of measuring and understanding how attachment security changes over time. The study involved the use of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)[50] which features self-reporting (people describing their early attachment experiences with their parents) when the participants were 19 years old. The study reported that the earlier findings of infant attachment security/insecurity were not aligned with their findings regarding adult attachment security/insecurity (Roisman et al 2002, Sroufe et al 2009). At aged 19, 37% of the participants were classified as 'autonomous' (securely attached) which was then divided into 'continuous-secure' (securely attached adults who were also securely attached as babies) and 'earned-secure' groups (defined as being securely attached adults despite early insecure attachment experiences as a baby or child). The study had previously explored what it meant for participants to have 'earned security' by analysing the participants' relationships with their mothers from birth and categorising their attachment security or insecurity throughout their lives. Consequently, the study was able to show that those participants who as adults were assessed as 'earned security' actually experienced supportive care from their mothers during their childhood, and were previously assessed as securely attached to their mothers as babies and children and so should not be categorised as 'earned security', but as 'continuous-secure'. The researchers concluded that negative reporting biases of early childhood experiences by the adults could be a factor in their assessments as 'earned security adults' which they linked to the participants being both from a high risk sample and too young at 19 to fully engage with the reflective thinking required by the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI):

> The AAI presumes that one has matured to the point of stepping outside of one's childhood experience, so that perspective taking and a reflective integration are possible. For young people, many from economically disadvantaged circumstances and still living at home, this may be challenging. (Sroufe et al 2009, p.208)

[50] It is used to assess and categorise attachment style in adults.

Although Roisman et al (2002) add that their study did not include any observations of parent–child relationships between the ages of 4 and 12 which is the time period of childhood memories that participants are asked about in the Adult Attachment Interview. Furthermore, there is a lack of observational data about the adults' relationships with their fathers as children so it is not known whether the father-child relationship was lacking and the mother-child relationship was compensatory which influenced their self-reporting of adverse childhood experiences. Overall, these studies show the difficulties of measuring whether attachment security or insecurity remains consistent from infancy to adulthood because measuring attachment security in adults is complicated by the self-reporting aspect of measuring attachment in adults (Roisman et al 2002, Sroufe et al 2009).

To conclude this section, despite the inconclusive evidence, I believe it is counter-productive to essentialise the child who had experienced early attachment insecurity. Attachment theory constructs attachment security or insecurity as being relationship-specific – about the relationship between, for example, a looked-after child and a specific caregiver, so, while it accepts the effects of early attachment insecurity, it need not be accepted that it is a predictor of all or future relationships. It is important to note that if a looked-after child is diagnosed with 'attachment disorder' (distinct from 'attachment insecurity') there is evidence that s/he is likely to respond to all people in the same way and either cannot form a secure relationship with anyone, caregiver or stranger, or is indiscriminately intimate with everyone whether caregiver or stranger (Granqvist et al 2017).

I accept the complexities of measuring attachment security over time when the nature and objectives of relationships change as people age and have new life experiences. Still, my research is not about assessing attachment security/insecurity in looked-after children, or about their future trajectories as adults and future negative behaviours or outcomes. In my professional work and in this research, I work as if a child's attachment style might change according to their current circumstances: the nature of their caregiving environment and the support they receive in school. I think of attachment as relationship-specific in centralising the relationship between the primary

caregiver and the child. At the same time, in accordance with the theory, I believe that a good-quality significant relationship influences beneficially how a child views and approaches their relationships with others, including school staff. For the purpose of my research and work, I am interested in what DTs and schools do and can do to support looked-after children in the present by offering those positive experiences in school for looked-after children to support their re-framing of themselves, others and their relationships.

The over-reliance of attachment theory to explain behavioural problems

Researchers point out that an over-reliance on attachment as an explanatory theory leads to the under-identification of other disorders such as conduct and hyperkinetic disorders (Barth et al 2005, Woolgar and Baldock 2015). Woolgar and Baldock's (2015) study comprised of a clinical team at a CAMHS outpatient service analysing the referral letters of 100 children (49 adopted children and 51 looked-after children) who were referred to their specialist Tier 4 CAMHS service over four years to determine whether the clinical team's diagnoses of the children's difficulties were consistent with those of the referrers.

The clinical team, which included clinical psychologists, child and adolescent psychiatrists, and mental health social workers, analysed the diagnoses and concerns identified in the referral letters. They then carried out a multi-disciplinary assessment of each referred child to compare the diagnoses and concerns from the referral letters. Sixty-nine percent of the cases were referred by paediatricians, GPs and social services and 31% by CAMHS psychiatrists. The sample compromised of children aged between two and 17 years of age and 61% of the sample were boys. The multiple assessments carried out by the clinical team included interviews with the child, their carers and relevant professionals; questionnaires; observations of how the child behaved both with their carers and with strangers; and 86% of the children were assessed using IQ and literacy assessments.

The study revealed two key issues regarding the assessment and identification of disorders in looked-after and adopted children: 1) the over-identification of generic attachment problems and attachment disorder and the under-

identification of more common disorders; and (2) the over-diagnosis of children with attachment disorder, particularly in older children. The clinical team diagnosed disorders such as anxiety, ADHD, autism, learning disability and neurodevelopmental problems from the referrals more frequently than the referrers who instead diagnosed generic attachment problems or attachment disorder. For example, only 4% of the referrals identified conduct disorders, such as oppositional defiant disorder, compared to the clinical team which identified conduct disorder in 53% of the referred children. Furthermore, a child having a learning disability was only identified in 3% of the referrals and 10% by the clinical team. Hyperkinetic disorders, for example, ADHD were identified in 12% of the referrals compared to 31% identified by the clinical team. And there was the under-identification of neurodevelopmental disorders: 0% by referrers but 12% identified by the clinical team.

There is the additional concern about the over-diagnosis of looked-after children with 'attachment disorder' (distinct from attachment insecurity) when this should be a rarity. Attachment disorder was diagnosed in 16% of the referrals compared to only 4% diagnosed by the clinical team. The ICD-10[51] and DSM-IV[52] diagnostic classifications state that relevant behaviours should be evident in the child's history before five years old and their behaviours are different to those observed in children with other disorders such as ADHD or ASD. Some referrers were identifying attachment disorder in children older than five years such as teenagers without evidence of the relevant behaviours before the children were aged five which the clinical team contested on account of the presentation of attachment disorder in older children being unclear because there are not the same observable behaviours.

The researchers conclude that other more common disorders and concerns were under-identified in the referrers' letters and that generic attachment problems and attachment disorders were over-identified because the children in the sample were looked-after and adopted. Therefore, attachment problems and attachment disorder were foregrounded as the likely explanations for the

[51] The 10th edition of the International Classification of Diseases developed by the World Health Organization.
[52] The 4th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association.

children's difficulties because of their pre-care and care experiences including disrupted relationships with their primary caregivers.

One of the study's limitations is the apparent difference in how the referrers and the clinical team assessed the referred children because there was no standardised, consistent assessment process which was used by both referrer and clinical team. Another limit of the study is that the diagnoses were based on the information included in the referral letters so there is the possibility that the referrers did not identify other common disorders about the referred children because they chose to foreground aspects of the children's presentation pertaining to attachment problems and attachment disorder.

In my own research and work, I have approached the criticism concerning the under-identification of other disorders and over-identification of attachment problems and attachment disorder by acknowledging and describing the other non-attachment theory based explanations for looked-after children's difficulties at school earlier in this Chapter which includes discussing the studies which reveal how looked-after children have been shown to have neurodevelopmental difficulties resulting from abuse and neglect and conduct and hyperkinetic disorders (such as discussing the Meltzer et al (2003) and Ford et al (2007) studies). Therefore, I do not point to attachment theory as the only explanation for looked-after children's behaviours and capacity to learn, but accept that attachment theory builds on the other explanations relating to neurodevelopmental difficulties and mental health studies to offer an in-depth understanding of the children's experiences, how their experiences affect them and what schools can do to support them.

Summary: Criticisms of Attachment Theory

Despite the combined criticisms above, a firm empirical link is established between early attachment history as a baby which continues to influence development and functioning as a child and adolescent, particularly in the areas of self-perception, social interaction and developing relationships with others (Sroufe et al 2009). Moreover, I seek practices for supporting children who are clearly finding it difficult to cope with school: attachment theory and attachment-aware practice offer a humane and empathetic way of viewing and

helping children address their difficulties. This is more important than specific diagnoses and labels. Attachment theory and practice offers an in-depth understanding of what looked-after children have experienced and what frames their perceptions and behaviours. They also show what is needed to mitigate the negative effects of looked-after children's experiences by providing pointers to why and how DTs and school staff could support looked-after children in school.

How Attachment Needs Affect a Child's Behaviour and Learning in School

In this thesis, it is proposed that many looked-after children have attachment difficulties for several reasons. First, what we know about looked-after children's educational outcomes and their presentation in school indicates attachment difficulties: difficulties learning resulting in low attainment, high SDQ scores and mistrust of adults shown in troubled relationships with teachers, and more likely to be excluded (NCCMH 2015). Secondly, a child often enters care because they have experienced unresponsive caring through abusive parents who failed to care for them and keep them safe. Finally, looked-after children who have not experienced abusive parenting like orphaned or unaccompanied asylum seeking children have still experienced a disrupted attachment to their primary caregiver. There are likely to be ongoing complex feelings for all looked-after children caused by a traumatic separation from family. This is discussed further below regarding how attachment difficulties affect functioning in school.

Children with an insecure attachment to an adult at home are likely to struggle to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours at school because their attachment behaviours are activated (Bergin and Bergin 2009). An insecurely attached child can feel unsafe at school which can manifest as hypervigilant or disruptive behaviour with verbal and physical aggression reflecting the child's under-regulated stress response (Bombèr 2011). Feelings of anxiety and insecurity can be compounded by changes whether changes in people, classrooms, or beginnings and endings of lessons because to feel safe the child needs consistency and predictability (ibid). Because of their impaired self-regulation they are likely to have difficulties with managing schools' systems

and processes like the behaviour policy. They can be unresponsive to the usual school behaviour management techniques which can lead to exclusion (Bombèr 2015a).

The American National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's study of child care and child development found a relationship between insecure attachment and education performance with insecurely attached children having a lower cognitive performance and IQ than secure children (West et al 2013). The longitudinal study followed over 1000 children from birth to 11/12 years old. The children's attachment behaviours and school behaviours were assessed using a range of methods: the Strange Situation at 15 months and 36 months, observations of the children at 24 months; teacher reports and IQ assessments. West el (ibid) conclude that secure attachment is linked to better academic performance because securely attached children are resilient and can manage the usual challenges of school. Consequently, they can concentrate and respond positively to the teacher's instructions and manage the school environment. Whereas children with an 'ambivalent' attachment style struggle because they are away from their attachment figure so their attachment behaviours are activated which hinders their capacity to focus, cooperate and learn (ibid).

How Attachment Needs Affect the Teacher-Child Relationship

Research indicates that insecurely attached children need a positive relationship with their teacher. Howes and Ritchie (1999) explored the quality of interactions between insecurely attached children and their teachers; and highlighted teachers' challenges in building an emotional connection with this group of children which, as I will show in Chapter Four, can be linked to theories of teacher identity and emotion. They studied teacher-child relationships of 3062 children aged between 3 and 5 years old with 'difficult life circumstances'[53] in a child care setting. A variety of different assessment methods were used including the Attachment Q-Set[54]; Pre-school Behaviour

[53] Defined as: experiencing maltreatment, poverty, parental psychopathology, or parental substance abuse.
[54] Used to assess attachment in children

Questionnaire[55], the Child Behaviour Checklist[56], the Peer Play Scale[57], and the Student Teacher Relationship Scale[58]. The study did not assess the child's attachment at home with their primary caregiver/s so it is not possible to compare the children's relationships at home and at school.

Howes and Ritchie found that children had the following relationships with their teacher: 29% of the children had a 'Secure' relationship; 35.4% of the children had a 'Near Secure' relationship; 20% of the children had an 'Avoidant' relationship; 4% of the children had a 'Resistant' relationship; and 10% of the children had an 'Unclassifiable' relationship. Howes and Ritchie (1999) draw on Ainsworth et al 's (1978) typology of a child's attachment behaviours with their caregiver at home described earlier to provide a typology of behaviours at school. They show that there are similarities between a child's attachment behaviour with their attachment figure at home and with their teacher; and, how this teacher-child relationship influences the child's behaviour. The children formed different attachment relationships with their teachers which affected how they interacted with them, like using them as a secure base from which to explore and learn. The study also investigated the teachers' responses to the children and showed the challenges of developing a positive relationship with 'avoidant' and 'resistant' children. A teacher needs to be empathetic and reflective to develop a relationship with insecurely attached children. Some of Howes and Ritchie's' (ibid) teachers described having conflicted, difficult relationships with the insecurely attached children. Bergin and Bergin (2009) claim that teachers respond differently to insecurely attached children:

> Unfortunately, the behaviour of insecure children elicits responses in teachers that make it difficult to attach to them. Such behaviour includes clinginess, hostility, helplessness, and disobedience. Teachers tend to interact with insecure children in a controlling manner, are less likely to expect compliance, and tend to use repeated directives. Teachers are more tolerant, nurturing and controlling towards *resistant* children because teachers perceive them as

[55] Assesses children's anxiety, hyperactivity and aggression
[56] Assesses children's internalising and externalising behaviours like depression and destructiveness
[57] Assesses children's play with peers
[58] Assesses teachers' perceptions of the teacher-child relationship

> immature and needy. Teachers are more likely to be angry and rejecting with *avoidant* children, and to isolate them because they defy adults and may hurt other children. (p.155)

Teachers usually try to regulate uncooperative children in an authoritarian way, but for children with attachment difficulties this response can escalate dysregulation and negative attachment behaviours (ibid).

The difficulties of forming attachments with 'challenging' children is understandable because not all teachers have the required knowledge, experience and emotional resilience to alter mistrustful children's internal models:

> If teachers are able to behave in ways that *disconfirm* the insecure child's internal working models, then a secure relationship can develop between teacher and child. A caring teacher has to work hard to disconfirm the insecure child's expectation that the teacher will be hostile, rejecting, or unresponsive. (Bergin and Bergin, 2009, p.155).

Thus, teachers are advised to reflect on their ability to regulate their own emotions and adapt their behaviours when faced with an emotionally dysregulated child; and on how their own personal attachment history will affect their ability to form an emotional connection with insecurely attached children (Howes and Ritchie 1999). The research reveals that secure relationships with adults at school can theoretically mitigate the children's problems but it does require a high degree of understanding, emotional responsiveness and resilience on the teacher's part and supportive policies and practices within school. In Chapter Eight, I draw on emotional labour theory (Hochschild 1983) to discuss the role of emotion in DTs' relationships with their looked-after children.

Summary: The Theory of Attachment

Attachment theory is applicable to all looked-after children because it claims that every child[59], looked-after or not, forms an early attachment to a primary

[59] Apart from children who are raised in appalling institutionalised conditions such as orphanages where they have little interaction with caregivers: a situation which is not applicable to looked-after children in the UK.

caregiver (Bowlby 1997). This is unlike the neuroscientific and mental health literature which shows that not all looked-after children are recovering from severe brain changing trauma or mental health difficulties (Woolgar 2013, Meltzer et al 2003). Furthermore, attachment theory is more 'school friendly' than the perspectives offered by neuroscience and psychiatry because it offers descriptions of the different attachment patterns of behaviours in the classroom which teachers can use to interpret looked-after children's behaviours and support accordingly. Therefore, theoretically, attachment theory might be more effective than previous efforts to support looked-after children in schools because it offers the understanding that DTs and schools need to offer an alternative model of support to these children which acknowledges their difficulties in managing school; justifies a flexible response regarding any disruptive behaviours in school rather than the usual school behavioural systems; and prioritises developing secure relationships with staff. This is discussed further below regarding literature about how schools can be attachment-aware.

The Meaning of Attachment Aware Schools

Attachment-aware practice (the use of attachment theory to inform how children are supported in schools) is increasingly taken on in schools as they begin to recognise how attachment needs affect a child's capacity to function at school. The Attachment Aware Schools initiative was developed by Bath Spa University, Bath and North Somerset Virtual School and the National College for Teaching and Leadership to provide guidance to schools about becoming attachment-aware including a website with online training materials for schools (Rose et al 2014). And there is a plethora of other advice and guidance on attachment available from various organisations who offer training, as well as clinical and educational psychologists introducing the theory to schools. Below I examine the key features of an attachment-aware school including: a whole school ethos; secure teacher-child relationships; and a school staff support system. I draw on practitioner literature[60] by pioneering key figures Louise

[60] 'Practitioner literature' refers to literature, which is not based on empirical evidence, but is based on the evidence provided from British practitioners who have considerable clinical experience of directly supporting children who have experienced disrupted attachments or trauma in schools.

Bombèr and Heather Geddes about how to provide a school environment which meets children's attachment needs to enable them to succeed at school.

An Attachment-Aware School Ethos

Developing a whole-school attachment-aware ethos requires commitment from all school staff to provide a school environment which: recognises and meets children's attachment needs; is promoted and supported by the school's senior leadership team; and, is reflected in school policies (Bombèr 2015a, Rose et al 2014). In an effective attachment-aware school, all staff are trained in an attachment-aware approach and so understand that children's behaviours stem from their experiences and this knowledge base encourages them to offer a consistently supportive response (ibid). Rather than punitively managing behaviour, Bombèr (2015a, 2015b) proposes that schools assess a child's capacity for self-regulation of their emotions and support the child to regulate. This empathetic approach requires knowledge of attachment, and of the child, acceptance of the child's emotionally dysregulated states, and, an individualised response. This approach is distinctly different to a generic school behaviour policy and therefore expects much of teachers, but theoretically is more effective for children with attachment difficulties (Bombèr 2015c, Wetz 2009). In Chapters Seven and Eight, I discuss the DTs' responses to looked-after children's challenging behaviours in relation to attachment-aware practice, and show what influences their responses.

Attachment-Aware Teachers

Secure relationships are central to making looked-after children feel safe enough to engage in learning following their likely previous attachment experiences with abusive or insensitive adults (Howes and Ritchie 1999, Bergin and Bergin 2009). Bombèr (2007, 2015a) proposes a 'Key Adult' role as a child's compensatory attachment figure in school to help de-activate a child's attachment behaviours. She suggests that the Key Adult is usually a teaching assistant so that s/he is consistently available for the child.

The Key Adult does not teach the child, but rather works with the child's teachers in school. They can be with the child both outside and inside the classroom and the child can benefit in the following ways:

> 1 develop trust in the Key Adult, by experiencing having her consistently emotionally and physically available
>
> 2 manage his or her feelings, by receiving sensitivity of response from the Key Adult, who attunes herself to her Key Pupil
>
> 3 develop an increased sense of self-esteem by experiencing acceptance
>
> 4 feel effective by being engaged in relationships with both adults and peers (Bombèr 2015a, p.13)

Key adults help children to regulate and manage the stresses of school by building up their self-esteem and supporting them to form and sustain relationships with others so they feel accepted and valued as part of the school community (Bombèr 2015a, Dann 2011, Bombèr and Hughes 2013). They become the child's secure base in school by being consistently emotionally responsive and available (Bombèr 2015a).

Therefore, a Key Adult prioritises developing secure relationships with children with attachment difficulties and is emotionally regulated and resilient enough to act as an additional attachment figure in school. Later, I will argue that a teacher's attachment-aware capacity is influenced by their perceptions and experiences of the role of emotion in teaching and in policy. In Chapter Nine I use the work of Ball et al (2012) to show from within an attachment-aware practice perspective how policy conditions and school settings both enable and constrain DTs' attachment-aware practice.

School Staff Support Systems

Practitioner literature recognises that being emotionally attuned to insecurely attached children can affect staff's emotional wellbeing and so promotes the benefits from formal support systems such as regular supervision sessions with the headteacher or an external specialist if required (Bombèr 2007 and 2011). These opportunities to reflect and make sense of their often distressing experiences supporting children with attachment needs enable staff to remain emotionally regulated and resilient (Geddes 2006, Bombèr 2015a).

The positive influence of colleague support was highlighted in an empirical study in which colleagues were shown to provide additional support for the teachers of looked-after children by informally offering: 'opportunities for

reassurance, advice sharing and joint-working during difficult interactions with looked after children' (Edwards 2016, p.61). For these teachers, reflecting on their work and expressing their feelings about their work with the children was cathartic and reduced feelings of isolation.

Despite such collegiality, attachment-aware teachers, and particularly Key Adults, need a formal model of support to manage the emotional demands of the job (Geddes 2006, Bombèr 2015a).

The Attachment Aware Schools Programme

Building on the Attachment Aware Schools initiative discussed earlier, some Virtual Schools have delivered the Attachment Aware Schools programme to their local schools. Sebba and her colleagues evaluated the programme's impact on developing an attachment-aware approach in Leicestershire, Bath and North Somerset and Stoke-on-Trent (Fancourt and Sebba 2018, Dingwall and Sebba 2018a, 2018b). In Bath and North Somerset, 25 staff participated from 16 schools, 40 participants, mainly teachers, from five schools in Stoke-on-Trent, and, in Leicestershire, 102 participants from 24 schools (Fancourt and Sebba 2018, Dingwall and Sebba 2018a, 2018b). The evaluations used a mixed-methods approach which included surveying and interviewing participants including looked-after children and DTs, data analysis and documentary analysis of some of the training materials.

The evaluations revealed increased staff knowledge about attachment theory and confidence in supporting children with attachment difficulties following attachment training (ibid). In Leicestershire, 92% of the participants surveyed felt confident supporting looked-after children compared to 73% before the training (Fancourt and Sebba 2018). And nearly all the 17 Bath and North Somerset participants and 24 of the Stoke-on-Trent participants reported increased confidence and knowledge of attachment (Dingwall and Sebba 2018a, 2018b). Some participants stated that the programme positively changed their attitudes and practice because they used this knowledge to interpret specific children's behaviours and to inform their response (Fancourt and Sebba 2018, Dingwall and Sebba 2018a, 2018b).

While the programme evaluations reported on three local authorities only, they do reflect the increasing recognition from schools that teachers need this knowledge of how attachment difficulties can affect children in schools. The studies also identified the constraints and enablements to implementing an attachment-aware ethos noting the much-needed commitment of senior leaders to drive changes in practice and guide staff; and, the importance of attachment theory being embedded in all school policies such as the behaviour policy.

Summary: The Meaning of Attachment Aware Schools

Attachment-aware schools promote a consistent whole-school approach to meeting children's unmet attachment needs. They educate and train attachment-aware teachers who prioritise building positive adult-child relationships; and who are enabled to do so by a robust support system. Evidence is emerging of the positive effects of schools adopting an attachment-aware approach including increased staff confidence in supporting children with attachment difficulties.

How the DT Role Supports the Education of Looked-After Children

Introduction

While I conceptualise the work of DTs as central to the success of attachment-aware practice, most DT research is not attachment theory based. Therefore, this section explores what is known about DTs including their knowledge and training; their work including their relationships with looked-after children; and, the support they receive for the role. It also shows where the knowledge about DTs links with attachment theory and where the gaps are in this knowledge.

Research on DTs

There is little research which involves DTs as participants (see Appendix A). This part of the Chapter will analyse those small number of studies which describe DTs and their work. Hence, Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson's[61] detailed study *The Role of the School in Supporting the*

[61] All three authors worked at the National Foundation for Educational Research when the report was published.

Education of Children in Public Care (2003) is drawn upon because of its insightful chapter on the DT role shortly after its introduction in 2000 (DfES 2000). The more recent work of Driscoll[62] (2011, 2013) examines the work of DTs regarding how they support year 11 looked-after children and is a useful comparison. And the work of Carroll, Black and Bettencourt[63] (2019) explores DTs' characteristics and professional development through a discussion of how looked-after children are supported in school. Below relevant studies are reviewed regarding the DTs' knowledge and training; support received; and their work including their relationships with looked-after children; partnership working; and guiding colleagues. But, as I show, the current research does not provide an in-depth exploration of the DTs' work, including how they conceptualise looked-after children.

DTs' knowledge and training

Little is documented about DTs' knowledge or training. One study described variation in the training received by DTs: only 10 of 20 participating DTs had received training relating to looked-after children from their local authority on personal education plans[64], the DT role, and, looked-after children's mental health (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003). (Attachment theory is not mentioned). Moreover, the DTs had varying perceptions of the training required for the role, some thought no specific training was needed for the role, other than child protection training while others requested additional training on their role, funding, how to influence others' practice, and increased knowledge of research on looked-after children's education (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003, Berridge et al 2009).

Three studies refer to DTs receiving attachment training through their Virtual School. Exact numbers are not reported, but seven DTs participated in the programme evaluations, although their views of the training are not distinct from the other participants and it is not possible to identify whether the DTs

[62] Jennifer Driscoll is a lecturer in child studies at King's College London.
[63] All three authors collaborated on a UCL Institute of Education project.
[64] Every looked-after child has a personal education plan which outlines the support they should receive in school.

found the training helpful for their work (Fancourt and Sebba 2018, Dingwall and Sebba 2018a and b).

Another study found that of the 29 Virtual Schools they surveyed about the services they offered to schools, eleven provided attachment training for DTs and their schools (Drew and Bannerjee 2019). However, again the study does not provide the DTs' views on the attachment training because no DTs participated in the study (ibid). Furthermore, this study is limited by the small number of participating Virtual Schools and so cannot be considered to be representative of the training offered by all Virtual Schools to DTs.

Overall, little is known about DTs' understanding of attachment theory and practice and how useful it is for their work. In Chapter Six, I analyse the policy on recommended DT training and the extent to which this training supports attachment-aware practice. And in Chapter Seven, I will compare this research and policy to the findings about DTs' perceptions and experiences of attachment training and the effects on their practice.

The support that DTs receive for the role

A key aspect of the DT role is working in partnership with others like Virtual School Headteachers to plan the support that a looked-after child should receive in school (DfE 2018b). There are gaps in knowledge regarding how a DT is supported by the Virtual School Headteacher. An earlier study which pre-dates the introduction of the Virtual School Headteacher role showed that most DTs received support from their local authority and had a named contact for advice (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003). And Virtual School Headteachers have helped by organising training for DTs and providing guidance about their work (Berridge et al 2009).

It is difficult to conclude whether DTs received the support they need for attachment-aware practice because there is limited reference to the support which DTs receive and relates to practical support like additional time in school for the role (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003, Driscoll 2013, Sebba et al 2016). In Chapters Seven to Nine, I show that there is variation in how DTs are supported to be attachment-aware; and who provides that support including the Virtual School Headteacher.

The work of DTs

Literature on DTs shows that there are two key aspects of DTs' work: relationships with looked-after children; and advising and supporting colleagues which are discussed below.

DTs' relationships with looked-after children

Even if there is limited evidence in research that DTs are trained in an attachment-aware approach, there is evidence that at least some recognise the importance of building relationships with looked-after children. One study describes how regular contact supports the children: 'a physical base out of class when a young person cannot cope in a lesson, or act as a bridge between the young person and other teachers who are less aware of the emotional challenges that the young person is facing' (Sebba et al 2016, p.43). Although such contact varied in frequency: in primary schools the DTs usually had daily contact with the children, but less frequently in secondary schools because there were other school staff who would have daily contact such as form tutors (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003). Thus, there are implications for insecurely attached children in secondary schools who may not have enough contact time to develop secure relationships (Bergin and Bergin 2009, Wetz 2009).

For children for whom the usual behavioural policy sanctions would be counterproductive, a strong figure in school who will advocate for them is vital. Two studies show how the DTs were advocates for looked-after children explaining how the children's experiences influenced their behaviour to avoid their exclusion from school (Driscoll 2013, Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003) Such advocacy is appropriate considering the vulnerability of this group to low attainment and high exclusion and I show how advocacy is part of the DTs' work in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Trust is the key to secure attachments (Bowlby 1997, Ainsworth et al 1978) and nearly half of the 22 looked-after children interviewed in Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson's (2003) study said that they would talk to the DT if they had a problem as they trusted them, yet, half did not because they would speak to their tutor or teacher first as is usual in many school

pastoral systems. And seven of the eight looked-after children interviewed by Sebba et al (2016) claimed that they had a positive relationship with their DT which supported them with their progress and behaviour at school. This shows that the children valued their relationship with the DTs and trusted them to support them in school.

Alternatively, some looked-after children stated that they did not want this connection with the DT as they did not trust them to show confidentiality regarding their care status and wanted to avoid the stigma of being in care (Driscoll 2011). As discussed earlier in the Chapter, there are complexities to building a relationship with looked-after children (Bombèr 2015a) and DTs need guidance about how best to approach this.

Advising and supporting colleagues

Practitioner literature suggests that school staff need guidance and support to meet the needs of looked-after children in an attachment-aware way, and, in Chapter Six, I will show how policy regards providing training and advice as a key element of DTs' work. But, there is little documented to suggest that DTs are carrying out this duty. Two studies refer to DTs' efforts to advise colleagues about looked-after children, but the details about the form and content of this advice are not described (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer and Tomlinson 2003, Sebba et al 2016). Although staff were constrained by not understanding looked-after children's experiences and having other priorities such as teaching (Sebba et al 2016). In Chapter Seven, I show how and why this aspect of the DTs' work is marginalised and how it constrains the DTs in their work supporting looked-after children.

Summary: How the DT Role Supports the Education of Looked-After Children

There is a lack of in-depth, rigorous research which investigates how DTs support looked-after children. I have discussed what is known about their work regarding their training; relationships with looked-after children; and the guidance and support they offer to colleagues. Most DT research is not attachment based and therefore there is limited evidence of DTs' attachment-aware work. Little is known about DTs' understanding of attachment theory or

training; or whether they promote attachment-awareness in schools; or how they are supported in schools to be attachment-aware.

As I embarked on my research, my assumption was that understanding what DTs say, and do would provide insights into the support of looked-after children in schools, which is central to understanding why looked-after children are underachieving. My research focus and research questions (see Chapter One), therefore, are justified because there are few studies which explore DTs and their work, and there are no studies which explore the role from an attachment theory perspective and consider DTs' practice in light of attachment theory. In the next chapter, I will justify a theoretical framework that combines: 1) attachment theory and practice 2) professional identity 3) emotional labour 4) policy enactment to provide an insight into DTs' work, their experiences, the conditions they work in and how they influenced their work shedding light on what constrained and enabled them from trying to support looked-after children in an attachment-aware way.

Conclusion

This Chapter has explored the alternative explanations for looked-after children's low educational achievement including the explanations offered from a neuroscientific and mental health perspective. It shows how attachment theory offers an alternative explanation by describing the key features of attachment theory and how it provides the basis for understanding how schools need to support looked-after children. It also examined how schools can create the optimal conditions for learning by using attachment-aware practice to mitigate the effects of the children's experiences. Finally, the Chapter discussed the research on DTs to provide an insight into what is known about DTs and their work and whether they support looked-after children in an attachment-aware way.

Chapter Four

Theorising DTs' Attachment-Aware Work: Identity, Emotion and Policy

Introduction

The literature on DTs lacks insight into how they conceptualise their work and whether what they do mitigates the effects on educational achievement of looked-after children's experiences. Current research describes what they do, but does not explore in depth why they do it (from their own point of view) or what shapes what they do. I have combined four theories for investigating the complexities of what shapes who DTs are and what they do. Attachment theory frames my research because I am convinced that its practical approaches are the most likely to address the problem of looked-after children's educational underachievement. I use teacher identity theory to understand how DTs' work with looked-after children influences their professional identity formation and why they do what they do; and use emotional labour theory to work with the idea of the DTs identifying as emotion workers. I also use policy enactment theory because, given the plethora of policy which addresses the problem of looked-after children's attainment, it helps me understand how policy shapes the DTs' work.

This Chapter shows how the theoretical framework was used to shed light on DTs, their practice and what might improve it. In Chapter Three I described the key features of attachment theory and practice which are used in Chapter Seven to analyse the DTs' knowledge and attachment-aware practice. In this Chapter, first, I outline teacher identity theory as propounded by Christopher Day, Pamela Sammons and colleagues in terms of three dimensions: 'professional', 'situated' and 'personal'. This theory is used in Chapter Eight to explain the formation of the DTs' identity showing how each identity dimension influences who they are and what they do. Secondly, I explore the key features of emotional labour theory, introduced in a seminal work by Arlie Hochschild, using the theory in Chapter Eight to shed light on DTs' identity, work and relationships with looked-after children. Thirdly, I describe Stephen Ball's

three contexts of policy enactment theory: 'professional', 'external' and 'situated' which mediate teachers' practice. I use these contexts in Chapters Eight and Nine to explore how policy shapes the DTs' attachment-aware practice.

Teacher Identity Theory

While the literature on teacher identity is large and wide-ranging, this thesis employs Day et al's (2006) and Sammons et al's (2007) teacher identity theory which outlines the different influences on the formation of teacher identity as three inter-related dimensions: 'professional', 'situated' and 'personal'. These dimensions need to be in balance to ensure a stable identity at work. Below I explore each dimension in relation to other literature on teacher identity.

