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Service-user and provider perspectives on the 'Team Around the Family': a Q-methodological analysis of four cases. Rachel Sempija.

Abstract.

The research focused on the lived experiences of four service-users, their families and the professionals working with them in multidisciplinary early intervention teams in a local authority in the North East of England. 'Teams around the family', or TAFs, were working at a controversial (and significantly publicly scrutinised) period of social work, wider public sector reorganisation and funding cuts. Young people were subject to a Child in Need plan, under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (amended 2004).

The comparability of the lived experience of different players in TAFs has suffered because studies have tended not to focus on the TAF group as a meaningful unit of analysis. The rationale for a Q-methodological study with a follow-up interview design is discussed. The original behaviourist position adopted by Stephenson, the father of Q, is described as well as the current 'qualiquantilogical' approach (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004). A modified version of social constructivism, that considers power, was utilised to centralise active participation in the construction of shared understanding for participants.

Results from factor analysis of 34 Q-sorts and 24 follow-up interviews are given in a four factor solution. Briefer discussion is given to a five and three factor solution. Interview data and other commentary are integrated into reflection about expert-centric Expert Judges, family-centric Anti-Interventionists, system-centric Hopeful Reflectors and rights-centric Collaborators.

The helpfulness of the focus on highly emotive, rare and tragic stories through Serious Case Reviews is queried by the results. The argument for further researcher-practitioner studies and a more compassionate cycle of learning and development in social work is presented.

Key words: social work, children's safeguarding, Q-methodology, researcher-practitioner.

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Service-user and provider perspectives on the 'Team Around the Family': a Q-methodological analysis of four cases.

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2019.

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We should be making discoveries rather than testing our reasoning.

Stephenson (1953: 151).

It came to pass that King Herod feared the coming of the new Messiah and decreed the immediate slaughter of all the first-born. And that day when the kingdom ran red with the blood of the innocent, and helpless babes in arms were horribly put to the sword by the Roman legions, where was Haringey child care officer Mrs E. R. Taff?

Alexei Sayle's Stuff Social Workers sketch,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmlJFykua_0

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List of abbreviations.

Abbreviation.	Description.	Page number(s).
CAF	Common Assessment Framework.	114-115, 130-131, 137.
ECM	Every Child Matters.	42, 98, 113-114, 118-120, 130.
LAC	Looked After Children.	26, 30, 109-110, 113, 160, 163, 170, 370, 376.
LSCB	Local Children's Safeguarding Board.	115, 119, 138.
NICE/ NIHCE	National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)/National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NIHCE).	112, 121.
PFA	Private Fostering Arrangement.	18, 256.
P-set	Sample of participants in Q-methodology.	183, 259, 298.
Q-set	Sample of materials (that will be sorted) in Q-methodology.	44, 172, 175-178, 183-186, 196-197, 298.
SCR	Serious Case Reviews.	15, 18-21, 24-27, 33, 35-36, 42, 45, 57-58, 91, 115-116, 120, 123, 138-140, 147, 151, 155-156, 160, 196, 275, 278, 292.
TAF	Team Around the Family.	14-15, 17, 19-20, 24, 29-30, 35-37, 39, 42-44, 46-47, 49, 56, 59, 63, 65-66, 82, 84-85, 93, 101, 107, 120, 124-127, 129, 131-132, 134-138, 141, 144, 146-149, 151, 153, 157, 164, 167, 177, 182, 184, 191-193, 196, 198-200, 202-209, 211-214, 216-220, 222, 224-231, 233, 235-238, 240-241, 243-251, 253-255, 257-258, 260, 262-273, 276-282, 284-287, 289-299.

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Declaration.

I, Rachel Anne Sempija, declare that this PhD thesis entitled 'Service-user and provider perspectives on the 'Team Around the Family': a Q-methodological analysis of four cases' is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. Total word length is 99,874.

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Signed: Date:

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Chapter one. Introduction. The nature of protecting vulnerable children.

> It is unrealistic to expect that it will ever be possible to eliminate the deliberate harm or death of a child – indeed no system can achieve this.
>
> Laming (2003: 361).

> There have been similar cases to those in Oxfordshire, most notably in Rochdale, Derby, Bristol and Rotherham. The same patterns of abuse are seen, the same views of victims and parents, and similar long lead-ins before effective intervention. For all this everywhere to be the result of inept, uncaring and weak staff, and leaders who need to go, seems highly improbable.
>
> Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (2015: 2).

1.1. Overview.

This introduction outlines the rationale for the research and provides summaries of its different sections. It sets out how the project emerged, along with key points along its development. The strengths and challenges of undertaking the dual roles of both a researcher and a practitioner in the field are also made explicit. The key advantages of Q-methodology to social work research are explained as well as the reasons for adopting the approach over other, more traditionally adopted methods. The highly contentious nature of child protection and safeguarding is emphasised, as well as the central goal of situating children's voices on an equitable platform with other players in the 'Team Around the Family', or TAF, is introduced. It is highlighted that the majority of TAF casework does not involve a child dying or being seriously harmed yet the profession tends to rely on the most tragic of examples for learning. A primary objective of the research, therefore, was to develop understanding about how young people and families co-construct knowledge about service delivery embedded within the dynamics of a geographical area (Mason, 2008). Within this, constructing and interpreting emergent knowledge from participants' own perspective was a

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central concern throughout. An outline sketch of findings and recommendations for future directions is also provided in the introduction.

This research arose from ongoing concerns about *how* safeguarding and child protection processes are negotiated by professionals in universal services (that is, those provided to all children and their families), specialist services (where an additional 'need' is identified – as in the case of social work) and service-users themselves. A case-based analysis of practice where Serious Case Review (SCR) criteria were *not* met was adopted. The vast majority of young people referred for social work assessment do not come to serious harm or die and therefore their circumstances do not receive the post-hoc analysis of a SCR. Mandatory publication of SCRs makes the most extreme of cases disproportionately more accessible and visible, potentially skewing public consciousness about social work with young people and their families. This runs the risk of social work involvement being conflated with abuse and neglect. The *case-based* nature of SCR analysis, however, is a useful approach because it reflects the multidisciplinary TAF model without being tragedy-centric. It also does not disconnect TAF players from the context in which they act.

Balancing the learning of lessons from 'successful' TAFs (as well as from SCRs) is arguably less blaming and more meaningful to practitioners, because examples resonate with experience and engagement is more manageable emotionally. The importance of learning lessons leads to the need to address the forms and function of knowledge in social work. This knowledge is the bedrock of action and therefore transparency about it is helpful to understanding relationships at the point of intervention. That is, being 'well-meaning' without an explicit theoretical rationale (and associated critique) is ethically problematic. This research is not a discussion about social work stereotypes but the 'do-gooder' (like Clare, who provides some shade to a homeless man despite her grand claims of inclusivity at the start of the thesis) is perhaps as prevalent as the incompetent pantomime villain in popular culture (like Mrs E. R. Taff, who is ridiculously accused of failing to protect children from the despotic King Herod). What these two polar stereotypes have in common is a lack of cultural humility (Foronda et. al., 2014; Fisher-Borne et. al., 2015) – a blindness to others, and/or a lack of concern about it. Progressive, critically-minded social work must challenge this by centralising the idea of epistemology through a reflective, critical stance in research (Willig, 2013; Ruch, 2005). As Denzin & Lincoln set out,

> Epistemology asks, how do I know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Every epistemology…implies an ethical-moral stance towards the world and the self.
>
> Denzin & Lincoln (2008: 157).

Embracing an analysis of power in reflections about the impact of intervention is important because social workers are not neutral. The social nature of all knowledge, including that drawn upon by the worker in the field, makes the justification for action a slippery business (McGregor, 2015). The emergent and dynamic character of meaning-making *ethically compels* the requirement to critically appraise it. Without cultural humility, taken-for-granted oppressive truths are embodied without systematic resistance (Foronda et. al., 2014). The case for snapshots of situated research with interconnected social actors is mirrored in the theoretical view that knowledge arises from interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). A modified social constructivism forms the theoretical stance of the research and places emphasis on how knowledge arises rather than 'absolute' categories of it. It is a helpful lens with which to view the adverse operation of power in this area because service-users' perception and their personal world view becomes crucial (Cottone, 2017).

Social constructivism allows historical practice to be reviewed for its legacy rather than for specific activities, which cannot be separated from the context of their own time (McGregor, 2015). Power is of course integral to this, which provides the rationale for the modified version of constructivism adopted in this research. Power is multifaceted and in some manifestations, *embodied*, making social constructivism helpful as the characteristic epistemology of social work research (Fisher, 1991). As Guterman suggests,

> Although both constructivism and social constructionism endorse a subjectivist view of knowledge, the former emphasises individuals' biological and cognitive processes, whereas the latter places knowledge in the domain of social interchange.
>
> Guterman (2006: 13).

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As above, constructionism and constructivism differ in the way meaning-making occurs – broadly speaking, constructivism considers action (and internal cognitive processing) whilst constructionism considers symbols (and social discourse). Whilst realist strands contend that human understanding is biologically constrained, the favoured anti-realist approach adopted here argues that reality is constructed in the light of experience within it. The former makes a universal, physical reality inaccessible or, in extreme versions of the account, non-existent (Burr, 2000). A modified, bridging position between constructionism and constructivism acknowledges the *active* assembly of reality. This dynamic conception recognises that service-users have an individual voice, asserts that citizens are not incomplete (or partial) and that the world is not passively awaiting discovery.

Constructivism posits that knowledge emerges through developing cognitive structures over time (Kelly, 1955), implying no single account is universally helpful. In line with this, the expert view is a socio-historically specific, individual *version.* This highlights the value in the increasing positioning of experts-*by-experience* in all aspects of health and social care practice (Videmšek, 2017). That is, TAF players can actively participate in ways to understand their life. Perhaps crucially, the development of individually meaningful cognitive frameworks suggests they are relatable to others and therefore examinable. Hearing stories reconstructed from Q-sorts subsequently affords the potential for TAF players and researchers to struggle together in the attribution of meaning, whilst being mindful that individuals do not have equal or identical access to the world. Power is therefore central and recurrent to concerns for researchers in the social work field (Smith, 2013) and hearing stories from the occupation is crucial (Zufferey & Kerr, 2004: 351).

1.1.1. The centrality of the case study in children's social work.

In February 2000, in the London district of Haringey, eight year-old Victoria Climbié died. Originally from the Ivory Coast, Victoria was in the care of her great aunt and great aunts' partner at the time of her death. She had been hit with hammers, burnt by cigarettes and tied up for extended periods of time in a bin bag, in the bathtub of the small flat she lived in. She had been starved and tortured, experiencing painful and violent exorcism rituals before she passed away. The media response to Victoria's story was profound, and her image was used many times in news features that called for reform and punishment for those who had failed to protect her. The work of professionals in the NHS, social services, police, the NSPCC and

local churches was heavily criticised in the subsequent review because members of these organisations had seen evidence of the abuse she was suffering. The Labour government in the UK at the time commissioned Lord Laming to undertake the inquiry. Laming's statement (noted at the start of this chapter) underlines the challenge facing society in its will to make young people safe. Following the review, it also emerged that a whistleblower had raised concerns about poor practice and understaffing in the local authority. She had been silenced – an experience in common with many who 'blow the whistle' in health and social care (Ash, 2016). Taken together, the narrative of a 'broken' social care system was magnified in news reports (Cooper, 2005).

When Victoria died, I was 20 years and in the second year of my undergraduate psychology degree. Although I had no intention of becoming a social worker at that point, Victoria's death occurred when social workers had supported the removal of one of the children in my extended family. When I went home at the end of my summer term that year, a social worker was dropping off bin bags of clothes for the eleven year-old boy who had come to live with us. He had been placed in temporary foster care for a few weeks before the placement with us had been agreed. Statutory monitoring of his care was led by a changing round of social workers in the local safeguarding children's team under a revised set of policies following Laming's report. Post-Laming guidance arose in the form of Private Fostering Arrangements (PFAs). PFAs had been introduced to mediate the risks associated with care of young people in extended family situations, coming into force as Victoria's aunt faced imprisonment. Informal care provision subsequently faced more regulation than ever more, and criminal charges could be brought if they were not reported to the local authority after 28 days.

In England, SCRs take place when a child dies or is seriously injured *and* neglect or abuse has been a feature of the child's life. These reports are central to the social work consciousness. Social work in Britain is decentralised so England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have their own systems. In Wales these investigations are referred to as 'Child Practice Reviews', in Scotland 'Significant Case Reviews' and in Northern Ireland, 'Case Management Reviews'. SCRs frequently highlight the value and importance of meaningful consultation with the young people who at the centre of concerns. Indeed, Laming's investigation argued that professionals had neglected to understand what a day in Victoria's life was actually like and this compromised the validity of any assessments about

her needs. Victoria came into an overstretched system and her immigration status meant there was at least one other involved agency (the United Kingdom Border Agency, for example) that had a different imagination of what constituted a 'successful' case outcome. Since then, increased integrated working across agencies has progressively been written into law and policy. What has not happened, however, is a critical mindedness towards capturing the lived experience of being part of TAFs. This research presents a case for cultural shift in how work in TAFs is constructed, reflected upon and disseminated. It argues that transparency is crucial to promoting the safety and wellbeing of young people and the rigour of social work practice.

Victoria's story highlights some of the wider systemic challenges (such as agency collaboration) facing efforts to safeguard the most socially excluded young people from harm. Austerity and immigration were high on the political agenda when data was collected for this PhD, and they continue to be politically sensitive. In the context of the UKs most at-risk and risky socially excluded young people, the capacity of professionals, communities and services to safeguard and/or protect is reduced as a result of limited resources (Stevenson, 2015). At the time this research was conducted, public services in the UK were in a state of contraction and fragmentation as a result of global recession. As a result, research focusing on the lived experience of young people, their families and involved professionals is particularly important because it could inform policy about the most effective way to allocate limited resources, and evaluate the impact of political decisions from the top-down. Research of this kind, designed and developed by social workers active in practice, has the potential to challenge the oppressive power of ideologically-driven political narratives that maintain the status quo in children's safeguarding work.

There are other reasons why research focusing on lived experience in social work is relevant and important. Some commentators have suggested that the occupation is a vehicle for society's fears about its most vulnerable (and, arguably, its most threatening) members. Perhaps as a result of this, reactive changes to policy are partly driven by sensitivity to media reporting, political ideology and subsequent public outcry (Houston et. al., 2005). Consequently, the problem-focused SCR falls short as a forum to learn lessons from and its centrality can limit the space for open and honest debate. As a cultural artefact, SCRs reveal the problem-soaked character of contemporary safeguarding narratives. Learning

opportunities put forward by proponents of social constructivism suggest that knowledge arises through interaction in situated contexts (Vygotsky, 1980), meaning that forums other than the SCR are helpful – such as local consultation, research and collaborative practice dissemination.

Given that SCRs are designed for practitioners and the wider public to help make children safer, Laming's report into the state of child protection can be criticised for focusing *exclusively* on Victoria's case. The representativeness of one young persons story (given the reality of the many and varied contexts of other young people in receipt of social work intervention across the country) is problematic. A spotlight on the most tragic and extreme of circumstances arguably restricts reflection on 'what works', at the same time as working to replicate and reinforce stigma and disadvantage. Selective dissemination of these rare accounts may explain why recommendations for change often lead to radical transformation of child protection systems because perceptions of practice are skewed towards children dying or suffering serious abuse. In addition, such a focus on failure may reinforce the culture of fear which restricts the capacity for good practice through innovation and creativity (Meyer et. al., 2003; Munro, 2018).

It is important to be cautious about assuming that the lived experience of TAF members in non-SCR cases is particularly different to that of members where SCR criteria are met. TAF players are unlikely to be able to accurately predict all young people who will eventually be subject to a SCR, despite the expectations of policy makers seeking to quantify and measure this. Effective practice perhaps implies that curiosity should be *balanced with* creativity, with the latter being less likely in a fear-driven, risk-averse culture (Munro, 2011). Similarly, assuming that professionals and family members have insight into (and control of) risk factors may be especially unhelpful given the huge range of uncertainty involved in making predictions. If lived experience of TAF work does not systematically vary according to whether or not children die or are seriously harmed, then case-based analysis of active TAF work is particularly valuable. Accordingly many of the challenges to interpreting retrospective, highly emotive cases are advantageously met by the model adopted in this research. This research supports the case for the power of practice to be in the relational narratives of service-users and professionals, and argues that social workers are compelled to capture marginalised, hard-to-reach accounts.

The assertion, made in social constructivism, that human beings *actively* formulate understanding is a helpful means to view the adverse operation of power and acts of resistance. This denotes an ontology characterised by the existence of an objective reality that can only be approximated through perception. Thus, local 'truths' are meaningful (Schwandt, 2000). Epistemologically, these locally specific knowledges can be approximated through subjectivity. As a result, measures of reliability and validity (associated with R methodology) are conceptually less helpful in evaluating research quality compared to ideas such as authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). As a result, this thesis proposes that individual subjectivity is inherently tied to context – later, this will permit discussion about the possibility of agency in the resistance of structural oppression.

The tension between agency and structure remains relevant, but is also contingent on local – or specific - circumstances. It is argued that power operates at all levels. Constructionism and constructivism have many strands but the idea that individuals actively engage with the world, perpetually testing and revising their assumptions and expectations about it (Kelly, 1955), is useful. In other words, there is an inherent *reflexivity* to understanding (which is dynamic and co-constructed in nature). This argument can be taken a step further to argue that active knowledge creation *should* be utilised to develop institutional and legal frameworks of practice (Cooper, 2001). In other words,

> Social work calls for flexible attention to individual client perceptions (starting where the client is), while also attending to the needs/desires of the context in which the client is found (person-in-situation)… inquiry provides practical guidelines for ways to understand and manage the context of multiple perspectives and diversity. By learning how to look at the "other"… the reader will also learn alternative ways of reaching the client and the context in order to do the job of social work.
>
> Rodwell (1998: 4).

Learning from any single SCR example, illustration from practice or piece of research is not a meaningful measure of the entire system. Indeed, criticality promotes the likelihood of avoiding the replication of dominant constructions about the worthy, and the unworthy. Generalisability of results from this research is discussed in chapter five but it is worth

highlighting that some stories are differentially more visible. Increased visibility does not imply representativeness or, indeed, that other stories are less valuable or important. Laming's report is situated in a background of a number of dominant (and contested) dialogues about how society acts to embody its value systems about 'the vulnerable' (including young people, the poor and those with irregular immigration status - such as Victoria) in policy. As such, a variety of methods must be used and a variety of questions must be asked in social work research because social action does not exist in a vacuum. This research stands alongside the views of many commentators and practitioners who have suggested that social work should move away from a blame culture, and disseminate the voices of those experiencing services if it is to set *and achieve* realistic goals. The global definition of social work accepted by the British Association of Social Work (BASW) echoes this hope;

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.
>
> The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.
>
> British Association of Social Work (2016: n/p).

Chapter three discusses how commentators in child protection, such as professor Eileen Munro, suggest the haste with which changes are implemented (as well as how they arise in reaction to tragic cases) makes actual meaningful improvement difficult to evaluate. Practitioners are expected to deliver targets that are constantly changing. That is, there is insufficient time to embed changes and this then limits the capacity to evaluate efficacy and achieve the goals set by governing bodies and stakeholders. Some argue that fundamental debates about the constitution of service quality, practice creativity and skill are sidelined in the drive to improve outcomes based on a set of readily accessible and easily quantifiable

measures – perhaps making social work more 'informational' than 'social' in character (Parton, 2008). However, information technology (IT) systems present a distorted, proxy picture of the social reality. In addition, systems may be used in different ways and this agenda-driven, variable application is not blind to processes of social construction. Even from the perspective of secondary data analysis, it has been found that workers using IT systems use them flexibly in such a way as to make the performance statistics arising from them inaccurate (De Witte, Declercq & Hermans, 2016).

1.1.2. The space in social work for practitioner-researcher studies.

Social work researcher-practitioners have the potential to set the scene for active engagement *with* society and challenge passive enactment of change *on* the profession by the media, policy makers and other professional groups producing research. Practice-minded research has been argued to be an important dimension to shaping practice but there is no universal way of approaching the 'doing' of it (Shaw & Lunt, 2018; McCrae et. al., 2005). The benefit of local knowledge and a critical methodological approach has the potential to facilitate possible ways forward. Currently, changes to social work practice tend to be driven by reactive public outcry to rare, but serious, events (Cree, Clapton & Smith, 2015). This narrow, problem-focused lens of analysis maintains the status quo – allocating a subordinated status to all aspects of, and people involved in, safeguarding. Being a social worker therefore embodies stigma and makes the role simultaneously personal and political because it means engaging with these issues as a whole person.

The personal and political often combine in the decision an individual makes to become a social worker as much as they do in the decision to engage in practitioner research. My own commitment to social work, and the notion of the marginalised account, may have emerged as a result of growing up on a council estate in Teesside during the 1980s. In this period, the rise in the neoliberal narrative that constructed disadvantage to be the result of individual character flaws was the ideological underpinning for the privatisation of the welfare state across the UK. Services in the North East, where this research was set, were profoundly stripped of resources. Witnessing the *mismatch* between dominant discourses about those 'in need' and the richness of the lives around me as I grew up perhaps shaped many of the choices I later made about the contribution I would make. The sense of *being with* and simultaneously *wishing to change* the situation for people in the communities I identified

with seems to underpin the core conflict in my decision to become a social worker and, later, to undertake this research.

For many, social work is a vocation motivated and underpinned by concern about the wellbeing of others. In this conceptualisation, demystifying the role and disseminating *what works* are activities that go to its heart. It may be that change driven from the ground-up – that is, by those who actually are members of TAFs - could be more effective in achieving the goals that society sets for children's social work. This argument promotes the case for social workers to undertake research in the discipline they are trained to practice in, in a way that reflects situated action (Beresford & Evans, 1999). In other words, there is a case for social workers to embrace the emerging research agenda in order to facilitate a learning *culture* that has the potential to drive innovation and the capacity of practitioners to shape the future (Rodwell, 1998; Munro, 2018). This research will also highlight the practical advantages to being a practitioner when negotiating access with gatekeepers to service-users and professionals in local authorities.

This thesis argues that researcher-practitioner studies are neglected in the profession. Other occupations centralise the role, and examples include the 'psy' professions such as the scientist-practitioner model in clinical psychology (Corrie & Lane, 2009). Chapter three presents the case for a stronger presence of researcher-practitioners, arguing that greater critical engagement with the theoretical evidence-base for action has the potential to promote public trust and make action more relatable and transparent. Social work involves a complex network of decisions about competing rights and needs, so approaches underpinned by theories such as empowerment can appear tokenistic when seen from the perspective of parents, whose children's needs are paramount in the law (for example). Disseminating lived experience of social work activity could achieve the progressive aim of demystifying action so that service-users may achieve greater equity in engaging in its core debates.

Moves towards increasing the transparency and accountability of decisions made during the events surrounding children who become the focus of SCRs has led to greater numbers of the most tragic stories being published. When SCRs were first introduced, for example, only executive summaries were available in the public domain. However, the Conservative-Liberal coalition government changed existing statutory guidance so that reports published

after 10th June 2010 provided online overviews to allow practitioners (and members of the public) to reflect on and learn from the circumstances leading to the critical event(s). In these, there was a focus on the role services had in prevention, with reports making recommendations for professional groups and agencies that had ongoing involvement with children and their families. However, from experience, many practitioners were not actively supported with the time to actually read SCRs, let alone critically reflect on them. Some SCRs are more widely disseminated in the form of media headlines to the service-users, families, groups and communities that agencies work with.

Since the first biennial analysis of SCR's (April 1999 – March 2001), consistent themes in recommendations demonstrate the importance and value of understanding the complex processes involved in work designed to reduce the likelihood, and actual events, of harm. Seeking to minimise abuse and neglect, as Laming notes, is a challenging and complex multi-agency task. Laming's response to the death of Victoria Climbié echoed the neoliberal hegemony because blame was allocated to mismanagement at Haringey council without acknowledging the extent that resources had been stripped from it. Neoliberalism, although variant in its manifestations, can be considered in terms of

> increasing marginalisation of service recipients and users, reductions in preventative services and a rise in managerialist supervision and management processes… the framing of public service provision as competitive and as operating through market-like arrangements means that social work practice is now operating in settings that commodify and… regard many interaction as primarily economic exchanges.
>
> Bay (2018: 2).

Indeed, *despite* the pervasive (and perpetual) changes to how services are structured and delivered, a similar number of young people die or are seriously harmed every year in the UK in cases where abuse or neglect is featured. In other words, existing and historical interventions do not appear to affect the rate at which young people are harmed. In fact, it appears that variation in annual statistical data from SCRs is due to occasional, large scale inquiries where systematic abuse is uncovered. An example of such an inquiry would be the

Rochdale child trafficking scandal involving vulnerable and Looked After children[1]. In this example, a network of older men trafficked young people for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This meant that a group of young people met the criteria for serious harm (and subsequent SCR) at once, which inflated the reported statistics for that year.

1.1.3. A contentious discipline.

In the UK, social workers are often lead professionals in seeking to deliver Laming's "unrealistic" expectation noted at the start of this chapter - that all children can be adequately protected. As a profession, social work embodies a contentious position in society as a relatively new field, less grounded in an empirical history and embodying contradictory tensions at the heart of its practice (Beresford, 2005). Social work is predominantly a publicly funded enterprise with its origins in religious moral discourses about aspects of life typically conceived of to be private - such as the family. Indeed, chapter four considers the complex legal positioning of 'intervention' in family life, which is possibly one of the more polarising debates in the discipline. Political sensitivity, therefore, provides the reactive backdrop to stories such as Victoria's. Tensions pervade practice and there are a number of dominant organisational discourses related to risk management that arguably create a space for social workers as agents of the local authority rather than independent advocates for children (Dalrymple, 2004).

Social work values are orientated to processes of empowerment, social interaction and social change. It is distinguished from other professional occupations as a result of its embedded humanistic values (Chu, Tsui & Yan, 2009) and includes the commitment to the improvement of wellbeing and individual problem-solving capacities (Jones, Ferguson, Lavalette & Penketh, 2004). In the UK, it is part of the welfare state implying that social workers are conceived of to be *enablers* of care, through the use of brief intervention skills. Whilst families with multiple and complex issues tend not to be 'deproblematised' in a meaningful way by short-term interventions (Cleaver & Freeman, 1995; Spratt & Devaney, 2009), existing literature also suggests that consultation about helping provisions with service-users (and young people in particular) remains uncommon (Clark, 2004).

[1] The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989 and refers to children who are subject to care orders (section 31) and those who are voluntarily accommodated (section 20).

Whilst the quality of consultation is influenced by factors such as the perception social workers have of their own skills as well as those of service-users (Davies & Artaraz, 2009), children's voices are "often constrained, defined and measured within a framework of measures, outcomes and indicators imbued with the values of their definers" (Winter, 2006:59). Furthermore, research that has directly explored the experience of children and young people consistently demonstrates that they respond in unique and inventive ways, implying individually tailored services are most effective (Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007). That is, there appears to be an ongoing need for studies that explore how safeguarding collaboration is perceived, shaped and understood by those directly involved in the process (Horwath & Morrison, 2007). This is especially important when the most productive means of creating meaningful change is so often heralded to involve maintaining a continuous dialogue between providers and users. Despite the legal requirement for social workers to negotiate assessments and interventions within a network of partnerships, engaging with the research community is not as interwoven as in allied disciplines such as nursing and the psychologies.

As SCRs consistently demonstrate, it is the interaction and complexity of safeguarding collaborators' perceptions that create an arena for 'outcome', which is itself contingent on many elements and is contentiously defined (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2001). The professional gaze is subject to the circumstances surrounding it, but uncovering the subtleties of it can expose both helpful and unhelpful themes in thinking (Jamie, 2014). There has been resistance to the unhelpfulness of a blame culture extolled through the dominance of the SCR in social work since the first report. However, the tone of recent reviews may reflect a change in approach. For example, the foreword of the SCR from the Oxford child sexual exploitation cases of six children noted;

> On the surface, many of the illustrations described in the report can seem like professional ineptitude, unconcern or inaction… [appreciation] is in understanding the context in which professional work took place, and what impacted on the thought processes and actions of staff… the answers to 'why' cannot be reduced to a few simple soundbites, as there are many complex interlocking issues.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (2015: foreword).

1.1.4. The relevance of Q-methodology.

Chapter five explains the methodological approach adopted in the research in further detail. Q-methodology and the Q-sort procedure stem from the ideas and work of William Stephenson (1902-1989). Q-methodology is an alternative to variable-focused approaches that are more often utilised in social work research. Q presents a radical challenge to existing trends which tend to focus on specific aspects of practice such as a problematic lack of communication microskills in workers (Forrester, et. al., 2008). Practice experience has been examined in a variable-orientated way to include the finding that social work has a 'firefighting' culture due to staff shortages, inconsistent training and feelings of being undervalued (Holt & Lawler, 2005). However, this precedent has possibly been to the detriment of examining cross-disciplinary casework because the literature tends to explore the experiences of selected groups. An example of this includes Harlow & Blackburn's study in 2007 which explored foster carers' unique perspectives about their role and how they managed issues such as financial arrangements and training.

Accordingly, Q had a number of key benefits over more traditional methods because it allowed *whole participant* arrays to be compared. In addition to its person-centredness, the qualitative-quantitative Q-method has advantages for achieving a broad evidence base for practice due to its value-free statistical factor analysis of statement data, which uses correlation to generate factors based on array similarities (McLaren, 1997). The approach in this research allowed critical exploration of the assumptions which permeate child protection and safeguarding policy by permitting participant stories to emerge from data (Spratt & Houston, 1999). It sought to conceptualise themes and stories from participants' viewpoints using focus groups, Q-methodology and semi-structured interviews. Transparency about data reduction decisions were similarly reflected upon as material was analysed.

Q-methodology is useful for eliciting opinion in politically sensitive domains. It allows participants to express personal views which they otherwise would be less willing to reveal in more traditional survey methods or via more invasive observational methods (Moss et. al., 1994). Allowing participants to express their views via comparative sorting choices of stimuli rather than through direct self-report was especially useful given the controversial and

highly guarded area of public and private life that the substantive issue occupies. The adverse operation of power was resisted in part by supporting participants to generate subjective data. In other words, substantive content was particularly suited to methodological choice. The contentious nature of social work in the climate that data was collected and the potential impact this had on developing a responsible empirical approach is explored later in the thesis. The legitimacy of safeguarding tends to generate polarised opinion because legal frameworks provide power to professionals in the domain of family life, but 'good enough care' is a complex moral, subjective judgement.

Having been a social worker previously based in the local authority where the research was conducted, my own experience suggested that an in-depth and time-consuming interview schedule would have posed a problem for the sample. It was expected that social workers, parents/carers, professionals and young people in TAFs would not be able or willing to make the commitment to this, which would have been in addition to the ongoing involvement of the TAF itself. Similarly, action research was not favoured because the appetite for transformative practice-in-action did not seem to be present at the time data was collected. This is also discussed later, including detail about delays in achieving ethical approval.

Materials arose from practice experience, focus group sessions, existing research literature and media reports about child welfare practice. A range of views was sought. From anecdotal knowledge, it was clear that views about the practice of social workers were often highly emotive and positioned in extreme camps. Concealed or non-obvious points of view are just as relevant and important as those more directly observable, as is the case for minority or subordinated perspectives (Cemlyn, 2008). This is the case in social work - comparatively few media outlets have allowed demonised social workers such as Lisa Arthurworry (who managed Victoria Climbié's case) to voice their own story of professional experience (see Taylor, 2007), for instance. The defensive culture in the target sample was also associated with a high level of vigilance when disclosing or sharing experience (Garrett, 2004; Maslach et. al., 2001). Caution in this regard has been explored in Munro's 2010 review of child protection (Whittaker & Havard, 2016) to illustrate the benefits of creativity and innovation. Indeed, defensiveness against the perception of threat and attack is evident in newspaper articles highlighting the failings of practitioners in high profile cases (Glendinning & Jones, 2008). Given this, and to avoid the study becoming a 'test' of the ability to report

professional guidelines or 'good-enough' parenting, alternative methods such as discourse analysis were not preferred.

1.2. Development of the current research.

1.2.1. Practice experience.

Social work action may be unnecessarily mystified by a lack of transparency and an atmosphere of fear and shame. Legal frameworks in safeguarding tend to place certain strands of human experience into categories – including that of 'good enough care', or forms of abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) and neglect. This 'cataloguing' approach can remove the meaningfulness of what people think and feel about their lives and reduce their capacity to make sense of what has happened to them. The act of labelling is an anxiety-provoking intervention in itself – and one with consequences across the lifespan. Having early experience of neglect and sexual, physical and emotional abuse is often reproduced in reports time after time. This is unlikely to be an empowering process for young people and their families and may actually alienate them from recovery (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). This applies to *both* service-users and service-providers.

A focus on service-user narrative is a powerful way to understand the unique ways a person negotiates the range of strengths and risks in their lives. Prioritising the notion of the story in TAF work can build meaningfulness into the experiences about what people think and feel about their lives. Emphasising process in this way can situate team members to be actors in that storyline, rather than the omniscient authors of it. This could be the difference between adults (professionals or otherwise) in the TAF being excessive in the labelling of unmet needs in the child compared to a situation in which the child is supported to express their own wishes, feelings and understanding. The former approach may reduce a child's understanding about themselves whilst the latter restores them to it. Munro's review advocated for this in early help work but other areas of children's social work (such as Looked After Children; LAC) has established this to a greater extent (Winter, 2006).

The power of a personal story is evident in the carefully chosen accounts provided in newspapers when some young people are seriously harmed. These accounts are rarely autobiographical, and they often selectively focus on abuse and failure. On 3rd August 2007, the month before I started social work training, Peter Connelly was found dead in his cot. He

had lived in the London Borough of Haringey, within walking distance of Victoria. Over a period of eight months, Peter had been physically and emotionally abused by his mother, her partner and a lodger until he died with more than fifty injuries. Including a broken spine, eight fractured ribs, missing nails and marks from dogs' teeth on his scalp, 'Baby P' dominated media reporting at the time. Peter had been seen by health and social work professionals no fewer than sixty times over the last months of his life. Responses to his tragic death were swift and massive, and had a huge impact on child protection discourse in the UK (see Stevenson, 2014).

The particular climate of social and political change in social work during the first two years I had qualified (2009-2011) was characterised by public outcry in the media about the perceived ineffectiveness of services for children and young people following Peter's death. News reports were keen to emphasise that Peter had lived in Haringey when he died and links were made to Victoria. His death led to another government inquiry into the failings of the child protection system in the UK. Laming's report into Peter's death criticised Haringey local authority for not implementing changes from his previous review quickly and thoroughly enough. Despite earlier recommendations not being fully embedded, however, *further* changes were implemented by the government through the Social Work Task Force. Social work was, to paraphrase, *being taken to task* by a government force through further massive revisions to policy and guidance. Revisions extended far beyond the borough of Haringey. Cultural change following the deaths of Victoria and Peter meant that the range of 'needs' identified for early intervention was dramatically broadened – and the complexity of this was added to by the practical problem of negotiating the sheer volume of guidance (Payne, 2006).

Changes arising from the intense national focus on the abuse and murder of children led to increased fear amongst professionals. This amplified a culture of compliance, bureaucracy and defensiveness (Munro, 2010). In many ways, practice increasingly became crisis-driven, which reduced the opportunity for creative and tailored work as regimental adherence to policy increased (Thomson & Thorpe, 2004). Later reviews would note that an innovative, reflexive culture was not at the heart of thinking and the impact of this made children less safe (Turnell, Munro & Murphy, 2013). Recruiting and maintaining staff to local authority social work posts became more difficult and morale in workers lowered (see Maslach et. al.

2001 for a discussion about burnout of social workers). This meant that the most complex work in the protection of children was undertaken by newly qualified staff (as in the case of Lisa Arthurworry). Arthurworry had been qualified for 18 months and had not yet managed any child protection cases when Victoria died.

1.2.2. Tensions within reflexivity.

Perhaps the trouble with attempts to uncover 'how' social work is done is linked to the complexity of the social world in which action is embedded. The methodological and practical challenges associated with understanding the nature of shared experience echo this – in practice as well as research (Clark & Sharf, 2007). The use of a reflective journal throughout this research was intended to promote a transparent and reflexive stance about the presence of the researcher in the interpretive process. A reflexive approach implies consideration of ontology – the way 'knowledge' is constructed (Bryman, 2008) but this is often neglected in practice and training. There is debate about the relevance and limits of reflexivity despite it being a learning outcome on social work, nursing and other qualifying courses in health and social care. The critique and counter-critique of this is explored in chapter four in a discussion about learning objectives for qualifying and continuing social workers registered with the HCPC.

By the time the Board of Studies had met to approve my social work degree two years after Peter's death, resignations had come from the leader of Haringey's Children's Services and the cabinet member for children and young people. Sharon Shoesmith, the director of Haringey Children's Services, was sacked by a panel of councillors and she found out from the evening news. A GP who had seen Peter had been suspended by the General Medical Council, and later left the UK in a suicidal state. Media coverage was intensive. The Sun newspaper led a petition for further dismissals and delivered it to 10 Downing Street in the glare of national news. Haringey Council found the recently qualified Arthurworry and three managers guilty of gross misconduct and they lost their jobs. Arthurworry was placed on a national register (the Protection of Children Act list) that officially labelled her to be a risk to children. She was also de-registered as a social worker and prevented from working with young people. As I embarked on my first days as a safeguarding social worker, Peter's mother received an indefinite sentence with a minimum term of five years. Her partner received life with a twelve year term for his role in Peter's death (including a minimum term

of ten years for raping another child aged two years to run concurrently). The third perpetrator received an indefinite sentence with a minimum of three years.

The response to the deaths of Victoria and Peter influenced my professional development in various ways. Whilst the wide-ranging changes to policy and guidance are explored in chapter two (along with the more radical review of child protection from Munro in 2010), interpersonal responses from members of the public when I was out in the community and at work led me to avoid telling people where I worked and what I did. On more than one occasion, I was chased out of a house by a parent who shouted that 'social workers were not safe to be near children after Baby P'. On another occasion, when out for lunch with a colleague (and with my identity badge around my neck), a market stall holder refused to serve me because I was a children's social worker. The community were aware that our office was based in the small town centre and also that no other businesses required staff to wear identification badges. Public feeling was intense and the impact on individuals involved in child protection work was felt in multiple and different ways.

Including these anecdotes illustrates to some extent the context to my perspective at a particularly demanding time in the British social work. Practice and research do not exist in a vacuum and chapter three will show that changes are often driven by the wishes of selected voices in society. The view that changes should be driven by those at the point policy *becomes* intervention (that is, by those *living* the changes) is also discussed, along with the value of achieving greater transparency.

1.2.3. The relevance of abuse and neglect.

Sadly, Victoria and Peter's stories are not unique. This thesis will highlight that many more children across the UK met the criteria for SCR in-between (and following) their deaths but, for a variety of reasons, it was their stories that were widely publicised. In the same year as Peter died, for example, 52 other children also died in similar circumstances in the UK. Between the times of the deaths of Victoria and Peter, more than 400 children have been victims of familial homicide. There are multiple sources for this data but Home Office crime statistics for manslaughter and murder for under 16's provide this figure. (The calculation is not without its difficulties - Peter would not have been included in this number, because his abusers were not convicted of murder but of 'causing or allowing his death' under the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act.) Statistics about children who are killed in

England come from two main sources. 'The Office for National Statistics Focus on violent crime and sexual offences' and 'The Office for National Statistics Mortality Statistics government publications' (Bentley et. al., 2017). These show a relatively steady rate of child deaths since reporting started. This is in sharp contrast to the sudden death of a child where abuse and/or neglect is *not* suspected which is now uncommon since the Second World War in the UK (Ferguson, 2011: 27).

To underline the point, seven years after Peter passed away in October 2014, the BBC aired "Baby P: the Untold Story". The director Henry Singer commented,

> When I realised that Peter Connelly's tragic death wasn't uncommon – a child dies every ten days at the hand of a parent in this county – I realised that the extraordinary reaction to his death might tell us something about our society, the media, politics and about us.
>
> Singer (quoted by Stevenson, 2014: n/p).

Abuse and neglect remain difficult issues for society to reconcile, and those involved or affected (victims, perpetrators and professionals) can be stigmatised as a result (McElvaney & Culhane, 2017). This is true even though abuse and neglect can occur to anyone. Maltreatment is a social construct, varying across cultures and over time, and its fluidity makes it conceptually complex. Similarly, stigma about social workers is entrenched despite the fact that the vast majority of the workforce is motivated to alleviate suffering (Little, 2010). Awareness of stigma is crucial to understand harm, and how reporting is not a simple endeavour (Schaefffer et. al., 2011). A NSPCC research report in 2017 looked at the extent of child abuse and neglect to find that up to a quarter of adults reported significant neglect, sexual and physical abuse as a child - reiterating the secrecy and hidden nature of these issues. The report was based on retrospective interviews with adults who reflected on their early experiences. The methodology has implications for interpretation because memory changes over time, as do constructions about the parameters of abuse. However, making a disclosure is emotionally very difficult and this has repercussions for research – for example, it would not be ethical to randomly sample young people using interviews to establish incidence rates without a commitment to supporting the impact of disclosures. In response,

some researchers have explored the use of casefile data to avoid exposing young people to repeated interviews and cross-examination of the harm they have experienced but this does raise serious issues for informed consent (McElvaney & Culhane, 2017).

It is not always easy, emotionally or practically, to report abuse. Morris & Wheatley (1994) highlighted that young people in Looked After care may fear disclosing maltreatment due to the imagined consequences of doing so. Young people may also underreport abusive situations due to capacity limitations associated with developmental immaturity, other understanding or social isolation. In the same way, it can be difficult for practitioners to manage the witnessing of disclosure (Gibson, 2016; Ahern et. al., 2017) because even when reports are made, they may not be handled in the same way each time or even in the best interests of the child. Subsequently, young people can perceive professionals to be judgemental and sceptical (see Tucker, 2011).

1.2.4. Decision-making in TAFs.

The complex and distinctive ways that group dynamics in TAFs play out remain an interesting focus for researchers. TAF members may include professionals from health, education, law enforcement and social work as well as family members themselves but the exact composition depends on the needs of children and their families. The ways that these individuals negotiate particular case characteristics to formulate decisions about young people is the basis of children's social work. Decision-making is a complex task, as Brown (2017) notes;

> How… choices are made depends in part on the array of choices available, on the participant's capacity to discern when choice is present, on the participant's decisional history, and on the contingencies of the moment, including the medium through which the participant is brought into contact with options.
>
> Brown (2017: 82).

Collaborative decision-making (particularly in regard to risk) often receives critical attention in SCRs. Abuse and serious harm are rare events and reports increasingly acknowledge that professionals (reasonably) lack the capacity to predict risk given the realities of hidden,

contrary or unclear evidence. The presentation of concerns or circumstances (such as parental mental health, domestic violence or substance misuse) may be features of many young people's lives but very few of these escalate to analysis through the lens of a SCR. The social work lens is panoramic, rather than narrow or unambiguous. That is, child protection work invariably means working with partial information and uncertainty (Fish, 2009). As the review for Peter Connelly noted;

> The uncooperative, anti-social and even dangerous parent/carer is the most difficult remaining challenge for safeguarding and child protection services. The parents/carers may not immediately present as such, and may be superficially compliant, evasive, deceitful, manipulative and untruthful. Practitioners have the difficult job of identifying them among the majority of parents who are merely dysfunctional, anxious and ambivalent... The authoritative intervention is urgent, thorough, challenging with a low threshold of concern, keeping the focus on the child, and with high expectations of parenting, and of what services should expect of themselves.
>
> Haringey Local Safeguarding Child Board (2010: 7).

Judgements about the welfare of young people are subject to confirmation and other biases. Decision-making is emotionally and cognitively demanding due to factors such as competing rights and needs, and the uncertainty and complexity just discussed (Department for Education, 2014). This can lead to delay and lack of action, arguably promoting the likelihood of crisis-led decision-making. In turn, this minimises the opportunity for planning and smooth transition as care needs change (Petch, 2009). Simon's classic study in 1956 argued that limitations to memory and restricted opportunities to appraise the likelihood of competing outcomes led to 'satisficing', a decision-making heuristic. Satisficing involves considering alternative ideas until certain satisfactory criteria are met. The satisficing process is influenced by task difficulty as well as individual ability and motivation. This, and the phenomena of seeking to achieve social desirability, is anticipated to be a key feature in the interpretation of safeguarding information. Chapter four explores how ideas such as satisficing are at play in the multidisciplinary TAF but also how group factors add complexity to the situation. Group functioning is an influence that tends to be overlooked in guidance,

despite the emphasis placed on the importance of it. The assumption tends to be that TAF members will work together, and will do so in a way that always prioritises a group goal of supporting children and their families. However, TAF members may be present in the group precisely because of the *unique* perspective they bring.

1.3. The changing cultural context around safeguarding children.

1.3.1. The dominance of functionalist approaches.

Functionalist approaches embody the majority of theories and approaches utilised in social work. Epitomised by the medical model (and particularly the randomised controlled trial), they are positivist, utilitarian and objective in relation to practice. Measuring the impact and effectiveness of services in the terms set by stakeholders has increasingly rationalised delivery (Amin, Das & Goldstein, 2007). These changes and statutory audit and inspection processes (through Ofsted, for example) in children's social work are further explored in chapter three. The popularity of functionalist evidence-based practice in social work and other helping professions has gained momentum over the years in the UK, which exemplifies rational and mechanistic preferences for theoretical knowledge rather than intuitive reasoning (Gray, Plath & Webb, 2009). Defined as overtly "the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions regarding the welfare of service-users and carers" (from Webb, 2001:61), proponents of evidence-based practice suggest adopting it improves performance on outcome measures, promotes transparency of professional activity and increases the efficiency of inter-agency collaboration (see Schlonsky & Stern, 2007). It is also worth remembering, however, that best evidence is not always adopted in practice – it is often a balance between cost and efficacy.

Functionalist perspectives often attribute the causes of maladaptation to the individual and include top-down market-based ideas about performance and efficiency. These ideas have been applied to child safeguarding practices as a part of broader socio-political dialogues concerned with the balance between public funding and efficacy (Tilbury, 2002). Chapter three considers if preferences for functionalism reflect social pressure to justify and legitimate state intervention into the private realm of family life. For example, managerialist programmes have progressively become incorporated into the fabric of service provision with subsequent government administrations. Just as importantly, however, research has highlighted that workers can resist these pressures and expectations (Stanford, 2010) which

illustrates how the translation of a functionalist rationale into the human services is not straightforward. In many ways, excessive focus on outcome measures creates tension between provision that is led by service-user choice and/or need compared to risk aversive management and bureaucracy (Lymbery, 2001). In other words, values of compassion and empathy can be lost in the human services. Chapter four considers the importance of organisational ethos from inquiries such as that of the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust in February 2013 by Robert Francis QC.

Howe (1987) divides functionalism into behavioural approaches (including psychoanalysis and developmental psychopathology) and social systems approaches. The dominance of top-down, stage-based theories such as attachment (which suggests that permanent and systematic psychological harm occurs in disruption of early caregiver-child relationships) has influenced all aspects of practice. These theories tend to fail to acknowledge microsocial influences such as those present in local communities (Fish & Chapman, 2004) and minimise ideas such as resilience. They may also promote excessive focus on 'faulty parenting' when considering appropriate and relevant interventions (Laranjo et. al, 2014). That is, such deterministic theories reduce and delineate the space for intervention in preventative social work (Lee, 2009). Formulating children to be agentic in relation to their environment rather than passive, dependent beings has implications for participation, therapy and intergenerational transfer (Walkerdine, 2016; Winter, 2006). These are themes that are visited at different points in the thesis.

1.3.2. A critique of functionalism in social work.

On the other hand, humanist approaches emphasise the influence of structural factors on the individual so that actively challenging discrimination and building environments that permit people to empower themselves become important dimensions to intervention plans. This thesis argues that that the field would benefit from research about the less tangible aspects of everyday life. Discrimination and oppression are ideas that are perpetually relevant because particular groups of children are selectively more likely to be highlighted for safeguarding assessment. There are many policy decisions and broader dialogues in society that problematise certain types of children, childhoods and family circumstances (Mayall, 2002). This makes the ethical positioning of social work contentious, because it can be argued that practitioners are part of the apparatus to maintain power relations in society.

The reality of what social workers actually do is arguably more complex and contingent than evidence-based practice feasibly allows. Despite this, the increasing push to rationalise provision by identifying flaws in it can be characterised to be a move towards increased surveillance and a reiteration that individuals are to blame. Indeed, Nevo & Slonim-Nevo (2011) suggest the evidence-based practice model has huge practical and theoretical constraints. Methodological critique tends to be minimised and general claims about service-users tend to be made rather than appreciating the subtleties of lived experience. Additionally, implementation of research evidence into practice is mediated by available time, understanding and training/support just as findings are dated by the time they are disseminated.

There are arguments for research-mindedness to be promoted on social work courses (Strompl et. al., 2017) but programmes in the UK are moving away from research training (with 'Frontline' and 'Think Ahead' fast-track routes discussed later). Therefore, the link between evidence and practice varies according to a number of different factors and Nevo & Slonim-Nevo argue *evidence-informed* practice (a balance between art and science), is both more appropriate and realistic because it provides a viable arena for practitioner expertise to be valued. In this way, practitioner expertise can be advocative, incorporating information such as service-user choice – the overtly subjective aspect of working with real people about their own lives. Currently, evidence tends to arise from voices outside of the discipline – reinforcing the message of its incompetence and the need for paternalistic control.

1.3.3. Social work ethics.

Social work ethics are not universal across cultures but they are at the heart of the rationale for the discipline, whatever form they take. In various ways, the moral contentions in work of this kind pervade and define it. Although referred to as 'service-users', young people and their families often meet TAFs through adverse life circumstances and are frequently *involuntary* recipients. Young people have minimal prospect of negotiating participation because the Children Act makes them *subject* to intervention which can be an objectifying and dehumanising experience (Lister, 2007). The contradiction between customer-orientated terminology and non-consensual lived experience is not to be underestimated because 'doublethink' (the simultaneous acceptance of two opposing beliefs) in the language of practice may create resentment, mistrust and mystification. As such, compliance can be

misinterpreted to be engagement, and non-compliance to be hostility – leading to a practice that is actually positioned to punish the excluded for their exclusion. As Orwell notes,

> Contradictions are not accidental, nor do they result from ordinary hypocrisy: they are deliberate exercises in doublethink. For it is only by reconciling contradictions that power can be retained indefinitely.
>
> Orwell (1949: 206).

Different countries adopt ethical frameworks depending on a range of factors which makes comparison problematic (Singh & Cowden, 2009). For example, in contrast to the UK, the social pedagogy movement in Europe encourages practitioners to challenge the status quo and oppressive power dichotomies by working in a way that is primarily described by the ethic of mutual respect (Cameron & Moss, 2011). Capturing and understanding the experience of the people 'doing' and 'receiving' safeguarding and child protection provision is not an emotionally-neutral practice and issues relate to multifaceted elements such as social exclusion and disadvantage. Differences in power not only raise concerns about informed consent but highlight the potential barriers for participants when openly discussing topics related to abuse and neglect. In research of this kind, data gathering and analysis additionally faces the risk of being negatively perceived to be further surveillance in an already heavily regulated and highly criticised area of professional and private life.

Power pervades the field. Payne (1996) suggests that decision-making in social work is political because professionals seek to enact change on service-users. In his discussion of micro-theoretical levels of influence on professional politics, service-users are exposed to ideas about the 'ideal' family via the interpersonal actions of workers. Certain life choices are denounced whilst others are favoured in order to serve dominant societal discourses. According to Payne, it is at the micro-level that service-users' dissension and disagreement is realigned or dismissed. This is in contrast to other levels of his model, in which Payne argues that differences of opinion can be negotiated. For example, meso-level constructs include ideas such about 'problem parenting' and child abuse, along with debate about causes and solutions. Dominant perspectives are mediated through social work training and the organisational structures that provide services. At the macro policy level, the interests of

those constructing the boundaries of the discipline are established by popularising notions such as riskiness. In policy documents, riskiness is constructed to be present both in people and in their actions or their lifestyle choices. This level includes consciousness-raising programmes and the selective funding for research issues.

1.4. Thesis structure.

1.4.1. Style and terminology.

The thesis refers to 'children', 'childhood' and 'young people' throughout. Whilst these refer to developmental immaturity and a biological reality, they are nevertheless terms that are socially constructed. The definition of a child is taken from 'Working Together' guidance (HM Government, 2012) to be anyone under the age of 18. Participants in the research were at least fourteen years old. Inverted commas are not used for contentious terms such as 'mental illness', 'abuse' and 'social exclusion' because it is acknowledged that operationalising these ideas is difficult. Definitions remain problematic and multiple, and contradictory markers have been proposed to represent these ideas (Coohey, 1996; Wintour, 2006). Chapter two looks at age as a variable of 'vulnerability' in a broader analysis about processes of social exclusion and disadvantage. 'Safeguarding' and 'child protection' are also often-used terms throughout this thesis, referring to definitions from the Children Act 1989/2004. The expression 'service-user', which implies a level of voluntary involvement and consent is also employed to incorporate service recipients. The thesis discusses the tension that terminology brings to children's social work.

Language and interpretation were crucial themes to this project and the parameters of terminology are discussed throughout. Chapter two discusses the view that language represents socially contingent realities rather than an objectifiable, external world. To illustrate an example that occurs frequently in the thesis, the shift from 'child protection' to the much broader concept of 'safeguarding' in discourse also invokes the notion of the 'threshold' for services. This brings its own particular difficulties, including overemphasis on an imagined 'spectrum of harm' which has been cited as a key barrier to effective practice for all children - including where a child has died (Brandon et. al., 2008). Harm is not appropriately considered to be a simple linear spectrum. As already mentioned in relation to thresholds, it is important to note that "child protection cases do not always come labelled as such" (Laming, 2003, 17:106). Victoria Climbié was never subject to one.

1.4.2. Outline of chapters.

In brief, thesis chapters are summarised below.

Chapter two considers the theoretical relevance of power and social constructivism to children's social work. This is imperative because constructs such as child abuse underlie the rationale for interventions that restrict freedoms - perhaps explaining emotional resistance to the idea that some social constructs are not objective realities. Literature is reviewed from a critical stance and linked to the rationale of Q-methodology. It is emphasised how children identified 'in need' of safeguarding provision come to services from a variety of referral sources and often present with a range of complex, competing and contested needs. Processes of social exclusion and poverty are discussed in regards to the problematisation of particular young people and their families. It is argued that social work is at the heart of society's concerns about the wellbeing of its most vulnerable and socially excluded, thereby embodying the tension between public and private lives.

Chapter three takes a historical perspective about the origins and development of social work from its charitable and religious roots to its current statutory legal frameworks. Particular attention is given to more recent developments of the policy context between 1989-2016 in social work in the UK. Changes include the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, the Framework for the Assessment of Child in Need and their Families (Department of Health, 2000), the Every Child Matters green paper (Department for Education, 2003a), the publication of recommendations following the SCRs of Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003) and Peter Connelly (Haringey Local Safeguarding Child Board, 2010), the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, Working Together to Safeguard Children in 2010 (to be notably updated later; HM Government, 2015), and the Munro Reviews.

Broader social shifts, media representation and political factors are integrated into a discussion about these changes (and subsequent responses to them). It is suggested that continual and large scale reforms to policy and guidance are not meaningfully appraised because they occur too frequently. The range and frequency of changes may have reduced clarity in this highly contested and emotive domain. This chapter also considers meta-analyses of SCRs and their recommendations, issues with performance indicators and the nature of evidence in everyday TAF practice.

Chapter four focuses on the multidisciplinary TAF and how different training and disciplinary cultures shape and depict the interaction between members of the team. It discusses the literature about group decision-making processes and the role of power in the positioning of service-users to be decision makers. Collaboration and interdisciplinary working is widely accepted as the optimal way of doing safeguarding but it faces significant challenges (Horwath & Morrison, 2007). Some of these difficulties, such as the different disciplinary and conceptual resources of TAF members, are discussed in the context of the locality. Further support is given for the argument that top-down measures and adverse media scrutiny of social work practice make everyday decision-making defensive, and, as a result, less effective and powerful in delivering the goals of policy.

Chapter five details the epistemology and methodology of the research and looks at the rationale for the Q-sort and follow-up interview design as an alternative to more traditional approaches. Theory, methodology and the particular methods utilised by researchers share a dependent and highly contingent interrelationship (Crotty, 1998). That is, the reasoning underpinning a particular approach to examining the world tends to reflect a view about the *nature* of the world itself. This chapter outlines the original behaviourist position that William Stephenson adopted, the approach implemented in the research and the innovative use of Q in the context of collaborative TAF groups.

Social constructivism offers a distinct but complementary explanation to social constructionism about the way knowledge emerges. Constructivism is a collection of approaches that commonly describe how individuals actively construct meaning through action in the world whilst the latter focuses on the attributions of meaning through symbols such as language. The current study adopts an inductive, exploratory methodological framework because the phenomena – participants' own personal world view about lived safeguarding experience – reflects a sense that real-world data should arise directly from participants in the language and terminology determined by those sampled. It is therefore argued that expanding knowledge about *dynamics* in a safeguarding locality using a ground-up method is likely to add to existing understanding because studies have tended to focus on specific service-user or provider groups and subsequently generate contradictory and/or incomparable results (Robbins et. al., 1998).

Chapter six analyses results from the study. The development of the Q-set is explained and data from the focus groups is presented. The most meaningful factor solution is explored in detail. The four factor solution explained 62% of the variance, which was suggested to be a good level of explanation. Discussion is given to the reasons for favouring the four factor solution over three factor and five factor explanations. Expert Judge, Anti-Intervention, Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator factors are described. Individual sorts are also discussed along with themes from follow-up interviews.

Chapter seven is a discussion of the results in relation to theory and policy. It includes recommendations for practice and future research. Recommendations include that the role of emotion should be acknowledged in practical ways by local authorities. They also include the view that increased transparency of child welfare practice through research has a potentially important role in reclaiming the narratives about TAF players, and can act to resist their pathologisation. An argument is presented that a shift in the learning culture of child welfare practice to include greater presence of researcher-practitioners would be beneficial. The emancipatory and radical critique of functionalist models of practice is discussed in relation to building the capacity of practitioners to shape the future of the occupation. The position that it is unhelpful to passively adopt top-down, evidence-free, knee-jerk responses from government and the media is expressed. Clear evidence is offered that young people have the capacity to speak equitably about their lived experience of safeguarding processes.