Professional Identity

Evidence about teachers' professional identities indicates that it is formed and continually reformed by a multitude of influences. Ivor Goodson and Jennifer Nias are leading figures in research about teachers' lives. Goodson (1991, 2008) argues that understanding a teacher's work needs life histories because professional identity is influenced by individual biographies and cultures beyond school. Nias's (1989) seminal interview-based study of approximately 100 primary school teachers found that teachers' identities and work are influenced by a multitude of different factors including biographical and social. Other research discusses what shapes the construction of teachers' professional identity including qualitative studies involving teacher interviews exploring the concept of the 'caring teacher' as a professional identity (Søreide 2006, O'Connor 2008); Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt's (2000) survey of 80 secondary teachers exploring the influence of biography and context on teachers' perceptions of their professional identity; and, Lasky's (2005) mixed-methods work exploring the relationship between teacher identity construction, agency and context.

From Day and Sammons' perspective (Day et al 2006, Sammons et al 2007), the 'professional identity' dimension is influenced by policy and normative expectations from beyond the school setting. Professional identity includes

teachers' professional values and aspirations, including beliefs about what a 'good' teacher should be and do (ibid). Many teachers believe that a core aspect of their teacher identity is about caring for their pupils, which is what a 'good' teacher does (Søreide, 2006, O'Connor, 2008). Indeed, teaching is described as a 'caring' profession because of the high level of human interaction involved and teachers' prioritisation of developing positive relationships with pupils (Lasky 2005).

Yet, the traditional 'caring teacher' identity is changing because education policy's ever-increasing expectations of teachers' performance constructs a professional identity which does not prioritise making children feel cared for as a pre-condition for engaging in learning (Goodson 2008, Nias 1989, Ball 2003). This trend includes re-defining the profession's priorities towards the achievement of government set targets (Day and Smethem 2009). Teachers can find themselves with a conflicted professional identity as agency and autonomy is compromised (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). Day et al (2006) claim that it is loss of values and beliefs that creates tension and affects teachers' sense of agency when they cannot realise their ambition to teach and support children as they think right. Chapter Eight explores the conceptualisation of the caring teacher in the DTs' work including how their professional aspirations enabled this professional identity and the implications for practice in light of the government's marginalisation of the 'caring' teacher.

Situated Identity

The 'situated identity' dimension relates to a 'meso' context: school, departmental and classroom contexts where pupils' and colleagues' responses are key. The focus is the school setting and how it influences the identity of teachers and involves several factors such as the school's socio-economic context and pupil demographic profile. Situated identity can include how the teacher's role is perceived within school by school leadership, colleagues and pupils.

That specific school settings influence teacher identity is uncontested: the expanse and variety of values stemming from the whole-school community

ranging from pupils and their families to the headteacher, other colleagues and governors feed into the pervasive culture of the school (Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt 2000). The effect of pupils and their behaviour on teachers' identity through affecting their understanding of their purpose in the school and sense of self-efficacy is also cited by many (Day et al 2006, Nias 1989, Ball and Goodson 1985). Therefore, exploring a teacher's perceptions of how they and their work are viewed by others in school can explain the nature of a teacher's work, including their constraints (Goodson 2000). Nias' research (1989) shows the importance of primary school teachers identifying with the culture and values of their school context and having a reference group within school, otherwise identity has to be constantly negotiated due to the tensions. Nias reveals how these tensions can lead to isolation for teachers (ibid).

I use the concept of 'situated identity' to explore: how the DTs and their work were perceived by colleagues; whether their values conflicted with the school's; and, how their colleagues' perceptions affected the DTs' conceptualisation of their work and the support they received in the role.

Personal Identity

The 'personal identity' dimension is identity outside school, for example, that of a parent or partner. It includes personal beliefs, values and aspirations and personal biography. Here, responses from friends and family are significant.

Despite the influence of the normative expectations of teaching and their school's values, teachers' beliefs and behaviour are still guided by their own interpretations of the world as shown by their personal identity outside school (Nias 1989, Goodson 2008). A teacher's personal biography can have a substantial impact on their teacher identity (ibid). For example, a teacher's philosophy and approaches to teaching and learning can be shaped by their own schooling experiences like earlier teacher role models, and the attitudes of family members (Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt 2000, Day 2007). In Chapter Eight, I explore how the DTs' personal beliefs and experiences including parental and own school experiences shaped their identity and their work supporting looked-after children.

Emotional Labour Theory

DTs' work can be conceptualised as emotional labour and an identity as emotion worker can be speculated about because their work involves managing looked-after children's emotions and their own. Moreover, their emotion work is influenced by the situated context of their schools.

The theory of 'emotional labour' was proposed by Hochschild (1983) whose multi-method study of 30 flight attendants found that their work with airline passengers amounted to emotional labour defined as: 'The management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (ibid, p.29). The flight attendants' work was defined as emotional labour because: 1) it involves face-to-face contact with the public 2) the employee must provoke an emotional state in the people they encounter which requires suppressing or faking emotion 3) the employer supervises the employee's emotion work. In my study, the DT's work involves emotional labour because: 1) the DTs have face-to-face contact with looked-after children 2) the DTs act as an emotional co-regulator for looked-after children to support their learning involving the DTs suppressing or faking their own emotions 3) the DTs' emotion work is influenced by the conceptualisation of emotion in schools. Further exploration of these characteristics of emotional labour and how they played out in the DTs' work are discussed in Chapter Eight.

The literature discussed below shows how the concept of emotional labour is relevant to teachers. David Hargreaves (2000), a leading figure on the emotions of teaching, proposes that teaching is emotional work because it involves interactions and relationships with children. Michalinos Zembylas has written extensively about teachers' emotional labour including an action research study about the role of caring in teaching (Zembylas 2003, Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006). Other emotional labour theory research includes qualitative studies involving semi-structured interviews of teachers including: Edward's (2016) study of the emotional labour experiences of 14 teachers of looked-after children; the marginalisation of emotion work for 26 teachers (Hebson et al 2007); the emotion rules governing 25 teachers' work (Yin and Lee 2012); and the emotional regulation strategies used by 30 teachers (Sutton

2004). There are also quantitative survey-based studies which assess 123 teachers' capacity to emotionally regulate and how their emotional regulation is enabled by their job satisfaction, and colleague support (Brackett et al 2010); and, the frequency of 266 teachers' suppression and faking of emotion in their work (Taxer and Frenzel 2015). The above studies discuss why teachers can be viewed as emotion workers and what constrains and enables their emotional labour such as display rules; job satisfaction; schools' performance culture; and, colleague support.

Hargreaves (2000) shows that emotion is side-lined in teaching which has implications for looked-after children who are likely to struggle with emotional regulation in school. Hargreaves interviewed 53 teachers in 15 schools and found that schools' systems and processes constrains teachers from meeting children's emotional needs. While teachers appreciated that students occasionally struggle to regulate their emotions for personal reasons and would sensitively deal with students' emotional needs at those times, they resisted changing their classroom practice to be consistently more emotionally responsive to students. He argues that the performance culture created by policy fails to acknowledge the role of emotion in teaching. Sutton (2004) proposes that teachers' use of behaviour policy to manage students' displays of emotion is evidence that emotions are not usually viewed as a positive part of classroom life, rather they are perceived as an obstacle diverting students' attention from learning.

It is likely that devaluing emotion in teaching leads to what Hochschild (1983) calls 'display rules' governing teachers' own emotional management. Display rules are implicit in normative expectations of teachers and relate to what is perceived as 'professional' and 'competent'. So 'good' teachers are expected to be emotional regulation role models to manage classroom behaviour and promote academic achievement (Sutton 2004, Yin and Lee 2012). Display rules are made up by: 'feeling rules', 'surface acting' and 'deep acting'. Feeling rules dictate what a person *should* feel rather than how they *do* feel. Employing organisations can send messages about what it is legitimate to feel. Surface acting involves suppressing or faking emotion to align with 'institutionally approved' emotion. Some teachers engage in surface acting

displaying only positive emotions to enable them to prioritise children's emotional needs and develop positive relationships (Yin and Lee 2012, Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006, Brackett et al 2010). Deep acting is when someone makes her/himself feel a specific emotion to display that emotion to others.

Studies show teachers emotionally exhausted from frequently faking positive emotions and hiding negative emotions (Taxer and Frenzel 2015), or unable to manage their emotions or their students' emotions (Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006). Sutton (2004) found that teachers described the frequency of emotional regulation in the classroom as "daily" or "every second" using various strategies to avoid losing control and expressing their true emotions (p.384).

However, the negative effects of emotional labour can be mediated by positive role identification and workplace support (Hargreaves 1998, Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006). Teachers can enjoy emotion work with children because it is a core aspect of their professional identity and fulfils their personal expectations of what 'good' teachers do leading to high teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction (ibid). Here, teachers have agency and control: they willingly give emotion in their work (Hebson et al 2007). And colleagues mediate teacher burnout by supporting teachers' emotional regulation (Edwards 2016, Sutton 2004). Kinman et al (2011) used a self-report questionnaire to assess the emotional labour experiences of 628 teachers and found that teachers with more colleague support experienced more job satisfaction and less burnout because they expressed their true emotions about their difficult interactions with children with colleagues.

In summary, research on emotional labour shows why teachers engage in emotional labour; the costs of engaging in emotional labour; and what mediates the negative effects. In Chapter Eight, I use emotional labour as a lens to explore the DTs' work including their relationships with looked-after children and the costs of managing the children's emotions. I discuss how feeling and display rules affect the DTs' emotion work; the personal and professional costs of their emotional labour; and what mediates the negative effects of their emotional labour.

Policy Enactment Theory

The policy enactment process is the translation and interpretation of policy as it moves from the minds of policy-makers into various contexts in local authorities, schools and individual teachers. Ball et al (2012) consider the UK education system to be 'performative', that is, over-focused on students' exam performance and schools' positioning in school league tables, and Ofsted gradings. From my perspective, performativity constrains schools' attachment-aware practice because improving academic attainment and meeting children's academic needs are pursued at the expense of meeting their social and emotional needs. Ball (2003) illustrates the personal impact on teachers whose opinions, knowledge and experience are marginalised within a teaching culture which no longer acknowledges their expertise (as they see it) as worthy. So teachers try to conform to a teaching ideal that fails to consider their students' needs. The result: 'A kind of values schizophrenia is experienced by individual teachers where commitment, judgement and authenticity within practice are sacrificed for impression and performance' (Ball 2003, p.221).

This is the socio-political context that teachers are working in which inevitably shapes their professional identity and capacity to carry out emotion work with children discussed earlier. Policy enactment theory explains how policy plays out in teachers' work and I have used it to explore how DTs' identity and practices are mediated by three different but interrelated contexts of policy enactment discussed below:

- The 'situated context' (parallel with the situated identity for professional identity formation) includes the school's location and pupil demographic profile as well as the history of the school. Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010) suggest that the situated context of a school could lead to different practices ensuing from a policy by a similar school in the same location, particularly as schools have different policy priorities. McCulloch (2004) also highlights the difference between what a policy states and the actual practice which ensues from the policy.

- The ‘professional context’ refers to whole-school ethos and departmental subject cultures as well as teachers’ professional values, loyalties and biographies.

- The ‘external context’ includes both local and national policy issues and support, for example, the school’s position in the performance tables, current Ofsted grading and local authority support (Braun et al 2011).

I explore the ‘situated’, ‘professional and ‘external' contexts of the DTs’ four primary schools and two secondary schools through an analysis of the DT interviews; government data about the schools’ cohort and performance (see Chapter Nine); my knowledge of the schools as a local authority consultant; and, policy pertaining to the schools.

Ball et al (2012) propose that the policy enactment process is also affected by: 1) policy type 2) whether people are active or passive policy subjects 3) policy actor type. They describe two types of policy: ‘imperative/disciplinary policies’ (ibid p.92) which offer explicit directives and expectations and are not open to much interpretation by teachers or schools; and, ‘exhortative/developmental policies’ (ibid p.94) which permit a more flexible response from teachers and schools where their own understanding, skills and experiences can be employed, resulting in a more personalised and creative response to policy. Imperative policies usually result in ‘passive policy subjects’ whose response to policy is constrained (ibid, p.92) whereas exhortative policies usually result in ‘active policy subjects’ because their interpretation of and response to policy is permitted flexibility (ibid, p.94). There are also different types of policy actors such as ‘entrepreneurs’ who lead on enacting policy in schools (ibid, p.53), and, ‘translators’ who translate policy for others through policy events and texts (ibid, p.59). In Chapter Nine, I discuss what influences the DTs’ enactment of policy identifying policy type, whether they are active policy subjects, their policy actor role, and, the Virtual School’s role as policy manager.

Policy enactment theory helped me to investigate how national policies play out in local contexts in the DTs’ practices and how policy shapes their work. In

Chapter Nine, I explore what the DTs say about how the DT policy is enacted in their schools to examine how their individual school contexts constrain and enable attachment-aware practice.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have outlined a theoretical framework constituted by three theories to shed light on what is not known about the DTs. In Chapter Three, I explained how attachment theory underpins what DTs need to know, understand and do. In this Chapter, I explained how teacher identity theory helped to explore investigating the complexities of what shapes DTs' identity and dispositions and how they approach their work with looked-after children; how emotional labour theory offered a view of the nature of work the DTs undertake; and how policy enactment theory helps to understand how policy about looked-after children and DTs was interpreted and shaped their work.

Chapter Five: Methodology and Methods of Data Generation

Introduction

This Chapter first explains how my ontological and epistemological assumptions influenced my decisions about how to conduct the research explaining how phenomenology is congruent with these assumptions and provided me with the research principles. Secondly, I explain how documentary analysis and qualitative, semi-structured interviews were congruent with phenomenology and with answering my research questions. Thirdly, I describe the selection of the documents and the documentary analysis process. Fourthly, I describe the process of recruiting and interviewing the DTs, ending with the ethical issues which emerged. Finally, I describe the data analysis process used to analyse the DT interviews.

Phenomenological Methodology

My ontological assumptions are that the reality that I am interested in - that of the DTs - is interpreted and given meaning by actors in a subjective way (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2005, 2011, Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Therefore, I position myself within an interpretivist paradigm (ibid). My epistemological assumptions are that generating knowledge about DTs' experiences, and how they feel and think involves exploring their perceptions from their point of view (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). Phenomenology is congruent with my ontological and epistemological assumptions because it is a way of understanding the social world in which the study of lived human experience from the point of view of those experiencing it is a valid way of generating knowledge (Moustakas 1994). In a qualitative, idiographic[65] research methodology, the phenomenological researcher accesses people's thoughts and feelings about their experiences and interprets the world from their perspective to generate new knowledge about the experience or phenomenon being investigated, often using in-depth interviews (Moustakas 1994, Adams and Van Manen 2008).

[65] Focuses on the individual

I pursued the principles of phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl because of the focus on understanding how people make sense of their own lived experiences. Edmund Husserl (1859 –1938) was a German mathematician who become a professor of philosophy and developed what he called transcendental phenomenology as a new way of studying the structures of consciousness and of doing philosophy (Moran 2000).[66] Husserl developed phenomenology by focusing on the essence of the experience; his catchphrase: 'back to the things' (Cohen et al 2011 p.18) refers to getting to the essence of the phenomenon being studied (ibid). Husserl proposed a process to achieving this: 'Epoche*'* defined as the process of bracketing or putting aside the researcher's own experiences, theories (scientific, cultural, philosophical), preconceptions, and judgements about what is being investigated (Moran 2000). This enables the researcher to focus on the participants' experience of the phenomenon to get to the essence of the experience (Moustakas 1994). Although the challenges of limiting research bias even when using the bracketing process is a criticism of phenomenological research which I discuss further later.

Other criticisms are that phenomenological research is not scientifically rigorous because of the focus on lived experience and forgoing scientific theories (Moran 2000), and that there is no generalisability of the findings because the data is generated from subjective, individual experience (Groenewald 2004). In addressing these methodological criticisms, I wanted to explore the DTs' lived experience to understand their work and I can comment on the shared experience of the phenomenon for this group of DTs.

Creswell (2017) sets out the features of a phenomenological study, I use these features (in italics below) to show how my study can be regarded as phenomenological:

- The research explores a *phenomenon* - the DT role;

[66] Phenomenology was later further developed by Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), Husserl's student, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 –1980), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961) (Groenewald 2004).

- I identified a group of people – the DTs - who all had *experience* of the *phenomenon*;
- I explored the *lived experiences* of the individual DTs and the *common shared experiences* of the group in relation to the *phenomenon*. Understanding individuals' *lived experience* is key to understanding how they construct meaning within their world, for example, the meanings they attached to their DT role and to looked-after children; how the DTs made sense of the role; and, why they interpreted it in that way;
- I attempted to use a bracketing process – *epoche* – to bracket my own experiences and bias about the DTs' and their work. This is described in more detail later in this Chapter;
- The data collection methods used are: (1) analysis of policy documents which provided insight into their wider context which was part of and so affected their *lived experience*; (2) interviewing the DTs who had experienced the DT role which allowed me to extrapolate the *lived experiences* of the DTs in relation to the *phenomenon*;
- The data analysis process I used involved developing the emerging themes into a description of the *lived experiences* of the DTs by providing a *textual description* – 'what' the DTs had experienced and the *structural description* - 'how' they had experienced it 'in terms of the conditions, situations or context' (Creswell 2017, p.78);
- Finally, I have written a detailed account of the *essence* of the DT role using both the *textual* and *structural descriptions* (see Chapters Seven to Nine).

Phenomenology was an appropriate methodology for my study because it suggested an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of a group of DTs. And, considering my working experiences with DTs, as discussed in Chapter One, I needed a methodology which allowed me to study the voices of the DTs while recognising and attempting to bracket my own experiences and bias about their work throughout the data analysis process. My research and interview questions focused on the participants' experience of the phenomenon, and what

influenced their experience of the phenomenon. See Chapter One for the research questions and Appendix D for the interview questions.

Methods of Data Generation

Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis allowed me to use policy enactment theory (Ball et al 2012) (discussed in Chapter Four) as a lens to explore policy influences on how the DTs experienced the role, how policy shapes the conditions they were working in like the government's expectations of the role.

Six policy documents (see Table 5.1 below) were selected because they show how the DT role has evolved in policy terms from its introduction in 2000 to its current form in 2018 revealing the evolving construction of the role and professional identity of DTs, and, the wider policy context. Further details about the documents are in Chapter Six.

Table 5.1: Selected Policy Documents

Document	Government Department
Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)	Department for Education and Employment
Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools (2009a)	Department for Children, Schools and Families
Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools (2009b)	Department for Children, Schools and Families
The role of the designated teacher (2009c)	Department for Children, Schools and Families
The role of the designated teacher (2018a)	Department for Education
Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities (2018b)	Department for Education

I carried out an initial analysis of the documents between January 2016 and September 2016 and again between February and April 2019 because of the government's revision of two of the policy documents in 2018 and the changes to my theoretical framework.

The key areas of analysis of the documents were:

1. The representation of looked-after children including their needs;

2. The representation of the DT's behaviour and activities such as the role's actions and priorities;

3. The extent to which the representations outlined above showed evidence of attachment theory and practice.

The analysis investigated the purpose and interplay between the representations including how they were linked and the contradictions and consequences emerging from such representations (Ball et al 2012). The documentary analysis showed how a particular issue is defined by the government (Gibson and Brown 2009, McCulloch 2004), namely, how looked-after children's low educational attainment is understood by government and presented for audiences such as DTs in the representations, and, revealed the values, and assumptions presented in the policy documents (Codd 1988). The documents were analysed using the theories of attachment theory (Bowlby 1997, Ainsworth et al 1978) and attachment-aware practice (Bombèr 2015a, Rose et al 2014). And I drew on Wellington's (2000) work on documentary analysis for the documentary analysis framework (see Appendix M for the framework). Chapter Nine draws on policy enactment theory (Ball et al 2012) to explore how national policies played out in local contexts in the DTs' practices and constrained and enabled attachment-aware practice.

DT Interviews

Selection of and access to participants

Wood County was the chosen location for the research because I work in Wood County Virtual School supporting DTs and schools. My role provides access to a database with the contact details for each school's DT which I used to invite the selected DTs to participate in the research. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Nottingham, School of Education's Research Ethics Coordinator in January 2015 (see Appendix F). The initial plan was to approach DTs directly to invite them to participate in the research. However, a challenge from the Committee resulted in a more thorough reflection on the implications of this approach. The Committee was concerned that the research could be considered 'covert' if the headteacher of the DT's school was

unaware and had not consented to the DT's involvement. I was concerned about headteachers' role as gatekeepers in the recruitment process, particularly if headteachers did not want DTs to share their experiences of supporting looked-after children because the experiences were negative. One DT agreed to participate in the research, but later withdrew because their manager refused permission to participate worried it might lead to a negative presentation of the school. This prompted my concern that any participants would be mindful of their headteacher's awareness of their participation which could prevent them speaking candidly about their own experiences and perceptions thus compromising the quality of the data generated (Goodson 2008). Accordingly, I assured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the recruitment and interview process.

On reflection about recruiting the DTs through their headteachers, I agreed that my own position within the local authority warranted informing the headteachers about the research and my intention to recruit the school's DT. I work in partnership with headteachers to improve school practice for looked-after children and there should be a transparency about our working relationship and my involvement in their schools. Secondly, Wood County's schools reflect the recent education policy changes regarding the considerable number who are academies with independence from local authority jurisdiction and control. Rather than assuming that approval from my local authority line manager justifies approaching DTs directly, it seemed appropriate to approach headteachers initially. Although the potential participant reflected my concern regarding headteachers as gatekeepers during recruitment, it could not be assumed that all headteachers would have this attitude. Or, that headteachers would not see the benefits of conducting research on looked-after children's education, particularly as these school leaders have the power to influence change in schools (Brown 2010). Other ethical issues arising from this are discussed later in the Chapter.

I approached DTs for looked-after children at 29 schools through their headteachers and seven participants agreed to participate in the study which is a response rate of approximately 24%. Explanations for the low response rate

are unclear, but potential factors include teachers' busyness; and looked-after children's education being a sensitive subject and low priority for teachers because of the low cohort numbers in schools. I asked the final four participants why they agreed to participate when the difficulties in recruiting participants became clear: three appreciated the support they had received from me and wanted to reciprocate, for example: '*I really appreciate your support at the networks and I thought it was only fair*' (Elizabeth), '*Well you guys support us so I wanted to support you*' (Grace). And one participant hoped that the research would lead to further DT training opportunities.

The participants were from four primary and two secondary schools. I approached DTs at both mainstream and special schools, but did not approach DTs at alternative provisions[67] because they are a proportionately small section and only those alternative provisions maintained by a local authority or are an academy are required to have a DT (DfE 2018a). Moreover, the DT role could be carried out differently in alternative provisions because the children attending have been excluded from mainstream school[68].

Although I recruited only a small number of participants, it is appropriate for a qualitative study which aims to provide in-depth data on a small number of specific cases and was realistically practical considering the time and resources available for the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). I aimed for purposive sampling[69] because the research was about investigating DTs as a specific group with the knowledge and experience of the DT role; there was no intention to generalise about the wider teaching profession (ibid). But, as discussed below, it was not possible to produce a purposive sample because of the low number of volunteers therefore these volunteers are likely to be 'best cases' because they were willing to talk about their work. Internal validity is relevant because the study involves only Wood County DTs (and likely 'best

[67] Alternative provision refers to education settings such as pupil referral units, independent schools or part-time off-site education provision for children who do not attend a mainstream school because of reasons such as exclusion or illness.
[68] Sebba et al (2015) show how attending alternative provision at Key Stage 4 can negatively influence looked-after children's GCSE exam performance suggesting that research into how looked-after children's education is supported in those educational environments is certainly worth exploring.
[69] To produce a sample which is representative of the DT population (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011).

cases') so some local consensus and commonality about how the DT role is perceived and practised was anticipated (Rosen-Webb 2011).
The characteristics of the group of DTs:

- There were one man and six women;
- There were five DTs from primary schools and two from secondary schools;
- Three participants had more than four years of experience and four participants had fewer;
- Variation in numbers of looked-after children attending the DTs' schools;
- Four participants were also a senior leader[70].

The details of the DTs who participated in the study are given below in Table 5.2. The personal details given about participants below are described in generic terms, for example, exact job titles, exact length of time in the DT role, and the exact number of looked-after children in the school are not provided. This is to ensure that the details given do not identify the participants, their schools, their families, or the children they work with. Further details about the participants are provided in Chapters Seven to Nine.

Table 5.2: Characteristics of the Participants

Pseudonym	School Profile	Post	Time in post as DT	Number of looked-after children in school
Adam	secondary	Senior Leader	Fewer than 4 years	6 - 10
Becky	primary	Senior Leader	Fewer than 4 years	0
Carla	primary	Senior Leader	Fewer than 4 years	1 – 5
Diane	primary	Teaching Assistant/Support staff	More than 4 years	1 - 5
Elizabeth	Primary	Senior Leader	Fewer than 4 years	1 - 5
Fiona	secondary	Teaching Assistant/Support staff	More than 4 years	10 - 15
Grace	primary	Teaching Assistant/Support staff	More than 4 years	1 - 5

[70] Senior Leader refers to holding a senior leadership role such as Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

The shortcoming of the sample was few DTs from secondary schools (13 secondary schools were approached). Secondary aged looked-after children have worse outcomes compared to primary aged looked-after children regarding exclusions and attainment so an unwillingness to share negative experiences of practice and support could be a possible reason. Although there was only one male participant, there were two men only on the DT contacts database and both were invited to participate in the research.

I had previously met most of the DTs (apart from Diane) who I selected for the research on at least one occasion either through DT training or a network meeting which I had arranged. As shown in Chapter Seven, four of the DTs (Grace, Elizabeth, Becky, Fiona) regularly attended the network meetings so I had worked with them on several occasions. I had also carried out annual monitoring visits to two DTs in their schools, Grace and Elizabeth, to review their support of looked-after children. I had only met Adam once before the interview and had not met Diane prior to her interviews. The ethical issues are discussed later in the Chapter.

The conduct of the interviews

The interviews were carried out between October 2015 and June 2016 and the duration of the interviews ranged from 54 minutes to 90 minutes (see Appendix B). I had offered to interview the DTs either at a venue of their choice or at the university (see participants' information sheet – Appendix C). But, all the interviews took place at the DTs' schools in their offices, a nurture room, an empty classroom and in a meeting room during their free periods. Each interview was recorded.

The interview questions

Unlike quantitative methods such as surveys, interviews provided the detailed, qualitative information that I needed to get an insight into DTs' lived experiences. Other qualitative methods such as observations of DTs interacting with looked-after children to identify aspects of attachment-aware practice would have been challenging to implement regarding selecting a sample and gaining access to observe the children.

I used an 'interview guide' approach with a planned outline of specific topics and questions which I wanted to cover (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011) and used them to develop a conversation with the DTs. See Appendix D for the interview questions. I wanted to understand the DTs' experiences in the role including their conceptualisation of looked-after children, their constraints and enablements such as their knowledge and support received, and how their work affected them. I did not explicitly ask the DTs about attachment because it was not the focus of the research at the time, as discussed in Chapter One. At the time of the interviews, my hunch was that school staff had low expectations of looked-after children because they lacked understanding of the children's experiences and needs, but not specifically their attachment needs, therefore attachment theory was not part of my theoretical framework. My own knowledge of attachment was growing, I had recently introduced it to the DTs. At that time, as a school improvement consultant, I was not convinced that understanding attachment theory was key to improving things educationally for looked-after children because I was entrenched in policy speak about performance and what is deemed important for schools. My perceptions were shaped by policy rhetoric in the policy documents of the time. Fortunately, my interview questions were broad because although I had preconceived ideas about DTs I tried to put them aside because I wanted to listen to what the DTs had to say about their experiences. Therefore, my interview questions did not make assumptions about DTs' experiences of the role, and I was retrospectively able to view them through an attachment theory lens.

Using a vignette

During the interview, I used a vignette about a fictional looked-after child, Patrick, to elicit from the DTs responses about their conceptualisations of and work with looked-after children (see Appendix E). This section explores the research literature on the advantages and limitations of using vignettes as a method of data generation, relating it to my own use of a vignette. The findings from the data generated from the vignette are discussed in Chapter Seven.

Finch (1987) offers a definition: '[Vignettes] are short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the

interviewee is invited to respond' (p.105). Vignettes are used both in quantitative and qualitative research either as the sole method or with other methods such as interviews or surveys (Wilks, 2004, Barter and Renold 1999). I used the vignette of Patrick as part of a semi-structured interview and asked the participants what advice they would give to a newly appointed DT struggling to support Patrick who is experiencing difficulties in school. The DTs' responses to the vignette provided a complementary source of data, enhancing the interview data and allowing me to explore discrepancies in their accounts of supporting looked-after children (discussed in Chapter Seven).

Hughes and Huby (2002) point out that a vignette is useful for studying 'people's lives, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs' (p.385) because it can elicit attitudes and beliefs about fictional characters and situations which the participant might be otherwise reluctant to divulge. As a local authority school improvement consultant and researcher, I was eager to avoid the DTs giving me 'textbook' answers I anticipated that they would give based on what they thought I wanted to hear (Hobson and Townsend 2013). More generally, a vignette allows the exploration of sensitive issues with participants because they are asked about hypothetical characters and situations which creates distance between the participant and the characters and their issues, rather than talking about themselves (Barter and Renold 1999, Jenkins et al 2010). So a vignette can create an environment where participants feel safe to speak and freer to give sincere rather than socially desirable answers (Poulou 2001). It can also provide an opportunity for participants to compare their own experiences with the vignette's characters (Barter and Renold 1999).

A further potential of a vignette is that it encourages exploration of complex issues by simplifying aspects of real life in the vignette's characters and situation (Finch 1987, Hughes and Huby 2002). This simplification can also draw participants into revealing their interpretive framework as they interpret and define the vignette's characters and situation for themselves, drawing on their own experiences (Finch 1987). I created Patrick to reflect specific and complex pre-care and care experiences and problematic behaviours. I wanted to explore how the DTs conceptualised and reacted to Patrick's behaviours and converted these into advice for a new DT. I simplified Patrick's complex pre-

care background, circumstances and needs into a concise summary to enable the DTs' comprehension and interpretation of Patrick and his needs.

When participants have varying levels of knowledge and personal experience of the situation being explored it can facilitate responses (Finch 1987, Hughes and Huby 2002, Barter and Renold 2000). As discussed in Chapter Seven, the DTs in my study had varying levels of knowledge and experience of supporting looked-after children's education. Responses to the vignette of Patrick allowed me to compare their opinions about how to support Patrick even if as individuals they had not experienced supporting a looked-after child with complex needs.

There are several limitations to using vignettes which I sought to mitigate. A vignette's effectiveness can be limited by its design: it needs clear characters and situations which are realistic, relevant, and interesting for participants to enable them to empathise with the characters and provide a realistic response (Finch 1987, Barter and Renold 1999, Jenkins et al 2010). My vignette design incorporates my knowledge of DTs' work by including details about Patrick which would be relevant, realistic, and interesting to the DTs. It was based on multiple factors which studies show can negatively impact on a looked-after child's educational progress and which DTs might be expected to encounter during their daily support of looked-after children like the effects of neglect or abuse on a child's behaviour and issues relating to frequent school moves and poor information sharing (Bernedo, Salas and Garcia-Martin 2011, Welbourne and Leeson 2012, Cairns 2011, Social Exclusion Unit 2003). The same vignette was given to the primary and secondary DTs to see whether there was variation in responses.

Jenkins et al (2010) caution that researchers should not assume that participants disclose more about themselves than they would through direct questioning about their own experiences. Moreover, researchers warn that vignettes should not be used for predicting participants' behaviour because there is no link between participants' beliefs and actions (Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000, Wilks 2004). A participant's response is not generalisable because it is limited to the context of the vignette (Wilson and While 1998, Poulou 2001). Although, if

participants' responses are congruent with their responses generated from other data generation sources, some generalisation might be appropriate (Hughes and Huby 2002). I did not interpret any DT's advice for another DT as predictive of how they themselves would support a child like Patrick in reality. Rather, as discussed in Chapter Seven, I used the DTs' responses towards Patrick to analyse their understanding of attachment theory and practice.

Ethical issues

The headteachers of each of the 29 schools were issued with an information letter (see Appendix G) outlining the nature and purpose of the research and the intention to recruit the school's DT to participate in the study. I had met three of the headteachers previously: two in a meeting to discuss individual looked-after children's education and one in a meeting about school admissions. The letter requested their support with the project and offered the option to contact me if they did not want the DT to participate in the research, or to sign a consent form (see Appendix H) if they agreed. It was hoped that by providing headteachers and DTs with a full awareness and understanding of the research and the opportunity to freely raise any concerns or questions then any unease about the study potentially damaging a school's reputation would be allayed and withdrawal of consent would not occur (Plowright 2011). And no headteacher did withdraw their consent.

The participant information sheet (see Appendix C) and consent form (see Appendix I) was then sent to 29 DTs to invite them to participate in the research. The participants had 'free will' to participate in the study and voluntary consent to withdraw if desired as part of a 'rolling informed consent' process due to the delicate nature of the topic (Plowright 2011, Piper and Simons 2011). The participants were asked to sign the participant consent form before the interview; and were asked at the start of the interview if they were still happy to participate. There were no incidents during the interviews which suggested that any of the participants wished to withdraw from the interview. And no participants withdrew from the study.