1.5.Chapter summary and context.

This chapter has summarised the rationale for the research and outlined the contested domain that children's social work has in British society at the current time. It is argued that social work suffers from a lack of authority about the issues it engages with. Social work carries the anxieties of society about people who are both at risk and risky, underlining that power operates politically at all levels of practice (Payne, 1996). It is contended that building the research agenda is crucial to achieving the recognition and transparency that allied disciplines such as clinical psychology enjoy. It is suggested that social work research *by social workers* may move the agenda towards issues are more relevant to what actually happens in TAFs.

A key message in the design and development of this research is that critical methodological thinking is a primary means of progressive transformation in health and social care. It is

argued that the SCR is an unhelpful way to adopt lessons about best practice when utilised in isolation. A critical, radical agenda is particularly valuable at times of austerity and during phases of contraction in services. Critical strands can helpfully challenge the oppressive operation of power (Rossiter, 1996). It is suggested that the researcher-practitioner is an underutilised and poorly integrated role in current social work practice.

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Chapter two. Power and social constructivism.

> A homogenising myth of our time is that people fall to the bottom because they are undeserving.
>
> Dorling (2010: 155).

> Troubled families are families who both have problems and often cause problems - where children are truanting or excluded, where there is youth crime or anti-social behaviour and where parents are not working. They also tend to have other problems including domestic violence or drug or alcohol abuse. In addition to the obvious human costs of this, families also costs local services, and the taxpayer, a lot of time and money – which was adding up to a burden on the public purse of an estimated £9billion a year.
>
> Department for Communities and Local Government (2012: 7).

2.1. Introduction.

2.1.1. Discourses in contemporary social work policy.

This chapter considers social constructivism to be a meaningful way of critically engaging with decision-making in social work. Inherent to this analysis is discussion about the operation of power. Social constructivism posits that truth and meaning arise through the interpersonal dynamics of group members, functioning to maintain and privilege certain beliefs and values (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Early constructions of social work roles are discussed in relation to the current goals of the discipline, which problematise power relations. Taking the epistemological position of social constructivism necessitates an approach to inquiry that permits rich exploration and embraces (rather than seeks to eliminate) subjectivity (Best, 1989). Phenomena are said to be socially constructed because meaning about them emerges in-situ (as opposed to them possessing intrinsic value or inherent qualities). Whilst all members of society (by way of individual agency or through group membership) generate knowledge to serve their interests, service-users can be positioned to be equal players in the narration of their lives in TAFs. Thus, reality is not

independent of socio-historical context (Houston, 2001) but a mindedness about this can inform action in practice. Through social constructivism, knowledge and action are connected by context because all understanding emerges from, and is maintained by, interpersonal activity - thereby providing means for the expression of power (although criticism about the strength of this explanation has been offered; Craib, 1997).

A critical approach is taken towards the notion of 'objective truth' because observations and assumptions cannot be interpreted in a neutral way. In turn, cultural and historical processes of reinterpretation are said to shape constructions as they evolve (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). All acts (including those in research) are therefore acts of (re)interpretation. This position is conceptually valuable when applied to safeguarding because the protection of young people is surrounded by policies, practices and beliefs that are characterised by a number of fundamental competing tensions that can legitimate oppressive ideas. Constructions about safeguarding practice are therefore subject to the shared experiences of those directly involved, *as well as* knowledges in wider society. That is, action is ultimately embedded in the context of a socio-historical and cultural dialogue, with assumptions about different roles influencing complex ideas about risk.

In other words, from the social constructivist perspective, discourse is communication that can be understood to be a culturally specific act. Foucault argued that a person is a fragmented whole, able to actively perform in ways that are contingent on social circumstances (Foucault, 1982) – making the state regulated endeavour of 'working the social', a highly contested process. In accordance with these ideas, attempts to capture a sense of TAF work must engage with the perspective of social actors in their own terms. It also reiterates that interpretation is most effectively done with critical awareness of the setting in which action is expressed (Serr, 2004; Crotty, 1998).

Social work is firmly located in discourses about justice and injustice, hope and hopelessness, morality and immorality - to name a few of the typically polarised views it evokes. Value-based assumptions about what constitutes such contentious ideas as 'good-enough parenting', what children deserve, and what are appropriate responses to abuse and neglect are a part of everyday practice. In this way, the nature of social work is loaded with taken-for-granted ideas that are made meaningful by their resonance with the culture they are situated in.

Indeed, one of the homogenising myths referred to at the start of this chapter by Dorling highlights the challenge of achieving equality in an inherently unequal society. If the discipline intends to meet its core purpose of empowering its recipients, it is my view that working assumptions should be made as explicit as possible. Given an acknowledgement of these processes, social workers – as actors situated in their own time – have a responsibility to examine them. Practices that were considered acceptable and appropriate a generation ago often sit uneasily when viewed through today's lenses, as do some concurrent cross-cultural responses to social exclusion and disadvantage. In other words, the history of social work in its context is the modern history of social change (McGregor, 2015). As Kendall puts it,

> The problems with social, economic and human relationships with which social workers deal will continue to require a broad understanding of human behaviour in all its aspects, together with knowledge of the social, economic, and political institutions that constitute the context for social work practice.
>
> Kendall (2000: 108).

In most descriptions of its tasks, what appears to be universal is that service-users tend to be the most stigmatised people in society. The following description comes from the Barclay Report, which was a critical review of the role and function of social workers more than 30 years ago but still remains relevant;

> The public very generally feel that social workers are for 'people of a certain kind', people who cannot fend for themselves, people often who are unpopular with their neighbours.
>
> Barclay (1982: 149).

Whilst narratives are multifaceted, overlapping and ever-shifting, the basis of justifying action in social work arises from them. This may be one of the reasons why the profession is susceptible to sweeping overhaul in the light of media scrutiny (through the presentation of emotive arguments), why rigour (in positivistic terms) is often considered problematic and why theoretical approaches underpinning practice are diverse and contradictory. There are

no straightforward solutions to the complex problems that are presented in social work but progressive change is a core goal. In fact, given this primary objective to promote social change for the better, some authors suggest that social work is the "politisation of sociology" (Marthinsen, 2011: 6). Whilst individual practitioners can reinforce or challenge unhelpful discourses, the discipline appears to be subject to reactionary ideas about how to deliver its aims from government and the media to a much greater extent than allied health and social care disciplines such as nursing.

Stephenson's original conception of Q-methodology to be a means of objectively evaluating individual subjectivity and, comparatively, intersubjectivity, is a departure from the social constructivist position adopted in this research. Stephenson asserted that subjectivity is operant in nature (and therefore examinable) and that themes arising from factors capture "common communicability" (Stephenson, 1993/1994: 5). This is elaborated further below;

> What is enshrouded in quotations and proverbs is some of the soundest thinking of the human race… namely, the common, everyday, sound thinking of the ordinary man? This is our theme. Its development has led us to understand the mystery of consciousness, in which self-reference is omnipresent, explicit or not… the concern is with *feelings*, with wishes, opinions, emotions, and, in a profound sense, with moralities. We recognise underneath the folk-songs of an Elvis Presley, or the Beatles, moral elements at lived levels.
>
> Stephenson (1993/1994: 5).

The italics are Stephenson's own emphasis. Reading the quote above, it seems that there is no better advocate for social work to examined using Q! The emotional and moral content of work in this field is discussed at length in chapter four but it is helpful to introduce the notion of common communicability at the same time as social constructivism and the contested parameters of practice.

The departure from Stephenson's original understanding of Q-methodology is justified by the nature of the materials forming the basis of analysis – the character of which is intended to mirror the *relational* dynamics of TAF work. The application of Q to teams is innovative

because it places a focus on connected systems. Framing the study in this way necessitates probing about the comparative, language-embedded, socially-contingent forms of knowledge that are the fabric of practice. At its heart, it asks questions about power – including in the double-hermeneutic process in which I sought to make sense of participant data as participants tried to make sense of statement material. Common communicability *emerges* and therefore research is a snapshot of a moment in time.

Oppression is a complex, intertwining and conflicted set of ideas so that engagement with the concept must incorporate a consciousness and a motivation to avoid reproducing hegemonic ideas through identity politics – having good intentions is not enough (Ying Yee, 2016). Q-methodology permits the opportunity for participants to construct varying perspectives about phenomena in-situ, therefore suiting a social constructivist ontological position (Ellingsen, Stephens & Storksen, 2010). Indeed, as Watts & Stenner (2005: 75) note, Q is useful in the study of subjectivity when there are "many potentially complex and contested answers" – making the possibility of capturing both dominant and marginalised stories feasible (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008). Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers (1990) similarly err from using the expression 'viewpoints' to describe subjectivity, instead preferring "stories" and/or "accounts", arguing for a "radical social constructionist use of Q" (1990) with;

> Under our social constructionist heresy, to use Q is to employ an effective pattern analytic for explicating diversities of socio-cultural representations, understandings and policies. Such accounts and voices are held to owe nothing to the Q-methodological axiom of "self-reference" which we regard as problematised and compromised by post-structuralist and post-modern theory.
>
> Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers (1990: n/p).

2.1.2. Moral goals underpinning practice.

Social work's core business is entrenched in the language of relieving suffering, facilitating progressive change and making a meaningful difference. The challenge of achieving this relates to the difficult-to-define nature of suffering but also to the nature of whose definition is prioritised and the way interventions are constructed, implemented and evaluated. For example, the preferences for rational, reductionist measures often adopted in audit tend to

focus on whether or not goals have been met rather than their legitimacy in the first place. Achievement of government goals is therefore favoured over evaluation of the power of chosen methodologies or even the goals themselves (Tilbury, 2004). Radical Marxist strands of social work, for example, present the case that occupational goals actually relate to restricting the freedoms of those in society who threaten the ruling interests. Hence, *generalisations* from empirical study have been argued to be problematic and oppressive (see O'Brien, 1999) because expert judgements about risky behaviour are constructions that curb liberty. Personal accounts can powerfully illustrate the suffering of others and set about progressive change by disseminating minority or subordinated stories (Zufferey & Kerr, 2004).

Using a moral compass to justify and explain (often highly resisted) state-ordained actions in the private realm of family life necessarily leads to concerns about the effectiveness of the processes designed to "better" particular families, but a full analysis involves critical thinking about the basic assumptions behind the processes. This makes Q particularly suitable. Seeking to make explicit *whose* morality and way of life is "better" can allow both service-users and service-providers a means to query its appropriateness. The question of how practitioners negotiate their own positioning in order to achieve these goals, and other queries, is underexplored in the literature. If it is to meet its own ends, perhaps

> social work must develop change-orientated, value-based models of knowledge development that address people, power, and praxis.
>
> Finn (1994: 25).

Freire defined praxis as involving "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (1970: 33). Praxis in social work is therefore contextualised by values, situated in practice and underpinned by theory – tying its actions to the moral goals at its foundation. The struggle for liberation, for Freire, involves developing a critical consciousness of oppression and directing collective action from this position. In children's social work, praxis fundamentally involves engaging with the concepts of power and the tacit knowledge of actors involved in safeguarding in order to harness action for change.

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The social work system in the UK is based on a welfare state mode of delivery, with not-for-profit organisations and religious institutions tending to constitute most other international models. However, state dominance has not always the case and philanthropy still plays an important role in the current care economy amid 2010 'Big Society' party politics from David Cameron's government. Donzelot (1997) suggests that philanthropy occupies a space between private life and the state because financial (and other) support is conditional on particular moral criteria. Early religious and philanthropic organisation mission statements in the UK positioned informal, familial relationships as the site of health and social care responsibility. This had the effect of managing behaviour perceived to be threatening by the ruling classes. Crucially, it did so without leading to reliance on state funding or permitting those helped to have a (dissenting) political voice.

State actions echo the moral lessons of philanthropy. For example, the institution of benefit payments via charities at the end of the eighteenth century to mothers was ostensibly created to reduce high levels of abandonment, abuse and infanticide. However, the policy also worked to construct mothers to be agents of the caring economy *of the state* (Donzelot, 1997). In this way, government help operated oppressively against the poor (and differentially against women and children in poverty). This thesis will show that similar processes occur in contemporary policy. The 'rape clause' in Child Tax Credit payments, brought in under the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, is one such example. Rape survivors are required to provide evidence that their children were born of sexual assault if they are to receive benefit payments for third-born children; an example of a policy that takes no account of issues related to survivorship, identity and disclosure. The Conservative government asserted this would bring fairness to the distribution of welfare, under its reinstitution of the notion of the deserving and the undeserving poor.

Examples from the past are important because they illustrate how the foundations of social work have contributed to its current form. According to Donzelot, a Foucauldian power analysis positions social workers to be the dominant priests of earlier times, tasked with the role of preaching about 'right' and 'wrong' in order to instill feelings of regret, shame and guilt to effect social control and order – thereby managing the impact of risky Others (Donzelot, 1997). Foucault argued that history is important when tracing the development of the taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning structural power relations, such as the family

unit. The narrative of the vulnerable child can be seen to have arisen when medical discourses about the education and care of children merged with social discourses about the health of the nation and colonialist concerns about defense of the empire. The vulnerable position of children may have been crucial in the centralising of family as an absolute or 'natural' arrangement (Foucault, 1972). Crucially, though, assumptions about the voice of the child in the family have implications for children's safeguarding work and to research of this kind.

The philanthropic Christian origins of social work still have a legacy on current views and experiences of practice. Social work developed in the context of a cultural shift from faith in God to rational science, which influenced popularly accepted ways of thinking about social order. These discourses may have promoted the adoption of strategies such as family support programmes (including home visiting) where non-familial experts assessed, monitored and intervened in daily life despite evidence of modest success (Carrilio, 2005). Similarly, this cultural shift may have led to the privileging of face-to-face communication (LaMendola, Ballantyne & Daly, 2009) and a religion-blind or belief-blind approach in the occupation (Gilligan, 2009) which continues to dominate thinking.

The motivation for early philanthropy has been problematised by authors who suggest that the goal of improving conditions was underpinned by a parallel desire to control, monitor and minimise the threat particular people posed (Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999). To echo this, from the institution of the Poor Law in 1834 (which functioned to restrict the cost of meeting the needs of the poor – all but in exceptional circumstances), the state contribution to welfare was massively outstripped by voluntary organisations until around the time of the Social Insurance Act 1911 (Lewis, 1999: 13). Authors such as Seed (1973) suggest that the roots of the profession lie in the administrative roles created by the Poor Law Acts (1601, 1834). Workers whose job it was to assess eligibility for early state intervention were employed as gatekeepers to access to a limited source of help during a time of extreme poverty and hardship. Responses to inconsistencies in the delivery of voluntary support, and the strict conditions it came with, may have led to the development of centrally administrated provision to make access fairer. After the Beveridge report (and subsequent legislation), the role of voluntary organisations changed alongside the formation of the welfare state. However, it was only in 1968 with the Seebohm Report Local Authority and Allied Personal

Social Services Act that social service departments were established and social care packages emerged.

2.1.3. The construction of issues in pre-social work roles.

Pre-social work roles, it seems, have always been contentious. This may be as a result of the issues they were constructed to aid – just as much as the methods designed to resolve them (Horner, 2003). This is illustrated by the amended Poor Act which introduced a policy of 'less eligibility' (that no relief could exceed that of the lowest paid worker) - an idea echoing the Con-Lib coalition benefits cap in the Welfare Reform Bill 2012. Whether this was the view of individual Poor Law Officers or not, Seed (1973) notes the unfavourable reputation officers had (which did not appear to improve in the public consciousness despite a course of training). The unfavourable reputation was possibly compounded by the variability of officers' decision-making across the country. Help was not universally delivered, meaning that some people were differentially disadvantaged by the system at the point it was delivered. This included unemployed single young men, who were typically constructed to be undeserving. This issue remains a challenge for health and social care provision nationally, with a sense of 'post-code lottery' attached to services (Asthana, 2017).

Prior to the establishment of social care entitlement through social service departments, the Victorian Charity Organisation Society (COS) sought to systemise access to charity (Mowat, 1961; Webb, 2007). Forming an earlier stage of support (prior to Poor Law help and institutionalisation via the workhouse), provisions were in the form of direct resources and education. Education was provided with the intention of enabling recipients to internalise changes which would then lead them to achieve financial independence from the state. This early form of individual casework was not without its critics and may have been perceived to be morally judgemental and punitive by those using it (Bosanquet, 1914/2014). As already mentioned, assessment of eligibility was on the basis of ideas about deserving or undeserving poverty (Seed, 1973). The problem of the most 'deserving' not being the most 'in need' and vice versa meant that its goals were in fundamental conflict with its procedures. This controversial political point was relevant at the time of this research which was undertaken during global recession and austere cuts to public services in the UK.

There are many examples of early provisions that were underpinned by the belief that moral teaching could reform and improve issues on an individual and societal level (including early Magdalen Hospital's for 'penitent prostitutes' at end of the 1700's, for instance). These views persist in the current ideological climate as well as through the code of conduct for professionals, which emphasise that social workers represent their profession in every aspect of self:

> **9. Be honest and trustworthy.**
>
> **Personal and professional behaviour**
>
> 9.1. You must make sure that your conduct justifies the public's trust and confidence in you and your profession.
>
> Health and Care Professions Council (2016: n/p).

Other examples of voluntary pre-social work roles, such as the Workhouse Visiting Society in the late 1800's (which acted to support inmates alongside work to facilitate the voice of reform about conditions) and the settlement missions (established by Canon Barnett in 1880s Whitechapel), sought to integrate the philanthropic wealthy into poorer communities. Settlements were supported by Christian ideology and the principle that meaningful change and emancipation were more likely through education (Scotland, 2007; Hunter, 1902). 'Settlers' purported the value of understanding and disseminating research about the experience and causes of poverty and disadvantage (Gilchrist & Jeffs, 2001). The day-to-day experiences of working alongside people living in poverty led to the politics of the settlement movement (Reisch & Jani, 2012) - which included activism. Workers organised strikes, formed unions, directed regulation and called for reform – positioning service-users at the centre of action (Addams, 1910). However, certainly not all workers met this urge to action, and instead considered these early roles to be politically neutral and independent (Weismiller & Rome, 1995). Then, as now, the tension between seeking to encourage

conformity *at the same time as* promoting circumstances that may enable empowerment (Freire, 1970) reflects one of the most fundamental conflicts of an applied discipline seeking to enact social change through direct work with (often) socially excluded, disadvantaged and stigmatised individuals.

2.1.4. Theoretical approach underpinning the research.

The social work practitioner can be conceived of to be a skilled professional who is able to blend a range of approaches and theories creatively in order to facilitate meaningful change (Fargion, 2006). They can, however, also be conceived of as having a conflicted theoretical and evidence-base which is lacking in methodological rigour. The challenge of dealing with the complexity of the social world *and* assigning a course of action that resolves issues (that are defined and measured by stakeholder criteria) invokes philosophical questions about *knowledge creation* and the appropriate measurement of reality. Most occupations embody contested knowledges that are differentially taken up in research and/or practice traditions. There are also competing legal, ethical, cultural, political, methodological and theoretical reasons why disciplines suffer from a limited capacity to engage in practice that is transparent and meaningfully accountable to the public gaze.

This research proposes a modified social constructivist approach to enquiry. Whilst individuals actively engaging in constructing the world do not always have a 'birds eye view' of a particular end goal (in terms of power and domination), the reality lived by TAF players can reveal patterns of oppression. The subjective person, or 'subject', implies an audience - even if the dialogue is internal. Therefore, all discourse has collaborative elements. As an applied discipline, social work is pulled towards humanitarian *action* meaning that actors are not neutral observers of change but agentic - and directed towards improving the experience of life for others. Social constructivism speaks about *processes* of transformation but the thoughts, feelings and actions of individuals in society speak about the *nature* of this action – an individual's concept of their life in a given moment. In social work, constructivism is a panoramic lens to make sense of the actuality of a person's story – it is not a means to remove the value of helpful social bonds because they are 'make-believe' or 'pretend', but it is perhaps a way to resist the unhelpful, oppressive ties that adversely impact how people think, feel and act. Therefore, the idea that all views about the world are equally good (in extreme forms of relativism) is rejected by this position. Accepting the notion of a socially

constructed universe brings advantages but should be used with a note of caution, as Hacking notes;

> Unfortunately social construction analyses do not always liberate… Take anorexia… any number of fashionable and often horrible cures have been tried, and none works reliably… It is at any rate a transient mental illness… but that does not help the girls and young women who are suffering. Social construction theses are liberating chiefly for those who are on the way to being liberated – mothers whose consciousness has already been raised, for example.
>
> Hacking (1999: 2).

It can be argued that it is not only valuable to understand 'insider experience' in child protection, but that it is *essential* to a profession underpinned by morally-orientated discourses about helping and alleviating suffering. Empowering the voice of service-users (so that they are represented with justice), may only be possible by investing resources and focus in providing arenas for service-users to feed back their experience. This would take a seismic shift in approaches to public policy because sanctions such as the 'rape clause' have their moral grounding in the payments to eighteenth century mothers. The stigma associated with being constructed to be in need of help takes recipients further away from emancipation, and society further away from progressive change.

The picture is not universally bleak and progressive change has been brought about by experts-by-experience who have shared their personal accounts (Videmšek, 2017). In February 2013, Robert Francis QC published his fifth official report since 2009 about a large number of preventable patient deaths at Stafford hospital. Although official red flags were raised, Julie Bailey (whose 86 year-old mother died in the hospital in 2007) was instrumental in bringing the situation to public attention through the 'Cure the NHS' campaign. The scandal continues to impact NHS delivery of care. The subsequent NHS 'Freedom to Speak Up?' independent review into whistleblowing (2015) highlighted the difficulty of openly raising issues in health and social care practice – an issue that is often emphasised in SCRs.

There are many other examples of how change can arise from understanding minority accounts and marginalised experience. Thought needs to be given to capturing these. In children's social work, developmental maturity is a factor in achieving meaningful ethical engagement. Being in corporate care is another barrier, as is illustrated by the psychological and physical abuse of people with autism spectrum condition and/or learning disabilities at Winterbourne View Hospital. The abuse was brought to light following an undercover BBC Panorama documentary in 2011. 11 members of staff were convicted of cruelty and neglect and the resulting SCR identified systemic difficulties in the structure of the organisation. Hundreds of missed opportunities (and disclosures) had occurred prior to the BBC report. The Association of Supported Living and Mencap called for people with learning disabilities to move out institutions into the community, and Transforming Care guidance arose.

Capturing insider experience comes with the responsibility to enact change. In 1987, Margaret Humphreys, a social worker in Nottingham, investigated the mass migration of British children to the colonies after she was approached by a service-user searching for their family. The service-user explained that the British government had sent her to Australia at age four as part of 'Home Children' policy. This was a national migration plan set up in 1869 in which children from the UK were forcibly relocated to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. Despite being viewed by the philanthropist Annie MacPherson as an opportunity for a better quality of life for the 'matchbox children' in 1860s London, it was a source of free labour in the colonies (and another form of slavery and abuse). Cases of abuse, and even of children being sent away despite having live parents, led to scandal and public outrage when they were revealed. The plan did not completely end until the 1970s (see Bean & Melville, 1989). At great personal cost (which included experiencing threats to her life), Humphreys established the Child Migrants Trust to help families reunite (Humphreys, 1994). In 2010, Prime Minister Gordon Brown issued an official apology.

Although these examples are focused on serious cases of harm, they arose from the action of citizens who utilised the power of the personal account to effect change in policy. There are fewer personal accounts available for everyday lived experience (or even of good practice), and this forms part of the rationale for undertaking this research. The appetite for stories from social work seemed to be tipped in favour of the tragic, reinforcing the stigma of

receiving help. As a result, there is space for greater dissemination of lived experience of TAF work that *does not* focus on serious harm – the subjugated story.

2.2.Power.

2.2.1. Approaching a definition.

The form, nature and operation of 'power' is difficult to define and observe. There is no unitary definition but any attempt to set down parameters should be sensitive to the socio-historical context from which it arises. This is because power takes its form in the relationships, the institutions and the world around those seeking to conceptualise it (Goffman, 1961). This has implications for the profession, as Smith (2013) points out,

> Social workers… need to develop an appreciation of their own position and the power relationships associated with the place they hold... Likewise, though, those who 'use' services are acting from a position within their own web of relationships, accountabilities, expectations and mutual understandings.
>
> Smith (2013: 1552).

For some, power is the effect of social relationships - existing as a feature of interaction between groups and individuals through discourse, within social structures (Foucault, 1982: 219-20). Foucault viewed power to be fluid and omnipresent, thereby giving individual agency and counter-discourses the capacity to emerge. Postmodern ideas about justice, freedom and progress are useful, but also have limitations because theorising about discourse and action is proposed to be an end in itself – even in the context of human services (Solas, 2002).

Foucault suggests that an analysis of power is necessarily an analysis of domination through discursive practices which are interconnected with ideology, language and practice. That is, what is spoken of (or done) *constructs* the thing being talked about (or acted in relation to). This process, according to Foucault, generates knowledge which then expresses power (Foucault, 1977: 27). Service-users and practitioners embody or resist domination through interaction and micro-level behaviours. These reflect gradual acceptance of norms so that every (in)action the body performs is fed back into working beliefs. As he notes,

> The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements.
>
> Foucault (1977: 304).

That is, power emerges *through* (rather than being held statically within) individuals. In this way, he argued, disciplinary power ("the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise", 1977: 170) mediates domination but is more fluid than a simple obedience to figureheads of society (Foucault, 1977). For Foucault, power was not a zero sum game – one person possessing it does not mean another person is powerless. Any knowledge-power embodied in social workers (or their artefacts; Høybye-Mortensen, 2015) to define and discipline those 'in need' through their profession is constrained by the organisation and that of managers or policy makers (Johnson, 1972). Artefacts can be discussed in terms of what they represent - as tools to label and monitor individuals as a process of stigma, for example.

Whilst Foucault's ideas have been criticised for focusing on micro-levels of analysis, power operates on multiple planes. As an example of disciplinary power on a macro-level, increased disciplinary control and reduced levels of autonomy have led some authors to argue that the social work role has progressively been devalued (Jones, 2001). The sustained ideological attack on certain strands of social work in recent years from the government is exemplified by David Cameron's proposal in 2015 to extend the criminal offence of "wilful neglect" (carrying a maximum sentence of five years) to social workers and other professionals involved in child protection and safeguarding. Originally introduced to safeguard older people in residential care, and later ratified in the Queen's Speech, the charge of wilful neglect was to make

> sure that the professionals we charge with protecting our children – the council staff, police officers and social workers – do the job they are paid to do.

Cameron, quoted in Stevenson (2015: n/p).

Cameron reinforced the potentially criminal consequences of not adopting a risk-averse approach - rather than, for example, a positive risk-taking stance which ultimately may be more enabling (Sharland, 2006). Cameron's view about social work had been expressed to good effect previously, however, as noted by Butler:

> Cameron, possibly looking to promote his "Broken Britain" agenda, declared Baby P to be a Labour policy failure – breaking a parliamentary convention that child deaths are not exploited for political gain. He was enthusiastically cheered on by [Rebekah] Brooks, whose reporters relentlessly pursued Haringey's director of children's services, Sharon Shoesmith, and who set up a Sun petition calling for her to be fired.

Butler (2016: n/p).

Narratives about the undeserving poor and troubled families provide examples of processes of domination. MacDonald & Marsh (2005) found that young adults in Teesside were able to identify difficulties about their lives on benefits or in low paid jobs but *simultaneously* took the view that others in their position were undeserving. Authors noted that no-one they interviewed claimed to be avoiding well paid employment even though the 'undeserving' had been deemed so because they did not choose to work. The immorality associated with poverty may have led to participants to deny their experience of it and assert others like them were undeserving. Indeed, Freire argued that;

> The oppressed are [not necessarily] unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. At this level, their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction, the one pole asperse not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole.

Freire (1993: 42).

However, the results may be at least partly due to the direct interview method, which could have encouraged participants to manage the self they presented during interaction in a defensive way with the researchers.

2.2.2. Resistance.

Tension between disciplinary power and resistance exists on every level – and not least because social workers build relationships with service-users as well as with their professional organisation (Rose & Miller, 1992). The capacity for individuals to freely choose to reinterpret and/or challenge power relations creates the possibility of resistance but it is not necessarily explicit and direct, and can be subtle and complex. For example, Weinberg & Taylor (2014: 75) noted that "rule-bending behaviour is one strategy employed by workers in a context of managerialism". The authors proposed that the large volume of policies and procedures negotiated in safeguarding children work heightened the likelihood that staff may have to deal with guidance that conflicted both with itself *and* workers' personal morality. Intolerance of this conflict, it was found, led to diverse interpretation. Other research has noted how flexibility and resourcefulness is enacted within the constraints of factors such as the relationship professionals have with their manager (Dustin, 2007: 66). Current constraints in social work mean that resistance may be in the form of "quiet challenges" (including the reinterpretation of guidelines; White, 2009) and postponing the sharing of assessments, for instance, in order to engineer particular decisions (Canton & Eadie, 2004).

Crucially, research has constantly demonstrated that the emotional demand of safeguarding is vital to understanding it. For example, Shulman (1991) found social workers adopted strategies of avoidance to manage the effects of traumatic exposure to events such as child deaths whilst managers tended to deflect a sense of blame away from themselves onto the staff they supervised. Due to the role of emotion, the psychodynamic concept of vicarious trauma (the transference of an individual's traumatic memories to another person) is useful. Studies examining inter- and intra-psychological processes have provided insights into the experience of practice, despite the critique provided by commentators such as Foucault. Foucault was highly critical about the oppressiveness of medical and psychodynamic approaches in modern science, and how much these become a part of the physical and mental identities of recipients (O'Brien, 1999). Concern about the oppressiveness of disciplinary

institutions (Foucault, 1975) arises in part due to the control and monitoring of inhabitants, but the impact of these cultures can be understood through different theoretical perspectives. Accordingly, a diverse theoretical evidence-base precludes the possibility of enriching knowledge and building theory.

Although not a recent study, Menzies Lyth's findings about the burnout of nurses in the 1950s are helpful when thinking critically about the construction of different roles in safeguarding and child protection. Menzies Lyth demonstrated that nurses can become insensitive to patients and their emotional needs over time and behave in a "brutal" way. Her studies demonstrated that institutions can promote defensive techniques such as depersonalisation, categorisation, splitting of nurse-patient relationships, detachment and ritualistic task performance, amongst others (Menzies Lyth, 1959: 51-63). There are

> devices that inhibit the development of a full person-to-person relationship between nurse and patient, with its consequent anxiety. The implicit aim of such devices, which operate both structurally and culturally, may be described as a kind of depersonalisation or elimination of individual distinctiveness in both nurse and patient. For, example, nurses often talk about patients not by name, but by bed numbers or by their disease or a diseased organ: "the liver in bed 10" or "the pneumonia in bed 15". Nurses themselves deprecate this practice, but it persists. Nor should one underestimate the difficulties of remembering the names of, say, thirty patients on a ward, especially the high-turnover wards.
>
> Menzies Lyth (1959: 52).

In social work, the "liver in bed ten" might become 'the adoption breakdown on the estate' or the 'domestic violence from duty'. Certainly, "thirty patients on a ward" reflects a similar number on a children's social workers caseload, but does not capture the complexity of community work with young people - which necessitates direct work with parents/carers, and other TAF members. Burnout can arise from high pressure work with sceptical or hostile parents, and time with scared or traumatised young people (Atwool, 2018). The emotional demand of contemporary social work practice – particularly feelings of fear - can lead to longer term experience of shame (Gibson, 2016), so effects can be long lasting. A background of austerity, the stigmatisation of service-users and the low status of the

profession increase the risk of depersonalisation. In this way, seeking to understand the thoughts and feelings of those in early intervention social work teams is arguably a form of resistance because the current climate limits the voice of those who are socially constructed to be either recklessly powerful or inadequately powerless. If it is to meet the goals of the discipline, as Finn notes, perhaps

> social work must develop change-orientated, value-based models of knowledge development that address people, power, and praxis.
>
> Finn (1994: 25).

2.3.Critical social work.

2.3.1. A collection of approaches.

The theoretical basis of social work is varied and diverse because not all circumstances leading to intervention are comparable. Being a social worker is inherently problematic because it negotiates taboo and emotive issues which can lead to extreme views on the activities it undertakes. Transparency is therefore crucial to a tailored, case by case analysis. Social work theory is drawn from psychology, sociology, economics, social policy, law, education and philosophy, amongst others (Fargion, 2006). In some ways, social work can be viewed as the connectivity between all of these disciplines in a way that takes account of actual lived experience. As Munro (2011: 168) notes, "a one-size-fits-all approach is not the right way for child protection services to operate". Justifying the reaching of decisions made across disciplines, however, is complex and differing underlying assumptions can confuse and minimise the effectiveness of facilitating change between practitioners and service-users (Payne, 1996). This has led some to argue that the skill of the effective practitioner lies in being able to integrate a toolkit of theories for overall case management (see Poulter, 2005).

By many accounts, critiques of social work centre around the capacity it has to deliver the targets it sets for itself. Transformative goals such as promoting inclusion are compromised by conflicting aims that seek to normalise and promote adherence to the status quo. In answer to this, critical social work is an umbrella of approaches encompassing radical, socialist and Marxist strands (Mullaly, 1997; Ferguson & Woodward, 2009), along with feminist (Dominelli, 2002), anti-racist (Dominelli, 1988) and anti-oppressive traditions

(Strier, 2006). They arose from critiques of social work that demonstrated practice was conservative and oppressive.

Critical strands take varying positions about the role of ethics in social work and its capacity to address oppression and inequality. Whilst different threads problematise the nature of 'difficulties' and 'solutions', critical approaches may be best placed to break down barriers between service-users and providers due to the focus on social justice. Critical strands often seek to challenge medical or disease orientated explanations that frame service-users to be relatively passive against difficulties that are located in the self rather than the environment (Rossiter, 1996: 24). Social work action can be seen to coerce less powerful people to accept additional state monitoring until they shift their behaviour to meet the definitions of more powerful, socially included groups (Pierson, 2011). In this way, organisations are complicit in worsening the problems they intend to remedy (Foucault, 1967). This tension has been present since the earliest roots of the occupation. As already mentioned, domination through eighteenth century moral discourses and regulation of (un)deserving poor has echoes in current value-based assessments regarding service eligibility. Critical social work often advocates consciousness raising and challenging the assumptions embodying the artefacts of statutory casework in order to facilitate emancipation from oppression.

As a practice that seeks to reform, social work is rather limited in setting its own agenda from the ground – this is a keen problem because it has been suggested that systemic social problems are not tackled well without arenas for ground-up change (Mullaly, 2007). Mullaly's approach (2007:24) emphasises that dialectical thinking illuminates the relationships between people and their environments by considering structural constraints. According to this, the main barrier to current transformative social work practice in the UK may be the limited ability to challenge the institutional status quo given deep budget cuts and austerity. Indeed, at the time this thesis was being submitted, a UN rapporteur was touring the UK to evaluate if government policy had adversely impacted on the human rights of citizens. The

> inquiry will assess whether government policies introduced in recent years breach international human rights standards to which the UK is a signatory, including the rights to food, housing and decent living standards… Alston has received nearly

> 300 submissions from charities, poverty experts and individuals living on the breadline – a record for a UN poverty audit.
>
> Booth & Butler (2018: n/p).

The core dilemmas of the discipline remain of primary importance and the question of whether social workers exist to promote compliance or to empower others is a dilemma that cuts through critical strands. The fact that social workers are members of communities and society makes them an integral part of the environment that can oppress others, and this presents a case for critical mindfulness towards practice in order to challenge disadvantage and achieve transformation (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004).

2.3.2. A theory about relationship-based change: social constructivism.

As already discussed, how the practices of social actors in TAFs (both service-users and providers) are constructed varies widely depending on time, place and culture (Payne, 1996). Accordingly, a socio-historical 'enculturation' is crucial to engaging in meaningful communication (Crotty, 1998: 79). Social constructivist explanations propose there is no universally 'true' system of knowledge. In other words, it is argued that there is *ontological multiplicity* which is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2016).

Berger & Luckmann (1966) postulated that social construction starts with individual people making the assumption that there is order in their perceptions of the intersubjective social world. It is argued that 'signs', which are predominantly language based, become institutionalised through habits. Habits then form the basis of action – that is, people behave as if the social world has an objective and concrete reality. The social worker Malcolm Payne (1996) offers that social construction beneficially functions in an analytical, dialogical way at the level of interpersonal interaction (contrasting with, for example, Marxist strands). This comfortably fits the remit of social work because it emphasises relationship-based change and addresses habitual behaviours that are considered to be problematic (Howe, 1998). Additionally, these unhelpful habits can be reframed into alternative meanings and actions (Saleebey, 2001). However, the construction about what is agreed to be helpful or not may be at odds with the people in receipt of services – creating ethical dilemmas.

Reframing is not only applicable to service-users but can be utilised to problematise taken-for-granted phenomena at the structural level. The concept of emancipation can be linked to the control and monitoring of problematised groups, for instance - such as the less economically active 'troubled families' that are overrepresented in social work provisions (Pierson, 2011). The injustice of poverty and an increasing gap between rich and poor has been reframed into a discussion about the immorality of the poor, and welfare benefits have become associated with "moral laxity, greed, and even criminality" (Jenson, 2014). With this in mind, utilising social constructivism provides the rationale to examine constructions of ethics, reframe notions of power and resist oppression.

2.3.3. The social construction of children and childhood.

There is no absolute definition of childhood or of child wellbeing - despite it being widely discussed (Amerijckx & Humblet, 2013). Children are not constructed to have the capacity to know what is best for them despite many authors arguing that young people are essential in the development of safeguarding provision (Hetherington & Cooper, 2001). Indeed, views of TAF members about the appropriateness of young people attending their own child protection conferences can be in conflict (Shemmings, 2000). The construction of young people as 'Other' in relation to adults is facilitated by their positioning in the law (in terms of the age of legal responsibility) and representation in media traditions and popular culture. For instance, where competing needs and wishes exist in a shared residence dispute (a common scenario in children's services), it has been suggested that children's needs are prioritised below those of parents (Haugen, 2010) and more specifically fathers (Mason, 2002). This adult/child dichotomy leads to others such as pupil/teacher, dominant/subjective which then legitimates practices that are 'done to/for' children rather than with them.

Kehily (2009) has discussed discourses of passivity underlying current ideas about childhood. She suggested that a 'Puritan' discourse embodies the idea that children need the 'saving' attempts of adults to defer them from corruption. Kehily's 'Romantic' discourse characterises children to be innocent and untainted – literally 'unadulterated'. The blank slate idea of human development provides the rationale for imprinting socially desirable behaviour. Ideas about passivity and vulnerability may be the starting point for the rationale of the right of the state to monitor family life. However, the invisibility of young people in being able to shape policy decisions about them fails to acknowledge their agency (Turnbull

& Fattore, 2008). Research has found that young people are able to choose to be 'active doers' or 'inactive beings' in particular situations (Kostenius & Ohrling, 2009) and it therefore may be possible to facilitate more meaningful engagement than is currently common (Franklin & Sloper, 2009). This is in line with some sociologists who problematise both a conception of children as active constructors of their childhood and as 'adults in the making' (Uprichard, 2008), consequently arguing for a view characterised by temporality and of ongoing dynamic change (Lee, 2001).

Rather than a paradigm that assumes children are provisional and incomplete, there are researchers who argue that a 'childism' paradigm is valuable (Wall, 2012). A paradigm such as this situates children to be whole, legitimate citizens who are the centre of analysis. Not all children are the same, however. There are different views about exactly how much children and young people should be involved in decisions relevant to them and/or about them. Inclusion needs to be well thought out because the least often heard service-users tend to be those who receive the highest levels of intervention (Wright et. al., 2006). Whilst participation for younger children necessitates different techniques than those used with older children (Davies & Artaraz, 2009) and adjustments should be considered to facilitate young people with disabilities inclusion (Franklin & Sloper, 2009), greater involvement is possible. Clarity around terminology in this field would be helpful, however, because there tends to be an unhelpful conflation between young people being involved and them actually making decisions (Schofield & Thoburn, 1996).

The current study proposes a critical perspective on transitional and actively constructed conceptualisations of childhood in response to criticisms that researcher interpretation of data is especially important in work with children (see Jones, 2004). In this, it should not be underestimated that practitioners and parents may have anxiety about engaging with young peoples' views because managing what emerges can be difficult (Pinkney, 2011). The rights of young people are complex and often compete with cultural taboos in safeguarding practice. An illustrative example of this occurred during data collection. A participant shared that a GP rang her (as the duty social worker) to request medical examinations for two teenage girls in order to rule out sexual abuse. The girls' neighbour had visited the GP and become very distressed, claiming to have heard the sisters being sexually abused on a regular basis by their grandfather through the wall. The participant had explained that since the girls had not made

a disclosure, putting the allegations to them unethically risked traumatising them and could unnecessarily disrupt family relationships. Interviewing the girls also risked jeopardising justice because it could be viewed to be an attempt to coach a disclosure. The GP remained insistent, suggesting social workers were missing an opportunity to protect - until the duty social worker explained that all children – including those of the GP - would not be subjected to such invasive internal examination solely on the allegation of another adult. The right of children to be free from examination in this way is exemplified by the Cleveland child sex abuse scandal in 1987 (which led to the enactment of the Children Act 1989). The scandal involved 121 children being removed from their families after a reflex anal dilation test between February and July, only for the vast majority of them to later be returned to their families (Pain, 2008).

This example from a participant in the research emphasises that the legal framework practitioners draw authority from can be in conflict with strongly held views about how to protect children. The stigmatised and taboo construction of sexual abuse may compound sensitivity about it but does not necessarily make children safer. Adult accounts of survivorship from childhood abuse and neglect often highlight the difficulty of enabling young people to safely disclose their experiences. Further, even when abuse has been evidenced, support for child victims can be re-traumatising (Scheerhout, 2017). Some responses, such as civilian organised 'sting operations' are controversial. The London-based vigilante group 'Public Justice' offer that they take "the law into their own hands by confronting online child groomers" (Booth, 2016: n/p). 'JB' suggests that being a survivor of child abuse had led the group to adopt a protective role to prevent 'rape, torture or murder' as a result of gaps in statutory services. Vigilante action contributes to a discourse of failure to protect innocents from harm.

> Jay, 29, who requested that his real name was not used, said he considered the stings "my therapy". His colleague, JB, 36, said: "Being a survivor of child abuse, I believe no other child should suffer what I went through, so if I can stop a child being raped, tortured or even murdered, that is what I should do… They said they wanted to expose "a lack of funding or cuts where not enough is being done to stop this vile crime".

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Booth (2016: n/p).

Popular representations of child abuse in the mass media appear to have created a commercial market. Every year, the BBC run various telethons (including Comic Relief and Children in Need) which involves a night of entertainment to showcase sketches by actors and comedians of the day, in-between videos of children starving to death, recovering from abuse or managing other adversity. Millions of pounds are raised and viewing figures are high, making the space for giving to children a part of UK culture. Marketisation of child abuse manifests in other ways such as the specialism of some fiction writers in fake child abuse memoirs (particularly fictional accounts of sexual abuse). In other words, there is a thriving economy for these stories. Similarly, daytime chat shows provide a regular space for the pain of others to be broadcast as entertainment. 'Poverty porn' documentaries about life on state benefits in the UK epitomise the commodification of trauma and reinforce commonsense ideas about the worthy and unworthy poor (Jenson, 2014). Anne Rothe's 'Popular Trauma Culture' (2011) suggests that the popularity of trauma stories as entertainment began with the impact of discourses about the Holocaust and Eichmann's 1961 trial on cultural memories. Rothe argues that an industry that meets the needs of consumers to vicariously witness suffering and victimhood has developed so that

> child abuse is increasingly replacing the Holocaust as the paradigmatic embodiment of evil because it is a far less historically specific subject matter.

(Rothe, 2011: 165).

Social work is, perhaps, the vehicle for society to process its fears and anxieties in this domain. The marketisation and commodification of abuse in Western culture has an impact on practice and may, for example, normalise the narrative that it only happens to "people of a certain kind" (Barclay, 1982: 149) - and that trauma is a personal affliction, attributed to be the responsibility of the individual to resolve. Whilst the collective expressions of emotional and cultural stories provide disciplining lessons about appropriate behaviour, they also create a focus for social work to be a proxy for its anger and shame. Alongside this exists the pull for impartiality, fairness and justice with the professionalisation of practice (Johnson, 1972).

A lack of dialogue between the two mystifies and stigmatisies the operation of power in this area even further.

2.3.4. The social construction of abuse and abusers.

The controversial questions that child abuse and other taboos raise go to the heart of what it means to be 'good' in society. Social work has a role in demystifying, deconstructing and challenging unhelpful assumptions about those constructed to be 'not good'. However, constructions about abuse and abusers are often firmly held and resistant to change. The idea that taken-for-granted truths are particularly robust when it comes to concerns in this field has been reflected in findings that different professional groups show no differences in the way child abuse is determined (Fox & Dingwall, 1985) despite its complexity. Media representation is a powerful means to communicate and shape constructions of actors in safeguarding and child protection, including those who have 'failed' abused children. Shoesmith (2014), citing how police released body maps of Peter Connelly's injuries from his autopsy, suggests that politicians and the media have a co-dependent relationship and young people such as Peter are proxies for the cultural expression of disgust.

Media reporting about sex offending is particularly skewed (Davidson, 2008). For example, following the death of Sarah Payne, the News of The World paper announced a campaign to name and shame sex offenders. In the call for a public register, emergency police protection was issued several times when men with the same name as those identified in the newspaper received hate mail and serious threats. Rioting ensued as the reality that children are sexually abused was cemented into the list of offenders the newspapers published. It was a call to action. Sex offenders are a unique group because they are the only people to have a dedicated act, the Sex Offenders Act 1997, in British history. Some human experience is relatively invisible whilst others form such powerful meta-narratives that they engulf individual identity (as in the narrative of a highly threatening adult offender). Patterns of over- and under-representation in policy illustrates the difficulty of making complex decisions about competing needs and rights within the punitively orientated legal framework. The differentially smaller amount of guidance given to, for instance, a younger perpetrator reflects the power of social construction in recognising socially unacceptable behaviour (Holt & Retford, 2013). Young people can be perpetrators of serious sexual offences and, in terms

of consequences, are treated as such by the law. Decisions made in court, however, started to take account of early trauma and loss (as mitigation) from 1st June 2017.

2.3.5. Young offenders and social construction.

National media reporting styles and traditions may contribute to differences in cross-cultural responses to young people who die in tragic circumstances. To illustrate this, Green (2008) compared reporting of the murders of two year-old Jamie Bulger in 1993 in England and five year-old Silje Redergard in 1994 in Norway. Both young people were killed by slightly older male children. Green argued there were four key differences in media responses from the two countries. These included that the Norwegian press constructed the older children to be vulnerable and in need of support whilst the British press called for punishment. In England, the criminal justice system took the lead but in Norway, case management was led by health and social care. Sensationalist reporting in the UK may have been promoted by greater competition for readers between the different newspapers. Similarly, oppositional party politics in England (compared to shared power, multi-party politics in Norway) may have led to Jamie's death being treated as a failure of policy (Green, 2008: 211). Jon Venables and John Thompson were given a custodial sentence whilst the two Norwegian boys were moved to a different school and a team of professionals were established to support them to remain in the community. However, Green's comparison was not straightforward because there were other differences between the cases (James & MacDougall, 2010). Silje's killers were of the same age, known to her and four years younger than James'. Perhaps the most crucial difference, however, was that there was no CCTV of Silje being led out of the shopping centre in Trondheim (unlike in Liverpool) to play during televised reports of the incident.

The media is crucial to understanding socio-cultural mediation of power. Other discourses ran through the reporting of the Bulger case. Jamie died at the end of a Conservative government in which 'troubled families' were at the centre of concerns about benefit dependency and moral corruption. The moral panic about troubled families perhaps led to emphasis that the boys had come from single parent homes - their punishment being a proxy for penalising the undeserving poor. As Scraton (1997) notes, the life story and surrounding systemic context tends to be minimised in commentary about young offenders – making them contemporary folk devils (see Marsh & Melville, 2011).

2.3.6. Institutionalisation and corporate care.

There appears to be a variety of reasons why children who come to the attention of safeguarding services are differentially less likely to be constructed as appropriate decision makers than those who do not. Some authors highlight that child abuse is a social construction (Freeman, 1983) because it is a *label* rather than a *state* in which the particular meaning of the term has emerged from values expressed through social groups, and in the context of tangible situations (Taylor, 2016). In a society where child abuse is the rationale for interventions that restrict freedoms, the idea that child abuse is not an objective reality is difficult to accept. Indeed, as Hacking notes;

> It is a truism that a great deal of behaviour that we hold intrinsically loathsome and terribly harmful to children is merely venial or even encouraged in other cultures. That was well known before child sexual abuse was on the scene as a confirmed "social problem".
>
> Hacking (1999: 147).

Institutionalisation is included in the range of statutory responses to young people who have committed offences and reflects the need to regulate the socially undesirable (Foucault, 1967). It is also an option for children who are not considered to be safe in the care of their families, and who therefore become subject to corporate care arrangements (typically foster care) or 'forever families' via adoption. Following the Children Act 1989, 'Looked After' became the term for children who had previously been referred to as being 'in care'. The drive to move young people out of institutions into the community has been a longstanding goal of various groups since the stark facts about survival rates in the late 1800's (Painter, 2000) but finding alternatives has been not been straightforward. The reasons young people became subject to corporate care following the world wars and throughout the 1960's and 1970's has shifted from reasons such as the child's parents not being married towards reasons couched in categories of abuse and neglect.

Contemporarily, outcomes for Looked After young people are poor in comparison with those remaining in the care of their families across a range of measures (Holland, 2009). Although substituted family circumstances have become the choice of local authorities, disruption and

breakdown of foster placements has been found to be high (Selwyn & Quinton, 2004). Placement instability has been linked to further adversity - including increased risk of sexual exploitation in young women (Coy, 2009). The gap between children raised in birth families and those in corporate care is not attributable to a single cause. Experience of trauma prior to becoming Looked After is one source of challenge; however, developmental disadvantage is often *compounded* over time. For example, care leavers also tend to have less support from family, are more likely to have to negotiate a teenage pregnancy and are less likely to have aspirational employment prospects (Harlow & Frost, 2007). Young people in care often report feelings of exclusion about decision-making about their lives (Leeson, 2007) and experience powerlessness (MacLeod, 2007).

2.3.7. The social construction of social work.

Social work arose from discourses in the late eighteenth century about the regulation and moral improvement of the behaviour of the poor. This developed into goals that focused professional delivery on the promotion of social change through individual casework. Any general summary, though, comes with an air of caution because change is not linear or straightforward and a full account is beyond the remit of this thesis. However, at any moment in time, a standardised, generic approach to understanding a person and their family can be unethical – this is because deviations from a (socio-historical and culturally specific) norm *becomes a need* that leads to intervention. Essentially, difference in itself is not automatically abusive or harmful. If practice is to avoid blindly becoming a disciplining strategy that supports the rationale for monitoring and intervention through constructions of risk, it should problematise the question 'risk to whom?' On its own, identifying risk does not identify a risk management plan. This is the task of professional judgement, depicted by creativity and insight. To echo this, Kemshall (2013) suggested that appropriate identification and management of risk was less likely when a systematic analysis process was utilised and an exploration of strengths was minimised. Research about lived experience from the profession can counter this.

Critique about the assumptions underpinning value-based artefacts of practice (such as assessments) has arisen from various groups at different times. For instance, a rise in the dominance of psychodynamic approaches in the 1950s problematised what social dysfunction actually was. This was succeeded by a general movement towards evidence-based practice,

and ideas from social learning and cognitive change theories. Person-in-environment models provided a further challenge to the individual focus that a psychodynamic conceptualisation of the social problem brought. Black and feminist critiques and Marxist class-based approaches grew in popularity during the 1980's in the UK, to acknowledge the fluid, multiple and complex processes of discrimination that enact on individuals. Subsequently, the term 'anti-oppressive practice' has been utilised to appraise implicit processes of domination in the origin and practice of social work's moral narratives (Trainor, 2002).

In the early 1900s, social workers were highly thought of, respected professionals (Ferguson, 2011: 25) – the death of a child was attributed to the wider social context rather than being assigned to the faults of individual workers. Confidence in social work was also high in the post-war UK when parents were more accepting of the idea that their child would be cared for appropriately if they were removed from their care (Parton, 2006). Workers were more able to share their successes with the public when they were less stigmatised, according to Ferguson (2011: 28). Perhaps social work would benefit from publishing research findings more widely than in the limited, elitist arena of the peer reviewed journal (Davies, 2014). Certainly, the organisation I moved into as a newly qualified social worker (and that hosted this research) did not provide journal access so practitioners could not read up-to-date findings unless they funded it themselves. Managed resources for the wider public are correspondingly minimal. As highlighted at the start of this thesis in the comedian Alexei Sayle's satirisation of the blame of social workers for social problems, the profession currently has a strained public image. Troubling the story behind this is important because narratives about the most excluded groups in society are heavily influenced by fiction and entertainment writers, rather than by researchers and practitioners in service-user orientated or service-user led organisations.

As a publicly funded enterprise, accountability of children's social work is expected through the dissemination of regular reports that give a picture of performance across the UK. The media, however, remains the most accessible means for most people to reflect on the issues that children's statutory services raise due to its pervasiveness in public and private spheres of daily life. Although analysis of media representations of social work over time is beyond the remit of this thesis, its role in shaping policy has been highlighted - and some authors have queried if we are being legislated by tabloid (Franklin & Lavery, 1989: 26).

Media accounts of safeguarding practice often portray a bleak portrait of outcomes for children, emphasise endemic failures and highlight understaffing (Butler, 2018). It seems unlikely that many newspapers would champion a social worker but there have been a number of campaigns seeking to name and shame them. Media portrayals tend to describe social workers to be too hasty or too reluctant to intervene, and too sceptical or too optimistic – but nonetheless poor of judgement (Ayre & Calder, 2010: 41). It is rarely highlighted how unrealistic the task of being able to foresee harm (or not) actually is to achieve. In 2009, Community Care magazine awarded their media awards as a part of their 'Stand Up Now for Social Work' campaign. Awards were given following their analysis of 345 articles about social work and social care services across 13 national newspapers over the first quarter of 2009. The campaign began as a response to hostile reporting about social workers compared to other public servants in the preceding six months (Lombard, 2009). The Guardian won 'Best Newspaper', and Jon Smeaton won an 'Editors Special Award' for "Who'd Want to be a Social Worker?" (15 January 2009 in the Sun). The 'Worst Newspaper' award was given to the Sun because most articles

> were negative and a large proportion were inaccurate, misleading or hostile. Most of the articles were peppered with pejorative and offensive language that can only be described as a hate campaign against the profession.
>
> Community Care (2009: n/p).

Over the course of producing this research, Prime Minister David Cameron commissioned Lord Justice Leveson to lead a public inquiry into the ethics and culture of the British press. This led to the Leveson report in 2012, which took into account the hacking of murdered Milly Dowler's phone by the News of the World paper. The hearings for the inquiry attracted a great deal of interest and debate, but Cameron did not institute Leveson's recommendation that the Press Complaints Commission be replaced. This decision was perhaps to be expected given the enmeshed relationship between the media and politics in the UK. For a practice so sensitive to public opinion, media culture and its regulation is perhaps in the best interests of those who become subject to intervention from children's services. For social work, the consequences of perpetuating a polarised view about what the occupation does are felt on many levels.

The social construction and stigmatisation of social workers is not only forwarded by newspapers. As I entered the local authority with my newly qualified cohort, one of the first training sessions we experienced involved discussion about worker stereotypes. An unfashionable, out of touch caricature with an individual agenda, unaware of social etiquette (or not bothered by it) emerged. Some of us recalled the bumbling, well-meaning social workers in a children's book that was adapted to a BBC children's series, others recalled a TV soap villain who was exposed to be a child abuser. In a profession dominated by the presence of women, the caricatures drawn by my cohort were typically of older middle-class women who could be seen to be resisting dominant ideas about femininity. The pictures depicted hairs from unshaven legs poking though brightly coloured tights, baggy cardigans, hessian tote bags and open toed sandals. Harry Venning's Guardian cartoon, Clare in the Community, echo this representation - of a well-intentioned liberal social worker who often gets it wrong;

> Clare Barker, the social worker who has all the right jargon but never a practical solution… A control freak, Clare likes nothing better than interfering in other people's lives on both a professional and personal basis. Clare is in her 30s, white, middle class and heterosexual, all of which are occasional causes of discomfort to her.
>
> BBC Radio 4 Publicity (2018: n/p).

Feminist strands of critical social work tend to emphasise the similarities of women's experience irrespective of role in statutory processes (Phillipson, 1992). One of the most frequent relationships in the field of safeguarding is often that between female social workers and female service-users (see Hanmer & Statham, 1988). In these accounts, it is often argued that women have shared experiences of oppression and similar day-to-day life goals. Interaction is regularly assumed to be the start of an open dialogue about equality (Dominelli & McLeod, 1989: 147). However, issues in social work do not begin and end with women and it is clearly the case that there is huge heterogeneity in women's experiences including that of race, age, disability, socioeconomic status and sexuality (Langan & Day, 1992). Given this, reflexivity has been prescribed as a helpful tool to avoid subjugating certain knowledges or interpretations - including by favouring objective, masculine accounts

(Maynard & Purvis, 1994). In this conception, being reflexive is a way to minimise effects that may lead to a distorted analysis (Smyth & Williamson, 2004).

2.4. Reflexivity.

2.4.1. Engaging in a cultural dialogue.

Reflexivity is the reflection of action as it emerges (Schon, 1983; Fook, 2001). It acknowledges underlying power dynamics as well as the fluidity of concepts such as knowledge and interpretation. Reflective practice in applied work has been imagined as a means of promoting ethical ways of working but it has been critiqued to be too poorly developed as an idea to apply to everyday dilemmas (Houston, 2003). Reflexivity is conceived of differently by commentators in terms of method, theory and substantive content (Lynch, 2000: 33). However, irrespective of whether it is discussed as a means of critical self-awareness or insight into practice rigour, it tends to be elevated in prestige above non-reflective approaches. Debate about the value and clarity of the concept (Ruch, 2002) has led some to suggest that it is merely a response to the poverty of social work theory. A truly reflexive approach, however, would acknowledge that theories are just as applicable to service-users *and* service-providers, and that individuals and society are inextricably linked. One of the challenges of reflexivity, from a social constructivist perspective, is that an objective reality is often not the core interest of social work practice. The power of processes of social construction, however, mean that this is not often problematised. That is, taken-for-granted truths can be as powerful as they are also unhelpful.

Some of the challenges to formulating the process of reflection are summarised by Mazhindu (2003), in relation to nursing training. Insight into the huge variability of how individuals understand and negotiate their experience is limited by the capacity to accurately capture and evaluate this. An objective approach to evaluating subjectivity might begin with awareness of current and historical influences, and the relationship these have with emotion, psycho-social factors and cognition. Subjectivity is not directly observable through conventional methods. The desirability of achieving reflexivity and reflection is nonetheless understandable when seeking to promote a critical methodological mindedness in interventions where there are complex presenting factors (Brown & Rutter, 2006). Child protection workers are required to demonstrate a reflexive approach to casework during pre- and post-qualifying courses (Brown & Rutter, 2006) even though qualifying areas of

competence are less well defined due to the huge array of roles and contexts practice takes form in. That said, from the perspective of reflexivity, it is worth noting that the basis of training and development agendas are as problematic as practice guidance because neither can prescribe a universally helpful way to act. To extend this argument, Ixer (1999:514) suggests the requirement for reflection and critical thinking set out by the regulator is inconsistently measured (and variably defined) by assessors. He argued that students and practitioners in social work were differentially disadvantaged by poorly transparent criteria - not least because critical thinking is treated as an outcome, rather than a process.

2.4.2. Reflexivity in the researcher-practitioner role.

Social workers are cultural actors in the same way that service-users are (see Corrigan & Leonard, 1978; Davies, 1991) meaning they express and transmit cultural messages in a dialectical way. Whilst it has been identified elsewhere that social workers' personal and political ideologies are underexplored in the literature, Schon (1983) discusses the concept of reflection-in-action to explore the interpersonal nature of safeguarding work. He argued that social work action arises deliberately and consciously from monitoring (and responding) to the dynamic and situated context of interaction – no matter which model of knowledge is being applied. That is, social work knowledge and the content of specific assessments are not simply the act of the worker delivering a particular theory-informed strategy and observing the reaction. Instead, it is an interactive means of negotiating often strongly contested, socially constructed realities (Fook, Ryan & Hawkins, 1997). In this way, it may be more appropriate to consider the notion of reflection in terms of interpersonal skill. A skill-orientated operalisation challenges the idea that theoretical knowledge is morally superior to knowledge constructed within practice (despite the barriers associated with evaluating rigour). However, as Ixer (1999) critiques, the original research conducted by Schon did not include social workers or any analysis of the social and cognitive processes underpinning how reflexivity is actually *done*.

Taken to its extreme, reflexivity implies excessive internalisation and introspection so that its relationship with applied practice becomes ineffective (Bleakley, 1999). In fact, Ixer (1999) suggested that reflection can approach self-indulgence and even narcissism. Two cases stand out to me in relation to this issue because the experience of them heavily contributed to my decision to leave safeguarding and child protection and move into therapeutic children's

social work. When a four year-old and his younger sister disclosed their organised sexual abuse as I drove them to a family contact during the same week I was asked to place a 15 year-old girl in bed and breakfast accommodation designed for adults (following the detention of her mother), reflection through managerial supervision was not enough – despite the assumption that it would be. My reflections actually became focused on levels of understaffing and how compelled I felt to take more cases. In other words, reflection and reflexivity are tokenistic if the substantive apparatus around staff to deal with what emerges is absent. Reflection has also been discussed as a means of managerial control and surveillance (see Gilbert, 2001). For instance, in an evaluation of nurse training (which also requires the achievement of practice-based competencies as part of qualification), Nelson & Purkis (2004: 255-256) suggested that the expression "mandatory reflection" was a means of instilling government goals to increase personal accountability and promote the internalisation of regulatory principles.

2.4.3. The presence of the researcher.

Some theorists argue that research is a product that reveals a story about the researcher (Finlay, 2003; Clark & Sharf, 2007). With this in mind, the contemporaneously recorded reflective journal became an artefact of the research where (analysis of) my thoughts and observations could be organised and reviewed at later stages of review – including Q-sort and interview material. Reflective journals are adopted in qualifying and post-qualifying social work training, with excerpts required to justify, explore and add rigour to decision-making (Domac et. al., 2016). This echoes the way that practitioners become *instruments* of change in the helping professions and how values are embodied in practice. Going full circle, and hand-in-hand with this embodiment of values, is the responsibility to 'fine tune' interpretation through reflection and reflexivity (Taylor & White, 2000).

Following the argument for reflexivity and criticality, the insider-outsider status of the researcher in studies of this kind remains an important issue. Researchers form dynamic relationships with their research (Fouché, 2015) which includes participants, organisations and supervisors engaging in it. Indeed, Doucet (2008) argues that the researcher has an ethical *responsibility* to critically reflect on the possible impact of differences and similarities on the research process. Self-reflexivity has been suggested as a tool to deconstruct the processes of insiderness (O'Connor, 2010) and power dynamics (Navarro, 2006) but is

limited by the insight of the person doing the reflecting amongst other things. In a bid to be transparent about self-reflexivity, the thesis included selected personal reflections that were intended to add depth and context to the development, process and interpretation of materials and data.

Achieving a helpful degree of disclosure about my presence was restricted, at least in part, by the invisibility of the 'other side' of the relationships I thought were relevant. That is, some of the stories that seemed appropriate to tell related to young people I worked with but sharing them was ruled out by their right to confidentiality. Given the dialogical, situated nature of interaction, some relational information about me would have been conveyed (through my accent and clothing, for example) irrespective of my choice or intent. I was able to make some choices about some of what was shared during data collection (such as not revealing my motivation for doing the research) despite one of the goals of the thesis being to achieve some transparency and authenticity about my own perspective. However, whether shared or not, those involved will have arrived at their own conclusions about my motivation – a potential variable for any research in which the researcher-researched relationship is a vehicle for data quality.

The duality of practitioner and researcher roles echoes the multiple and overlapping identities in the cultural activity that is social work – indeed, the negotiation of expertise as a service-user *and* as a professional is sometimes an uneasy hybridisation of knowledge (Fox, 2016). As an occupation drawing on socio-moral rationales for action, children's social workers refer to representations of personal relationships to inform professional practice. That is, an assessor focusing on parenting may relate their own experience of being parented, and, if relevant, parenting children of their own. My move out of child protection came after the birth of my children – an experience that profoundly influenced the perspective I had about casework. That is, it is short-sighted to only focus on the roles of researcher and practitioner, and perhaps especially so in safeguarding work with children and their families. In fact, more often than not in this field, parenting often specifically refers to *mothering*. Social work is predominantly a practice by women about women (Dominelli, 2002) highlighting that a critical approach to power relations is crucial.

Many professionals in the sampled TAFs had existing, but unique, collaborative relationships with me from previous casework. The very fact that they consented to participate in the research may suggest some cordiality, and imply a set of expectations about the process. Capturing a rich imagination of the network of existing relationships between service-users and their families with other TAF players is a complex task. Each of the participants brought their own general views about social work (that is, those not specifically related to the TAF they were part of) as well as about their experience of the casework they were engaged in at the time of data collection. The two domains are not mutually exclusive. In a similar way, being part of the research may have impacted participant views – just as they did my own. Perhaps, for instance, I may have been considered to be a practice insider *until* I began undertaking this research – at which point my identity then came to include a temporal, 'becoming' aspect (varying that derived from my settled, qualified status).

Whilst reflexivity has no definite endpoint, there is also no clear way to conclude about insider-outsider issues which draw "upon the personal, political, intellectual, and theoretical autobiographies of ourselves as researchers throughout all stages of research" (Doucet, 2008: 74). The origins of this study were in reflection-in-practice of children's safeguarding and child protection work – echoing some of the characteristics of andragogical learning (Knowles et. al., 2005). However, some origins can also be traced to the reasons I became a social worker in the first place – in my experience as a young person – but I made a decision not to directly share this with participants. This is because researchers, as embedded social actors, have a particular perspective that can create proximity or distance between participants and data (Maier & Monahan, 2009). There are both advantages and disadvantages to having characteristics in common with those who are researched (Kanuha, 2000). Unfamiliarity with the field under focus can help illuminate it, and bring to attention potentially relevant implications for research aims. On the other hand, commonalities can help establish rapport with participants and personal insights can add value and meaning to interpretation (O'Connor, 2010). That said, self-disclosure is not a straightforward task, presenting ethical dilemmas to the self and the intended audience.

Problematically though, researchers may faultily assume that their 'insiderness' is mirrored by participants or other stakeholders. This can be compounded when secondary assumptions about the *implications* of perceived insiderness are mismatched. For example, social workers

claiming homogeneity with service-users (in regards to age and gender, for instance) may fail to recognise the impact of other dimensions of difference, such as socioeconomic status. Reflexive appreciation that service-users may *resist identification* with professionals (whom they may consider to be oppressive) can be helpful. Even if appreciation of difference is mutually understood, the risk of under-problematising what is similar can also lead to tepid analysis that replicates the status quo rather than generates critical thought (Maier & Monahan, 2009). In other words, incongruent assumptions, whether challenged or taken-for-granted, pose a problem for consuming research (Kanuha, 2000).

It is rarely the case that a person is completely an outsider or an insider and the dichotomy may be unnecessarily distracting when attempting to appreciate the intersectional character of identity (Doucet, 2008). No single status is superior but some dimensions may be more important than others at a particular moment. Indeed, excessive focus on a particular aspect of identity may engulf an individual and restrict their capacity to tell their story. To illustrate this, Burnham and colleagues (2008, 2013) provide a useful list of dimensions of difference that can be reflected on by the researcher addressing insider-outsider status. Including gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality, the social GGRRAAACCEEESSS can be voiced or unvoiced, be visible or invisible but invoke discussion about the relational aspects of power. Viewed to be fluid characteristics that reciprocally shift in non-mutually exclusive ways, deconstructing GGRRAAACCEEESSS is a pragmatic process echoing the dynamic nature of identity.

The rationale for researcher-practitioners to seek understanding of their impact and the assumptions they hold are clear, even if the practicalities associated with achieving it can be problematic. Bourdieu's ideas about reflexivity suggest that the social scientist may strive for objectivity, but remains a person constructing the world through engagement in various fields whilst embracing forms of capital and certain doxic ideas in their habitus (Bourdieu, 1980). Fields are said to be networks of relationships that can be cultural, intellectual or religious (for example) - therefore useful in understanding how some adverse operations of power are selectively resisted by individuals (Everett, 2002). Doxa is a description of taken-for-granted norms that legitimate forms of oppression. Bourdieu's habitus, a concept incorporating the interaction between the body, status and society, is proposed to exist within unconscious

schemata built from social engagement with the world within the physical constraints of the body (Bourdieu, 1986; Waquant, 2008) making it a theory that is biopsychosocial in orientation (Pickel, 2005).

Bourdieu held that social workers were heavily aligned with fields associated with the state because the profession does not have the independence from the ties that govern practice. In fact, social workers negotiate *competing* rights and needs – including the collective goals of the state. Arguing that social workers enact symbolic violence on service-users (Stabile & Morooka, 2003), Bourdieu also minimises the capacity and power that service-users have to negotiate constraints. Social work integrates goals arising in structure and agency accounts, because the focus on building capacity in individuals *and* communities is designed to lay the groundwork for emancipation from oppression (Schinkel, 2007). This means that insider-outsider status is an ongoing concern for all players in the field.

Reflection about Bourdieu's account of symbolically and culturally specific power can be illuminating. For example, acknowledging that certain structural positions have a clear impact on how power is negotiated in interactions with service-users is useful to see how domination occurs through the artefacts of assessments as well as through research material (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). In this research, young people and their families were conceived of to be citizens (rather than a burden on a strained system) but this does not automatically adjust processes of oppression in the real world (that research data captured a snapshot of). Bourdieu's notion of capital highlights that symbolic, social and cultural aspects of self are proposed to interact in a formulation of power and domination. In terms of shaping an approach, this led to an in-situ monitoring of action in a pragmatic way in order to minimise the adverse operation of power. A hierarchical notion of TAF involvement by role was also resisted through the use of Q-methodology which sought to facilitate an equitable arena for participants to express their views.

2.5.Chapter summary and context.

This chapter has outlined the rationale for a modified social constructivist approach in the research. It sought to explore how epistemology influenced the favoured methodological approach prior to a deeper discussion of Q later in the thesis. Chapter two covered some of the dominant ways that social work and its practices are socially constructed. The moral

narratives underlying the earliest roots practice were discussed, along with the tensions that a helping profession tasked with monitoring cases of potential abuse and neglect embodies. Social work emerged from attempts to organise charity to those in the most need, but also the most worthy – subjective, value based categories that reveal the socially constructed parameters of appropriate ways of helping others. In accordance with this, the adverse operation of power was presented as a crucial dimension to working with service-users. It theorised that the reality lived by TAF players can reveal patterns of oppression. The chapter simultaneously emphasised the pull towards humanitarian *action* which is inherent to the goals of social work, and how this situates workers to be dialectical agents of progressive change.

Social construction is considered as a means to resist unhelpful, oppressive ties that adversely impact how people think, feel and act by promoting insight into *processes* of transformation through the adverse operation of power. Thus, the notion that all views are equally good (in extreme forms of relativism) was rejected – the aim of the profession is not to remove the value of helpful social bonds because they are 'make-believe' or 'pretend', but to improve a person's experience of life. This was underlined with an overview of how children and abusers tend to be constructed, as well as some of the responses to these risky and at-risk identities.

Chapter two considered the value of radical and critical social work responses to social exclusion. The concepts of reflexivity and reflection were introduced because they are important aspects of the expectations of qualifying and post-qualifying practice. These ideas are explicitly used in supervision in allied disciplines such as clinical psychology to embrace the notion that professionals' use of self can be nurtured and sharpened. In all, it is noted that social workers are cultural actors in the same way that service-users are. The embedded nature of relationships makes communication possible but also brings with it the risk of replicating the disadvantages that originally bring people to services.

Chapter three, the policy context, goes through the recent legal and macro-political environment changes the profession has faced. It reviews again the earliest roots of the occupation from the critical perspective of the contested journey to professionalisation before giving a greater discussion about changes after the Children Act 1989 to the present day.

Tying in with concerns about power and social constructivism in social work, it is argued that policy tends to change in response to highly selective, emotive cases that function as proxies for political and ideological ends.

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Chapter three. The Policy Context 1989-2016.

> To write the history of social work is also to write about the early work on sociology. It is also about the relationship between humanism, Christianity and charity – not so much about social science.
>
> Marthinsen (2011: 6).

> Today's problems, policies and controversies cannot be understood without reference to their historical backgrounds. The slate is rarely, if ever, wiped clean… However far-reaching change may appear to be, their origins lie in what has gone before. The present is constructed from the past…
>
> Parker (1990: 108-9).

3.1. Enduring tensions from early social work.

3.1.1 A recap of the context.

As discussed in chapter two, the practices conducted under the remit of social work are not only broad and diverse, but highly contextualised to the time and place they are situated in (Shoemaker, 1998). One of the reasons for this may include that action in the applied, relationship-based professions is relatively more reactive to socio-political and economic pressures than others (Lorenz, 2008). These tensions are implicated in debate about whether or not social work is an art or a science, or a mix of the two (Sheppard & Charles, 2015). Ultimately, social work draws its authority from regulation flowing from the law. This chapter outlines key moments in the legal frameworks affecting children's social work in recent years (providing a selected timeline in Appendix one). It also emphasises the ways in which the impact of regulation can be critiqued to be a means of disciplining those involved with the socially undesirable task of engaging with abuse, and its associated shame (Butler, 2016). The chapter builds on a review of very early roles and philanthropy as the roots of modern manifestations of social work to highlight the road to professionalisation.

This chapter shows how ideas about 'riskiness' and 'need' continue to pervade debate. Given the difficulties of asserting the central defining goals of social work, the value of tracing its

history and development is useful when seeking to understand the shifting sands underpinning its approaches at any one time. Social work arose from philanthropy, which is not as straightforwardly generous as it may seem. The irony, for instance, of white middle-class women engaged in the helping of oppressed families living in destitution whilst often keeping servants of their own is not lost. Critical analysis of the founding ideals of social work is important because concepts such as justice, truth, meaning and power are woven throughout the practices of the profession. That is, how society has responded to the at-risk and risky reveals much about the milieu preceding current thinking. Social work's roots are in the struggle to alleviate and manage social unease about issues such as discrimination, disadvantage and poverty (Horner, 2003). The earliest manifestations of social work demonstrate how fundamental tensions have endured into modern day practice, including the 'false generosity' that comes with paternalism;

> True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands - whether of individuals or entire peoples - need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.
>
> Freire (1993: 42).

That is, themes in current debates and the relative dominance of some approaches over others have echoes in the origins, growth, organisation and diversification of very early social work roles. In the UK, as already noted, the origins of social work are closely tied to the work of charities, and the subsequent social and economic relations of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. In other words, socio-economic change shaped policy responses to the different needs of a growing population.

Powerful illustrations of this can be found in casefile recording prior to the Children Act 1989. Occasionally, in the child protection team where I worked, historical files would be requested and it would fall to team members to take turns to read and redact them. For adults who had received social work involvement as children, some of the language and

professional interpretations noted on the files jarred with acceptable recording from my training and code of conduct, sometimes only 20 years later. The sense that personal opinion was often recorded in a factual style in historical files may have been partly due to the different socially constructed, taken-for-granted truths I held as a cultural actor in a different moment and, more generally, with societal change. As Jack (1997) notes:

> The language used by any professional group is the product of a historically specific set of received ideas and codes of intervention, dependent upon generalisations which tend to stereotype individuals and solutions to problems.
>
> Jack (1997: 659-660).

As well as recording on old files, there are still examples of the changing responses to socially excluded groups in the fabric of many council buildings and estates – from the "warden" plaque above a room at the end of the corridor my office was based in, to the once shower rooms now storing files, or the traces of removed fixtures that once formed a bedroom (and became my office). Gradual reduction in the number of children's residential centres was a policy response to escalating costs and wider knowledge about the damaging effects of institutionalisation. This changing use of space reflects the heightened threshold at which care in the family was deemed unsafe by the state – and therefore the point at which corporate parenting was initiated. Professional thresholds for action are therefore shaped by resources inherent to the institutions of the time - as well as cultural constructions of service-users (and their needs) and of service-providers (and their interventions). In this way, austerity in the UK influenced the restructuring of many of health and social care services (Garrett, 2016). The same is apparent in the NHS (El-Gingihy, 2015). When I started working in a secure hospital, the pattern was echoed – my office was in an empty ward, in an old bedroom, in-between two other empty wards. These beds were empty because the funding for them had been withdrawn.

Chapter two reviewed the idea that the construction of social problems and their solutions depends on the goals and interests of competing voices in society, with some critiques of social work accordingly applied through the lens of power (Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999). Some authors emphasise the importance of taking "a critical approach to power

relations implicit within [social work] to respond to the oppression which results" (Payne, 1996: 73) rather than seeking to further normalise the heterosexual, white bourgeois model established in its history. Echoing this, the over- and under-representation of particular socio-economic, ethnic, disability and gender characteristics of service-users poses important questions for the discipline in terms of how it replicates disadvantage and minimises the possibility of individual agency. As Freire argues:

> Pedagogy, which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of the paternalism) and makes the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanisation. This is why… the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors. It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education.
>
> Freire (1998: 12).

The implications of Freire's view (that some state ordained practice is in opposition to individual freedoms) is not necessarily an argument for inaction on the part of social workers (Ledwith, 2016). A relatively more moderate position might emphasise the fluidity of power and the view that social actors are both service-providers and service-users at different times.

3.1.2 Legalities of confidentiality.

One of the first overarching lessons I took on board about the legal framework that children's social work operates in was about confidentiality and the closedness of the culture of information sharing. Perhaps many social workers graduate with, as I did, a range of 'worst case stories' to prepare them for early intervention work. Stories about the risks associated with dangerous parents, unsupportive managers and insurmountable caseloads also routinely included concerns about the consequences of confidentiality breaches. Stories about individual workers who had mishandled information often ended seriously and seemed to act as cautionary tales about social workers who had believed that 'it might not be them'. The term 'atrocity story' (coined by Bromley & Shupe, 1979) has been used to highlight how some tales become barometers for social morality. Atrocity stories can function as examples

of immoral or risky behaviour – warranting control and justifying punitive responses. Accordingly, some SCRs have the potential to become atrocity stories. The culture around the centrality of the warning, moralistic tale takes time to reconcile - and newly qualified graduates may experience a sense of being an 'imposter' to practice (Urwin, 2018).

The atrocity story about Lisa Arthurworry, Victoria's social worker, affected children's social workers in various ways. Ten years after Victoria died, Lisa was allowed to register again under eight conditions (including annual reporting to the then governing body, the GSCC, and re-training).

> The report placed much of the blame for Victoria's death on me… I had expected to be suspended from my job, but what absolutely killed me was being placed on the Protection of Children Act list in 2002. Now I was a child murderer who had become a pervert. If I looked in the mirror, I didn't see Lisa, just a dirty paedophile. In September the same year, I was sacked and referred to the psychiatric service, diagnosed with a 20% loss of faculties. I couldn't remember my past - where I'd come from, what I used to do - and could see only what was in front of me.
>
> Lisa Arthurworry (Taylor, 2007: n/p).

Atrocity stories can reinforce attitudes of silence. Finding an appropriate arena to comment and, indeed, *reflect* on practice issues is therefore difficult – not least because a neutral and safe space must account for the tendency of safeguarding and child protection to polarise opinion and generate extremely emotive responses. Hostile online social media forums created by service-users and the online comments tagged to high-profile news stories demonstrate this. The situation may be exacerbated by the minimal changes to media regulation after Leveson's Inquiry and the 'post-truth' era in world politics (Stiglitz, 2012). Reasoned, ethically approved research from the ground may therefore be the most effective way of achieving appropriate dissemination of typically spoken-for or spoken-about voices. Indeed, some have queried whether or not it is actually possible to share the perspective of others through research if it is not actually enabling subjects to speak of themselves (Boylan & Dalrymple, 2009). Q-methodology permits the possibility of open and honest

collaborative debate in ways that other methodologies do not but every approach has a range of strengths and disadvantages that are brought to bear on the interpretation of results.

An additional point to make about the possibility of openness and honesty is the uneasily struck balance between confidentiality and transparency in safeguarding and child protection. The right of state intervention in family life can be traced through Acts of Parliament beginning with the Children Act 1948, the Children and Young Persons Acts 1933, 1963 and 1969, the Children Act 1975, the Child Care Act 1980, the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. Inherent to these Acts has been the upholding of the confidentiality of children and their families who are subject to provision and that the wellbeing of young people is paramount. Balancing the right to confidentiality for parent/caregivers who perpetrate harm on the one hand with the rights of children who have been (or are likely to be) harmed on the other is set out in this legislation.

3.1.3 Surveillance.

Selected visibility and minimal autonomy may also be made worse by high levels of surveillance, some of which is covert. A number of my colleagues had been followed by undercover police as part of intelligence gathering about families who were receiving statutory home visits. Covert recordings of meetings and home visits by parents/caregivers were posted on social media, or were included as evidence in a complaint about particular staff. Several social workers relocated to other locality teams for their own safety following various threats after being followed home. More still had police alarms installed in their home or were named on hate sites - which included pictures of them with their families and friends, and information such as a home address or car licence plates.

When high-profile cases of young people were emerging in the media, the local authority press department briefed staff to direct all queries to them. Court skills trainers advised us to avoid referring to research when giving evidence because our occupation did not have a research culture, and we would appear inadequate during cross examination. The assumption was that we were not experts in our fields of practice. This picture, of a practice under threat, perhaps gives an indication of why safeguarding and child protection social workers burn out. Limited autonomy within organisations (and strong critique outside of them) contributes to a working ethos entrenched in blame and fear (Ferguson, 2011: 34). Further, social workers

work in collaboration with others in multidisciplinary meetings with professionals and family members who bring their own versions of the effectiveness of the profession to interactions. These arrangements can exaggerate feelings of being misunderstood and unskilled (Ayre & Calder, 2010). Strains apparent to group decision-making in TAFs are discussed in chapter four.

In many ways, the public face of social work is an involuntary and guarded one. The risk of acting (publicly or privately) in a way that could be taken out of context could result in creating a permanent record of inadequate professional performance and even disciplinary action from employers and/or the regulatory body (Taylor, 2007). The code of conduct can be digressed for behaviour outside of work – and often is. Disciplinary hearing information is published online, and is a matter of public record. In fact, decisions at hearings held by the regulator have, at times, been queried for breaching the human rights of social workers (McGregor, 2011).

3.1.4 Macro-power dynamics in policy.

The 'Troubled Families' agenda, referred to at the start of this chapter, was launched in the UK by the coalition government in 2011 after rioting in London in 2010. The agenda provided a fund to support adults in families into work, reduce the incidence of antisocial or criminal behaviour and promote children back into school. The reality of this for many practitioners in first contact teams meant another set of measures and expectations were to be juggled within TAF relationships. Staff posts had been created from ringfenced government funding to monitor and collate additional data on the families that had been identified. It meant that my colleagues and I received occasional emails requesting feedback on 'turnaround criteria' from the service-users we were working with. Once targets had been met, money was released to the hosting local authority which meant that the new tasks were strongly encouraged. However, it also meant that 'successes' were short lived once funding expired.

Policy often mismatches the reality of social care practice. One of the ways "troubled families" were deemed to have successfully "turned their lives around", for example, included that an adult family member had entered paid work for at least three months. Based on practice experience of child protection and safeguarding, three months of paid work

seemed unlikely to resolve many of the reasons why young people and their families received specialist support. In fact, the extra tasks associated with implementing the policy presented another barrier to building rapport (placing worklessness on the agenda of statutory casework, for instance) and actually made the "turn around" less likely. Cementing the myth of the undeserving poor, these additional tasks affixed problems to particular families who presented to be an economic burden on tax payers (estimates were that these families represented an annual spend of £9 billion, averaging £75,000 per 'troubled family'). This example of how government can utilise the social worker role to promote political agendas in a tokenistic way illustrates how the profession is vulnerable to policy change that has been implemented without workers or service-users in the planning.

3.2. Brief history of children's social work in the UK: a critical perspective.

3.2.1. Social work in the West.

Social work is firmly established in many Westernised, developed countries even though the way services are actually delivered varies widely in accordance with social, political and economic factors. Payne (1996) argues that the development of social work precludes the construction of issues or problems to be social in character. The subsequent formulation of a political response then leads to the development of provision (which includes a range of strategies that justify intervention and entrench symbolic solutions). The basis of practice is therefore contingent on the time and place it originates from. Indeed, commonalities in the conceptualisation of social work in the West generally differ from those in second or third world countries (Payne, 2005). That is, social work is not essential to the negotiation of problems in all settings or welfare systems, and, to the contrary, increased state surveillance tends to co-occur with economic development and the provision of services (Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999).

The emergence of social workers in the nineteenth century came much later than professions such as doctors and lawyers. Tensions in the forms of knowledge underpinning it continue, and can form a circular argument about its effectiveness (Beresford, 2001). Where societies tend to use extended family networks for social support rather than state-funded social workers, the prominence of narratives about informal social support being the responsibility of family tends to be at the heart of thinking (Pawar, 2014). There are many possible solutions to the problem of social exclusion but medical and legal narratives have dominated

the conceptualisation of Western social work. As already demonstrated, responses in the West have tended to favour the development of a civil servant group to monitor and control *at the same time* as address inequality at a 'pathological individual' level. The subsequent tension between viewing social work as a mode of social control and a means of social change presents an uncomfortable positioning for practitioners, allied professionals and service-users (Cowger, 1977; DuBois & Krogsrud-Miley, 2008). This tension has its roots in the origin and development of social work as a profession but remains relevant because its function is to be a practice of ethics with a critical approach to claims about knowledge (Rossiter, 2011). In response, some authors suggest that social work should seek justification rather than professionalisation and locate this argument in a conceptual debate (Colgan & Cheers, 2002).

As this thesis moves on to discuss decision-making made by social workers, it is worth commenting that the Department for Education was tasked to understand these processes by Michael Gove (then the Secretary of State for Education) and David Cameron (then the Prime Minister) in May 2013. However, "given the potential breadth of this project, and the limited resources available… focus [was] upon the entry point for children coming in to contact with the Child Protection System, usually referred to as the 'front door'" (Department for Education, 2014: 4). The analysis concluded that four crucial elements influenced social work decision-making. These included that the quantity of work was unreasonable and relied on intuition rather than evidence (as in other professions), that behavioural biases were in operation (discussed later), that 'decision fatigue' occurs because multiple, consecutive decisions are made in a working day, and finally that accessible evidence is of minimal quality and requires time to synthesise. The authors additionally noted;

> There is an over-arching issue that complicates all of these behavioural factors… an almost total lack of robust evidence available or given to social workers on what works in particular contexts. This weakness in analytics compromises both current diagnostic practice and the development of better approaches.
>
> Department for Education (2014: 5).

3.2.2. History of significant cases.

There is recognition that research evidence about how day-to-day decisions are made in the field could be richer and more closely linked to practice. Currently and historically, a pattern of intense national scrutiny follows selected and tragic high profile cases. There are many examples of how safeguarding and child protection guidance has been shaped by particular cases of young people. For example, the Monckton Report (Home Office, 1945) followed the death of Dennis O'Neill, a child who had been starved and beaten to death by his foster carers. He had shared his foster home with the birth children of his carers, whose needs were well met, indicating the extent of his subjugated identity and differential treatment in the house. Dennis' case highlighted growing evidence that out-of-home care was not automatically the most beneficial solution for all young people, and in some cases achieved the opposite of its intentions. The adverse recollections of evacuated war children also challenged the view that unregulated benevolent philanthropic care was always safe for young people. In a similar way, gradual dissemination of the lived experience of institutionalisation led to growing resistance about separating children from their families. This chapter will discuss some of these tragic high profile cases.

Although she was certainly not the first young person to die in the care of her family, Maria Colwell's murder in the early 1970s was one of the first cases to lead to a public inquiry. Her story represented a change in how child deaths were understood. Prior to her death, Maria had been living with foster carers (and thriving) but was returned to the care of her mother and her mother's partner after social work assessment. She died in 1973 as a result of sustained violence and neglect from her mother's partner (Department of Health and Social Security, 1974). The Colwell inquiry took place in full sight of the media with the late social worker and commentator Olive Stevenson on the panel. Maria's story, and the subsequent review, led to the development of a specialist framework for child protection social work which included the child protection case conference and, as it was then, the child protection register. (Now young people are 'made subject to a child protection plan' rather than be placed on the at-risk register). Public reaction at the time was hostile towards Maria's mother Pauline Kepple as well as Maria's social worker Diana Lees (Butler & Drakeford, 2003:113). During the inquiry, Stevenson was critical of what she felt was 'purple prose' – the material that led to headlines (Butler & Drakeford, 2003:161). In other words, 'legislation by tabloid' has long been part of social work's development – with some arguing that the Children Act

1975 was built from media attention that framed a need for social work to be placed firmly under the regulatory gaze of government.

The role of the media in contemporary social work is not to be underestimated. In the same year that Maria died, a BBC documentary about 11 year-old Michael "Mini" Cooper was screened to the nation. Mini was a young person from Craghead (in Durham) who had been placed in Redworth Hall Residential School for Maladjusted Children on a Care Order. He had set fire to the family home, and he was filmed as he met with a range of professionals;

> It was one of those Cathy Come Home TV moments… [the] documentary followed the fate in the care system of a baby-faced, articulate, compelling 11-year-old arsonist, Michael "Mini" Cooper. The programme touched a public nerve and prompted a national debate about how we dealt with youngsters whose parents weren't up to the job… his brutal ex-Army father and his distant, out-of-control, religious mother both colluded with the authorities to wash their hands of their son.
>
> Stanford (2013: n/p).

The Inside Story documentary closed on the audio of social workers visiting his parents who objected to the plan for Mini to be placed out of Durham (to Essex) for treatment. The social worker is heard shouting that Mini was subject to a Care Order and decisions were now down to the local authority and not his parents, as the screen filled with Michael's young face. The public response to the story was characterised by anger about social services. Mental health difficulties and institutionalisation characterised the rest of Michael's life (Cooper, 2013). Since the 70s, though, the focus of assessment and intervention has increasingly expanded beyond the parameters of the socio-medical structure (Parton, 1991), with greater inclusion of information about the influence of discrimination, poverty and deprivation (Jack, 1997). Secure institutionalised settings are also much less common. Redworth Hall is now a hotel, hosting a range of events (including to facilitate the training of social workers).

Later inquiries such as the Cleveland child abuse scandal further reinforced the unhelpfulness of exclusively using the medical lens to view child abuse. 98 (of 121) children were

incorrectly determined to have been sexually abused. Judge Butler-Sloss (1988) criticised that social workers did not challenge the medical focus taken by professionals, who had dominated the assessments that led to the children being removed. Elsewhere, it was shown that the underfunded children's residential centres in Staffordshire in the late 1980s were akin to military centres, where children as young as nine had to earn the right to clothing and social interaction (Levy & Kahan, 1991). This shocking insight into life in corporate care led to a government funded appraisal (Utting, 1991), and again highlighted that state intervention was often the least desirable option for most young people.

Following these and other enquiries, Victoria Climbié's death in 2000 had a profound effect on children's safeguarding. In response to the public outcry, the Laming Inquiry recommended 108 significant changes to children's social work in his 400 page report (which led to Every Child Matters policy and the Children Act 2004). The regulator put Haringey children's services into special measures at the same time that Victoria's aunt began her sentence in Durham prison. Despite the depth of the public response, longer-term institutional change may have fallen short of intended change.

> The "script" for this kind of Inquiry is now almost traditional. The Minister goes on TV to insist that: "this must never happen again". Responsibility is pinned on a few expendable front-line staff, all conveniently sacked in advance. Criticisms are made about poor communication, with earnest recommendations about better co-ordination and possible restructuring. Council officers - all new appointments - go on TV to say that everything has changed since the case began. Everyone looks very earnest. Voices crack with compassion. Nothing essential changes.
>
> The picture of a wretched eight year-old beaten and starved to death should haunt the dreams of everyone involved in the case for the rest of their days. Past experience suggests that it won't. It is futile to change procedures and structures if so many key individuals refuse to take personal responsibility. If that lesson is not learnt, Victoria's tragedy will happen again.
>
> Ian Willmore, former Deputy Leader of Haringey Council (2003: n/p).

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

3.2.3. Professionalisation of social work.

The neo-liberal hegemony shaping all aspects of the social work landscape has dramatically impacted training routes in the UK. The way individuals are socialised into their professions to gradually embody what it means to be a 'good' social worker is a complex process. During training, students begin to formulate answers to questions they may grapple with throughout their careers - including dilemmas arising from *inter*professional issues (Domac, Anderson & Smith, 2016) and readiness for collaborative practice (Freeth et.al., 2005). Are social workers agents of social control, working towards maintaining the status quo? Or are they agents of emancipation, working towards progressive change through social justice agendas? In this chapter, the view that social workers are the former (Davies, 1994) is explored with reference to processes of normalisation – or, rather, the submission to domination (Foucault, 1977). Although a full discussion of social work education is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is clear that social workers come to be through a negotiated process of adult learning. Academic capitalism and the students-as-consumers shift in higher education (Bunce et. al., 2017; Todd et. al., 2017) is one aspect of difference in the current learning culture but it is not the only one (Munro, 2018).

Sometime after starting to have students on placement with me as a practice educator, I attended a course designed to introduce social workers to academic teaching and lecturing. When setting out the aims and objectives of the course, the tutor lamented the radical positions that some trainees took in their essays and mocked how they might fare in the "real-world". Procedural knowledge and technicality were clearly the desired skill set for social work students at that university, and the view was firmly reinforced that social workers existed to deliver the government agenda of the day. The feeling of alienation from my personal and professional values (and my training at a different university some years before) was compounded by the student I had on placement with me at the time. Although my colleagues and I witnessed *schadenfreude* (the feeling of joy or pleasure - *freude* – in the degradation and harm of others - s*chaden*) in the student, it was only after a serious breach of conduct that a fail recommendation was accepted by the university. The conflict we experienced as a team about gatekeeping the profession from inappropriate entrants was particularly emotionally destructive (see Finch & Taylor, 2013) and was not assisted by frequent reminders from the university that the student had spent £27,000 in fees as a finalist.

The value of professionalisation is a perpetual debate in the occupation. Perhaps uneasiness about the issue relates to the idea that membership of a profession essentially designed to solve the problem of the risky poor may alienate service-users from workers. As Bhattacharya relates;

> Professional women and men of any specialty, university graduates or not, are individuals who have been "determined from above" by a culture of domination which has constituted them as dual being. (If they had come from the lower classes this miseducation would be the same, if not worse). These professionals, however, are necessary to the reorganisation of the new society. And since many among them – even though "afraid of freedom" and reluctant to engage in humanising action – are in truth more misguided than anything else".
>
> Bhattacharya (2011: 252).

The notion of social problems being 'fixed' or 'treated' by a particular set of expert others in society (who may have progressed through organised training programmes) is a familiar model of professionalism in health and social care. This may have influenced the tendency to adopt medically-orientated approaches in order to benefit from their rational orientation as well as the associated prestige and privilege. The prominence of the expert in relation to child-rearing arose with the gradual medicalisation of childhood, the growth of the free market economy and the increase in working hours for adults of caregiving age. All of these led to informal, familial caregiving ties being less readily available (Timimi, 2010). Relatedly, increased expectations for caregivers to recognise typical and atypical patterns of development, and for experts to take responsibility for supporting optimal progress can be thought to be the 'psychologisation' of childhood.

That is, social work has drawn heavily on psychological and medical frameworks to analyse human behaviour. A medical approach would tend to attribute problems to causes *within* the child rather than adopting a systemic analysis - but it also prescribes authority to professionals. This preference may have facilitated the trend to adopt an individualised focus (Robbins et. al., 1998) in which the views of service-users or professionals in the field of safeguarding are typically elicited using structured survey techniques (Gilligan, 2009). Some

members of TAFs embrace the medical model more than others, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) professionals in the NHS. Indeed, some members of CAMHS may have a social work background, but it is traditionally a setting for nurses and other medical specialists. On my first day in a CAMHS team, for instance, there was no option for social work when my manager was adding my professional background to my human resources file. My payslips recorded that I was a nurse.

Timeline 3.2(a) briefly sketches the path to current professional status. In 1968, the Seebohm Committee reviewed the disparate and separate training routes to social work roles. After social service departments and the notion of social care packages were developed, Seebohm also influenced the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) and the creation of British Association of Social Workers (BASW). A generic training programme (through the CCETSW) was developed and directors of social service departments were appointed to co-ordinate and oversee progress. However, criticism soon followed about the liberal curriculum, taught by practitioners who were trained in psychoanalytic approaches from their days of practice in the 1950's and early 1960's (Shoemaker, 1998).

Timeline 3.2(a) to show social work professionalism.

1970	British Association of Social Workers (BASW) founded.
1971	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) is introduced. Regulation is through the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW).
1975	Certificate in Social Services (CSS) is established.
1989	Two year Diploma in Social Work replaces the CQSW and CSS.
1990s	Continual Professional Development and post-qualifying awards brought in.
2003	Undergraduate degree in social work is made available.
2000	The Care Standards Act and the GSCC implement codes of practice.
2005	'Social worker' becomes a protected legal title requiring registration (which can be withdrawn for breaching the code of conduct).
2010	College of Social Work established in the wake of the Baby P scandal - envisaged to lead to a Royal College of Social Work.
2012	Governing body changed from the GSCC to the Health Care Professions Council

(HCPC).

2015 Funding for College of Social Work ended and the College is disbanded.

2016 Bursaries for social work training are dramatically cut from universities. New practice-based routes (Frontline and Think Ahead) fast-track graduates to qualification.

2019 Governing body changed from HCPC to Social Work England.

With the election of New Labour in 1998, Giddens' 'third way' for the welfare state promoted the rhetoric of independence from services so that, where possible, people would be 'empowered' to meet their own needs. This added weight to the rationale of reducing resources for citizens with subordinated identities, including those accessing welfare benefits (Jenson, 2014). (Subsequent Conservative governments under David Cameron would develop this in narratives about 'Broken Britain' and impose heavy benefit sanctions and conditions on entitlement.)

New Labour introduced a barrage of social work targets and outcome measures to meet socio-political objectives – all the while emphasising the duty of accountability to the public purse. Initiatives such as the 'New Deal for Communities' and 'Sure Start' during the 1990's underscored the political nature of social exclusion. From this period came the inspecting body, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), and the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to regulate practitioner behaviour. It is rarely contested that successive bids of government to prevent controversial child deaths have led to over-regulation (Meleyal, 2017). Inspections and codes of practice are ostensibly designed to protect service-users, social care employees and their employers but have been criticised for inadequately tackling the complexity of real-world dilemmas that take place in practice contexts (Storm-Gottfried & D'Aprix, 2006). In addition, a training body (Skills for Care) and a source of best evidence (the Social Care Institute for Excellence) were introduced. Of key importance, authors such as Garrett (2004) suggested that the safeguarding welfare agenda became entangled with New Labour paternalism and a government concerned with disciplining the people. Mirroring the medical model, it implied that the cause of social disadvantage was rooted and embodied in individuals themselves through these discourses (Kemshall, 2002). This led further commentators to argue that social work's roots in emancipation and radical

critique were lost by an overarching state agenda focused on monitoring and control (White, 1997).

A programme of professionalisation has included gradual reorganisation of routes to qualified status from the 1970s through to the early 2010s (as outlined in the timeline). Ongoing reorganisation to training and regulation has often formed part of the response to calls for change in the discipline (Allen, 2003). Subsequent to the 2010s, professionalisation appears to have been narrowly interpreted by successive Conservative governments and the growing neoliberal agenda. Following the death of Peter Connelly, the Social Work Task Force (2009) made a range of recommendations for transformation and the Social Work Reform Board (2011) was set up to instrument the suggestions – thereby continuing the tradition of constant modification (Dickens, 2011). Changes included an Assessed and Supported Year (ASYE) for newly qualified practitioners and adjusted professional standards (the Professional Capabilities Framework, or PCF). Despite this, and the establishment of The College of Social Work, the profession continued to receive a range of attacks from government (Gove, 2013; MacAlister et. al., 2012).

The more recent changes to training options follow from the Martin Narey report (commissioned in February 2013), which delivered 18 further recommendations to improve the education of social workers. The report (commissioned by the coalition government) examined the training of social workers and criticised the poor clarity of training guidelines, noting:

> The [Professional Capabilities Framework], in my view, is a significant improvement on HCPC's *Standards of Proficiency.* It is to be regretted that the College and HCPC did not work together to produce a single source document for social work training. Instead, HCPC publish a twenty- one- page document that maps their *Standards of Proficiency* to the *Professional Capabilities Framework.* Simultaneously, the College has produced its own twenty-four-page document mapping the PCF to the Standards of Proficiency. This is, frankly, embarrassing.
>
> Sir Martin Narey (2014: n/p).

Narey's report is problematic for a number of reasons. Commissioned *just a few weeks after* a review into social work education by Professor Croisdale-Appleby was called for by Liberal Democrat MP Norman Lamb, Narey's report was favoured by the Conservatives despite

> the report [being] based on undisclosed interviews and consultations, citing anecdotes from interested parties who are largely unnamed. It is written with the sometimes emotive and sensationalist language Mr Gove has been quick to use.
>
> Cleary (2014: n/p).

In a particular team, there may be people qualified by way of the 'old' diploma, by undergraduate or postgraduate degree or by the new training routes. It causes unhelpful confusion and unnecessary division both within and outside of the profession. When I started in CAMHS, for instance, I was excluded from training opportunities because my manager believed that social workers had diploma-level training only. The training I had hoped for required undergraduate-level education. He assumed I was making a joke when I explained that I had studied social work at postgraduate level in order to qualify. The current team I work in takes Think Ahead students and those from traditional university routes and recently, a nursing colleague asked me how I felt about new trainees having to "do proper degrees now". It is an unparalleled situation in the professions.

Decisions made according to statutory frameworks have huge implications for young people and their families, who are often in a least powerful position relative to others in their lives. Payne (1996) discussed how power is mediated at different levels including the micro (during face-to-face communication, for example) and the macro-level (through government policy, for example). It is perhaps useful at this point to note how power has also flowed from ground-up social action movements and pressure groups as well as top-down government policies, as is discussed later in this chapter. Crucially for social work, the *value base* of key influences and movements on these shifting dynamics reflect the interests of different groups competing for resources (which may be actual and/or conceptual). Once again it is therefore important to engender a strong research base in the discipline which captures lived experience of those 'delivering' and 'using' services on the ground. As a final point on this

issue, the coherence of the value base for social work is also undermined by the revolving door of regulators. As this thesis was being bound, a new regulator (yet again) was coming into force in the form of Social Work England. Anecdotally, the uncertainty this created for my colleagues in local authorities was mirrored for those of us employed by allied organisations in the NHS and the charitable sector. It seemed like we were a profession that did not have a secure base, at any level, which could embody the trust and commitment to our work other professions had.

3.2.4. The shift from faith in God to rational science in ideas about social order.

Despite the 1914-1918 war and global economic depression in 1928, which provided undeniable evidence about the influence of structural factors on a person's development, a focus on individual casework rather than person-in-environment models dominated practice (Woodroofe, 1962). Whilst this seems counterintuitive, similar economic slowdown at the time of this research went hand-in-hand with a rise in right-wing politics across Europe and the rationalisation of services to the deserving poor. Reflecting on this, Payne (1996) suggests there are three main strands within the discipline. Integrating methods and theory from psychiatry and psychology, the 'reflexive-therapeutic' strand was popular after the Second World War (and more enduringly after this in the US compared to the UK). Some authors have suggested that social work has gradually positioned itself away from a therapeutic model and moved towards more adversarial and analytic perspectives (Jack, 1997). Payne suggested the 'social constructivist' strand featured heavily in settlement missions and radical critiques of the early 1950s and 1960s, whilst the 'individualist reformist' strand was said to comprise most of contemporary practice - a series of cases that are handled in a routine, formulaic manner before closure.

Whilst I am tempted to say that a Q-methodological study may illuminate further and/or different strands in today's world, the emphasis on risk management in safeguarding work has come to dominate current discourse and policy and is arguably the rationale for social work intervention. Professor Eileen Munro, in her important review of child protection, argued that the search for evidence of individual-focused risk factors may be gradually moving practice away from preventative work towards a bureaucratic process where cases are either escalated or closed after brief assessment (see Munro, 2010).

In 1918 the Joint University Council for Social Studies (JUCSS) was developed to lead the transformation of social studies in universities. There was a growth in the employment of social workers at the same time as roles were simultaneously established in the public sector. This was arguably a key turning point for the profession. Despite this, however, the majority of social workers continued to act on a voluntary basis. This included the social worker Eileen Younghusband, who later chaired a working party funded by the Carnegie Trust in 1947 to make recommendations which led to the first qualifying certificate (alongside the institution of a council overseeing training). It can be argued that the process of professionalisation may have set out and cemented the terms of subjugation through the definition of its key players (Foucault, 1977). That is, postmodernists such as Foucault may argue there was a growing sense that social workers were the human face to the oppressive control of the state. By occupying this space, other voluntary organisations were free to champion and advocate for individual rights. Such developments established the route to the protected status of the title in British law (from 2003) so that it is now illegal to claim to be a social worker without completing a recognised qualification (and adhering to registration criteria).

The Local Government Act 1929 transferred Poor Law infirmaries to local authorities, abolishing Boards of Guardians. Most definitions of appropriate action in the emerging discipline, such as the ethic of separating people from their families for their own (and that of society's) good, continued. Whilst the popularity of radical settlement missions may have reduced when settlers became professionalised, the role was increasingly characterised by an individualised casework approach (Seed, 1973).

The late 1950's and 1960's saw an increase in radical challenges from the left of the political spectrum. Radical strands were initially heavily focused on class rather than other dimensions of disadvantage such as ethnicity, gender and age. Such restricted focus meant that people were not seen to be whole, multifaceted and complex individuals (Phillipson, 1992) but as vessels subject to oppression. In terms of legal frameworks, amendments to the Children and Young Persons Acts of 1908 and 1920 were introduced in 1963 and 1969 to set out support requirements for young people to remain at home. Reasons for intervention included not attending school and committing offences (as well as experiencing neglect and abuse). However, progressive increase in statutory guidance and the sheer demand of

administering the assessments meant that not only were social workers no longer housed in community bases but they were restricted to the office by the amount of form filling required to meet targets and evidence their work. The broadened range of statutory responsibility in the law brought increasing costs as the apparatus to deliver support grew (Aldgate, 2002).

The social pedagogue role, which incorporates some of the values of the settlements, is more characteristic of European social work (Eichstellar & Holthoff, 2011). In this, values of justice, equality and rights are central. However, in most cases, radical movements have been limited in being able to set out *how* to deliver services in the context of limited resources. Additionally, developments in practice should be sensitive to the fact that changes are not unified or linear across all areas. Younghusband (1981) pointed out that social work with older people, for instance, was more administrative in character, whilst individual casework was prominent in other strands such as services for young people and their families. The diversity of service-user groups supports the argument that there is no-one theory that suits all situations and there continues to be benefits associated with understanding the challenges facing individuals in order to predict needs and support bespoke recovery. The reality, however, of a social worker being able to manage a TAF where a young person has experienced trauma (for example) without forming a relationship akin to individual casework is unlikely. This is because assessment of past, current and future needs may be difficult (and less helpful for service-users attempting to make meaning) if it is purely a bureaucratic exercise disconnected from an individuals' story (Lewis, 1995). These tensions are still debated from both from the left and the right of the political spectrum (Shoesmith, 2014).

As the welfare state grew, and the idea of universal cradle to grave care became instituted, commentators considered how social work could utilise scientifically based methods to make best use of evidence (Younghusband, 1959). The notion of an evidence-based practitioner challenged the idea that social workers were welfare bureaucrats (who pathologised service-users to be responsible for their own, possibly externally defined, 'difficulties'). It is an ongoing aim for the occupation to develop an identity that is characterised by highly specialised and sensitive professionals who are able to formulate person-centred, needs-based packages of support based on high quality evidence (see Bailey & Blake, 1975).

3.2.5. Theoretical diversity and the brokering of services.

In some ways, the effectiveness of practice can be considered in terms of its success at integrating theories in a way that centralises the lived experience of the 'whole person' (Poulter, 2005). The broad and disparate definition of social work has raised criticism about the question of whether or not the profession is a coherent whole (Brewer & Lait, 1980). Others have suggested that early reliance on methods from psychiatry and psychology was intended to create an illusion of rigour and confer greater status on practice that was generally poorly defined and characterised by conflicting underlying perspectives (Wootton, 1959). This has led critics to argue that social work lacks a distinct theoretical basis, and therefore has poor justification for action. However, as Payne (1996) notes, differing underlying assumptions of theories can confuse and minimise the overall power of the approach.

Criticism about roles and functions became more prominent in the 1980s. Along with the tensions of the political climate and economic depression, the 1980s brought critique from service-user groups who voiced experiences of poor and stigmatising treatment. Following the Barclay Report in 1982, local authorities were newly conceived of to be purchasers rather than sole providers of social care. There was a shift towards the *brokering* of specialised services and outsourcing in social care was part of nationwide privatisation. The 1980's saw a number of inquiries into the abuse of children in the care of their families (including Jasmine Beckford, Tyra Henry and Kimberley Carlisle) and in the care of professionals (including the errors made in the Cleveland Inquiry and the scandal in Staffordshire). The 1990s similarly saw reviews into corporate care provision such as the Kirkwood Report (Kirkwood, 1993). Public trust was low and in the case of the Waterhouse Report about the physical and sexual abuse of young boys placed in Welsh care homes (DoH, 2000), a second review followed the first inquiry after public unease about the initial findings;

> The Review was announced on 8 November 2012 in the midst of the increasing number of allegations of sexual abuse made against the late Jimmy Saville and the BBC's complicity in concealing and effectively countenancing the same… It also resurrected the disquiet voiced after publication of the Report, 'Lost in Care'… that prominent public figures had been involved in the abuse of children in care in North Wales, but had escaped exposure and public censure by virtue of their standing in society. Many suspected the connivance of government, the

> police, masonic lodges and/or the Tribunal itself. A significant number have maintained this stance to date.
>
> Lady Justice Macur (2017: 15).

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 further facilitated the development of a case-based approach in social work. Rationalised care packages were explicitly based around separate needs in a variable-orientated way rather than viewing service-users to be whole persons (Sturges, 1996), in-keeping with Payne's 'individual reformist' stance. This model depicts much of the profession now but changes continue amid voices of contestation (El-Gingihy, 2015). The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 had further implications for social work because some spending was ringfenced for the voluntary and private sector so that a variety of different agencies competed for commissioning – subsequently fragmenting approaches and building tension into collaborative working (Henricson, 2016).

Proposals from the government's Partnership in Action paper were included in the Health Act 1999 to give new powers to commissioners to share resources across health and social care sectors. These powers were developed in the NHS Plan (Department of Health 2000) to further extend the future of commissioning to third party providers. The coalition government ran a consultation on proposals for children's social care departments in local authorities between April-May 2014. Following some pilots (December 2009-March 2012), provision for Looked After Children from November 2013 could be tendered to independent, for-profit providers. Children's services in the UK are being privatised as part of all health and social care services across the lifespan, from cradle to grave.

The impact of competitive tendering is visible from the ground – from the general reduction in staffing, to the overtime offered around inspection time (in order to artificially meet targets), to the news of neighbouring local authorities placed in special measures. In fact, a planned inspection at the hosting local authority for this research delayed data collection by five months. Frontline workers later told me that holiday requests had been cancelled and administrative staff had been given overtime to get any files that had been requested by the inspectors up to date. The understandable decision to inflate the quality of the true picture of practice occurs because councils can be placed into special measures and tendered out to for-

profit companies if they are deemed to fall short. However, it is somewhat of a departure from the true spirit of the rationale for inspection – to ensure service value.

3.3. Key developments between 1989-2015.

3.3.1. The Children Act 1989. A moment of change.

The Children Act 1989 was the largest single review about children in the UK in recent years. It was subsequently revised in 2004, but this interim period of children's social work saw a shift in state intervention to the rights of private family life, constituted as it was in the Act under a Conservative government from the 1980's. The number of young people removed from the care of their families decreased during this time and many local authority buildings mutated in function from places of direct care to offices containing social care coordinators. The Children Act highlighted a number of principles about practice with children and young people that may have contributed to this – including that children should live at home with their families where possible and due consideration to the wishes and feelings of young people should be given. The most important principle is arguably that a child's welfare is paramount to any decision-making. Other principles include that children in need or those experiencing disability should be offered help and family contact should be promoted in the case of Looked After Children.

Hence, the centrality of the family for safe care and the minimal intervention of the state are pervasive themes of the Act (Horner & Krawczyk, 2006). Prior high profile mistakes – often based on based on poor, inaccurate information - that had led to children being separated from their families (such as the alleged Orkney Satanic child abuse cases in 1991; see Clyde, 1992) may have encouraged the limited focus and non-interventionist stance (Masson, 2006). The Act also set out thresholds. Section 17 outlined provisions and duties around Child in Need cases (which require consent of parents/caregivers) whilst section 47 outlined Child Protection and the threshold for significant harm (which does not require parent/carer consent). Young people often traverse both thresholds over time and it is worth considering that high profile cases such as Victoria Climbié, as already mentioned, were allocated on a Child in Need (rather than Child Protection) basis. The threshold concept is socially constructed because it is not an objective reality about the differences of likely harm young people will experience.

Changes instituted in 1989 were not without their critics. For example, Munro (2007) has offered that the Children Act emphasised the need for young people to be kept safe but also expected that this would be captured meaningfully through organisational performance measures. Other complexities to this picture included the ratification in 1989 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) in the UK. Adopted in 1991, the UNCRC meant that the child was not subsumed into the family unit but had separate, individual rights of their own. This greater individualism and focus on the child arguably made the family "both deconstructed and disaggregated" (Parton, 2011: 857). Some argued these rights came with a new positioning of young people to be *responsible* for their own choices and wellbeing – that is, an increased tendency to pathologise differences into difficulties (Fortin, 2006).

The (non-statutory) 'Orange Book' or 'Protecting Children: a Guide for Social Workers undertaking a Comprehensive Assessment' (Department of Health, 1988) was a crucial guidance document used by children's social workers prior to the development of subsequent assessment frameworks. It provided a formulaic risk assessment approach to child protection, focusing on adverse risk characteristics. That is, it forwarded a model of deficit rather than resilience, drawing on a medical model of recovery. The guidance, focused on the alleviation of presenting symptoms of dysfunction, led social workers to undertake a tick-box analysis, with final options limited to 'the child staying at home', 'the child being temporarily taken out of the home' or an option relating to permanent separation from family members (which was then applied for via the court). There was no further detail about support that could promote stability for a family, or the possibility of reducing risk factors through intervention. The emphasis on risk management in safeguarding work dominates discourse and policy (Kemshall, 2002), and endured beyond the lifetime of the Orange Book.

In this, the search for risk factors has gradually moved from a preventative focus towards a bureaucratic, tightly managed process where cases are either escalated or closed after brief assessment - irrespective of the views of collaborative partners (Munro, 2010). Decision-making processes that are incompatible with the day-to-day lives of service-users may promote feelings of disconnectedness from associated support. For example, service-users became *customers* under the mixed economy of competitively tendered services after the 1979 Conservative government. Children and their families became customers of child

protection, introducing an oppressive 'doublethink' sense to action because there is no choice about section 47, and children can be removed from their families if child protection plans are not adhered to. Orwell may have said that the Ministry of Working Together concerns itself with obedience;

> The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation. These contradictions are not accidental, nor do they result from ordinary hypocrisy: they are deliberate exercises in doublethink. For it is only by reconciling contradictions that power can be retained indefinitely.
>
> Orwell (1949: 206).

Managerialism and a business-like approach also became dominant in social care following the changes already started in health (Dominelli & Hoogvelt, 1996). Managerialism increased rationalised forms of accountability which reduced the closedness of closed institutions. Similarly, the rationalisation of service delivery through evidence-based approaches and tiered access further pathologised customer 'symptoms' by attributing causes to individual agency rather than more general structural factors (Carey, 2008).