My own ethical values included treating the data collected from DTs in a confidential, respectful and safe manner including anonymising all data,

storing data securely, and maintaining the participants' confidentiality which did present some challenges because all the participants were employed in the same local authority. Following the interviews, I intentionally did not discuss my research at DTs' events or with the participants unless I was talking privately with individual DTs and this was limited to discussing progress writing the thesis. However, one DT was happy for people to know that she was a participant and, once asked me about the research in a small group setting. I gave her a brief outline of the key findings from my research thus far and was mindful of protecting the other participants' anonymity. DTs were informed at the start of the interview that they must refrain from naming specific looked-after children in their school during their interview.[71]

Reflexivity

I was concerned that my local authority role as an 'expert' on looked-after children's education and a source of advice and support for DTs (discussed in Chapter Seven) would lead to the DTs providing an interpretation of their role and lived reality according to their expectations of me and the power dynamics in the interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). Moreover, my role involves carrying out monitoring visits to schools to review DTs' support of looked-after children so it would be reasonable (unless convinced otherwise) to think I might be monitoring and evaluating their practice and the school during the interviews. My concern, therefore, related to the DTs providing textbook answers to questions regarding their work with looked-after children and expressing only positive attitudes about their work and looked-after children rather than their true perceptions and experiences. It could be argued that the participants' answers would not be accurate representations of their beliefs and feelings due to the social pressure of wanting approval for their answers so I must accept and acknowledge this possibility (Leonard 2003, Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

[71] No safeguarding issues emerged during the interviews, but all participants and headteachers were informed at the outset of the research process that I would make a disclosure if there was a safeguarding issue for either a child or a member of staff due to my duty of care to both parties as a local authority employee and researcher.

However, I used an interview approach to build trust and prompt participants to talk openly about their experiences as they had some control of the process and could decide what is worth narrating (Smith 2012). I started each interview by reading out a briefing statement (see Appendix J) to build trust which stressed that: the interview was confidential; the research was separate from my local authority work; and, their work would not be evaluated. I also explained how I wanted to hear about their views and experiences as a DT and would be asking them about their work. I requested that they treat the interview as an open discussion to promote as truthful a conversation as possible. I used a funnel approach to questioning starting with questions about individual biography and their trajectory to working in a school to establish a more conversational tone before moving to indirect questions about looked-after children and then to specific questions about their experiences with looked-after children (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011).

Howe and Moses (1999) argue that interpretivist research: 'invites intimacy and open-endedness' and needs 'more vigilant ethical reflection and monitoring' (p.40) which could be considered relevant because of the sensitive and personal issues which were discussed like supporting traumatised children. The participants did reflect on private matters like career decisions and histories, sense of agency and self-efficacy. One participant talked about her own journey adopting a child. Therefore, the level of intrusiveness could be regarded as quite high for the participants and Lindsay (2010) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) outline the implications of participants revealing too much in interviews and regretting it later. In my de-briefing at the end of the interview, I asked participants if they had any questions about the interview and reminded them that they could contact me afterwards if required.

While the discussion of looked-after children did cause some frustration for some participants, none of the participants became outwardly distressed during the interviews (Howe and Moses 1999). As Plowright (2011) advises, I did not take on the role of 'adviser or counsellor' (p.158) for the participants, although I made some attempts to offer understanding or reassurance when participants expressed frustration or unhappiness. One participant, Diane, was frustrated

about a looked-after child who had been failed by social care (discussed further in Chapter Eight). My response: 'It sounds like you did everything that as a school and yourself you did everything you could to support her, it's just that it was lacking elsewhere? Is that how you feel?' Another participant, Grace, described how she had cried in the staffroom because of a looked-after child's experiences (discussed further in Chapter Eight). My response was: 'But that's good though that you have that opportunity to offload because we all do that.' In both responses, I tried to show empathy for the participants' experiences and feelings.

There were moments during the interviews when I was genuinely surprised by a participant's response like one disclosing that they had an adopted child and more than one candidly discussing how children had been abused, or their own distress regarding a looked-after child's situation or treatment and I was unsure how to respond. Although I remember feeling surprised in the interview, the audio recording of the interview and the transcript do not suggest that I outwardly displayed my surprise either verbally or non-verbally. I did have to reflect on whether it would be appropriate to include the highly private aspects of people's biographies such as adoption in this thesis, but thought that if the analysis of those participants' transcripts revealed that these aspects shaped their perception and response to looked-after children then it justified their inclusion. This was coupled with the DTs' willingness to share those aspects of their lives with me and them explicitly connecting these personal experiences with their attitude towards their practice. Therefore, including these important, private details does justice to my participants' data. I was also mindful of taking care of myself as a lone researcher who also had a dual role which involved working with and supporting the participants following the interviews.

Using interviews does raise issues about the ownership of the research and about whose voice is being heard– mine or the DTs (Bryman 2004, Miller 2003, Creswell 2009, Smith 2012). Bold (2012) warns about the issues relating to re-interpreting someone else's personal story which are relevant considering my own background, personal experience, knowledge and philosophy of

teaching from previous roles as a teacher and senior leader which was similar to some of the participants. I was an 'insider' in some ways, but also an 'outsider' as a researcher and local authority consultant. This did not preclude me from representing the DTs' views and experiences as long as I remained reflexive about my own prejudices and censored them if needed; and avoided misrepresentation of the participants' voices through over-influencing the participants' experiences with my own understanding and interpretation rather than theirs (Bridges 2001, Smith 2012). In Chapter One, I outline my professional positioning and perceptions and experiences regarding DTs including my reflections on why the role is not always deployed effectively. This recognition of my own subjectivity placed me in a stronger position to attempt to bracket my preconceptions about DTs.

Interview data analysis process

Each interview was recorded using a dictaphone (see Appendix B for duration and word count of each interview and transcript). I transcribed each DT interview from the recording of the interview (see Appendix K for an example transcript). At the end of each interview, I offered to send each DT a copy of the transcript from their interview for them to check that the transcript reflected what they had said during the interview (Groenewald 2004*)*. None of the DTs wanted a copy of the transcript, but all requested a summary of the research findings.

I carried out an initial analysis of the DT interview data from November 2016 to April 2017. Following revisions to my research questions and theoretical framework (see Chapter One), I re-analysed the interview data between December 2018 and April 2019. I did not use NVivo or any other data analysis software package because there were only seven participants. After transcribing when I familiarised myself with the data, I initially read each interview twice more: once to get an overview of the whole interview and then again to identify the initial codes. I annotated the transcript with key words – codes – which emerged during the second reading (see Appendix K for example transcript) and were drawn up into a list of codes. Adam was the first participant to be interviewed and his transcript was analysed first. The list of codes which emerged from his transcript was then revised following the coding

of the remaining transcripts resulting in a list of 29 codes drawn from all the transcripts (see Appendix L for the code list). The eight months between the first and last interviews gave me time to immerse myself in the data. The theories of professional identity, policy enactment, attachment and emotional labour emerged during the data analysis process helping me to shed light on the patterns which were emerging in the data and helped me to understand and explain the DTs' perceptions and experiences.

I drew on Hycner's (1985) work on phenomenological analysis of interview data to analyse the DT interviews. Hycner's (ibid) features of phenomenological analysis used in my data analysis process (see Table 5.3 below) described below are in italics. During the data analysis process, I attempted to bracket my preconceptions about DTs and their work during the data analysis process by being reflexive about my preconceptions about the DTs (described in Chapter One) so that I could be open to the DTs' experiences and understand their world from their perspective.

Table 5.3: The Phenomenological Data Analysis Process at Different Stages

Code	**Units of general meaning**	**Units of meaning relevant to the research questions**	**Clusters of relevant meaning**	**Theme**
DT emotional support	*There's two teachers in particular and when they go on school trips they always ask me along.* *And go in and chat with our family support worker and go "I've just had this really emotional experience."*	The emotional support DTs received in school which helped the DT manage the emotions emerging from the role e.g.: Colleague allowed DT to talk about the upsetting incidents Colleague seeks DT out to offer support Colleague reassured DT about their actions Colleague showed empathy for DT's thoughts and feelings	Emotional support provided by school colleagues	Significance of support for DTs' emotional wellbeing

First, I used the list of codes to identify *units of general meaning* which illuminated the phenomenon being studied, the DT role, and described aspects of the participants' experience. For example, for the code 'DT emotional support' I grouped together all of the extracts from each transcript which

described the emotional support DTs received. These became *units of general meaning*.

Second, I used the *units of general meaning* to identify *units of meaning relevant to the research questions.* For example, for the *units of general meaning* about the DTs' emotional support I identified those units which illuminated how the emotional support the DTs received affected their experience of the role in relation to the research questions. Here, the research questions about emotional labour and attachment-aware work were pertinent. For example, the *units of general meaning* which described the emotional support DTs received were distilled to identify *relevant units of meaning* like the emotional support DTs received in school which helped the DT manage the emotional labour of the role. Some *units of general meaning* became redundant e.g. 'Other Virtual Schools' because they were not relevant to the research questions.

Third, the *units of meaning relevant to the research questions* were used to form *clusters of relevant meaning* such as emotional support provided by school colleagues shown above. Fourteen *clusters of relevant meaning* were identified during the analysis process, and six *themes* were identified from the *clusters of relevant meaning* (see Appendix N) which were used to provide a description of the DTs' experiences discussed in-depth in Chapters Seven to Nine.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have discussed my interpretation of phenomenology and why it was appropriate for my research design; and explained my choice of documentary analysis and interview as data generation methods. I have described the conduct of the interviewing of the DTs including the ethical issues which emerged from the interviews. Finally, I have described the data analysis process used to analyse the DT interviews.

The next four chapters are the empirical chapters and present the research findings. Chapter Six discusses the findings from the policy document analysis and presents the policy context for the DTs. While the DTs themselves were not conscious policy enacters, I do regard them as enacters of policy therefore

first Chapters Seven and Eight analyse the DTs' enactment of policy as emotional labourers who have varying levels of knowledge of attachment theory and practice. And then Chapter Nine uses policy enactment theory to analyse who and what influences the DTs' enactment of policy.

Chapter Six: Policy Analysis

Introduction

This Chapter reports the results of an analysis of six policy documents linked to the DT role through the lens of attachment theory and practice. It is important to clarify that generally policy is not formulated to give guidelines based on a specific theoretical approach. The aim of my analysis is to highlight the extent and implications of the contradictions and gaps in policy for DTs and schools who are trying to support looked-after children's education. The analysis is used in Chapter Nine to show how contradictory national policies play out in local contexts in the DTs' practices. The Chapter presents selected policy documents and the justification for the selection. From there it is organised in four parts, each of which is accompanied by a Table summarising the key elements of the documentary analysis: Meeting Looked-after Children's Emotional Needs; Schools Managing Looked-After Children's Behaviour; Looked After-Children and Learning and Teaching; and the DT as an Attachment-Aware Lead. The Chapter addresses the research question: What are the contradictions and gaps in policy concerning the education of looked-after children?

This Chapter argues that policy's representation of looked-after children is contradictory and has gaps, similarly, the role of the DT is depicted in such a way that it would be difficult to act as an attachment-aware lead. The extent and implications of the contradictions and gaps in policy are discussed below.

Selection of Documents

The table below shows the six government documents which were analysed:

Table 6.1: Selected Policy Documents

Document	Government Department	Audience	Purpose
Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)	Department for Education and Employment	Schools, local authority staff	To introduce the DT role.
Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools (2009a)	Department for Children, Schools and Families	Primary school staff including the DT	To outline the key qualities for improving looked-after children's attainment.
Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools (2009b)	Department for Children, Schools and Families	Secondary school staff including the DT	To outline the key qualities for improving looked-after children's attainment.
The role of the designated teacher (2009c)	Department for Children, Schools and Families	Governing bodies, DTs, schools	To outline the role and responsibilities of the DT.
The role of the designated teacher (2018a)	Department for Education	Governing bodies, DTs, schools	To outline the revised role and responsibilities of the DT.
Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities (2018b)	Department for Education	Local authority officers including the Virtual School Headteacher	To outline how the local authority can fulfil its statutory duties regarding the education of looked-after children including the role of the Virtual School Headteacher.

The six policy documents were selected because they show how the DT role has evolved and the wider policy context. Chapter One provided a brief policy context regarding the education of looked-after children. The DT role was first introduced in *Education of Young People in Public Care* (2000) and, as set out in *The role of the designated teacher* (2009c), was promoted to a statutory role in schools to improve looked-after children's educational outcomes. This document was accompanied by the *Improving the Attainment of Looked After Children* document. All three documents were launched on the same day in November 2009, outlining the support that the DT and schools should provide. *The role of the designated teacher* and *Statutory guidance for local authorities* documents were revised in February 2018 following further legislation around the DT's and local authority's role in promoting looked-after and previously looked-after children's education. These two latest documents explicitly promote attachment-aware practice to support looked-after children in school. Foregrounding the contradictions and gaps in policy gives an insight into the policy context within which DTs are working which is explored further in relation to the DTs in the study and what affects their enactment of policy in Chapter Nine.

The Representation of Looked-After Children

The documents' representation of looked after children and their emotional, behavioural, and teaching and learning needs might shape what schools decide to do to support them.

Meeting Looked-After Children's Emotional Needs

There are contradictions and gaps in policy regarding the representation of looked-after children's emotional needs. The documents represent looked-after children as having emotional needs and suggest that schools provide some emotional support for looked-after children, yet do not promote creating a school culture that fully addresses looked-after children's emotions through providing an appropriate level of emotional support. The risk is that schools will not provide the appropriate level of emotional support which some looked-after children need. Attachment theory and practice states that children with attachment difficulties need positive relationships with staff, and a Key Adult as a secure base who helps the child to self-regulate (Bergin and Bergin 2009, Bombèr 2015a). These attachment concepts are discussed below in relation to the documents (see Table 6.2) to highlight the extent and implications of the policy contradictions and gaps for looked-after children, DTs and schools.

Table 6.2: *Meeting Looked-After Children's Emotional Needs*

Document	Develop child's capacity to emotionally regulate	Positive relationship with all staff	Key Person/Mentor	Key Adult
Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)	No	No	Yes	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools (2009a)	No	No	Yes	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools (2009b)	No	No	Yes	No
The role of the designated teacher (2009c)	No	No	Yes	No
The role of the designated teacher (2018a)	No	No	Yes	No
Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children (2018b)	No	No	Yes	No

In Chapter Two, the care leavers described how they needed skilled adults to help them make sense of 'explosive' feelings about their experiences, implying more than someone to talk to. An attachment-aware approach suggests what is

needed: space, time and a skilled adult to express their 'explosive' feelings without consequences for their 'unacceptable' behaviour (Bombèr 2015b). There is a gap in policy because, while the documents acknowledge that looked-after children do have emotional needs, none suggest that school staff should support the children to develop their emotional regulation skills.

While all policy documents acknowledge that looked-after children need a positive relationship with at least one adult in school, none advocate a whole-school approach whereby all school staff are responsive and prioritise the development of positive relationships with looked-after children (see Table 6.2). On the contrary, all six documents advise that only a selected few adults develop this relationship: at least one adult, the DT and/or a 'key person'. Two documents refer to the key person's availability: '[Schools] provide access to the key person through a 'drop in' arrangement. A 'haven' or 'listening post' is suggested to allow children to take time out, reflect and on some occasions to calm down (DCSF 2009a, p.12). But, the language is ambiguous: looked-after children can informally access their key person, yet there is no confirmation that the key person will be consistently available, or that they will emotionally co-regulate the child. Therefore, none of the documents propose providing a Key Adult who is *consistently* available to act as the child's emotional co-regulator and secure base in school, which is almost certainly what at least some looked-after children need in school (Bombèr 2015a).

Instead all six documents propose that the key person is an empathetic 'confidant' (DCSF 2009b, p.13) who the child can talk to about their problems and feelings. It is unlikely that this is sufficient for a child with attachment difficulties as defined by attachment theory. Rather than provide a Key Adult, five of the documents suggest that schools provide looked-after children with a 'learning mentor' (DfEE 2000, DCSF 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, DfE 2018a):

> Ensure mentors support academic as well as personal and emotional needs in most schools, the mentoring role encompasses support and challenge for academic progress as well as emotional and behavioural development. (DCSF 2009b, p.11)

This suggestion undermines the importance of looked-after children needing an adult who can provide a high level of emotional support. Furthermore, being a learning mentor for learning requires knowledge of emotional needs as well as of pedagogical theory, and, experience of working with children with relational difficulties which is not mentioned in the five documents. Only one document considers the skills school staff need to develop a relationship with mistrustful children (DfE 2018a) and none of the documents describe how staff's emotions would affect their relationships with looked-after children (Parker and Levinson 2018, Howes and Ritchie 1999) as discussed in Chapter Three.

The documents outline looked-after children's emotional needs and suggest that schools provide some emotional support for looked-after children, but do not promote a school culture that fully meets looked-after children's emotional needs through providing an appropriate level of emotional support like a Key Adult.

Schools Managing Looked-After Children's Behaviour

There are contradictions and gaps in how policy represents looked-after children has having behavioural needs because of their experiences, and, how policy suggests that school staff manage those behavioural needs by being flexible yet also punitive which leads to a problematic depiction of looked-after children's behavioural needs. Attachment theory and practice advocates that schools should use the attachment behaviour types to interpret the behaviours of children with attachment difficulties, and re-conceptualise disruptive behaviours as their stress response because of their attachment difficulties (Rose et al 2014, Bombèr 2015a). Schools are encouraged by attachment-aware practitioners to use a flexible behaviour policy because children with attachment difficulties can find the school environment and behaviour policy complex and stressful (ibid). These attachment-aware concepts are discussed below in relation to the policy documents (see Table 6.3) to highlight the implications of the contradictions and gaps in policy for looked-after children, DTs and schools.

Table 6.3: Schools Managing Looked-After Children's Behaviour

Document	Flexible response and behaviour policy	Behaviour stemming from family separation	Attachment behaviour types	Re-conceptualisation of behaviour as stress response
Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools (2009a)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools (2009b)	Yes	Yes	No	No
The role of the designated teacher (2009c)	Yes	Yes	No	No
The role of the designated teacher (2018a)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children (2018b)	Yes	Yes	No	No

All six documents advocate that schools adopt a flexible approach to looked-after children's disruptive behaviours to avoid school exclusion (see Table 6.3) which aligns with an attachment-aware approach. *Education of Children in Public Care* (2000) encourages an empathetic response from schools advising them to use their knowledge of the child's experiences to interpret their behaviour rather than react punitively. It is not until a looked-after child is excluded that 'their particular needs are first identified and the effects of their pre-care and care experiences understood' (ibid pp. 73-74). Exclusions often signal that a looked-after child is in crisis or that their needs are being overlooked by schools.

The later documents also encourage school staff to differentiate their behaviour policy to avoid escalation and exclusion (DCSF 2009a, 2009b). *The role of the designated teacher* (2018a) advises DTs to review the behaviour management policy so it is 'sufficiently flexible' enabling staff to offer the 'most effective' response to looked-after children (p.10). But, these references to flexibility are contradicted by the documents' conceptualisation of looked-after children's behaviours discussed next.

All six documents link looked-after children's emotions to their separation from birth family (see Table 6.3), but they do not clearly show how the children's emotions stem from their life experiences and how the children's

experiences and emotions 'shape' their behaviour (Parker and Levinson 2018). While some of looked-after children's emotions and behaviours are described, what is missing is an unambiguous description of the behaviours which schools are *likely* to see as a result of their attachment experiences (Bergin and Bergin 2009). The implications of this policy gap is that policy does not support school staff such as DTs to fully understand or explain looked-after children's challenging behaviours to others, to advocate for individual looked-after children, or justify why looked-after children need an alternative model of support as discussed below.

Nevertheless, three documents acknowledge that some looked-after children's mistrust of adults stems from their experiences which, in turn, can present as challenging behaviour. For example: 'They may show impatience and frustration if their difficulties and issues are not dealt with quickly' (DCSF 2009b p.18) and: 'Some will push boundaries, some will try to get others to reject them' (ibid, p.20). Such a formulation provides a glimpse, albeit fleetingly, into how some looked-after children might interact with adults, alluding, it might be argued, to their attachment difficulties and internal working model of adults (Bowlby 1997, Ainsworth et al 1978). Overall though, the policy documents do not show fully the relationship between looked-after children's experiences, emotions and behaviours.

Policy does not encourage a re-conceptualisation of looked-after children's disruptive behaviours as their stress response stemming from their experiences (see Table 6.3) (Bombèr 2015b). Two documents (2018a, 2018b) signpost the Attachment Aware Schools materials (Rose et al 2014) (discussed in Chapter Three) which include reference to the framework of attachment behaviour types (see Table 6.3) like 'avoidant', and 'ambivalent' (also discussed in Chapter Three) which attachment-aware practice suggests that schools could use to interpret and respond to children's behaviours (Howes and Ritchie 1999). Yet, policy's conceptualisation of looked-after children's disruptive behaviours has multiple contradictions. While policy advocates understanding and flexibility as discussed earlier, it also describes looked-after children's behaviour as justifying exclusion. Two documents use normative language to describe looked-after children's behaviours as 'unacceptable' and

'inappropriate': 'For many, previous and continued sporadic emotional trauma and chaotic lifestyles can be revealed through unacceptable behaviours in the school environment' (DCSF 2009b, p.20). This mirrors the judgemental language used in government exclusion and behaviour documents which advise schools on the use of punitive responses to children (DfE 2017). Describing the child's behaviour as 'unacceptable' is the antithesis of the acceptance of the child demanded by attachment-aware practice (Bombèr 2015b) and reflects how some schools perceive disruptive behaviour regardless of the causes of the behaviour (Munn and Lloyd 2005). The terms 'sporadic' and 'chaotic' suggest the volatility of the 'unacceptable' behaviour which will be hard to control, but there is no acknowledgement of attachment theory and practice explanations for such behaviour, which would support staff to interpret individual's behaviour and respond in alternative ways.

Furthermore, *The role of the designated teacher* (2018a) offers a case study which describes some looked-after children's mental health issues like self-harm and substance misuse and states that these children are at risk of exclusion from school. Policy justifies excluding children, even if they have mental health issues; have been bereaved; or have been bullied (DfE 2017). These are experiences which research shows often form part of the life and school experiences of looked-after children (Stanley et al 2004, Meltzer et al 2003). Policy tends to send a punitive message about discipline and justifies excluding children who breach the school's behaviour policy and disrupt the learning of others (DfE 2017).

This attitude intensifies when discussing teaching and learning. Three of the documents conceptualise looked-after children's behaviour as disruptive in class:

> Staff are aware that the young people may sometimes exhibit inappropriate behaviour to gain attention but awareness is not confused with acceptance and expectations remain high as teachers are not diverted from the focus on teaching and learning. (DCSF 2009a, p.10)

Here, children's behaviours are unempathetically dismissed as attention-seeking rather than recognising that some children need teachers' attention and

reassurance. Teachers are encouraged to respond authoritatively because teaching and learning is the school's priority. It is not the teacher's role to emotionally co-regulate the child because emotion has no place in the classroom (Hargreaves 2000). The classroom teacher is expected to respond only to the child's academic needs. The separation of the emotional and academic illustrates policy's failure to view the child as both feeling and learning (Parker and Levinson 2018). The quotation above suggests that all children *can* on their own control their strong feelings and resume their learning if instructed (by an authoritative teacher). Moreover, no connection is made between emotional dysregulation and an impaired capacity to learn.

The role of the designated teacher (2009c) also suggests that teachers should respond to challenging behaviour in order to prioritise the child's academic attainment over their emotional needs. Teachers need to:

> [U]nderstand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children but the teacher should not allow this to be an excuse for lowering expectations of what a child is capable of achieving. (p.11)

Although the concern for academic achievement is commendable, the phrase 'should not allow this to be an excuse' is authoritative in tone and is indicative of how teachers should respond to looked-after children's disruptive behaviour. It is important that teachers have high expectations of looked-after children's academic attainment, but there is not a contradiction, as implied, between the right kind of emotional support and high academic standards. If a balance is to be achieved between support and challenge, the complex relationship between a child's emotions and their capacity to learn needs to be recognised, understood and acted on.

There is little discussion in the documents about how the school environment can activate a child's stress response. None of the documents explicitly explain how attachment difficulties render looked-after children likely to find school systems and processes difficult: such as, interacting with staff, the size and busyness of school, and the external sanction and rewards system (Bombèr 2015a). Instead the onus is on the child to control his or her behaviour, and the

child is expected to adapt to the existing environment rather than schools to adjust the environment for looked-after children.

In summary, there are multiple contractions and gaps in policy's representation of looked-after children's behaviours and how to respond to them. Policy advocates an understanding and flexible response, and describes how looked-after children can struggle with emotional regulation following their family separation which can manifest as disruptive behaviour. Yet, the representation fails to offer thoroughgoing explanations of looked-after children's disruptive behaviours, such as that provided by attachment theory. These gaps and contradictions mean that in policy the looked-after child constructed as emotional, disruptive and problematic for schools comes across more strongly than the looked-after child as constructed by attachment theory as vulnerable and recovering from their experiences.

Looked-After Children and Teaching and Learning

Gaps in policy mean that policy fails to adequately depict looked-after children's teaching and learning needs leading to an ambiguous representation of looked-after children needs and how schools can support them. Policy's representation of looked-after children's teaching and learning needs uses the lens of attainment to explain why they can struggle to learn and how schools can create optimal conditions for learning in the classroom (see Table 6.4). The policy gap is the affective side of learning or with explanations for disengagement: policy does not concern itself with how looked-after children *feel* in the classroom and *why* some looked-after children dis-engage from education, and how to make the classroom environment more comfortable. An attainment-focused approach views the child simplistically as a learning child rather than a feeling and learning child as suggested in attachment-aware practice (Parker and Levinson 2018).

Insecurely attached children can lack the skills needed for the social aspects of learning, and can lack confidence and resilience (Howes and Ritchie 1999, Bergin and Bergin 2009). Attachment-aware practice shows how schools can mitigate the negative effects of the children's attachment experiences by

adapting the classroom environment (Bombèr 2015a). These concepts are discussed below in relation to the policy documents and their representation of looked-after children's teaching and learning needs (see Table 6.4) to highlight the implications of the policy gaps for looked-after children, DTs and schools.

Table 6.4: Looked After-Children and Learning and Teaching

Document	Explicitly link learning to attachment	Lack social skills needed for learning	Lack resilience and confidence	Adapting classroom environment
Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)	No	No	Yes	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools (2009a)	No	Yes	Yes	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools (2009b)	No	Yes	Yes	No
The role of the designated teacher (2009c)	No	No	Yes	No
The role of the designated teacher (2018a)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children (2018b)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Overall, the documents' representation of looked-after children's teaching and learning needs is not explicitly linked to attachment, but two documents explicitly refer to how looked-after children's attachment needs can affect their capacity to learn (see Table 6.4). Some details are provided about how these needs would manifest in the classroom as difficulties with 'executive functioning skills' which are defined as 'The mental processes enabling us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully' (DfE 2019a, p.25). One document refers to the Harvard University Centre of the Developing Child [72] describing how children's experiences affect their capacity to learn, what a teacher would be likely to see in the classroom, and, signposts a relevant research source for schools (DfE 2018b, p.29). This description found in a UK policy document reflects the rise of the attachment-aware schools' movement signalling changes in how policy and schools think about looked-after children's education.

Yet, in all six documents looked-after children's teaching and learning needs are more usually constructed using the frame of attainment. Looked-after

[72] A centre of research which aims to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

children's educational risk factors are outlined; and attainment improvement strategies proposed to minimise the risks associated with these factors. The documents propose that gaps in learning caused by low school attendance pre-entry to care, and placement and school moves which lead to disrupted education and low aspirations can be addressed by providing one-to-one tuition and learning mentors, but this not sufficient. Here, policy is not addressing how looked-after children feel in the classroom or how to make the classroom environment less stressful and more comfortable.

Four documents describe how looked-after children can lack the skills needed for the social aspects of learning (see Table 6.4) like working with their peers: '[L]istening to others and working effectively in a group' (DCSF 2009a, p.9). And, how teachers and mentors need to support the children to develop these skills using such strategies as circle time and ensuring the children ask questions and seek help because they are a key aspect of school learning (DCSF 2009a, DCSF 2009b, DfE 2018a, DfE 2018b).

Despite the provision of some practical advice, the children are constructed as deficient. Six documents link looked-after children's lack of confidence and resilience to their capacity to learn and achieve (see Table 6.4):

> They are often very vulnerable in a school environment and can be easily 'knocked down' by their peers and by teachers, making some 'tread carefully'. Their progress can be fragile; a successful day at school being eclipsed by a traumatic event at home. (DCSF 2009b, p.10)

Despite such acknowledgements that looked-after children are likely to have some additional teaching and learning needs stemming from their experiences, there is no policy expectation that schools adapt their classrooms to create optimal conditions to meet looked-after children's attachment needs (see Table 6.4). A key policy gap, as pointed out previously, is that policy offers no consideration of why some looked-after children might dis-engage with education or how the environment can be changed to make it less problematic or more appropriate for those children (Parker and Levinson 2018). Policy focuses on the individual looked-after child as one who needs mending in order to join the mainstream, rather than the mainstream classroom environment

adapting to become a more comfortable environment for all children. Some documents promote removing looked-after children from their mainstream classroom environment under the guise of meeting their additional needs, but are implicitly promoting the idea that schools should not adapt a mainstream environment because this environment is appropriate for most children without attachment difficulties which is arguable.

From a policy perspective, looked-after children should access their education in a more appropriate education setting away from the mainstream classroom: 'Many schools use specialist learning units to give the young people focused support in addressing significant gaps in their education and develop learning skills' (DCSF 2009b, p.21). Looked-after children are moved from the mainstream environment to the "more 'protected' environment" of a small group setting because they lack the skills needed for school and are 'gradually' moved back to the mainstream environment (DCSF 2009b, p.21). These practices can be seen as illustrating how secondary schools can adapt the learning environment to suit looked-after children's attachment difficulties by providing a small group environment with few changes of people and classroom promoting the development of secure attachments to key people and enhanced feelings of security (Wetz 2009). Although removing a child from a mainstream classroom to another environment will mean a change of environment and disrupted relationships for looked-after children which as I have shown can have negative consequences (Bombèr 2015a). An alternative view is that this exclusion is linked to schools' performance culture whereby those children who are likely to disrupt the learning of others whether through disruptive behaviour or a lack of learning skills are moved out of the classroom to prioritise other children's learning and achievement. My view is that it is important that schools create inclusive classrooms which attempt to meet the needs of *all* children to allow a positive and successful schooling experience for all.

In two documents (DfE 2018a, DfE 2018b), schools are at least prompted to reflect on their decisions to remove looked-after children from the mainstream environment to another setting, but again in these documents there is no consideration of why looked-after children might dis-engage from school.

Regardless of the reasons given for looked-after children being removed from mainstream classrooms with excluding cultures, the above examples illustrate how policy is not promoting a school ethos whereby *all* staff are responsive to looked-after children's needs. The main suggestion is that looked-after children are moved to other education environments rather than making mainstream classrooms more attachment-aware and therefore more inclusive which would benefit all children.

In summary, there are multiple contradictions and gaps in policy's representation of looked-after children and how they should be supported in school. Looked-after children are represented as having emotional needs, but policy does not promote an appropriate level of support in school. Policy advocates a flexible approach to disruptive behaviours, but also describes such behaviour as warranting exclusion. And policy fails to adequately depict looked-after children's teaching and learning needs leading to an ambiguous representation of looked-after children and how schools can support them.

The Representation of the DT as an Attachment-Aware Lead

Policy has explicitly extended the DT role and its responsibilities to promote DTs as attachment-aware strategic leaders who should develop a whole-school attachment-aware culture, and additional support for DTs to enable them to meet their new responsibilities has been provided through the Virtual School Headteacher role. But, policy gaps mean that DTs and their schools are not held accountable for failing to carry out all aspects of the DT role such as the strategic, whole-school attachment-aware work. The risk is that this important aspect of DTs' work could be neglected by DTs and schools.

Attachment-aware practice suggests that schools need an attachment lead. An influential person who promotes and guides attachment-aware practice which includes enhancing whole-school practice: training staff in attachment theory and practice; developing positive relationships with children with attachment difficulties; and, ensuring policy is attachment-aware (Bombèr 2015c, Rose et al 2014). These features are discussed below (see Table 6.5) to foreground how the gaps in policy relating to the DT role and responsibilities have implications for looked-after children, DTs and schools.

Table 6.5: The DT as an Attachment-Aware Lead

Document	Trained in attachment theory and practice	Train staff	Develop a positive relationship with looked-after children	Develop whole-school attachment-aware approach
Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)	No	No	Yes	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools (2009a)	No	No	Yes	No
Improving the attainment of looked after children in secondary schools (2009b)	No	No	Yes	No
The role of the designated teacher (2009c)	No	Yes	Yes	No
The role of the designated teacher (2018a)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children (2018b)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The professional knowledge required for the DT role has evolved since the role's introduction extending to include knowledge of attachment theory and practice in the latest two documents (see Table 6.5) to reflect changes in the understanding of what constitutes a barrier to learning for looked-after children[73] (DfE 2018a, DfE 2018b). These documents explain that to support looked after-children DTs need knowledge of attachment theory including attachment disorder; and, to recognise the signs of attachment difficulties because they can affect children emotionally and academically: '[U]nderstand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning' (DfE 2018a, p.26). The other four documents do not refer to attachment training for DTs and instead reflect earlier thinking about looked-after children's education and the role of the DT in improving their educational outcomes. DTs' training was focused on knowledge of broad areas such as the care system and its impact on education, and, looked-after children's educational risk factors like gaps in learning and SEN (DfEE 2000, DCSF 2009a, DCSF 2009b, DCSF 2009c).

The development of DTs' professional knowledge includes knowledge of attachment, reflecting DTs' responsibility for training staff. Policy stipulates

[73] The DT interviews were carried out in 2015-16 and so pre-date the 2018 documents' publication therefore the DTs I interviewed did not have knowledge of these documents or the policy expectation that they received attachment training.

that the DT has appropriate experience and authority to train staff and influence school practice, and, theoretically provides a clear system of training and support for DTs to enable them to do this. Three of the documents state that the DT should train staff (see Table 6.5), but it is only the two 2018 documents which stipulate that the DT has responsibility for educating their colleagues about attachment (DfE 2018a, DfE 2018b): 'This means making sure that all staff: are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families' (DfE 2018a, p.11). But, the proposed training is flawed: it emphasises DTs educating staff about the looked-after children's difficulties rather than what staff can do about them by using attachment-aware strategies. The annex of *The role of the designated teacher* (2018) does prompt: 'What training is in place for staff to ensure they have the skills to meet looked-after children's needs?' and 'How do staff work to build positive relationships with looked-after children?' (ibid, p.40). But, these prompts are not in the main body of the document and this is only one document.

Five documents outline a system of training and support available for DTs which reflects DTs' enhanced training needs and responsibilities. *The role of the designated teacher* (2009c) promotes the advisory and support role of the LACES team[74]. And the 2018 documents (DfE 2018a, DfE 2018b) describe how the Virtual School Headteacher will provide attachment training for the DT who can then train their colleagues aligning policy's promotion of attachment training with the Virtual School Headteacher role (DfE 2018b). Therefore, policy expectation is that the DT will have sufficient knowledge of attachment to train colleagues because in theory policy provides a clear model of training and support for DTs. However, Chapter Seven shows that the reality for DTs regarding their training needs and those of staff is more haphazard than policy suggests.

The representation of the DT role reflects a gap in policy regarding the nature of the DT's relationship with looked-after children. The DT is expected to provide a low level of emotional support leaving a gap in the emotional support

[74] the local authority looked-after children's education service

provided to the children. Five documents state that the DT should develop a positive relationship with looked-after children. But, policy does not expect the DT to act as a looked-after child's Key Adult as discussed earlier in relation to the representation of looked-after children's emotional needs. Two documents (DCSF 2009a, DCSF 2009b) effectively describe how the DT should build up a 'supportive' relationship with the looked-after child through maintaining regular contact with the child, and monitoring their presentation and progress in school. The DT gets to know the child and builds up their trust with discreet, responsive support by slowly building up a connection with a child (Howes and Ritchie 1999). And *The role of the designated teacher* (DfE 2018a) provides feedback from looked-after children collated by Staffordshire Virtual School who stated that 'having a good relationship with their designated teacher was one of the most important factors in supporting them at school' (p.20). The document goes on to offer advice for how the DT should listen to looked-after children, again collated by Staffordshire Virtual School.

- Be available, take the time to get to know me
- Notice if I am upset or angry and listen to me when I need help
- Understand that my past will affect my present and my future behaviour even if I don't notice (ibid p.20)

The advice (ibid) incorporates many aspects of what a DT needs to be if they are to develop a relationship with a child with attachment difficulties such as being available, emotionally responsive and attentive to the child's emotional state; and being aware of how a child's experiences affect their behaviours (Bombèr 2015a). However, what is missing in the advice and in policy is a focus on *who* will carry out the much-needed emotional regulation work with looked-after children as discussed earlier leaving a gap in the emotional support provided.

Attachment-aware practice recommends that schools develop a whole-school attachment-aware approach through reviewing school policies to ensure they are attachment-aware, and on-going monitoring of staff's practice to ensure whole-school consistency (Rose et al 2014, Bombèr 2015b). And two documents suggest that DTs should develop a whole-school attachment-aware approach (see Table 6.5) although neither document adequately encourages

DTs to monitor staff practice or review policy. The DT's role has expanded over time to include responsibility for developing a consistent whole-school approach to meeting looked-after children's needs. *The role of the designated teacher* (DCSF 2009c) introduced the responsibility for reviewing school policies so that 'they do not unintentionally put looked after children at a disadvantage' (p.12). And a wide range of policies are referred to for schools to review including the school's curriculum policy, behaviour policy and staff professional development policy (DCSF 2009c). This aspect of the role was reinforced in the revised document (DfE 2018a): 'ensure school policies and approaches appropriately reflect the needs of looked-after children' (p.9). The two 2018 documents (DfE 2018a, DfE 2018b) further developed the DT's responsibility to ensure that their school 'adopts a whole school approach to identifying and supporting pupils with attachment difficulties' (DfE 2018b, p.30). But, there is no expectation to adapt school policy from an attachment-aware perspective.

Developing an attachment-aware ethos across a school also requires ongoing development, monitoring, and reviewing of attachment-aware strategies (Bombèr 2007). But, policy is not meant to be prescriptive about a particular approach to practice, and *The role of the designated teacher* (DfE 2018a) and *Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children* (DfE 2018b) do not suggest that schools need to carry out this monitoring process. It is stated that how schools monitor their policies is 'up to them' (DfE 2018a, p.9). And the DT policy is an 'exhortative' policy (Ball et al 2012, p.94) meaning there is little which is mandated and a lack of accountability for schools if they fail to carry out any mandated responsibilities. Therefore, DTs are not yet enabled to carry out all aspects of their important strategic attachment-aware work.

In summary, the two most recent documents are explicit that DTs should develop an attachment-aware approach across their schools, but neither document expects DTs to review their policies from the perspective of attachment theory and practice or to monitor staff practice as advised by attachment-aware practice. And a lack of external monitoring and

accountability by government could result in little motivation for schools to adopt whole-school attachment-aware practices.

In policy, the DT role and its responsibilities and priorities has significantly evolved since the introduction of the role in 2000, but does not yet fully encapsulate all the aspects of an attachment-aware lead. The role has extended to promoting DTs as attachment-aware strategic leaders who should develop a whole-school attachment-aware culture. However, while policy has provided additional support for DTs via Virtual School Headteachers, it has not yet provided the accountability needed to enable DTs to carry out all aspects of the role such as their strategic attachment-aware work.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have shown how the representations of looked-after children and the DT role in policy have multiple contradictions and gaps. Although policy acknowledges that looked-after children have emotional and behavioural needs which require support and flexibility from schools, it does not reveal the complexity of support and acceptance of the children's emotional dysregulation which is required to meet those needs. Looked-after children's learning needs are viewed through the lens of attainment not through schools optimising conditions for learning by making the children feel safe in school. While in more recent documents DTs are expected to promote a whole-school attachment-aware approach and training and support should be provided to enable them to do that, the policy is exhortative with no call for accountability that school practice is attachment-aware.

The next three chapters draw on the interviews with seven DTs in four primary schools and two secondary schools to explore their perspectives and experiences of their work with looked-after children in the light of attachment-aware practice; professional identity; emotional labour and policy enactment, respectively.

Chapter Seven: The DTs' Attachment-Aware Practice

Introduction

This is the first Chapter of three which discuss the findings from interviews with seven DTs. In these chapters the theories of attachment, emotional labour, teacher identity, and policy enactment are mobilised to explore the DTs' work and the extent to which their work is attachment-aware and what enables and constrains them being attachment-aware. Each of the three chapters relates to one of the research questions. This Chapter address the questions: How do DTs conceptualise looked-after children and their needs? To what extent are their conceptualisations attachment-aware? How do DTs support looked-after children? To what extent is their work attachment-aware? Chapter Eight addresses the questions: What professional identity shapes the DTs' work for and with looked-after children and influences their attachment-aware practice? What role does emotion play in DTs' work for and with looked-after children and influence their attachment-aware practice? And, Chapter Nine addresses the question: How does policy shape DTs' work with and for looked-after children and influence their attachment-aware practice?

As discussed in Chapter Three, I accept some of the criticisms of attachment theory namely the insistence that the primary caregiver must be the mother; and the complexities of assessing attachment security/insecurity beyond infancy, but I do not accept the criticism that attachment theory essentialises the looked-after child, their experiences, behaviours and outcomes as wholly negative. I accept that analysing the data from the DT interviews in this Chapter from an attachment theory perspective presents limitations in understanding the data because other theories are not used to analyse the DTs' understanding and support of looked-after children's education. Nevertheless, attachment theory offers a powerful explanation of the experiences and behaviours of some looked-after children, and more importantly, it offers a framework for school staff to understand and support children in school therefore this Chapter focuses on how knowledge of attachment theory influenced the DTs' practice.

This Chapter starts by introducing each DT describing their experience and school context. Then, the Chapter is in three parts. First, the Chapter is framed by a discussion of how the DTs accessed knowledge about attachment theory and practice. Secondly, I use data elicited during the interviews by offering a vignette which features 'Patrick' a fictional looked-after child and asking the DTs for their advice about how to support Patrick in school. This data allowed me to explore the DTs' conceptualisations of looked-after children; what constitutes attachment-aware practice; and, their awareness of whole-school approaches. Thirdly, I discuss the same issues of evidence of attachment-aware practice and whole-school approaches via a thematic analysis of the interview data which allowed me to confirm the trends established by examining the responses to the 'Patrick' vignette.

The Chapter shows how DTs' attachment-aware work is constrained by a lack of knowledge of attachment theory and practice and that those who were enabled by being more knowledgeable carried out more strategic attachment-aware work in their schools.

Introduction to the DTs

The Primary School DTs

Becky had been the DT for fewer than four years and thought that looked-after children's needs could be overlooked by schools because staff lacked an understanding of their issues and circumstances. Becky had an adopted child and she explained how raising her child influenced her work at school. At the time of the interviews, there were no looked-after children in Becky's school.

Elizabeth had been the DT for fewer than four years. For Elizabeth, the DT role is a busy role which incorporates lots of different skills including partnership working and keeping the looked-after children safe and happy. She frequently referred to her supportive colleagues within school who helped her to manage the stresses of the job. There were between 1-5 looked-after children in Elizabeth's school.

Carla had been the DT for looked-after children for fewer than four years. For her, the role is like the SENCO role with a pastoral element and co-ordinator of

support role. She worked at the same school as Diane and shared the DT role with her. There were between 1-5 looked-after children in Carla and Diane's school.

Diane began working in schools as a member of support staff which included working with disengaged pupils on alternative education programmes. This experience of supporting disengaged young people triggered her desire to understand the impact of childhood trauma. Her current role was as a member of support staff supporting children with their emotional wellbeing. She had been the DT for more than four years and shared the role with Carla.

Grace had worked at the school as a member of support staff supporting children with their emotional wellbeing. She had been the DT for more than four years. For Grace, the DT role involved varied aspects such as supporting the children, partnership working, and strategic planning but her priorities were advocating for looked-after children and co-ordinating PEP meetings. There were between 1-5 looked-after children in Grace's school.

The Secondary School DTs

Adam had been a DT for fewer than four years. For Adam, many looked-after children are academically vulnerable and, like children with SEN, required additional support in school. He summarised the DT role as being about relationships: the relationship with the looked-after child; and, with other professionals to share information and make sure that everyone was supporting the child both in school and at home. There were between 6-10 looked-after children in Adam's school.

Fiona was not officially the DT yet carried out the DT role and had worked with looked-after children for more than four years. Her conceptualisation of looked-after children was centred around their vulnerability arising from their circumstances. To her, the role is about looking after the children and she adopted a nurturing approach to supporting them which she associated with her maternal instincts. She supported the children by being honest, patient, and listening to them. There were between 10-15 looked-after children in Fiona's school.

The Professional Knowledge Received by DTs

Whether the DTs' work was consciously underpinned by attachment theory and practice depended on their knowledge and understanding and there was variation. Of the seven, Adam, Becky and Diane described themselves as knowledgeable about attachment theory and practice and, as shown later, whether a DT possessed this knowledge was reflected in their comments about how they worked with looked-after children.

The Table below shows the DTs' varied sources of professional knowledge:

Table 7.1: Sources of Professional Knowledge for DTs

Categories	Attended Virtual School DT training	Attended a DT network meeting	Attended the Virtual School conference on attachment	Received attachment training from non-local authority source	Read policy documents	Read professional literature on attachment
Adam	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Becky	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Carla	No	No	No	No	No	No
Diane	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Elizabeth	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Fiona	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Grace	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

The Virtual School's role in providing DTs' knowledge is discussed in Chapter Nine regarding how policy shapes DTs' work. Although Carla did not refer to any explicit knowledge sources, she worked closely with Diane, an attachment expert, and Carla's attachment knowledge was evident in her comments about supporting looked-after children as shown below. The Table shows that not all the DTs engaged with all available knowledge sources. Attendance at DT training is recommended in policy, but is not mandated (DfE 2018): four of the seven DTs had not attended the DT training; and, only two DTs, Fiona and Grace, attended the attachment conference. The interviews revealed that there were limited opportunities for the DTs to receive attachment training other than through the Virtual School.

Adam, Becky and Diane can be considered the 'best-case' examples of the group regarding underpinning knowledge. These three had received their attachment training from a source other than the Virtual School and did not receive training as a DT. Adam gained his attachment training from his previous experience working with looked-after children who lived in residential homes: '*So I was the one who took kids out mountaineering and climbing and that sort of stuff so I was one of the welcomed figures when I knocked on to the care home door.'* His experience working with looked-after children had built up his attachment knowledge: '*I've worked in these environments that, you know, I understand attachment theory, I understand attachment disorders and that's a good way to start.'* For Adam, understanding attachment was a necessary starting point for understanding and interpreting looked-after children's behaviour and why they have low achievement.

For Becky, the attachment training she received as an adoptive parent enabled her to understand her adopted child's experiences and needs and enhanced her practice as a DT:

> *The only way I can do the role is the training I had outside the school, so in an ideal world you would have to have at least, well I had six days and your half a day so I'd say at least six, seven, eight days and at different times* […]. *A number of training events throughout the year.*

She received several days of training on attachment which she regarded as much-needed. She was frustrated that her teacher training did not include attachment theory and thought that it should be mandatory training for all teachers because the theory shows how children and their education can continue to be affected by their early experiences.

Diane's attachment training was gained while completing training on therapeutic practices in schools. Her school's pupil cohort had a high level of social and emotional difficulties so emotional wellbeing was a school priority, and the school received government mental health funding which led to her becoming the school's lead on supporting children using therapeutic practices. Diane thought that this training provided her with '*therapy knowledge about what that child would be experiencing'*.

Hence, these three DTs possessed a language with which to describe the benefits of their attachment training and how it improved their practice. Adam, Becky and Diane were also the only DTs who further developed their knowledge by reading professional literature on attachment: *'I found quite a few journals online about attachment disorder and that sort of type of stuff'* (Adam). Adam's professional knowledge was also shaped by his wife who had accessed her local authority training on attachment. She was a personal source of attachment knowledge:

> *There's been a knowledge pool there between us: "I've read this, have you read this? I've seen this, have you seen it?" "Oh no, I haven't." So there's been very much a* [laughing] *pillow talk about the job.'*

Like Adam, Becky's ongoing professional knowledge was provided by a personal source in her adoption agency which directed her to articles and books like those written by Louise Bombèr:

> *So I'm trying to think what we've bought already from the adoption agency, but the two: 'Inside I'm Hurting' and the other that's the same, is it the same author?*[...] *In our agency they've got like a Facebook thing and then they put useful articles on.*

And Diane described how she maintained her knowledge about attachment:

> *I constantly read, I constantly read. I constantly dig out new ideas again very therapy driven. I mean there's endless books on attachment and there's endless books on surviving after trauma that I could recommend.*

Therefore, it is understandable why Adam, Becky and Diane regarded themselves as knowledgeable about attachment compared to other DTs such as Fiona and Grace who had attended only a one-day conference on attachment provided by the Virtual School; and, to Carla and Elizabeth who did not mention receiving any attachment training, although both showed some awareness of attachment in their comments about looked-after children discussed below. Adam, Becky and Diane were also the three who claimed they were confident about using their attachment knowledge to train other staff. Knowledge or lack of knowledge about attachment was reflected in the DTs'

comments about supporting Patrick and other looked-after children as shown below.

The DTs' Conceptualisation of Looked-After Children

As discussed in Chapter Five, the DTs were given a vignette about 'Patrick', a fictional looked-after child (see Appendix E), to elicit their understanding of looked-after children's behaviours and experiences. The vignette included information on Patrick's pre-care and care experiences; and his disrupted education and history of undiagnosed SEN. His presentation in school was described:

> He is often tearful at school and runs out of the classroom and hides in the toilets. Or, he walks around the school site and refuses to return to the classroom even when asked to by the headteacher. His teachers have also reported that he has started to become abusive toward other pupils by lashing out verbally and physically.

The vignette did not use the term 'attachment' or other attachment-related terms, however it provided information about Patrick's early attachment experiences. As shown below, the DTs' response to Patrick showed the varying levels of understanding of attachment theory and practice.

Understanding Patrick's Behaviours

The Table below (see Table 7.2) shows which attachment theory and practice concepts the DTs showed understanding of during their discussion of Patrick and are used below to illustrate DTs' understanding or lack of understanding.

Table 7.2: The DTs' Understanding of Attachment Concepts During Discussion of Patrick

DT	Referred to 'attachment'	Attachment behaviour styles	Key person	Secure base	Internal working model	Supported transitions	Develop whole-school practice
Adam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Becky	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Carla	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Diane	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Elizabeth	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Fiona	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Grace	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

The Table shows that those with more attachment knowledge revealed more understanding of attachment theory and practice concepts like attachment behaviour styles (Ainsworth et al 1978, Howes and Ritchie 1999); an attachment figure at school (Bergin and Bergin 2009, Bombèr 2015a); feeling unsafe at school (Bergin and Bergin 2009, Perry 2016); 'secure base' (Bowlby 1997, Ainsworth et al 1978); 'internal working model' (ibid); supported transitions (Bombèr 2015a); and developing whole-school attachment-aware practice (Parker, Rose and Gilbert 2016) as discussed below. While all seven DTs showed some understanding of attachment by explaining how Patrick's disruptive behaviour stemmed from his experience of being separated from family, the variation in knowledge is shown in how Adam, Becky and Diane's enhanced attachment knowledge made their interpretation of Patrick's behaviour more insightful and more likely to help him, and enabled them to develop a whole-school approach to meeting Patrick's needs.

Only Adam and Carla explicitly used the term 'attachment' when discussing Patrick and none of the DTs used such vocabulary as 'avoidant', 'ambivalent' or 'disorganised' to interpret Patrick's behaviours in school. Still, despite not using attachment-related terminology, Adam, Becky, Carla and Diane showed understanding of Patrick's patterns of attachment behaviour like his aggression and running around school and they linked these behaviours to his emotions, showing insight into the complexity of Patrick's stress responses. An attachment-aware response was recognising that Patrick felt frightened at school: for him, the school and the staff were unsafe because of his home experiences.

Carla showed some explicit understanding that despite the inappropriate care received by his mother, Patrick would still be attached - albeit with an insecure attachment to his mother, which had been disrupted by his entry to care:

> *It's sort of fear. As much as there's been obviously a chaotic lifestyle you gonna make that assumption that, as is more often the case, the children still love their mum. Mum's been sort of taken away so he would be struggling in school because emotionally he's going to be all over the place, bless him.*

She explained that the separation from his mother has led to Patrick feeling frightened and being emotional dysregulated and experiencing further placement and school moves in care so '*lots of kind of attachments, separation, emotional disturbance*' which meant that he was lacking an attachment figure at that time.

Adam also explained that Patrick's experience of disrupted attachments through moving school created feelings of insecurity and anxiety: '*Multiple school moves: he's never had that attachment with a group of teachers or a group of friends that makes him feel secure, safe.'* He understood Patrick's need to develop positive relationships at school to feel safe.

Becky and Diane recognised the sustained impact of Patrick's experiences and described how he was still responding to the chaos and danger that he left behind in his birth home:

> *He might be seeking out chaos and danger because that's what makes him feel comfortable and actually the more safe he feels makes me feel more uncomfortable 'cos he's used to that.* (Diane)

> H*e was witnessing chaos and danger, that's what he knew. Then removing all of that and putting him in this completely different environment. Yes, we know that that's a safer environment, but for him it's so completely different it must be terrifying.* (Becky)

They both understood that Patrick being removed from an unsafe environment does not mean that he now felt safe, showing an implicit understanding of Patrick's under-regulated stress response: he is hypervigilant with his body and mind primed for responding to a threat which is not there from the school environment. Moreover, they showed understanding of Patrick's perception of the world as unsafe, his internal working model (although they did not use the term), and, of how difficult it is for Patrick to adjust his behaviour.

And Adam recognised that Patrick's aggressive behaviour towards others communicates his feelings of anxiety:

> *He could be predisposed to just saying rather than admit 'I can't do this; I'm going to lash out'. And that might be when things get hard or if he feels*

threatened or intimidated, challenged. He'll bare his teeth as a warning message perhaps.

Here Adam is offering an attachment-aware interpretation of what Patrick's behaviour stems from: Patrick fears admitting that he's struggling with the work because that makes him feel even more helpless and this becomes an extraordinary stress for him, and so he reacts in a defensive manner.

The vignette described how Patrick communicates only with selected adults in school to illustrate how some looked-after children can struggle to develop relationships with adults in school because of their earlier negative experiences with adults. Adam recognised that Patrick did not trust adults because of his experiences:

Well you know there's a body of trust there. Most young people have an element of presupposition of trust and a presupposition of 'I will communicate with you 'cos that's polite, 'cos that's how I've been brought up' and obviously if he's not been taught that.

Although Adam did not use the term, he recognised that Patrick's internal working model tells him that other people are unsafe so he is wary of their intentions which affects his willingness to speak to them if he cannot trust them. The adults he speaks to are those he trusts. Adam understood Patrick's communication difficulties and how he was replicating his usual patterns of interaction with adults in his new school.

Those DTs with more attachment knowledge (Adam, Becky and Diane) showed more understanding of attachment theory and practice concepts when discussing Patrick's behaviour and needs.

Attachment-Aware strategies to support Patrick

All seven DTs drew implicitly on aspects of attachment theory and practice in their descriptions of how they would support Patrick if he attended their school. There was no explicit use of attachment terms such as Key Adult, secure base, and supported transitions. Yet, all the DTs recognised that Patrick needed to seek safety when he was emotionally dysregulated, and all talked about providing an adult with whom Patrick had a positive relationship and trusted, which is key in attachment theory. All the DTs said that this adult

would be a mentor/learning mentor which, as discussed in Chapter Six, is what policy promotes (DCSF 2009a). From the DTs' descriptions of this special adult (key person), s/he would understand and respond to Patrick's needs in an attachment-aware way by recognising that Patrick finds managing school difficult; and, that he needs a consistently available adult to act as a co-regulator.

Although none of the DTs used the term secure base, Grace, Fiona, and Adam outlined how Patrick would be able to return to his key person when he was emotionally dysregulated and the adult would act as a co-regulator to alleviate his stress response and eventually enable him to return to his lessons. Grace, Fiona, and Adam recognised that Patrick should be able to return to the secure base when he needed to and would provide him with a time-out card out so he could leave the lesson when required:

> *I would give him a time-out card so that if he was in class and was struggling he wouldn't feel that he needed to run out of the classroom. He could just kind of come out and keep a little bit of dignity really so that other people aren't thinking what's this child running round school for, 'cos they often do don't they?* (Grace)

> *A time-out card to go to his key worker, just show the card so he wouldn't need to be tearful or run out he could just show his card and go. Obviously if he's just running out of lessons he's going to make a scene so that would take that away from it.* (Fiona)

Here, the focus is on Patrick's stress regulation rather than punishing him for leaving the classroom and they would create an infrastructure within school to enable him to access his secure base and develop his self-regulation recognising when he needs to leave the lesson, which is attachment-aware.

Carla, Grace, Adam, and Diane would use the key person to support Patrick's transitions, to 'meet and greet' him on arrival to school to support his settling into school each morning. They recognised that Patrick needed support with transitions because for children with attachment difficulties, school can be a stressful environment. Patrick would connect with his key person to alleviate his anxieties about being in school and settle him in ready to learn: '*Getting*

him into school, keeping him in school so that's got to be done through touching base with that same person in the morning' (Adam). Adam recognised the importance of the key person being the consistent person who co-regulates Patrick into a calm state.

Grace explained how, as Patrick's key person, she would carry out emotional check-ins with him throughout the day:

> *I would start seeing this child three times a day. I would see him first thing in the morning, I would see him after lunch and I would see him at the end of the day. I'd see him first thing in the morning to gauge how he's feeling in the morning. I'd see him after lunch to see how his lunchtimes were to see if I can support with any friendship issues. And I'd see him at the end of the day to see how his day's gone so he can have a positive to go home.*

Grace would be Patrick's secure base being responsive to his emotional presentation, and support his transitions and peer relationships.

All the DTs proposed a key person for Patrick who would support him in an attachment-aware way, but none discussed the support that the key person would need as a result of the role's emotional demands. Research shows that disconfirming a child's internal working model of adults as mistrustful is complex and requires appropriate relational knowledge, experience and emotional resilience which will be discussed further in Chapter Ten. The DTs did not consider this which reflects the support they received as discussed in the next chapter regarding the DTs' own emotion work.

Developing a consistent whole-school approach

All the DTs prioritised Patrick building a positive relationship with his key person through getting to know him and developing his trust. But, there was little consideration of how the DT could support other school staff to develop a positive relationship with Patrick which is integral to developing an attachment-aware approach used by all staff, and to ultimately meeting Patrick's needs. Only Diane and Adam described how they would work with colleagues to develop a shared understanding of Patrick and his attachment needs so that all would respond consistently to Patrick reflecting their

enhanced attachment knowledge and confidence in developing others' attachment knowledge.

For Diane, a shared understanding of the child and their experiences was key to implementing a shared approach to supporting the child. She illustrated why this was important for Patrick by describing how she would work with Carla and others to use consistent language when talking to Patrick when he was emotionally dysregulated and running around school:

> *Me and Carla set up a script between us, we would tackle him on the playground if he was walking off and we'd say 'We can't tolerate this, but we understand. But we're here to keep you safe. We can keep you safe in a safe space, but we can't keep you safe wondering around the site on your own'. And if everybody uses that eventually you can re-adjust that chaos and danger being the norm because the norm is we can't tolerate this, we will keep you safe and that becomes the norm and it's just re-programming the brain.*

She explained how everyone needed to use the same consistent approach and language to de-escalate Patrick's attachment behaviours and make him feel safe, a consistent response which is sensitive to Patrick's feelings of insecurity and disconfirms his internal working model of unsafe people and unsafe world. An on-going process which will eventually enable Patrick to adjust his attachment behaviours and there is the acceptance that he will keep running off for some time. It must be remembered that Diane had received training in supporting children with therapeutic practices, and therefore is an exemplar among this group of DTs in terms of how much she knew and understood.

Adam showed understanding that within the secondary school setting Patrick would encounter many staff and so there would be variation in how staff responded to Patrick's behaviours:

> *You know, we all know that some teachers are better at managing behaviour, better at managing conflict than maybe some others. You know it might just be about carefully placing him appropriately.*

His solution for Patrick was to place him in lessons with the '*right teachers*' who would be likely to interact more appropriately with him, respond empathetically to his needs, and not activate his stress response by being

authoritative with him or rejecting him. And so Adam knew that he would need to develop staff's understanding of Patrick: '*You're talking about that knowledge and understanding from the staff. You've gotta share that information and unpick it.'* He understood that it was not enough for himself and the key person to know and be responsive to Patrick's needs, he needs to develop this in all staff that interacted with Patrick so that they responded sensitively to his presentation.

In sum, as a group, the DTs' interpretation of Patrick's behaviours while not fully underpinned by attachment theory, was empathetic. Individual DTs revealed different levels of understanding of Patrick's behaviours as a response to his disrupted attachment. Nonetheless, to some extent all the DTs' descriptions of supporting Patrick in school were underpinned by attachment-aware practice with all the DTs recognising that Patrick needed a positive relationship with an adult in school.

What was missing from the DTs' accounts, other than Adam and Diane's, was a consideration of how to develop a consistent whole-school attachment-aware approach to meeting Patrick's needs through developing the awareness and response of other school staff. There was no discussion of what might have been happening in the classroom for Patrick. All the DTs focused on how Patrick's impaired self-regulation led to disruptive behaviours, but there is little reference to how his attachment difficulties would affect his capacity to learn like how his hypervigilance could affect his concentration and listening skills. Still, there is the recognition from some DTs, Carla, Grace, Adam, Diane, that he is not arriving in school in a calm state settled to learn, and that he cannot do the work which compounds his feelings of anxiety so the link is made between the feeling and learning child (Parker and Levinson 2018).

Therefore, the DTs, apart from Adam and Diane, did not identify Patrick's optimal conditions for learning in the classroom from an attachment-aware perspective. There is limited evidence of them thinking about the school environment from Patrick's perspective apart from considering how to enable Patrick to safely exit the classroom through the use of a secure base and time-out card although these features are key to implementing an attachment-aware

response. Yet, all seven DTs approached creating optimal conditions for learning through a teaching and learning perspective with reference to arranging SEN assessments, checking work was appropriately differentiated, and co-ordinating academic interventions. This suggests both that even in light of Patrick's difficulties in school his academic attainment was a priority for the DTs; and that how to improve educational attainment is what they know about (discussed further in Chapter Nine).

Nevertheless, none showed particular insight into why Patrick would struggle with the social learning aspect of school life such as socialisation with other children, for example, his attachment difficulties are likely to lead to lack of empathy for others, or why or how other children would be likely to respond negatively towards him. Although only two DTs talked about making the classroom environment safer and more attachment-aware for him, their priority was making him feel safe in school with a secure relationship with an adult.

None of the DTs referred to using their school's behaviour policy to manage Patrick's disruptive behaviour, despite his abusive behaviour towards other pupils which, as discussed in Chapter Six, is noted as a reason for school exclusion in policy. This suggests there is an implicit shared understanding among the DTs that the behaviourist model used in schools to tackle disruptive behaviour is inappropriate for Patrick. Instead, all the DTs responded sensitively and empathetically to Patrick's disruptive behaviour by avoiding a punitive response and focused on managing his stress response with appropriate support in line with attachment-aware practice. It could be that the vignette clearly outlined Patrick's experiences and his behaviours which meant the DTs could easily understand his attachment experiences and see the link between his experiences and his behaviour and so interpret his behaviour which is key for attachment-aware practice.

In life this is not always the case: it involves school staff patiently taking the time to get to know the child and build up a framework to interpret their behaviours. These were the DTs' perceptions and responses to a theoretical situation involving a fictional child. They responded to the vignette about Patrick on-the-spot with little time to consider a strategic plan to meet his

needs. They were not given any information about the DT other than that they were new in post. No information was provided about the DT's positioning in school or their school's context. Consequently, it could be argued that the DTs' advice is based on the optimal conditions of support a school could provide for Patrick hence no reference to exclusion. So, I turn now to what the DTs said about how they supported real looked-after children in their own schools.

The DTs' Attachment-Aware Practice with Looked-After Children in their Own Schools

All seven DTs showed understanding that looked-after children are affected by their early attachment experiences and all drew on some aspects of attachment theory and practice in their work with looked-after children in their schools as shown in table 7.3 below.

Table 7.3: DTs' Understanding of Attachment Concepts During Discussion of Looked-After Children

DT	Referred to 'attachment'	Attachment behaviour styles	Key person	Secure base	Internal working model	Supported transitions	Develop whole-school practice
Adam	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Becky	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carla	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Diane	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elizabeth	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Fiona	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Grace	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

But, as shown with Patrick, the variation in the DTs' knowledge was shown to play out in their approach to developing whole-school practice. It was Adam, Becky and Diane who possessed more underpinning knowledge about attachment who were enabled in their practice supporting looked-after children and were knowledgeable and confident enough to develop others' attachment-awareness and develop a whole-school attachment-aware approach.

Five of the DTs (not Elizabeth and Grace) used terms such as 'attachment' when describing their work, but none used the attachment behaviour styles to describe looked-after children's behaviours. All the DTs referred to their

looked-after children having a positive relationship with a key person in school and for almost all the DTs, apart from Adam and Carla, the key person was the DT. Adam and Carla used other school staff to act as the key person. Adam used an academic mentor, and Diane and the learning mentors acted as the key people in Carla's school. As with Patrick, although the DTs did not use the term secure base, the practice of Elizabeth, Diane and Grace was underpinned by the principle of the looked-after children needing an adult to act as a secure base in school.