3.3.2. Focus on early intervention.

Rationalisation of provision continued with New Labour emphasis on medical and scientific evidence-based approaches. Guidance such as 'Modernising Social Services' (Department of Health, 1998), the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) in 1999 and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in 2001 emerged. This was despite the government issuing several research pieces on the functioning of the Children Act (Department of Health, 1995) over the 1990s which suggested that risk was the focus of most of the work in children's care. These reviews highlighted that a more systemic view of the child would be more helpful and effective in promoting their wellbeing and safety.

From 2000, the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health, 2000) replaced all other guidance in England and Wales. It was a response to the view that a focus on child protection (as opposed to early intervention) had

reduced the threshold at which crisis intervention took place and/or families were separated. The Framework included a standardised, interdisciplinary assessment for all children referred for social work provision, with the intended outcome of improving quality. Giving a common language to allied professionals, the Initial Assessment and the relatively more in-depth Core Assessment arose. Despite the intended effect of these documents to fully capture the specific circumstances of the child, it assumed and relied on a certain amount of theoretical knowledge and expertise about child development on the part of the social worker.

The huge increase in guidance, and the potential for differential interpretation was a barrier to translating policy into practice for workers. The Framework was linked to the 'Family Assessment Pack of Questionnaires and Scales' (Cox & Bentovim, 2000) as part of the approach designed to improve service consistency for families across the country. In my experience, this pack was not often used - I was only introduced to it during my second year of post-qualifying practice. Training to use the questionnaires and scales was not given and this may have been because they were not linked to targets or funding. One of the reasons they may not have been utilised a great deal was that the theoretical knowledge, practical skill and time required to use them was often not accounted for. Despite the language of the Framework explicitly focusing on need, some commentators have suggested that the crux of the assessment was, again, about risk (Calder, 2003) – repeating the same argument about the scrapped Orange Book, a decade earlier. It appeared that the tools of assessment - the artefacts associated with the discipline - replicated the unhelpful focus of those that went before.

Whilst these changes took place in children's safeguarding, changes were not homogenous for young people in other groups. The Quality Protects Initiative for Looked After Children, for example, responded to the need for a focus on the story of the child by integrating a developmental framework into approaches about recovery from trauma. Indeed, when I moved out of safeguarding into children's therapeutic social work, the model adopted by the team was the attachment-focused Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (Hughes, 2006) rather than an overarching risk-focus of "heathy scepticism" (Laming, 2003).

New Labour emphasis on needs and strengths terminology in safeguarding was cemented in the Every Child Matters (ECM) Green Paper through its five core objectives – 'being

healthy', 'staying safe', 'enjoying and achieving', 'making a positive contribution' and 'economic well-being'. Parton (2006) suggests that the ECM was the culmination of government goals to reform children's services at the time. It recommended a number of changes including improved multi-agency collaboration, the creation of various posts to oversee this work (including the Directors of Children's services), the development of multidisciplinary teams in accessible spaces for families and children (such as schools) and the institution of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF, Department for Education, 2006). The CAF was designed to "target" change on at least one of the ECM objectives so that services could be in place very early in a child's life (and consequently adjusted according in the light of changing needs) - thereby reducing the likelihood of crisis-led (and more expensive) assessment from qualified social workers. The justification of the changes were summarised in 'Keeping Children Safe' (2003) – the government's response to Lord Laming's inquiry about Victoria.

> Abuse and neglect of children will inevitably remain a substantial problem, with children dying at the hands of their parents or carers, albeit in very small numbers, an unavoidable feature. The children's services system must therefore be able to protect and support those children who are at risk of abuse or neglect. Although the Government does not believe that child deaths can be eliminated entirely, action is still needed – by supporting families more effectively, and at an earlier stage, the extent and seriousness of abuse and neglect can and will be lowered.
>
> Keeping Children Safe (2003: 7).

Community based early intervention social care services became more accessible but some service-user groups systematically remained sceptical of programmes such as Sure Start. Services were largely utilised by middle class families but when the political appetite changed and funding stopped, the buildings were shut. Without heating and care, they began to decay.

The CAF was an added dimension to the continuum of section 17 and 47 in the Children Act because it related to children with 'additional needs' that prevented them achieving ECM

targets. That is, there was another group of young people subject to state scrutiny *in addition* to those requiring safeguarding or child protection through social work. Following its implementation, Pithouse et al (2009) noted that the interpretation of the CAF had been wide and disparate, and added confusion to existing processes - as well as the role of social workers. The CAF therefore did not appear to standardise practice as originally intended and instead made decision-making more complex and multifaceted. Young people and their families were typically passed to different professionals as they reached the different criteria of each threshold. Service-users faced having to repeat their story multiple times, including their strengths and difficulties, thereby having to bear the possibility of different professional reinterpretation.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015), HM government's guide to inter-agency working, established a national panel of independent experts to support Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) with the task of evaluating the effectiveness of the system. The first annual report in July 2014 identified a range of barriers to taking on board lessons from SCRs – including that agencies avoid undertaking them;

> The panel is bemused by the number of different types of investigation, review or audit that LSCBs hold up as an alternative to carrying out an SCR. To date this has numbered over twenty. The simple fact is that an investigation, regardless of title, should seek to establish the cause of an incident and attempt to prevent its recurrence. SCRs provide a means of accomplishing this which reflects the seriousness of the issues concerned. The panel is not confident that other types of review necessarily investigate failings with sufficient independence, thoroughness and openness, and suspects that on many occasions they are proposed as a way of evading publication.
>
> HM Government (2014: 6).

In the same year, the Department for Education undertook a research study in barriers to learning from SCRs. Obstacles included the sheer number of recommendations, the disproportionate and overwhelming generation of new procedures and the inaccessibility of language in reports to name a few. The review also found that training was irregular and

inadequate, repetitive learning outcomes led to disengagement with the content, and applicability of recommendations to staff was limited by their restricted capacity to contribute to change. The authors also importantly highlighted that the culture of high caseloads and the speed that changes were implemented reduced the clarity of learning opportunities. As a result, shorter, more succinct reports were recommended in order to encourage learning and discourage blame. Reviewers commented;

> The length, time and content of SCR publications create an ethos of 'blame', avoidance, apathy, defensiveness and increased workload. This is exacerbated by media coverage. The number and dispersal of SCRs nationally means it is difficult to give them all local attention and what gets attention is then skewed and determined by national media selectivity and coverage.
>
> Department for Education (2014: 6-7).

As a result, a change in the learning culture associated with the occupation was suggested. Authors recommended that changes to policy and guidance should be considered by practitioners prior to them being rolled out, noting:

> A new reporting system needs to be developed that captures learning from smaller incidents as well as major emergencies to better reflect the typical context of working practice (incremental and regular learning).
>
> Department for Education (2014: 8).

3.4.Implications of the expanded focus on safeguarding.

3.4.1. Systems put in place to record, measure and monitor.

Laming's 2009 report made 58 recommendations for change to 'make children safer'. Recommendations incorporated ringfencing of training budgets for social workers and a *focusing of resources on early intervention* work. To the public, the large number of recommendations may have suggested much needed change was required. However, it is worth reiterating that the number of young people reaching criteria for SCR did not vary before or after the report, and the system has been radically reorganised since. The impact,

therefore, on the occurrence of serious harm incidents against young people was minimal. The remit of assessment and intervention hugely broadened because objectives such as 'achieving potential' (rather than being protected from harm) were applicable to most children at various points in time.

Parton (2006) referred to the focus on early intervention as "the preventative state" – a situation where monitoring starts from a young age. The extent of statutory monitoring limits the opportunity for children to explore and develop because the framework of risk around them is primed to label them adversely. The preventative state is more likely to find evidence of problems because it is set up to find it. This is particularly oppressive for children living in poverty because they are relatively less likely to meet government targets related to, for instance, economic productivity during periods of austerity. Therefore, a shift to safeguarding from child protection increased state surveillance on particular families to a much greater extent, creating an arena that could *exacerbate* experiences of social exclusion (Cree & Myers, 2008).

As a result of the responsibility for intervention dramatically increasing, more children and their families were newly categorised to be 'in need'. This then placed a duty on local authorities to provide services – with no additional resourcing. Given this situation, the chance of democratic, universal delivery seemed low. In practical terms, the expanded terminology and broadened areas of concern were largely unattainable given the budgetary constraints of local authorities (and the capacity of individual practitioners). This was because changes were not accompanied by a cultural shift or beneficial structural changes that tackled poverty and recession. This further distanced the UK from European models of social work in which democratic participation is more embedded into the code of conduct (Marthinsen & Julkunen, 2012). Instead, the adverse operation of power and the social construction of those deemed to be in need amplified the likelihood of replicating disadvantage. In this analysis of bias, the consequence of a dichotomy of the deserving and undeserving *needy* is not too far from Poor Law criteria.

The concern about the oppressive impact of *over*protecting young people has to be considered because a social care system still fails to adequately protect when it oppressively over-protects, over-monitors and over-regulates. It doubly fails when it does so selectively,

based on criteria that reproduce dominant constructions of the deserving and undeserving. In fact, by 2017;

> Children's social services are being analysed by a funding crisis in which nine out of ten local authorities are struggling to meet their legal duties and families face a postcode lottery… the all-party parliamentary group for children, also suggested that councils were coping with a spending squeeze by tightening up the criteria by which they classify a child as being in need – cutting thousands out of the system altogether.
>
> Asthana (2017: n/p).

Perhaps the main test for a system that has a parallel child protection and safeguarding agenda is whether or not the prevention of harm and the promotion of wellbeing are conflated. Conflation between the two may have led to a global risk management approach throughout the practice as a whole – a spreading of risk aversion. For example, safeguarding broadened the remit of intervention to young people who were 'unlikely to achieve' or had unmet needs required to fulfil their potential. As a result of this, an act or an omission captured in an assessment could be framed to be a predictor of probable harm, even if it was an unrepresentative snapshot (Jack, 1997:673). Accordingly, aspects of family life that could be attributed to poverty and social exclusion could be conflated to be risky, which would lead to further monitoring. Equally, a moment of impulsivity or typical developmental exploration could become a permanent indicator of concern. In this way, social work assessments positioned some service-users to have to account for the structural factors impacting on them - or face interventions focused on service-user change. It is this idea that highlights the value of promoting social work to be a rigorous, respected profession that does not exacerbate 'homogenising myths' (Dorling, 2010) and works in tailored, person-centred ways with families - depending not only on their needs but also their strengths.

The Integrated Children's System (ICS) came into being in 2007 to evaluate various performance measures across ECM directives. Systems across the country now hold vast amounts of data and this has always raised dilemmas about monitoring and privacy – particularly so because information was shared across professionals and agencies (following the Children Act 2004). In addition, the Data Protection Act permitted practitioners to

consider the rights of some individuals to come second if a child's needs were at risk, which posed ethical questions for workers on the ground. To further complicate the picture, there were some ECM initiatives that were completely abolished - such as ContactPoint in 2010. ContactPoint was a centralised database which held confidential information about millions of children and was controversial for many reasons, including its capacity to adequately protect data held within it. Critique about the state surveillance of childrearing ensued (Munro & Parton, 2007).

Whilst ICS was designed to standardise a systematic approach to electronically recording data (Department of Health, 2002) commentators such as Mitchell (2003) suggested the format of recording assessments reduced the focus on children's lives and generated redundancy through excessive duplication within and across assessment domains. Munro (2010) and others have also argued that assessment quality appeared to be adversely impacted on in favour of meeting timescales for completion. Further criticism included Butler & Drakeford (2010) who suggested that the pressure to meet performance targets and measures meant that humanist values were comprised in favour of record keeping. In other words, ICS became the focus of work rather than a means of simplifying information sharing. Perhaps of more concern, it has been suggested that a trend towards excessive record keeping may lead to the objectification of service-users – that is, a step away from compassionate, personalised approaches to work with vulnerable people. Prioritising technical skill without compassion can set the scene for institutional harm and neglect.

3.4.2. A round of major revision in 2004.

As already mentioned, duties flowing from the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Children Act 2004 and meant that the wishes and feelings of children became a key feature of assessments. Children's Trusts were created from section 10 of the Children Act to operate at all levels of children's safeguarding services to ensure that local provision functioned well and met the needs of the young people in that area. Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) replaced Area Child Protection Committees in 2006, with the change in titles reflecting the broadened remit of the revised safeguarding focus. There were challenges for LSCBs - not least because they acquired the dual responsibility of supporting Children's Boards whilst simultaneously being expected to ensure they were delivering adequately on their responsibilities. From 2008, LSCBs were also required to formally reflect on child deaths

and learn lessons from them in order to improve practice. Accordingly, the ethic of preventative work (and a culture that feared the consequences of crisis) may have led to the development of the SCR process so that lessons could be learnt by all stakeholders in children's social care, and members of the public.

The Children's Plan was first published in 2007. It was again heralded as a new way of working, emphasising partnership between families and professionals. However, the Children's Plan was based on yet *another* set of objectives to evaluate and conceive of children's needs that differed from ECM. Some of these objectives were subjective and difficult to evaluate (such as "achieving world class standards") because there was no explanation of what these were or how to achieve them. Multiple and different objectives in each of these different outcomes left actual goals unclear. Poor clarity therefore existed even before a given local authority interpreted goals and then delivered training to professionals working in the field. Chapter four will further examine how these messages are translated into ways of managing relationships with service-users and other professionals in TAFs. Ambiguity may be another reason why government audit measures (including completion times for assessments) tend to be the focus for practitioners because - they at least - have concrete definitions and parameters.

In June 2010, Professor Eileen Munro was commissioned by the coalition government to investigate child protection procedures in England. The recommendations for reforming early intervention and training were later accepted and written into national policy. Munro strongly criticised the gradual move towards bureacraticisation, suggesting that simplified assessment formats (without arbitrary timescales) would improve standards. This led to Initial and Core Assessments established by New Labour in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families 2000 to disappear. They were replaced by largely free text formats in order to allow greater scope for creativity in approaches with service-users and to reduce a risk-averse style which shifts accountability to others. A social work assessment is a snapshot and can never accurately reproduce the reality of life in a family but the management of uncertainty can be dealt with in other ways. For example, some researchers advocate a self-critical approach involving reflection-in-action and retrospective reflexivity (Schon, 1983). Munro suggested a "risk-sensible" (2011:43) style given that some risk is inherent to any decisions made in social work. For example,

outcomes for young people in Looked After care are often below national targets but this is balanced with the risks associated with remaining with family. Acknowledging that risk is a part of all decisions perhaps encourages greater investment in thinking about meaningful alternatives.

Munro's recommendations for Principal Social Worker roles in local authorities were also incorporated. These roles bridged the gap between senior managers and practitioners on the ground. In the local authority the curent research was based in, a representative from each of the different teams met up with the Principal Social Worker once a month to discuss issues which were then fed back to higher management in the council structure. Although different local authorities do this in alternative ways, establishing a dialogue like this may break down barriers in communication across the hierarchy.

2012 brought further change. National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance became the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NIHCE), to emphasise value for money (rather than gold standard care). Revisions to Working Together guidance updated and replaced the 2006 version. Its length (almost 400 pages) was criticised because practitioners were faced with somehow having to additionally incorporate these new recommendations to pre-existing, overlapping and even contradictory expectations (Munro, 2011).

In May 2010, in the midst of a deep recession, a Conservative-Liberal coalition formed in the UK. Led by David Cameron and his signature 'Big Society' party politics, it was argued that the state should have a reduced interventionist role. These politics differentially disadvantaged certain young people through the provisions available to them in particular geographical areas (Bagley & Hillyard, 2014). A reversal in the growth of the welfare state was implemented and for-profit care contracts grew under an ideology characterised by personal autonomy and individual responsibility. Examples of this included reforms to the Children and Families Bill (Ministry of Justice and Department for Education, 2012) which sped up the completion of care proceedings to 26 weeks (or less), thereby reducing the capacity of assessors to bring in costly (expert) witnesses. This arguably led to a strengthening of the local authority position due to reduced scrutiny from independent others.

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3.4.3. The problem of an ever-changing set of parameters.

Change is an important feature of every profession, but it is especially so for those in social care fields because responses to needs and risks are contingent on processes of social interaction. However, unlike allied professions, social work is relatively limited in being able to shape and drive change. It appears that the professional judgement of social workers is not valued in the same way as that of other qualified graduates. The explanation for this may lie in the circularity of explanations for its specialist evidence-base. Chapter four discusses how the adverse constructions about those in receipt of social work transfer to workers, in a discussion about other reasons for the relatively low status of the profession.

Where change is commonly instituted following public outcry to controversial cases or according to agendas of political reform, the social task becomes consequential to reactive agendas set from outside. This is exacerbated by the sheer volume of guidance which has ballooned since the Children Act 1989. Simply being able to keep up-to-date with policy changes whilst managing the emotional labour of a caseload (Moesby-Jensen & Nielsen, 2015) is difficult enough – even before tackling the job of interpreting vague goals and measures. Technocratisation, hand-in-hand with an auditing accountability culture, was high on Labour party policy drives in response to child deaths but this presented further barriers between practitioners and service-users. Despite claims, and the tendency of government to invest in technocratic systems and the monitoring of abstract performance indicators, key questions about the impact of services on its users (and providers) is poorly evaluated in existing frameworks. As a result, it is difficult to understand national differences in the delivery of child protection work (Bunting et. al., 2018). Accordingly, the capacity of state social workers to change policy from the ground may be overemphasised at the current time. There are recent and historic examples, though, of how communities, agencies and individuals can have a meaningful role (as well as a legal duty) to facilitate a child-focused approach to issues such as sexual exploitation (Coffey, 2014).

Commissioning and development of services over time may be a way for practitioners to contribute their views and experience. Perhaps what is at the heart of social work is the negotiation of *values*, so, at the very least, values should be central to commissioning (Bubb, 2014). Transforming Care guidance created roles for social workers in the NHS where they had never been employed previously, including the post I took in the final drafting stages of

writing this thesis. In many ways, social work is a barometer for social history and because of this, it has the capacity to reinvent its image and role. Even during the snapshot of time this research was undertaken, changes were profoundly affecting services in the hosting local authority data arose from.

3.4.4. The selected visibility of social work cases.

Perhaps the unsettled journey of social work through policy and social thought over time exemplifies the perpetual battle society engages in when thinking about poverty, discrimination, abuse, neglect and many other emotive and highly contentious issues. The role of emotion is not to be underestimated – social work exists in the public consciousness through heart wrenching, graphic images of young children tortured and abused in the media, and through the speeches of election-focused politicians. Chapter four will show that there is perhaps no other profession as clearly tied to tragic stories about children as social work. How best to manage the impact of abuse, how to negotiate inequality and how to intervene in private areas of life such as the family are constantly reframed and reconstructed. In this, power is central – its definition, limits, fluidity and abuses. Ultimately, a balance of personal autonomy from state interference brings with it the fact that some children will be harmed by the people caring for them.

There is now a library of anonymised SCRs detailing partial stories about the serious harm or death of young people. Since April 2013, the NSPCC SCR repository has been freely available online with the intention of providing opportunities to learn. In addition, regular inspection and audit events are ostensibly available to provide feedback for professionals in organisations that deliver services to young people and their families. The results from Ofsted's Annual Report 2007/2008 (Ofsted, 2008) for its first complete year of inspection since its expanded safeguarding remit were stark. It is worth pausing to consider the individual stories behind them. Results illustrated that in the 17 months since the inclusion of safeguarding data, a total of 424 serious incidents involving 282 deaths of children were reported from local authorities in the UK. In other words, this amounts to 199 deaths over a year, or almost four children each week. Gilbert (2008) has since further examined Ofsted data and noted that 210 children (or three a week) died in circumstances associated with abuse and neglect (including inconclusive cases where abuse and/or neglect were suspected). It has already been suggested that public opinion and political decision-making would more

realistically reflect practice if this information was reported in the media. Sensationalist reporting without this context limits the conceptual space to think about the daily impact of this backdrop on players in TAFs.

The development of strategies and guidance in reaction to high profile child deaths - only to see them heavily revised or abolished before they are integrated and evaluated fully - merely reaps further criticism about the ineffectiveness of the publicly funded social care system. Rather than being realistic about the limitations of the state, constant revision runs the risk of making practitioners and the wider public interpret the role to be inadequate and unfit for purpose because the goals are wholly unachievable. Dialogues about austerity can be conflated with this. Whilst some view this process to be a deliberate ideological part of Conservative plans to privatise health and social care (El-Gingihy, 2015), it remains an irony that change-orientated goals are co-constructed with service-users (at the point of intervention) but the goals of the discipline are set from the top-down. In my view, and echoing the motivation for undertaking this PhD, research by social work practitioner-researchers can help re-set the narrative (Orme & Powell, 2007).

The future may show greater collaboration between researchers, service-providers and policy makers to be the most effective way to tackle health and social inequalities by building more realistic experiences into planning (Whiteside, 2004). However, the fragmentation of services (and their associated aims) due to competitively tendered budgets may present obstacles to this. Disintegrating resources and the ongoing lack of practitioner consultation with government can be met with counter-narratives about the role of the social worker. As a result of sustained attacks on its tasks and its value in recent years, the current call to radical action is helpfully understood as a part of a longer struggle located in the history of the occupation. This history charts the struggles of the most marginalised members of society at any single moment. There is an agenda for social work beyond the existing pattern of reactionary responses to the most tragic of cases but it is currently a minority account.

3.5.Chapter summary and context.

This chapter looked at the way social work emerged from philanthropy, at a time when the welfare state was not yet developed in the UK. Chapter three introduced a brief overview of early key moments in the relatively new discipline of social work in the UK. It has illustrated

the durability of tensions in a discipline embodying disparate and conflicting themes, approaches and critique. In this, the centrality of the high-profile abused child in the public consciousness may function in the same way as atrocity stories (Bromley & Shupe, 1979). Alongside this, surveillance and confidentiality were considered to be key dimensions of the learning culture associated with children's safeguarding practice. Since the Children Act 1989, huge transformation in the legal frameworks providing the authority to act may have reduced the meaningfulness of guidance and policy for social workers. That is, it was suggested that understanding has been hampered by both the volume and lack of clarity of change.

Chapter three argued that regulatory structures in the field have unhelpfully conflated need and risk so that certain children and childhoods receive much more professional scrutiny than others. The oppressive implications of the situation were reflected upon. It was discussed that much of the critique and analysis about decision-making in child protection social work has suggested that a risk-averse culture does not make children safer. However, more recent changes arising from the Munro reviews have placed greater value on interpersonal skill and less prescriptive assessment formats.

Whilst the capacity of state social workers to change policy from the ground appears to be overemphasised at the current time, chapter four moves on to discuss existing debate about the impact of delivering and receiving this reactionary and insecure way of working. It builds on chapter three's macro-focus by introducing the micro-level of relationships and interpersonal dynamics within the TAF. Collaboration is a legal duty where there is a safeguarding concern in relation to a child. It is emphasised that social work is a practice of collaboration and risk management, but that policy falls short when detailing how this work is *actually done*. The large amount of unpredictability and uncertainty present in TAFs is argued to be exacerbated by the emotional content of the issues, austerity and competing goals of TAF members. Locality factors and the involvement of service-users in the decisions made about them is also discussed in chapter four with a view to building on knowledge about the legal framework that children's safeguarding practice is founded on.

Chapter four. The multidisciplinary team around the family.

> Over-proceduralisation squeezes out professional practice, judgement and accountability and ownership of actions.
>
> Department for Education (2014:9).

> Too much is expected of social workers. We load upon them unrealistic expectations and then complain when they do not live up to them. Social work is a relatively young profession. It has grown rapidly as the flow of legislation has greatly increased the range and complexity of its work
>
> Barclay Report (1982: pvii).

4.1. Introduction.

4.1.1. Tensions in social work.

Social work as a profession has a number of contentions at the heart of practice (Beresford, 2005) but policy ultimately asserts that it should be collaborative in character. This chapter sets out both the context of this research and the arrangements that TAF work takes place in. TAFs may be arranged for different reasons depending on a range of factors (including the local authority they are set in) but the aim of work undertaken within them is the same – to promote the wellbeing of young people and their families, and facilitate safe care. It is the multidisciplinary, multi-agency TAF that is the site of children's social work - meetings take place in accordance with the legal framework of the time.

TAF meetings are therefore the point at which the assessment-plan-monitoring-review social work cycle is organised. Qualifying and newly qualified professionals are socialised into a culture in which risk-management discourses create a space for social workers to be agents of the local authority rather than independent advocates for children (Dalrymple, 2004). Social workers tend to be lead professionals in safeguarding but negative stereotyping may act as a barrier to effective and timely collaboration (Holt & Lawler, 2005). This is exacerbated by differences of style between practitioners which has been attributed to unclear protocols and the influence of occupational and agency ideologies (Bourassa et. al., 2008). Similarly,

popular ways of working (such as delivering care in institutions rather than the community, for instance) may persist due to assumptions in the language of marginalisation and deviancy rather than any rigorous evaluation of success. Taken together, the situation is complex and troubled.

TAF members are the individuals who contribute to the wellbeing and care needs of young people. They may include social workers, health visitors, educators, advocates, foster carers, professionals in law enforcement at any one moment. TAF teams form when a safeguarding or child protection concern is being managed through policy and procedures outlined in the Children Act, and all the relevant people in the child's life may be involved. This chapter explores how different disciplinary and training cultures shape and organise the interaction between members of health and social care teams. Collaboration and interdisciplinary working is widely accepted to be the optimal approach to achieving safeguarding goals and targets (Holt & Lawler, 2005) but it faces significant constraints including poorly integrated learning curriculums across health and social care (Anderson, Smith & Hammick, 2016). Chapter four considers the literature about group decision-making processes and the role of power in the positioning of service-users as decision makers. The different conceptual resources of health and social care team members (arising in part from their different training backgrounds) is discussed along with the influence of locality factors on the experience of family life.

This chapter also suggests that learning culture and acknowledgement of the unrealistic expectations made of social work are crucial to achieving a more transparent and less defensive approach to understanding team work. It is argued that research into *everyday practice* (as well as in cases where serious incidents have taken place) is valuable at this stage in the story of British social work. It is argued that the tradition of non-consultative top-down change is compounded by the influence of highly polarised media narratives. This firmly established state paternalism is presented to inhibit creative, critical thinking in practice in favour of defensiveness. As a result, decision-making is less effective and less powerful when seeking to deliver the goals of policy. This has the undesirable counter-effect of adversely impacting the quality of services designed to protect children.

4.1.2. The dynamics of multidisciplinary collaboration.

The concept of multidisciplinary working is an ambiguous term that has been defined in various ways by different authors. This has meant that it has been used interchangeably with other descriptions – such as 'interdisciplinary working', for example. Despite difficulties operationalising concepts, interdisciplinary practice is a key part of the Children Act. Perhaps usefully, Carrier & Kendall (1995) suggest that interdisciplinary collaboration implies;

> A willingness to share and indeed give up exclusive claims to specialist knowledge and authority, if the needs of clients can be met more effectively by other professional groups.
>
> Carrier & Kendall (1995: 10).

Collaboration also is a variably defined construct. Hornby & Atkins (2000:12) offer a definition in terms of

> A relationship between two or more people, groups or organisations working together to define and achieve a common purpose.

Others such as Courtney & Craig (2004) suggest that there is a continuum of low to high levels of collaboration ranging across coexistence, networking, coordination, cooperation, collaboration and finally partnership. Both of these definitions present the reader with the possibility of interpreting collaborative styles and effectiveness in transient and fluid terms, contextualised by multiple factors (including team composition and the nature of group goals). Interagency collaboration in child protection has been problematic from its earliest formalisation (Reder, Duncan & Gray, 1993; Milbourne, Macrea & Maguire, 2003) and it is widely accepted that collaborative safeguarding practice is subject to a number of problems (Richardson & Asthana, 2006). Interdisciplinary collaboration is a key area of concern for policy makers and professionals alike in the current socio-political climate (Watkin, Lindqvist, Black & Watts, 2009) because research indicates that effective working can promote the positive developmental outcomes of children identified to be being in need of provision (Bledsoe et. al., 2007; Appleton & Stanley, 2009). The huge number of independent and dependent variables make attempts to empirically evaluate collaborative

processes difficult, and this complexity presents a particular challenge to researchers orientated towards positivist models.

Understanding how individuals interpret and negotiate their situated experience is useful but studies focusing on integrated working tend to examine selected professional and service-user groups in isolation – that is, a comparative analysis is missing. An example of this is provided by Harlow & Blackburn's (2007) research which explored foster carers' unique perspectives about their role and how they manage issues such as financial arrangements and training. Foster carers do not make decisions alone and they form part of a team which includes the young person, their family and social workers (to name a few). Some authors such as Huxham & Macdonald (1992) argue that there are dangers associated with this 'organisational individualism' including a lack of common goals, conflicting targets, inefficiencies through redundant work practices and the omission of important tasks between agencies. Those who do not participate in TAFs and who rely on current research may be forgiven for seeing the work of children's safeguarding to be conducted in a fragmented way.

Capturing collaborative experience across different professional and service-user groups on a case-by-case basis in the current research allowed integrated analysis of data in the same study. Different perspectives are associated with particular professions, just as families can negotiate their experiences of intervention in complex and unique ways (Spratt & Devaney, 2009). The language and approaches characterising children's social work are sometimes at odds with open engagement. For instance, women who are the victims of partner violence often act in ways to protect their children but risks associated with leaving abusive partners can leave them described to be 'failing to protect' in documentation (Nixon, Bonnycastle & Ens, 2017). Accordingly, different professionals and family members can have varying expectations and feelings of resistance about safeguarding processes.

Varying subjective expectations impact on decision-making and role conceptualisation (Watson, 2002; Harlow & Blackburn, 2007). If group processes are effective, then a team may be more productive and more able to achieve the goals it sets for itself. In fact, the range of innovative interventions generated by a team has been shown to grow with variety of members' professional background in Breast Care and Primary Health (Fay et. al., 2006). However, the effectiveness of innovative interventions (in terms rated by patients) was

influenced by factors such as the extent team members felt listened to, high levels of interaction, and a sense of a common cause. It is worth noting that the cross-sectional methodology may have encouraged conflation between successful interventions and a more positive perception of the team but the idea that outcomes are influenced by team dynamics is interesting and useful. In a business example, Peterson et. al. (1998) used the Organisational Group Dynamics Q-sort with seven Fortune 500 businesses to compare successful and unsuccessful teams (as determined by their own goals). Decision-making processes appeared to be linked to the outcomes *experienced by the group.* In other words, objective measures set by policy can seem abstract and disjointed from the lived experience of actual work undertaken.

4.1.3. A legal duty to collaborate.

Collaboration in safeguarding and child protection is required by law. Section 11 of the Children Act (2004) places a duty on organisations in the UK to work together to safeguard children and young people. This stipulates appropriate information sharing should take place alongside an approach that facilitates the statutory cycle of assessment, planning, intervention, monitoring and review. That collaboration is a part of the law, however, does not mean that expectations are straightforward or clear. Social class, culture and geography are all factors that influence decisions about risk and whether or not a 'threshold' has been reached. Gaps in inter-agency knowledge and planning are consistently identified to be important lessons from investigations into child deaths. In other words, working together successfully is recognised to be important but it is also difficult to achieve.

Chapter three highlighted that thresholds actually overlap and this can lead to young people and their families becoming subject to more than one multi-agency plan during periods of transition or complex presentation. Collaborating in this multifaceted, multi-goal way is again compounded by the different categories of harm that exist and the fact that they can be reached simultaneously and in parallel. As already discussed, Every Child Matters generated the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for allied professionals such as teachers and health professionals to take the lead on the task of coordinating support for families where concerns did not traverse the threshold for Child in Need involvement (and specialist intervention). Drawing on the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, early intervention with vulnerable children and families was intended to prevent

crisis point intervention at a later stage (Department of Health, 2006). The thresholds for the CAF, section 17 (safeguarding) and section 47 (child protection) and care proceedings imply that children could move across this continuum and not really 'fit' in any, so they do not get the best provision associated with any category for at least some of the time (Pugh, 2007).

In this research, difficulties emerging from thresholds were compounded by the economic and political context. Across the period of time that focus groups, Q-sorts and interviews were undertaken, the local authority was reorganising the way services were delivered as a result of cuts to local government budgets from the Con-Lib austerity agenda (Garrett, 2016). Prior to cuts, specialist provision under children's services was organised by social workers, managers and assistants based in the community hubs. Access to services was tiered so that initial referrals were received by a telephone triage team that had the capacity to give advice and close the case, follow-up concerns with a face-to-face visit and/or transfer it to a waiting list for allocation in a locality team. Once awaiting allocation, safeguarding teams completed work under section 17 (safeguarding) or section 37 (child protection) of the Children Act.

The local authority structure was reorganised into multidisciplinary hubs by the time participant contact was made in this research. The composition of teams had radically changed - with family workers, Think Family workers, education welfare officers, youth workers, youth advisors, health visitors, school nurses, resilience workers, support workers and wellbeing for life workers (to name a few) making up the teams. Subsequently, a greater proportion of team members were not formally qualified or externally regulated. It meant that staffing costs reduced and role specialism increased, as community sites were identified to serve as single points of access for a range of early intervention needs. The research therefore took place as changes were coming into force.

4.1.4. Uncertainty and unpredictability.

Research focused on authentic TAF functioning is minimal for understandable reasons. They can form quickly in response to an unexpected or unplanned need (say, if a young person makes a disclosure of harm). Similarly, uncertainty and unpredictability is added to by changing team composition as agencies become involved (or exit) dependent on the needs identified through TAF meetings over time. These needs can relate directly and/or indirectly to the young person – through unmet needs in family members, the identified skill sets of

professionals or the dynamics of the group. This fluidity of membership and the changeability of the tasks in the TAF contribute to practical and methodological difficulties in capturing them. These difficulties are amplified by strict confidentiality laws and gatekeepers within and across agencies. When the constantly changing legal framework (as outlined in the previous chapter) is factored in, the ability of researchers to capture the workings of TAFs is clearly more suited to in-depth qualitative analysis at this point in the literature.

The same complexity that makes transparency in research about TAF work difficult to achieve also brings strengths to practice. The relational character of the connections between TAF members and group tasks are unique and specific - although action is absolutely connected to discourses outside of the TAF, the value of how issues (and their solutions) are co-constructed is helpfully viewed with TAF players in sharp focus. This point is further highlighted when consideration is given to alternative models. For example, having a 'board' of fixed team members for all children in a certain area is constrained in its ability to bring situated day-to-day knowledge of young people and their families to decision-making. In other words, a fixed team approach may bring stability to group membership but would also mean that young people and their families would be less likely to be assessed by people who knew them in an everyday, 'common-sensical' way. In other words, the effective TAF is transient by nature rather than generic or fixed.

The organisational structure of local authorities, other agencies and families is also fluid in character – not only responding to cost-cutting reorganisations but to developments in how effective working is constructed. In terms of interpersonal relationships between TAF members, the development of an identity tied to group membership can be equally temporary and transient – especially when interdisciplinary politics or personal views may be in conflict with the concerns leading to the safeguarding referral in the first place. This can be problematic because mutual trust and respect between health and social care team members may not always have time to develop (Milbourne et. al., 2003) - perhaps creating an adversarial, defensive tone to work. It may also leave TAF members relying on faulty assumptions (as opposed to personal knowledge and experience) about particular individuals. Whether variation is due to individual and/or organisational factors, changing decision-

making forces and alternative claims to knowledge can create tension and exacerbate existing strains (Huxham & Vaugen, 2000).

In order to efficiently negotiate the huge array of policies and procedures relevant to children's safeguarding, young people may be allocated to different social work teams according to their circumstances, legal status, age and current local (or national) legislation and guidance. For example, a young person may initially be allocated to a social worker in an early intervention team where the policy and procedures relevant to practice in this context would be undertaken under section 17 of the Children Act. A referral might be an anonymous report about late night parties in the family home that contributes to a picture of chaotic care, for example. However, if concerns escalated to the threshold of child protection (section 47) following assessment and analysis – perhaps young people themselves had become intoxicated at the parties - they may be transferred to a social worker on a team specialising in this work. Similarly, if remaining in family care became unsafe (if, for example, concerns continued despite a child protection plan) and the young person entered Looked After care, they may transfer to another team, and once they turned 25, they would also become a 'care leaver'. Different teams (depending on the local authority) may handle each of these different points in a young person's life in alternate ways – even though the same child was the focus of them all. That is, varying leadership styles from social workers in different teams is not the only challenge – they may actually be operating under different sections of an evolving legal framework, and with alternative approaches (as a result of differentiated funding arrangements, caselaw and/or cultures). Whilst this research is focused on the situation in England, variation across the jurisdictions of the UK varies, adding another dimension to work (Bunting et. al., 2018; McGhee et. al., 2018).

Representation from other agencies also changes (for instance, in school, class teachers generally change every academic year) providing another test for continuity. When chaotic family care arrangements, changes of foster placement and general staff turnover are also factored into the situation, a child living in the same geographical area may not experience a great deal of stability in one of the key decision-making forums of their life. To illustrate the point, on one occasion in my experience as a practitioner, it became evident that a seven year-old had been allocated 17 social workers over the previous five years of his life – including two occasions when I had been allocated (in alternative roles, in different teams). This

highlights how the different levels and sub-systems within a TAF influence decision-making in complicated ways (Horwath & Morrison, 2007). The numbers of people who have the opportunity to scrutinise the 'safeguarding journey' of a child and their family can become very large indeed and raises questions about the ethics of involvement.

The complexity alluded to above is not captured well by approaches in positivist traditions and chapter five sets out that interpretivism presents a way of organising enquiry that is more suitable to this field. Q-methodology is able to engage with multiple and individual experiences of TAFs. Unlike the vast majority of existing research in children's social work, using Q-methodology in the context of a TAF is an innovative way to understand individual perspectives from the position that participants adopt *relative to each other*. Q's emphasis on subjectivity highlights that an analysis of human experience must take account of the unique positioning of social actors. For example, existing literature shows that variables such as practitioner flexibility influences how effectively families negotiate and interpret safeguarding services (Washington, 2008) – illustrating how increased understanding of perceptions between collaborators can be useful in challenging potentially detrimental service assumptions (Bracken & Fischel, 2006).

4.1.5. Co-constructing casework in a multidisciplinary team.

Negotiating the point at which thresholds of intervention should be initiated amid this unpredictability presents TAF members with an emotionally demanding range of options. The difficulty of working with vulnerable families with often complex and competing areas of need does not marry up with common expectations that social workers *should* be able to predict and intervene in young people's lives at a point that prevents theoretical risks becoming actual harm (Stanford, 2010). This highlights the value of researching the dynamics of casework in a locality team at an interpersonal level (rather than from an organisational perspective). Research of this kind is arguably a move away from *experimentalist* evidence-based practice in the discipline - which may not always be appropriately suited to actual ways of working (Van de Luitgaarden, 2009) because families with multiple and complex 'problems' are unlikely to be deproblematised in a meaningful way by short-term interventions (Cleaver & Freeman, 1995; Spratt & Devaney, 2009).

The way a social worker explains a particular case can be conceived of as an act of knowledge creation. Workers are cultural agents and as such are part of the stories and narratives that are enacted and documented in assessments. Social workers have limited time to evaluate case characteristics, possible causal explanations of identified problems and set out interventions in complex and often contradictory circumstances (Keddell, 2011). Finding a consensus is not always achievable. Contestation about the meanings assigned to parental behaviour, for example, by workers in child protection processes are often a source of debate and conflict in TAFs (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 1998). Differences of opinion may also be amplified by different language and terminology between professionals which presents another level of re-interpretation when identifying group goals (Huxham & Vaugen, 2000). That is, individual team members mediate their responses in the context of shifting inter-professional politics and broader dialogues in society (Jones, 2014). Accordingly, the interaction of inter-and intra-agency functioning is an important dimension to appreciating the nature of collaboration in children's safeguarding. This area is currently under-researched (Dyson, Lim & Millward, 1998) but multidisciplinary teams co-construct many aspects of the TAF, making it a crucial dimension to children's safeguarding.

One of the main stories that impact social work is the construction of a user-provider dichotomy. Despite the implication of choice and active engagement, service-*users* often acquire their title involuntarily. It is not surprising to note that sometimes social work practice is at odds with the wishes and feelings of family members in TAFs who object to involvement in their own, and their children's, lives. Service-users tend to arrive at TAFs through adverse life circumstances and are frequently involuntary recipients - young people have less opportunity to negotiate involvement because the Children Act makes them *subject* to intervention due to their age or legal status. This can become an objectifying and dehumanising experience (Lister, 2007) – a form of institutional harm. The impact of this is not to be underestimated because 'doublethink' in the language of practice (through the non-consensual customer) may create resentment and mistrust. As such, compliance can be misinterpreted to be engagement, and non-compliance to be hostility. Coerced involvement can lead to resistance, even in subtle ways.

Policy sets out the advantages of collaboration but does not address how power pervades the field. Attempts to demystify collaboration are missing from the focus of audits and research

despite the availability of good practice examples of what might work. Instead, the paternalistic agenda of government to evaluate its narrow interests neglects the nuanced emotional tasks in TAFs. Without mechanisms from those in the profession to shape the learning culture once graduates are qualified, the concerns of people in TAFs are invisible beyond them. Therefore, integration of researchers, service-providers and policy makers is crucial for progressive action (Whiteside, 2004). Whilst the advantages of collaboration for members of multidisciplinary teams might include peer review and shared responsibility for decision-making, it is not an automatically effective or helpful process. Ideally, staff can develop skills through good practice guidance and situated interaction (Webb & Vulliamy, 2001) to produce a co-ordinated service response to service-user need and organisational pressure (Ovretveit, 1996). However, the blurring of professional roles, poorly distributed task load and interpersonal tensions can be counteractive.

4.2.The current context.

4.2.1. Social work in a time of austerity.

At the time this research was completed, health and social care in the UK faced additional pressure after the worldwide fiscal crisis of 2007. As mentioned in chapter three, the Social Work Reform Board was brought about by the coalition government in order to implement the 15 recommendations of the Social Work Taskforce. Many roles and services were reorganised, with limited resources channelled into early intervention. In other words, provisions were rationalised in most areas apart from preventation. Crisis-driven practice has been found to reduce the opportunity for work with abusive and/or neglectful parents/carers, which subsequently reduces the benefits of intervention for the young people concerned (Thomson & Thorpe, 2004). However, the focus on preventative practice meant that there was a time lag in seeing the effect of early help on later need. Those *currently* in crisis would be hugely disadvantaged. Mirroring changes to services for adults, children's social work appears to be increasingly characterised by the commission of competitively tendered services from not-for-profit and third sector organisations in a mixed service economy. Framing young service-users and their families to be customers more plainly places them in the position of being stakeholders, but the benefits of this are only apparent if involvement is not tokenistic and an approach of cultural humility is preserved (Hook et. al., 2013). Cultural humility centralises service-users to be experts in the construction of their life story. It

implies that social workers (at *all stages* of their career) are perpetually learning as part of being embedded socio-cultural actors.

Even prior to the austere public spending cuts, Calder (2003) suggested that time constraints impaired the opportunity to foster helpful rapport with service-users so that families felt valued and listened to. Reformed market forces and the drive for efficiency restructured and reshaped how and when safeguarding actors communicated within newly commissioned relationships (both within and outside of social work). Budget cuts led to staff redundancy, service reorganisation and limited opportunities for staff to train, develop and progress. Cuts to allied services increased pressure on service-users and providers alike, which perhaps restricted the capacity of individuals to resist or challenge changes arising from austerity. This includes changes that compromised personal values at a time when stress and demands on personal coping strategies were high. Resistance against the changes came in different forms – including in a British Association of Social Workers campaign. The foreword to the Campaign Action Pack was composed by Ken Loach, director of social issue movies such as 'Cathy Come Home' (1966) and 'I, Daniel Blake' (2016).

> The wickedness of this situation is that this suffering is not necessary. It is a conscious choice by a government run in the interests of the ruling class. As the number of those living below the poverty line rises, so does the wealth of a small minority, hidden, we have just learned, in tax havens so they can dodge tax.
>
> Loach (2018: 4).

One example of resistance was demonstrated by a teacher who was involved in a TAF that I was leading prior to this research. The teacher explained that when she was frustrated by being told that the threshold for child in need involvement had not been reached in work with young people through the CAF, she would make a call expressing elevated but *anonymous* concerns. This then necessitated the duty for assessment, bypassing the organisational pathways for smooth transitions across thresholds of need. This echoes Department for Education findings that young people would more often have a referral about them escalated to assessment if information had been received over the phone or from face-to-face discussion. Their research was based on 49,000 young people across three different English

local authorities, which meant that information was in dissimilar forms and detailed referral data was absent. However,

> the lower referral rate for written referrals could have at least two possible explanations. The effect could be on social worker decision-making at the point of referral, with written referrals carrying less weight or capturing less attention from busy staff. Equally, they could be artefacts of the decisions made by referrers themselves – with referrers picking up the phone when they have serious concerns, and saving email referrals for cases they are less immediately concerned about. Without further research, we are unable to identify which of these is driving the relationship we observe.
>
> Department of Health (2017: 5).

Whilst resistance can be much more subtle than a teacher making anonymous allegations about her students (and claiming it to be an act of defiance against protocol), it is arguable that when there are threats to professional identity, behaviour in collaborative TAFs may change. Clashes within teams have been found to be associated with each profession's distinguishing perceptions and outlook (Leidtka & Whitten, 1998) and the emotional labour involved with delivering the goals of social work is exacerbated during austerity. A consciousness about the current strains on relationships has other implications. For example, direct self-report measures in research (or in practice) may be less likely to elicit the honest views of participants – thereby making approaches such as Q-methodology useful.

Post-hoc analysis of the tragic SCR exemplifies the disciplining approach associated with learning lessons in social work. However, reports from LSCBs across the country have been criticised for the highly variable *quality* of recommendations emerging from SCRs (Stevenson, 2014). More effective professional collaboration is often cited but the transparency of what this means can be blurred by excessive use of jargon, a lack of focus on the child's perspective and a failure to consider the reasons for poor decision-making (such as fear and exhaustion). Indeed, as Sharon Shoesmith (former head of service in Haringey) offered;

> Until they engage with the function of emotion and affect, SCRs cannot succeed as a learning tool. They are too often a proxy for blame and a form of defence for society… It is the social work profession itself that must take the lead. The task is to cease to allow the profession to be cast as the 'lame duck' or the 'psychic retreat' for society's lack of courage.
>
> Shoesmith (2014: 21).

4.2.2. The role of emotion and burnout.

Research studies have shown that social workers tend to come to training with the hope of making a meaningful and positive difference – often conceptualised in humanitarian and ethical terms (Jack & Donnellan, 2010). However, optimism about the potential of 'the system' to facilitate progressive change tends to diminish over time (Maben et. al., 2007). Although emotional labour is often accepted to be part of decision-making in the role (Moesby-Jensen & Nielen, 2015), the emotional impact of working in the field can contribute to burnout which is depicted by a loss of faith in the capacity for progressive change (Maslach et. al., 2001). Having noted this, some early career social workers are relatively less certain about future goals and commitment to the profession than others - highlighting individual factors in feelings about work in the field (Smith et. al.., 2018).

Emotion influences all aspects of decision-making (Wagaman et. al., 2015) but preferences for procedural and technical knowledge make it a taken-for-granted aspect of work. Situating emotion to be a difficulty within certain 'pathological individuals' can lead to organisations that tend to respond discompassionately and in a blaming way to normative human emotional expression. The role of emotion (especially fear) in safeguarding work is equally important in understanding how *good* practice happens as well as how SCRs emerge (Gibson, 2016). Whether it is acknowledged or not, the impact of emotion is profound. In other words, emotion (and the coping strategies associated with it) directly impacts behaviour and decision-making. As Trevithick noted (whilst employing psychoanalysis to explore the psychological defences used by workers in child protection) individuals enact certain practices to protect themselves from anxiety-provoking behaviours, thoughts and feelings (2011: 391). Similar results were noted by Whittaker (2011) who drew on Menzies Lyth's

(1959) study about psychological defences in nurses, although the complexity of individual defence mechanisms was not explored.

Emotional labour is an under-researched and under-valued aspect of practice, with areas such as compassion fatigue and occupational stress minimally factored into training and professional development programmes, despite its importance (Moesby-Jensen & Nielen, 2015). Removing children from a parent or carer without consent, for example, is likely to leave all involved with a complex mix of emotions including anger and guilt. It raises profound ethical issues for practitioners who seek to create circumstances that can empower service-users and their families, but experience secondary trauma from involvement with *both* children and their parents/carers (Jones, 2000). In children's safeguarding, errors are given disproportionate attention when serious consequences arise – as in the case of SCRs. The culture of fear and blame does not facilitate the emotionally and morally complex task of working with the most vulnerable and socially excluded people in society. Given this, the threat of criminalisation and prison sentences of up to five years already discussed is unlikely to facilitate open and honest communication (Stevenson, 2015). In allied services such as the NHS, the need for compassionate conversations and safe spaces to express emotion have been recognised and implemented through, for example, structured peer group reflective supervision, protected time for informal 'tea and chats' and Schwartz Rounds (Robert et. al., 2017; Hughes et. al., 2017). Schwartz Rounds were set up by Ken Schwartz in the US. Diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, he noticed that the staff caring for him experienced few occasions to express the emotional impact of their work. Rounds permit this, and the chance to experience kindness and compassion, in a structured way.

Compassion fatigue, or burnout, has been noted in people who experience trauma and those who work with or support those who have experienced trauma – such as professionals in helping roles (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006). This includes social workers (Travis, Lizano & Mor Barak, 2016) and more specifically, child protection workers (Anderson, 2000). Symptoms in affected individuals include anxiety, depression and sleeplessness (Cerney, 1995). As a social worker by background, Ferguson researched defence mechanisms of staff in Haringey council following Victoria's death to demonstrate that the culture of children's social work teams heavily featured staff burnout (Ferguson, 2011). Using an ethnographical approach, a "hostile team culture" (2011:134), in which members of

staff learned how to cope with abusive behaviour, was found. Organisations should do more to tip the balance in favour of care, rather than control, of its social workers.

Working with traumatised individuals, families and communities influences relationships outside of the work context, as well as within it. Wu & Pooler (2014) echo this, finding that the social work professional identity impacts of all facets of personality. For example, social workers may be relatively more susceptible to developing an identity linked to being a caregiver of others rather than of themselves. Authors found distress increased exponentially with stronger caregiver identities, but this was mediated through social support and self-esteem. This illustrates that trauma can be 'contagious' and can adversely impact relationships in personal and professional spheres. Therefore, the role of emotion and of empathy is vital to explaining and understanding TAF experience for social workers, other professionals and family members.

Empathy is an esteemed characteristic that is associated with much pro-social, valued human behaviour (Baron-Cohen, 2011). Empathy is associated with reduced service-user worry, and enhanced trust and engagement with services (van Ryn et. al., 2014; Stanley & Bhuvaneswari, 2016). It has also been noted to play a role in reducing child maltreatment (Rodriquez, 2013) and promoting psychosocial development for Looked After young people (Farmer & Lippold, 2016). However, it is widely agreed that those who engage with greater empathy are at greater risk of internalising others' emotional distress (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006) making emotional attunement a 'double-edged sword'.

Emotion and empathy are not straightforward skills that can be mastered in the same way that technical knowledge can. Given the conflicts in its theoretical and value base, it can be argued that the site of social work – interpersonal engagement – does not permit honest, meaningful relationship formation. This is because professional frameworks (interwoven with the notion of a non-judgemental, value-neutral stance) are in conflict with relationship-based, professional judgements (which invoke reference to socio-cultural norms; Howe, 1998). In other words, the official stance is juxtaposed with the reality that practitioners must not only be aware of judgements and values, but *actively reinforce* them in order to seek change (Clark, 2004). The social constructivist perspective presented in this research

provides a framework that challenges the idea that any action can be meaningfully explained without reference to the process of co-construction within a particular culture.

The idea that honest engagement is an active process directly influenced the development of the research. Researchers and practitioners have an ethical responsibility to be critically aware of the impact their actions and the 'products' of collaborative work (such as assessment documents from practice or publications from research) have. Accordingly, producing action (or 'things') is tied to when and where they were created. For this research, therefore, my personal and professional relationships were relevant. Neutrality is impossible but reflection of it can aid transparency. In an example about a social worker undertaking doctoral studies, Etherington notes;

> There is a danger that we report the voices of participants, either as powerless victims incapable of acts of resistance or as heroic stories of innocents who have overcome powerful destructive forces. The difficulty might be in maintaining a balance that acknowledges that we are all capable of being victims *and* perpetrators and that these are not positions to be judged, but rather to be seen as adaptive to circumstance that evoke those roles and behaviours.
>
> Etherington (2004: 210).

The extract emphasises some of the emotional complexity involved with reflexivity in research that seeks authenticity. In other words, knowledge construction is actively collaborative, and interpretations must be critically explored to understand how they arise (Hertz, 1995). Theoretically, true collaboration brings equity to the different forms of expert status but mirroring interpretations back to participants is helpful. In applied practice and research, this brings a degree of emotional exposure, along with a commitment to make changes if required. The anthropologist Ruth Behar offers that witnessing the world can be evoked more genuinely by writing from a personal perspective but that;

> the worst that can happen in an invulnerable text is that it will be boring. But when an author has made herself or himself vulnerable, the stakes are higher: a

> boring self-revelation, one that fails to move the reader, is more than embarrassing; it is humiliating.
>
> (Behar, 1996: 13).

These same responsibilities are brought to the social worker in collaboration with service-users. Dissemination of my research diary is limited as a result of the need to reduce data into the chapters of this thesis, but it is noted elsewhere that reflective diaries in portfolios are part of the qualifying criteria for social work students (Vinjamuri et. al., 2017). As a practice educator of students on placement, diary writing in this way is a skill that often takes time to nurture (Walker, Crawford & Parker, 2008: 34) but is simultaneously a useful way to organise emotional responses to the typically controversial content of the work.

4.3.The limits of working together.

4.3.1. Engaging with families.

The privileged knowledge attributed to social workers to assess parenting capacity has been critiqued in different ways but the idea that the behaviour of parents directly influences the wellbeing of children is the starting point for the justification of intervention. The notion that seeking to change parental behaviour can lead to important improvements in children's behaviour, wellbeing and safety has existed for a long time (Golding, 2000). However, determining the nature of ideal outcomes for young people, which parenting approaches achieve this and how to change 'Other' parenting styles to this is not straightforward. There are so many contentions, complexities and variables that the only idea that is clear is that one size does not fit all. However, the lack of an accepted recipe means that some approaches can be oppressive *and* justifiable in equal measure. In this way, it is my view that social workers are ethically compelled to query taken-for-granted truths.

Ferguson (2011) and others suggest that writing in social work could do more to evoke the lived experience of service-users, and that assessments should story the lives of those discussed. There has been growing support for this idea because ethical and safe dissemination of experience is crucial to developing provisions that are in tune with the needs and wishes of those receiving them. The challenges to achieving this are widely acknowledged. Social work caseloads are high, funding for non-statutory activity is minimal

and the literature suggests there is a culture of risk-avoidance that constrains transparency. Research is especially valuable and important in this area because it has the potential to be transformatory – not least because strengthening the link between policy and practice necessitates stakeholder involvement.

Engaging families in processes they may not wish to receive is a key dilemma that the reflective account can illuminate. For example, Davies, a mother who experienced a child protection investigation (following an unexplained injury on her son) considered the process to be very negative, suggesting that power was not balanced with compassion (2010:8). Her account showed how the experience of assessment compounded her feelings of distress about the injury on her child. Reflecting on this, TAF meetings could be a crisis event in themselves - perhaps even exacerbating original concerns in the referral (Lammers & Happell, 2003). In other words, social work involvement brings additional issues of powerless, shame and isolation that may further multiply the barriers parents feel about professional intervention.

Despite challenges, accounts of the importance of including people in decision-making about services they access are compelling (Tyler, 2006). Further, families may be more willing than might be expected to participate - as Ghaffer, Manby & Race (2012) found when they looked at 42 families' experiences of being subject to child protection in the north of England. However, increasing calls for service-user participation have been hampered by the struggle to pin down conceptually what it actually means (Forbes & Sashidharan, 1997). It has been used to represent a variety of things including manipulation by providers to full control from users. There is also no clear agreement about the most appropriate method of promoting service-user involvement but commentators tend to agree there is a continuum. Allain et. al. (2006), for example, drew on Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation to interpret a university programme that incorporated service-users to think about the extent of inclusivity. Arnstein's ladder describes non-participation (manipulation and therapy), degrees of tokenism (informing, consultation and placation) and citizen power (partnership, delegatory and citizen control; Arnstein, 1971; cited in Allain et. al., 2006).

In practice, services are beginning to embrace the concept of experts-by-experience. Integrating experts-by-experience has the potential to benefit practitioners and service-users

alike because their presence has the capacity to start a dialogue about their concerns within organisations (Videmšek, 2017). However, embracing user involvement in practice tends to be superseded by the critique of the quality of participation itself – as well as scepticism about the value of it (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). For example, the literature about participation on training programmes tends to minimise the influence of structural factors as opposed to local or individual constraints (McDaid, 2009). Authors such as Manthorpe (2000) advocate incorporating lived experiences into training programmes to avoid pathologising service-users into types or creating a user-provider dichotomy. She suggests three models for involving experiences of carers into the training of social workers including personal testimony (sharing autobiographical experience), employing carers as co-trainers (such as expert-by-experience presentations) and using course students' own experience and personal biography.

Service-user involvement can be further restricted by the ability to establish appropriate forums, facilitate agreeable organisational climates and support service-user capacity. Whatever the reasons, particular service-users tend to be less involved than others. Participation of fathers tends to be far less than that of mothers in safeguarding processes, for example, but the explanation for this is complex and traverses individual, family, community, policy and organisation levels (Gordon et. al., 2012). Understanding this is further complicated by the competing methodological approaches utilised to evaluate user empowerment (Forbes & Sashidharan, 1997).

As well as the barriers that differential power presents in partnership working, care sector professionals have also witnessed increased fragmentation and individualisation of service delivery. So, whilst involvement has appeared to gradually embrace the conception of an empowered service-user who is able to intervene and shape provision (from a simplistic, bureaucratic role), participation has been critically discussed in terms of increased marketisation (Carey, 2009). Direct payments of social care budgets have been cited to be an example of this. Marketised participation exemplifies the primary goal of reducing operational costs to agencies, at the same time as promoting the organisational profile. Therefore, as a result of their superficiality, direct payments fall short of delivering full and equitable engagement.