Elizabeth described how two looked-after children were struggling with the disrupted attachment from their mother:

> *They just talk about their mum all the time* [...] *They're feeling like why's mum gone, why's she left. It's like she's abandoned me, isn't it? They're not old enough to understand that she hasn't.*

Elizabeth understood that the children were struggling with the trauma of losing their attachment figure and so tried to act as a compensatory secure base for the children in school:

> *I make sure every single day that I meet them and say hello to them and sometimes it's like a simple love story they come for a hug. And sometimes they'll say they want to just come in here and sit and have a chat with me. And I always have to have fruit because they come and eat my fruit. So if they've got something they're worried about: Mum or anybody they'll come and knock on the door and say. They'll come and sit and play with the toys.*

Elizabeth tried to regulate the children's emotions by acting as a secure base for two very unhappy children, one of whom is self-harming because she is so distressed. She made herself consistently available for them.

And Diane described how she also acted as a secure base for the looked-after children:

> *They'll come and talk to me and tell me just if things aren't quite right. That little girl in year six will seek me out for anything: she could have wet socks; she could have no dinner money because she's left it at home. She could have*

a fall out with her friends. She could just need a hug and she'll seek me out for that.

Diane also understood that the children needed that support and reassurance from her and allowed them to check in with her when they needed to.

Like with Patrick discussed above, Diane, Elizabeth and Grace understood how being separated from their parents affected the looked-after children at school: they needed the security and reassurance of an adult who acted as a secondary attachment figure in school (secondary to their carers) to positively influence the looked-after children's functioning in school. They made sure they were consistently available as an attachment figure both physically and emotionally for the looked-after children and provided comfort for their physical and emotional needs.

Grace described how she successfully supported a looked-after child who was permanently excluded from his primary school to reintegrate into her school: *'He was excluded for severe violence towards adults and other children and was described as you know a horrible little boy, evil little boy'.* She created a secure base for him at school - both physically and emotionally which was key to making his time at the school a success: *'Gave him time, gave him a base in here. We made it a safe place for him and he'd got safe adults in here he could come and talk to us and he still does it now'.* She gradually built up the relationship and his trust by being available for him when he needed her. She prioritised building a positive relationship with him following his disrupted attachments to his birth family coupled with further relationship breakdowns caused by the permanent exclusion, further school moves and foster placement breakdowns:

Just things like that just keeping those consistent adults 'cos there's a lot of you know through no fault of anybody's they have a lot of change don't they just keeping that consistency for them. Just being somebody who's gonna listen and not not be on anyone's side. Just be on their side.

She was aware of disconfirming his internal working model of adults as inconsistent and rejecting and tried to provide a stable, caring, trusting relationship – exactly what he needed. The other DTs' understanding of

disconfirming looked-after children's internal working model were evident in their emotion work discussed in the identity section later. And all the DTs described supporting looked-after children's transition in some way; mostly regarding supporting the transition between primary to secondary school.

So, the DTs' conceptualisation of looked-after children and their work was underpinned by attachment theory and practice regarding their understanding of the importance of developing a positive relationship with looked-after children.

Evidence of Developing a Consistent Whole-School Approach

Again, similar to the DTs' advice for supporting Patrick, what was missing from Carla, Elizabeth, Fiona and Grace's accounts of their work supporting looked-after children was a consideration of how to develop a consistent whole-school attachment-aware approach through developing the awareness and response of other staff. On the other hand, Adam, Diane and Becky (as discussed above) had received robust training on attachment which enabled them in their practice *both* supporting individual looked-after children *and* enhancing staff's understanding of looked-after children's experiences and their needs and inspired them to support looked-after children appropriately and effectively.

Adam saw it as his role to tackle looked-after children's academic underachievement by supporting staff to understand what affects looked-after children's achievement and he used his attachment knowledge to provide whole-school training on looked-after children's needs: '*We start at the first INSET in the year with these are our looked-after children, this is what we need to do*'. Adam's perception was that his colleagues need advice and support about meeting the needs of individual looked-after children and he identified as the person to provide this knowledge because of his dual role as the lead on improving teaching and learning across the school whereby he would be expected to provide such support to staff about the children's teaching and learning needs. He explained how being the lead on improving teaching and learning practice also enabled him in the DT role because he had influence in the school:

> *In many respects I think it's lucky that I am the* [teaching and learning lead] *as well because when I call a meeting, people will come. Because they know: a) I'll follow it up and b) because I'm a senior member of the school that they need to be here.*

He thought that he was well positioned for influencing colleagues' practice because he was accepted as an expert on children's additional needs and staff were familiar with him providing advice and support. Therefore, Adam provided advice on individual looked-after children throughout the school year sharing information and strategies gained from other professionals with the staff:

> *We get them down here, we'll put up a discussion and share so for this young man we'd come back from a CAMHS[75] review a couple of Mondays ago by Friday we had every member of staff down here for a 10-minute meeting. 'This is the content of the meeting (Shows IEP[76]) and this is the situation. I'd like you to try this, this and this. If you can email me back, let me know which ones are working for you. Then we follow that up so beginning of this week.' I've gone round all those members of staff and said: 'How's it working?'*

Adam regarded staff training as an on-going process – a dialogue between him and them which relied on him having authority in the school: the staff trusted and respected what he said as an expert on looked-after children and what they need in their classroom. Adam admitted that some staff did ignore his meeting requests, but he was confident to challenge them about their lack of engagement because of his positioning in school as a senior leader. Adam showed that the DT needed to be an expert with influence in the school as well as a warm, empathetic person.

Diane developed whole-school staff awareness by providing whole-school training on how early attachment experiences and childhood trauma affects learning, and by working with individual teachers to develop their understanding of individual looked-after children by interpreting the child's behaviours:

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[75] Child Adolescent Mental Health Services
[76] Individual education plan

> *If I feel like here is too much expectation on them* [looked-after children] *or if their behaviour is being questioned, I will go and let me explain why their behaviour's like it is, you know. And then I'd work with the teacher and say: 'Let's think of other ways to work with this' and our staff are great here at doing that.*

Within the school, Diane was recognised as an expert on attachment. Her colleagues accepted her guidance because she was trained in supporting children using therapeutic practices and was acknowledged as coming from a position of expertise in the field of childhood trauma. Although Diane was not a member of the senior leadership team like Adam, Diane's positioning in the school still enabled her to influence staff.

On the other hand, although Becky was knowledgeable and felt strongly about developing an attachment-aware ethos in her school, she was not influential in this area at her school because her headteacher did not regard attachment-awareness as a school priority which constrained her from developing staff awareness in this area:

> *I think everyone should have some attachment-related training like whole schools have done, every member of staff have twilights or half a day INSET or something. And I have tried to set that up a few times. Yeah, I think because our number of* [looked-after] *children is so low it's not seen as a priority.*

Becky perceived her efforts to advise colleagues as: '*a battle that I have to fight sometimes, but I haven't quite won that one'*. Becky's perception was that she was constrained from carrying out an important part of her role because of the school's pupil population. Although she held a senior leadership post in school, Becky was not the lead for improving teaching and learning practice like Adam or trained in supporting traumatised children like Diane and so did not have the same influence regarding implementing attachment-aware practice.

The accounts of Adam, Becky and Diane of their efforts to develop a whole-school approach indicate that DTs need sufficient knowledge and understanding of attachment and support with ongoing training *and* influence if they are to feel confident enough to identify as attachment leads and lead staff

training and development of attachment practices in their schools. Furthermore, their accounts also reflect the findings from attachment-aware schools research relating to the much-needed commitment of senior leaders to drive changes in practice to become more attachment-aware (Dingwall and Sebba 2018a).

Conclusion

This Chapter is framed by a consideration of variation in the depth and breadth of attachment-aware knowledge of the seven DTs. Three DTs thought that they were knowledgeable about attachment because of training that they received. The other four DTs appeared to lack this deeper understanding of attachment. The degree of knowledge played out in the DTs' observations about how they would support the fictional looked-after child, Patrick, and how they said they supported looked-after children in their school. Nonetheless, all seven DTs described using attachment-aware strategies in their practice with looked-after children; however, the least knowledgeable DTs appeared less enabled to be influential within their schools. As discussed in Chapter Five, it was difficult to recruit participants to the study therefore these DTs might be 'best cases' regarding attachment knowledge and practice. Having established the central role of knowledge and influence in enabling DTs' work, in the next chapter I consider how professional identity enables and constrains their attachment-aware practice.

Chapter Eight: The Professional Identity and Emotional Labour of DTs

Introduction

This Chapter uses theories of attachment, professional identity and emotional labour (discussed in Chapter Four) to show how and why the DTs formed a professional identity as an emotion worker; how each of the three identity dimensions: 'professional', 'personal' and 'situated' (Day et al 2006, Sammon et al 2007) shaped this professional identity which is not recognised in policy; and how engaging in emotion work affected the DTs. The Chapter reveals that there is no formal model of support in place for DTs and therefore most do not receive the support needed to manage their emotional labour.

The Chapter is in three parts. First, I explore how the DTs' professional identity as emotion workers stems from their professional duties and aspirations regarding making a positive difference for looked-after children. Secondly, I discuss how the DTs' emotion work was influenced by their personal beliefs, experiences, and, identity as parents. Thirdly, I show how the DTs' situated identity as an emotion worker constrains and enables their attachment-aware work.

Professional Identity as an Emotion Worker

In this thesis, I propose that how the seven teachers identified as professionals is important to how they carry out their DT work. It is important to acknowledge first that being a DT is a secondary role: secondary school teachers (one in my group) generally identify as classroom teachers of specific subjects (Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt 2000, Ball and Goodson 1985, Day et al 2005) and primary school teachers are first and foremost classroom teachers of diverse groups of children (Woods and Jeffery 2002, Nias 1989). In my group, the DTs occupied a variety of dual roles. The DTs who were teachers also occupied two other roles: that of the DT and another senior leadership role. Of the two secondary school DTs, Adam was a teacher who was also a senior leader, and Fiona was a member of the school support staff who also carried out the DT role. Of the five primary DTs, three were classroom

teachers who were also senior leaders, and two were school support staff, who, like Fiona, carried out the DT role as well. Despite the variation in their primary roles, I argue that what all seven DTs brought to the role was a strong identification as what call I an 'emotion worker' which had been developed over their careers in their current role and other roles.

Many teachers believe that being a 'good' teacher is about caring for their pupils and making them feel safe at school so they can take advantage of learning opportunities (Søreide 2006, O'Connor 2008, Kelchtermans 1993). This core aspect of teacher identity seemed particularly pertinent for the group of DTs I interviewed because of looked-after children's circumstances and the dual role of five of the DTs as safeguarding officers[77] in school.

Carla, Diane, Elizabeth, Fiona and Grace had a safeguarding role consequently they knew more about the children's experiences at home than other staff because they were positioned both to hear looked-after children's disclosures about their experiences with their parents and also to read children's confidential files which described their home situation and reasons for entering care. Therefore, these DTs were likely to have a deeper understanding of looked-after children's emotional presentation at school.

Most had been involved in the looked-after children's entry to care which influenced how they viewed themselves and their work supporting the children. Good teaching is always emotional work because it involves developing good quality relationships with children (Hargreaves 2000) and for the five DTs who protected and rescued children from their abusive circumstances these relationships were complex and intense, shown below. Because of their safeguarding role, these DTs had some experiences with looked-after children which provoked strong emotions in both the children and the DTs and led to the development of an emotional connection between the two.

Grace and Diane described how some looked-after children had disclosed to them about the abuse at home, and how this had created a close bond between them and the children. Grace explained how she felt following a child's

[77] As designated safeguarding leads, they led on child welfare and child protection issues in their school.

disclosure to her: '*She disclosed to me: why couldn't I just make everything change right now?'* After the disclosure, Grace felt an increase in the child's trust in her and in her responsibility for the child's wellbeing. Her role was caring for the child following her traumatic experience.

It was similar for Diane who described a looked-after child's experience: '*She went home and the most horrific things happened and if you talk to her she would say she thinks she was going to die. She thought she was gonna die that night.'* Diane was instrumental in supporting the child through the traumatic child protection process and her removal from her family:

> *I went through every physical examination with her because she was too scared to be on her own with anyone else which is humiliating for her. You know, she did go through everything with me.*

Like Grace, Diane felt an increased sense of responsibility for this child which was continuing many years after the child's disclosure and subsequent entry to care. She was meant to keep this child safe and became emotionally involved because of this shared experience. This child was now almost an adult and Diane maintained a relationship with her because the child had no one else in her life. Diane fought to be allowed to have contact with the child as a non-family member, and the child had a relationship with her and her family. She held herself responsible for separating the girl from her family and, although she did not regret her decision, she clearly carried the responsibility of that decision and her actions which continued to affect her emotionally.

As safeguarding leads in schools, Carla, Elizabeth and Fiona knew what the looked-after children had experienced. Elizabeth described how this affected her relationship with two looked-after children:

> *Well they know that you know about what happened. And they know that you know about mum and they know that you've been to a meeting when mum was in it. And so they know that you know everything and their secrets, so I think that's that's quite good that they have a secure person in school.*

Elizabeth's knowledge of what the children had experienced created a bond between her and the children.

Therefore, for all seven DTs, the looked-after children's circumstances; the shared experience of the child protection process; and the relationships which emerged from these experiences shaped the DTs' views of themselves as DTs. Without using the phrase, they identified as emotion workers for looked-after children because they felt a 'professional duty' for managing the children's emotions which related to caring for them, and, in turn, managing their own emotions arising from supporting the children in this way (Edwards 2016). All the DTs willingly accepted emotional labour as part of the role (Hebson 2007). It was their responsibility to help the looked-after children recover from their earlier experiences with abusive parents, including listening to them talk about their painful experiences to help them make sense of the 'explosive feelings' described by the poet and care leaver, Sissay (1999). It was their responsibility to try to improve things for the children. In Chapter Two, the care leavers describe how they needed adults to support their emotional needs and the DTs I interviewed perceived their role to be providing this level of empathy and acceptance of their looked-after children's emotions.

Grace, Elizabeth, Adam, Diane, and Fiona saw it as their role to listen to and support the children when they were emotionally dysregulated even when the children's negative emotions were targeted at them:

> *The behaviours that they can display can be quite a challenge and often you get drawn into that because you're that go-to person. They're under your remit so very often you are, here's this for you* [laughing]*, take that.* (Adam)

Adam recognised the children's challenging behaviour as their emotional response to their traumatic experiences and that the children projected their anger and frustration on to him which he willingly accepted as their 'go-to person'.

And Grace and Elizabeth responded similarly: '*You can say all the nice things to them but they don't believe you, they're not interested, they throw it all back at you because they're so angry'* (Elizabeth). Grace explained how she responds to the children's anger: she accepted the children regardless of their words or actions:

> *Being there for them. Just being somebody for them that they know whatever they've done I'm still going to speak to them the next day. They can call me what they like but the next day we'll still do exactly the same. It's just building up that trust 'cos they just don't have it.*

Attachment-aware practice states that the responses described above are exactly what children with attachment difficulties need: consistently empathetic responses from school staff to disconfirm the children's internal working model of adults as rejecting and uncaring following their earlier attachment experiences. Because the DTs knew and understood the children's experiences, they understood why the children mistrusted them, projected their anger on to them and pushed them away. Grace showed how she tried to disconfirm their internal working model by not allowing the child to reject her. The DTs appreciated that sanctioning a child for their emotional dysregulation is inappropriate. Thus, these DTs were consistently supportive of the children, accepted their emotions and not rejecting them regardless of their behaviour.

Moreover, the DTs' understanding of the looked-after children's experiences influenced their professional aspirations regarding what they wanted to achieve in the role: all seven DTs wanted to make a positive difference in their looked-after children lives following their negative experiences. But there were occasions when they did not have the influence or agency to improve things for the children which provoked in the teachers negative feelings like anger or sadness. Grace, Fiona, Diane and Elizabeth all described interactions with looked-after children where they lacked agency which provoked feelings that they had to suppress to prioritise the children's emotional needs (Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006).

Grace described how she suppressed her feelings of sadness and helplessness:

> *It was very difficult when we had a child who went into care and didn't want to go home and didn't want to go to contact and was in here every day crying saying: "You told me that things would get better. Why aren't you listening to me? I've told you I don't want to go back. Why aren't you stopping them? How many times do I have to tell you this is what happens at home?" So but that was really hard at one point because we kind of there was nothing I could do.*

It was hard for Grace to accept that she could not help the girl and improve the situation, but she knew that she had to reassure the child so she engaged in emotional labour: surface acting to suppress her sadness at the child's situation and faked positivity to provoke a more positive emotional response from the child regarding her situation (Hochschild 1983, Taxer and Frenzel 2015).

Fiona, too, suppressed her sadness which was provoked when supporting a looked-after child who was distressed about not knowing whether he would return home to his family: *'I just want to pick him up and tell him everything's going to be alright, but you can't do that'*. Like Grace, Fiona suppressed her true emotions to prioritise the boy's emotional needs over her own at that time, showing how display rules (rules governing the appropriate display of emotions discussed in Chapter Four) (Hochschild, 1983) governed her response and her emotional display in front of him as she was unable to comfort him as she wanted to.

Therefore, the DTs were supporting the looked-after children through some highly challenging situations which inevitably provoked strong emotions, yet implicit display rules prohibited their display of those negative emotions in front of the children and they were expected to be emotional regulation role models (Yin and Lee 2012). Hence, despite all the DTs' positive role identification as emotion workers, there were signs that this emotion work took its toll on all of them although this was mediated by their personal identity which is discussed next.

In sum, the DTs' 'professional identity dimension' was evident in their perceptions of their professional duty towards looked-after children of managing their emotions, and their professional aspirations of wanting to improve the lives of the children which inevitably led to negative emotions when they lacked agency to change things for them.

Personal Identity as the Origin of Professional Identity

As discussed above, the DTs appeared to be willing and skilled emotion workers. What is not clear is whether they were chosen as DTs (and safeguarding officers) because this aptitude was noticed or whether it developed on the job. A consideration of the relationship between the DTs'

professional identity and personal identity might offer clues. I found that the DTs' personal beliefs and experiences influenced their professional aspirations for their work with looked-after children, and led them to become emotionally involved with their work. Even though their positive identification as emotion workers mediated the negative effects of their emotional labour, the costs of their emotional labour meant that some DTs struggled to separate their work and private selves as shown below.

For Fiona, Becky, Grace and Carla, their identity as a parent influenced their identity as emotion workers. Fiona compared the looked-after children she supported with her own children and it upset her that the looked-after children did not experience happy lives like her children:

> *I know that there are carers and they're with people that are looking after them, but they get paid to look after them you know. And I just feel that I feel quite not envious, sad that I'm going home to this happy home life and I've got the freedom to go where I want and do what I want. And my children always had the freedom to do what they want and they're sort of restricted. They can only see mum and dad this time or they can't see dad at all or they can't see mum at all. The siblings are split up.*

Fiona wanted to make life better for looked-after children as she would for her own children and admitted that she got '*attached*' to the children because of their circumstances which led to upset:

> *I think sometimes you get too attached but I can't help it* [laughing] [...] *I mean when the lad was leaving at Christmas I couldn't help but think about that all over Christmas, you know, it was horrible I was thinking he's got such a naff Christmas knowing what's going to happen afterwards but, yeah, so I have a good cry.*

Emotional labour research shows that an inability to separate the private and work self can lead to stress (Kinman et al 2011) which is evident in Fiona's account. Here, she cannot stop herself thinking and worrying about the looked-after children when she is away from work which could potentially lead to burnout (ibid). However, her emotional labour is willingly given which helped

mediate the negative impact because she still felt that she was helping the children in some way.

For Becky too her identity as a parent shaped her identity as an emotion worker. As the mother of an adopted child, Becky saw her child and their story and needs reflected in the looked-after children at her school and felt that she must work hard to improve matters for them: '*Because I've got that experience looking after* [her own child], *you know, I'm looking out for those children*.' The pressure of getting it right for the children meant she became emotionally involved – this is the emotional toll:

> *I think that's the thing because, you know, you're trying really, really hard to do something and make a difference and you know how it can all go terribly wrong and how damaging that is. Like I say the stakes are higher you get more emotionally involved.*

It is impossible to avoid becoming emotionally involved if the work is done well – this is what a good DT does. Being emotionally invested drove Becky's work as a '*champion*' for looked-after children leading to her high self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006). But, equally Becky needed to be mindful of role over-identification and risking burnout.

For Diane and Adam, it was other personal experiences which shaped their identity as emotion workers. Like Becky, Diane was clear that she must embrace the emotionality of the children's experiences in order to carry out her role effectively:

> *What I've always said is that if I get to the point where I hear a disclosure or a story or a child's bad experience and it doesn't shock me then I think I need to check myself. I make sure I still feel that shock because if not I don't think you'd work as hard for the child.*

This attachment-aware willingness to acknowledge the emotional impact of the children's experiences allowed Diane to connect with them to develop the level of empathy she needed when carrying out her intensive work with individual children. This approach stemmed not only from Diane's work supporting children using therapeutic practices, but also from her personal experience of adoption. She wanted to become emotionally involved with the children and

disregarded the feeling rules which dictate how you should or should not feel about the children (Hochschild 1983). Diane disregarded the normative expectation that school staff should be emotional regulation role models because this is in the child's best interests academically. Diane explained that her personal experience of adoption is her motivation for working with looked-after children: '*That's probably why I have a link and a desire to understand and a desire to know and maybe a desire to give back a little bit of something I got'*. She wanted to understand and support them through their experiences like she was enabled to do through the support she received from her family. As discussed earlier, this is why Diane felt so passionately about maintaining a connection with a looked-after child who had no one else in her life. She wanted the girl to have a family.

Diane showed the difficulties of separating work and private life once she was emotionally invested with a looked-after child. She recognised that her relationship with the child was professionally inappropriate to some staff because she had no professional reason for sustaining the relationship which occurred outside the school building, but it was personally appropriate for her: '*And I think some people would look at it and think well it's not very professional, you shouldn't do that, but I'm absolutely confident with it to say I've got no problems'. S*he was transparent about her feelings for the child: '*She's just a special girl and I love her dearly*'. Diane acknowledged that this was unusual, but ignored the normative expectations of school staff and social workers and implicit feeling and display rules which should govern how she felt about the looked-after child because this was not in the child's best interests. But, Diane is an exemplar among the DTs because, as discussed later, she was trained in supporting children using therapeutic practices and received professional support enabling her to traverse the boundary between her private and work self-mitigating the risk of burnout.

Research shows that a teacher's approach to teaching can be influenced by their own experience as pupils and this was similar for Adam (Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt 2000). Adam's approach to supporting looked-after children was shaped by his own schooling experience. His teachers carried out emotion work with the children thereby, in his view, improving his life. He

described his '*challenging*' background living in a single parent family and his disengagement at secondary school. But, that he was supported by one teacher in particular:

> *And I got into all sorts of trouble and Dave Lesley*[78] *was very much a champion for me if you like and in hindsight I probably should have been kicked out of the school* [laughing] *on several occasions. But, he was a really good egg and he sort of looked out for me and, yeah, smoothed the ripples in many instances.*

Mr Lesley was a '*champion*' for him because he engaged with him and advocated for him to avoid exclusion from school. He recognised that Adam needed a positive connection with someone at school to sustain his engagement. Adam explained that this experience influenced his philosophy as a teacher which was to champion for disadvantaged children. The DTs' situated identity section discussed next shows why Adam's professional identity is conflicted when he cannot support looked-after children as he would like to. He felt strongly about the exclusion of looked-after children because of his schooling experience. Adam also struggled to separate his work and private self because he discussed his work with his wife, but this inability to separate private and work was not to the same extent as Fiona, Becky and Diane who showed some hints of over-identification and hence the emotional toll more clearly.

Some of the DTs' personal beliefs and experiences influenced their professional aspirations for looked-after children and so informed their identity as emotion workers. These DTs were coping quite well with their emotional labour: there were no signs that they were experiencing burnout, but their emotional labour being willingly given mediated the negative effects of emotional labour.

Situated Identity: Enablements and Constraints

Situated identity relates to the DT's identity within school. Although all the DTs identified as emotion workers, there was variation in their situated identity

[78] Name changed to protect anonymity.

because not all were *perceived* as emotion workers within their school leading to a conflicted, unstable identity. This variation in situated identity constrained or enabled them as emotion workers because it affected the support they received. And, as discussed in Chapter Six and below, because policy does not recognise the full role of emotion in DTs' work, there was not a formal, systematic support model for the DTs to enable them to manage the emotional demands of their work. Therefore, whether or not colleagues supported them informally, they did not receive the level of support in school that they needed to manage the children's emotions and their own.

Attachment-aware practice shows that managing the emotions of children with attachment difficulties is likely to provoke an emotional response in those adults who are supporting them and so those adults are also likely to need support with their own emotional management. Whether school staff are recognised as emotion workers and are accordingly well supported rests on four aspects of a school's 'professional context' in relation to the role of emotion: (1) whether or not the school culture is one which recognises the role of emotion in teaching and learning (Hargreaves 2000); (2) where adults' emotional needs are recognised and supported (Bombèr 2007 and 2011); (3) where colleagues provide workplace support to each other (Kinman et al 2011, Edwards 2016), and (4) where models of specialist support like regular supervision are available (Bombèr 2015b).

Elizabeth, Grace, Fiona and Diane reported that their identity as emotion workers was reinforced by their school's professional context: their emotion work with looked-after children was recognised by their colleagues who provided support to mitigate the emotional impact of their experiences. Of the DTs, Diane and Elizabeth provided best-case examples. They reported all four aspects of a supportive school culture as described above. Diane's situated identity as an emotion worker was stable: her emotion work and her own emotional needs were recognised within school. She felt well supported by her colleagues and the intensity and complexity of her emotion work was recognised. Because her role involved supporting children using therapeutic practices, Diane was supported to receive regular professional supervision:

> *I have my clinical supervision once a month normally, but I have two hours. And that is great because I think some people think you go and you kind of say it's almost like going to a therapy session. But actually I explore the children I work with; I explore ways of working with staff; how to work with social care. What do I do now? How do I move forward?*

The supervision allowed her to share her experiences working with looked-after children and to reflect on her work including opportunities for joint thinking about how she approached her work: all much needed when supporting looked-after children with attachment difficulties (Edwards 2016).

Diane's level of support was unusual because her role was unusual – no other DT received clinical supervision because they were not trained to support children using therapeutic practices. Carla, who shared the DT role with Diane, did not receive any additional support to manage her emotions other than Diane's. Carla was not recognised as an emotion worker in school and did not carry out much emotion work with the children because this was Diane's job and she was appropriately qualified and supported to do it.

Elizabeth also had a stable situated identity as an emotion worker in her school where adults' and children's emotional needs were acknowledged and supported as evidenced by the support she gave and received from her colleagues:

> *I support the staff so if they're really sort of down about it I'll say: "Just come and sit in my room to have a chat 'cos sometimes it's really depressing"…they said "You've probably had to listen to four times worse than what I've come across about" but I say: "No, just come and talk".*

Her school's culture recognised that adults were emotionally affected by their work supporting children. Elizabeth encouraged staff to discuss upsetting experiences with her not shying away from them. Equally, her colleagues understood that her work was emotionally taxing, worried about the negative emotional impact on her and wanted to support her, for example, by involving her in positive things in school such as going on school trips. Elizabeth felt that her colleagues' support enabled her to continue her work managing looked-after children's emotions. Her school was the only school which commissioned

supervision from the local authority's educational psychology service to support her and other staff to deal with distressing situations such as children being taken into care:

> *We had somebody else to just talk through what we'd gone through because it is quite traumatic. They would come and talk to you and actually ask you if you're all alright because it's quite heavy. It's quite depressing some of the stuff that you have to deal with, so you have to keep a balance*.

Elizabeth's account shows how the support allowed her to reflect on her distressing experiences so that she could remain emotionally regulated and resilient. However, this specialist support was not provided on an ongoing basis even though it was needed to mediate the effects of Elizabeth's emotional labour.

Grace and Fiona also received colleagues' support, but no professional support. Grace worked within a supportive whole-school culture with clear ways to access support with emotional needs because of the school's display rules whereby the expression of emotion amongst adults, albeit away from the children, was allowed and even encouraged:

> *None of us ever go home on a stressful situation; we always go in the staffroom or go down into the head's office and get chocolate out of her drawer and just it's just that type of place. People often come in here and they might have a cry and have some tea and a slice of toast and off they go again.*

The school culture acknowledged adults' emotional needs, and colleagues provide emotional support for each other which enabled people to '*go again*' and carry on with their work emotionally soothed. Like Elizabeth's school, this support was reciprocated, and staff talked to each other about their emotional experiences. Although if all school staff are viewed as emotion workers then the complexity of emotions experienced by someone like Grace who is supporting children with attachment difficulties could go unacknowledged and sometimes chocolate and toast is not enough.

Grace explained how she needed and received her colleagues' support following an emotional interaction either with or relating to a looked-after child:

> *I just go in the staffroom and just chat with everyone about it afterwards or go and see somebody. And go in and chat with Ms White[79] and go: "I've just had this really emotional experience I just need either a bit of a cry or a bit of a moan or this is what I need" and then I go again* [laughs].

These interactions with colleagues allowed Grace to share her experience and feelings with others which helps her make sense of it. Her phrase '*then I go again*' indicating that she felt emotionally stronger following her chats with others. These interactions were cathartic for Grace, provided opportunities for reassurance, and allowed her to put the situation into perspective. Although arguably in the absence of professional support it is difficult to estimate the extent of the emotional toll on Grace, but she felt well supported and enabled to carry on with her work. But, it was serendipitous.

So, Diane, Carla, Elizabeth and Grace were fortunate because their schools' cultures recognised staff's emotional needs to varying degrees and they received colleagues' support to support their emotional regulation. Their situated identity as emotion workers was enabled by their schools' culture. On the other hand, the other DTs were less fortunate.

For Fiona, there was no indication of a supportive whole-school culture, although she did receive some colleague support. However, Fiona was not viewed as nor expected to be an emotion worker to the same extent as Diane, Grace and Elizabeth which is aligned with Hargreaves' (2000) findings about secondary schools' reluctance to accept emotion as part of school life and teachers' resistance to addressing children's emotional needs. But, Fiona felt well supported in school: *'I think I've got quite a good network of support within school'* which included other teaching assistants and her manager, Joanne[80], a senior leader. She spoke to Joanne if she was feeling upset about the children:

> *I talk to Joanne, she's not the most sympathetic person. So I don't think she fully understands what children are all about in a sense their emotions and what they*

[79] Name changed to protect anonymity.
[80] Name changed to protect anonymity.

need so, yes so although I can go and talk to her she'll just go: "We'll deal with it". "How?" you think, you know.

Fiona felt that Joanne was quite dismissive of her emotional response and did not feel reassured by Joanne's unemotional response, and it is reassurance which is a key benefit of colleague support. This contrasts with the support Grace and Elizabeth received whereby colleagues were highly aware of the potential emotional impact of their work. Although Fiona added that she did feel supported by her other colleagues. Yet, as discussed earlier, this support did not stop Fiona from crying both at school and at home and did not help her separate her work and home life.

On the other hand, Becky's and Adam's schools' cultures did not recognise them as emotion workers so their situated identity as emotion workers was conflicted. There was no acknowledgment of adults' emotional needs; an absence of colleague support; and no professional supervision. Indeed, Becky perceived that the purpose of her work with looked-after children was misunderstood by some staff because these children were not regarded as a school priority although she was determined to do her best for them: '*I'm not just going to abandon those children*'. She perceived that looked-after children were a low-profile group in her school. Her strong language reflected her belief that the children needed her to advocate for them. She felt isolated and alienated in relation to her stance about looked-after children and sought support elsewhere from her adoption agency where her emotion work was recognised and supported. She described the adoption agency as a '*massive*' source of support who were '*like family*' and allowed her to reflect on her experiences with looked-after and previously looked-after children and provided much-needed advice. Becky had to seek this reference group outside school because, for her, one of her core purposes in the school was not understood.

Likewise, Adam did not have a supportive whole-school culture which acknowledged adults' emotional needs therefore colleagues' support was lacking, and he did not have professional supervision for his emotion work. Adam's identity as an emotion worker was unstable because like Becky there were tensions between his professional and situated identity dimensions. His

professional and personal identity dimensions discussed earlier suggested that he identified as an emotion worker and knew the importance of carrying out emotion work with looked-after children, but the complex emotion work that Adam did with looked-after children to support them to stay in lessons and in school was unacknowledged by his colleagues. His identity as an emotion worker was constrained by his school's ethos and his colleagues' response which failed to recognise looked-after children's emotional dysregulation as stemming from their experiences and that adults, like Adam, were emotional co-regulators. Hence, he was unable to challenge the school's use of a behaviourist model to sanction looked-after children for their emotional dysregulation and prevent looked-after children being excluded:

> *Obviously, we do have some exclusions so you've got exclusion meetings. You've got occasionally complaints that ensue from social workers or carers. And you think it's not me: I'm not the pastoral side, I'm looking at it from their side. I have told them. And then you get into that sorta evidencing things. I guess I'd say that I probably often feel quite attacked.*

Other professionals complained when looked-after children are excluded and Adam must explain the school's actions with which he disagreed to those professionals. There is tension within Adam's professional identity because his professional values of inclusivity for all children suggests that he understood the causes of looked-after children's challenging behaviour; thought that exclusion was inappropriate, and, he distanced himself from his colleagues' actions. His situated identity was conflicted because he stopped short of stating that he disagreed with his colleagues but did posit that he was on the child's side. He was positioned in conflict with the school as a 'policy outsider' (Ball et al 2012, p.113) because he disagreed with and was constrained by the inflexible school behaviour policy. He disagreed with one of the school's core principles: how and why children are disciplined. His language illustrated his torn loyalties, the repeated use of '*side*' to demonstrate allegiance and support with the excluded child. It must have been isolating and frustrating for Adam that the school's practices regarding excluding looked-after children did not reflect his own views and values. DTs are sometimes placed in a difficult position in their schools which the DT policy does not acknowledge.

Similar to Becky, because of the conflict between the school's values and his own, Adam struggled to understand his purpose in the school as a DT, and his sense of self-efficacy regarding how he could make a difference for looked-after children: *'So you're just, you know, like a ball on a rope basically* [laughing] *just swinging. Have I got it right this time?'* Adam's use of a metaphor to describe his isolation, alienation and lack of direction is powerful illustrating the importance of colleague support for DTs who are carrying out emotion work. He did not have the colleague support so did not get the reassurance or advice which he needed.

In sum, policy does not expect DTs to carry out the emotional co-regulation work with looked-after children which their accounts suggest that they actually do, therefore it does not provide a framework of emotional support to enable the DTs to manage the sort of emotional labour described above. In the absence of a formal model of support to manage the job's emotional demands, informal, serendipitous colleagues' support enabled DTs to continue carrying out the role. Such informal support is not systematic and can also act as a constraint obscuring the need for formal opportunities to reflect and make sense of often-distressing experiences supporting children with attachment difficulties. Even if the support being offered to DTs is not formal clinical supervision it should still be frequent and scheduled, not *ad hoc* like the DTs' workplace support. Although most DTs' colleagues were supportive, there is little recognition of the complexity of the emotion work that the DTs carry out because most do not get the professional support they need to manage their emotions. The DTs described how their emotion work with looked-after children affected them emotionally and they used a variety of emotional management strategies and sources of emotional support to manage the role's emotional demands. As discussed in Chapter Five, it proved difficult to recruit participants for this study so it is likely that these DTs are 'best cases' who take their work seriously, do not burnout, and felt adequately supported within their school contexts, but the emotional toll of their work is still evident.

Conclusion

The DTs had formed a professional identity as emotion workers which was shaped by personal and situated dimensions. Because their identification is not recognised in policy or by some of their schools, many DTs did not receive the support they needed to manage the job's emotional labour. This Chapter shows that DTs' identity as emotion workers is not as policy intended therefore policy, as outlined in Chapter Six, is not enacted as intended regarding the DTs' emotion work. The next chapter goes further to explore the relationship between policy and the DTs' work: how and why some policies are not enacted as intended; and how specific policies shape their work including how they constrain their attachment-aware work.

Chapter Nine: The Policy Enactment of DTs

Introduction

This is the final chapter of the three chapters based on the DT interviews. This Chapter uses policy enactment theory to show how the DTs' professional, external and situated contexts affect their enactment of policy. This Chapter draws on Ball et al's (2012) concepts of 'imperative' and 'exhortative' policy types, 'active' and 'passive' policy subjects, and policy actor types, described in Chapter Four.

As discussed in Chapter Six, the DT policy is an exhortative policy allowing for a fairly wide interpretation by DTs and schools. Unlike imperative policies, the DT policy does not have an accountability framework of extrinsic outcomes like educational attainment targets to be achieved. The DT policy outcomes are more intrinsic and more difficult to measure by those external to the school. Policy is unclear on how the effectiveness of the DT role should be monitored and, although the DT role is statutory, many of the policy strands are suggested rather than mandated which means that, as shown in Chapter Seven, some non-mandated strands like providing attachment training to staff are discarded (Braun, Maguire and Ball 2010). Therefore, the DTs that I interviewed enacted policy differently to policy expectations because it is an exhortative policy influenced by other policies and their multiple and contradictory demands.

This Chapter takes three policies and shows how the DTs interpreted the policies and translated them into their practices: the Virtual School policy which is itself an interpreter and translator of policy; the well-being policy; and, the standards policy. The Chapter reveals how policy shapes the DTs' work through determining school priorities; and how managing the multiple and contradictory policy demands constrained the DTs' attachment-aware work.

DTs' Interpretation and Translation of the Virtual School Policy

The role of the Virtual School is introduced in Chapter One and further discussed in Chapter Six. Policy expectation is that the local authority plays a large role in policy management for schools and for these DTs this meant that

the Virtual School was a 'policy manager' providing policy interpretation and translation of DT policy (Ball et al 2012, p.55), and enabled their attachment-aware work. Only two of the DTs, Adam and Elizabeth, read policy documents so the DTs' interpretation of DT policy was mainly provided through the Virtual School. The training, attachment conference and termly DT network meetings provided by the Virtual School were key sites for policy interpretation and translation with opportunities for DTs to learn about attachment theory and practice and the role's normative expectations, along with the Virtual School acting as an ongoing source of advice and support:

> *I like the fact that I know that I've got you and Wendy*[81] *that I know I can ring if I've got a question or a query. I like to know that I've got somebody who I know who knows the role that I can just ring up and I can ask*. (Grace)

And Becky perceives the Virtual School as **'***a massive source of knowledge'* because*: 'I think it's really useful having the Virtual Schools so you're my go-to-person when I don't know something which is really, really useful'*.

Most of the DTs appreciated the quality of support that the Virtual School provided, although Carla, Diane and Adam did not know the work of the Virtual School well and had infrequently accessed its training. Therefore, as an exhortative policy, the Virtual School was not enabled to be a policy manager to all the DTs. DT training is not mandatory and there is no formal induction process for DTs in policy resulting in the variation in DTs' attachment knowledge received with implications for the formation of their professional identity, how they supported looked-after children, and developed whole-school attachment-aware practice (discussed in Chapter Seven). Furthermore, while the Virtual School provided policy and interpretation, the DT policy was still subject to individual teachers' interpretation and translation in their schools and other policy demands as shown in the varied policy response amongst the DTs discussed below and in Chapters Seven and Eight.

[81] Name changed to protect anonymity.

In sum, the Virtual School acted as a policy interpreter and translator for the DT policy and was key to the DTs' attachment-aware work but was not enabled to be an effective policy manager to all the DTs.

DTs' Interpretation and Translation of the Children's Wellbeing Policy

Children's wellbeing policy constrained DTs' attachment work by shaping how DTs supported looked-after children. At the time of the interviews, children's wellbeing policy[82] outlined the role of external services such as CAMHS and local authority educational psychologists, and of schools in identifying and supporting children's wellbeing including their mental health needs (Public Health 2015). The children's wellbeing policy is an exhortative policy with no high stakes for schools with limited accountability and targets, but there are high stakes for the children if they do not receive the specialist support that they need. As an exhortative policy, it leads to the DTs being active policy subjects because their interpretation of and response to the policy is permitted flexibility. As policy actors, the DTs were either 'enthusiasts' or 'translators' because of their perspectives and positioning on promoting children's wellbeing, this was an important aspect of their work and they were keen to embody the policy in their practices. As discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight, they all recognised the importance of supporting looked-after children's wellbeing as shown by their attachment-aware work with looked-after children and their positive identification as emotion workers.

The government pledged more funding for mental health and increased service provision, but these promises did not materialise and instead there was reduced provision for children and extended eligibility and waiting times for available services (SCIE 2017, Parkin et al 2019). Therefore, the children's wellbeing policy assumed 'best' policy conditions (Ball et al 2012, p.41) of specialist support available for children which the DTs found to be lacking. The DTs had to meet the contradictory policy demands which stated that children's wellbeing should be supported appropriately by schools, but the external,

[82] Policy about improving children's wellbeing including physical and mental health and social and emotional needs. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing; https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-wellbeing-provision-in-schools

specialist support outlined in policy was missing. This policy shaped the DTs' work because they had to provide support when the external services did not. Children with attachment difficulties require different levels of support. Some require more specialist support than just being in an attachment-aware school can provide. It is this lack of appropriate support which constrained the DTs' attachment-aware work. They were not able to enact the policy as intended because of the shortfall in local specialist support available.

The DTs' professional, situated and external contexts influenced their interpretation and translation of children's wellbeing policy. Their professional context consisted of their professional knowledge of attachment theory and practice; their experience of supporting looked-after children; and their personal beliefs and values about looked-after children's needs. As shown in Chapters Seven and Eight, they viewed it as their role to support these children with their attachment difficulties and policy promotes this by outlining schools' role in supporting children's wellbeing needs. The DTs' situated context was the needs of their looked-after children cohort and all seven DTs mentioned needing specialist support for their looked-after children at some point.

Their external context was the lack of specialist support available for those looked-after children who they felt had attachment difficulties which required more specialist support from services like CAMHS. They were constrained by the lack of support for these children and they were responsible for 'picking up the pieces'. Diane, Carla, Elizabeth, Adam and Fiona explained how external support was lacking. Diane said that it was '*really hard*' to access CAMHS support: '*I think the referral system is tedious, it's not easy*.' And she thought that the time allocated to individual children for CAMHS interventions was not enough to enable the children to make sense of their experiences: '*Six weeks' working and then you're done…It's not gonna work and it's not their fault*.' She appreciated that CAMHS were struggling with capacity issues. Others also described getting CAMHS support as '*hard*' – ' *a hard slog* [...] *it's hard, it's hard*' (Carla) and '*they're hard to get hold of*' (Elizabeth) reflecting the criticisms about the poor level of CAMHS support that was available at the time of the interviews (Parkin et al 2019).

The DTs enacted the policy by substituting the lack of specialist support as best they could. And Adam, Elizabeth and Fiona showed the implications of supporting those looked-after children they felt required more specialist support because they lacked the relevant skills to support the children. Adam described a frustrating situation with a boy who was struggling to recover from his earlier attachment experiences:

> *This young man here desperately needs CAMHS and the CAMHS waiting list is as long as your arm. And, yet he's not necessarily a significant priority, but there's a young man that's seen some stuff that he really shouldn't have seen and he's struggling to cope with it and he can't come to terms with it. You know, no CAMHS support. Instead he's got a bunch of people that are trying to do their best* […] *we're all trying to do pockets of stuff in our knowledge, our own understanding, our own comfort zone rather than the kid actually getting access to the professional that they need to start unpicking the issues that they've got.*

He was angry that there were a team of professionals working hard to support the child including him, but that their support was '*futile*' considering the child's needs.

Elizabeth described how others like social workers and carers viewed her and her colleagues as substitute mental health professionals who were expected to support looked-after children's more complex attachment needs:

> *School will deal with it like we're trained mental health professionals as well as all of the other jobs we do. Yeah, I think I need to take up you know psychology as a degree or something, take up counselling or something. I think they throw it back and the child's sort of left in the middle just going round and round so school end up having to deal with it the best they can.*

Elizabeth added that a referral to CAMHS could take a year which inevitably negatively impacts the child.

And Fiona described the same challenges of supporting a looked-after child who needed more specialist support than she could provide. She described his presenting behaviours: '*Messing about in lessons* […] *trashing rooms* […] *he was starting to pick on the others* […] *and slyly trying to break up friendship*

groups […] *verbally abusing staff*'. As discussed in Chapters Three and Seven, children with attachment needs can find the social learning aspect of school difficult, particularly if they do not feel safe in school. Hence, they are likely to struggle to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours and to have difficulties with managing schools' systems and processes. But, the boy's disruptive behaviour was still managed in line with the behaviour policy and an inappropriate authoritative approach involving '*year group isolation*' and '*internal exclusions*' which did not help the boy to self-regulate leading to a vicious circle of sanction and heightened behaviours.

Because the boy did not respond to the usual behavioural management techniques, Fiona sought CAMHS support, which was provided, but was limited:

> *Took a couple of weeks but they did come out, but he just wouldn't – wouldn't even speak to them and they said you know it wasn't worth their time which you know it wasn't. He'd barely say "Hello" to him so in fact the counsellor sit there he'd sit here, he'd just say hello and then turn his back on 'em. And he'd sit like that for most of the hour that was allocated so you know they terminated it after the first one.*

CAMHS withdrew their support after one session reflecting the service's limited capacity to justify continuing their support if the child would not engage with them. Because of the boy's attachment difficulties, he continued to reject those around him, sabotaging care and school placements: '*He'd been in quite a few placements and he said that he doesn't last long in placement. He gets to about six or seven months and then he's kicking off and the carers have had enough'*. Unfortunately, the boy was 'managed' out of the school and enrolled into an alternative education placement to avoid permanent exclusion. It is not known whether the child's next education placement was successful. Fiona's account showed the challenges DTs and schools faced in trying to meet the needs of children with more complex attachment difficulties who are without specialist support.

The primary school DTs also enacted the policy by co-ordinating in-house therapeutic support to replace specialist support for their looked-after children

through play therapy[83] which reflected a general increase in schools providing their own in-house support like counsellors (Parkin et al 2019). These primary school DTs were enabled by their professional context: their supportive school ethos which recognised that looked-after children were affected by their experiences and tried to mitigate the effects by supporting individual children to manage their stress response in school reflecting an attachment-aware approach. Although it is debatable whether thirty minutes of '*special play*' (Grace) is enough for some looked-after children who require more specialist support. But, in the absence of external support, the primary school DTs were doing the best that they could to support the children and this was more than the secondary DTs who were unable to provide in-house consistent therapeutic support for all looked-after children (as evident in Fiona's account). The different resource environment (Ball et al 2012) of schools regarding supporting emotional needs is shown with the secondary schools prioritising resources and interventions explicitly targeting rising attainment whereas the primary school '*special play*' had no explicit academic objective and could not be measured in academic outcomes (Braun and Maguire 2018).

In sum, children's wellbeing policy assumes the ideal policy conditions that specific support is available, but it is not. The DTs' accounts showed that this policy shaped how they could support looked-after children: their support was constrained by the lack of specialist support and they still had to support the children regardless of their skills, resources, capacity, or context. Thus, they were doing the best they could with the available resources which was even less in the secondary schools. They tried to manage the pressures of looked-after children not getting the support they needed, but Fiona's account clearly showed the negative impact on the children. And there are the multiple and contradictory policy demands arising from other imperative policies which are prioritised and further constrained them as discussed next.

[83] Play therapy is a therapeutic approach which helps children make sense of their experiences and emotions through using play.

DTs' Interpretation and Translation of the Standards Policy

Standards policy[84] constrained DTs' attachment-aware practice because of the prioritisation of academic attainment over children's attachment needs and wellbeing resulting in the DTs managing the multiple and contradictory demands of different policies. The standards policy relates to the standards of teaching and learning in schools which is measured by a school's achievement of attainment targets resulting in a pervasive performance culture in schools. Standards policy assumes the ideal policy conditions regarding schools having the 'good student' who can achieve the academic expectations stipulated in policy (Ball et al 2012, p.126). But, the reality for the DTs was that some looked-after children needed additional non-academic support to achieve these expectations. As shown in Chapter Six, policy encourages DTs and schools to have high expectations of looked-after children's attainment, but those high expectations can be counterproductive if schools fail to differentiate their expectations of some children according to their emotional and social age rather than their chronological age and provide appropriate support enabling them to achieve their academic potential. The DTs were positioned within a context of performativity (Ball 2009) which meant convincing staff that some looked-after children needed differentiated expectations and additional support, namely an attachment-aware approach in order to achieve their academic potential.

As an imperative policy, standards policy means high stakes for schools and usually results in passive policy subjects because of the level of accountability which determines how school staff are positioned by the policy and hence enact it. However, because the DTs were policy translators for children's wellbeing policy and linked children's wellbeing to attainment (as shown in Chapter Seven), to some extent Adam, Diane and Grace were also translators for the standards policy because they had to convince other staff that the wellbeing agenda and standards agenda were not contradictory even though policy positions them as separate and competing (Braun and Maguire 2018).

[84] Policy outlining accountability measures for schools: https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables ; https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/exams-testing-assessment

The DTs' external, situated and professional contexts influenced their interpretation and translation of standards policy. The Tables below (see Tables 9.1 and 9.2) show both their external and situated contexts. The details given about the DTs' schools below are described in generic terms, for example, exact numbers of children and looked-after children on roll, specific Ofsted grading, exact numbers of children eligible for free school meals and SEN support, and exact exam results are not provided. This is to ensure that the details given do not identify the DTs, their schools, or the children they work with.

Table 9.1: The External and Situated Contexts of the Primary School DTs

DT	No on roll	Number of looked-after children on roll	Ofsted grading	Eligible for free school meals	Eligible for SEN support	2016 results % expected level in reading, writing and maths
Becky	Between 350 - 499	0	Good/Outstanding	11 – 20%	11-20%	35-45%
Carla, Diane	Between 350 - 499	1-5	Requires improvement/ Inadequate	21 – 30%	1 – 10%	35-45%
Elizabeth	Between 500 - 650	1-5	Good/Outstanding	11 – 20%	21-30%	20-30%
Grace	Between 500 - 650	1-5	Good/Outstanding	31-40%	11-20%	65 – 80%

Table 9.2: The External and Situated Contexts of the Secondary School DTs

DT	No on roll	Number of looked-after children on roll	Ofsted grading	Eligible for free school meals	Eligible for SEN support	2016 results C or above in GCSE English and maths
Adam	Between 651 - 800	6-10	No current Ofsted grading	21-30%	1-10%	65-80%
Fiona	801 - 950	10-15	Good/Outstanding	31-40%	1-10%	20-30%

The DTs' external context was their schools' positioning in the school league tables based on their school's exam performance and their Ofsted grading. Ball et al (2012) argue that a school's external context is hugely influential in how schools enact policies and determine their policy priorities. The DTs' situated context is their pupil cohort: their looked-after and non-looked-after children

cohort including children's teaching and learning needs which affect their exam performance; and the history of their school (Braun et al 2011). The Tables show that the DTs' external and situated contexts are varied with some schools positioned more positively then others regarding their exam performance and Ofsted grading, but all seven DTs described the pressures of achieving academic outcomes for looked-after and other children. Three primary school DTs were in schools with 'good' or better Ofsted judgements and Grace's school appeared to be particularly well positioned, followed by Becky's school. Whereas, Carla and Diane's school was facing the pressures of an unsatisfactory Ofsted grading and low attainment figures and this is evident in Carla's concerns about her school's academic performance discussed later.

Both secondary schools were previously placed in 'special measures' by Ofsted before the DT interviews. Although, by the time of the interview, Fiona's school had been removed from special measures and Adam's school had re-opened as a new academy and so had no Ofsted grading, Ball et al (2011) stress that the discourse of failure surrounding both schools would still exist: 'Schools' histories, and bound up in this, their reputations, are another aspect of context that is alive within the collective consciousness of schools' (Ball et al 2011a, p.590). The history and story of each school would have remained as one of struggle with both schools being mindful of the battle to leave an Ofsted 'inadequate' category behind. And Fiona's school had struggled to maintain its improved performance to avoid being placed back in special measures and retaining their new status and success. These contexts illuminated the additional contextual pressures for the DTs when carrying out their attachment-aware work.

The DTs' professional context was their understanding of the relationship between children's emotions and their capacity to learn and achieve (Parker and Levinson 2018). On the one hand, as shown in Chapters Seven and Eight, the DTs were aware of the likely effects of some looked-after children's attachment experiences such as impaired self-regulation, low self-esteem, and socialisation difficulties and they tried to mitigate those effects for both their own looked-after children and when discussing Patrick by using an attachment-aware approach. On the other hand, all seven DTs commented on the

expectations of achieving positive academic outcomes for their looked-after children illustrating the challenges of working in an attachment-aware way within a culture of performativity. They explained that they had to justify focusing on looked-after children's emotional and social needs to other staff.

For three DTs – Adam, Grace, and Diane - their standards policy translation work involved discussions with staff where they contested staff's interpretation of the standards policy by showing the connection between a child's wellbeing and their capacity to learn (Maguire, Braun, Ball 2010). Adam and Diane held policy events where they met with and trained staff and offered their policy interpretation as discussed in Chapter Seven. And Grace and Adam offered a creative response to the standards policy using interventions targeting looked-after children's wellbeing and academic achievement and tried to convince others of the benefits of such interventions. Grace was aware how to mitigate the negative effects of her looked-after children's experiences, but had to justify her decisions to remove the children from their lessons to focus on their emotional and social needs to their teachers who struggled to understood how these things were related to their attainment:

> *I have this discussion with the teachers because they'll say: "Look they're underachieving and you still want to remove them for four afternoons a week". How can I justify that? Well because the things that I want to put in place are their self-esteem, are their emotional intelligence, are the socialisation them actually having friends if they've got friends and they feel comfortable and they want to learn they're gonna learn more. Or even just give them that time to offload a bit of baggage in the morning just give them that. If they're coming in with all this baggage they're in no place to learn and they can't learn because there's too much going off.*

Grace understood why solely prioritising a child's attainment was counterproductive, and as the lead for supporting children's emotional wellbeing in the school she was better positioned to respond to the individual needs of children over the more dominant pressures of attainment.

Adam understood that his looked-after children suffered low self-esteem stemming from their experiences, and that improving their self-esteem would improve their confidence in their academic ability which is attachment-aware.

Therefore, he used Pupil Premium Plus funding to fund interventions aimed at improving the looked-after children's self-esteem. But, because of his school's performance culture, he had to justify the self-esteem intervention to others in school: *'But, how do you monitor the success of that? How do you manage the impact of that? Because stuff like that doesn't get picked up'.* The benefits of this self-esteem intervention were not measurable like exam results so it was not regarded as a priority even though it is what the children need.

Like the other DTs, Carla was aware of the importance of meeting children's academic and non-academic needs: '*I'm a big believer in holistic support and I do wonder if we do look after our children as holistically as we should do'.* But, Carla showed how she was positioned by standards policy to be more restrictive in her policy response – she acknowledged children's social and emotional needs but also had to balance that with getting the best academic outcomes because she has to meet policy demands:

> *I'd like to think we support everybody by looking at them holistically. But there are…I acknowledge there are the demands of getting the grades without a shadow of a doubt.*

Yet, Diane refused to position herself and her work within the school's performance culture: '*Although I work in a school and in education when people get on at me about grades I'm a bit like ppphhh. But let me tell you what's happened today in his life, you know*'. As a member of staff who supported children with their emotional wellbeing, Diane acknowledged that attainment pressures existed but refused to justify her work within the same perimeters of academic achievement like other staff because she was the '*nurture person*' who prioritised children's wellbeing over attainment. She explained that it was Carla, whom she shared the DT role with, that had to worry about looked-after children's attainment, not her. Diane, like Grace, shows how within their nurture spaces in schools the standards policy is enacted differently to how it would be enacted in other parts of school such as classrooms (Maguire, Braun and Ball 2010).

In sum, standards policy constrained the DTs' attachment-aware work. These DTs were empathetic and attachment-aware and were mostly well supported by

their schools to support their looked-after children in a way which recognised their attachment difficulties. However, some still struggled to justify working in an attachment-aware way within the performance context stemming from standards policy. And, as discussed in Chapter Five, it was difficult to recruit participants to the study therefore these DTs might be 'best cases' regarding working in an attachment-aware way within a culture of performativity.

Conclusion

This Chapter used policy enactment theory to analyse how specific policies shaped the DTs' work, showing how their enactment process is influenced by their professional, external and situated contexts; and explored their policy response including their positioning as policy actors and policy subjects. The Chapter shows that although the Virtual School policy enabled their attachment-aware work, the multiple and contradictory policy demands and ideal policy conditions also constrained their attachment-aware work with looked-after children.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Introduction

This Chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis in three parts. First, it presents a summary of the main findings from Chapters Six to Nine regarding the main research question about what enables and constrains DTs' attachment-aware practice. Second, it outlines the thesis's contribution to knowledge including illuminating the conditions for enabling DTs' attachment-aware practice. Then, the Chapter discusses the recommendations for policy and practice including my learning from the doctoral research process. I conclude by reminding the reader why capturing the DTs' experiences helps understand how policy-makers can support DTs and schools to be attachment-aware and improve looked-after children's educational experiences and outcomes.

Aims of the Study

This research topic emerged from my working experience and wanting to understand the role that the DT plays in supporting looked-after children's education and how they mitigate the effects of looked-after children's earlier attachment experiences and maximise their engagement with learning by using attachment-aware practice. The aims of this study therefore were:

1. To explore whether and how attachment theory and attachment-aware practice influences how DTs view looked-after children and how they approach their work.

2. To explore other influences on how DTs support looked-after children in school using theories about teacher identity, emotional labour, and policy enactment.

3. To explore what constrains and enables DTs from supporting looked-after children using attachment-aware practice.

The next section presents a summary of the findings relating to the research questions from Chapters Six to Nine.

The Constraints and Enablements on DTs' Attachment-Aware Practice

In Chapter Five, I discussed whether the DTs would discuss their genuine beliefs, feelings and experiences regarding their work with looked-after children because of my positioning as the local authority 'expert' on looked-after children's education. My view is that the DTs provided honest accounts of their work which allowed me to elicit both their enablements and constraints discussed below.

In Chapter One, I discussed the problems with DTs' practice which I had identified during my working practice. These problems centred on: DTs' lack of attachment knowledge leading to a lack of understanding of looked-after children's needs and of their role; their dual role as DT and Key Adult which constrained them from carrying out either role effectively; their lack of authority; and, the lack of support they received. Therefore, the constraints and enablements of DTs' attachment-aware practice discussed below which relate to their knowledge, professional identity, and support were not wholly unexpected. However, the extent to which policy constrains DTs' practice, and, the complexities of their constraints and enablements was unexpected (discussed further below).

I have cast policy as almost always a constraint because of its implicitness about attachment-aware practice and its numerous and contradictory exhortations. Although the Virtual School as policy manager enabled the DTs in their attachment-aware work. Enablements are of a different nature: they concern the DTs' knowledge; emotion work; and professional identity. On the one hand, DTs' work with looked-after children is enhanced by the possession of attachment knowledge; the capacity to do emotion work; and, a professional identity which encompasses raising the awareness of and educating colleagues about attachment-aware practice. On the other hand, lack of such knowledge; incapacity to cope with emotion work; and, a professional identity which does not encompass responsibility beyond individual children will constrain attachment-aware practice. In the lived reality of DTs, these stark opposites are not apparent, rather I found that being enabled and constrained in these ways was a matter of degree.

Policy Constraints on DTs' Attachment-Aware Practice

As discussed earlier, attachment-aware practice is more likely than other approaches to support looked-after children's educational achievement because it offers an understanding of how looked-after children's experiences affect them in school, and, what schools can do about it. It is important to emphasise that generally policy is not formulated to give guidelines based on a specific theoretical approach. In my analysis of policy, I used attachment theory and practice concepts to highlight the extent and implications of the contradictions and gaps in policy for DTs and schools who are trying to support looked-after children's education.

The representation of looked-after children offered by policy is problematic because of the multiple contradictions and gaps in policy. While policy promotes that DTs and other staff are understanding of and prioritise looked-after children's needs, it does not encourage schools to adapt their culture and practices to being more accepting and supportive of looked-after children's emotional presentation and perceived challenging behaviours. Moreover, policy promotes a flexible approach to disruptive behaviours, but it does not challenge the behaviourist model used by schools or offer a re-conceptualisation of behaviour, both of which are key features of an attachment-aware approach. Overall, the representation of looked-after children and how schools can support them is ambiguous and does not reflect the looked-after child and their needs as constructed by attachment theory and practice.

Policy's representation of DTs is also problematic because the DT role is depicted in such a way that it would be difficult to act as an attachment-aware lead. There are two significant contradictions within policy which can constrain DTs' attachment-aware work by preventing the conditions that they need to be effective attachment leads. First, any stipulations in the DT policy are likely to be overlooked because the policy is an exhortative policy. The lack of accountability and targets for schools means that in practice the recommendation that DTs and schools are attachment-aware and change whole-school practice can be neglected or ignored by schools.

Second, policy implies that DTs and schools should be attachment-aware; simultaneously, it assumes three ideal conditions for DTs to enact the DT policy and prioritise looked-after children's needs within school. The first is that DTs will receive sufficient and appropriate training and support from the Virtual School; the second is that the DTs can access specialist support for looked-after children if required, and the third is that schools are receptive to an attachment-aware approach. In the case of the DTs I interviewed (who I have argued are likely to be 'best case' examples) these conditions pertained in a patchy fashion.

Policy also constrains DTs' attachment-aware work because of the complex policy enactment process. Policy is always enacted in context and the DTs' external, situated and professional contexts affected how the DT and their school interpreted the DT policy and translated it into practice. Therefore, the individual DTs enacted the policies differently as a result of their contexts. DTs and schools are positioned in relation to policy with some DTs and schools better positioned than others. The external, situated and professional contexts of schools meant that the four DTs in schools either performing well in both exam league tables and Ofsted inspections, or in schools where pupils' high level of emotional and social needs were acknowledged and supported by staff, were better positioned than others to interpret and translate the DT policy and its attachment-aware work as a policy priority. They were better positioned to assume the role of policy translators, contest their colleagues' prioritisation of attainment over emotional and social needs, and educate staff about attachment-aware practice.

However, individual teachers enacted policy, the Virtual School as a policy manager for DTs mitigated the negative effects of competing policy demands for DTs. But, not all the DTs engaged with the Virtual School thus benefitting from the Virtual School's interpretation and translation of the DT policy.

DTs' Knowledge of Attachment Theory and Attachment-Aware Practice

The study found that there was variation in the DTs' depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of attachment which played out as a variation in the extent to which their conceptualisation of looked-after children and their

practice was attachment-aware, and, whether they identified as attachment leads. Those with more knowledge had the confidence and language to describe how looked-after children's experiences affected their capacity to learn and to convince others of what needed to be done to mitigate the effects of their experiences. Those DTs with the least knowledge were the least influential in school. While their high level of support for looked-after children suggested they understood the children's attachment needs, they were not enabled to convince others of their role in providing support.

DTs' Engagement in Emotional Labour

Displaying, discussing, accepting and regulating emotions is key to good quality attachment-aware work, and my study found that the DTs' descriptions of their work with looked-after children revealed that they understood the role of emotion in their work, which, in turn, evidently enabled attachment-aware practice. Nevertheless, overall, their ability to be attachment-aware was constrained by the ongoing devaluation of emotion in teaching by policy and schools which affected how they could support looked-after children's emotional and social needs, and, educate staff about looked-after children's attachment difficulties. This marginalisation of emotion resulted in a lack of appropriate support for the DTs' emotional needs, namely regular opportunities to express their true emotions and discuss their work through professional supervision meaning that being attachment-aware was an ongoing challenge for most DTs because of the risk of burnout.

Policy does not foreground the high level of DTs' necessary emotional co-regulation work with looked-after children, so it fails to provide a framework for the kind of emotional support that enables them to manage this sort of emotional labour. Without a formal model of support, the serendipitous support of colleagues enabled five DTs to continue carrying out the role and minimised the negative effects of their emotional labour. It cannot be taken for granted that this is the case for all DTs. While for this group of (probably) 'best case' DTs the emotional attachment-aware labour with looked-after children was enabled by colleagues' support, it can be speculated that for many DTs the negative effects of their emotional labour will not be mitigated in this way,

which will constrain their capacity to be consistently attachment-aware with looked-after children.

DTs' Professional Identity

The identity of emotion workers which the DTs had formed was not that outlined in policy, but because this identity was focused on providing emotional support it did enable their attachment-aware work as discussed above. The DTs' identity as emotion workers was formed from the inter-relationships between their individual backgrounds and professional and personal experiences; their position in the school hierarchy; and, the professional teaching culture of their schools. For three DTs, this identity led to tensions between their professional and personal values and their school's values and those promoted by policy regarding how staff viewed and dealt with looked-after children's emotional dysregulation; and their lack of understanding of the purpose and nature of DTs' emotion work with looked-after children. The DTs identified as emotion workers because the looked-after children in their school required a level of emotional support which the DTs felt was their professional and personal responsibility to provide. However, while the DTs had a relatively stable identity as emotion workers, not all DTs identified as attachment-aware leads which constrained their whole-school attachment-aware work.

Contribution to Knowledge

My research has contributed to the gaps in the literature on DTs both empirically and theoretically. Scholarly literature on DTs lacks detailed insight into their work and whether what they do mitigates the effects of looked-after children's negative experiences. As I show below, while I have confirmed what is found in literature, I have added to existing knowledge by showing the DT role to be more complex than conveyed in policy and research. The complexities concern the DTs' knowledge and training; and how they are supported by the Virtual School. The study also shows the complexities of DTs being able to provide what looked-after children need and make the difference for them (as discussed in Chapter Two): staff who make them feel safe, valued and that they belong. The research reveals the DTs' reality regarding the

capabilities of the role: not all the DTs were able to educate staff to provide what looked-after children needed. These complexities were illuminated by theories about the formation of their professional identity; the role of emotion in their work; and, how policy creates conditions which can enable or constrain good practice. Previous studies have not done this, as discussed below.

The research reveals the importance of knowledge and understanding about attachment theory and practice underpinning DT work. While previous research refers to the attachment training some DTs have received, it has not identified the depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding necessary to undertake their work effectively. This is because knowledge and understanding confirm a professional identity as an emotion worker and offers a language and builds the confidence to be a school attachment lead.