4.3.2. Competing and conflicting goals of agencies.

One of the key barriers to achieving family-centred effective collaboration may be managing the sometimes competing and/or conflicting goals of agencies (even though the Children Act stipulates that the welfare of the child is paramount in law; Scott, 2005). There are many examples of this (Reder et. al., 1993) but Victoria Climbié's case emphasises how inter-agency collaboration between a children's safeguarding team and the Border Agency was problematic because the goal of securing political borders conflicted with the need to safeguard any person aged under 18 years old in the UK. The narrative of a foreign child with questionable rights to remain in the country was highlighted by Laming to be an unhelpful missed opportunity to promote her safety.

Kemshall & McIvor (2004) suggest that collaborative working may be a means for some agencies to avoid taking ownership or responsibility for leading on tasks, thereby reducing the likelihood of adverse associations with poor outcomes in the media and public consciousness. Hallett & Birchall (1992) noted a range of interagency tensions between professionals involved in safeguarding work in their research - including poor understanding of the role of others, a sense of competition, feelings of wariness and difficulties associated with balancing confidentiality and information sharing. This has been echoed in other research which has suggested that the information sharing policies of different agencies can act as an obstacle to timely and appropriate inter-agency consultation - over and above legal issues such as data protection (Leung, 2009). This might occur when mental health professionals (present in the TAF to represent their work with a parent, for example) feel that child protection enquiries may jeopardise recovery of 'their' service-user. Even when collaborative working is fully supported, unhelpful issues can arise if roles become blurred (MacNaughton, Chreim & Bourgeault, 2013) which presents the case for group members to be clear on the task they are to perform. On the other hand, softened disciplinary boundaries may create a situation where the specialised contribution of individuals is reduced - to the detriment of decision-making processes (Peck & Norman, 1999).

As Galvin & McCarthy (2009) further illustrate, team agendas may clash with professional training backgrounds so that members feel low levels of identification with the team and high levels of identification with their profession (Onyett et al., 1997). This can embed deep divisions between the different occupations represented in a group (Abbott, 2001). For social

workers, this may be more relevant for those working outside of local authorities where their roles are non-statutory and more generic. The reality of working in frequently temporal ways perhaps means that personality factors, interpersonal loyalties and tensions (as well as belief systems) constrain the development of working relationships (Rosenwald & Hyde, 2006). Accordingly, it has been suggested that the nature of particular team dynamics explains more about problems than multidisciplinary working itself (Onyett & Ford, 1996). Given that the research literature submits that uncertainty and poor clarity around boundaries is detrimental, it seems that having a shared group purpose, a clear set of values and an established line of responsibility may be beneficial to team functioning.

It is evident that not everyone in the safeguarding TAF has an equitable or democratic voice. For example, parents are permitted to give a view at child protection conferences regarding the appropriateness of their child being made subject to a plan but this is not considered in the weighing up of the Independent Reviewing Officer who makes the final decision. Outside of child protection, the absence of birth fathers in planning is often raised in SCRs as a missed opportunity to protect young people. Other players tend to opt out despite being routinely invited - of the many child protection conferences I attended in five years of practice, I never saw a GP attend. Collaboration clearly is not equitable.

4.3.3. The social psychology of groups.

Group functioning is a variable that tends to be overlooked in policy, despite the emphasis placed on the importance of it. It tends to be taken-for-granted that TAF members will work together, and will do so in a way that always prioritises a group goal of supporting children and their families. Group identity can be a particularly difficult issue to manage because TAF members may be present precisely because they bring a unique perspective. Theories about intergroup conflict such as Tajfel & Turner's (1979) social identity theory assert that group belonging (be the group a profession, an organisation, a family and so on) shapes a person's sense of self. Tajfel suggests that individuals emotionally invest in the value of the groups they align to, and this has the effect of building self-image. Out-group members are excluded and stigmatised. This in-group preference can be applied to TAF work because members may be differentially committed to goals – if, for instance, they feel more commonality with their professional group or family identity. A basic example of this might include differences between the social worker concerned about a risk analysis of likely harm

(aligned to their professional identity) compared to the parent concerned about managing their mental health needs whilst juggling the care needs of a new baby and those of their older children (aligned to their growing family identity). If members are drawn more strongly to their TAF *role* (social worker, parent, teacher, health visitor and so on), rather than the TAF *purpose* (to safeguard a child in response to a specific set of concerns) then Tajfel's theory would propose that they would deprecate others' views in the TAF.

TAFs take place in the context of shrinking resources and competition for the conceptual space about safeguarding expertise. To relate an example, in the mental health Trust that I now work in, safeguarding nurses design and deliver all safeguarding training. All decisions about the safeguarding of adults or children coming into contact with the Trust must be discussed with them. Employment into the roles is *ring-fenced* for nurses – social workers are excluded. Examples like this in contemporary practice might suggest that TAFs might embody features of intergroup rivalry and protectionism if the perception of limited, competitively available conceptual resources is present. Indeed, this is part of the modernisation agendas of many key organisations (Currie, Finn & Martin, 2009).

The TAF, however, is a group in its own right – even if its members identify with diverse external identities and membership is temporary (Hugman, 1991: 11), affiliates are jointly responsible for the progress of work undertaken in it. For social work, this may be less of an onerous task than for other professions because their work is often determined by whatever role and organisation they are in (Hugman, 2009). Some authors argue that social work does have a core set of strands and these are dynamic in character, which allows practitioners to act in diverse and changeable contexts (Bell & Allain, 2011). Nonetheless, persisting debates about the merits of different ways of doing social work can denigrate the identity of the occupation (Oliver, 2013). Research focusing on TAF work is therefore made complex as a result of competing identities and unhelpful power discrepancies. This includes how some professionals tend to be privileged (in multiple ways) so that their commitments outside of the TAF become a priority *for the TAF* – as in the case of meetings arranged around the availability of medics (Whitehead, 2007).

It is noteworthy that decision-making flaws in safeguarding are often solely constructed to be the problem of social workers. Implying there are problems (and therefore solutions) to the

ways social workers make decisions, the centrality of the multidisciplinary, multi-agency team is missing in this analysis. When the government exclusively asks 'what are the problems with social worker decision-making?' the only answers possible are problems about social workers – as was the case when the Con-Lib coalition published research about the factors that influence social worker decision-making. They found;

> A range of behavioural biases affect social workers' ability to make objective judgements. These include, for example, the availability heuristic (people make judgments about the probability of events based on how easy it is to think of examples), confirmation bias (only looking for evidence that confirms pre-existing views) and the tendency to judge cases on their relative rather than objective merits.
>
> Department for Education (2014: 4).

The circularity of government asking questions in order to get certain answers is especially difficult to accept given the challenges children's safeguarding faces. In Q-methodological terms, this issue is referred to as the 'condition of instruction' and is discussed in chapter five.

Consequently, discussion in this chapter about decision-making biases is applicable to all members of TAFs, including children and their families. Kahneman & Tversky sought "to understand the cognitive processes that produce both valid and invalid judgments" in their work (1996: 582), considering some common heuristic processes. Heuristics are cognitive rules that guide judgements about complex issues. 'Errors' are those decisions that deviate from the rules of logic. Confirmation bias, for example, is characterised by people seeking information to validate what they already know. The availability heuristic relies on how easily evidence for an argument comes to mind – an example of this is the prominence of stories in the media that suggest social workers are ineffective and unhelpful. These stories come to mind more easily, and so they may be overestimated. However, logic and probability theory are not always appropriately applied to decisions made about complex social phenomena and outcomes from heuristic decision-making is often reasonable enough (Gigerenzer & Murray, 1987). As Gigerenzer notes;

> The problem with these heuristics is that they at once explain too little and too much. Too little, because we do not know when these heuristics work and how; too much, because, post hoc, one of them can be fitted to almost any experimental result.
>
> Gigerenzer (1996: 592).

There are many ways that decision-making is biased but a full discussion of the literature is beyond the remit of this thesis. Focus, however, on the emotional complexity of collaboration in children's safeguarding must be alert to the *dynamics* of the team. Authority bias, for instance, occurring when information is given more weight if it comes from a source that is deemed to have more authority, was explored by Asch in the 1950s. His classic conformity study, in which confederates were planted alongside participants to evaluate the effect of a group norm on judging the length of a simple line, demonstrated this (Asch, 1956). However, Hodges & Geyer (2006) noted that at least one of Asch's participants demonstrated misgivings about the experiment, and offered that participant behaviour was more complex than a simple explanation about conformity afforded – participants may have been acting in a way that negotiated the incongruous expectations in front of them. Perhaps more crucially for this research, judging the length of a line is not a good approximation for making decisions about the safety and wellbeing of children. To examine the latter, a rich and deep analysis of actual cases is required.

Groupthink is a theory addressing how members of a group attempt to reduce disagreement and conform to a norm by sacrificing critical engagement with possible outcomes (Janis, 1972). Janis argued that groupthink was more likely when teams were insulated, and when members were of a similar background and/or under pressure to make important decisions – which are often conditions present in safeguarding and child protection arenas. Janis identified eight indicators of groupthink, divided into three domains – inflated group characteristics (the perception of group resilience and morality), closed mindedness (in/outgroup processes, undervaluing alternative assumptions) and pressure towards agreement (where silence is interpreted to be agreement, 'mindguards' restrict access to information and dissenters are criticised).

Janis' original exploration of disasters in American foreign policy (including the 1964-1967 Vietnam war) led to the development of his concept. Authors such as Kramer (1998) have subsequently reviewed additional evidence (including declassified information) to argue that Janis' ideas were overstated. Groupthink has not been applied to SCRs (or more generally to safeguarding and child protection to a great extent; Houston, 2015: 10) but SCRs do focus on failures of communication and/or actions. That said, Janis' antecedents are comparable to the current climate in children's social work. Some aspects of his theory (such as group homogeneity) are very difficult to examine whilst others have little empirical evidence – such as the hypothesis that some people may be predisposed to conform (Ahlfinger & Esser, 2001). Nevertheless, the notion that the increased opportunity of TAFs to be creative and innovative is beneficial is hardly controversial.

Many of Janis' suggestions to avoid or minimise groupthink – such as varying team members at different times, having someone adopt the role of Devil's advocate, ensuring all viable alternative options are explored, integrating external experts to meetings and actively encouraging an open dialogue – are adopted in current practice. However, in critique, Kowert (2002) suggested *too much* information and discussion could lead to 'deadlock' - which is equally unhelpful for decision-making. Kowert considered there was a midway approach that involves leaders reflecting on their style in conjunction with the learning preferences of the team. In application to safeguarding, however, this may be difficult because teams can form quickly, traverse different parts of policy and law, and full participation of some members may be resisted.

The next sections of this chapter explore the role that particular players in TAFs have. It is structured this way because the literature tends to emphasise the identity of group members in terms of their associations *outside* of the TAF. In this tradition, the four young people in this research would be dissected from their TAFs and examined separately, which is problematic because it divides them from the group of people involved in shaping their lives. There are, of course, reasons why research would fragment the TAF into distinct roles, including that some issues do differentially impact on certain players. This same argument and counter-argument about which group identity (that of a young person subject to a TAF or that of a member of a specific TAF, for example) reflects the difficulties in asserting the rights of individuals verses families – they are connected but can conflict.

4.4. Young people and their voice.

4.4.1. Barriers to participation.

A local area creates a context and a range of potential experiences for children, families and professionals to act in (De Visscher & Bouverne De Vie, 2008). That is, it creates a socio-political space where children are introduced to society (Holloway & Valentine, 2000) making it an important dimension in framing outcomes for young people and families. Many authors conclude that child maltreatment occurs in diverse and contingent contexts and that meaningful analysis seeking to assert cause has to consider multifaceted and multilevel factors, including those at the neighbourhood level (Belsky, 1993). Although maltreatment is a contentiously defined construct incorporating varying dimensions of harm through mental, sexual and physical abuse and neglect, negative outcomes tend to be related to it (Schultz, Tharp-Taylor, Haviland & Jaycox, 2009). How maltreatment causes poorer developmental outcomes also remains a source of debate and disagreement. User and provider perspectives are therefore valuable in shaping policy for practice because there is no absolute system that successfully achieves the goals of welfare systems - despite the idea that identifying how and when most effectively to intervene with families clearly impacts on young people's wellbeing (Sidebotham & Heron, 2006).

In the same way that perceptions of (and about) professionals can shape case outcome, young people and their families are equally constructed in ways that directly influence the services they receive (Hubert, 1991). Representations of 'damaged' childhoods, for example, are transitional and actively constructed within the complex process of social work involvement (Mayall, 2002). This echoes that welfare policy decisions reflect a wide range of sociocultural value systems - including those about childhood (Woodhead, 1990; Etzioni, 1969). Studies indicate that young people express themselves in complex and multidimensional ways (Pithouse & Crowley, 2007: 206) but language in research may not consistently represent their perspective as they wish to convey – that is, researchers add another layer of interpretation before studies are published (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Conceptualising children to be active agents in the world who can transactionally shape their own 'outcome' emphasises their rights as citizens to influence decisions about their care (Prout, 2002).

Demarginalising children when constructing social policy challenges the view that young people are ontologically different or 'unfinished' compared to adults (Qvortrup, 1994:3). The current study proposes a critical perspective on transitional and actively constructed conceptualisations of childhood in response to criticisms that researcher interpretation of data minimises and filters individual perspectives; especially in work with children (Jones, 2004). This is in line with some sociologists who problematise both a conception of children as active constructors of their childhood and as 'adults in the making' (Uprichard, 2008) consequently arguing for a view characterised by temporality and of ongoing dynamic change (Lee, 2001). Children are able to choose to be 'active doers' or 'inactive beings' in particular situations (Kostenius & Ohrling, 2009) and it therefore may be possible to facilitate more meaningful engagement than is currently common. Accordingly, since TAFs are centred around young people, this research was similarly contingent on, and based around, their consent and engagement.

4.4.2. Being 'subject to provision'. The non-consensual and the consensual stakeholder.

Some children, such as those with disabilities, are more excluded than others from the opportunity to participate in decision-making forums (Mitchell et. al., 2009). Provision of care for those who are deemed in need of control, punishment or with additional developmental and/or mental health needs has traditionally been dealt with by institutionalisation. The dominance of socio-medical models in constructing the care needs of neurotypically functioning young people endures but there is growing understanding about developmental conditions in terms of integrative, whole system approaches (Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995). The progressive move out of institutions into the community since the 1950's has been in accordance with broader economic, political and social trends. These include greater dissemination about the adverse impact of institutionalisation on a person's wellbeing (Goffman, 1961), the promotion of human rights agendas (Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 1999), the need to achieve 'value for money' (Pollock, Shaoul & Vickers, 2002) and a cultural shift in seeing individuals as family and community members (Seed, 1973).

In every society, there are children who are more vulnerable to being abused and neglected than others (Buchanan, 2007). There are a variety of reasons why children who come to the attention of safeguarding services are differentially less likely to be constructed to be appropriate decision makers. A study exploring representations of 'damaged' children in a

British charity advertisement (O'Dell, 2008) concluded that constructions of child abuse reinforce notions of the passivity and innocence of childhood – implying dependency and poor capacity. Often, the first barrier to being able to prevent and minimise harm against young people is the presentation and behaviour of wider family members and/or carers because difficult to engage or antagonistic parents reduced the likelihood of understanding how a young person experiences day-to-day life (Brandon et. al., 2009).

Parents who actively disguise and misrepresent their child's story (whilst at the same time appearing to be cooperative) distort assessment quality. In fact, hard-to-reach families (including where children are subject to a child protection plan or families whose first language is not English) pose particular ethical problems to safeguarding practitioners and researchers for negotiating consent. Consent is often obtained from primary caregivers rather than children themselves (Moyers, Farmer & Lipscombe, 2006) and the integrity of consent from a parent who is not meeting the needs of their child should be considered rigorously from an ethical perspective. That is, unlike adults, children and their views are often managed by adults acting for them. These barriers exist even before the tension between acting as an agent of the state *and* a source of support is considered (Gorin, Hooper, Dyson & Cabral, 2008).

In fact, young people subject to statutory intervention face further barriers to being able to express their views (Kostenius & Ohrling, 2009). Some of these relate to the reasons for social work involvement – the presenting concerns in the referral – and may include the effects of trauma on mental health and wellbeing. There is a huge amount of evidence to suggest that reducing child abuse and neglect promotes psychosocial development (Christoffersen & DePanfilis, 2009), because studies demonstrate that adversity arising from poverty in childhood can transfer into adulthood (Frederick & Goddard, 2007; Rutter, 2000). That is, the association between mental health difficulties and adverse life circumstances is robust (Rutter, 2000).

Stage-based, deterministic theories (couched in 'natural' explanations of how young people develop) propose systematic effects in adulthood are relayed from early disruption, and consequently reduce the justification for certain forms of intervention. Explanations such as this minimise factors such as resilience (Rutter, 2000), and may facilitate tendencies in

professionals to excessively focus on 'faulty parenting' when considering appropriate and relevant support (Russell, 1992). Social work theory is dominated by top-down theories such as attachment which offer that permanent psychological harm occurs in disruption of early caregiver-child relationships (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). The literature for the construct of attachment is huge and key findings have been replicated numerous times. However, the *dominance* of the explanation is a result of the operation of power and the social construction of knowledge, meaning that its position of hegemony in children's social work is not solely about the nature of the explanation itself.

More recent trends in the field of developmental psychopathology emphasise the importance of *process* rather than *aspects of endstate* to understand the influences that shape development (Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995). Similarly, network approaches to social action have been discussed in relation to 'person in environment' models (Mukherjee, 2007) to emphasise the inherently complex nature of social work. That is, social work benefits from theoretical developments in allied disciplines in order to contribute to the ongoing research agenda in the discipline.

Younger children are more likely to experience significant harm and are least likely to be directly represented in their plans of care. The NSPCC depository shows that children under five are overwhelmingly the most common group to be subject to SCR with almost two thirds of all reviews relating to their death or serious injury. This may be due to factors such as early receptive and expressive language development being an obstruction to representing a young person's views. Professionals must then rely on knowledge about child development and observation to interpret younger children's behaviour. Carer accounts, including poor explanation of injuries, are a key factor in raising concerns. Despite these difficulties, it has been argued that children should be treated as lawful citizens with a right to participate in decisions about their lives (Lister, 2007; Rossi & Baraldi, 2009). Moral landscapes in young people's understanding of authority do shift over time (Thomson & Holland, 2002) but changes across the lifespan can be incorporated so that challenges to full inclusion can be overcome by exploring a range of strategies when working with children (Clark, 2004). For instance, it has also been suggested that constructing children as active agents in research increases reciprocity and also the underlines the inherent value of children's voices even beyond the research itself (McDonald, 2009; Wynes, 2009; Moss & Petrie, 2002).

The partial presence of children in decision-making is compounded when the issue of wellbeing moves into the court arena, which is where decisions affecting parental responsibility are ultimately made. Participation in legal processes has been explored through observational studies such as that of Sheehan's (2003) which concluded that the direct voices of young people were often absent or minimised in court. The author argued this was due to the adversarial nature and formality of the context, which can be an obstacle to achieving justice. Further, in the widely publicised Rochdale and Oxford cases concerned with child sexual exploitation, young people expressed feelings of re-traumatisation as a result of court procedures during the testing of their evidence. This occurred despite the publication of two SCRs on 20th December 2013 by Rochdale local authority that illustrated the extent of exploitation and trauma the seven young people had gone through at the hands of a gang of nine men over a period of years. The SCRs criticised attempts to modify the behaviour of the young people, excessive faith in families being able to protect their children and poor communication between staff and strategic managers. In other words, they were failed in many different ways.

Many of the young people sexually exploited in Rochdale were on the edge of care or were Looked After already, and it is well documented that living in out-of-home care is also related to disadvantage. The causes of this are complex because young people are likely to be more vulnerable before coming into the Looked After system, but their difficulties may be escalated by it. For instance, meta-analyses of studies about young people in corporate care suggest that adverse constructions about them promote the likelihood of negative labelling and poorer performance on typical outcome measures (Holland, 2009).

4.5. The context of the locality.

4.5.1. The whole person in their environment.

'Person-in-environment' models continue to influence social work theory (Smith Rotabi, 2007), with research showing that 'neighbourhood' factors are important in influencing outcomes for individuals – both in terms of the physical opportunities for interaction they permit and the psychological representations that are affixed to them (Matthews, 2003). Neighbourhood influences therefore relay some characteristics relevant to understanding how young people develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Coulton et. al., 1995). Interventions and theories focusing on individuals or individual characteristics (in the form of variable analysis)

arguably neglect the broader nature of local identity (Jack, 2003). However, neighbourhoods are defined by different criteria so that physical boundaries, social boundaries and administrative boundaries (as in the case of local authorities) have been alternatively employed by researchers.

Whilst 'community' is a term used in everyday life, there is debate about the definition of its parameters. Definitions carry assumptions from the theories underpinning them. 'Community' is not a neutral term, but rather one that is subject to change. Accordingly, researchers such as Cohen (1985) suggest community is a symbolic construction. Despite this, it remains useful because it appears to imply two related ideas – that members have something in common with one another and that non-members possess something of difference in terms of their symbolic values and/or other aspects.

Indeed some authors (such as Holland et. al., 2011) present the case that social work should adopt a greater focus on the relationship between neighbourhoods and the wellbeing of their residents. This is important because the role that social workers and social care professionals are perceived to have in a locality may be attributable to the particular set of accessible provisions made available, including staff allocation and the interpersonal dynamics acted out in TAFs (Carey, 2009).

Social capital, the engagement in norms that assist groups to achieve goals and resolve difficulties, has been adopted in Australian social policy in order to build capacity in communities (Healy & Hampshire, 2002). Greater social capital is associated with higher quality of life, health and wellbeing. It is expressed in cultural, political and economic aspects of social life (Bourdieu, 1986: 242). However, cohesive community networks with a strong positive identity can also work to exclude others through processes of in/outgrouping as already noted (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). An example of this may include ostracism of those whose experiences of abuse are perceived to reflect negatively on the community itself. Group identity is multi-layered and the avoidance of taking on board the imagined characteristics of, for example, 'the abused' may be strong.

Community level responses to young people remain important to understanding the nature of their lived experience. Communities act as a key source of support, as well as a means of

social regulation. The research literature demonstrates that particular groups of young people may be more vulnerable as a result of public reactions to them when there are safeguarding concerns. For example, as Jessiman, Hackett & Carpenter (2017) discuss, children and young people demonstrating harmful sexual behaviours are not a homogeneous group, and differ in terms of disability, gender, age and ethnicity but community level discourses about them often fail to acknowledge this. When children are shown to be perpetrators of sexual harm, the conflict between a view of children's sexual innocence is sometimes resolved by characterising sexual behaviour to be inherently evil. This is interesting because other authors have found that adverse family and community responses to sexual offenders can actually *increase* the likelihood of reoffending (Chaffin et. al., 2008). Sex offending seems to impose a 'deviant' identity that is complete and total, determining others' responses to a larger extent than any other aspect of their selves. Accordingly, offenders can be ostracised and move into areas where there is generally more in/out migration, social instability and poor cohesion/support.

Adverse community reactions can also extend to wider family who may experience social stigma and isolation. For example, Allan's inductive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews noted that 'mother blaming' featured in ideas about the sexually violent child when they were deconstructed (Allan, 2004). Further, Hackett et. al.'s 2014 study, which involved the casefiles of 700 young people demonstrating harmful sexual behaviours, noted a lack of positive community support across the board. There are methodological issues associated with reviewing casefile data (which is primarily made up of professional recording) but the large sample consistently reflected the view that stigma associated with sexual offending was 'contagious' at a family/community level. Recommendations from the research included that rehabilitative work with individuals was most beneficial when family and community level interventions were factored in, again reinforcing the importance of local relationships. It illustrates the point that involvement with safeguarding services is a stigmatising experience due to the association with child abuse and neglect - and this has an impact on users *and* providers of services. The policing of the family begins in the community.

Social exclusion and poverty relay various issues for families and research has approached the problem of examining these elements in different ways. Whilst the processes

perpetuating unequal distribution of wealth are complex and on an international level, relative poverty (a measure of comparison incorporating degrees of disposable income in a particular society) rather than absolute poverty (an inability to fund basic necessities) tends to be adopted in UK research. Definitions of poverty are also political. For example, the Conservative government lowered the threshold when families were defined to be poor before they announced they had begun tackling poverty and, they proclaimed, fewer families now met the criteria. The rate of child poverty (households with equivalent incomes below 50% of the average after housing costs) fluctuates in the UK (Bradshaw, 2002) but disparity can have adverse effects on social equity and cohesion. Research seeking to derive a definition of poverty from those experiencing it (rather relying on privileged 'expert' accounts) has found that cultural markers of *inclusion* tend to feature along with more familiar ideas about the impact of financial difficulty (Serr, 2004).

Socio-economic status can structure and restrict day-to-day experience and interaction at a local level – not least because communities tend to be organised spatially to mirror dispersal of wealth (Uprichard & Byrne, 2006). For instance, play outside in streets and public spaces can reduce the impact of overcrowded conditions at home but can also be perceived to be threatening to other residents in a variety of ways (Elsey, 2004). Socio-economic factors therefore interact with the particular resources and character of local areas which in turn influence expectations about employment and other lifestyle choices (Pierson, 2002). The most poor have the least opportunity to determine where they would like to live. It has been noted that moving between localities is a stressful life event and highly mobile young people and families are more likely to be referred to safeguarding services (Ersing, Sutphen & Loeffler, 2009). Localities differ according to a range of interconnected qualities but individuals also bring their own sense of belonging or exclusion to them (Hillyard & Bagley, 2015).

Some research has focused on the psychosocial impact of the make-up of residents, and has similarly shown that adverse mental health occurs more often where there are high levels of poverty and deprivation (Ghate & Hazel, 2002). The experience of poverty and/or ethnic composition influences customs and habits (Brooks-Gunn et. al., 1993) which relay advantages and disadvantages (Hillyard, 2015). For instance, geographical localities embody a number of positive identity characteristics including behaviour around work (Atkinson &

Kintrea, 2001). That is, the locality confers a physical environment with which to engage in the world and it is this that shapes perspectives about the risks and dangers it presents to young people. This is relevant to a profession focused on risk management, and makes community an important aspect of assessment and intervention. Families with restricted resources have disadvantages that may accrue over generations so that there may be no-one in the family with the socio-economic capital to act in a way that minimises the likelihood of state concern, and its associated intervention. That is, disadvantage tends to be reproduced. In the case of Peter Connelly, his mother Tracey was 16 when she met Peter's 33 year-old father (who had a conviction for raping a 14 year-old girl). Another member of Tracey's family was the focus of SCR following organised sexual abuse in Islington. It was relatively under-reported that Tracey had

> an absent father who was a sex offender, a neglectful mother, and another relative who was lured into a paedophile ring in one of the biggest children's home scandals of the late 20th Century.
>
> Laville (2009: n/p).

Communities tend to be organised around family, extended kin and non-kin relationships. In the case of Looked After Children, multiple placement moves have been linked to adverse factors such as an increased likelihood of sexual exploitation (Coy, 2009). The notion of the family is crucial to safeguarding policy, which draws on strong discourses about *who* delivers appropriate care as well as what appropriate care consists of. Non-kin relationships are also crucial to feelings of esteem and quality of life, and some authors have offered that friendships in modern times have taken on roles traditionally adopted in larger families (Chambers, 2017). Smart et. al. (2012) suggest that the emotional labour and the sense of duty associated with maintaining community ties make non-kin relationships socially valuable and ontologically significant because these relationships influence an individuals' identity and 'self' - that is, establishing and maintaining social bonds can provide alternative perspectives on a person's thoughts and feelings about themselves. Research has also indicated that animals and pets are incorporated into people's understanding of social ties and responsibilities (Charles & Davies, 2008). In other words, the protective interpersonal ties in

communities are important when weighing up what is helpful and what is unhelpful for recipients of intervention.

4.5.2. Building capacity.

Social constructivism presents practitioners and community members alike with a means to reframe and to co-construct a more helpful narrative about their lives. Researcher-practitioners may be able to promote children's wellbeing and build social capital by facilitating and working with service-user groups in a *listening* capacity (Jack & Jordan, 1999; Jack, 2004). The advantages of an increased presence of researcher-practitioners include awareness of (and access to) beneficial local resources and support services for participants (Bunger, Stiffman, Foster & Shi, 2009), and a more explicit integration of critical research methodology into daily practice. The latter point is important if the view that all acts are cultural is accepted (whether they originate in research or practice), because decisions become products of this. The capacity of a community to make changes through reflective forums and organised enquiry has the potential to be transformational and progressive. For social work, this may start with greater focus on research from and by practitioners but the central goals of the profession mean that it must ultimately enable service-users to disseminate findings about their strengths and needs, about what works and what does not, and about community-specific issues. Specifically, researcher-practitioner action can to provide a (political) dialogue for social workers to actively engage *with* society rather than being passively enacted *on* by the media, policy makers and other professional groups producing research. The benefit of local knowledge and a critical methodological approach to action, therefore, can promote praxis.

There are limited arenas for members of the public to collaborate and consult with professionals about safeguarding practice due to the confidential nature of casework. Virtual communities, however, may be a useful contemporary medium to interact and engage with communities in the future – even if they are *currently* poorly informed and may even encourage action that endangers the wellbeing of children and their families. For instance, there are websites that provide pseudo-legal advice to parents/carers who may seek "the emerging informal network which helps parents flee with children from UK Social Services before they take their children" (see 'The Social Worker is Coming!' http://www.ectopia.org/pass.html) to receive the following advice.

> **Stay safe code for UK parents**
>
> Obtain passports for your children as soon as they are born… Avoid all contact with social workers. If a teacher is asking your child questions about you, change him or her to a different school. Do not allow access to your children to counsellors, psychologists and, above all, psychiatrists. Under no circumstances, allow a psychiatrist to prescribe drugs for your children… Remember that your biggest threat is that SS will regard you as helpless and worthless and treat you accordingly. If you act strong and resourceful, they will smarten up and may back off.
>
> Anonymous (2012: n/p).

Some hate sites publish the personal details of social workers (including identifiable pictures and postal addresses). Being named or having an allegation made in a hostile public arena such as this is often met with a policy of silence by agencies. That is, enquiries are redirected to the legal department and/or the police rather than to the person being accused. The internet raises interesting questions and opportunities for accountability and meaningful engagement with service-user groups, and it is also worth noting that public expression of (hostile) feelings about social work activity certainly existed prior to the widespread use of social media. An example of this includes the journal 'Case Con', which was established in 1970 to critique the position of children's social workers as oppressive agents of the state (Weinstein, 2011).

There are limited arenas for social workers to disseminate their experience which makes the profession vulnerable to knee-jerk policy changes and ongoing misinformation about the role in the public consciousness. It is difficult to conceive of a culture shift that could prevent the 'hidden harm' young people experience in their own homes, often by people they trust, but this is a problematic concept for society to accept. Social workers are authorised to act through the law but this power often conflicts with personal moral beliefs. Establishing a dialogue, however, seems to be a helpful step in setting up more balanced and transparent discussion.

4.5.3. Organisational change.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of working collaboratively in safeguarding and child protection in the current climate is the culture of blame, and the media appetite for retribution. The social workers involved with Peter Connelly reported that they were harassed by the media even five years after his death (Jones, 2014). The difficulty in retaining staff following media reporting of child deaths has meant that very complex work has been undertaken by the most newly qualified or temporary agency staff. The impact of the government response - to fast-track Russell Group graduates through training and reduce the amount of social theory on the curriculum in so doing – is yet to be fully evaluated. The knock-on effects of these changes to universal services and other specialist provisions are also unfolding.

Organisational change in social services perhaps could do more to incorporate good practice from allied services, such as in the NHS. Following the deaths of patients in Mid-Staffordshire Trust hospital and the organised sexual exploitation of primarily Looked After children by groups of men and 'celebrity abusers' such as Jimmy Saville, it is interesting to note the different approaches adopted by health and social care. The NHS introduced the Freedom to Speak Up Review (with the intention of establishing a safer, more open and accountable culture) whereas the government imposed criminal offences on social service staff for failure to act on their suspicions of harm.

Calls for increased transparency in institutions can be translated into increased surveillance, which may can lead to oppressive control, even if this is unintentional. The need to monitor risky Others has been espoused through the government's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST (Home Office, 2011) which has implications for safeguarding young people via multi-agency attempts to place "greater emphasis on prevention and the need to intervene at earlier points before radicalisation takes place" (Home Office, 2012). In a parallel with the conflation of child protection and safeguarding, early monitoring for signs of radicalisation has led to greater surveillance of us all. This has echoes in Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon – a prison designed so that inmates are always visible to (invisible) guards (Foucault, 1977: 170).

4.6.Chapter summary and context.

This chapter highlights how collaboration is required by law in safeguarding and child protection work. Collaboration in this field involves *joint* surveillance and *collective* support to children and their families (Howe, 2014) but research tends to focus on the faulty decision-making of social workers. This adds to the narrative about an inferior occupation, subordinated by its lack of rigour and justifying its lack of authority. In this conception, child abuse is not caused by macro-level structural inequalities, meso-level organisational customs or even micro-level behavioural choices of parents who harm their children – the inherently flawed social worker is culpable and government must paternalistically keep a close watch and be ready to punitively step in at any moment. This chapter has sought to emphasise that collaboration is absolutely central to TAFs. Collaboration between professionals and service-users faces particular challenges but the issue of interpersonal dynamics remains at the crux of TAF work. This chapter has suggested that non-tokenistic involvement of experts-by-experience may be helpful to ensure compassion underpins all working together (Videmšek, 2017).

Teams can form quickly around a safeguarding concern and even though shared group purpose is clear, group members may not have a democratic role in contributing to decisions. This chapter has therefore discussed some of the barriers that exist when seeking to achieve the well-intentioned - but vague - goals set by policy and guidance. It has emphasised the emotional and highly pressurised circumstances that make decision-making complex. The notion of decision-making error was introduced tentatively because phenomena are complex and multifaceted. Members have a legal duty to contribute to TAFs but unhelpful team dynamics can have crucial implications for subsequent decisions, and ultimately, outcomes for children. However, the different alliances, group memberships and pressures experienced by TAF member's influences how effective TAFs can be. In line with this, some authors have queried the dominance of the view that collaboration is as much of a remedy for the difficulties apparent in complex casework as is claimed (Wigfall & Moss, 2001).

Research in this area faces difficulties because social exclusion and child maltreatment take place in different contexts. Complexity is the norm, rather than the exception. However, it is clear that reducing child abuse and neglect promotes psychosocial development (Christoffersen & DePanfilis, 2009) even though notions about child abuse and risk shift

across socio-cultural and historical parameters (Kemshall, 2002). The concept of social exclusion is a political one, with discourse emphasising the multi-dimensional and non-static character of marginalisation and disadvantage (Levitas et. al., 2007).

Chapter five discusses how this crucial, complex and relational framework can be explored using Q-methodology. Chapter five builds on discussion so far to justify and explain why Q is under-utilised despite it being appropriate for research in this area of public and private life.

Chapter five. Epistemology and Q-methodology.

> We propose a monstrous new word – *qualiquantology* – to express this discomforting hybridity… Hybridity pierces the boundaries of identity and opens up the difference of Otherness. By contrast, merely adding a qualitative dimension to a quantitative study or *vice versa* does not constitute hybridity and may be far from discomforting.
>
> Stenner & Stainton Rogers (2004:166).

> Questions can be generated from a social work perspective and explored in social work settings. If social workers do not engage in research then we have to rely on other professionals to generate knowledge for us.
>
> Dodd & Epstein (2012: 3).

5.1. Introduction.

Chapter five examines the epistemological and methodological rationale for a focus group, Q-sort and follow-up interview design. This chapter highlights the fundamental connection between a constructivist epistemology and a radically 'qualiquantilogical' (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004) methodology. Methodology and the particular methods utilised by researchers share a dependent and highly contingent interrelationship (Crotty, 1998). That is, the reasoning underpinning a particular approach to examining the world tends to reflect a view about the *nature* of the world itself. For example, pursuit of contentious concepts such as 'truth' and 'meaning' have led some researchers to seek understanding of the social world through observation and experience.

Chapter two explored the idea of taken-for-granted, culturally-referenced truths through the lens of social constructivism. Published when Stephenson was 64 years old, Berger & Luckmann's 1966 *The Social Construction of Reality* brought social constructivism to prominence. The narrative turn, influenced by Foucault in the 70s and 80s (setting out the dialogical nature of knowledge and power) came as Stephenson moved into his final years.

Stephenson died in 1989. There is no way to predict the nature of Stephenson's views about Q-methodology should he have developed his ideas in the context of these developments. Whilst Stephenson did not view Q-methodology through the lens of social constructivism, this chapter argues that they are fitting partners. Social constructivism underpins the rationale of the inductive, exploratory methodological framework adopted in this research. That is, the substantive focus – participants' own personal world view about TAF work – implies the sense that real-world data should arise directly from participants' own language and terminology. Q-methodology is applied to a snapshot of the *working of teams* in children's safeguarding. Utilising Q in this way, in the contested 'community' that is the TAF, permits reflection on the *relative positioning* of players at a particular moment in time. This innovative use of Q, therefore, echoes the comparative way that knowledge emerges in groups. Examination of the lived experience of TAF work at this point in the literature required an approach that did not assume that all children or all social workers (and so on for all TAF players) form homogenous groups in oversimplified descriptive categories.

Methodology is much more than method, it provides the theoretical rationale and justification for how data is conceptualised, captured, analysed and interpreted. For Q, technique (the Q-sort), method (factor analysis) and methodology (the underlying theoretical and philosophical assumptions) are distinguished. This chapter addresses the practical process of Q-sorting and its appropriateness to the aims of the study compared to other, more traditional methods typically used in social work research. Q-methodology is an alternative to more traditional options in health and social care research in the UK. Focus groups permitted rich development of materials and interviews allowed Q-data to be understood more deeply. All aspects of the research reflected an inclusive attitude to participation.

5.1.1. R v Q-methodologies.

When traits vary proportionately with each other in a population, it is predicted that they represent an underlying function, or factor. Factor analysis is a statistical method used to explain a data set through a reduced number of *variables*. Individual participants' scores are grouped together in a systematic way using correlations. Factor analysis techniques form two main groups – those that are exploratory and those that are confirmatory (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The former approach, adopted in this research, tends to be utilised to create

hypotheses at early stages of theorising whilst the latter tends to examine the robustness of existing models.

Spearman's 'r', or correlation coefficient, forms the basis of many statistical techniques in subsequently called 'R-methodologies'. Nuances, interactions and individual differences tend to be summarised mathematically in a measure of error. That is, R-technique does not handle sets of experiences or the holistic person as a unit of correlative value – it is limited to traits or snapshots of people in social research. In contrast to R-methodology, subjects become the sum of their parts when their test scores are compared. This variable-orientated approach is not without its limitations, as noted by Watts & Stenner below.

> The simple problem for R-methodology, however, was that its focus on specific bits of people – variables, traits, abilities and so on – necessarily invoked a kind of methodological dissection.
>
> Watts & Stenner (2012: 12).

Q-methodology does not create factors from measures across individuals, but from patterns within *sets* of data. On one level, Q is an inversion of R but the difference lies in the integrity of the 'whole person' in the analysis of the latter. Q is therefore radically different because it handles "correlations between persons or whole aspects of persons" specifically in relation to subjective experience (Stephenson, 1936), which represent themes in behavioural choices (Burger & Rimoldi, 1997). This chapter will show that the relative subjective viewpoints of participants are collectively compared in Q-methodology, and this is powerful because it allows data themes to emerge. Reducing the impact of existing assumptions when seeking to understand an issue from a subjective, lived experience perspective has many advantages. These include that it has the potential to permit marginalised voices to be heard (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008). Despite the weight of favour for the method, Q is not without its contemporary critics, and some commentators have argued that Q-methodology is not appropriate in the terms set by positivism or constructivism (Kampen & Tamás, 2014).

5.2.Positivism and post-positivism.

5.2.1. Objectivity through science.

The positivist view of science, emerging in the early nineteenth century, presented a view that reality is objective, stable and observable (Daly, 2010). Many existing methodological approaches in social work have embodied these views about scientific enquiry, conceptualising the variation demonstrated by participants in terms of *inaccuracy* through error, bias and distortion. The alternative view, that differing perspectives are an undervalued aspect of real-world interaction which can reveal interesting and subtle realities of human experience, is adopted in this research. Applied health and social care is characterised by complexity – it is the practical engagement of individual practitioners and service-users in the context of limited, shifting resources. Even if positivist approaches could assign clear problem causation, and then establish solutions, the reality of implementing change in applied practice is that action is *political* - not least because it is largely funded from the public purse in the UK.

Perhaps what is more appropriate in social care is the moral argument that the very construction of a problem is (and *should be*) debatable. For example, being constructed to be a victim of maltreatment can *in itself* be oppressive. Objective scientific methodology has not yet been able to provide risk assessment tools that universally predict maltreatment. Maybe the most important barrier to research being helpful to practitioners in child protection work is that no risk factors need be present for abuse and neglect to occur. Research can only examine what is acknowledged – and hidden harm therefore limits what can be known. The picture is further complicated by factors such as resilience – some children seem to manage the impact of trauma and adversity in a way that appears more helpful to their overall wellbeing (Bifulco, 2013).

The dominance of outcome measures in the majority of social work audits and studies restricts the ability to capture the in-depth qualitative nature of how professionals and families actually negotiate their experiences, from their perspective. The social constructivist lens brings scepticism to the notion that an objective reality exists or, more moderately, if it is accessible to human perception. Outcome measures such as number of children subject to a child protection plan, the length of time from referral to case closure and number of complaints, are often tied to central government targets or organisational goals.

Traditionally, social work has drawn heavily on psychological and medical frameworks to analyse human behaviour and this may have created a tendency to adopt an individualised focus in which views of professionals in the field of safeguarding are typically elicited using questionnaires or other survey methods (Gilligan, 2009). Constructs such as the stage-based, psychoanalytic theory of attachment, for example, are associated with large bodies of research that support traditional measures of reliability and validity, and provide an example of the dominant ways knowledge is created and reinforced in practice (Cassidy, Jones & Shaver, 2013).

This research is not a study about attachment but more consideration should be given to a construct that is implicit to the rationale for early intervention in children's social work. It is discussed here to consider the appropriateness of Q-methodology to the field. Whilst attachment theory has been helpfully utilised in Looked After Children social work through the therapeutic interventions from psychologists such as Dan Hughes and Kim Golding (Hughes, 2006; Golding, 2000), there are challenges for delivering the model where children remain in birth families at the point of intervention. The Quality Protects Initiative responded to the need for a focus on the story of the child by integrating a developmental framework into approaches about recovery from trauma – which differed from an overarching *risk* focus seen in early intervention work (Laming, 2003). Politicians espouse how crucial these concepts are but early nurturing environments are sometimes presented in ways that determine a persons' wellbeing and success (however this is operationalised) across the lifespan (Kagan, 2000). This relegates a huge proportion of young people to have to carry indefinite, adverse assumptions about them (Meins, 2017; Rutter, 1972). It also asserts large numbers of parents/carers to be inadequate when this may not be the case (van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988) – although it is important to query how researchers operationalise 'no harm'. Being middle-class, for instance, should not be assumed to imply difficulty-free childhoods (Gedaly & Leerkes, 2016). Equally, finding that attachment security is related to socioeconomic factors lends itself to arguments for macro, structural change as well as individually tailored support to promote recovery.

The attribution of blame – as well as limited training, support and funding to deliver the interventions set out in government guidance (through the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Social Care Institute for Excellence) - may be one of the reasons that

working with the concepts of attachment with children still in their birth families can be more difficult. The reality of complexity means that one size does not fit all – and in practice, social workers walk a fine line between enacting professional curiosity and alienating service-users. That is, approaches can be oppressive whilst *also* being justifiable in the context of government guidance.

5.2.2. The study of subjectivity.

Post-positivist perspectives (such as interpretivism) suggest that the world is more flexible and contingent than a variable-by-variable analysis allows, even with built-in estimations of error. Ideas such as meaningfulness, complexity and significance have different connotations in post-positivism. This has implications for the issue of construct definition. The highly conditional nature of concepts such as 'problematised parenting', the generalised use of 'need' or, indeed, the 'effectiveness' of a given intervention are not appropriately reduced to explanations that can be measured or manipulated in a variable-orientated way. There is a risk that reducing human beings to selected traits can act to dehumanise the (vulnerable) people social work intends to support, and may promote stereotyping about 'people like that'. Boehm et. al. (2013) argued that large scale social surveys can reinforce and legitimate existing power relations, making the case for smaller scale, exploratory research. Similarly, bureaucratic documentation systems common in health and social care generate virtual representations of people and their circumstances, which can disconnect a sense of the whole person from recordings about them. The least of these problems is that data can be extrapolated to justify service rationalisation (Reisch & Jani, 2012).

Examining social phenomena necessitates some comprehension of what phenomena actually are because many concepts have disparate and contentious meanings. The way an individual interprets and makes sense of their situation is crucial to appreciating their lived experience, and this is true even when experiences are not linked to any standardised, objective or reliable data (in the R sense of these terms). Stephenson critiqued the idea that social constructs were as conceptually grounded as those in the natural science disciplines, writing

> The hallmark of sound scientific procedure nowadays, it seems, is to assert hypotheses and to confirm predictions… There is need, however, for care and discernment… Psychology, it seems to us, has by no means achieved a

> sophisticated theoretical status, with ideal constructs such as physics has fashioned for itself. The situations in psychology, therefore, call for an attitude of curiosity, as well as one of hypothetico-deductive logic… we should be making discoveries rather than testing our reasoning.
>
> Stephenson (1953: 151).

Utilising Q-sampling to develop standardised measures of already defined constructs is R-technique because the concourse (the range of possible characteristics of phenomena) is already established and participants can be allocated a category within an *existing framework* of theory (Stainton Rogers, 1995). This is frequently done and Q-sorting results have been compared with more established measures since its earliest application (see Dymond, 1953). Some personality traits have been shown to be stable from childhood using Q-sorting (Asendorpf & van Aken, 1999), and Q has also been employed to explore attachment cross-culturally (Posada, Carbonell, Alzate & Plata, 2004). It is not always appropriate to utilise Q in the same way as R. There is confusion evident in the literature, as demonstrated by a meta-analysis of 14 Q studies by Dziopa and Ahern. Aside from notable difference in sampling strategies and the shape of arrays, three of the 14 studies did not meet the criteria for Q-methodology due to pre-scaling of the Q-set (Dziopa & Ahern, 2011: 42). These authors argued that limitations in the Q-methodology literature may have added to poor clarity of process for researchers (Dziopa & Ahern, 2011: 48). It is important to note, however, that this research study had a number of key problems relating to the claims that authors made about trends in the literature and the number of assumptions they made in their tool to screen studies.

Interpretivism suits an exploration of attitudes and interpersonal perspectives because it supports the argument that the fabric of social life is visible to the people participating in it. Research can be conceived of as a form of interaction that captures a particular glimpse of social life. Applied practice can be viewed in the same way. Different disciplines privilege particular ways of acting in health and social care (see, for example, the scientist-practitioner model in clinical psychology; Corrie & Lane, 2009) but a social constructivist perspective highlights how knowledge is co-constructed through embedded social interaction. In this conception, objectivity is illusory and positivism is limited because researchers, practitioners

and service-users are all 'participants' alike. These roles, in my experience of children's social work, are not meaningfully described through a calculation of error because preference, relative choice and belief constitute aspects of the 'whole person' and are the site and focus of interventions.

As noted at the start of this thesis, the emphasis on subjectivity emerged from interest in how professionals and families experience the delivery of early intervention safeguarding services at a time of social and political change. It arose from practice experience in a safeguarding team in the North East of England. Grasping how individuals negotiate and interpret experience is sensitive to the specific nature of case characteristics (including family history and current concerns), the dynamics of professional collaboration and locality-specific factors. An exploratory approach was favoured due to the substantive area being a relatively under-researched area of personal and professional life in the UK. In other words, with limited existing research of this kind in this area, a theory falsifying approach would not be as useful as a paradigm concerned with eliciting meaning through emerging data patterns and trends.

Q-methodology is particularly valuable when seeking to explore opinions that tend to be under-reported – indeed, the issues that arise in safeguarding relate to some of the most taboo in society for a variety of reasons. For those outside of its processes, opinions about the protection of children tend to be polarised - perhaps because it is an area of life that evokes strong emotional responses. For those 'doing' and acting in safeguarding, there are multiple stories and experiences, the complexities of which are largely untold in existing research. In this way, it is relevant and useful. Stephenson's concerns regarding the methodological foundations of research remain relevant for contemporary researchers, practitioners and policy makers in disciplines allied to social science. Essentially, a method that is in-depth and qualitative allows the possibility of going beyond current classificatory systems which incorporate ideological constructions of 'issues' (Spratt & Houston, 1999) was appropriate for this research.

Q-methodology is a powerful way of systematically approaching subjective data from the perspective of *whole persons.* It can be used for studies of individuals (single cases) and to illuminate views apparent in a particular group or population (Good, 2010). For these

reasons, and although a departure from Stephenson's original rationale, Q can be seen to sit within constructivist theories which suggest participants build meaning in differing, potentially idiosyncratic ways according to their interpretive position. That is, Q is tailored to 'hear different voices' (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Firmly focused on the range and nature of views in specific areas of interest rather than large population-based statistics, Q situates participants to be experts about their own experience and permits views to be presented in a non-judgemental way (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Stephenson did not adopt a social constructivist stance and developed his approach as a behaviourist, as this chapter will go on to underline. For Stephenson, subjectivity was a matter of individual perspective.

5.3. Introduction to Q.

5.3.1. The origin of Q.

The term "Q" comes from Stephenson's wish to contrast his approach with that of R-methodologies, and highlight key differences between them. Stephenson began his career as an assistant to Charles Spearman and Cyril Burt, the well-known psychometricians at the University of London during the 1930s. His background in physics and mathematics has a clear legacy on Q-method. That is, despite Stephenson's argument that Q is a challenge to the dominance of the hypothetico-deductive approach in social science research, it is a development of factor analysis. Factor analysis is utilised to systematically evaluate subjective experience (Stephenson, 1953); making it both qualitative and quantitative in nature (Dennis & Goldberg, 1996:104) without being either (see Dennis, 1986). This shift in the way data is collected is arguably more than "the transpose of the R matrix. That is, as the correlation and factorisation by rows of the same matrix of data that in R is factored by columns" (Brown, 1980: 12-13).

Stephenson conceded that the simple statistical inversion of R (swapping the role of rows and columns just discussed by Brown) was only true in very limited cases in which the unit of measurement was uniformal in both rows and columns (Brown, 1980: 13). The transposing of 'traits across persons' to 'persons across traits' is therefore radical due to its *participant* rather than *variable* level analysis. Each participant sort represents a systematic combination of hypothetical effects. That is;

> Factor analysis… is concerned with a selected population of individuals each of whom has been measured in m tests. The (m)(m-1)/2 intercorrelations for these m variables are subjected to… factor analysis. The technique, however, can also be inverted. We begin with a population of m different tests (or essays, pictures, traits or other measurable material), each of which is… scaled by m individuals.
>
> Stephenson (1936: 344-245).

Q has been employed in the study of new policies in health settings (Alderson et. al., 2018), parental attitudes to orthodontic treatment (Peeva et. al., 2017), experience of peer-group supervision (McPherson et. al., 2016), accounts of narrative therapy (Wallis et. al., 2010), perceptions of childhood obesity (Bayles, 2010), mate compatibility (Zentner, 2005), intergenerational transfer of self-perception (Zentner & Renaud, 2007), coparenting and attachment (Caldera & Lindsey, 2006), changes in teacher beliefs (Rimm-Kaufman et. al., 2006), educational practices (Bracken & Fischel, 2006), children's interactions in triads (Lansford & Parker, 1999), workplace internet usage (Anandarajan, Paravastu & Simmers, 2006) and as a tool in post-qualifying education (Daniel, 2000). This illustrates selected, examples from the diverse applicability of the Q since the 1960's. Materials are not limited to written stimuli and researchers have used data such as photographs to permit involvement with learning disabled adults, for instance (Combes, Hardy & Buchan, 2004).

5.3.2. The sorting grid.

Data is held in a fixed arrangement, called a Q-sort which is shown in chart 5.3(a). The current study adopted a set of 36 statements, which gives "roughly 11000 times as many [sorting] options as there are people in the world" (Brown, 1980: 267). Research studies vary widely in terms of Q-set size as well as the shape of the sorting grid. Brown (1980:228-229) discusses a number of statistical analyses to show "distribution effects are virtually nil" so that variability in the form that arrays take (whether quasi-Normal as in this research, or ordered linearly, for example), minimally influences the factors that subsequently emerge from data. In other words, Brown argues that asking participants to order statements entirely by rank on an agree-disagree continuum has a negligible impact on results so that other considerations can be prioritised when making decisions about the distribution.

Rank ordering was therefore not favoured in the current study due to the greater task demand this is associated with. Placing the 36 statements in 36 columns is a more difficult task than arranging them into nine (across -4 to +4 piles) - and the research was intended to be enjoyable as possible. Whilst some authors have argued for a free-sorting approach in which participants create their own array shape, a forced sort (that is, where participants must place the Q-set into a specific array silhouette) generally takes less time to complete and may allow participants to engage with comparisons to a further extent (due to reduced task demand). Whilst free choice sorts may generate poorer discrimination between participant grids, Block (1961) suggests that forced designs may produce decisions that participants would not otherwise make. As a result, Bolland (1985: 93) argues that overemphasis on fixed sorting points can disguise valuable and important differences between participants. Previous practical experience of using Q-methodology and these considerations led to the shape favoured in this research. The grid in this research was comprised of 36 statements across nine piles (two statements making up extreme tails, three in the next two inner piles, four in the next and finally six making up the three middle piles).

Chart 5.3(a) to show the blank Q-sort array adopted in the current research.

			1	2	3			
			4	5	6			
		7	8	9	10	11		
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	2	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
-4	**-3**	**-2**	**-1**	**0**	**+1**	**+2**	**+3**	**+4**
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

5.3.3. Q-sort technique.

Participants are presented with materials in the same medium (such as a set of written statements, objects, pictures or sounds) and they are reorganised – or sorted – by participants according to their personal values. In this way, Q-sorting involves arranging qualitative data into a distribution according to the degree the views of the sorter are represented (Stephenson, 1936:357). The set of materials is called the Q-set. In the present study, each statement represented a different idea about TAF work because the research 'question' was focused on the experience of it. The condition of instruction for this research is set out below.

Based on your experience of being involved with TAFs, how much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Regardless of the substantive area, all statements must be a possible response to the condition of instruction. If participants are asked to describe experience, then all statements must be possible descriptions, and so on. To illustrate this, Q-method has been employed to evaluate and compare professional judgements about service-user functioning using case examples (Shedler & Westen, 1998) and by using hypothetical service-user characteristics (Zeldow & Bennett, 1997) – among many others.

The Q-set is sampled from a theoretical population of ideas, referred to as the 'concourse'. Brown (1980: 3) defines the concourse as the "the flow of any communicability surrounding any topic". It is the total range of possible statements that can be elicited about the issue under scrutiny. The notion of the concourse is a philosophical one for Stephenson (1980) because he identified that much of what is understood to be 'real' is taken-for-granted and subconscious – again bringing his methodology explicitly back to thoughts about epistemology. The theoretical basis of the ordering principle arose from the Freudian pleasure-unpleasure concept making it possible for items to be sorted into 'most like me' to 'least like me', or 'agree-disagree' (as in the current research). Although the pleasure principle has received extensive critique for its assertion that it is a crucial driving force in determining behaviour (Kagan, 2000), the notion of relative preference underpins Q-sorting. Stephenson offered that;

> A concourse must be governed by simple principles, few in number… three principles come to mind - as they could to anyone: the quotations are all emotional in tone - pleasure and unpleasure embrace them; morality and immorality are much in evidence; and some of the attributions … are more objective than others, more realistic, or less. *Feeling* (pleasure-unpleasure), *Morality* (positive, negative), and *Reality* (realistic-unrealistic) would seem to be all-encompassing, for every quotation.
>
> Stephenson (1993/1994: 7).

Items therefore become a selection set of the total range of views that are possible.

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Once read, materials are sorted (or ranked) on a scale so that the configuration of data is "attributed a posteriori through interpretation rather than a priori postulation" (Brown, 1980: 54). Stephenson argued that all experience (including thoughts and feelings) is purposeful and deliberate. His conceptualisation of Q-methodology was based on the idea that categories in the world are operant in nature. In other words, there are sets - or systems - of subjective experiences that are made meaningful by participants. Some sorting choices tend to be associated with each other, without being causal. For example, some statements may be sorted into sets because they reflect a persons' group identity, such as being a social worker, a mother and so on – so, a person may consider that social workers can do more harm than parents *and* you can't win with them. Neither view may be causal of the other but the richness of data interpretation is enhanced by the *total* complexity of the Q-sort, amongst other things. Hence, Q has the capacity to allow people to express contestations and complexity but also connected thinking. Survey methods miss out on data of this kind.

Q-sorts are not pre-scaled in the same way as questionnaires and surveys, and participants must actively engage with data in order to evaluate it, in accordance with their world view. Such active participation presents the possibility of the research process to be an empowering experience – it is a process that is *engaged in* rather than a process 'done to' participants (Ellingsen et. al., 2010). Effectively, every statement is compared to every other in the light of participants' perspective on the issue under examination. Participants are therefore experts. The potential for rich and authentic engagement complements the notion that whole participants become research variables. Each factor is appropriately imagined as an average of a group of statistically similar Q-sorts.

5.4.Social work and Q-methodology.

5.4.1. Research traditions and the benefits of Q.

After such an introduction, it is not immediately clear why Q is not more often used in sociology or social work research in the UK. Perhaps if social work had a more entrenched and robust approach to incorporating critical and exploratory research methodologies into practice, Q may have been taken up to a greater extent. However, the explanation about why they are not more often utilised may be *because* critical and exploratory research methodologies have the capacity to demonstrate realities of practice that society and policy makers have a limited appetite for. This is another example of a fundamental tension that

runs through the discipline – that social work is powerfully placed to make difficult experiences visible but in so doing may expose uncomfortable stories. Strong associations with stigma have adverse consequences on the quality of practice itself (Ayre, 2001). In other words, critical social work and interpretivist methodologies have the capacity to challenge dominant assumptions *and* disseminate potentially uncomfortable lived experience. Q-methodology is not the most obvious choice for those hoping to verify politically driven hypotheses, especially when social workers can be formulated to be agents of the state. Results can capture unexpected, complex and/or unusual views which do not necessarily assist the formulation of simple solutions – especially when decisions could conflict with responses to recession and social change. In other words, these methodologies provide answers that reinforce the notion that social work is a complex human, relational activity – making it difficult to justify under-resourcing.