Little is known about how DTs use their knowledge to improve colleagues' understanding of looked-after children's needs. The study adds to this scant field of knowledge by describing how DTs educate staff by working both whole-school and with individuals using the language of attachment to educate colleagues about individual looked-after children's experiences and needs; providing attachment-aware interpretations of looked-after children's behaviours; and, attachment-aware strategies. The study also identifies what constrains and enables this important attachment lead work: convincing staff of the difference they can make for children with attachment difficulties, and, how the three DTs with enhanced knowledge of attachment were more confident advising staff.

Previous research identified Virtual School training as a main source of knowledge acquisition. My study confirms this, but goes further by drawing on policy enactment theory to reveal the Virtual School's role as a policy manager and their problems in mediating policy and actual day-to-day practice. Being an effective policy manager means the Virtual School having good relationships with DTs and schools so DTs engage with the Virtual School's policy interpretation and translation. But, this process was constrained where three DTs and their schools did not have a strong relationship with the Virtual

School and were unaware of their work. This meant that the Virtual School was not an effective policy manager for all the DTs.

Similarly to the issue of knowledge**,** current research does not discuss DTs' professional identity. Therefore, my research's contribution to knowledge is using teacher identity and policy enactment theories to both describe DTs' professional identity and what shapes it, showing the complexities of their identity: how and why their identity is different to that constructed in policy. The DTs' professional identity was shaped by their conceptualisation of looked-after children and their needs, and, in turn, of their role which is different to policy's conceptualisations of the children and the role. The DTs' conceptualisations were influenced by their professional and personal values and experiences, and their school setting which policy does not consider. The identity constructed in policy only considers the professional identity and values the government wants DTs to have, and, assumes that DTs work with staff who share those professional values. The DTs showed that it is more complex to support looked-after children to achieve than policy suggests as reflected in the DTs' perceptions of what a good DT needs to be and do, and in their professional aspirations for the children.

Other research provides the professional characteristics of the DT group such as length of experience in the role, their other roles in school, and, discusses how these characteristics affect their work on a superficial level regarding little time to carry out the role. But, the research is not insightful about who the DTs are or shows how these professional characteristics influence professional identity. My study also provides the professional characteristics of DTs revealing their trajectory to becoming the DT, and, their dual roles in school, and showing how those characteristics and their personal backgrounds and experiences influence the formation of their professional identity and their work. DTs' dual roles as safeguarding officers and personal experiences as parents shaped how they viewed looked-after children, and, their aspirations of improving their lives by building positive, caring relationships with them.

To date, previous studies have not considered DTs' practice through the lens of education policy. My study shows the disconnection between policy rhetoric

and DT practice. It reveals how policy fails to provide the right conditions to enable the professional identity of attachment lead because of the policy gaps and contradictions regarding what looked-after children need in school, and, the performance culture DTs are working within which does not enable attachment-aware practice. My study shows what policy conditions would enable DTs to assume the professional identity of attachment leads (see Recommendations below).

Previous DT research does not explore DTs' work using emotional labour theory as a lens. I have theorised the DTs as emotion workers to reflect the emphasis on emotional regulation skills and work both in attachment theory and in DTs' accounts of their everyday work with looked-after children. The theory allowed me to see and explain the DTs' response towards looked-after children: their willingness to act as their emotional co-regulators when this is not a policy expectation, and, other school staff did not carry out this emotion work with the children. Emotional labour theory also helped me to understand how the marginalisation of emotion in schools constrained the DTs from carrying out emotion work. And I used the theory to understand how and why the DTs regulated their own emotions when with the children by suppressing and faking their emotions.

My study also confirms and adds to research on what mitigates the effects of emotional labour by showing what support DTs need to do their job well. DTs need policy and schools to value their emotion work with looked-after children, and acknowledge that they are emotionally affected by their work. DTs' emotional labour involves suppressing and faking emotion so that they do not upset the children or staff, but they should be able to display their genuine emotions arising from their emotion work disregarding the feeling and display rules inherent in teaching culture without being judged as unprofessional or incompetent. Furthermore, the DTs need opportunities to reflect on and make sense of their emotional experiences with looked-after children both informally with colleagues and formally with specialists in professional supervision to alleviate any feelings of isolation and minimise the risk of burnout.

In sum, my study's theoretical framework combined theories not used in DT research before to shed light on what is not known about DTs and their practice and to identify what was needed for them to support looked-after children effectively. So my research has contributed to the gaps in the literature on DTs because I am contributing a theorised version of DTs' work to a scant mainly untheorised literature. Moreover, the only use of an attachment theory perspective is by Sebba et al (Fancourt and Sebba 2018, Dingwall and Sebba 2018a, 2018b) to evaluate the impact of schools adopting an attachment-aware approach, though the focus is not DTs only.

Four theories combined allowed my exploration of the complexities of what shapes who the DTs are and what they do. They illuminated the *research problem* by offering explanations for why looked-after children underachieve and what DTs and schools can do about it (attachment theory); how policy shapes responses to looked-after children's low attainment (policy enactment); and the DTs' work as key to mitigating the effects of the children's experiences, and, reflecting the culture of schools (emotional labour and teacher identity). And, the four theories combined suggested *solutions* to the research problem regarding what policy and school conditions would be more likely to enable DTs to support looked-after children using attachment-aware practice. The solutions include a revised training framework for DTs (attachment theory and teacher identity); policy and school practices which support DTs with their emotion work (emotional labour); and enhancing the Virtual School's support and monitoring role as policy manager (policy enactment). Further details on how these solutions could play out in policy and practice are outlined below.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Below I outline my recommendations for policy and practice changes to enable DTs' attachment-aware practice at the macro level – national policy; the meso level – for the school and the Virtual School; and at the micro level – for the DT.

National Policy: Macro Level

Regarding developing understanding of looked-after children's educational predicament, policy should recognise and be explicit about the relationship between a child's emotional regulation and capacity to achieve to justify schools meeting children's emotional needs because attainment drives schools' priorities and practices. Policy should highlight how schools are improved for all children if they are more relationship-centred creating a climate which builds DTs' and schools' capacity to meet the needs of children with attachment difficulties through enabling them to enact the DT policy with the attachment-aware work as a policy priority and whole-school responsibility.

A balance needs to be achieved between encouraging schools to invest in attachment-aware practice without promoting more managerialism and forcing yet another thing on school staff. Policy enactment and teacher identity theory show the disadvantages of destroying teacher autonomy with government directives as discussed earlier. The DT policy is an exhortative policy which informs how schools enact it, but revising the policy to an imperative policy would likely lead to DTs and other staff becoming passive policy subjects. School staff are better able to support looked-after children when they can be autonomous, flexible and creative in their response to policy. But, equally, my research and policy enactment theory show the complexities of getting schools to be attachment-aware amidst other policy priorities therefore some policy strands need to be mandated regarding DTs' knowledge and support discussed below.

Winning hearts and minds of school staff through raising awareness of the benefits of an attachment-aware approach showing why all staff need this knowledge is key with the government embedding knowledge of attachment within all levels of school staff's professional development from teacher training education to school leadership training programmes.

The government should create a substantial, standardised, mandatory one year training programme for DTs in collaboration with NAVSH[85] and delivered

[85] National Association of Virtual School Headteachers

through Virtual Schools to strengthen the Virtual School's role as policy manager working with schools to develop attachment-aware practice. The goal of the training should be identity formation focusing on building a strong professional identity for DTs with explicit expectations about their role as attachment leads, as well as educating them about attachment theory and practice equipping them to be attachment leads. The training should promote DTs as a group of professionals who are experts in looked-after children's education and attachment thus raising the gravitas and status of the role.

While the DTs in my study were evidently satisfied with the emotion work they were doing and are assumed to be 'best case' examples, they still needed more support to enable their emotion work and to be consistently attachment-aware. Policy should be explicit about and support DTs' emotion work by creating a mandatory support pathway for DTs and Key Adults delivered through the Virtual School, and making the Key Adult a statutory role stipulating that schools should provide for each looked-after child a trained Key Adult who works alongside the DT.

Virtual Schools: Meso Level

Completing research on the DTs has shaped my own approach to my work within Wood County Virtual School with regards to educating, training and supporting DTs. I now work more strategically to promote attachment-aware practice to schools by prioritising building relationships with all DTs and their schools, and familiarising them with the Virtual School's advisory and support role.

I prioritise DTs' professional development arranging for them to acquire a high level of attachment theory and practice through providing training opportunities for DTs from attachment experts experienced in working in school contexts to build up their knowledge of attachment-aware strategies. I will also audit all schools' attachment training needs and offer whole-school attachment training where required through the local authority educational psychology service.

I support the formation of a strong identity in DTs and develop their confidence as leads in schools through using the termly DT network meetings

as an opportunity for collegiality showing them that they are part of a group of professionals, providing a reference group to reduce their isolation, and, to share their practice reminding them of the importance and value of their work. I also encourage the DTs to be strong autonomous attachment-aware agents by promoting collaborative working with each other through my formalisation of a DT peer support system, the Attachment Lead Group, whereby DTs educate and support each other in the area of attachment. This is to improve the DTs' confidence in their own knowledge and skills rather than always approaching me for advice and support, and, for the DTs to invest in their professional development and build up a repertoire of attachment-aware school practice. It is challenging because it means the DTs having a different relationship with me as a policy manager. The DTs are used to being directed about policy, and do not understand that they are themselves enacters of policy too. They need to understand this to develop their confidence as attachment leads who challenge other policy demands which constrain attachment-aware practice.

I recommend that all Virtual Schools as policy managers build up DTs' confidence and capacity to be attachment-aware by providing enhanced education, training, support and monitoring including delivering the one year training programme for DTs as discussed above.

And, I recommend that Virtual Schools carry out direct work in schools including with headteachers to promote a shared understanding of attachment-aware practice, and, support the monitoring of school practice. This would include arranging good quality whole-school training.

I would advise that Virtual Schools implement a support pathway for DTs and Key Adults providing training on self-reflection and self-care skills (required for emotional resilience), termly supervision via the local authority educational psychology service, and, access to other support services as required.

Schools: Meso Level

While the Virtual School as policy manager articulating the importance of attachment-aware practice to schools is needed, it is better if school staff themselves are committed to this important social and emotion work. The DTs in my study were usually working in isolation with looked-after children so

their attachment-aware work was often tokenistic rather than whole-school. Headteachers should promote a collegial approach to attachment-aware practice in their schools. This requires stressing to staff that the DT both leads and is part of a staff team who all share responsibility for supporting *all* children with attachment difficulties.

Yet, staff need convincing that they can make the difference for children with attachment difficulties by providing what the care leavers in Chapter Two said they needed: attachment-aware staff who understand their role in disconfirming the children's negative expectations of adults formed from previous experiences. Staff who empathise and accept a child's emotional presentation rather than pathologise the child and their behaviour.

This could be achieved with attachment training which educates staff about reflecting on their practice: how their response to looked-after children is based on their own professional and personal experiences, and, how they affect the children's attachment behaviours. As well as teaching staff the skills of developing positive relationships with children with attachment difficulties. The headteacher to be responsible for ensuring this training is viewed as relevant, necessary training for all staff.

The headteacher should support the DT to undertake mandatory DT training and to develop whole-school practice through the auditing and monitoring of staff's use of attachment-aware strategies.

Schools should also provide an emotionally supportive infrastructure which recognises the emotional needs of looked-after children and of the adults who support them. This involves providing a safe space and a Key Adult for each looked-after child. Regarding supporting DTs' emotional needs, a formal support pathway is required including professional supervision as well as maintaining the informal support system arising from supportive school cultures which enabled the DTs.

DTs: Micro Level

DTs should engage in the Virtual School training and network meetings to develop their knowledge and enable a strong, professional identity as

autonomous agents who understand what they are doing and why. The training should build their confidence and gravitas because having this knowledge and the language of attachment, and, understanding the value of their work confirms their identity as emotion workers and gives them the confidence to win the hearts and minds of others. DTs should share their knowledge with colleagues in a formal, systematic way by providing ongoing monitoring and evaluation of staff's attachment-aware practice.

Personal, professional dispositions are important. DTs should be self-aware, identifying whether they have the required emotional resilience and emotional regulation strategies for the role; and, they should reflect on how their own emotions affect their work with emotionally dysregulated children. They should take responsibility for their own emotional self-care: accessing the support pathway through attending professional supervision and requesting additional support if needed.

My Learning from the Doctoral Research Process

The doctoral research process has contributed to my professional development enhancing my knowledge and understanding of specific theories. As my research progressed, I increased my knowledge of attachment theory and practice which has influenced and helped my work developing DTs' and school staff's understanding of attachment theory and practice. Reflecting on my perspectives on the DTs and their work at the start of my research, I have developed my understanding of the constraints and enablements of DTs' work. I now realise that my earlier perspective on what constrained DTs from carrying out their role effectively did not consider the complexities of the role, of their experiences supporting looked-after children, or the wider context - school, local and national - within which DTs were working. I intend to use my increased knowledge to further contribute to the professional knowledge of DTs and others by writing a training pack for DTs about what a DT needs to do to support looked-after children in school, based on my doctoral research. This training pack will include how other school staff and the Virtual School can support the DT in their work. This will be shared both with DTs and with headteachers within the local authority.

Carrying out the doctoral research has also allowed me to reflect on my own professional identity and on the barriers to my own attachment-aware practice. Like the DTs, my professional identity is also influenced by the wider context of the Virtual School, local authority and policy where a culture of performativity exists often leading to a fragmented conceptualisation of my work. While I view my work with DTs as being underpinned by the principles of attachment theory, others -local authority colleagues and managers- view the objective and effectiveness of my work as related solely to academic outcomes. Completing the doctoral research has increased my analytical skills and confidence and how I am positioned in relation to policy becoming a more creative policy subject offering more of my interpretation of policy to DTs. It has allowed me not only to see the contradictions in policy and colleagues' perspectives, but also to increase my confidence in using theory to contest 'policy speak' and propose and convince others of changes to local authority practice. For example, the changes in how I educate and support DTs described earlier.

I am, of course, also mindful that changing practice is a complex process and how my role within the Virtual School as a policy manager is affected by my positioning, capacity and influence which leads to variations in the effectiveness of any partnership working with DTs and schools. And successful direct work with schools rests on the Virtual School having influence over schools through good relationships with headteachers (Sebba and Berridge 2019). Those relationships are becoming increasing complex following educational landscape changes such as the school's academisation programme leading to more autonomy for schools constraining the local authority's influence on school practice. Nevertheless, the intensive nature of the doctoral research process has also revealed my capacity to be determined, aspirational, and resilient and further embedded my commitment to improving the educational experiences and achievements of looked-after children.

Final Word

In Chapter Two, care leavers, Lisa and Byron (Cherry 2016, SCIE 2013), stressed that policy makers should listen to looked-after children's and care

leavers' stories of their care experiences. By listening, policy makers would come to understand the children's experiences and this understanding would inform policy. I wanted my research to explore the barriers to looked-after children's educational success and how attachment-aware practice can help looked-after children in schools by capturing the perceptions and experiences of the DTs who care for and support them in school. I would like policy makers to hear about how policy constrains what DTs and schools can offer to support looked-after children; and, how policy can support DTs and schools to improve looked-after children's educational outcomes. Care leaver and poet, Lemn Sissay (2015) states: 'I am not defined by my scars but by the incredible ability to heal'. And my research has shown the pivotal role that DTs and schools can and do play in a looked-after child's healing process through being attachment-aware and how this approach can make a considerable difference for the child. This will take will and commitment at all levels, and it is what we owe the children.

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Appendices

A. A summary of DT research
B. List of interviews showing dates and duration of the interviews
C. Participants' information sheet
D. Interview questions
E. Patrick's vignette
F. Ethics documentation
G. Headteachers' information letter
H. Headteachers' consent form
I. Participant consent form
J. Briefing statement for interview
K. Example from annotated transcript
L. A list of the codes and definitions
M. Framework for documentary analysis
N. Data analysis process

Appendix A: A summary of DT research

Study	Main research focus	Number of DTs	Methods
Fletcher-Campbell et al (2003)	The role of schools in supporting looked-after children's education	20	Interview
Hayden (2005)	The quality of PEPs	148 10	Survey Interview
Berridge et al (2009)	An evaluation of the Virtual School Head pilot	21	Survey
Honey, Rees and Griffey (2011)	The resilience and aspirations of looked-after children	32	Survey
Driscoll (2013)	How DTs support Year 11 looked-after children in school to continue in education	12	Interview
Berridge et al (2015)	The educational progress of looked-after children	20	Interview
Sebba et al (2016)	An evaluation of the London Fostering Achievement Programme	3 85 7	Interview Pre-training survey Post-training survey
Fancourt and Sebba (2018)	An evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Programme in Leicester	4	interview
Dingwall and Sebba (2018a)	An evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Programme in BANES	2	interview
Dingwall and Sebba (2018b)	An evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Programme in Stoke-On-Trent	1	Interview
Carroll, Black and Bettencourt (2019)	The teaching and learning practices in schools which support the education of looked-after children and includes an exploration of the characteristics and professional development of DTs.	454 And two focus group meetings with DTs	E-survey

Appendix B: List of interviews showing dates and duration of the interviews

DT	Date of interview	Duration of interview	Word count of interview transcript
Adam	16.10.15	90 minutes	11,577
Becky	6.11.15	84 minutes	14,581
Carla	12.1.16	54 minutes	8,880
Diane	22.1.16	66 minutes	11,815
Elizabeth	10.2.16	83 minutes	18,076
Fiona	22.3.16	72 minutes	12,535
Grace	14.6.16	86 minutes	16,217

Appendix C: Participants' information sheet

The perceptions and experiences of the designated teacher/person for looked after children

Would you like to take part in this study?

Please read the following information about the research. Take time to decide whether or not you would like to take part. Please feel free to ask me or my supervisor if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. There will be no negative consequences if you choose not to take part or if you change your mind about participating during the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research has been approved by the research ethics committee at the University of Nottingham. The research is part of my studies for a Professional Doctorate in Education at the University of Nottingham. The study aims to investigate: 1) the existing policy and guidance on the education of looked after children 2) the views and experiences of the designated teacher/person in schools.

Why have you been chosen and what will you have to do?

You have been invited to take part because you are a designated teacher/person in a primary, secondary or special school and I am interested in your views about your role. I will interview you about your views and experiences as a designated teacher/person. The interview will take place at the University of Nottingham or at a place convenient to you and should take no longer than sixty minutes. The interview will be audiotaped.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the study will be anonymised and kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a safe and secure location and all electronic data will be password protected. The material will be shared only with the people involved in working on the research project.

What are the possible benefits for taking part?

The study aims to draw conclusions about how the designated teacher/person can be supported in schools to meet the needs of looked after children. You might also welcome the opportunity to discuss your work with me.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Some of the discussion about your designated teacher/person role might provoke some emotional responses. You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any questions or concerns, you can raise them with me or my supervisor (details below). If you feel unable to do so, or wish to make a formal complaint about your treatment in any aspect of the study, you can contact the University's Research Ethics Co-ordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk or 0115 9514543.

What will happen to the results of the study?

This will be presented as a thesis for a university doctorate and as a paper for a journal. Your participation and information will not be personally identifiable in any report. You will be given a transcript of the interview to check for accuracy and a summary of the findings if you wish.

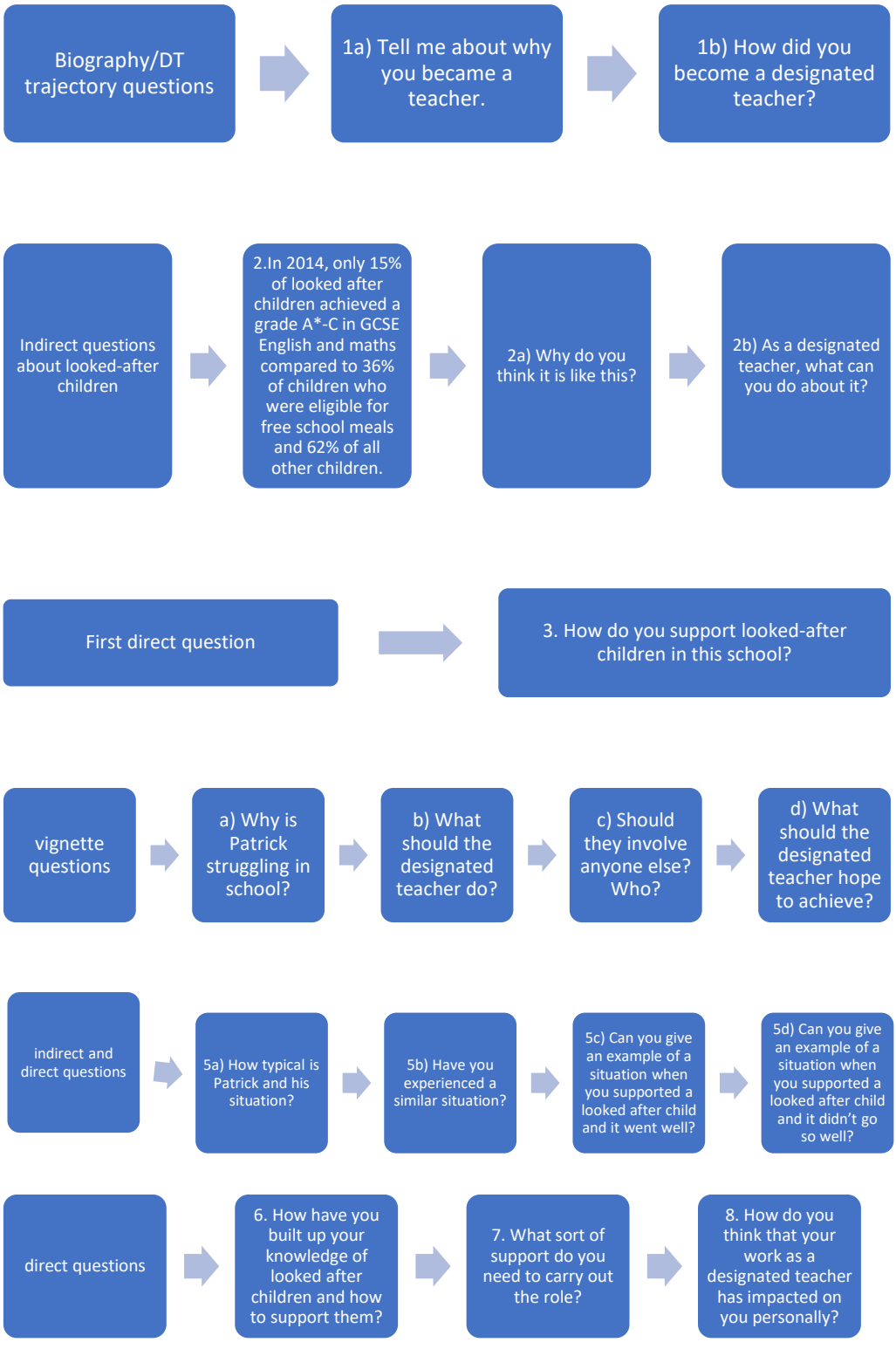
What happens now?

If you are willing to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Kelley Connolly	**Professor Monica McLean**
Professional Doctoral Student	Research Supervisor
School of Education	School of Education
University of Nottingham	University of Nottingham
ttxkc21@nottingham.ac.uk	monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk
07966 201133	0115 9513704

Appendix D: Interview Questions



Appendix E: Patrick's vignette

Patrick

Patrick is in year 5 and has recently started attending the school three weeks ago due to a move to foster carers who live nearby. Patrick is the oldest of four children. The family have been known to social care for a long time as Patrick's mother is a registered drug user. The family home was assessed by professionals as being 'chaotic and dangerous'; Patrick's mother was sectioned under the Mental Health Act and the children were placed in three different foster placements. This was the first time that Patrick and his siblings had been separated from each other.

There is a lack of recent educational information available on Patrick due to his previous poor attendance and multiple school moves, but it is believed that Patrick has special educational needs with particular weakness in literacy and organisational skills.

Patrick finds it very difficult to make any significant friendships with other children and he prefers to communicate only with select adults. He is often tearful at school and runs out of the classroom and hides in the toilets. Or, he walks around the school site and refuses to return to the classroom even when asked to by the headteacher. His teachers have also reported that he has started to become abusive toward other pupils by lashing out verbally and physically.

Appendix F: Ethics documentation

2014/34/MO

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form

The University of Nottingham

Name	Kelley Connolly
Main Supervisor	Monica McLean
Course of Study	EdD
Title of Research Project:	The perceptions and experiences of designated teachers for looked after children
Is this a resubmission? Yes	**Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office:** 20/01/15

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

Thank you for addressing the concerns we raised earlier. I assume from your application that 20 January will be the earliest you will be recruiting your teachers to participate in the research. I would encourage you to include the research office contact details on the head teacher's information letter as well, in case they have any need to contact the SoE.

Good luck with the research.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk ☐

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee.
http://www/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines *If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.*

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:

Approved [X] Revise and Resubmit ☐

Signed: *Mary Oliver* Name: Dr Mary Oliver (Research Ethics Coordinator) Date: 20 January 2015

Appendix G: Headteachers' information letter

Dear

Re: Support to interview the designated teacher/person for looked after children

My name is Kelley Connolly and I work in the Virtual School for Looked after Children at (**removed to retain confidentiality**). I am undertaking a piece of research on the perceptions and experiences of the designated teacher/person for looked after children as part of my studies for a Professional Doctorate in Education at the University of Nottingham. The study aims to investigate: 1) the existing policy and guidance on the education of looked after children 2) the views and experiences of the designated teacher/person in schools.

The attainment gap between looked after children and non-looked after children in England is considerable and persistent and also leads to further poor outcomes later in life. The role of the designated teacher/person in a school is central to promoting the educational achievement of this vulnerable group, but there is currently a lack of research regarding the knowledge, skills and practice of the designated teacher/person and how they can be best supported in schools to meet the needs of looked after children. It is hoped that the research will be of value to schools, local authorities and other agencies that support the education of looked after children.

I am seeking your support for recruiting the designated teacher/person in your school to participate in this research. Participation involves an interview with the designated teacher/person which will take no longer than sixty minutes and can take place at either the University of Nottingham or at another place which is convenient for the designated teacher/person. The interviews will take place from March - July 2016.

This research has been approved by the research ethics committee at the University of Nottingham (educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk). A participant information sheet and consent form is attached which explains the purpose and nature of the interview. Participation is entirely voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time.

The results of the study will be presented as a thesis for a university doctorate and as a paper for a journal. The participation of the designated teacher/person will be kept confidential and the information given will not be personally identifiable in any report.

I will be sending an invitation to the designated teacher/person in your school to participate in the research. If you would not like the designated teacher/person to participate in the research, would you please contact me before Monday 29th February. Also, if you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact me or my supervisor.

I hope I have provided you with a sufficient overview of the research proposal and would be delighted if you would be able to support the research project.

Yours sincerely

Kelley Connolly

Professional Doctoral Student

School of Education

University of Nottingham

ttxkc21@nottingham.ac.uk

07966 201133

Professor Monica McLean

Research Supervisor

School of Education

University of Nottingham

monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk

0115 9513704

Appendix H: Headteachers' consent form

Project title: The perceptions and experiences of the designated teacher/person for looked after children

Researcher's name: Kelley Connolly

Supervisor's name: Professor Monica McLean

- I have read the letter and Participant Information Sheet which outline the nature and purpose of the research project.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and the designated teacher's/person's involvement in it.
- I understand and agree to the researcher approaching the school's designated teacher/person to invite them to participate in the research.
- I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, the participation of the designated teacher/person will be kept confidential and the information given will not be personally identifiable in any report.
- I understand that the data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The audiotapes and hard and electronic copies of transcripts of research interviews will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected. Interview transcripts will be anonymous and will be given a research code known only to the researcher. A master list identifying participants to the research codes data will be held on a password protected computer accessed only by the researcher. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known and used only by the researcher. The audiotapes and hard and electronic copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet, within a locked office, accessed only by the researcher.
- I understand that once the research is completed, the research data will be securely archived within the University of Nottingham's School of Education. In accordance with the University of Nottingham's Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics, the research data will be securely archived for a minimum of seven years after the date of any publication which is based upon the research data and then securely destroyed. The data (audiotapes and hard copies of transcripts) will be stored in their original form and kept securely. Electronic copies of transcripts will be archived together on a memory stick.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint regarding the research.

Signed ..... (headteacher)

Print name ..... **Date** .....

Contact details

Researcher: Kelley Connolly (ttxkc21@nottingham.ac.uk 07966 201133)

Supervisor: Professor Monica McLean (monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk 0115 9513704)

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: (educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk 0115 9514543)

Appendix I: Participant consent form

Project title: The perceptions and experiences of designated teachers for looked after children

Researcher's name: Kelley Connolly

Supervisor's name: Professor Monica McLean

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored (the audiotapes and hard and electronic copies of transcripts of research interviews), will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected. Interview transcripts will be anonymous and will be given a research code known only to the researcher. A master list identifying participants to the research codes data will be held on a password protected computer accessed only by the researcher. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known and used only by the researcher. The audiotapes and hard and electronic copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet, within a locked office, accessed only by the researcher.
- I understand that once the research is completed, the research data will be securely archived within the University of Nottingham's School of Education. In accordance with the University of Nottingham's Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics, the research data will be securely archived for a minimum of seven years after the date of any publication which is based upon the research data and then securely destroyed. The data (audiotapes and hard copies of transcripts) will be stored in their original form and kept securely. Electronic copies of transcripts will be archived together on a memory stick.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed ..... (research participant)

Print name ..... **Date** .....

Contact details

Researcher: Kelley Connolly (ttxkc21@nottingham.ac.uk 07966 201133)

Supervisor: Professor Monica McLean (monica.mclean@nottingham.ac.uk 0115 9513704)

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix J: Briefing statement for interview

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research. Are you happy for me to audiotape the interview?

I'd like to repeat again that this interview is completely confidential so please be honest and treat it as an open discussion.

This research is separate to my work for the local authority: I won't be evaluating you or your work in any way: there are no right or wrong answers.

I'm interested in listening to your views and understanding your experiences as a designated teacher. So, I would like to ask you some questions about your work as a designated teacher. And to discuss a scenario about a fictional looked-after child where a new designated teacher would like some advice with supporting this child. But, it is important that you don't talk about or name any of the looked-after children in this school. Is that okay? Are you ready to start? Brilliant.

- What is your role in school?
- How long have you been the designated teacher?
- How many looked-after children do you have in the school?
- How long have you been teaching?

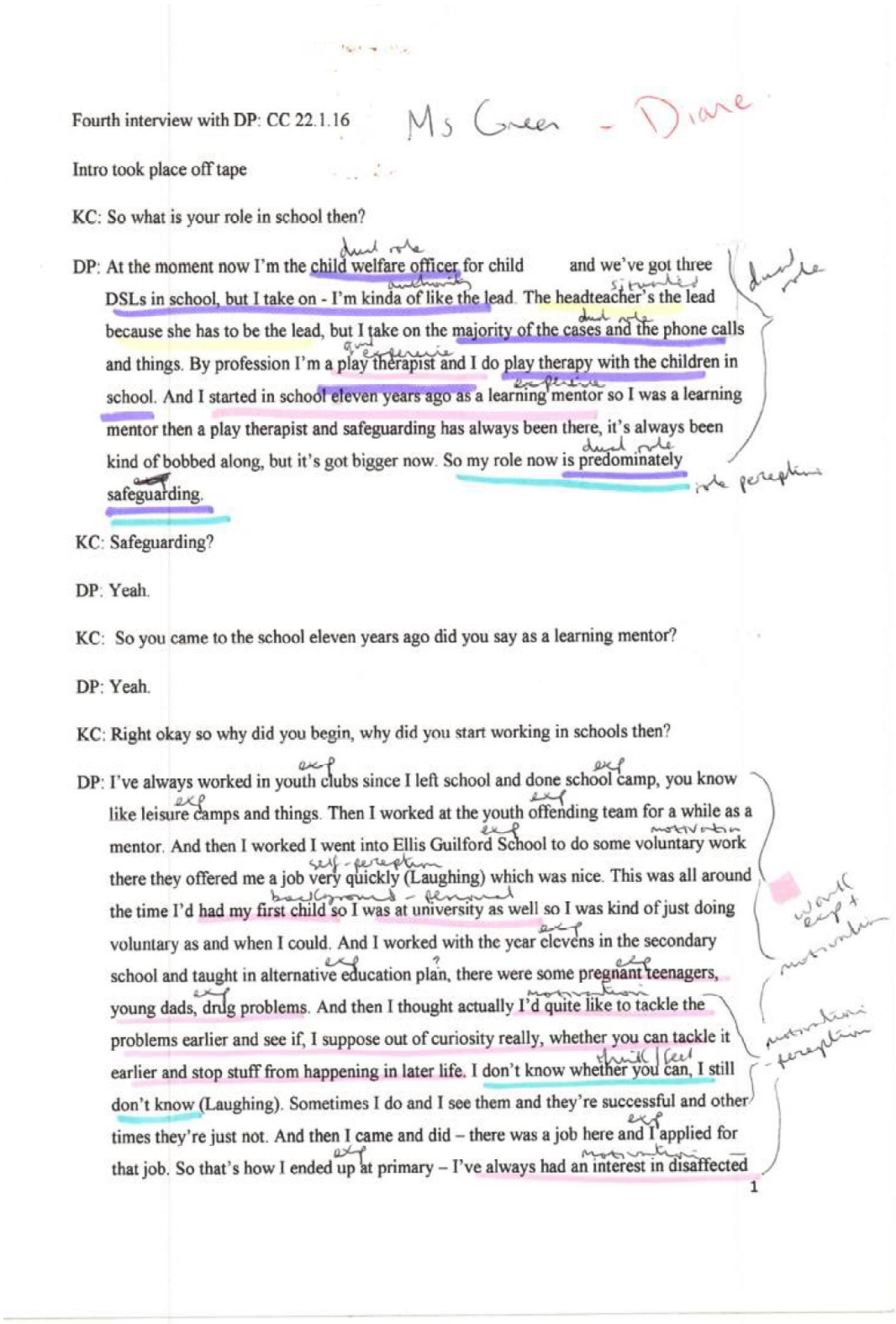
De-briefing

Thank you for your time, I am really grateful. You have provided lots of useful information.

Is there anything important which we have missed out and you would like to add? Do you have any questions? Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions later.

Would you like a copy of the interview transcript? Would you like a copy of the findings from the research? Just to recap on what happens next - This will be presented as a thesis for a university doctorate and as a paper for a journal.

Appendix K: Example from annotated transcript



Fourth interview with DP: CC 22.1.16 Ms Green - Diane

Intro took place off tape

KC: So what is your role in school then?

DP: At the moment now I'm the child welfare officer for child and we've got three DSLs in school, but I take on - I'm kinda of like the lead. The headteacher's the lead because she has to be the lead, but I take on the majority of the cases and the phone calls and things. By profession I'm a play therapist and I do play therapy with the children in school. And I started in school eleven years ago as a learning mentor so I was a learning mentor then a play therapist and safeguarding has always been there, it's always been kind of bobbed along, but it's got bigger now. So my role now is predominately safeguarding.

KC: Safeguarding?

DP: Yeah.

KC: So you came to the school eleven years ago did you say as a learning mentor?

DP: Yeah.

KC: Right okay so why did you begin, why did you start working in schools then?

DP: I've always worked in youth clubs since I left school and done school camp, you know like leisure camps and things. Then I worked at the youth offending team for a while as a mentor. And then I worked I went into Ellis Guilford School to do some voluntary work there they offered me a job very quickly (Laughing) which was nice. This was all around the time I'd had my first child so I was at university as well so I was kind of just doing voluntary as and when I could. And I worked with the year elevens in the secondary school and taught in alternative education plan, there were some pregnant teenagers, young dads, drug problems. And then I thought actually I'd quite like to tackle the problems earlier and see if, I suppose out of curiosity really, whether you can tackle it earlier and stop stuff from happening in later life. I don't know whether you can, I still don't know (Laughing). Sometimes I do and I see them and they're successful and other times they're just not. And then I came and did – there was a job here and I applied for that job. So that's how I ended up at primary – I've always had an interest in disaffected

kids and that problem solving and how and understanding their behaviours. I went down the therapy route because I was interested in how the brains were different in those traumatised children to the children who have ideal set ups. I don't think anyone has a perfect set up. So yeah and it was kind of adjusting the balance of the brain that just really fascinates me and how nurture and love and care can adjust the way a child reacts.

KC: Okay that sounds like a really interesting path that you've gone down. It seems like you've got lots and lots of experience.

DP: If I'd had any sense I'd have fitted teacher training in (Laughing) because I'd be paid a lot more money. Yeah yeah I've done a lot and I've enjoyed all of it. And I don't and I still have – I'm still enthusiastic. I say to my husband I could never do a job that if I woke up in the morning and I thought 'Oh my god another day' I just couldn't do it. And actually if it ever got to the point where I'd get like that I know it would be the time to move on or, but I'm not there.

KC: Right so you have to have that passion for what you do?

DP: Otherwise I think especially with children – I suppose with people, but I think I work a lot with the parents as well so it's not just the children, I do a lot of work with the parents. And I just think that if you don't I don't know how you have those interpersonal skills if you don't have that passion really. It's just not…sorry that's the radio (Walkie-talkie radio speech). So yeah I don't know and I am passionate about it and I think that you can tell the people that aren't passionate (Laughing).

KC: I'd agree actually, I'd say where children are involved, it's how do you maintain it to be honest.

DP: And I think that people assume that everybody who works in education or social care or probation or anything like that will have that passion, but actually it's not the case. I think people would like to have the passion, but they don't always.

KC: But they don't and do you think that's because they just become bogged down and jaded by what they see everyday like the experiences of the children and things?

DP: Yeah yeah I think – I think that everybody's – I know that my caseload is huge. And I mean I can manage it, but it's massive and people don't – you know we've got 450 kids

in this school and we've got just a quarter that are affected by something which is a massive amount of kids. Now obviously they come in waves so you have you know one day you'll have five children from five families and then those families by a month's time will have diminished slightly because social care will have worked and things. And then you'll get another five families arrive and they come and go it's not a constant, but there's children – the children on the radar is vast I think. I also think that that one thing I've always said is that if I get to the point where I hear a disclosure or a story or a child's bad experience and it doesn't shock me then I think I need to check myself. You know because I think also we all work, as you'll be aware, you work you sit in those meetings, you hear that information, you hear those stories and you can become blasé towards it. You know and I don't burst into tears anymore, but I make sure I still feel that shock because if not I don't think you'd work as hard for the child. And I suppose some people become blasé and it's like 'Yeah I've had an abuse case and what it's just another abuse case'. Actually it's not just another abuse case cos it's a different child and you know it's for them it's their case so yeah I think you do get bogged down. And I think you do get bogged down and you become not as passionate.

KC: Is it like you become numb, like anaesthetized to it all?

DP: Yeah yeah.

KC: So for you then keeping - the way that you keep that focus is ensuring, like you say, every child is different and you keep the child at the centre of it?

DP: Yeah, I mean it doesn't distress you in the same way. I don't go home and be a mess. You know I mean when I was young and I'd go home and I'd hear something and I'd go home and I'd be 'god that was' and I'd carry it with me. I have supervision through my therapy job so obviously you know I deal with it, but I think maturity and experience I deal with things in different ways. But for me it's just important to still have that 'Ah' that gasp.

KC: Yeah yeah, that you are shocked by it. So just to talk about your therapy job then: you said that you came here as a learning mentor and then how long have you been doing the – the play therapy?

DP: I've been a play therapist for seven years. Is that right? God, yeah (Laughing). That's my daughter's age.

KC: (Laughing) Don't worry that is a common response.

DP: I've been a yeah maybe six years so maybe I did my training seven years ago so yeah six years. And we – there was some money, TAMS money it was called targeted adolescent mental health. It was given out I think to the St Ann's schools I don't seem to think it was a city-wide thing. And each school got given a bulk of money depending on their level of looked after children, confidential files things like that. And we, my headteacher, at the time said he know I was interested in therapy and he said why don't you use that money to train and then we'll have an in-house therapist. As much as CAMHS is there and as much as there's things out there I think the referral system is tedious, it's not easy. I put hours into doing referrals and I get them bounced back to me because it doesn't make the grade and I think he just thought let's have our own in school and it's been great. My only negative thing about it is I don't it becomes less and less because of the safeguarding role. I just allocate days now, I give myself days to be a therapist, days and that work obviously.

KC: So I'm just thinking because part of my research is about the support schools need to meet the needs of looked after children and like you've touched on there, you know, promoting and measuring emotional wellbeing and mental health issues is huge for schools at the minute. So what sort of qualifications did you need then in order to become a play therapist – was it a hard path, did it take a while?

DP: I had – I had a degree because I'd gone down the line in my head of I'll be a teacher so I did – so I had a degree and I also by the time I went had fifteen years' experience of working with children around about that. And I think like you said when I told you my path through I'd done lots of different things and I'd worked, I'd shadowed a therapist for a while and I'd had drama therapists come into school and work in school. I'd just kind of been, I'd just always been to things I'd do. It wasn't a difficult route. Our learning mentor now is about to start the same course she's a trained social worker though. You can't just walk, you've got to have some kind of you know previous experience I would imagine. And it was distance learning so it was on a weekend so you'd do it and I did it over two years. It wasn't difficult.

KC: No?

DP: No. The work was quite difficult.

KC: Yeah and that ate into your personal time doing it at the weekends, but you were happy to do it?

DP: Yeah, yeah, but yes. My daughter cut her hair off (Laughing) and I remember doing my final piece of work and saying I just need I just need an hour to finish this and she said 'I'll get myself ready' she must have only been about 2 or 3 and she came down and she was 'Do you like my hair?' and she'd cut her hair off laughing. It did eat into my personal time, but it was also ideal because you had to have a placement and I had my placement it was here; you had to have your kids that you worked with I had my kids; set up a group and do a therapeutic group and I'd got a captive audience. I got paid because I was doing my job. Completely supported by the headteacher, well by the school. It was a bit of a battle claiming your space and saying the door's shut, but you can't just walk into a therapy session. But when I'd listened to the people who I was on the course with you know they were having to do their job as a social worker and then go and find a placement in a school where they could work with children you know. And they were in – were in cupboards in like you know just finding space to do it and actually I – my resources were all paid for cos we had the money from the budget from the you know mental health money. It was I was extremely lucky extremely lucky and now I offer our set up as a placement and I try and what's lovely I just think that the other trainee therapists who come here now they've got a safe set up and it's done. They're not going to have to battle and you know worry that their paints have been stolen in the week (Laughing) because I think you know I'll just set them up. And I offer, well it sounds a bit big headed, it's a good placement you know if they come. And I push them you know I give them I put them into tricky situations (Laughing). But no yeah I'm a bit notorious for being a bit of a hard knock (Laughing) I'm not a gentle therapist.

KC: But like what's coming across is the fact that you, you know, you want to have an impact in what you do, you want to make a difference for the children.

DP: Definitely, I mean particularly with I've worked with a looked after child she worked with me as a mentor; I went through the child protection process with her and there was

three of them – three siblings and they were removed from their family in the end. It was a drugs related thing. She went into foster care; I've supported her through the initial foster care process. I have a lovely relationship with the birth parent and the foster carers. I've worked with them on you know how to work with the children and how to the expectations of a child. And she's a textbook child because she comes and I think because she went into such a good foster placement she whatever everything she gave me fits. Some children blow my mind out of the water I have no idea and it takes me months to think what are you doing, what's going on? Whereas with her she just she just ran with it and we just worked alongside each other and we've done after school sessions; we've been here at six at night and she's just so desperately wants to work through everything. Then she had a lull where she stopped coming and then she'll come back and she'll say 'You know what I'm ready for the next step now' and she's in year six she's ready to leave and she just wants to nail that final life story. A piece of work that social care should have done, but never do but in the end I said 'Look, I'll just do it' it's I want well I want the family to have it actually. The older brother who's left the school he's going to come back in and work with me and just to nail that first five years of her life really I suppose. And it's just been that family have just I think I've been on massive journey with them, but also they won't realise how much they've given me as much as they'll think 'Oh Christy's done this and that' whereas actually they've given me loads and they're just amazing.

KC: Is that what you mean by them being 'textbook' the fact that they've literally people can learn so much from or that?

DP: Definitely I could write about them you know they've just done loads. Yeah, they're amazing. Also I suppose textbook sometimes you can read all the books in the world and you can flick through and try and find things and every you know I think cos there's certain theories around looked around children and adoption and things so you'll work in that way and with her you'll think you can read and you'll think my god yeah that's her. She gives you exactly it's just a - it's not an easy piece of work it's just – it's just deep I think it gives you everything a big of I don't know a big ball of therapy I suppose.

KC: Right so in a sense that that child embodies all the issues that that generally you read about for looked after children?

DP: Yes, yes.

KC: So what sort of things are we talking about then would you say?

DP: I think there's of confusion over her early life obviously. There's a lot of because she was young when she was taken into care she was explained her story in an age-appropriate way at the time , but then since then has nothing else explained to her. Well she's nearly twelve now she wants she's ready to understand it in her twelve year old terms. She'd go through the normal process of fallings out with friends and things. She went through the normal process of challenging the foster carers and not linking them because they - they were the baddies. Then she went through the process of falling in love with the foster carers and wanting them to be mum and dad and she's staying with them until she's eighteen. She's gone through the process of really desperately missing mum and wanting mum. We did an amazing piece of work that I started out with about *The Selfish Giant* by George Orwell. But actually the parallels were very much in Maleficent the film and she'd watched Maleficent at the cinema. And we just did weeks on what made Maleficent the way she was what made that - what made her heart so hard; what had happened in Maleficent's life that had made her stony cold. And obviously all those parallels are there with her this little girl's life. And it just and she just went with it and the work was – I mean it's hard to explain the therapy work, but the kind of the – the - the relationship you get when you're working one to one in that kind of thing. And I know that she got it the little girl got it and I know and we just and she came out the other end and she kinda had that: I know my mum loves me, I know my mum desperately wants me, but my mum wasn't just unwell my mum had been made unwell by her experience and therefore that reacted and made her be that kind of mum with us. And that was like she kind of boxes things, you know, she'll deal work through one and then she'll she's very good at just picking it up and saying I've done that now Christy, I get that that's sorted. But now I've got this and my big brother's not giving me my big brother's not as close to me anymore cos he's getting older and he's not interested and he was always her carer. He kept her alive, he fed her, he begged for her, he, you know, he made sure she was alright. He kept her quiet when we were trying to get the information out of them. and when he got older and he started to be interested in his friends and computers and things she suddenly has a massive rejection because her father figure had left her so then we did a piece of work about why did the father figure leave you. Why is

he your father figure? And just the work's endless with her really. But she's just really good at noticing it, she kind of taps into it she realises and almost comes to you and says this is what I want to do, but without realising really.

KC: So she's quite good at reflecting on it, but it's almost a subconscious thing?

DP: Yeah, yeah. Yeah and the best work to work with them is in metaphor because they're not having – if I spoke to her about what, you know, what was your bedroom like at home? You know, in her mind funny enough we did it because when we started the life story work we were talking about it and she was like 'Well I had princess bedding and purple walls and this and this and this.' And I know she didn't have that, you know, that wasn't the case she didn't have any bedding. But she's really fixed with that idea and it's a bit of a you don't want to take that away cos that's her armour, that's what's protecting her from the harsh reality, but you've also got to kind of prep her for the reality as well. That wasn't the case, it's a good memory to hold on to, but it wasn't true.

KC: Okay and just thinking again about you know you said she was sort of very typical of looked after children so for this child: did she struggle academically at school the way that some looked after children do? Not at all?

DP: No she's a fine scholar like she's above. Her brother did he was dead twitchy, couldn't focus, couldn't concentrate. In his early days we put it down to hunger. Obviously we found more and more out and then he was obviously feeling very unsafe, was constantly worried about his younger sister. Did she get to class on time? Will she go to the toilet if she needs the toilet? I mean I'd say to him she's with a teacher you don't need to worry. But she has just – no she's – she's an enigma really cos she just gets on. She struggles with her friendships a little bit, but then I just think that's normal and I probably know more about it because she constantly tells me. She'll come and say 'I've fallen out with so and so'. No, no bad behaviour never anything.

KC: Right, that's brilliant.

DP: The older brother was he was a bit silly. But no she just .

KC: Right okay so a really good experience? Can you think of an experience where you supported a looked after child and it didn't go so well? You might not have had the impact that you were hoping for?

DP: I worked with yeah (Laughing) I've got that one success story.

KC: (Laughing) It is a good one though – it is a good one.

DP: There's a few I would imagine if I went, you know, went through my mind, but the one in particular is a girl I still see now. She's eighteen now she we knew there was things happening at home and she was she started coming in and disclose. There was a night she was going to be left on her own while her mum went into hospital to have another baby. We set up there was a disabled an autistic boy in the family so we set up – social care had set up overnight care. There was no need for her to be on her own, but she was left with her autistic brother at the age of seven she was seven and he was six. She came in and told me I rang social care and told them. It was with the disability team and I rang them and told them if you go home and tell the parents I can't be, I don't know what's going to happen tonight. I don't know what will happen. She went home and the most horrific things happened and she if you talk to her she would say is she thinks she was going to die. She thought she was gonna die that night. And she was taken- taken into care the next day and so was her brother and so was the baby and there was another child as well. And she's over her time she's had thirteen foster placements.

KC: Wow.

DP: And if you spoke to the people involved a lot of people would say well you know she sabotages this and she does this and she does this. And she does completely she sabotages her relationship with me all the time, but she does it for a reason, you know, and it's a reason that she needs there is a reason there and someone needs to work with her on it. But there's a lot of blame put on her about it. I think there was a lot of I think there were a lot of foster placements which weren't appropriate, but I realise it's hard to get the perfect placement. She would run away. I found there was lots of things about the foster carer and I worked with the other family which was successful and I worked with them early on and I remember them coming in and saying. 'And I gave him just normal pasta with gorgonzola cheese on and he wouldn't eat it' and it's like he's been rifling

through the bins and living on fish fingers and chocolate cake for five years. Why is he going to eat gorgonzola cheese? (Laughing) You know my kid wouldn't eat gorgonzola cheese. And so I think there's expectations that are given to foster carers that, you know, we'll suddenly introduce them to this middle class life and everything will be okay. And actually it's not because it's completely alien to them and it's wrong. I also think it's a downfall that they are not given the information they need on the child and a lot of them don't know the story of the child. They don't know what happened. Chocolate cake for that other family was a massive issue because on a Friday mum would buy a chocolate cake it was huge, but it would last them until Sunday. But that was all they ate - all weekend, they didn't have anything else. And when mum comes to supervised contact she brings a chocolate cake and I had to ask it to be stopped because there was something about the chocolate cake. And actually when they were giving him they were: 'When we give him chocolate cake he likes chocolate cake' and it was like yeah but that just reminds him of his survival technique. And I suppose being a therapist helps with that kind of understanding. This other girl, the one that went wrong, I just – she should have following what she had she should have had intense therapy. It's never been provided for her. The endless amounts of social workers so she's not really got a relationship with any social worker. She's vile to people, you know, I mean she got back in touch with me and she's kind of adopted us as her auntie and uncle. But, I got absolutely grilled through the social care process for being why did I want to be this person. It's just like this girl has got nobody. She's not even got a solid foster carer who she can have a relationship with because she's ruined everyone as they say. There's no aunties and uncles; she's forbidden contact with her mum. She's not allowed any she doesn't see her brothers. You know she's got nobody. And she's gonna end up pregnant; she's gonna end up knocking around with boys. She's already started, you know, putting herself in dangerous positions with men. And she will come round when she needs something and she'll ring me at four in the morning and call me all the names under the sun and swear and shout at me. And all I can do is back off for a little bit and then let her know I'm there again and she comes back round, you know, and she's just at the minute she's fallen out with me (Laughing). She fell out with me just – just after Christmas. So and I mean she does I think what I always say to people is they say why do you get it and why do you tolerate it, but why do you get it? And she does hate me, she blames me because I made that phone call. One I sent her home that night to a house where she nearly got killed then I rang up the next

day and dobbed her in and said because she didn't come to school so I rang and they went and removed her straightaway. I went through every physical examination with her because she was too scared to be on her own with anyone else which is humiliating for her. You know she did go through everything with me and rightly so she blames me, but all I keep saying to her is I wouldn't change it. I wouldn't change my mind I would never say well you know what you'll be alright there. I would everytime I'd still go back to getting you out of there and, but she'll blame me all her life. And until someone else steps up to the auntie I can't. you know, I can't just leave her so. It's an awful story hers and it's one that if I ever had the time I'd put in a massive complaint (Laughing) cos I just think it's and even now, you know, she's threatening she went into a hostel and then threatened to burn the hostel down. And she's a damaged person, she's such a damaged person. And I have emailed and shouted at social workers and said why are you not doing something. She's eighteen in February and on her way to London. She'll be back in with her mum and I don't know what, you know it does make me worry because I just think what will happen. Bit I just feel like since she went to the fifteen plus team in particular I just think .

KC: So even though and I know you said that there's been lots of changes of social worker obviously that support should have still been there for her, but you think it was totally lacking?

DP: No, not at all. They'd put her into Harmless, but she wasn't self-harming. She had a therapist she was the girl who when the drama therapist came in and I shadowed the work with her. So she was the girl really that got me into being a play therapist and - and that therapist is still there and she had an amazing relationship with her. And social care could pay they could just pay. Even if they just did a six month you know we'll pay but they're not interested.

KC: So that's the therapist that she did therapy with in school?

DP: Yeah.

KC: So she didn't access anything outside of school then like CAMHS or anything like that?

DP: She's – she's got she's in a hostel at the moment there's a CAMHS worker works there. I think that I mean the thing is she does sabotage relationships so you could send her to

CAMHS and she will sabotage it, but has constantly asked to go back to this other therapist and – and she's a shit-hot therapist (Laughing) and she'd keep her. She wouldn't sabotage that relationship because it would be dealt with properly. But yeah I think it's a massive failure. She's only just got her birth certificate; she's never been allowed to leave the country. They don't know how she got into the country in the first place she's from Angola. Nobody's ever chased that; nobody's ever her name's not the name she said it was because it's an English name when she'll have had an African name. There are just too many things a bit like the life story with the other family which have just never been done. And all she can do and again it makes her angry and I get the anger because all she can do is pick bits of information from me, you know. And I think for a long time I've felt controlled by social care to say ooh you can't tell her this and you can't tell her this and you just think actually nobody else is doing anything, you know, so I've got to the, you know, I just tell her I let her know what I know.

KC: Because she's got all those gaps presumably about her life and her identity and everything?

DP: Massive gaps. Yeah and all she can really remember her clear memories are abuse. Her clear memories are having her feet scalded in the bath; her clear memories are all the horrendous things that happened to her. And actually she doesn't remember those in between bits that, you know, there were some nice things that happened to her. When she falls out with me she calls she says some really awful things to me and then her last comment is always: 'And my mum hates you' (Laughing). And I think I'm sure she does (Laughing) I really believe you. Sorry I went on a bit there (Laughing).

KC: (Laughing) No no because it's all really, really useful. It sounds like in that case you've still got this on-going really positive relationship with her. I know you said there's patterns and she falls out with you and things, but clearly though you're absolutely invaluable to her. So it sounds like as a school then you did everything that as a school and yourself you did everything you could to support her it's just that it was lacking elsewhere? Is that how you feel?

DP: Yes definitely. I do-I think, to be fair, I think that we're an amazing school and we do have all those things in place so you wouldn't find any – any schools in Nottingham which have an in-house play therapist. They just don't exist. You wouldn't find people

who have two behaviour learning mentors necessarily we're a big school. You wouldn't find – you wouldn't find a school which allocates as much time and money to me I don't think. I just, you know, I don't how it would work without cos the headteacher's always saying I don't know what we'd do because just this morning there's been seven things before you arrived (Laughing) one of those days. But, I think it always sometimes sets up to fail because we have that in place so we'll go to a looked after review and they'll say right the child needs this, this, this, this and this. And we say we can do that, that, that, that and that. Do you know what I mean? And we can do that and it's easy and it's provided and it's there. I'm much better now at saying let's try CAMHS, let's try the BMAH (CYPBEH – behavioural and emotional health team?). Let's try the routes and if nobody comes forward then I can offer that work. It normally comes back to me (Laughing) seriously. But, I do think it's not a case of the other services don't necessarily provide but I don't think it's easy. And I think obviously because they're all bogged down and stuff as well (phone rings). Hang on (Answers the telephone).

KC: I just wanted to share some statistics with you about looked after children just to get your views on that really. So this is from last year cos we don't have the statistics for this year yet. So last summer only 15% of looked after children got grades A* - C GCSE English and maths and that's compared to 36% of children who are free school meals and 62% of all other children. So just to get your views on why you think it's like that, why there's that huge gap for looked after children?

DP: I think the first thing is I've got I have…little interest in levels at all for my own family and also I just think children are children. And I think the Swedes have it right by they don't go to school until seven so although I work in a school and in education when people get on at me about grades I'm a bit like ppphhh. But let me tell you what's happened today in his life, you know, so there's that. It doesn't surprise me and my answer would come back round to mental health and therapy. I just think those kids I think there's a little bit of a thinking and I don't mean this in a patronising way, but I just think there's a little bit of a thinking that you pick up a child from the shit that they were and you put them into a family and all of a sudden everything's fine and they're going to accelerate in their academic world; they're going to do in their emotional health and it's not the case because they've got however many months, years whatever before them that need dealing with. And because I know the genetic set up of the brain and how

trauma affects the brain and how neglect affects the brain and how a lack of sleep affects the brain all of that. There is no way those kids are going to walk into a classroom and achieve: it's simple. And it's the same for those kids who are still in those homes who arrive and I do a presentation on it to the staff and there's an alarm system in the brain and the majority of those kids' alarm systems is going in their brain and they cannot even begin to access the work that needs to be done. So I don't mean it's a case of we shouldn't tackle it, but it can't be tackled with better teaching; it can't be tackled with extra tuition time. You know when you get that money through the Virtual School you get all that extra money for them and at the last meeting for the little girl who was a success story they were saying, but there's still this much money, there's still this much money. But it's like maybe she doesn't want to do another violin lesson, you know. She does violin she does clarinet; she's at brownies; she is at stars club; she does gymnastics; she does this she does that and you think what else can she. 'What else would you like to do? You must think of something else that you'd like to do.' And it's like god she wants to play. She wants to watch Sweet Valley High or whatever it is. She wants to do what kids do. Why all the pressure? And I don't get it I just don't get it and I also think that even with the best will in the world my son, for instance, was in a lovely home and went through a lovely childhood, but he couldn't read very well. It turned out he was dyslexic and he wasn't arsed, he wasn't bothered. He hated school he's gone to be a joiner cos he wants to be a joiner and he wants to play with wood. And it doesn't matter he would never had got an A in English. That was never gonna happen. And why should it? Do you know what I mean? I think even with this little girl she does do well in school because she's a clever girl. Her – her whatever happened in her early life didn't, because of her brother I think, saving and covering her from it she managed to get through. He however can't do it, but he might never have been able to do it. You know some people are scientists and some people are mathematicians aren't they? I just don't I don't know I don't…let them be (Laughing). I think. I think there's too much pressure put on them.

KC: Yeah and that it shouldn't be a priority for those children. So as a school then what could you do to support those children? You've talked about some of the things that you did with that little girl in particular so if you think about how many looked after children have you currently got in school?

DP: At the moment we haven't got many, we were saying this. We've got a few we've got more adopted children than we have looked after children. I think because of special guardianships would you count them as well?

KC: They would be previously looked after children.

DP: Yeah. We've only got a handful I think four or five.

KC: Right okay and do you - would you work with all of those or does it depend on need or?

DP: I'm kind of involved, I always know who they are and I quite like to put in a bit of support if they're going to a new foster family. We had a little boy who was a LAC child but he's gone to live with birth dad who he doesn't know so it's a very similar situation although he's birth dad it's still meeting a new parent. And I support I mean I am the nurture person I suppose. I will always support in that way. I celebrate with them when they do well in their academic work, but I'm not interested in it particularly. And Jo as well who you meet last week she works with them as well, but in a different, you know, she would we kind of share the load of the meetings and things, but I suppose Jo's a teacher so she would always get involved in that side. And then we've got Lisa Clarke who's the assistant head and she deals with the Pupil Premium money and giving them so they do get extra tuition. That little girl who's in year six she gets extra tuition time. She can request things like she wanted to increase her literacy and she wanted to spend time with little ones so she reads to the other children. And you know there's definitely different provision for LAC children if they request it. We do accommodate anything they want really.

KC: Yeah okay. But in terms of your role then with looked after children so you talked about some of the things you did with the looked after – she's year six isn't she. So you do things like the play therapy like you say you used metaphors and things like that. Is there anything else just so I can sort of capture everything that you do with looked after children? Yeah to support them?

DP: With me? I do life story work yeah I kind of carry them a little bit I suppose. And they know that if even if it's not their play therapy session they know they'll come and see me. They'll come and talk to me and tell me just if things aren't quite right especially if you're with the child. I think – I think that there's two different kinds: there's children

who come to our school as looked after children because they've moved to the area with their foster carers or whatever and then the ones that are different are the ones where you've seen them with their birth family and actually there's a diff - I think for me there's a different relationship for the children that you've gone through the child protection process with. They've been removed from the home you're – I am their constant it doesn't matter how many social workers come and go I have been with them. And the hardest bit is the year six when they leave, you know, and I keep in touch with them professionally as much as I can. The other girl, the eighteen year old, there was a bit of an anomaly where she kind of came back and found me and needed a family. But so I think it's a very different relationship. That little girl in year six will seek me out for anything: she could have wet socks; she could have no dinner money because she's left it at home. She could have a fall out with her friends. She could just need a hug, you know, and she'll seek me out for that. Children who are looked after who are introduced to me as looked after children have a different relationship, but presumably they've got a Christy somewhere else. You know whoever worked through that child protection process with them. There's normally an adult isn't there who set the ball rolling. It's just being there I think, rolling them I always say. It's that kind of early 'There, there, there, there' and that's what I kind of rock them (Laughing).

KC: Right, like a kind of comforting them, supporting them in that way?

DP: Yeah.

KC: And that can take lots of different forms depending on what the child needs?

DP: Yeah. I think they also quickly work out that I'll fight their corner, you know, and if I feel like they're being that there is too much expectation on them or if their behaviour is being questioned I'll – I will go and let me explain why their behaviour's like it is, you know. And then I'd work with the teacher and say let's think of other ways to work with this and our staff are great here at doing that so.

KC: Right okay so a lot of working with the staff as well? Staff?

DP: Yeah yeah.

Appendix L: Code list

Advocate	•DT advocates for child
Authority	•DT's authority, responsibility and accountability
Personal background	•Family, personal experiences including as a pupil
changes	•social care and care experience changes
communication	•communication between DT and others
dual role	•DT's other role in school
Empathy	•Empathy shown by DT
Expectations	•DTs' expectations of child
Work experience	•Any work experience
foster carers	•Any references to foster carers
role induction	•describes induction into DT role
isolation	•Any reference to the DT feeling isolated - professionally or personally
Knowledge	•DTs' knowledge of looked-after children and the role
Training	•Training for the DT role
Local authority	•Local authority policy, services or resources
Support	•Any in-school support including interventions
Motivation	•What motivates DTs in the role
Needs	•Looked-after children's needs - emotional, social, behavioural, academic
Outcomes	•looked-after children's outcomes or school's outcomes (attainment, Ofsted)
Outside agencies	•non-local authority agencies external to the school
Role perception	•What a DT is and should do
Policy	•national or local policy
Relationships	•DT's relationships with others including looked-after children
Resource	•Resources used by the DT to support looked-after children
Role model	•The DTs' role models - professional or personal sources
Social worker	•Any references to social workers
DT support	•Any support that the DT receives for the role
Tasks	•Any tasks which the DTs carry out for the role
Time	•Any references to time

Appendix M: Framework for analysis of the documents

Area/question	Notes
Context Date when published? How does it relate to previous and later looked-after children documents? What was the social, political and cultural context when it was produced? (legislation, normative expectations)	
Author and purpose Who? Positioning? Written for what purpose?	
Intended audience Who? Why them? Any assumptions about the audience?	
Use of language Is the language used to…convince, persuade, provoke? Which words or terms are commonly used: to describe looked-after children; DTs? Frequency of words used? What beliefs and values are expressed? Implicit? Explicit? Use of metaphors? Other literary or linguistic features?	
How does the document represent the DT role: • The actions • The priorities • The values • The attitudes	
How does the document represent looked after children: • Their identity • Their behaviour • Their needs (and where they stem from)	

Evidence of attachment theory and practice concepts: • Internal working model • Adult as a secure base • Attachment behaviour styles • Re-conceptualising behaviour as a stress response • Alternatives to behaviour management strategies • Attachment behaviours styles in a school setting • Social skills needed for learning • Adapting the classroom environment • How emotional dysregulation affects capacity to learn • Key Adult • Supported transitions • Positive relationships with all staff If not, what are the explanations provided for looked-after children's needs? How do the documents suggest that DTs/schools support looked-after children?	
Evidence of the characteristics of an attachment-aware Senior Manager • Trained in an attachment-aware approach • Promoting a whole-school attachment-aware ethos • Training and advising staff • Ensuring all policies are attachment-aware • Adapting the school environment to meet children's attachment needs • Ongoing monitoring or evaluation of school practice	

Appendix N: Data analysis process

Clusters of meaning	Themes
Emotional support provided by school colleagues **An emotionally supportive school culture** **Emotional support from outside agencies**	Significance of support for DTs' emotional wellbeing
The importance of developing a positive relationship with looked-after children **How the DTs developed the relationship with looked-after children**	Developing relationships with looked-after children
Sources of training and advice utilised for the role **The benefits of the training provided for the role** **Using training to develop staff knowledge (of looked-after children's needs)**	Knowledge required and received for the role
Meeting looked-after children's emotional needs	Thoughts and feelings about what looked-after children's needs in school - to learn in school
Negative feelings about the role **Managing own emotions** **Positive feelings about the role**	Emotional impact of the role (thoughts and feelings connected to the role)
Personal experiences affecting role perception **Previous work experience affecting role perception**	Significance of professional and personal background