The privileging of positivist ideas about reliability and validity, and the explicitly subjective focus of the methodology may also have influenced the limited take up of Q in the literature. Reliability and validity are the measures of the 'trustworthiness' of outcomes and claims to knowledge (Gray, 2004), and are treated differently in Q compared to other methods. Gray (2004: 345) suggests that the idea of trustworthiness is more useful than traditional ideas about reliability and validity. Golafshani (2003) addresses the concept of reliability and validity in qualitative research and argues that *usefulness* should be the key issue. The focus on trustworthiness means that concepts such as authenticity, transferability and dependability become relevant. These concepts are important in applied practice, where issues are politically sensitive and stigmatised, because it can be argued that the goal of praxeological and cultural change is better facilitated by sharing (and listening) to findings from the ground.

Authenticity is a key strength for Q because it provides an opportunity for participants to voice their own subjective point of view, which can capture complexity and conflict. Q's trustworthiness is high because it has the capacity to construct individual viewpoints, unveil ways of thinking, as well as explore contradictions, conflicts and consensus about the area under scrutiny. It can highlight otherwise rarely disseminated issues that concern particular groups of people involved in safeguarding and child protection. To dismiss subjective data in terms of wider applicability due to issues of reliability and variability does not do justice to

the interesting and creative ways individuals understand and cope with uncommon but interesting situations.

In terms of reliability, the researcher in Q rarely has to handle data absences and is arguably less affected by ambiguous category allocation or issues linked to social desirability. However, concourse coverage relates to face validity. As Stainton Rogers et. al. (1995: 249) note about Q, "people can only tell a story if they have the appropriate statements with which to tell it", the same principle (that practitioners and service-users can only explicitly negotiate issues that are accessible) applies to dissemination. Replicability, for example, is not a desirable measure in studies about subjectivity because it is argued that an individuals' viewpoint can change but this does not make alternative perspectives less valuable, legitimate or insightful. In fact, variability would be expected in a social world comprised of emerging constructions. *Change* is almost universally the goal of social work intervention, which echoes the strengths of Q-methodology. Indeed, Q has been employed as a therapeutic tool due to its usefulness in the evaluation of changes in self-image over time (Bambery, Porcerelli & Ablon, 2007) and after an intervention (see, for example, Williams, 1962; Bambery, Porcerelli & Ablon, 2007).

Other theorists have proposed criteria to evaluate research from an interpretivist position (Angen, 2000). Acknowledging that enquiry has ethical and political implications connects researchers to the issue of whether it has been helpful or meaningful to the population – and, of course, if other explanations have been explored. Interpretivist criteria centralise human experience in processes and scrutinise how the research problem was framed, how respectfully participants were included and how insightful researcher interpretation was, for example. The extent that arguments are convincing and findings are disseminated is also important for evaluating the impact of research on participant groups. Substantive validity (which covers concerns about the transparency of choices about data, researcher assumptions and reflection; Angen, 2000) is a challenge for all research. In this study, a reflexive diary and supervision were useful tools to deconstruct some of these ideas. Arguably, validity was most at risk if statement content, the principle of ordering or any other aspect of the process was unclear because Q-sorts would not accurately represent participant views. Material and interpretations were mirrored back to participants at all stages.

5.4.2. Alternative methods.

As already discussed, more traditional R-methods could have been utilised to examine the substantive focus of this research. However, the limited literature about the experience of TAF members (particularly that of young people and their family members) demanded an exploratory approach. Principally, it was important to uphold values of social justice in this research by seeking to minimise replication of unhelpful assumptions about the concourse. Existing research about the lived experience of TAF work tends to focus on specific user or provider groups in methods that can generate contradictory or incomparable results in meta-analysis (Robbins et. al., 1998). In addition to this, comparing multiple perspectives on the same issue at the same time is uniquely performed with Q-methodology. The way participants combine and organise statements in Q-sorts has the potential to reveal more than a hypothesis-testing approach to item content could – an essential point when appreciating the difference between a trait-orientated approach. Q permits marginalised voices to be heard.

Members of TAFs experience differing degrees of marginalisation in relation to their involvement in safeguarding work. Therefore, Q is especially suited to the evaluation of subjective experience in this arena. It is useful for eliciting opinion in politically sensitive domains because concealed attitudes are at least equally interesting and relevant as those more directly observable. There are many examples of this including Q studies focusing on the study of behaviour linked to HIV (Moss et. al., 1994), and crime seriousness (Carlson & Williams, 1993). Q allows participants to express personal views which they would otherwise be less willing to reveal in more traditional survey methods or through more invasive observational methods. Also, participants can share as much or as little as they wish in their commentaries as they sort.

To avoid the study becoming a 'test' of the ability to report professional guidelines or 'good-enough' parenting, discourse analysis was also not preferred. Steele, Spencer & Aronson (2002) suggest that when individuals believe their behaviour could be attributed to adverse group stereotypes, they experience 'stereotype threat', which is suggested to be a sub-category of social identity threat (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Attitude scales and questionnaires can include 'lie scales' but they are fraught with practical and theoretical issues linked to the construction of norms, the training required to deliver them (and the associated expense of

data collection). More than this, the applicability of results to a study committed to evaluating subjective experience could be problematic if being truthful was measured in a lie scale or something similar – it is not an appropriate tool.

As a former social worker based in the locality it was also anticipated that in-depth, time-consuming interviewing schedules would have posed a problem for the proposed sample. Having been a participant in several dissertation research projects by social work trainees completing their final year placements in the teams I had worked in helped me to appreciate the tendency of respondents to respond in a guarded way. Anxiety about the potential adverse implications of participation (that controversial comments may be identifiable and consequently addressed by the organisation, for instance) outweighed the perceived benefits (primarily that the student would qualify) in some cases. Perhaps I also worried that a qualifying social work student may not fully appreciate the sensitivity of their research questions, and the implications these may have for staff members. This cautious approach was also mirrored in audits and service reviews through anonymous organisational 'health check' questionnaires about practice issues. On one of these occasions, a colleague honestly (but anonymously) reported her feelings about her work pressures and a strategic manager interviewed her at the headquarters. It seemed like a disciplining strategy.

Action research is a useful methodology for social work researcher-practitioners but was not favoured due to the length of time required to collect data and the associated level of disruption to ongoing casework. The key ideas of involvement and improvement were appealing in the case for action research – learning about an organisation whilst seeking to change it meets the criteria for continual development (Lewin, 1946). However, confidentiality, staff turnover and organisational change are just some of the barriers that make action research difficult to evaluate and drive change.

5.4.3. The P-set.

Theoreticians debate the necessary size of the participant sample (the P-set) as much as the size of the Q-set in order to generate stable results. Differences in how authors calculate P sample size relates to their understanding about the relationship between the theoretical rows and columns in factor analysis. In other words, authors who argue Q is purely a mathematical inversion of R-technique suggest there should be a greater number of variables

relative to participants. According to this, Thompson, Frankiewicz & Ward (1983) offer the following formula;

Number of participants = (number of Q-items)/2-1.

For this research, the Thompson et. al. technique provides an ideal figure of 17 participants. However, following the argument that the differences between R and Q approaches are not accurately summarised by a simple inversion, Watts & Stenner (2005) suggest an equal number of participants and items contribute to factor stability, thereby giving a figure of 36 for this research. The actual number of participants in this research was 34, but this would have been higher if an entire TAF did not withdraw consent after data had been collected.

A pragmatic approach to sampling was utilised. Six social work teams were initially identified when focus groups were undertaken but the local authority reorganised services in the time it took for ethical approval to be granted. However, once the new organisational structure was agreed, six cases were selected and consent to meet members of staff, through team managers, was retrieved. Following this, I went into team meetings to discuss possible appropriate 14-16 year-olds for the research. This allowed professionals to formulate the necessary plans and decisions about need, and service-users were not overwhelmed or confused by the additional presence of a researcher early on in the referral process. Ultimately five cases were deemed appropriate, and as already mentioned, one TAF later withdrew consent.

5.5. The Q set.

5.5.1. Definition of the concourse and the sampling of it.

Sampling the Q-set, or the process of developing the materials to be sorted by participants, differs in essential ways from R-technique because items are not intended to measure an existing construct of reference (Brown, 1996). Instead, Q statements (or, more generally, 'materials') are imagined to be a selection from an infinite set of possibilities. Stephenson illustrates this by way of a table;

> There are all sorts of… tables – round, square, oval, oblong, hexagonal, one-legged, four-legged, three-legged, six-legged, wooden, metal, glass, plastic,

> carved, painted, marqueteried, dining…. Ad infinitum. Photographs of such constituted concourse samples from which can be used to determine what table really means to a person.
>
> Stephenson (1980: 885).

Any finite number of statements will never fully traverse the full, theoretical range of possibilities about a particular topic and so a critical approach to the sampling technique of generating the Q-sort was adopted. Of course this is not unique to Q-methodology but it has been argued that there are important differences to bear in mind. In some sense, and whilst the coverage of the theoretical concourse is important, what is of primary interest to the Q-methodological researcher is individual participants' subjective engagement with the sample of material. That is, it is the processes of meaning-making, interpretation and belief that are of value (which is somewhat of a departure from R-methodologies). As Goodling & Guthrie note,

> Theoretically any sample of statements is as acceptable as any other for the same design.
>
> Goodling & Guthrie (1956:70).

This means that the exact composition of statements may be less problematic than it otherwise might be because they are compared and clustered in more complex and idiosyncratic ways than other methods could afford. As Stainton Rogers (1995: 183) notes, a

> less than ideal [set of statements]… invites active configuration by participants ('effort of meaning') [and] may still produce useful results.
>
> Stainton Rogers (1995: 183).

In essence, it is both the construction of the concourse and subsequent arrangement of it that then highlights what an issue really means for individuals.

Structured Q-set sampling was favoured over unstructured sampling, though both techniques can and have been applied in Q research (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Semi-structured

sampling of Q statements was therefore used to balance the risk of under- or over-representing parts of the concourse. This was done to allow participants to express their views without considering the constructs underlying them. Structured sampling is arguably more effective in formulating a representative array of the area being researched - bearing in mind that decisions about the implicit structure of the issue come with their own assumptions. Stephenson advocated for this with a balanced block design. Item selection arises from (informal and formal) inductive processes or by utilising pre-existing theory (Weber, Danielson & Tuler, 2009). This of course, relies on the quality of existing theory. Accordingly, Block critiques a structured sampling technique suggesting that criteria are arbitrary and this can create issues for reproducibility (1961). Whilst the issue of whether analysis is free from the expectations of the interpreter is contentious, different samples from the same concourse have been shown to reflect similar analyses in both R and Q (Thompson et. al., 2012).

In practice, the theoretical concourse is unlikely to be sampled randomly. Instead, sampling has the potential to tune into aspects of the concourse that 'connect' with participants, in their own terms of reference. In line with this, Berger & Luckmann (1966: 71) noted that all knowledge is subjective and social in character. Q-statements are typically controversial, topical and framed in 'common sense' explanation. In the current research, the Q-set was derived from focus groups, academic literature, media reports, personal and professional experience, and policy documents. Statements were refined by mirroring them back to participants, to ground them in an expert-by-experience version of 'common sense'. In this way, the flexibility and robustness of Q reflects how social life is constructed. Stephenson (1980) took this view, arguing for an inductive methodology - a way to "put good reasoning into being and faith". Accordingly, he suggested a fifth rule to Newton's rules of deduction (which include avoiding unnecessary hypotheses, attributing the same causes to the same effects, replicating experimental conditions and using experiments to explore scientific properties). Newton's first four rules of reasoning deal with deductivism. His fifth "suppressed" rule deals with inductive thinking. Stephenson commentated that generating novel theory from data (induction) was possible because subjective hypotheses relate to reality. In other words, subjective hypotheses – which can be revealed through Q-methodology – are of the same sort as phenomena in the natural sciences. As Stephenson put it;

> All consciousness is representable by operant factor structure, we have to suppose the structure is comparable to that postulated by Einstein (1934) and Torrance (1974) as inherent structure for objective reality: The factor structure is the subjective counterpart of the physicist's inherent structure of reality.
>
> Stephenson (1979: 355).

5.5.2. Q-sort administration.

Although some authors have argued for a specific Q-sort protocol (Dziopa & Ahern, 2011), technique varies across the literature. Transparency about the approach adopted in Q studies is therefore important. Q-sorting took approximately 30-60 minutes to complete. Cards, with individual Q-statements written on them (see Appendix two), were shuffled for participants to read and then sort into three roughly equal 'agree', 'disagree' and 'unsure/neutral' piles. Re-reading their personally selected 'agree' pile, participants were then prompted to select the two statements they most strongly agreed with. The researcher subsequently recorded these choices in the extreme left pile of a blank array. Participants then selected the three cards they most strongly agreed with from remaining 'agree' cards and so on until no 'agree' cards remained. The same process then began with 'disagree' cards which were recorded from the right extreme of the array. Remaining 'unsure/neutral' cards were then sorted into the array through the same process of agree-disagree discrimination. Finally, sorts were reviewed for any adjustments after a general suitability check of the positioning of the cards. Cards were shuffled after each arrangement was recorded (using numbers on the reverse) for entry into the computer programme.

Participants were asked if there were any aspects of the arranging procedure that struck them during the sorting of cards and subsequent commentary was recorded. Participants discussed decisions about their extreme choices, any statements they may have felt neutral or confused about and any gaps in the concourse as they perceived it. Contemporaneous notes were taken in order to add rigour to the power of the interpretive process.

5.5.3. Factor analysis of Q-sorts.

The current method was within the parameters of the PQMethod programme (Schmolck, 2002) which is limited at 299 sorts, 200 statements (and 50 within-pile statements), eight

factors and 13 columns (-6 to +6). Data was entered manually for computation and output included a correlation matrix (showing the level of association each sort has with one another in the sample), and associated typifying Q-sorts.

The PQMethod programme (which runs under Windows) calculated Q-sort intercorrelations before performing a principal component analysis in which factors were varimax rotated. There are different types of factor analysis and factor rotation available. Centroid factor analysis has an infinite number of possible solutions. The orthogonal varimax rotation method maximised the amount of variance of each factor (by increasing high loadings and decreasing low loadings) to make interpretation more simple (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Factor rotation was done to achieve the 'best fit' based on correlations. Intercorrelations (and consideration of communal variance) between Q-sorts permits factor analysis, meaning that forcing choice allows person-orientated and variable-orientated units of analysis (McLaren, 1997). The configuration of typifying factors is calculated by weighting the averages of each participant sort that significantly loads onto them.

5.5.4. Interpretation.

The number of factors to extract is as much a source of debate in Q-methodology as it is in R. Determining the legitimacy of factors has been done by including solutions where at least two participant sorts load significantly onto them at the 0.05 level of significance, or if calculated eigenvalues are larger than 1.00. Watts & Stenner (2005) suggest one factor can be extracted for every six sorts as a guide. These strategies seek to find ways of determining underlying patterns and themes in data by prioritising connections between individual sorts. Participant sorts correlating (or, in the language of factor analysis, 'loading') significantly on multiple factors therefore share their viewpoint with others, which reduces the defining characteristics of the different factors that emerge. Thus, loading is a measure of the relationship that individual sorts have with factor arrays. Alternatively, participants who do not significantly load on any emergent factor have statistically non-similar views and can be considered unlike (or not alike enough to) others in the sample. Therefore, factor arrays represent the relative contributory mathematical weight of each item to the character of the opinion set. This means that most statistical information is conferred by the ordering of statements (Brown, 1971: 286).

Stephenson (1953) argued factor analysis did not necessarily prove the existence of a particular system of thinking but instead represented themes that may form the basis of a developing theory. However, one of the challenges for researchers utilising Q is that they are "forced to spend a lot of time and energy explaining and justifying their method" (Kitzinger, 1999: 273). Kitzinger, in discussion of her own five factor research, notes how it was occasionally interpreted to be a summary of "five types of lesbians" (Kitzinger, 1999: 274), indicating how Q can be misunderstood to create 'types' of participants rather than 'stories'.

It is for theoretical reasons that different solutions are explored for their real-world fit. Qualitative interpretation is more useful than sole reliance on statistics (Stenner et. al., 2007) and some suggest that factor analysis is not necessary at all and a Q-sort is meaningfully analysed in itself (Block, 1961: 92; Good, 2010). It is therefore a hermeneutic process (Stenner et. al., 2000) in which the researcher iteratively and dynamically interprets the qualitative content of Q-sorts, commentary and case information. In practice, justifying real-world fit (as no solution is mathematically better than any another) tends to balance having 'too few' (where factors are too homogenous) with 'too many' (where factors are too disparate). This involves interpreting factor solutions by looking at typifying factor arrays (the solution) for meaning. In this research, a four factor solution was derived because the three factor explained less variance, and the five factor made less real-world sense. Outputs from the PQMethod programme are available in Appendix three.

Using Stephenson's table analogy, a simple example of a two factor solution that explained an acceptable level of variance in the sample would imply that two stories or themes had emerged. They may differentiate each other in one aspect (the idea that blue tables are more beautiful than green tables, for example). A three factor solution may further differentiate the sorts by separating the 'blue is beautiful' factor into two further factors (expressing a 'blue and oblong' and a 'blue and square' preference, for example). A four factor solution may force the sample into groups that do not make meaningful sense and divide the arrays into a disorganised, and more fragmented, system whereby some individuals do not load significantly onto any of the four typifying factors and more of the sample is forced out of groupings.

This summary shows that data analysis is an emergent process which can be reflected back to participants to clarify understanding because Q-methodology is a measure of particular people in particular situations. Whilst the idea that Q-methodologists themselves are excessively involved in the interpretation of data, exploring alternative possibilities can provide interesting opportunities to engage in dialogue about the issues. Understandably, interpreting emergent factors is aided by background knowledge of participants and the experience of data collection.

5.6.Focus groups and follow-up interviews.

5.6.1. Richness of interpretation.

Focus groups have the advantage of encouraging collaborative expression, and participants may benefit from greater confidence in the group setting (Burns & Grove, 2005). This does, however, rely on helpful interpersonal dynamics and an environment that promotes conversation. It is also pertinent to note that the group situation can be unhelpful because more dominant members can influence the views that are expressed and restrict the capacity of less dominant members to be heard (Kitzinger, 2005). The latter point may be particularly important in a study focused on subjectivity.

Interviewing is widely adopted in social science research because it permits participants to be present in data through their own voices (Heidinger, 2009; Kuyini et. al., 2009; Kvale, 1996). They allow researchers to act reflexivity to promote cooperative information gathering. However, Obdenakker (2006) highlighted that subconscious social cueing through body language and vocal characteristics, for example, can limit the capacity of researchers to evaluate this. For Q-methodology, it has been argued that follow-up interviews can promote richer analysis of Q-sort factors (Gallagher & Porock, 2010). The detailed follow-up information that was available from semi-structured interviews elaborated the complexities of Q-data and added an additional qualitative element to conceptualising, for instance, how perceptions may be contingent on particular case-based experiences or case characteristics (McNamara, 1999). Whilst there exists important issues around the use of researchers as (biased) tools in the data gathering process (Langhaug et. al., 2010) it is the *meaning* of what interviewees say that is of utility (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, interpreting meaning is an act of cultural transmission and therefore *requires* social enculturation. The semi-structuring of

pre-set questions allows researchers to generate in-situ follow-up questions, which has the advantage of permitting replicability given some flexibility.

There are limitations to the use of interviews because they are typically formal in context and, as a result, set up expectations in service-users and professionals. However, they are analysable and provide an opportunity to explore particular areas of interest in more depth. As part of this, I sought to reflect on my own position as an active participant (rather than a neutral observer) as informed by Holstein & Gubrium (1997). This meant that lines of talk were followed for further clarification. It has also been argued that the artificiality of the interview also enables the researcher to create an agenda and make observable what ordinarily may not be (Potter & Mulkay, 1985). In safeguarding there are various meetings required as part of statutory processes, but these are highly protected by confidentiality rules and often inaccessible to those who are not directly involved. However, all of the information in these could be used in legal proceedings so it would not be surprising that safeguarding TAF members would be guarded in a research interview about their TAF involvement.

Interviews were manually transcribed. NVivo was used to store and code the resulting transcripts in accordance with recommendations that computer based technology should fit with the epistemology of the research rather than the other way around. NVivo technology was used as a tool to develop node-based themes from transcripts. Doing this permitted a system of searching, transporting, coding and storing data in the same theoretical space even as the development of conceptual nodes developed (Richards, 1999). Coding in sets, for instance, allowed saving in multiple and overlapping configurations whilst nodes became points of reference for later qualitative interpretation (Dey, 1993).

5.7.Research ethics.

Whilst it has been argued that increasingly restrictive ethical regulation of research will reduce standards and quality (Hammersley, 2009), the ethical responsibility of the researcher was set out in guidance from Durham University, in the terms of HCPC registration (that is, adherence to the code of conduct for social workers) and the organisation I gathered data in. Core social work values emphasising an inclusive and anti-discriminatory approach were upheld in the research from the outset. That is, in order to minimise the possibility of

marginalisation, participants were involved in the process as much as possible and in a planned way (Jones, 2004). The underlying approach was to manage issues if they arose rather than attempt to eliminate them (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002: 27). For instance, if risk of significant harm had been disclosed, confidentiality would have been compromised (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles, 2008). Individual rights and views were considered equally valid irrespective of gender, age, disability, ethnicity or special needs (Witkin, 1999:7), although the ethics committee reviewing the proposal recommended young people should be at least 14 years old and have no barriers to learning. It was planned that sessions would be sensitively ended if participants appeared to become uncomfortable or distressed, but this issue did not arise. Ensuring that consent was as informed as possible with children and establishing the limits of confidentiality was a perpetual task (Williamson et. al., 2005).

Following recommendations from ethical review, young people in receipt of *early intervention* section 17 child in need social work (rather *harm minimisation* intervention under the remit of child protection) were included in the research. As highlighted in chapter three, crossing the child protection threshold would have made TAF involvement non-voluntary. However, it is important to note that significant harm thresholds have been criticised in relation to child death cases (Brandon et. al., 2008). As was noted in relation to Victoria Climbié,

> Child protection cases do not always come labelled as such.
>
> HM Government (2003: 106).

Accordingly, supervision and negotiation with locality team managers proved essential and there were two occasions when cases were deemed inappropriate because concerns escalated and statutory child protection procedures were initiated.

Researchers have responsibilities to participants, professional colleagues and to wider society because they enter into moral and personal relationships in the course of their work (Gallagher et. al., 1995). Researchers are not neutral (Hammersley, 2009) and the duality of the researcher-practitioner role makes reflection about issues of informed consent important because participants may experience a heightened sense of obligation in this situation. To

handle this, letters, verbal explanation and consent forms were provided each time contact with participants was made. This reiterated participants' right to withdraw at any point with no further consequences. To reduce the likelihood of participants feeling obliged to contribute, no cases were selected if I had active involvement in casework or care planning.

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Durham and the local authority where participants resided. Approval for the focus groups was granted on an initial application, leaving the Q-sort and follow-up interview phase to be granted later. Perhaps indicative of the unfamiliarity ethics panel members had with research of this kind, the NHS panel rejected three applications for the latter phase before finally deciding that NHS approval was not required at all. Whilst there is no definitive answer to this eventual decision, negotiating NHS ethics panels are perhaps made more complex by the range of research applications made to the teams – including life and death dilemmas posed by experimental medicine (Jamie, 2013). This research did not seem to fit and new recommendations were made at each panel hearing. This process exhausted almost a calendar year (11 months), which delayed data collection. However, once approval was granted, the researcher collected all date to minimise effects associated with differential training and motivation. Additional preparation involved selecting minimally distracting but comfortable settings, allowing time for participant questions and preparing for controversial or challenging responses.

5.8.Chapter summary and context.

This chapter has set out the rationale and process of conducting Q-methodology, including the unique strengths it brings to research focused on TAF work. A discussion about positivism and post-positivism introduced the reader to the roots of Q-methodology and Stephenson's original behaviourist conception, as well as the positioning of the current research in terms of social constructivism. Key terminology was introduced and some of the debates surrounding Q-methodology were explored.

Chapter five presented the idea that subjectivity is an under-utilised, but powerful, lens to view human experience in the field of children's safeguarding. Some of the political tensions about disseminating lived experience in social work research were considered. It was reflected that the positivist notions of reliability and validity were inappropriate for research of this kind, and an approach was adopted from the interpretivist perspective. In this, ideas

such as authenticity, transferability and dependability were highlighted to be more appropriate measures of the trustworthiness of data that reliability or validity. At this moment in British social work, praxeological change may be better achieved through methods that capture the voice and lived experience of activity under its remit.

The procedure for collecting materials used in the research was discussed along with the technique of analysis. The way data was gathered was explained in detail in order to build as much transparency into interpretation as possible. A discussion about the function of focus groups (to develop materials through authentic contact) and interviews (to support the analysis of Q-sorts) was provided in order to highlight that the research was primarily a Q-methodological study. Whilst focus group and interview data are analysable in their own right, this research utilised these methods to illuminate factors arising from participant sorting choices. The next chapter discusses results from the research.

Chapter six. Results.

> Is becoming a social worker primarily to be understood in terms of the 'helping', 'caring' or therapeutic content of the job, or according to the official, bureaucratic, legal and even potentially coercive powers and responsibilities it entails?
>
> Jordan (1984:13).

> [It is] of the utmost importance to look at the teeming behaviours confronting us with a fresh and puzzled attitude, willing to take what comes along in terms of very general considerations to start with, believing nothing, and expecting little.
>
> Stephenson (1953:152).

6.1. Introduction.

This chapter outlines the results from factor analysis of the 34 Q-sorts and 24 follow-up interviews. Brief discussion is given to a five and three factor solution before a more in-depth look at the four factor solution is explored. Interpretation was an emergent process (with each of the three, four and five factor solutions derived on the basis of correlations, principal components factor analysis and varimax rotation, as discussed in chapter five). Prior to deep analysis, solutions were preliminarily examined for real-world fit – or, rather, how they made 'sense' in the broader context of the process and interpretation. Interview and commentary data is integrated into the structure of Expert Judge, Anti-Intervention, Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator factor analysis. There is some discussion about themes arising from interview data but this research was first and foremost a Q-methodological study, and this analysis is briefly included to provide an overview of the information.

6.1.1. Selecting four young people. Anna, Beth, Claire and Daniel.

Once ethical approval had been granted, the operations manager for children's early intervention services in the hosting authority introduced me to locality team managers through email. I attended a weekly meeting in six locality areas to introduce the research to

staff, answer preliminary questions and share information packs (see Appendix four). Over the four months after attendance at these meetings, five social workers contacted me by email to discuss a young person aged 14-16 they were working with, who might be suitable for the research. Final agreement about the suitability of the young person and their family to participate was discussed by the case-holding social worker and his/her manager before I contacted families. In all cases, social workers approached caregivers with parental responsibility first to gather preliminary consent. Arrangements were then made for me to meet young people and their families, as well as other members of the TAF. Initial meetings occasionally took place in routine TAF meetings. No GPs responded to requests to participate but most of the remaining members of the identified sample who did not participate were unable to do so as a result of practical arrangements and difficulties agreeing a convenient time to meet.

6.1.2. Focus groups and the development of the Q-set.

The first set of 156 statements arose from focus groups, academic literature, popular text sources (including newspapers and magazines), informal discussion, policy documents and two focus groups with professionals in safeguarding teams. Extensive reading of SCRs was completed. Newspapers included the Guardian, the Telegraph, the Sun and the Daily Mirror. The social work magazine, Community Care, was also searched. Search terms such as 'child protection', 'safeguarding' and 'social worker' were used, along with the names of young people who had high profile stories and the policy/guidance arising from change. Statement generation was the most time-consuming aspect of data collection – and certainly exceeded administration. This is in common with the front-loaded nature of the methodology (Curt, 1994: 120). In Q-methodology, statement generation is not necessarily theory driven but the idea that it is a sampling task (of the infinite concourse) makes it a time-intensive process.

Focus groups were undertaken in two safeguarding and child protection teams in the local authority over working lunches. Lunches took place a few weeks before the reorganisation of the council structure following funding cuts set in motion by the Con-Lib government. Staff members were aware that they were moving to different teams (and sites) at the time focus groups took place. Focus groups were planned at least one month ahead to promote a good rate of attendance. Groups were well attended but due to the nature of emergency crisis work, not all staff could come after agreeing to do so. As a result, there were slight changes

to the composition of follow-up focus groups, which lasted approximately 60-90 minutes each. When introducing focus groups, the research was summarised using the information pack. After consent forms were signed, I recorded the sessions using pen and paper on large flipchart paper so that everyone present could see what I was writing, as I wrote. At least one person in each group opted out of the session being audio recorded. The loose interview schedule shown in the information pack (see Appendix four) was adhered to.

Table 6.1(a) shows that the first focus group (the south team) was made up of six social workers, a manager, a student and an assistant. Seven participants were female and two were male. Four participants were aged 27-35, four were aged 36-40 and one was aged 41-50. As a practitioner, I had worked more closely with the north team which was comprised of four social workers, a manager, a student, an agency social worker and an assistant. All participants were female. Three participants were aged 21-26, three were aged 27-35, one was aged 36-40 and one was aged 41-50. In both focus groups, there was a mix of experience.

Table 6.1(a) to show the composition of focus groups.

South team		
Role	Age	Gender
Social worker	27-35	Female
Social worker	36-40	Female
Social worker	36-40	Female
Social worker	36-40	Male
Social worker	41-50	Male
Social worker	27-35	Female
Social work manager	27-35	Female
Social work student	27-35	Female
Social work assistant	36-40	Female

North team		
Role	Age	Gender
Social worker	27-35	Female
Social worker	27-35	Female
Social worker	36-40	Female
Social work assistant	21-26	Female
Social work student	21-26	Female
Agency social worker	21-26	Female
Social worker	27-35	Female
Social work manager	41-50	Female

6.1.3. Themes arising from focus groups.

The 156 statements developed in the first phase of Q-set data collection were reduced by eliminating items for redundancy. Once a set of fifty statements had been created, they were

piloted in two follow-up focus groups in the original teams to consider how representative they were of the concourse of viewpoints about TAF work. As a result of this collaboration, they were reduced to 33 statements in order to condense the opportunities participants had to express a range of views, and also to remove unclear items. This was done through group discussion. Follow-up focus groups were comprised of the same participants apart from the absence of two female social workers aged 27-35 in the south team, and an agency social worker aged 21-26 in the north team. In addition, a different female social worker aged 41-50 attended the second focus group in the north team. Discussion between members of the review sessions resulted in statements being structured into five common themes – the sense of shame and stigma associated with safeguarding, the moral justification of practice, the limitations of TAFs, policy mismatch with practice and, finally, emotional issues. Participants then focused on each theme in turn and reduced the data set further to 33 statements that covered the concourse in a more succinct way. 33 statements were then increased to 36 following discussion with supervisors, largely due to the need to separate statements into simpler forms and improve clarity. Aspects such as font size and style, phrasing and content were adjusted to aid or elucidate statement meaning.

6.1.4. Characteristics of the P-sample.

The names of all participants were changed to protect their identities. Data was gathered from five TAFs, generating a total of 40 participants. However, this reduced to four TAFs and 34 participants when the concerns about one young person escalated above the threshold for child protection (section 47 of the Children Act) rather than the voluntary child in need threshold (section 17). This meant that the data for all of the people in the fifth TAF was removed from the thesis. 26 out of 34 participants undertook follow-up interviews but of these, 21 requested that the transcripts of their interview not be reproduced in their entirety when the question was asked. As a result of this, follow-up interviews and comments arising from Q-sorting are reproduced as selected excerpts to add depth to analysis whilst adhering to consent agreements. However, one interview is included (in Appendix five) to provide an example of a complete transcript.

The composition of the sample in each of the TAFs is shown in table 6.1(b). TAF one was centred around 'Anna', a 15 year-old girl who had been adopted at age six through a different local authority in the north west. She was receiving social work support and therapeutic

intervention due to early trauma when in the care of her birth family. Anna had been seeking contact with her birth siblings and mother online (using Facebook) when we first met, and had posted sexualised images of herself to older males through online chat rooms. The second time we met for a follow-up interview, she was living with foster carers and had no contact with her adoptive parents. The members of Anna's TAF contributed most to the Hopeful Reflector factor (five out of eleven). Two members contributed to the Expert Judge array and one participant loaded onto the Collaborator array. None of the participants in Anna's TAF contributed to the Anti-Interventionist array and three participants did not load onto any factor.

TAF two was centred around 'Beth', a 14 year-old girl who was engaging poorly at school. There were concerns about the quality of relationships with her peers, her attainment and her attendance. Beth often presented as unkempt and had stated that she was being bullied by other girls in her class. Beth's school grades had steadily declined over the past year. Chaotic, neglectful home conditions had led to initial referral and assessment with the safeguarding team after an anonymous referral had been placed. Early intervention work was in its latter stages and Beth and her family were discharged by social care as the interviews were completed. Most members of Beth's TAF contributed to the Expert Judge factor (four out of nine). Three members contributed to the Anti-Interventionist array and one participant loaded onto the Hopeful Reflector factor. Another participant contributed to the Collaborator array. All participants loaded onto a factor in the four factor solution.

TAF three involved 'Claire', a 16 year-old girl who was opting out of school and had been missing from home on a few occasions. The police had been involved and Claire was subsequently identified as a young person who might be at risk of sexual exploitation. Claire's family had moved home many times. She was living with her aunt and uncle to ease the strain on relationships in the family. Most members of Claire's TAF contributed to the Anti-Interventionist factor (three out of nine) whilst two members contributed to the Expert Judge array. One participant loaded onto the Hopeful Reflector factor and another contributed to the Collaborator factor. Two participants did not load onto any array.

TAF four involved 'Daniel', a 16 year-old boy who was accessing regular respite care at a local authority young person's home for two nights a week. This was a longstanding

arrangement (ongoing since he was 14 years old), which allowed Daniel to engage in therapy and provide his mother with a break from caring responsibilities. Daniel's father was absent and had been so for more than 12 years. His mother had long-term mental health difficulties. Daniel expressed a lot of anger and was open to CAMHS for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder medication and a talking therapy to treat anxiety. Four members of Daniel's TAF loaded separately onto each of the factors, with the fifth member not loading onto any.

Table 6.1(b) shows the composition of the total sample, grouped into the TAFs for each of the above young people.

Table 6.1(b) to show the composition of the sample.

TAF	Q-sort	Follow-up interview	Role	Age	Gender	Factor loading
1: Anna	1a	Yes	Young person	15	Female	3
	1b	No	CAMHS clinician (nurse)	34	Female	None
	1c	Yes	Mother	45	Female	3
	1d	Yes	Social worker, second	32	Male	None
	1e	Yes	Social worker, first	37	Female	3
	1f	Yes	Therapeutic social worker	35	Female	3
	1g	No	Father	46	Male	1
	1h	No	Teacher	41	Male	3
	1i	No	Agency social worker	25	Female	None
	1j	Yes	Student social worker	22	Female	4
	1k	Yes	Team manager	59	Female	1
2: Beth	2a	Yes	Young person	14	Female	2
	2b	Yes	Mother	34	Female	2
	2c	No	Stepfather	33	Male	2
	2d	Yes	Teacher	27	Female	3
	2e	Yes	Team manager	48	Female	1
	2f	Yes	Social worker	37	Female	4
	2g	No	Agency social worker	29	Female	1
	2h	No	Grandfather	51	Male	1
	2i	Yes	Safeguarding link teacher	55	Female	1
3: Claire	3a	Yes	Family worker	23	Female	2
	3b	Yes	Father	42	Female	2
	3c	No	Mother	37	Female	2
	-3d*	Yes	Maternal uncle	33	Male	3

	3e	Yes	Deputy team manager	34	Female	None
	3f	Yes	Young person	16	Female	4
	3g	No	Maternal auntie	34	Female	None
	3h	Yes	School nurse	42	Female	1
	3i	Yes	Social worker	32	Male	1
4: Daniel	4a	Yes	Young person	16	Male	2
	4b	Yes	Manager	46	Male	None
	4c	Yes	Psychiatrist	58	Male	1
	-4d*	Yes	Senior social worker	41	Female	4
	4e	No	Youth advisor	23	Female	3

* Loaded onto the factor negatively.

6.1.5. Accessibility.

Before discussing the factor solution, it may be useful to comment on the process of collecting and interpreting data. For all the reasons already discussed in this thesis, there were many aspects of gathering results that highlighted the practical barriers facing social work research. These barriers partly explained why preparation time and data collection took approximately four times as long as was set out in the original plan. Delays to participant access through gatekeepers, along with the practicalities of negotiating convenient face-to-face appointments could be related to the sensitive and emotive nature of the substantive research area and associated scepticism about its value. For example, ethical approval for the focus group phase was granted relatively quickly but the confirmation letter was returned with an email advising me that the research was unlikely ever to be published. On the other hand, approval for the Q-sort and follow-up interview phase took 11 months, after the NHS review panel rejected it three times before deciding they did not need to review it at all. This confusion about the stakeholders of research ethics for studies like this was compounded by an additional delay of five months as a result of local authority preparation for a planned inspection. Given unexpected changes and delays, the reflective diary that went alongside the research proved to be useful in tracing occasionally disjointed development over time.

As a final general reflection before the solution is discussed, it is worth noting again that data interpretation and data reduction in Q-methodology varies from relatively more popular, traditional approaches. Stephenson believed that participants;

> Expressed [their] subjectivity operantly, modelling it in some manner as a Q-sort.
> It remains [their] viewpoint.
>
> Stephenson (1968:501 cited in Brown, 1972).

In contrast to Stephenson's original behaviourist position, emphasis was given to the existence of multiple stories in individual autobiographical accounts. This idea is compelling in applied practice because it leads to questioning 'whose account is most useful?' This perspective is well-versed in social work. An example of this would include Professor Eileen Munro's advice that biases and errors of judgement could be countered by playing Devil's Advocate – that is, actively exploring opposing views with peers (Munro, 2010).

6.1.6. Introduction to the factor solutions.

Three, four and five factor solutions were derived. The three factor solution explained less variance than the others (55%), and the five factor solution was less concise when interpreted. Appendix six gives a fuller account of the three and five factor solutions.

62.04% of the variance in the sample was explained by the four factor solution. This explanation was favoured because it was the most meaningful arrangement of stories about the Q data, with at least four participants contributing to each of the factors (see table 6.1(c) below). To add depth and richness to interpretation, follow-up interview data was incorporated into analysis of the different arrays.

Table 6.1(c) shows which participants loaded onto the four factor solution.

	TAF one	TAF two	TAF three	TAF four	Total sorts
Factor one	1g, 1k	2e, 2g, 2h, 2i	3h, 3i	4c	n = 9
Factor two	none	2a, 2b, 2c	3a, 3b, 3c	4a	n = 7
Factor three	1a, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h	2d	-3d*	4e	n = 8
Factor four	1j	2f	3f	-4d*	n = 4
None	1b, 1d, 1i	none	3e, 3g	4b	n = 6
Total	n = 11	n = 9	n = 9	n = 5	N = 34

* This sort loaded on the factor negatively.

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6.2.Factor one of the four factor solution. Expert Judge Sorters.

6.2.1. Participants loading onto factor one.

Table 6.2(a) shows that nine out of 34 (26.47%) participants defined this factor, making it representative of the highest proportion of the P-sample. The table shows that no young people at the centre of TAFs were Expert Judges. It also demonstrates the mean age of these participants was 38.9 years, making them the oldest group. This factor was comprised of three males and six females, and included more qualified professionals than any other. (Anna's adoptive father worked as an engineer and Beth's grandfather was a police officer, for example.) Participants from all four TAFs contributed to the Expert Judge array. Six of the nine Expert Judges completed follow-up interviews, as shown in table 6.1(b).

Table 6.2(a) to show Expert Judges.

TAF	Q-sort	Role	Age	Gender
1: Anna	1g	Father	46	Male
	1k	Team manager	59	Female
2: Beth	2e	Team manager	48	Female
	2g	Agency social worker	29	Female
	2h	Grandfather	51	Male
	2i	Safeguarding link teacher	55	Female
3: Claire	3h	School nurse	42	Female
	3i	Social worker	32	Male
4: Daniel	4c	Psychiatrist	58	Male

6.2.2. Factor description.

Chart 6.2(b) shows the Expert Judge array. In general, this factor was depicted by a faith in professional expertise, formal training and evidence-based practice. Participants in this group tended to be critical of cuts to health and social care public spending and argued this had led to reduced quality in work with families where safeguarding was a concern. Expert Judges emphasised the importance of professional suspicion and curiosity because, they suggested, some young people were made safer by regulation and monitoring. Extreme tails of the array are discussed and middle range results are further explored in Appendix seven.

Four factor solution

Chart 6.2(b) to show factor one.

			Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Neglect is very different to abuse.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.			
			Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.			
		Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.		
	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	People who hurt children are evil.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Parents always know best for their children.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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6.2.3. Very strong sorting choices.

Analysis of the most extreme sorting choices of Expert Judges (statements placed in the -4 and +4 sort piles) suggested that these participants felt young people and their families were not monitored and regulated enough when safeguarding concerns have been expressed. Table 6.2(c) shows that very strong disagreement with statements 22 and 6 was supported by participant interviews which indicated the view that too much trust is given to families and that the 'innocence' of parents should not be assumed. Two of the nine Expert Judges mentioned Ellie Butler in their interviews. Ellie's story and public anger directed towards the actors in the case (such as Justice Lady Hogg) had been widely reported at the time data was collected (Evans, 2016). To provide some background, Ellie's father murdered her after an assault in October 2013. Her injuries were compared to a high-speed road traffic accident. High Court judge Lady Justice Hogg overturned a ruling that had placed Ellie in the care of her maternal grandparents as a result of evidence that her father had grievously harmed her in 2007. The case was controversial and her parents had utilised the media to have Ellie returned to their care. The team manager in Beth's TAF, for instance, noted "the most convincing parents are not necessarily the most honest, not least-guilty of harm, look at the Justice Hogg ruling" and Claire's school nurse commented "Ellie Butler shows how suspicion gives children a chance. If [parents] are fine, there's no issue".

The idea that "good social workers are detectives" (Daniel's psychiatrist) echoed very strong agreement with statement 26 and tied in with the importance of "exploring all angles rigorously" (Claire's social worker) to understand what 'a day in the life of the child' felt like because "trusting mams and dads is not above keeping children safe, the child's life is the focus" (the team manager in Anna's TAF). Very strong agreement with statement 18 prompted comments such as "TAFs are only as good as the people in them" (Beth's safeguarding link teacher) and "if we can't keep our word, why should they?" (the team manager in Anna's TAF). However, one Expert Judge, Claire's school nurse, seemed to distance herself from social workers, commenting "maybe social workers get more caught up in the 'keeping in' with families, which leads to mistrust of them with other professionals".

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Table 6.2(c) to show very strong sorting choices of Expert Judges.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Very strongly disagree (-4 pile)	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	22
	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	6
Very strongly agree (+4 pile)	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	26
	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	18

6.2.4. Strong sorting choices.

Strong sorting choices, shown in table 6.2(d), indicated that Expert Judges had confidence in the power of corporate care to be dignifying because it is delivered and monitored by trained professionals (statements 27 and 9). -3 and +3 choices also demonstrated confidence in textbook theory and professional expertise (statements 23 and 9). Participants drew on these ideas to suggest that corporate care had greater evidence-based safeguards built in, thereby reducing risk so that "assumptions are made whether good, bad or indifferent. We know that but then that's how theory comes in and deals with decision-making in a scientific way" (the team manager in Beth's TAF). As part of this, however, participants in this group expressed the view that there were caveats to the capacity and skill of professionals to make informed assumptions (see statement 23). For instance, "the underfunding issue is huge actually. There's not enough money so unqualified staff are doing qualified jobs" (Beth's safeguarding link teacher) and the adverse impact of funding cuts was mirrored in "staff on prequalified salaries are carrying risks without the protections that come with a title – like a governing body and union... And there's no way an established manager will defend one of those 'new roles', they'd hang them out to dry" (Claire's social worker).

Strong agreement with statements 28, 16 and 3 indicated that Expert Judges felt TAF workers were too busy to meaningfully help service-users, and that this situation was unsafe. Part of the rationale for this was that cuts had adversely impacted the capacity of professionals so that "you can't get hold of [social workers] when you need them" (Daniel's psychiatrist) and "services are stretched beyond goodwill and I know we're not supposed to, but more often now I think [service-users] don't have a chance" (Claire's social worker).

Table 6.2(d) to show strong sorting choices of Expert Judges.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Strongly disagree (-3 pile)	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	27
	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	23
	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	9
Strongly agree (+3 pile)	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	28
	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	16
	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	3

6.3. Factor two of the four factor solution. Anti-Intervention Sorters.

6.3.1. Participants loading onto factor two.

Table 6.3(a) shows that seven out of 34 (20.59%) participants defined this factor. The table shows that mainly young people and their family members formed this group. In fact, there was only one participant who was not a family member who was included in the Anti-Interventionist group (Claire's family worker). That is, Anti-Interventionists were largely *subject to* TAFs. This factor was comprised of three males and four females. No members of Anna's TAF contributed to this factor, but all others did. The mean age of Anti-Interventionists was 28.4 years, making its members the youngest of all the four factors. Five of the seven Anti-Interventionists undertook follow-up interviews, as shown in table 6.1(b).

Table 6.3(a) to show Anti-Interventionists.

TAF	Q-sort	Role	Age	Gender
2: Beth	2a	Young person	14	Female
	2b	Mother	34	Female
	2c	Stepfather	33	Male
3: Claire	3a	Family worker	23	Female
	3b	Father	42	Male
	3c	Mother	37	Female
4: Daniel	4a	Young person	16	Male

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6.3.2. Factor description.

Chart 6.3(b) shows the factor two array of the four factor solution. In general, this factor demonstrated the greatest amount of criticism about the rationale and actions of interventions under the remit of children's safeguarding. Participants expressed a sense of alienation from processes and noted feelings of resentment about being treated with suspicion. Anti-Interventionists suggested that TAF work imposed unnecessary change on individuals and placed service-users in the position of being passively 'done to' despite the great deal of knowledge and life experience apparent through family and community involvement. Extreme tails of the array are discussed and middle range results are further explored in Appendix seven.

Four factor solution

Chart 6.3(b) to show factor two.

			Neglect is very different to abuse.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.			
			People who hurt children are evil.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.			
		Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Parents always know best for their children.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.		
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	
Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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6.3.3. Very strong sorting choices.

Table 6.3(c) shows the most extreme sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists. These participants suggested that children and their families are not empowered by safeguarding processes because parents are treated with excessive suspicion and family members are not involved in decisions about them (statements 25 and 2). Claire's father commented "you feel like a criminal and they've already made their mind up before they meet you". Given the almost complete representation of service-users in this factor, the very strong view that their voice was not heard may reflect underlying opinion that service-users are "not treated equally or respectfully a lot of the time" (Beth's mother). Participants contributing to this array appeared to be concerned that there was an unhelpful, accusatory and suspicious culture led by professionals in the field. During Q-sorting, Claire's mother suggested "there is a big unspoken gap between us and them [professionals] – they know, or they think they know, everything about our lives but we know nothing about them". Similarly, Beth's stepfather commented "don't be like 'oh we are equals'… because we are on different planets… when you know decisions have already been made about me and the kids" during Q-sorting.

Equally importantly, Anti-Interventionists took a firm stance about the rights of young people to be loved and cared for by their families with minimal interference. For example, "children need to know where they come from… where we live it's all about sticking together… we might not have the money but we have the love and time to raise them" (Beth's mother). In other words, Anti-Interventionists took the view that being loved and cared for - within the cultural constructions set by families and communities - was important. Claire's family worker problematised this idea of harm, however, with "every child has the right not to be harmed and to be cared for but the difficult bit is working out exactly what workers can add to what is already there".

Table 6.3(c) to show very strong sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Very strongly disagree (-4 pile)	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	25
	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	12
Very strongly agree (+4 pile)	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	7
	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	2

6.3.4. Strong sorting choices.

Table 6.3(d) shows that Anti-Interventionists strongly disagreed that greater transparency when sharing information was appropriate (statement 10) because, as Claire's family worker noted, "if you look hard enough, the more you find out and then the more you can read into it. It means that day-to-day stuff, a bit of depression, arguments with the neighbours, and then… one and one makes ten". Anti-Interventionists tended to argue that "social services stick their nose into stuff that's none of their business" (Beth) and appeared to feel averse to more than short term intervention (statement 4) because "complicated families are every family. If you mean problem families even then it's not long term, one size fits all help, it's specific to that family or it's a waste of time" (Claire's family worker). There was a theme in talk from Anti-Interventionists about feeling attacked by TAF work, as illustrated in commentary. For example, "it's not being mentally ill just because you don't agree with them" (Beth, about statement 32) and "what is and what should be are total opposites. Social workers are like the police, they can get away with anything" (Beth's stepfather during Q-sorting). Some members of this group commented that involvement with safeguarding professionals can be a shaming experience as Claire's father noted, "you get proper showed up when they are on your back".

Mirroring very strong sorting choices, these participants 'defended' their experience and knowledge against challenges from social workers more than other TAF professionals (statements 35, 30 and 26 shown in table 6.3(d) below). In a related way, a sense of value was attributed to the lived experience of being part of a locality and the way that those in receipt of services negotiated this. For example, Claire's father said "I'm proud to be working class, there's dignity in it. I bring my kids up to be proud and… when social

workers come in and [tell me] it's causing harm it does piss me off". Participants appeared frustrated when expressing their views in TAFs, explaining that they felt that safeguarding processes did not allow them to be open and honest because "you end up telling them what they want so they can go, to be honest" (Daniel).

Table 6.3(d) to show strong sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Strongly disagree (-3 pile)	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	32
	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	10
	Complicated families need more than short term help.	4
Strongly agree (+3 pile)	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	35
	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	30
	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	26

6.4. Factor three of the four factor solution. Hopeful Reflector Sorters.

6.4.1. Participants loading onto factor three.

Table 6.4(a) shows that eight out of 34 (25.53%) participants defined this factor, making it the second largest group of participants. Hopeful Reflectors were made up of one person from Beth's, Claire's and Daniel's TAF, and five members of Anna's. However, Claire's maternal uncle contributed to this factor negatively, meaning that his views were a reversal of the array, perhaps making him an 'Anti-Hopeful Reflector'. The Hopeful reflector group was comprised of two males and six females. Five out of eight Hopeful Reflectors completed follow-up interviews, as shown in table 6.1(b).

Table 6.4(a) to show Hopeful Reflectors.

TAF	Q-sort	Role	Age	Gender
1: Anna	1a	Young person	15	Female
	1c	Mother	45	Female
	1e	Social worker	37	Female
	1f	Therapeutic social worker	35	Female
	1h	Teacher	41	Male
2: Beth	2d	Teacher	27	Female
3: Claire	-3d*	Maternal uncle	33	Male
4: Daniel	4e	Youth advisor	23	Female

* Loaded onto the factor negatively.

6.4.2. Factor description.

Chart 6.4(b) shows the factor three array of the four factor solution. In general, this factor demonstrated the view that social workers were helpful and early intervention is central to the wellbeing of young people, whose rights and needs were the rationale for all professional involvement. These participants took a liberal, inclusive and respectful view about culture and relationships between service-users and providers. Hopeful Reflectors reported that good collaboration meant that individuals did what they said they were going to do and learned from their mistakes. Recovery and therapy seemed important dimensions to these participants in particular. Extreme tails of the array are discussed and middle range results are further explored in Appendix seven.

Four factor solution

Chart 6.4(b) to show factor three.

			There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.			
			Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	People who hurt children are evil.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.			
		People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.		
	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Parents always know best for their children.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Neglect is very different to abuse.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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6.4.3. Very strong sorting choices.

Analysis of the most extreme sorting choices for Hopeful Reflectors, shown in table 6.4(c), suggested a view that social workers "work with the intention of doing good" (Anna) and "no-one hears about the fact children are safer because social workers exist and work well over and above what they should out of goodwill" (Anna's first social worker). Such ideas reflect the choice of statements 24 and 11. In this way, Hopeful Reflectors tended to believe, like Anna's adoptive mother, that parents/carers "have such a privileged place in a child's life, that they can do far more harm than a social worker" (statement 24). Anna's therapeutic social worker commented that "social workers are often parents too so the two categories aren't always separate... being a mam has made me understand even more that most of us… do our best". Hopeful Reflectors tended to very strongly agree that every child has the right to be loved and cared for and early help prevents families getting into crisis (statements 7 and 5), occasionally linking the two in interviews. For example, Beth's teacher said "nowadays people don't think it's… only other people who need help or support, a bit of… reassurance and empathy, can set people on a better path".

Table 6.4(c) to show very strong sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Very strongly disagree (-4 pile)	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	24
	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	11
Very strongly agree (+4 pile)	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	7
	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	5

6.4.4. Strong sorting choices.

Table 6.4(d) demonstrates that Hopeful Reflectors felt that parents/carers are treated with enough suspicion but countered this with a view that families were trusted to make positive changes (statement 6) "because there is such a thing as positive risk taking, yes the stakes are high but we should not… be draconian" (Beth's teacher). In line with this, safeguarding children seemed to be looked at in terms of a "shared responsibility because the best safeguards come from people who are going to be in a child's life longer term like family or a teacher" (Anna's therapeutic social worker) which was echoed by Anna's mother who

suggested "teachers, everyone, they're all involved with protecting children". The view that social work is not the domain of social workers alone (statement 14), was further backed up by statements 18 and 15 because, to Hopeful Reflectors, "collaboration is the safety net" (Beth's teacher). At the same time, Hopeful Reflectors strongly agreed that workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made because "if you can prevent a child being hurt, you should learn about it" (Anna). This group referred to the impact of serious cases on practice and how ways of learning could be more helpful because "no-one had learnt lessons from Baby P" (Anna's first social worker). There was a sense that collaboration was very important to this group, but that effectiveness depended on group dynamics.

Table 6.4(d) to show strong sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Strongly disagree (-3 pile)	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	25
	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	14
	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	6
Strongly agree (+3 pile)	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	21
	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	18
	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	15

6.5. Factor four of the four factor solution. Collaborator Sorters.

6.5.1. Participants loading onto factor four.

Table 6.5(a) shows that four out of 34 (11.76%) participants defined this factor, making it the most marginal group. The table below shows only social workers and one young person loaded onto this group. All Collaborators were female. One member of each TAF contributed to this factor although the senior social worker in Daniel's TAF negatively contributed to it, perhaps making this participant an 'anti-Collaborator'. The mean age of Collaborators was 29 years. However, if only positive loading participants were included, the average age for participants was 23.7 years. Four out of four Collaborators completed follow-up interviews, as shown in table 6.1(b).

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Table 6.5(a) to show Collaborators.

TAF	Q-sort	Role	Age	Gender
1: Anna	1j	Student social worker	22	Female
2: Beth	2f	Social worker	33	Female
3: Claire	3f	Young person	16	Female
4: Daniel	4d	Senior social worker	41	Female

6.5.2. Factor description.

Chart 6.5(b) shows the fourth factor of the four factor solution. In general, this factor demonstrated a view that TAF members were citizens with varying roles and duties, but also with a shared responsibility to work to safeguard young people. Collaborators expressed the view that honesty was at the heart of good practice and social stigma was a barrier to progress. Collaborators were advocates of early intervention and individualised, flexible support. Extreme tails of the array are discussed and middle range results are further explored in Appendix seven.

Four factor solution

Chart 6.5(b) to show factor four.

			Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	People who hurt children are evil.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.			
			Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Parents always know best for their children.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.			
		Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.		
	Neglect is very different to abuse.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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6.5.3. Very strong sorting choices.

Table 6.5(c) shows the very strong sorting choices of Collaborators. These participants emphasised their firm view about shared responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of young people (see statement 14). These participants felt most strongly that safeguarding is not done solely by social workers but "is everyone's job" (the student social worker in Anna's TAF) and "if you notice something then you should let someone you trust know to keep children safe from dangers" (Claire). Collaborators also offered that children and their families should be more involved in decisions that affect them. They often related this to their own experience, like Beth's social worker who said "well, when I am a service-user, I expect to be treated like a human being with rights and choices, so I do that when I am in work". Collaborators felt that young people's rights should be paramount, and this was reflected in the view that parents/carers should not be assumed innocent until proven otherwise and that workers should put themselves in their shoes. As the student social worker in Anna's TAF put it, "the focus of all work should be on life from the perspective of the child" and Beth's social worker said "children are the point of all the meetings. Parents are important but that can be helped as well".

Table 6.5(c) to show very strong sorting choices of Collaborators.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Very strongly disagree (-4 pile)	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	22
	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	14
Very strongly agree (+4 pile)	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	26
	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	2

6.5.4. Strong sorting choices.

As table 6.5(d) shows, Collaborators felt strongly that working with social workers can be very helpful when there is collaboration and integrated working ("it works well when they work with us rather than against us"; the student social worker in Anna's TAF). In a similar way, Collaborators also took the strong view that form filling does not turn people into numbers because "it's what you do with numbers that matters, it's the face-to-face personal bit that counts" (Beth's social worker). However, Collaborators also acknowledged that

people experience barriers "such as stigma of social workers" (Beth's social worker) that causes everyone to worry when safeguarding is mentioned (statement 17). To illustrate this, Claire commented "it can be scary because you think 'oh that means I'm going into care' but it doesn't mean that".

Collaborators also expressed the opinion that early help prevents crisis intervention because abuse and neglect are often hidden (statements 5 and 34). As Claire commented, "if a family got help before things got really bad then that would be easier to fix". Collaborators also appeared to feel strongly that neglect and abuse were not different and that "it is our job to prevent any harm, yes to understand and debate it… but in my experience they happen at the same time" (the student social worker in Anna's TAF) and "people who are abused often do not understand that there is a way out because there's nothing to compare it, it's their normal" (Beth's social worker). In contrast, the senior social worker in Daniel's TAF (who loaded negatively onto the Collaborator factor) said "neglect is a sub-category of abuse but understanding about it has been slowed down because neglect and hopelessness can get entrenched in families".

Table 6.5(d) to show strong sorting choices of Collaborators.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Strongly disagree (-3 pile)	Neglect is very different to abuse.	33
	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	11
	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	8
Strongly agree (+3 pile)	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	34
	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	17
	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	5

6.6. Differences between the factors.

Having explored the factors in isolation, the differences *between* factor pairs provide further insight into the structure of the views expressed in the sample.

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6.6.1. Defining characteristics of Expert Judges.

Chart 6.6(a) shows the 16 statements that distinguished Expert Judges from the other three factors derived in the solution. Distinguishing items are based on the relative Z scores of statements. Z scores for all statements and all factors are shown in Appendix eight. Z scores are dependent on sort pile location. That is, a Z score of zero implies that Expert Judges tended to sort the statement into the same pile as other participants. If the Z score is 1, then it is one standard deviation above the mean, if minus -1, then it is one standard deviation below the mean.

Statements that distinguished expert Judges from other factors at $p>0.01$ are highlighted in yellow. Statements that distinguished at $p>0.05$ are highlighted in orange.

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Four factor solution

Chart 6.6(a) to show factor one distinguishing statements.

KEY:

* = p>0.01
** = p>0.05

			Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Neglect is very different to abuse.**	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.**			
			Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.*	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.			
		Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.*	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.*	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.		
	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.*	People who hurt children are evil.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.**	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.*	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Parents always know best for their children.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.**	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.**	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.*	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.*	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.*	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.*	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.*	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.**	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Highlighted in yellow on chart 6.6(a), and shown in table 6.6(b), Expert Judges differed from other factors at $p<0.01$ significance for ten statements. Based on relative sorting choices of these participants, the Expert Judge array was distinguished by the view that children and their families should not be more involved in decisions that affect them and that they were already given enough trust to make changes expected of them (statements 2 and 6). Expert Judges were also distinguished by the view that there was not enough help for families (statement 28) – something they strongly believed. The idea that safeguarding was mainly the job of social workers (statement 4) and that money should be spent on workers rather than local resources (statement 36) also reflected the value these participants placed on defined roles and associated skill. Expert Judges also expressed the opinion that young people are treated with dignity in corporate care (statement 27) and textbook theory is more valuable than experience (statement 9) to a significantly greater extent than other factor-loaders.

Table 6.6(b) to show distinguishing statements on the Expert Judge array ($p<0.01$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers (28).	3 z=1.17	1 z=0.22	-1 z=-0.47	0 z=0.14
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers (14).	1 z=0.44	-2 z=-0.89	-3 z=-1.34	-4 z=-2.01
Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them (2).	1 z=0.39	4 z=1.94	2 z=1.05)	4 z=1.81
Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems (36).	-2 z=-0.71	2 z=1.00	0 z=0.24	1 z=0.43
Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system' (27).	-3 z=-1.09	0 z=0.09	-1 z=-0.47	-1 z=-0.14
Textbook theory is less valuable than experience (9).	-3 z=-1.51	0 z=-0.10	1 z=0.68	1 z=0.21
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives (6).	-4 z=-1.96	1 z=0.46	-3 z=-1.26	-2 z=-0.84

Table 6.6(c) shows that Expert Judges felt more strongly than Collaborators that every child has the right to be loved and cared for (statement 7). Collaborators seemed to emphasise co-working to a relatively greater extent than Expert Judges. In contrast, however, Anti-Interventionists and Hopeful Reflectors appeared to differ with Expert Judges on this point

because they problematised the assumption that the intention to love and care was more important than other needs.

Expert Judges also felt 'you can win' with social workers (statement 11) to a greater extent than Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators who seemed to emphasise a less dichotomous (win/lose) approach in the evaluation of success. In contrast, however, Anti-Interventionists agreed with this idea – emphasising again their critical view of social worker action.

Expert Judges seemed to hold the relatively more sceptical view that social workers can do more harm than parents/carers (statement 24) compared to Hopeful Reflectors. However, they appeared to be less sceptical than Anti-Interventionists (who were much more critical of social workers) and Collaborators (who tended to prioritise *shared* accountability).

Table 6.6(c) to show further distinguishing statements on the Expert Judge array ($p<0.01$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Every child has the right to be loved and cared for (7).	2 z=0.96	4 z=1.88	4 z=2.16	-1 z=-0.63
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 z=-0.56	2 z=1.11	-4 z=-1.35	1 z=0.22
You can't win when you're involved with social workers (11).	-1 z=-0.60	1 z=0.28	-4 z=-1.41	-3 z=-1.50

Highlighted in orange on chart 6.6(a), and shown in table 6.6(d), Expert Judges differed significantly from other factors at $p<0.05$ for six statements. Taking account of relative sorting choices for these statements, the Expert Judge array was also distinguished by the view that TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families (statement 16) and funding cuts have made child protection less safe (statement 3).

Remaining distinguishing statements at $p<0.05$ demonstrated another pattern of views. Expert Judges held stronger views than Anti-Interventionists, but were less committed than Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators for statements 10, 5, 35 and 33. Therefore, the ideas that TAF members need to be more open when sharing information, early help prevents families getting into crisis, customs in a local area are important because children can be

raised in different ways and neglect is very different to abuse characterised the view of Expert Judges to a greater extent than the more sceptical Anti-Interventionists, and to a lesser extent than the more moderate remaining factors.

Table 6.6(d) to show further distinguishing statements on the Expert Judge array ($p<0.05$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families (16).	3 z=1.61	2 z=1.10	-2 z=-1.08	-2 z=-0.72
Funding cuts have made child protection less safe (3).	3 z=1.44	0 z=0.19	1 z=0.69	2 z=0.85
People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information (10).	2 z=1.03	-3 z=-1.45	1 z=0.50	1 z=0.30
Early help prevents families getting into crisis (5).	1 z=0.64	-2 z=-0.85	4 z=1.69	3 z=1.36
Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well (35).	1 z=0.22	3 z=1.38	2 z=1.04	-2 z=-0.50
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 z=-0.30	-1 z=-0.83	2 z=0.99	-3 z=-1.51

In summary, the Expert Judge array valued the application of theory alongside an approach characterised by curiosity and professional expertise in order to safeguard young people. They expressed a belief that budget cuts were harmful to collaborative work in this field.

6.6.2. Defining characteristics of Anti-Interventionists.

Chart 6.6(e) shows the 15 highlighted statements that distinguished Anti-Interventionists from the other factors, based on Z scores.

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Four factor solution

Chart 6.6(e) to show factor two distinguishing statements.

KEY:

* = p>0.01
** = p>0.05

			Neglect is very different to abuse.**	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.*	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.			
			People who hurt children are evil.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.			
		Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Parents always know best for their children.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.**	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.		
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.*	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.*	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	
Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.*	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.*	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.*	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.*	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.*	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
People listen to my voice in my TAF.*	Complicated families need more than short term help.*	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.**	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.*	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.**	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Highlighted in yellow on chart 6.6(e), and shown in table 6.6(f), Anti-Interventionists differed from other factors at $p<0.01$ significance for eleven statements. Considering the sorting choices made about these statements, the Anti-Interventionist array was differentiated by the view that the media have got it right about social workers (statement 19), they can do more harm than parents/carers (statement 24) and 'you can't win' with them (statement 11). Anti-Interventionists also took the view that their voice was not heard in their TAF (statement 12), professionals ask families to change without showing them how - even when children have been raised the same way for generations (statement 30) and families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives (statement 6) to a much greater extent than participants loading onto other factors. Expert Judges, Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators tended to believe that abuse and neglect were often hidden (statement 34) whereas Anti-Interventionists were more neutral in their position. The Anti-Interventionist array was also distinguished by the idea that early help does not prevent crisis (statement 5) and complicated families do not need more than short term help (statement 4). Finally, they reported that greater openness when sharing information in TAFs was not needed (statement 10) and TAFs are not well or good, even if members did what they said they were going to do (statement 18).

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Table 6.6(f) to show distinguishing statements on the Anti-Interventionist array ($p<0.01$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations (30).	-1 z=-0.45	3 z=1.31	-2 z=-1.14	-2 z=-0.79
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 z=-0.56	2 z=1.11	-4 z=-1.35	1 z=0.22
The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire (19).	-1 z=-0.59	2 z=0.93	-1 z=-0.69	-2 z=-1.02
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives (6).	-4 z=-1.96	1 z=0.46	-3 z=-1.26	-2 z=-0.84
You can't win when you're involved with social workers (11).	-1 z=-0.60	1 z=0.28	-4 z=-1.41	-3 z=-1.50
TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do (18).	4 z=1.66	1 z=0.27	3 z=1.23	2 z=1.31
Abuse and neglect are often hidden (34).	2 z=1.07	0 z=-0.27	2 z=0.91	3 z=1.64
Early help prevents families getting into crisis (5).	1 z=0.64	-2 z=-0.85	4 z=1.69	3 z=1.36
Complicated families need more than short term help (4).	1 z=0.68	-3 z=-1.02	1 z=0.49	0 z=0.14
People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information (10).	2 z=1.03	-3 z=-1.45	1 z=0.50	1 z=0.30
People listen to my voice in my TAF (12).	-1 z=-0.51	-4 z=-1.72	0 z=-0.06	1 z=0.22

Highlighted in orange on chart 6.6(e), and shown in table 6.6(g), Anti-Interventionists differed from other factors at $p>0.05$ for four statements. The Anti-Interventionist view of services to be ineffective and too powerful prior to cuts was reiterated by other factors which were distinguished by a stronger sense that funding cuts have made child protection less safe (statement 3).

Table 6.6(g) also shows that Anti-Interventionists felt less strongly than Expert Judges that TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families (statement 16) but more strongly than Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators about this. In the case of the latter two factors, a greater faith in the benefits of TAF work may have accounted for this.

Anti-Interventionists did not feel as strongly as Collaborators that no-one should assume they know best how to help families (23) and neglect is similar to abuse (statement 33). This perhaps echoes the view of Collaborators that evidence-informed practice supports decision-making and that it is the lived experience of neglect and abuse that is most important when defining it.

Table 6.6(g) to show distinguishing statements on the Anti-Interventionist array ($p<0.05$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families (16).	3 z=1.61	2 z=1.10	-2 z=-1.08	-2 z=-0.72
Funding cuts have made child protection less safe (3).	3 z=1.44	0 z=0.19)	1 z=0.69	2 z=0.85
No-one should assume they know best about how to help families (23).	-3 z=-1.27	0 z=-0.07	-1 z=-0.86	2 z=0.64
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 z=-0.30	-1 z=-0.83	2 z=0.99	-3 z=-1.51

In summary, the Anti-Interventionist array was clearly defined by a view that professional intervention was undesirable.

6.6.3. Defining characteristics of Hopeful Reflectors.

Chart 6.6(h) shows the eight highlighted statements distinguished Hopeful Reflectors from the other factors based on Z scores.

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Four factor solution

Chart 6.6(h) to show factor three distinguishing statements.

KEY:

* = p>0.01
** = p>0.05

			There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.*	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.*			
			Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	People who hurt children are evil.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.			
		People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.		
	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.*	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.*	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.*	
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.*	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Parents always know best for their children.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Neglect is very different to abuse.*	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.**	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Highlighted in yellow on chart 6.6(h), and shown in table 6.6(i), Hopeful Reflectors differed significantly from other factors at $p<0.01$ for six statements. These statements suggest that Hopeful Reflector views were distinguished by a belief that neglect and abuse were very different (statement 33), parents/carers are most likely to harm their children (statement 24) and everyone does not start 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned (statement 20). Learning lessons from serious mistakes (statement 21) was more important to Anti-Interventionists relative to other factors. They also tended to agree significantly less than the other three arrays that TAF workers should put themselves 'in the shoes' of young people they work with (statement 26).

Hopeful Reflectors were more ambivalent than Collaborators about the idea that safeguarding causes worry (statement 17) - who tended to agree with this idea. This ambivalence was also significantly different to Expert Judges and Anti-Interventionists who tended to disagree that safeguarding was anxiety provoking.

Table 6.6(i) to show distinguishing statements on the Hopeful Reflector array ($p<0.01$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made (21).	0 z=0.03	1 z=0.44	3 z=1.26	0 z=-0.11
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 z=-0.30	-1 z=-0.83	2 z=0.99	-3 z=-1.51
TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with (26).	4 z=1.66	3 z=1.58	1 z=0.84	4 z=1.71
Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned (17).	-1 z=-0.48	-1 z=-0.73	0 z=1.21	3 z=1.31
Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned (20).	0 z=0.12	1 z=0.68	-1 z=-0.58	1 z=0.46
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 z=-0.56	2 z=1.11	-4 z=-1.35	1 z=0.22

Highlighted in orange on chart 6.6(h), and shown in table 6.6(j), Hopeful Reflectors felt there was enough help for families to make improvements (statement 28) which was significantly different to other factors at $p<0.05$ - perhaps reiterating their optimism about the beneficial power of services. Hopeful Reflectors agreed to a lesser extent than Anti-Interventionists and

Collaborators that children and their families should be more involved in decisions but to a greater extent than Expert Judges (statement 2).

Table 6.6(j) to show distinguishing statements on the Hopeful Reflector array ($p<0.05$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them (2).	1 z=0.39	4 z=1.94	2 z=1.05	4 z=1.81
There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers (28).	3 z=1.17	1 z=0.22	-1 z=-0.47	0 z=0.14

In summary, Hopeful Reflectors took the view that the lived experience of young people was complex, and a faith in social work action through continuous learning from mistakes was important. They felt that people do not act with anxiety when involved in (generally helpful) safeguarding processes.

6.6.4. Defining characteristics of Collaborators.

Chart 6.6(k) shows the nine highlighted statements distinguished Anti-Interventionists from the other factors, based on Z scores.

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Four factor solution

Chart 6.6(k) to show factor four distinguishing statements.

KEY:

* = p>0.01
** = p>0.05

			Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.**	People who hurt children are evil.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.			
			Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Parents always know best for their children.*	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.*			
		Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.		
	Neglect is very different to abuse.**	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.**	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.**	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.*	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.**	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.*	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Highlighted in yellow on chart 6.6(k), and shown in table 6.6(l), Collaborators differed from other factors at $p<0.01$ significance for four statements. Collaborators indicated they felt that everyone gets worried when safeguarding is mentioned (statement 17) and form filling does not turn people into numbers (statement 8), which differentiated them from the other factors. The statement that parents always know best (statement 29) appeared to be a more contingent, context-dependent concept for Collaborators, whilst participants loading onto the other factors tended to disagree. Collaborators agreed to a lesser extent than Anti-Interventionists that social workers can do more harm than parents (statements 24), but to a lesser extent than Expert Judges and Hopeful Reflectors.

Table 6.6(l) to some distinguishing statements on the Collaborator array ($p<0.01$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned (17).	-1 z=-0.48	-1 z=-0.73	0 z=0.21	3 z=1.31
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 z=-0.56	2 z=1.11	-4 z=-1.35	1 z=0.22
Parents always know best for their children (29).	-2 z=-0.97	-1 z=-0.74	-2 z=-1.11	0 z=-0.12
Lots of form filling turns people into numbers (8).	0 z=-0.08	-1 z=-0.61	0 z=-0.23	-3 z=-1.41

Highlighted in orange on chart 6.6(k), and shown in table 6.6(m) shows that Collaborators felt no-one should assume they know best how to help families (statement 23), customs in a local area are not as important as other variables (statement 35), every person (rather than every child) has the right to be loved and cared for (statement 7), neglect and abuse are similar (statement 33) and safeguarding is a shared responsibility (statement 14). Concurrence with these ideas made Collaborators differ at $p<0.05$ compared to Expert Judges, Anti-Interventionists and Hopeful Reflectors.

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Table 6.6(m) to show distinguishing statements on the Collaborator array ($p<0.05$).

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
No-one should assume they know best about how to help families (23).	-3 z=-1.27	0 z=-0.07	-1 z=-0.86	2 z=0.64
Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well (35).	1 z=0.22	3 z=1.38	2 z=1.04	-1 z=-0.50
Every child has the right to be loved and cared for (7).	2 z=0.96	4 z=1.88	4 z=2.16	-1 z=-0.63
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 z=-0.30	-1 z=-0.83	2 z=0.99	-3 z=-1.51
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers (14).	1 z=0.44	-2 z=-0.89	-3 z=-1.34	-4 z=-2.01

In summary, Collaborators recognised barriers to engaging in safeguarding processes (such as anxiety) and seemed to problematise taken-for-granted ideas to a greater extent than others. This even included the controversial idea that every person (rather than every child) has the right to be loved and cared for.

6.6.5. Consensus statements.

It is perhaps important to bear in mind that factor analysis provides a way of organising and presenting data, but Q-sorts are analysable in their own right (Good, 2010). In other words, factor analysis characterises the sample by areas of consensus that are not entirely captured by looking at factors in isolation. The four factor solution summarised Q-sorts so that between-group differences were maximised and within-group differences were minimised. Similarities between each of the factor pairs, however, represent shared viewpoints across the P-sample.

There was one consensus statement (differing non-significantly at $p<0.01$) between Expert Judge, Anti-Interventionist, Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator factors shown in table 6.7(a). In other words, this statement did not distinguish participants loading onto any array because they tended to slightly or moderately disagree that policy strictness promotes the safety of young people in the context of TAF work. Table 6.6(n) shows which sort pile this statement was placed in, on each of the four factor arrays.

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Table 6.6(n) to show the consensus statement across factors.

Statement.	Expert Judges.	Anti-Interventionists.	Hopeful Reflectors.	Collaborators.
If policies were stricter, children would be safer (1).	-2 z=-0.91	-2 z=-0.84	-1 z=-0.47	-1 z=-0.51

Appendix nine provides an in-depth analysis of similarities between factors.

6.7.Non-loading sorts.

Appendix ten shows that six participant sorts did not load onto any of the four factors. This group was comprised of three males and three females across three TAFs (Anna's, Claire's and Daniel's). Participants were a mean age of 34.17 years old. Other than Anna's social worker, all other non-loaders had a relatively transient (in the case of the agency social worker, for instance) or slightly more peripheral role from TAF work. Three non-loaders gave a follow-up interview – Anna's social worker, the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF and the manager in Daniel's TAF.

6.8.Interview themes.

For a variety of practical and other reasons, 24 out of 34 (70.59%) of the P-sample went on to participate in follow-up interviews after Q-sorting. Follow-up interviews varied a great deal in length and depth. Due to the fact that participants did not give consent to share interviews in their full form, comments were integrated into factor discussions and the following analysis. Providing interview data in this way permitted its inclusion (since consent for this was given) but it did mean that some transparency of the data reduction process was lost. Contemporaneous notes were taken during Q-sorting and these also contributed to subsequent interpretation of data.

Prior to discussing interview themes, it is important to bear in mind that interviews were always intended to support interpretation of Q-sort data rather than become a separate part of the thesis. The following four themes (power, risk, knowledge and construction of problems, and personal history) were derived before comments were integrated into the factor solution. Table 6.8(a) below shows the participants who undertook interviews.

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Table 6.8(a) to show participants who undertook follow-up interviews.

TAF	Q-sort	Role	Age	Gender	Factor loading
1: Anna	1a	Young person	15	Female	3
	1c	Mother	45	Female	3
	1d	Social worker, second	32	Male	None
	1e	Social worker, first	37	Female	3
	1f	Therapeutic social worker	35	Female	3
	1j	Student social worker	22	Female	4
	1k	Team manager	59	Female	1
2: Beth	2a	Young person	14	Female	2
	2b	Mother	34	Female	2
	2d	Teacher	27	Female	3
	2e	Team manager	48	Female	1
	2f	Social worker	37	Female	4
	2i	Safeguarding link teacher	55	Female	1
3: Claire	3a	Family worker	23	Female	2
	3b	Father	42	Male	2
	-3d*	Maternal uncle	33	Male	3
	3e	Deputy team manager	34	Female	None
	3f	Young person	16	Female	4
	3h	School nurse	42	Female	1
	3i	Social worker	32	Male	1
4: Daniel	4a	Young person	16	Male	2
	4b	Manager	46	Male	None
	4c	Psychiatrist	58	Male	1
	-4d*	Senior social worker	41	Female	4

* Loaded onto the factor negatively.

After gathering and transcribing interview data, I read and re-read the printed transcripts. During readings I made notes about my impressions, thoughts and feelings. Initial readings for substantive content and meaning were followed by subsequent selection and organisation of comments into emerging themes. That is, themes arose from sorting similar patterns of ideas into conceptual groups from the textual material. Looked at separately, each theme then became the focus of more detailed analysis. Clusters of themes were then pruned and discarded so that those rich in information (higher order themes) remained. Subordinate themes included 'fear and blame', 'recovery', 'reward' and 'success stories'. Throughout this process, emerging interpretations were linked back to the accounts given in interviews. This method was supported by the research diary when participants could not review these face-to-face.

Four out of 24 (16.67%) participants who completed follow-up interviews met with me to discuss the accuracy of interpretations. Participants who contributed to this were the student social worker in Anna's TAF, Anna's first social worker, the team manager in Beth's TAF and Claire's school nurse. The primary reason for such dropout was that staff left or changed jobs and families were no longer working with services organised under the 'early help' services at the local authority.

6.8.1. Power.

As a general summary of the first theme from interview material and Q-sorting commentary, constructions about power were fluid, temporal and complex. Whilst some participants related their knowledge-power to the roles and tasks required of them in TAF work, others considered their experience-power to be a challenge to this. Conflict between these two forms of knowledge was apparent. Resistance also appeared to be an important aspect of the dynamic characterisation of this theme. Power was a complex construct for people in the sample and the theme traversed all four factors and non-factor loading participant concerns.

Some professionals expressed a conflict between their professional power and the reasons they came into work with children. For example,

> I am a student and I don't feel I have the experience or like… stories to go armed with, people demand a lot of answers and clarity and I am still questioning. I don't want to go into social work and it was an accident getting here to be honest. I thought it would be more about helping people empower themselves and all that but it feels like I am focusing on the things they fail at and saying 'be more like me', and I am not sure I am the right person to speak truthfully about what the best way of doing things should be.
>
> The student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator).

The socio-moral justification for intervention through TAFs was also commented on during participant interviews and commentaries. The comment above illustrates that knowledge-power is not static and can lead to internal conflict for individuals. Similarly, experience-power was discussed in multifaceted and negotiable terms. For instance, some participants

took the view that relationships go through strain but kinship connections are more enduring than professional ones.

> Being a parent and raising a child through thick and thin… there's no qualification for that. In my life I always wanted to be a mam. I always gave respect to my mother and Beth will come round because she's growing up – social workers or not. She's growing up and she's mine long after they've gone and she's got kids of her own.
>
> Beth's mother (an Anti-Interventionist).

In some ways, this relationship-based, kin-orientated source of authority was linked to a connectedness to culture and history, which participants tended associate with their identity.

> It's a battle to keep your identity and… be able to pass on where they came from, they came from around here.
>
> Claire's father (an Anti-Interventionist).

The linking of an identity to a "battle" seemed to imply fluidity and tension embodied in the idea of power, which included the possibility of active resistance. Fake compliance as a means of resistance was discussed in interviews, as demonstrated in Daniel's comment below. Social workers were characterised to be intrusive arms of the state, so that they

> come into your house and lay down the law… and if you ask for help, they make it sound like you're weak. But you soon learn how to play the game. You can just wait if you don't like them anyway because they don't last long. You pretend to believe what they say and then can do what you want. See ya!
>
> Daniel (an Anti-Interventionist).

Extending this, the notion of non-tokenistic involvement and ethical consent was also brought up by Anna's first social worker,

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> Some choices are not really appropriate choices – so living in a house with no heating, for example. Or, no, you might have a case where they choose food rather than heating. A better example could be if, which happens a lot, a mam chooses a dangerous partner who is a risk to children, over them. Then that's no choice.
>
> Anna's first social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

Discussion about how feasible it actually is to equitably involve young people and their families in decisions that affect them through early intervention TAFs was raised in various ways. This has implications for the feasibility of empowerment. In the quote below, the complexity of including parents in decision-making is highlighted because previous parenting choices may have led to concerns in the first place.

> The trouble is, yes, get people involved but if you've got a mam and dad lying and sabotaging what you're trying to do, you have to judge whether it's helpful to have them fully involved. It's tokenistic if either side aren't being willing, open and honest.
>
> The team manager in Anna's TAF (an Expert Judge).

Interview material also demonstrated more moderate positions that highlighted the competitive forms (and sources of) knowledge-power, experience-power and identity-power. For example, complexity arising from shared responsibility and rights of citizenship were asserted in interviews, such as:

> You realise at some point that we're all just trying to survive… everything is a compromise… [which] is why we need the conversations. An expert is only an expert if what they think is relevant and what they do works.
>
> The student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator).

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Control of information and transparency were discussed in relation to power and knowledge, with some participants commenting,

> No-one gets to hear the amazing progress that happens in TAFs because it's confidential.
>
> Anna's therapeutic social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

and

> Confidentiality is a get out clause because none of it would stand up to scrutiny.
>
> Claire's father (an Anti-Interventionist).

Imbalance of power and information sharing also came up in terms of relationships between different professional groups. Some members of the sample reported feeling less able to challenge approaches taken by social workers, noting that sharing information triggered processes out of their control,

> Social workers are more… closed off and only accountable to themselves. So you put a referral in, you have to, and sometimes can't check if anything has happened.
>
> Beth's teacher (a Hopeful Reflector).

Developmental capacity and resilience were identified in a more general sense in discussions relating to power, indicating that a dichotomy between service-users and professionals was not the only dimension that was important to participants.

> Kids believe what you tell them up to a certain age and then they'll tell you what they don't agree with. So part of it is not forcing them to share something they aren't happy with because repercussions can be massive.
>
> Anna's therapeutic social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

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6.8.2. Risk.

Risk was referred to many times over during Q-sorting and follow-up interviews. It was expressed in a general sense (in relation to a risk-averse culture) but also in terms of specific issues such as the moral complexities of state actions which disrupt private family life. As with the other identified themes, risk overlapped with others and was discussed by most participants in the sample. As a concept based on likelihood rather than actuality, risk-averse ideas seemed to focus on the implications of 'getting it wrong', as below -

> Red flags might be like the toxic trio of substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health but it's not always written on the wall, 'watch this child, they are in trouble here,' they can look like the other kids on the caseload.
>
> Beth's social worker (a Collaborator).

The complexity of risk-based decisions was demonstrated in some comments through the 'weighing up' expressed by some, as below.

> In my head I hear the question 'is this worth the risk to a child, to my career' and more often I say 'no, not my call' and pass it to the social worker.
>
> Anna's first social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

Risk was discussed in terms of the presenting features of cases and the relationships associated with it, which overlapped with the theme of power.

> Parents have a great deal of powers and can abuse systems designed to help them which means families who conceal details, they are very difficult to then work honestly with. But there's a balance between trust and suspicion in relationships, which is a compromise.
>
> Beth's social worker (a Collaborator).

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The notion of risk seemed to be implicit to the complicated emotional and moral dilemmas that arise from safeguarding work. For example, the risk of vicarious trauma as part of TAFs was shared,

> You have to learn to block out the distressing things you see… or you can burnout, but also you have to keep some sensitivity to working with people. Sickness rates are high.
>
> The deputy team manager in Claire's TAF (a non-loader).

Developing strategies to manage the personal risks associated with safeguarding work arose in commentaries. In other words, identifying a risk often came hand-in-hand with a management strategy or way of coping,

> If you didn't laugh, you'd cry… and possibly never stop.
>
> Beth's safeguarding link teacher (an Anti-Interventionist).

However, participants also highlighted the role of burnout and emotion in terms of physical harm, showing that risk analysis was often grounded in experience.

> When it happened to me I didn't eat or sleep or think properly.
>
> Anna's first social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

As well as physical harm, the impact of working in TAFs seemed to extend into other relationships and judgements,

> I am always suspicious, I think the worst and don't believe people… even in my personal life and especially when it comes to my kids.
>
> Claire's social worker (an Expert Judge).

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These ideas might relate to the transfer of a 'risk identity' or a 'risk status' for service-users and providers alike. For example, the perception of social workers from other members of TAFs was negative,

> I'm not a social worker and wouldn't do it for any money let alone what they get paid. The ones I've seen are in different stages of breakdown.
>
> Beth's safeguarding link teacher (an Expert Judge).

Some transcripts showed that social workers associated the impact of negotiating risky ways of working with a sense of alienation from their original motivation for training. For example,

> I came into children's social work because I cared but I will leave because I care. I can't deliver what I should be because the resources don't exist.
>
> The student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator).

Echoing the comment above, cuts to public funding were linked to concerns about the reduced capacity to safely manage risk,

> The cuts mean kids don't get the treatment and therapy side but also that workers are run into ground as well.
>
> Anna's therapeutic social worker (a Hopeful reflector).

On the issue of public sector spending cuts, these were linked to the risk of status loss and of inhibited continual professional development as below,

> One issue we have now is training because it's not funded. Unless you pay for it out of your wages, the budget cuts mean you're just winging it.
>
> Claire's school nurse (an Expert Judge).

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In a similar way, the risk of being stigmatised by association with TAF processes was discussed by service-providers,

> I don't let on that I am a social worker, I say I am a childcare officer, it's more respected. The uncomfortable sideways looks wear thin and you always get 'oh, I don't have the stomach for it, it would break my heart' or something, something, something. And you also get the head tipped to the side pious ones who assume they are far too clever to do social work.
>
> Daniel's senior social worker (an 'anti-Collaborator').

For family members, taking on board the TAF risk identity may have long term effects on individual and family identity,

> It might only be a short involvement but it becomes part of your family, like in your reputation… and so a teacher or whoever might be more suspicious of day-to-day life stuff.
>
> Anna's mother (a Hopeful Reflector).

In this way, the construction of young people who are at risk (and possibly also risky) face scrutiny that may add to the experience of social isolation. Replicating discriminatory, oppressive action through practice emerged as a concern in some of the comments participants made. Over-involvement (or unnecessary involvement) was conceived of to have potential adverse implications for families, including stigma – as Anna pointed out,

> It can be proper embarrassing because when they come into school and that, I bet people guess what it's about. It should really stay separated off, imagine if it was a false accusation or something.
>
> Anna (a Hopeful reflector).

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6.8.3. Knowledge and the construction of problems.

The idea that privileged voices construct problems (and subsequent solutions) featured in participant discussions. Competing knowledges and different ways of 'being' in TAFs was a theme throughout. However, many members of the P-sample emphasised that the TAFs they were involved in were focused on early intervention - rather than child protection or other areas of children's social care. Examples of this include Claire's social worker, Daniel's psychiatrist and Beth's safeguarding link teacher who noted that they may approach cases where child protection concerns were present in a different way.

Some participants emphasised that the knowledge they possessed related to acquired skills from professional training and expertise. This, in turn, was invoked to justify their privileged position in being able to educate others. For example,

> It takes years of study to become a consultant, it's a specialised role… that's the specialist judgement I'm paid for… people are free to take or leave it but it is well backed up.
>
> Daniel's psychiatrist (an Expert Judge).

The notion of traditional educator/learner relationships in which a knowledgeable person imparts facts on a passive other was problematised. Counter views about expertise in TAF work seemed to favour *processes* of co-construction. For example, Claire's school nurse (an Expert Judge) commented,

> Since training, I have developed knowledge and skills that has – honed what I can offer families… in advice. Sometimes they take it and sometimes they tell me to 'shove it!' but occasionally I also learn something from them… it is a two way thing sometimes.

The legitimacy of social worker knowledge-power was queried given the perpetually changing legal frameworks which relay the authority for social workers to act. The comment below from Beth's social worker (a Collaborator) indicated how a flexible approach to working within policy and guidance for professionals was associated with resistance.

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> The rules and the guidance changes all the time, let's be honest. But it doesn't change how I work with the kids or families. The important thing to work out with the law is obviously… *how* I am a social worker. But *how* I have good relationships comes from me as a person.

There was also a sense expressed in interview material that stories in social work were problem-saturated at all levels,

> The current story the papers and politicians give out is social work is broken, we're not good enough, systems and local authorities are bust. We are getting privatised, writing on the wall, it's getting dismantled and going commercial… it's set up, strip the services of resources and then say 'oh, look at that, look at how badly they're failing our vulnerable children, and what is this? We're all paying for it!'
>
> The student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator).

Some participants considered that construction was an active process that could be emotionally demanding due to overwhelming, conflicting and/or negative narratives about them,

> I am always unsure what people will say I am, if I'm a do-gooder, a wicked bitch one day to the next… can be exhausting, I don't know who I am!
>
> The team manager in Anna's TAF (an Expert Judge).

Representations in the media also featured in participants' thoughts about how TAF work and its players were constructed, as well as the commodification of trauma. Alongside this appeared to be a wish for participants to psychologically distance themselves from stigmatisation, as below.

> I don't watch the daytime chat shows, it's just like being at work. And it makes me angry that the people are paraded out and booed and cheered like a freakshow.

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> It's rank. Imagine being the kid in the playground picked up by the mam who failed a lie detector about sleeping with her uncle. Cringe.
>
> Beth's social worker (a Collaborator).

Values were an important aspect of how constructions about TAF members and TAF work were formed. In fact, values and the notion of emotional labour were frequently introduced into discussions during focus groups, during Q-sorting and follow-up interviews. Young people were some of the clearest in expressing the view that it was the job of people in roles of responsibility to listen to them and resist making assumptions about their lives and experience.

> Social workers should live by the standards they set for everyone else. Actually, just be kind and listen before… fixing us.
>
> Claire (a Collaborator).

As well as socio-moral characteristics of TAF members, the importance of the choice of tool and approach used to assess the needs of young people and their families was highlighted by participants in this theme,

> Sometimes formulation is very medical off the consultants, you have to – round here anyway – give space for the communities they live in, which you can see would be triggers for crisis or be [sources of] resilience.
>
> Anna's CAMHS clinician (a non-loader).

In terms of constructing difficulties, participants raised the point that the symbolic representations in artefacts of practice limit the ways people in TAFs relate to one another (Høybye-Mortensen, 2015). Some social workers felt that their perspective was hugely shaped by the tools they were given – as well as time constraints and other demands. That is, there were only certain 'ways of seeing' afforded by the paperwork.

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> You can get through an assessment and not recognise the family you've described at the end of it sometimes. You learn to see the woods from the trees but even with the best will in the world, you're working flat out with cases in court and… staffing, I could go on all day.
>
> Daniel's social worker (a Collaborator).

Discussions about constructing 'vulnerable' children in a narrow (or limited) way raised implications for co-creating the change that is so often a part of the recommendations from reports.

> There's the thing about everyone knows who the problem families are and you sometimes have to keep going to not be like 'oh there's no point' and just keep optimistic... and then the social worker report says 'there's no room at the Inn' and then when you talk about it, it's not them, it's managers and their managers above them so you have to get together and present a case.
>
> Beth's teacher (a Hopeful Reflector).

However, the impact of disadvantage was also raised during interviews. This was often grounded in the reality of seeking to promote wellbeing, and build success into corporate care planning. For example,

> TAFs identify problems and ask for change utilising strengths. That job is harder when strengths are hard to find. If you're on the bottom, it's pointed out to you and then you have to pull yourself and the kids out of it. Very hard that, often.
>
> Student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator).

To some extent, the TAF context led to reflection about the way in which assumptions can be challenged as well as the way they can be compounded.

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> Yes there are bad social workers but there are also good ones if you could put it that simply, and also there are bad relationships, times when two people - be it a parent and a social worker, that would never get on in real life… life outside of the TAF so it's a forced situation.
>
> The team manager in Daniel's TAF (a non-loader).

Some participants constructed their roles to be on the periphery of safeguarding work, whilst simultaneously reporting less authority in setting the agenda for intervention, as below,

> I tend not to be involved from the outset or even at the very end of the social work procedures. I have my own part to play which is led by other needs of the child.
>
> Daniel's psychiatrist (an Expert Judge).

Others extended this idea of being on the periphery to a feeling of being marginalised,

> If I suspected a safeguarding need, I'd refer it in but sometimes it feels like we don't have a common goal, a common language.
>
> Anna's CAMHS clinician (a non-loader).

In turn, this seemed to be supported by others who shared a sense of exclusion in TAF processes,

> Obviously it's not my training background but I do wonder how [social workers] reach their decisions… and it is not always the best information sharing. I've had parents feel betrayed and not very safe in school after because no-one knows anything.
>
> Beth's safeguarding link teacher (an Anti-Interventionist).

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6.8.4. Personal history.

Identity and personal history across the lifespan formed a theme that participants felt was important when relating their current experience of TAFs. Emphasis was on personal perspectives about key events rather than the notion of a rational storyteller. The relationship between personal and private 'selves' inside and outside of TAFs featured in comments, with some participants drawing on personal history and background to illustrate and explain the professional rationale for their decisions. Participants also referred to early childhood relationships when reflecting on their own journey through current interventions. For example,

> I had a lovely upbringing, but the area I was a child in was not lovely at all. But my parents gave me loads of opportunities and I wanted to get on. So it's not just the environment, upbringing is so important. In my case, I went to the professional side of social work but could have been a service-user.
>
> The student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator).

Some participants considered that looking back retrospectively could be both beneficial *and* challenging, and may distort original memories.

> I look back at my own childhood and think we were better off, now kids can't move without being assessed all the time or there being a meeting every five minutes.
>
> Claire's father (an Anti-Interventionist).

The process of relating personal history can be helpful *and* unhelpful due to the emotional content of the subject, as demonstrated below,

> Reflection is a double edged sword, the more you take on board emotionally, the more you carry.
>
> Anna's therapeutic social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

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Overlapping with the theme of knowledge and the construction of problems, the idea that stories are open to re-telling over time emerged in discussions about problem-orientated and solution-focused assessments,

> What one person thinks about you might be different to someone else, but you are still the same person, so how is one report about you from years ago fair to keep coming up?
>
> Anna (a Hopeful Reflector).

Personal change over time was linked to the relationship participants had with services in other ways. This emphasised how idiosyncratic and transient strengths and needs in individuals and families can be. For instance,

> When I think about my own life, tough times and all that, it shows a bit of being flexible does make the difference… only the person knows what it feels like to be them. You can run the risk of seeing stuff though rose-tinted glasses yourself…. But maybe if you had seen me when I was a student you would see no-one is perfect and everyone has a past.
>
> Beth's teacher (a Hopeful Reflector).

Other participants reflected about the impact of early experience on perceptions of current action. For example,

> Being a parent is a massive responsibility and you don't get a manual. When we were kids, my God, you had a social worker and it was the shame of the place. Now they knock on the door, age of kids themselves… and it's a big step to trust them.
>
> Claire's father (an Anti-Interventionist).

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The point in a person's life and personal history when they get involved in TAF work was considered to be relevant because changes to practice over time have been profound. For example,

> I think when you qualify has a lot to do with understanding TAFs… early intervention has changed services… but some older professionals get more worried that social workers mean child protection.
>
> Claire's family worker (an Anti-Interventionist).

The manager in Daniel's TAF similarly commented,

> I did sociology before social work and I suppose I was more naive and hopeful really. I wanted to help but didn't know what social work really was until I started doing it. But now I am more cynical. My opinion has changed a lot about children. It's not all doom and gloom but there are problems.

This echoed the idea that the gradual conflation between intentional harm against children with difficulties associated with poverty has influenced personal relationships with services.

> It shouldn't have to matter if you're wadded or not but like everything it does. If you've got money, they look at you with different eyes… since Baby P, they've been stricter, scared to let someone fall through the net.
>
> Claire's family worker (an Anti-Interventionist).

The idea of learning and development through experience and over time was raised in follow-up interviews as part of this theme. All of the comments about personal history brought up relationships. Therefore, personal history was an emergent, transactional process where knowledge and personal growth was shaped with others. This included peer support, as below,

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> Most of the learning I did when I started out took place when working cases and shadowing more experienced social workers but also finding my own approach. Childhood and experience comes into it that way. How to be a social worker is not a simple thing to pick up by theory.
>
> The deputy team manager in Claire's TAF (a non-loader).

Finally, some participants also talked about (resisted) attempts to shift individual service-user beliefs in order to change future behaviour.

> It is education but actually getting people to do different things and see for their own eyes that things can be better. At the very least you stop social workers being involved.
>
> The manager in Daniel's TAF (a non-loader).

6.9.Chapter summary and context.

This chapter has outlined the results from the research. It provided an overview of the background stories of the four young people at the centre of the TAFs, with a focus on the reason for social care involvement. The origin and development of the Q-sample was also discussed in reference to the themes arising from the two focus groups that took place across the local authority. The four factor solution - of Expert Judges, Anti-Interventionists, Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators - was favoured above the three factor solution (which explained less variance) and the five factor solution (which fragmented the analysis).

Nine participants defined the Expert Judge array. Members of all four TAFs contributed to the array (but none of these were young people). Faith in professional expertise and training was coupled with criticism of budget cuts and the belief that regulation and monitoring assist to keep children safer. Seven participants defined Anti-Interventionists, which were mainly young people and their family members. This group was most critical about children's services arguing that professionals in TAFs dominate young people and their families. Eight participants defined Hopeful Reflectors. In general, this factor took a view that early intervention through collaborative social work was important, in the same way that learning

from mistakes improved practice. Four participants defined Collaborators who were all social workers or young people. The view that TAF members were citizens with varying roles and duties, but a collective responsibility, was apparent. Social stigma was highlighted to be a barrier to progress.

Four overlapping themes emerged from the information narrated by participants in follow-up interviews or in talk during the sorting of statements. These were described in terms of power, risk, knowledge and construction of problems, and personal history and were integrated into the discussion rather than formulated as a separate element to the research. Power was constructed to be fluid, temporal and complex in nature. It was discussed in terms of imbalances of knowledge-power, experience-power and identity-power in TAFs. Risk was referred to many times in terms of risk-aversive practice as well as the moral, emotional and practical implications of intervention and risk-identity. The third theme (knowledge and the construction of problems) highlighted that some voices were more visible in TAFs whilst the final theme (personal history) highlighted that life stories emerged as an important element to understand decision-making in TAFs.

Chapter six has emphasised how there are different ways of interpreting the views expressed in the sample – through different factor solutions and different interpretations. This research was first and foremost a Q-methodological study but the themes derived from interviews provided a sense of the narratives behind the decision-making of the participants when they were engaged in Q-sorting.

Chapter seven considers the results in the context of current practice and theory. It argues that children's safeguarding practice is a culturally-embedded and highly contested process and that the rich stories evoked in research such as this are helpful on many different levels.

Chapter seven. Discussion.

> [Social work] has been accused, and sometimes accused itself, of being moralistic, authoritarian, knowing best what was good for other people, permissive, soft, manipulative, ineffective, damaging, essential, or a waste of public money.
>
> Younghusband (1981: 9).

> Social work intervention should be conceived as flexible and unbounded, starting from where service users are, and addressing the social problems they face in their own terms, with due recognition and validation of their perspectives and distinctive expertise.
>
> Smith (2012: 436).

7.1. Introduction.

Anna, Beth, Claire and Daniel were four young people receiving intervention at a particular moment in a large local authority in the north east when data was collected. 15 year-old Anna experienced a late-age adoption that had broken down. 14 year-old Beth was being bullied and was disengaging in school but, with intervention, home conditions improved enough for support to end. 16 year-old Claire was living in a private fostering arrangement with her aunt and uncle, after being missing from home on several occasions. 16 year-old Daniel lived in respite for some of the week and received support from CAMHS for ADHD and anxiety. His mother was a single parent who also experienced mental health difficulties. Each of these young people was able to engage in this research and their capacity to speak in their own words about their lives enriched what emerged. The team of adults they brought with them were drawn from a range of professional and personal backgrounds, and their involvement underlined the relational character of situated subjectivity.

Consequently, this thesis presents a case for empirically informed *relationships* rather than sole focus on empirically informed interventions in research (Howe, 1998). In other words, transformation-for-the-better is argued to be social in character, with stories presented as a

compelling form of evidence. I had the privilege of working with many teenagers as a social worker in the same local authority that data was collected in and each of those relationships was qualitatively and richly different. Active engagement with materials seemed to enable the "flow of communicability" (Brown, 1980: 3) and permitted a plausible interpretation of the stories participants had to tell. Each of the players involved in TAFs had views and expectations about social work that may have traversed some of the issues in the quotes at the start of the chapter to varying extents over time.

Young people are more than sets of variables and a reductionist account was resisted in this research through the adopted lens of social constructivism. Factors demonstrated important areas of similarity which challenges ideas that, for example, service-users are different to service-providers, or that social workers are at odds with teachers, and so on. In other words, viewpoints of members of the sample were not easily reduced to role and function in the TAF. Rather, players in safeguarding decision-making teams bring personal histories to the dynamic, relational context of practice. This means that Expert Judges, Anti-Interventionists, Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators were not 'types' of people, but story-tellers contextualised by the situated experiences of their TAF. It is argued that relationships between social actors in this field are poorly summarised through existing measures, despite the Working Together rationale set out in policy and guidance.

Variable-orientated approaches, therefore, can reduce the meaningfulness of *messages* from social work activity and can distance practice from the ideal of achieving an equitable space to make judgements. However, and despite their dominance, interviews in isolation are not the necessarily the best way capturing the interpersonal substrate of social work teams. Of note, the "monstrous hybrid" of a qualiquantilogical version of Q (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004: 166) permitted stories to come to the fore that other methodologies may not have allowed (Kitzinger, 1999: 273). This chapter considers results in relation to theory and with a view to recommendations for future study. The integration of focus group, Q-methodology and follow-up interview data generated rich information about the lived experience of TAF work in communities in a local authority. The function of interview material was to illuminate factor interpretation, and subsequent themes arising from them applied to all factors in various ways. It is important to note again, however, that consent was

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not given for interview transcripts to be produced in their entirety, making the thematic analysis an opportunity for a general overview of the data.

7.1.1. The power of Q and use of technology.

Q-methodology centralises the subjective voice of participants whilst *deliberately* making no claims about the rest of the population (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008) – thereby resisting the privileging of dominant, top-down constructions about the concourse (Stainton Rogers, 1995: 183). The capacity to hear subordinated and unexpected stories was particularly suitable in this field because the perspectives of safeguarding players are typically decanted through standardised recording formats (Keddell, 2011). Such formats have built-in assumptions about concepts such as need, risk and worthiness of help. Artefacts of practice tend to be developed independently of TAF players (Høybye-Mortensen, 2015), constraining the active and dialectical sense-making process. As will be discussed later, approaches such as Q can systematically frame complex dynamics of fluctuating views, strengths and needs (Shedler & Westen, 1998) to allow collaborative interpretation. Whilst existing tools and documentation are ostensibly designed to shape and direct action in TAFs, they can oppressively engulf the individual and their story if the frameworks dominate the assessment-plan-intervention-review cycle. Perhaps Munro's critique of "a one-size-fits-all approach" (2011: 168) fell short in the methodological shift she argued for – a less restrictive recording format is still a pre-determined, limiting way of seeing children and their families. That is, in methodological terms, it remains R. This chapter argues that Q *truly* is a monstrous alternative to R dominance because it has the potential to transform *how* people are involved in safeguarding children processes.

There were other, more practical advantages to utilising Q with computer-aided analysis (through PQ-Method). The programme permitted factor analytic calculations to be completed instantly, as new data was added to the set (Schmolck, 2002). The impact of this is not to be underestimated - when Stephenson first introduced Q, scepticism about the approach may have been exacerbated by the mathematical competence and time-consuming long-hand calculations required to utilise it (Good, 2010) As a result, Q-methodology did not quickly build proponents and is not as well-known compared to other radical approaches (Kitzinger, 1999). Technology therefore assisted the application of Q and removed some of the challenges it was previously associated with. With the goal of involving participants as

much as possible in interpretation, quick calculations were helpful because results could be mirrored back to participants in a timely way. Overall, the minimal time commitment (either in sorting or interpreting) demanded of participants was useful because the P-set was characterised by high staff turnover and rapidly changing case status - reiterating that the research captured a transient moment in time.

7.1.2. The follow-up interview and use of Nvivo.

Interviews can be considered to be a specific form of interaction in which meaning is co-constructed between interviewers and interviewees (Kvale, 1996) rather than, for example, an independent representation of the interviewee's world views (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Not all participants chose to complete them but those who did seemed open and willing to share their thoughts and feelings despite often expressing anxiety that comments might lead to adverse follow-up from the organisation. To illustrate this, when a Channel Four Dispatches documentary reported that an undercover social worker had gone into Birmingham Children's Services in May 2016 (McNicoll, 2016), a member of the sample contacted me to ensure that the research was not contributing to a similar report. Comments such as this reiterated responsibilities about confidentiality and the need to safeguard participants – as well as the value of highlighting that interviews functioned to support Q-sort interpretation rather than stand independently from it.

In relation to the management of interview material in NVivo, the use of qualitative computer-aided processing tools did not solely generate quality in analyses (Seale, 1999) because exploration of interview transcript data necessarily implies selectivity and reinterpretation by the researcher (Langhaug et. al., 2010). Nvivo was useful, however, because it assisted the storage and processing of material into themes. The four themes derived from follow-up interviews show how the concepts within them connected and overlapped with each other, thereby representing a conceptual scatterplot of views. Some ideas tended to be associated with particular factor-loaders more than others, allowing relevant existing literature to be integrated into discussion.

7.1.3. Insider-outsider concerns.

Interpreting Q-data is a hermeneutic process (Stenner et. al., 2000) that is based on the qualitative content of sorts, commentary and case information. Interpretation is not an

impartial neutral process, even if the goal is to achieve insight. Essentially, the task of reflecting was attempted to be balanced with action in order to avoid becoming excessively introspective in a way that detracted from the research issue (Hosking & Pluut, 2010). In seeking transparency, reflection about the process of interpreting and selecting data was assisted by the research diary, which was used to add rigour to the story-telling frame of the research (Clark & Sharf, 2007). Clearly, having pre-existing relationships with participants impacted on the production of the thesis – including by assisting access to participants. Decisions about selecting (or excluding) data were not always based on how interesting or illustrative content was because dissemination was sometimes constrained by the ethical responsibility to do no harm. For example, one participant disclosed her unhappiness about the unhelpful dynamics of a particular team in the organisation but she did not consent to her comments being included. She went on to explain that the only reason information had been volunteered was because she "knew me". There were many other instances similar to this, relating to insider-outsider identity (Fouché, 2015), illustrating that existing relationships not only impacted the nature of data that arose but also the *selection* of it - however relevant and interesting it was (Cooper, 2009).

In line with Stephenson's analysis of Q-sort material about his career (Stephenson, 1990), I sorted the 36 items under the same condition of instruction as participants. Although there was slight variation, I loaded onto the Collaborator array before and after participant data had been collected. Although I was not an active, decision-making member of any of the sampled TAFs, being a Collaborator perhaps illustrates aspects of my perspective about the concourse in a general sense. Whilst my sorts remained outside of the main analysis, transparency about researchers can be valuable. In equal terms, though, such transparency had the potential to be distracting from the main aims of the work. Collaborators, who will be discussed again later, formed a minority view contributed to by a young person and three social workers at different stages of their career (student, qualified and senior). Should my position have been described by expert judgement, anti-intervention or hopeful resistance at the time data was analysed, perhaps this thesis would be shaped differently.

Researcher transparency, which "may result in a simple identifying of oneself or a telling of a confessional tale", has the potential to add methodological power (Pillow, 2003: 176). In practice, reflection can be a tool to avoid impairing service-user recovery or cause more harm

(Houston, 2002). Accordingly, the task of the social scientist is to consider their position in relation to the social world, by being critical of seeing

> the social world as an interpretive puzzle to be resolved, rather than a mesh of practical tasks to be accomplished in real time and space.
>
> Waquant (2008: 273).

The prosocial effects of disclosing appropriately when in direct contact with others can be helpful and may illuminate data reduction and interpretative decisions. However, confessions are necessarily selective and a negotiation of past *emotional* experience, thereby introducing the risk of sharing irrelevant or confusing information which can detract from core messages (Knox & Hill, 2003). In addition, stories in children's safeguarding tend to be on the periphery of societal norms, and controversially at the heart of its fears and taboos (Barclay, 1982). Indeed, as I considered at various points during this research, my decision to become a social worker seems to be rooted in *wishing to change* the subjugated stories about the undeserving I was immersed in whilst growing up. Whilst my early experiences must have connected me to humanitarian values (something that is arguably aligned to a Collaborator viewpoint), the decision not to share them was embedded in the view that it would not have been beneficial to participants or data collection. Ultimately the capacity of the researcher to identify their own subjectivity is not a straightforward issue – even before the politics of disclosure are considered.

Researchers form dynamic relationships with their research in the context of life experience (Fouché, 2015; Fox, 2016), which introduces a level of complexity that opens up more enquiry than it closes. For example, I witnessed the struggles and progress of the eleven year-old who moved in with us at the end of my second year at university as he grew up anchored to 'the system' as I qualified. At 18, he moved in with his girlfriend as they expected third baby (with their first two children having been removed at birth). Ongoing substance misuse contributed to their chaotic lifestyle and instability in their relationship. After my second child was born, the local authority asked if I could adopt their unborn baby. How has this shaped the stories I tell as a social worker? The answers to this are just as complicated as the struggle to deconstruct any moment of situated action but it is clear that

reflexive thought can be applied to the decision to examine a particular field as well as the relationship with the intended audience and epistemic community (Doucet, 2008). Viewpoints are contingent, contested and transient but increased transparency about the perspectives that players hold could valuably help propagate a view of citizens struggling together in a goal-directed way making research of this sort valuable.

There is no definite end to reflection about insider-outsider issues but there are broad advantages and disadvantages to both positions (Kanuha, 2000). There are challenges to achieving a reflexive appreciation of the similarities and differences between researchers and participants, and this is associated with how limited a simple insider-outsider dichotomy is (Doucet, 2008). In addition, no single variable or dimension is wholly more important than another but Burnham et. al.'s (2008, 2013) social GGRRAAACCEEESSS can aid reflection-in-action of power imbalances. Whilst insight is sought, though, there is no guarantee that the researcher will be able to consistently access the details of the fluctuating relationships within the research as it evolves. However, broadly speaking, critical approaches in social work are committed to how power dynamics shape processes of discrimination (Fook & Askeland, 2006) and subsequently a pragmatic approach to thinking about relations is valuable.

There is no guidance on what is the right amount of insiderness or outsiderness – rather, the struggle for meaning making occurs in a context where there is not parity between TAF players (Hallet & Birchall, 1992). However, mutual respect and appreciation of the different perspectives brought by individuals brings the 'wholeness' of a person to analysis (Hugman, 1991: 11). The complexity of insider-outsider experience therefore might be theorised more adeptly through Q-methodological research in the area.

7.2. Discussion of the four factor solution.

Although the four factor solution was favoured, the inclusion of five and three factor analyses illustrates there is more than one possible explanation of data (see appendix six). Further, the social constructivist interpretation of Expert Judge, Anti-Interventionist, Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator factors demonstrates that any TAF is likely to embody a range of perspectives on a variety of issues, related directly and indirectly to casework (Fisher, 1991). The richness and depth of stories from participants demonstrated that people are not easily or

simply reduced to their role. However, strong personal identities, such as that of resistant family members (typified by the Anti-Interventionist array) or highly specialist professionals (typified by the Expert Judge array) may dominate interpersonal engagement if these perspectives were represented in a team. This is vital to a discussion of TAFs because those in least powerful positions may be further marginalised by group dynamics (Forbes & Sashidharan, 1997; Foronda et. al., 2014).

7.2.1. Summary of factor congruence.

Chart 7.2(a) below summarises areas of concurrence in the favoured solution. Expert Judges and Hopeful Reflectors considered that professional intervention was justified because some children are harmed by their parents and carers. They disagreed about the role and authority of services, but the idea that intervention was necessary was underpinned by the need to prevent harm that occurs as a result of professional action. Expert Judges and Anti-Interventionists similarly agreed that the reasons why young people need services are complex and this makes their views crucial to achieving rich understanding of their lives. In a comparable way, Anti-Interventionists and Collaborators held the common view that young people should be involved as much as possible in safeguarding work about them. Hopeful Reflectors and Anti-Interventionists concurred that children should be loved and cared for, and that mental health problems explain less harm against children than other issues. These array pairs varied in many more ways, but it is interesting (and, in my view, reassuring) that their commonalities centred on the needs of young people. In terms of lessons for practice, a focus on the child may ease other tensions between group members. In other words, the potential to unify a TAF that is unable to plan and set goals may be more likely when the unmet needs of service-users are sufficiently revisited (Fay et. al., 2006). This certainly fits with my professional experience in which the most compelling calls to collaborative action were made by reminding TAF members of the lived experience of the child we were all meeting to discuss.

Collaborators and Expert Judges shared a sense of what ideal professional behaviour consisted of (namely that curiosity and weighing up evidence was important) rather than ideas about the focus of work being about children, as above. For practice, TAF effectiveness may be enhanced by explicit reference to codes of conduct and ensuring that appropriate information is shared in a timely way so that the group can appraise the quality of

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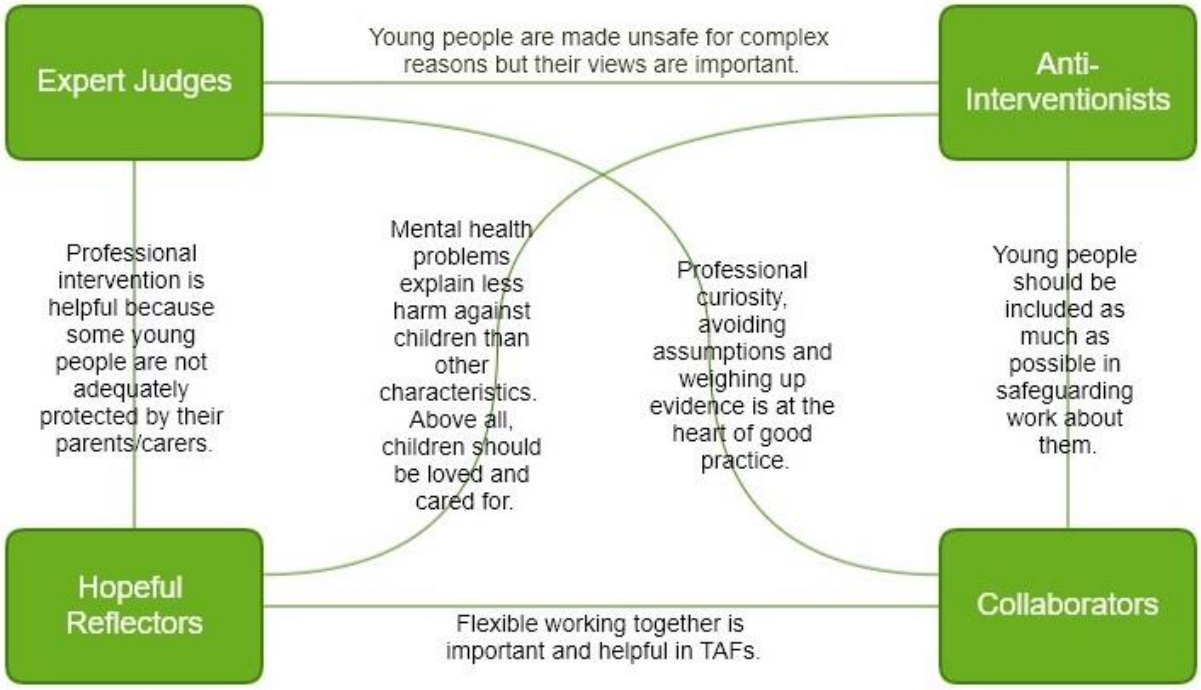
collective action from different members. Similarly, Collaborators and Hopeful Reflectors shared a view that flexible working across TAF members was important and helpful. Consequently, clear role and action formulation for team players could be useful with the caveat that effectiveness is appraised, reviewed and reformulated into evolving roles and actions.

Chart 7.2(a) to show similarities between the factors.



Given this discussion about congruence, the following analysis of each of the four factors considers differences between arrays. This includes how aspects such as emotion and morality (which are arguably the origin and basis of the occupation) may be negotiated in each flow of communicability.

7.2.2. Expert Judges: expert-centric.

> "You've got to take a step back clinically. This is not a choice about me or my family, it's another family."

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Beth's agency social worker (an Expert Judge).

Tending to express the view that formal professional expertise, training and enculturation brought authority and knowledge-power to TAF work, Expert Judges tended to be older, more qualified and have specific rather than generic roles in TAFs. Q-sorts and interviews indicated that the Expert Judge construction of professionalism was generally rational, impartial and positivistic - with evidence-based practice and clear role description being important. The rationalisation of service delivery through, for example, evidence-based approaches (which may pathologise service-user 'symptoms'), tiered access to services (Carey, 2008) and the pervasiveness of managerialism in organisations (Houston, 2015) are therefore associated with Expert Judges more readily than other arrays. Although managerialism is a dominant characteristic of contemporary social work (Dominelli & Hoogvelt, 1996), it is most certainly not without its critics (Eichstellar & Holthoff, 2011). In fact, social work's core (if contradictory) values about empowerment are at odds with a culture that situates bureaucratic managers as the gatekeepers of care in the UK context.

Although Q-methodology does not seek to assert that people have relatively static personality traits, Expert Judges provide an opportunity to reflect on the way that an increasingly rationalised occupation impacts on children's social work (Otway, 2002) and, perhaps more speculatively, if this adds value (or denigrates) the profession. Although they tended to be the most qualified in the sample, Expert Judges also frequently had specialised roles which may have placed them on the periphery of core safeguarding processes. In other words, and although safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, Expert Judges seemed to suggest that their specialist roles were *more valuable than* safeguarding activity (which was perceived to be more straightforward and generic).

Differential perception of TAF work may be exaggerated by the greater insecurity and uncertainty brought by socio-political and economic change - even in the case of privileged expert status (Jamie, 2014). Profound restructuring in public sector health and social care services has placed additional (and more generic) tasks on workers (El-Gingihy, 2015). Indeed, at the time data was collected, the local authority was going through its third restructure in the preceding five years. At the final draft, it had started a fourth. Such changes may have influenced participant concerns that funding cuts were a key barrier to

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engaging in TAFs with robust professional curiosity. Therefore, Expert Judge loaders may have experienced a greater sense of commitment to justifying the prominence of specialist provision in order to defend their expert identity and status in core processes. Accordingly, the task of promoting a young person's journey through early help to different thresholds of the Children Act 2004 seemed to be firmly situated with the (subordinated, and task-focused) expertise of social workers.

Privileged expertise was formal rather than informal in nature and favoured stable and established means of professional recognition. Compared to other occupations, social work is a relatively new field, less grounded in an empirical history and embodying fundamental tensions at its heart (Beresford, 2005). Unlike health disciplines, social work does not have indicators of esteem such as its own Royal College (funding for the College of Social Work was withdrawn in 2015) and its training pathways and regulatory bodies are subject to confusing change in backlash responses to public anger (Ying Yee, 2016). Along with regulation of qualified practitioners, training routes are heavily influenced by political mood and agenda – demonstrating the lack of authority social work has in determining its own direction. At the time of writing, the last three renewals of my protected registration were done under different regulatory bodies. Currently, the impact of the two-tier route to qualifying status through the introduction of a fast-track course remains to be seen. Perhaps one way of tackling this could be integrating elements of training across health and social care programmes (Anderson et. al., 2016; Domac et. al., 2016) in order to integrate thought about occupational power, and the processes that subjugate or privilege forms of knowledge (Anderson, Smith & Hammick, 2016). One of the potential advantages of greater interdisciplinary collaboration at the point of training and development is the building of compassion and empathy for "people of a certain kind" (Barclay, 1982: 149) which would be progressive.

Expert Judges highlighted that occupations make different claims about knowledge and employ defences to protect them (Foucault, 1977). Power operates in the jostling conceptual space that normalises expertise about child rearing (and pathologises some childhoods). To illustrate this point, Friedson argued that the autonomous authority of medics to control their own remit and determine what is (and is not) illness protects their interests and acts to maintain their credibility by managing threats to this (Freidson, 1970). Themes relating to

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power, knowledge and the construction of problems arising in follow-up interviews are directly relatable to the idea of expertise expressed in this factor. Expert Judges had a preference for neutrality in their construction of professionalism, possibly mirroring the positivistic origins of their training backgrounds. This is despite the fact that positivism has yet to provide a social care (risk) assessment that universally predicts maltreatment.

In some ways the expert-centric view of factor one, which appeared to minimise the idea of expertise-*by-experience*, is less typical of social work compared to other professions (Scourfield, 2010). The expert-by-experience role has been increasing in standing over time in the UK (Skilton, 2010), to epitomise the inherent value of understanding lived experience from the perspective of service-users. Unlike Expert Judges, the experts-by-experience movement acknowledges the importance of compassion, inclusivity and authenticity (Wiles, 2013).

Despite Expert Judge preference for impartiality, safeguarding children is not an emotionally neutral experience (Munro, 2010). Expert Judges may have relied on the reputation associated with their professional background and training to protect them against the anxiety-provoking context that safeguarding creates. A response to this may have been characterised in Anti-Interventionists, who were primarily service-users who expressed anger at lack of empathy from professionals. Reference to defence mechanisms invokes psychoanalysis, which has been heavily critiqued for objectifying human beings (Foucault, 1982). Creating psychological distance between sources of distress can be thought of as a means of self-protection (Trevithick, 2011). Threats in TAFs are varied and multiple – shrinking resources, vicarious stigmatisation as a result of involvement, anxiety about being 'named and shamed', fears about investigation by regulatory bodies and/or loss of employment - to name but a few. These ideas were echoed across factor-loaders and were represented in interviews under the risk theme.

In terms of implications, children's social work could do more to acknowledge the impact of emotion on decisions and action, and there are lessons to be had from therapeutic settings across health and social care (Morrison, 2007; Hughes, 2006). This could include adopting safe spaces in, for example, structured peer group reflective supervision, protected time for informal 'tea and chats' and Schwartz Rounds (Robert et. al., 2017; Hughes et. al., 2017) to

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acknowledge feelings in a nourishing, cathartic way. Other implications may include joint opportunities to learn and transparency about training background in collaborative settings (Domac et. al., 2016) since players may be present for the unique perspective they bring.

7.2.3. Anti-Interventionists: family-centric.

> "My bairn[2], my life, my family, my business."
>
> Claire's mother (an Anti-Interventionist).

Anti-Interventionists took the clear stance that family life should be protected from professional monitoring and review because the most preferable care arrangement for children to grow up in was kinship (rather than corporate) care. Services were considered to be too intrusive and blunt in their approach (Davies, 2010). The critical appraisal of social work as a risk management strategy (Sidebotham & Heron, 2006) arose in follow-up interviews, with Anti-Interventionists discussing how unfavourable assumptions about young people and their families and the nature of actions in TAF work can disrupt family life. Further than this, disruption was viewed to endure in a problematic way even after involvement with services had ended.

Anti-Interventionist views were characterised by resistance against systemic discrimination in TAFs. This reflects the vast body of evidence suggesting that social work referrals, assessments and interventions over-represent particular socially excluded groups in society (Ross & Glisson, 2008). Localities show variation in thresholds for significant harm and the numbers of young people subject to child protection planning (Pugh, 2007), which suggests a range of multi-level factors are at play. This is despite legislation and guidance explicitly setting out the duty to promote equality and anti-oppressive practice (Strier, 2006). It is important because the stigma associated with being deemed in need of corporate safeguarding is a significant barrier to empowerment (Dolgoff et. al., 2012) and therefore the capacity of services to create change-for-the-better (Freire, 1970). Whilst there is no simple solution to this, the future of empowering social work should recognise the temporality of (discriminatory) action. The notion of the snapshot and the shifting sands of *social* work

[2] 'Bairn' is a term commonly used in parts of the North East to refer to a child or young person.

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knowledge and authority are therefore relevant. Simply put, social workers must engage with transience. Although Anti-Interventionists did not suggest it, ongoing practice research may be one way of achieving this and other goals in the discipline.

Justice (tying in with the interview theme about knowledge and the construction of problems) was a central concern for many participants who had strong views about the capacity and legitimacy of social care to provide non-judgemental support. Conceptual tensions between social work practice and human rights have been widely discussed (Flynn, 2005) and these were reflected in Anti-Interventionist mistrust of social work ethics. The largely liberal characterisation of duties conflicts with the surveillance and monitoring of service-user lifestyle – the tension from which arguably does not permit honest, meaningful relations (Cemlyn, 2008). In other words, risk management approaches create a space for social workers to be agents of the local authority rather than independent advocates for children (Dalrymple, 2004).

Participants loading onto this factor appeared particularly concerned with (high) levels of monitoring and surveillance in TAF work once young people were deemed 'in need' or 'at risk of significant harm'. Foucault's discussion about the powerful disciplining and punishing gaze of services was therefore relevant to this group. As Foucault put it,

> The judges of normality are present everywhere… it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based.
>
> Foucault (1977: 304).

The (over)regulation of activity under the remit of TAFs was referred to by a number of participants. Ideas arising from the personal history theme reiterated how discourse in child protection has unjustifiably moved towards child *welfare* (Payne, 2006) – broadening out the role of social workers but also invoking different expectations about partnership working, which is especially challenging in times of austerity (Krumer-Nevo, 2008). This factor was most critical of social work practice, and seemed to minimise the extent of harm perpetrated within families 'like theirs', thereby distancing their personal connection to abuse or neglect. They seemed to mirror negative media views about occupational harm to a greater extent than

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other arrays. Members of this group mentioned high profile cases such as Peter Connelly, Ellie Butler and children sexually exploited in Rochdale, exemplifying the centrality of the atrocity story in children's social care (Cree, Clapton & Smith, 2015). Atrocity stories, described as tales that become barometers for social morality, come to warrant control and justify punitive responses (Bromley & Shupe, 1979).

Unfortunately, the focus on extreme, emotive cases distorts the reality of most cases under the early help remit of the TAF (Turnell, Munro & Murphy, 2013). It may be that the lesson for practice is to increase safe arenas for consultation between service-users and providers in order to build dialogue about the issues. Crucially, making non-tragic experience (which is the bulk of practice) more visible could facilitate normalisation of experience, resist pathologisation and, ultimately, reject inhumane treatment.

Moral reasoning was often invoked by these factor loaders. For instance, since service-users were judged against socio-moral criteria, a view was expressed that TAF professionals should also be assessed in this way. A common idea underlying this seemed to be about the relatability of workers to service-users, and a view (often expressed with some anger) that professionals lacked empathy. The role of empathy (which often involves feelings of mutuality, connection and value; Baron-Cohen, 2011), however, is contentious because it is a non-rational process that can be a 'double-edged sword' in terms of impact (Bloom, 2016; Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006). Burnout and vicarious traumatisation is one experience of over-empathising with the pain of others (Gibson, 2016; Cerney, 1995), for example.

There are implications for social work training in relation to this because competencies intend to capture the ethical or moral dimensions of work. Failing a student against competencies, though, is notoriously difficult (Finch & Taylor, 2013; Todd et. al., 2017), as is evidencing characteristics such as *schadenfreude.* Once qualified though, the importance of personal morality is echoed in the criteria for ongoing registration by the governing body, which asserts that standards of behaviour in and outside of work impact the reputation of social work as a whole (HCPC, 2016). Ensuring that explicit discussion of ethics is routinely done using compassionate language could promote meaningful engagement with people who held strong Anti-Interventionist views.

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A compassionate trauma-informed culture has the potential to build feelings of trust and confidence (Bifulco, 2008) that *fair* assessment of parent/carer moral behaviour may eventually justify an end to intervention from the state. The Anti-Interventionist factor, which was comprised primarily of service-users who had a close emotional investment in outcomes from the TAF, highlights that least-powerful voices should be democratically heard and weighed-up from multiple perspectives (Thomson &, 2004). Research about decision-making heuristics emphasises that judgement is a social process, subject to many influences (Kahneman & Tversky, 1996). Theories such as Janis' groupthink have faced critique and were not designed with safeguarding in mind (Houston, 2015: 10), but there are benefits to exploring how to make rigorous decisions in high-pressure TAFs. Janis' critique about the way groups may sacrifice critical engagement in order to reduce disagreement and conform to a norm usefully focuses on interpersonal factors. The emphasis on a group dynamic may be more helpful than the 'faulty cognition' argument reiterated in government research about decision-making (Department for Education, 2014) which is unnecessarily in an environment of hugely stripped resources. Perhaps this array suggests that professionals should connect with *their own* Anti-Interventionism – just as the GP (described on page 69) only accepted that an invasive internal examination was inappropriate in the absence of a disclosure when he considered his own children being subject to it.

As a final comment, the family-centric Anti-Interventionist perspective invites discussion about how to facilitate empowering, culturally sensitive, non-tokenistic engagement (Hook et. al., 2013). Activists such as Freire suggest that freedom from oppression cannot be driven by oppressors, and that emancipation comes from the actions of those who are subjugated (Freire, 1970). Certainly, there are conceptual barriers to understanding oppression for those who have not experienced it (Brown, 2005) but there is a more moderate view than Freire's which states that it is possible to facilitate progressive change without experiencing oppression in the same way. In this, service-providers and service-users are reconceptualised to be equal players (Cameron & Moss, 2011). Whilst Anti-Interventionists did not seem to align with the possibility that equity was feasible (instead emphasising injustice and organisational harm), the social pedagogy movement (discussed later) has growing support in the UK (Hatton, 2013).

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7.2.4. Hopeful Reflectors: system-centric.

> "I ask myself… is this good enough for my own children?"
>
> Anna's therapeutic social worker (a Hopeful Reflector).

The Hopeful Reflector factor was characterised by optimism and hopefulness about agencies that seek to help in TAFs. Perhaps it can be conceived of as the opposite of *schadenfreude*. Attitudes that existing structures were imperfect but ever-striving towards improvement made this array appear to be system-centric (Sturges, 1996). The focus on relationships, perpetual change and cycles of improvement was emphasised throughout. Underpinning this seemed to be the belief that beneficial learning can be derived from situations where less desirable outcomes have emerged *as well as* from situations with successful outcomes through reflection and reflexivity. This perspective therefore centralises the idea that collaborative learning and development was possible and the ideal for work in children's safeguarding. Like Expert Judges, no social workers contributed to this factor (which was comprised of teachers and a youth advisor) but they arguably did not enjoy as much esteemed status (Rimm-Kaufman et. al., 2006). Perhaps the narrower focus (on education) of factor loaders permitted more optimism than the remit of other TAF players in the backdrop of the research.

Professional optimism about the potential of 'the system' to make a positive difference has been examined in newly qualified trainees. Bearing out my own experience, many social workers choose to train for humanitarian and ethical reasons (Jack & Donnellan, 2010), accepting that emotional labour forms part of decision-making in the role (Moesby-Jensen & Nielen, 2015). Research has demonstrated that social workers and allied professionals in TAFs experience a decline in optimism about the positive difference they can make through their work over time (Jack & Donnellan, 2010; Maben et. al., 2007). Similar findings show that emotional labour contributes to 'burnout' (Maslach et. al., 2001; Ahern et. al., 2017), which is characterised by a loss of faith in the capacity for progressive change. Other research has highlighted that early career social workers are far from a homogenous group and can be understood in terms of their future goals and commitment to the profession (Smith et. al.., 2018). Given that the literature shows a trend of reduced optimism over time, future

system change may be embraced to a greater extent by professionals if they were more heavily involved in the designing and planning of it.

On personal reflection, the atrocity story of a child dying seemed extreme, rare and *avoidable* to me when I first qualified - it took time and experience to appreciate that serious harm is not always easy to predict. Optimism, in the same way, is subject to the impact of emotional experience of work over time (Maben et. al., 2007). As already noted, the roles of emotion and reflexivity are essential to explaining and understanding TAF experience because work necessitates contact with the most sensitive issues in society on an interpersonal level (Wagaman et. al., 2015). Emotion impacts wellbeing and all aspects of functioning, including the capacity to make the balanced decisions set out in policy (Wu & Pooler, 2014; Taylor & White, 2000). This is illustrated by the quote at the start of this section, in which it is said that safeguarding shapes personal and professional aspects of self. No young people or family members contributed to this array but being allocated social work provision in itself can be a stressor that may reduce hopefulness.

Unsurprisingly, this array emphasised the moral rationale for intervention with families in order to achieve some form of improvement. However, and in contrast to Anti-Interventionists, hopeful reflection could be criticised for failing to see how disadvantage is replicated over time. Social work is a barometer of history and ideas about moral improvement have featured in the underlying philosophies of the discipline from its earliest versions (Donzelot, 1997). At micro, meso and meta levels of analysis, practice engages with (and seeks to change) the ever-shifting and contested margins of moral life. In many ways, social work continues to disproportionately address the unruliness of the underclasses. From the Victorian Charity Organisation Society's attempt to organise the distribution of donations (Mowat, 1961; Webb, 2007) to the formation of the welfare state, the merits of (ostensibly) providing forms of help under certain conditions have been critiqued (Bosanquet, 1914/2014). Perhaps the most controversial intervention involves separating families in institutions, which has its roots in the prison-like conditions of the workhouse (Foucault, 1967). Assessments of eligibility are just as contentious. Contemporary policies such as the Troubled Families agenda (for "families who both have problems and often cause problems"; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012: 7) are replications of ideas about

deserving or undeserving poverty (Seed, 1973). Some people are considered to be more worthy than others.

The problem that the most deserving/worthy not necessarily being the most in need (and vice versa) means that core objectives are in basic opposition with procedures. For *praxeological* change to occur, reflection must lead to informed action. Hopeful Reflector confidence in the capacity to challenge the multifaceted, overlapping and ever-shifting discourses that surround the operation of power does not seem to be borne out in social work (Smith, 2013), which may explain why no social workers loaded onto this factor. In fact, commentary from Q-sorting and follow-up interviews suggested this view may be more representative of early intervention work than other thresholds of the Children Act. For example, statutory child protection (where serious harm has occurred or is likely) is associated with different legislation, policy and guidance than early help.

Although some children experiencing abuse and neglect demonstrate resilience (Rutter, 1990; McAuley & Davis, 2009), higher levels of need and greater complexity are related to disadvantage because trauma is cumulative (Atwool, 2018). Given the emotional and ethical context of serious harm, hopeful reflection may be a less of a feature (Ferguson, 2011). Historically, Charity Organisation Society members may have had different ideas about need compared to Poor Law officers (who could send families to the workhouse) and it is interesting to speculate how power operated over time to popularise certain ideas above others.

The idea that the Hopeful Reflector factor (or any other factor in the solution) may be specific to the data set is not a limitation to the robustness of the findings. Q-methodology captures a snapshot of subjectivity at a specific moment with particular people so there is no reason why generalisability would be expected (Mauldin, 2017). Whilst this research focused on voluntary help at an early stage, perhaps optimism about 'the system' is contingent not only on the amount of experience but the nature of it. Notably, variation in practice across Children Act domains has been attributed to unclear protocols, distinct decision-making systems and agency ideologies (Bourassa et. al., 2008). At the same time as this, short-term interventions may fall short if poverty and social exclusion are not tackled (Statham & Smith, 2010). Perhaps in contrast to professionals with a broad safeguarding perspective, hopefully

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reflective teachers and youth workers may have noticed the benefits of brief interventions in ways they valued (such as attendance, concentration or performance) to a relatively greater extent. Indeed, Hopeful Reflectors expressed the view that tailored, timely interventions can mitigate unfavourable circumstances and promote resilience.

Despite the fact that different stages of a child's journey through safeguarding have unique considerations, the rate of change in early help provision in recent years has been huge (Dickens, 2011). For service-users moving through different thresholds and legal sections, it may compound a fragmented and task-orientated perception of provision (Galvin & McCarthy, 2009). Fragmentation may reduce the 'buy in' from professionals with specialist roles such as GPs who tend to be the least involved actors in safeguarding, and who often do not attend child protection conferences or produce reports (Armstrong, 1995).

For Hopeful Reflectors, relationships and working together (by building trust and reframing problems) were clearly important ideas because this was considered to be the mechanism for structural change. Formal diagnosis and static accounts of wellbeing (in which innate qualities are emphasised) appeared to be less appealing, compared to dynamic, ecological ways of formulating needs (Belsky, 1993). This has implications for the way participation is conceptualised – for example, by seeing children as active agents rather than passive, dependent beings (Wall, 2012). Sociological models of childhood have some advantages over stage-based models characteristic of psychology (Walkerdine, 2016; Winter, 2006) because they tend to acknowledge effects relayed by localities (Fish & Chapman, 2004). Thus tailored, locally attuned provision may be best suited to meet the specific needs of communities (Jack, 2003).

Amid increased integration and service contraction, working together is arguably more of a priority than at any other time. There are many examples illustrating the importance of learning lessons from those receiving and those delivering services to effective safeguarding (Scourfield, 2010). The Francis report (2013), for instance, noted that stories about day-to-day care on the wards from families (rather than data from existing systems) demonstrated the tragedy of preventable deaths at Stafford hospital. The current evidence-base for learning lessons in children's social work is dominated by the UK government's SCR strategy. However, exclusively taking lessons from retrospective, tragic cases creates a blame culture

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that promotes compliance, bureaucracy and defensiveness (Munro, 2010; Whittaker & Havard, 2016). Instead, as Munro (2018) discusses, developing services based on research and audit that is focused on everyday experience is more likely to promote provisions attuned to service-user needs than reliance on atrocity stories (and reactive policy making) could.

Emphasis on continual improvement underpinned by relationships can be linked to evidence-*informed* practice, which is a balance between art and science due to its capacity to embrace social and emotional experience (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011). Evidence-informed practice necessitates reflexivity which was one of the defining characteristics of this array. In contrast to risk aversiveness, reflexivity has been noted to beneficially place young people at the heart of decision-making and promote morale when undertaking casework (Turnell, Munro & Murphy, 2013). Although there is debate about how it is actually done (Ixer, 2016) and whether or not it becomes a means to internalise organisational principles and/or managerial surveillance (Nelson & Purkis, 2004; Gilbert, 2001), it does helpfully emphasise that practice is a dialectical negotiation of often strongly contested knowledges (Schon, 1983). Crucially, reflexivity must be accompanied by the apparatus to support introspection of emotionally difficult experience (Robert et. al., 2017; Hughes et. al., 2017). Therefore, an advantage to case-based research in children's social work at the current time is the promotion of an ethos where critical methodological thinking adds rigour, creativity and compassion to everyday thinking.

7.2.5. Collaborators: rights-centric.

> "We all live differently, in partnership. TAFs are imperfect, like people."
>
> Beth's social worker (a Collaborator).

Collaborators tended to adopt citizenship values at the heart of their rights-centric approach, emphasising ideas about empowerment and building capacity. Collaborators took a view, somewhat similar to Anti-Interventionists, that moral standards and criteria should be applied to all TAF members. Collaborators differed from Anti-Interventionists in the sense that they seemed to believe greater equity between social actors was achievable and should be strived for. Echoing this argument, authors such as Houston & Dolan (2008) argue the possibility of

praxis can be realised by an awareness of service-user rights and participation. It may not be surprising that the (most radical) array was also formed by the lowest number of participants. Participants who loaded onto this factor formed the youngest group, and included a student social worker and one of the young people at the centre of a TAF.

Collaborator views were generally aligned to critical social work approaches and a radical social justice agenda that problematises how oppressive discourses are shaped and replicated in social action (Rossiter, 2005). The idea of partnership and facilitating empowerment by dissemination and collaboration was an important aspect to the Collaborator array. These ideas echo the attempts of early settlers to understand and share knowledge about service-user needs in social work's history (Gilchrist & Jeffs, 2001). This factor was characterised by a dialectical approach to acknowledging that systemic structural limitations account for some of the barriers between full and equitable partnership between service-users and service-providers (Videmšek, 2017). Presently, actual consultation with young people remains uncommon (Clark, 2004) and tends to be restricted to prescribed outcomes when it does (Winter, 2006: 59). Collaborators held the view that short-term, narrowly focused interventions further limit the capacity to engage (Cleaver & Freeman, 1995; Spratt & Devaney, 2009) and, in line with Hopeful Reflectors, went on to say that a community-wide response is most helpful.

Social pedagogy could be considered to be a contemporary example of early integrative settlement philosophies, which reflect an underlying argument that disadvantage is primarily due to structural constraints (Mullaly, 2007). The social pedagogy movement, popular in Europe, holds that service-users and professionals are whole people who enact values of respect through perpetual reflection (Petrie, 2013). Collaborators did indeed consider service-users and service-providers to be 'in it together'. However, in order for the social pedagogue model to be fully and meaningfully applied in the UK, it would need to be adjusted to fit in with the current state of service contraction and fragmentation (Hatton, 2013). The movement echoes Freire's view of transformational leadership, which suggests leaders should not impose their personal ideologies but work flexibly with emerging knowledge;

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> The more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it… this person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side.
>
> Freire (1970: 39).

Rights-centric Collaborators emphasised the importance of striving for equity between citizens. Achieving equity amid difference is not simple (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004). In fact, members of TAFs are often selected specifically for their unique perspective (Ovretveit, 1996). Team agendas can be in conflict with specialist training backgrounds which can subsequently embed inter-professional divisions (Abbott, 2001), or, at the least, lead to low levels of identification with group goals compared to occupational identity (Onyett et al., 1997). The reality of forming sometimes fleeting relationships with interdisciplinary colleagues in high pressure circumstances constrains the development of working relationships (Rosenwald & Hyde, 2006). Hence, it has been theorised that the backdrop of team interaction explains more of the difficulties of collaboration than multidisciplinary working itself (Onyett & Ford, 1996).

For Collaborators, shared decision-making was seen to promote positive risk management in relation to the different and overlapping thresholds in the Children Act. Concerns built into the legislative framework and evidence from SCRs about systemic failures of communication were constructed to be failures of all players in context rather than those of particular members (Department for Education, 2014). The rights-centric approach was orientated to non-blaming and transparent practice (Turnell, Munro & Murphy, 2013), highlighting the importance of underlining shared group purpose, clear values and an established line of responsibility in work. The assertion that social workers have a duty to promote knowledge and improve services in a humanitarian way was especially relevant to this array. Collaborative equity is an ideal rather than a reality in current practice but there were times when social work was not as subjugated (Parton, 2006) and more respected (Ferguson, 2011: 25).

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Fundamentally, social work is a collaborative, relationship-based occupation (Howe, 1998) in which service-users and practitioners embody or resist domination through micro-level interactions (Foucault, 1977). Collaborators highlighted that the experience of powerlessness, shame and isolation during social work compounds presenting problems (such as poor mental health and substance misuse; Salveron, Lewig & Arney, 2009). That is, the adverse operation of power has emotional, psychological and social repercussions and the impact of domination should be considered if citizenship values are to be achieved (Freire, 1993). Power functions at multiple levels, just as collaborative relationships exist between individuals, families, communities and organisations.

The notion of the collaborative relationship can be extended to links between universities and the public sector which have the potential to capture and disseminate the situated experiences of TAF players, and lead to service development that is more in tune with its values (Camilleri & Humphreys, 2005). Researcher-practitioners bring insight from being immersed in the context of casework, including awareness of (and access to) helpful local resources for participants (Bunger, Stiffman, Foster & Shi, 2009). However, these relationships do not occur in a vacuum and contemporary politics in the UK are in conflict with its left leaning values. The pursuit of professionalisation, preference for evidence-based practice and fast-tracked training routes (Scholar et. al., 2014) present potential issues for the citizenship agenda. For example, these changes have received critique for legitimising increased surveillance of, and intervention with, 'problematic people' as a means to legitimate the control of marginalised groups (Corrigan & Leonard, 1978). They have additionally been appraised for enforcing a service-user/service-provider dichotomy (Johnson, 1972).

Some commentators have argued that social workers have achieved many of the characteristics of professionalisation in the striving for status but this has led to losses in its humanistic roots and ethics (Morris, 2008: 30). In terms of Bourdieusian theory, social work can be said to be subject to fields originating in state goals and responsibilities to provide forms of *care* – perhaps making it subordinate to state forms of *discipline* (Waquant, 2008) and therefore a sub-field dependent on an identity defined elsewhere. This is problematic because if you believe, as Bourdieu did, that there is a duty to utilise your social capital in the emancipation of others to challenge the doxa that maintains an unhelpful status quo. Professionalisation will not answer all of social work's critics, some of which argue that

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social workers do not "possess unique knowledge and skills that produce better results compared to nonprofessionals" (Gambrill, 2001: 166). Reclaiming social work values from politicised, commodified images of abused children can be done in collaboration with *all* TAF players as part of a capacity-building agenda. A model of professionalism that accounts for the creative process of decision-making and knowledge creation is therefore important.

Collaborators argued that the normalisation of roles (either service-users or providers) in TAFs is promoted at least in part by demystifying the labels and terminology surrounding practice. They also argued that the ethics of engagement must tackle the tension between protection of data and transparency of it. Calls to embrace this approach in mental health services include trauma-informed ways of working (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018; Atwool, 2018) which helpfully see behaviour to be a reasonable response to past or current experience of power;

> Drawing on relevant theoretical approaches, principles and practices… allow us to see humans as active, purposeful agents, creating meaning and making choices in their lives, while at the same time subject to very real enabling and limiting factors, bodily, material, social and ideological. This has implications for service-user/survivor and carer voices and views, for culturally appropriate perspectives on manifestations of distress, and more widely, for ethics, values and social justice.
>
> Johnstone & Boyle (2018: 6).

7.2.6. Non-loaders.

The four factor solution was based on 28 out of 34 participants, leaving six members of the sample who did not load onto any factor. Non-loaders are interesting because, for Stephenson, each individual array represented an operant record of subjectivity in relation to the concourse (Stephenson, 1990). The favoured solution was one way of interpreting data but not the only one, and non-loading sorts in this solution were not excluded in other solutions. For example, in the three factor solution, Claire's maternal auntie contributed to factor one whilst the team manager in Daniel's TAF contributed to factor two. Similarly,

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Anna's CAMHS nurse and the deputy manager in Claire's TAF contributed to the third factor of the same solution (see appendix six).

7.3. Messages from the research.

7.3.1. The existing cycle.

The opening chapter of this thesis briefly outlined the circumstances of Victoria Climbié's death in February 2000 whilst she was in the care of her aunt and her aunt's partner. The way that Victoria's story was told led to a massive overhaul in the way child protection services were structured in the UK (Munro, 2010), and the ramifications of this were felt in numerous ways. When Peter Connelly died in August 2007, another round of change was instituted despite the fact that previous recommendations had only been partially enacted. Sadly, many young people have lost their lives in tragic circumstances similar to this (Gilbert, 2008) but only a selected few receive national media attention, and the reasons for this traverse all levels of analysis (Payne, 2006). Victoria and Peter died at particular moments in the socio-political landscape of the country which meant their stories became part of public consciousness about children's safeguarding (Shoesmith, 2014; Ayers, 2016). In contrast, young people like Anna, Beth, Claire and Daniel rarely receive attention in the media that is remotely comparable. There is space, therefore, for a call for research that captures the range and richness of relegated stories in local children's safeguarding teams across the UK.

Diagram 7.3(a) shows that social work appears to be in an unhelpful, self-perpetuating cycle. This begins with the sensationalist reporting of selected atrocity stories of murdered children in the media (Jones, 2014). The maps of children's injured bodies in the news exemplify the emotional impact on cultural memories – echoing cautionary images from the Holocaust as the "paradigmatic embodiment of evil" (Rothe, 2011: 165). Unacceptably, collective distress is focused on individuals rather than the structures underpinning the current hostile context (Shoesmith, 2016). Subsequent outcry forms a collective, but narrowly conceived, means of cultural emotional expression that builds the rationale for top-down overhaul of services (Meleyal, 2017). In a circular way, increased marginalisation of those in receipt of services, marketised provision, commodification of need and managerialism (Bay, 2018: 2) compound the challenges to praxeological action in social work.

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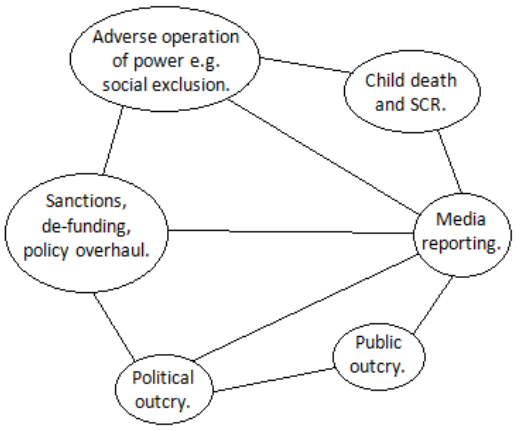
Diagram 7.3(a) to show how existing patterns reinforce and replicate unhelpful blame and shame cycles in social work.



This pattern arguably promotes mechanistic ways of working that are less creative or flexible (Munro, 2010) because there are limited arenas of change from the ground-up – which restricts the capacity for resistance (Mullaly, 2007). In this cycle, social work can be conceived of to be a political punching bag due to the knee-jerk, top-down policy changes it has been subject to (Payne, 2006). This scandal-orientated and problem-soaked picture of children's safeguarding provides the moral justification for sanctioning, de-funding and policy overhaul (Shoesmith, 2014). That is, this low status work is tasked with the important work of supporting the young people of the UK through recovery from abuse and trauma, without a professional learning culture that values an evidence-base of its own that is readily disseminated to TAF players (Gray, et. al., 2009). This restricts the capacity of practice to be shaped by special interest groups, practice-orientated research and wider social change (Serr, 2004). Subsequently, the burden of an accusatory culture replicates and reinforces processes of social exclusion through the adverse operation of power (Cree et. al., 2015; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

No other publicly funded occupation is driven by national moral panic in the same way as social work is and reactionary policy making may actually compound the issues it intends to resolve (Cree et. al., 2015). As a profession, it carries the shame and fear that society has about the harm of those who are deemed to be in need of protection (Shoesmith, 2016). It is a circular account of reduced resilience, increased disempowerment and eventual collapse. Stories become polarised by firmly held, common-sensical knowledge which asks the

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question 'why should public money be wasted on examining what we already know is to blame, and what would be unbearable to look at differently?'

In many ways, Laming's report (and subsequent accounts in the media) was problematic for at-risk and/or risky young people – along with those involved in delivering their care. It can be seen to have replicated the stigma, disadvantage and adverse reinforcement of 'Otherness' of people with these stories to tell. As already emphasised, Victoria exemplifies the atrocity story and how such accounts can come to be consumed in the same way that entertainment products are. One effect of this is to alienate people from their *own experience* and the understanding that human beings are more likely to cause harm when they face adversity and disadvantage (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). Perhaps one of the more detrimental implications of Laming's report was the proffering of a blame culture in practice, because this magnified experiences of social exclusion (Turnell, Munro & Murphy, 2013). Indeed, blame was explicitly allocated to mismanagement at Haringey council without acknowledging the extent that resources had been stripped from the service.

In this first diagram, the neoliberal hegemony presents social work to be an ineffective and inadequate tool in need of close paternalistic control by the state (Kemshall, 2002) – thereby justifying over-regulation (Meleyal, 2017) through the rationale that unacceptable failure, inefficiency and excess waste is paid from the public purse. The notion that social workers are under-skilled in being able to tackle the problematic undeserving is as pervasive as it is detrimental. Indeed, the 'well-intentioned' themselves become stigmatised – gently parodied in radio shows such as Clare in the Community (BBC Radio 4 Publicity, 2018) or more punitively tackled through criminalisation (Stevenson, 2015). Successive governments have responded to this with increased health and social care privatisation (El-Gingihy, 2015). However, change in this vein devalues interventions that are not orientated towards self-help - minimising relational, therapeutic work in favour of procedural knowledge and technicality (Munro & Parton, 2007).

Current trends in state overhaul of the way services 'on the ground' are delivered can therefore be disempowering and re-traumatising. Crucially though, *despite* the pervasive (and perpetual) changes to how services are structured and delivered, a similar number of young people die or are seriously harmed every year in the UK in cases where abuse or

neglect is featured (Bentley et. al., 2017). Over-regulation and constantly shifting, reactionary government targets leaves insufficient *time* for practitioners to embed subsequent revision. This in turn limits the capacity to evaluate efficacy and work towards achieving the goals set by governing bodies and stakeholders (Munro, 2018). The development of services in response to public backlash means that organisational change is *not* based on evaluation of what works and what does not. Whilst measuring impact is not neglected per se, the drive to improve outcomes based on a set of readily accessible and easily quantifiable measures restricts meaningful evaluation about quality, creativity and skill – perhaps making social work in this cycle more 'informational' than 'social' in character (Parton, 2008).

The current response does not achieve the aims it intends. However, it is not the only way. Greater transparency has the capacity to promote dialogue between those directly experiencing TAF work and those who can transform it - at all levels (Dodd & Epstein, 2012). The occupation underutilises its potential to develop tools that are grounded in the contested knowledges and actions of safeguarding work. Certainly, having led many TAF meetings prior to this research, it is clear that relationships are struggled through in the absence of a robust theoretical framework or useful evidence-informed guidance. No less important, building research capacity in social work may be one of the most effective ways of challenging existing trends (Orme & Powell, 2007).

7.3.2. The proposed direction of change.

Diagram 7.3(b) proposes that social work could adopt a more compassionate cycle that is underpinned by applied social science. In this, the most serious examples of harm could be seen in the context of *all* cases (Dodd & Epstein, 2012). Selective reporting in the media leading to public outcry could be balanced by research, audit and evaluation of experience (that of practitioners and service-users alike) in appropriately managed ground-up arenas. Troubling taken-for-granted ways of working in TAFs that do not end in tragedy has a range of benefits – the least of which not being that an accessible repository of knowledge about what works and what does not could promote the safety and wellbeing of young people. Subsequent government review could promote enquiry that had clear, practice-relevant goals centred on social *justice*. Public consultation about service change (with critical mindedness on the emotional impact of work kept on the agenda as a priority), could better meaningfully incorporate the range of experience in safeguarding for all children. Integrated training

routes could better prepare professionals for complexity of multidisciplinary work in health and social care (Anderson et. al., 2016).

With leadership at all levels grounded in lived experience, greater sharing of practice-meaningful research and audit could be one of the most valuable developments for the future of social work in the proposed direction of change. Crucially, dissemination is a key difference to diagram 7.3(a) - but limiting this to elitist journals compounds critique about poor transparency because most TAF players have no access to this literature (Davies, 2014). Ambitious and radical goals should be strategically planned at the highest levels to include the enabling of research *by service-users* so they can address issues affecting them with the support of the regulatory body and the organisations social workers practice in. Authentic, ethical enquiry aided by practitioner-researchers appears to be an obvious step towards achieving this. The proposed culture of evidence-informed practice replicates and reinforces processes of *continual improvement* through the involvement of all players, which has clear implications for the reputation of, and public confidence in, work to safeguard young people. In other words, change would not be driven by fear of children dying but appreciation that the picture is broader than the existing narrow focus allows (Munro, 2016; Stanford, 2010). This cycle is argued to promote attuned ways of working that are less blaming and less scandal-focused by highlighting that all children are done a disservice by perpetuating the atrocity myth. It is a system of reduced stigma and eventual *normalisation*.

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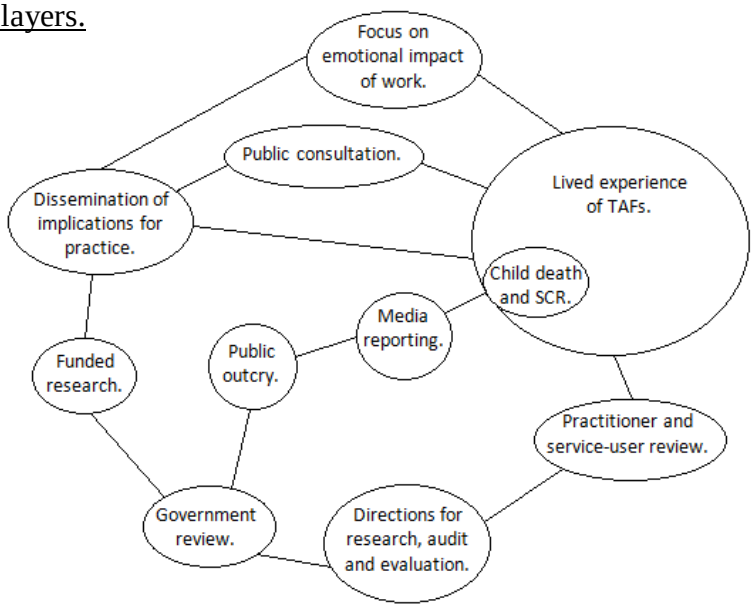
Diagram 7.3(b) to show how evidence-informed practice can lead to a more compassionate cycle for all TAF players.



This cycle highlights that any moment in social work will be a measure of the history of social change (McGregor, 2015). The inequality and power imbalances that play out in children's safeguarding are a microcosm of society as a whole. Children's social work is tasked with control and monitoring in one hand and providing support and help in the other (Howe, 2014). It negotiates the interface of public and private life, child and adult status, need and choice, expert and non-expert definition, and the parameters of care and abuse - to name just some examples of the contested spaces it occupies (Dickens, 2011; DuBois & Krogsrud-Miley, 2008). The 'right amount' of care or control (for instance) is highly dependent and contingent on the specific circumstances surrounding the concern. However, at a structural level, balance is crucial - a system that overly restricts the child-rearing environment may reduce the number of children who die but care and compassion is likely to become lost in the oppressiveness of the system. Society appears to resolve the tension by reserving the punitive gaze for the so-called undeserving and allocating the privilege of liberty to the powerful (Donzelot, 1997). The Expert Judge and Anti-Interventionist arrays are by no means the simple polar extremes of this debate but they do indicate that few people are likely to be wholly comfortable in the role of oppressor ('doing-to' others) *or* oppressed (being 'done-to' by others) – this bi-polar narrative in the occupation must mature.

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Given the existence of dualisms and the fragile tensions between them, it is ethically imperative to accept that practice cannot currently live up to its goals because they are inherently contradictory and locked into self-perpetuating cycles. How do individuals or wider society come to reconcile the punitive gaze reserved for the undeserving? The reconciliation is in the socially constructed fabric of action, and the artefacts that arise from it. This means that (regressive or progressive) change is bounded by *the same terms* – that is, social workers are meaningfully situated for radical action. Social constructivism usefully acknowledged that the 34 TAF players in this research actively participated in understanding their situation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) but, of course, there are other theoretical lenses with which to view practice. At the same time, being acutely conscious that particular individuals do not have equal or identical access to being able to shape the world recognised the adverse impact of power on the freedom to act (Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1977). What emerged was a rich network of ideas rather than prototypically opposed views that could be summarised in a series of dualisms.

It is not enough to be well-intentioned, as the philanthropic forerunners of contemporary social work were (Seed, 1973), because the beneficiaries of help are in a least-powerful position to fully consent (Freire, 1993) and intentions do not always marry well with outcomes (Humphreys, 1994). There will always be some voices that are marginalised and some ways of living that are privileged in society - if not, then how would citizens know how to be 'good'? TAF members must engage in a dialogical way in order to be able to appreciate what the concepts of abuse and neglect (for instance) actually mean. Accordingly, this research has argued that seeking to understand insider experience in children's services is essential because the profession is underpinned by social constructions that can be oppressive (Dominelli, 2002; Strier, 2006). This is an enduring concern for the profession (Fram, 2004) but perhaps it is especially pertinent at present due to trends in regressive social change and an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor (Dorling, 2014).

Progressive change recognises that human rights do not mean generic, one-size-fits-all care. Centralising critical enquiry in the settings that safeguarding relationships occur on a case-by-case basis is a uniquely powerful way to authentically and meaningfully disseminate the struggles and strengths of this work in communities. In other words, case-by-case whole team analysis may be less likely to pathologise TAF members on the basis of their role (such

as being a child in need of protection, or a parent who has failed to protect, or social worker who is risk-averse and so on). It is also important to the tailoring of provision to local need. Amongst many advantages, adopting this approach can challenge the dominance of adult-centricism and give support to a "childism" paradigm that invites the construction of young people to be equitable and valid participants with a worldview that is not incomplete (Wall, 2012). Accordingly, stories grounded in the communities people live in have the power to 'bring to life' and normalise the accumulation of disadvantage and social exclusion in a way that variable-orientated research cannot (Loach, 2018).

Uncovering the subtleties of the professional gaze can expose both helpful and unhelpful themes in thinking (Jamie, 2014), and this is why criticality is important. Collective praxeological goals to promote rights must be anchored in this dialogue because tackling discriminatory practice is not always straightforward. For example, given the taboos about perpetrators of sexual violence against children, sex offenders are unlikely to become the target of a rights campaign in the same way that survivors of sexual assault may be (despite the empirical evidence suggesting an alternative approach helps to make children safer; Jessiman, Hackett & Carpenter, 2017). More can be done to support social workers to embrace their identity as social scientists, rather than as socio-moral barometers of decision-making. This point is timely if social workers are accused of being the 'dominant priests of earlier times' (Donzelot, 1997) because piety and reverence for state intervention have long been in decline.

The current political climate appears resistant to critical approaches, as demonstrated by the response to Croisdale-Appleby's review about professional training routes (2014). Croisdale-Appleby argued that social workers should adopt a social science methodology but this was disfavoured by the Conservative government which instead preferred the Narey report – despite it suffering from a lack of transparency and poor stakeholder involvement (Cleary, 2014). Narey's championing of a fast-track route to qualification was adopted and the implications of this remain to be seen given the increasing co-location (and opportunities for joint training) of professionals in health and social care (Anderson et. al., 2016). It is nothing new that radical strands have passed in and out of prominence over time (Reisch & Andrews, 2002) but the proposed cycle emphasises their value.

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7.4. Views from the concourse.

The 'flow of communicability' expressed in Q-sort material has messages for practice, including its core imagination of ethics. Cautionary notes are attached to this. Research of this kind should not be thought of as a sketch of aspirational and non-aspirational viewpoints in TAFs. The goal, for instance, is not to move Expert Judges into Collaborator ways of thinking but to seek reflective understanding of the lived intersubjective experience of involvement. No perspective is heralded to be more valuable than another – rather, all views are to be heard and validated for their personal (as well as their group) contribution. This ethic has a role in reducing the likelihood of depersonalising and detaching from fellow human beings in safeguarding work because people are not simply types appropriately defined by concerns about them (such as being the "liver in bed ten;" Menzies Lyth, 1959: 51-63). A social worker may be an Expert Judge in one TAF but a Collaborator in another but any conclusions drawn from this are limited if group decision-making dynamics and wider context are not considered – along with individual factors.

Non-prescriptive relational tools can be developed to enable players to name and better communicate their viewpoint to the decision-making team around them. If genuine attention is to be paid to providing forums that are equitable (given that power operates to exclude some people), then perhaps this will better enable the chance of emancipation. Simply telling TAF members that everyone is equal, or that all views are equivalent (and safe to express), is potentially a troubling form of oppressive doublespeak if people are relatively disadvantaged in the group because it negates the discussion before it begins. Or, as Orwell would have it, "it is only by reconciling contradictions that power can be retained indefinitely" (Orwell, 1949: 206). With these ideas in mind, the sorting of the current sample of statements has some broad lessons for children's safeguarding.

7.4.1. Openness and transparency in relation to emotion.

Social work has multiple, often troubling, stories to tell. The existence of multifaceted, overlapping and ever-shifting discourses as the foundation of social work means that practitioners and researchers must *justify* their interpretations and actions. Although the guarded and defensive public face that social work presents is understandable, transparency is a prerequisite to shared reflection and understanding. Caricatures rarely represent the majority of experience (or, in Q terms, the full range of the *concourse*) – and absent views are

no less valuable despite their subjugation (Carlson & Williams, 1993; Francis, 2013). Practitioners must resist the view that "people of a certain kind" (Barclay, 1982: 149) have failures of character, self-mastery or expertise and are therefore less than worthy of compassion (Cerney, 1995; Conran et. al., 2006). This equally applies to red herring ideas such as the notion of the incompetent and/or malicious social worker whose naming and shaming is deemed to be warranted when children are harmed. Indeed, Alexei Sayle's satire about Haringey child care officer Mrs E. R. Taff failing to prevent "helpless babes in arms" being "horribly put to the sword by the Roman legions" at the start of this thesis mocks the unrealistic expectations of society about preventing the harm of children.

Unfortunately, it seems that current practice has been coerced into a careful, apologetic space – if I was still a safeguarding social worker assessing a day in the life of the infantalised social work profession, I might consider that the threshold for actual harm had been met by the abusive paternalistic behaviour of the state and the media. The well-versed allegation of inadequacy and failure has become a self-fulfilling prophecy which means that it is not currently an arena where openness and transparency can safely thrive. This is especially troubling for a relationship-based profession in which stigma can pathologise and dehumanise people (McElvaney & Culhane, 2017). Nurturing openness and transparency is not safely done if the core role of emotion in work with young people is not appreciated (Morris & Wheatley, 1994; Ahern et. al., 2017). However, whilst compassion and empathy allow practitioners to relate to service-users (and vice versa), this alone is not enough to achieve authenticity (Stanley & Bhuvaneswari, 2016).

The 'double-edged sword' of emotion and empathy has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis but there appears to be a gap in the way society processes that serious abuse and death is perpetrated against children. There is a huge appetite for representations of child abuse in the commercial market in the UK – through BBC telethons showing starved and abused young people across the world, fake child abuse memoirs, 'poverty porn' documentaries, vigilante websites showing screengrabs of conversations with groomed children, and, of course, the dominance of the daytime chat show. (Incidentally, appearance on a daytime chat show by family members in a fifth TAF in this research led to an escalation of concern about the wellbeing of the child at the centre, which then meant that they met exclusion criteria.) Given this context, there is little surprise that being open and transparent about lived

experience in this domain is a risky and personally exposing endeavour if the story does not fit the dominant frame.

Having attempted to balance transparency with meaningfulness, this research remains an artefact to the players in it, firmly situated in context. It is rich *because* it is a snapshot of comparative knowledge between individuals-in-context in a moment in time. Socially constructed, taken-for-granted truths in this field are transient (Jack, 1997) because practice engages with the perpetual tensions in wider society and the pressure to demonstrate continual improvement. Social workers in the field are well-versed in the importance of tracking change and capture this routinely as a means of sketching patterns and variations between the goals set in TAFs and the reality that is experienced by team members. Accordingly, the fact that a data set is most meaningful in context does not reduce its value because the goal of achieving progressive transformation for individuals, families and society is a pervasive goal in children's safeguarding.

Accounts rooted in the relational networks of actual casework have the potential to be an antidote to the surreptitious field of dualisms in social work in which people are swallowed up by association with one end of a polarised tale about them. Such a pole makes service-users and providers opposites and "the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism" (Freire, 1998: 12). Such domineering identities separate people from what they do, think and feel – limiting them to the frame set by polar caricatures. Instead, service-users (and all other social actors) actively construct their world view within the intersubjective, emotion-rich network that services exist in. The possibility of true collaboration in TAFs is in being able to harness and *name* how knowledge and meaning is co-constructed through perpetual reflexivity (Cooper, 2001; Kelly, 1995). Active, collaborative sense-making resists a blaming culture by enabling team work that can appreciate the expertise and unique subjectivity of group members. This is timely because the rise of the expert-by-experience continues to impact health and social care (Skilton, 2010). This argument for greater openness has limitations including the capacity of individuals to reflect (Ixer, 1999), group members to tolerate co-production and the supportiveness of the organisation (Bay, 2018) to illustrate a few. However, the precedent for transparency in services is clear and compelling in relation to the principles of safeguarding and the philosophies of compassionate care (Goffman, 1961; Buckley et. al., 2007).

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7.4.2. Leadership and regulation.

An explicit focus on 'the social' may have placed social work in a subordinated position compared to other professions. Perhaps due to the privileging of positivist discourses about science, measurement and the nature of the world, the profession is not often framed to be able to speak powerfully about itself. This is compounded by, and conflated with, society's lack of appetite for what it has to say – functioning in some ways as a proxy for society's fears. Appropriate, evidence-informed accountability in a robust discipline empowered by leadership at all levels could better lead reform from the inside of the profession.

Leadership from the ground-up could stabilise how change is implemented. Instability in training routes, for instance, is likely to continue (Giroux, 2011) but its direction is not settled. Change itself is not necessarily negative but training has been politicised along with other aspects of the profession. Fast-tracked students are not a homogenous group but their heralding as a rescuing force will shape the culture of social work in the UK because Frontline and Think Ahead represent the tapering of social work training. The shortened paths to qualification (13 months as opposed to 24 on postgraduate routes) perhaps echoes core goals - to "*create a movement of leaders* to challenge social disadvantage" (MacAlister et. al., 2012: 2). Leadership, however, is perhaps a broader concept than current governments intend.

The duty to collaborate in TAFs is set out in legislation, policy and guidance but SCRs and research show that the effectiveness of team working depends in part on the match of people, leadership strategy and the task (Horwath & Morrison, 2007). Classic studies in psychology have demonstrated that group dynamics influence decision-making outcomes and limit their rigour (Kahneman & Tversky, 1996; Janis, 1972) and a critical mindedness on this is important. Embracing critical methodological thinking in practice has a number of benefits for leadership in the profession, including inviting the possibility of innovation to open up dialogue about safeguarding and facilitate rigorous collaboration to resolve difficulties. Innovatively using methods such as Q can assist meaningful collaboration even (and perhaps especially) when TAFs face significant barriers. It would be naïve to advocate for a whole-person, whole-TAF approach underpinned by Q in routine practice given the shift this would require. However, it is a helpful tool to draw out unspoken (but illuminating) perspectives about sensitive issues that typically elicit polarised views (Brown, 1980) and it is therefore

illustrative of how joint reflection and co-construction of problems could be helpful in sensitive and/or emotionally complex situations. Social work must not lose its ambitious hope that service-users can liberate themselves from unhelpful, oppressive systems through non-blaming, non-stigmatising enquiry.

Change in this direction, if it happens at all, is likely to be slow because a radical shift is not high on the current agenda in British social work. However, applying critical mindedness to action could improve the authenticity of recommendations, the confidence in the work undertaken and, ultimately, reduce the stigmatising experience of having a social care need (Meyer et. al., 2003). Investment in ethical reflective forums requires acknowledgement of the emotional content of work due to the issues that may arise. Certainly, Payne's discussion of reflexive-therapeutic strands of social work (Payne, 1996) are suited to ways of working that incorporate the notion of formulation, which is central to clinical psychology (Johnstone & Dallos, 2013). Case formulations are shaped by the theoretical model behind them but they generally conceptualise problems in the context of a person's past, their community alignments and plans for treatment (Dean & Poorvu, 2008). A focus on local issues in communities is valuable if a mindedness on resisting oppressive replication of structural disadvantage is present (Mullaly, 2007).

The ever-shifting artefacts of practice that label, impact and shape the form and nature of decisions can themselves problematise unhelpful assumptions (Høybye-Mortensen, 2015). Developing practice-relevant tools that create a more equitable forum for relaying individual viewpoints could promote non-tokenistic collaboration in circumstances such as the Family Group Conference. The development of relational tools, then, may be more effectively utilised for selective TAFs that are the most complex and/or those that have reached a breakdown in communication.

The challenge for critical, ground-up leadership is that practitioners are employed to implement a publicly funded state agenda in which the state is critical and paternalistic. Social work will always be a political activity because it adopts a socially constructed network of ideas about need, risk and transformation to present a case for people to change (Chu, Tsui, & Yan, 2009; Payne, 1996). As such, social workers are expected to act against their values and/or their professional identity in order to deliver policy. In addition, they

almost certainly must act independent of consultation about the policies they enact. An example of this is the Troubled Families agenda referred to at the start of the thesis. Cameron's Troubled Families strategy is an example of how the false generosity of paternalism (Freire, 1993: 42) may have been less helpful than a relational whole TAF approach. The labelling of families to be "troubled" as the rationale for generating additional scrutiny with the promise of a small grant had "no discernible impact" (Cook, 2016). In contrast, a non-blaming, non-stigmatising invitation to all stakeholders of children's safeguarding to struggle together to attribute meaning to experience may have been more beneficial.

Arguably, though, one of the least desirable outcomes of highly politicised practice is *association* with ruling party politics given the disconnection between practitioners and policy formation. In the public consciousness, delivery of one strategy may be synthesised with an idea that other policies are endorsed by social workers. The conflation of Troubled Families with policies such as the 'rape clause' in benefits assessment (which denies entitlement to third-born children conceived consensually; Pevesz, 2018) would be problematic for social workers seeking to establish rapport. However, the intersection of, and conflict with, personal and professional values makes researcher-practitioners appropriately placed to negotiate the proposed direction of change (McCrae et. al., 2005). Irrespective of theoretical orientation or political leaning, engaging with concepts such as justice, truth, meaning and power is core to social work (Cooper, 2001).

7.5. Closing comments.

7.5.1. Future directions of study.

The argument for research grounded in multidisciplinary casework has been made at various points in this thesis. Calls for practitioners and commentators in the discipline to evoke the lived experiences of service-users and their families continue to be made (Ferguson, 2011) – not least because no risk factors need be present for abuse and neglect to occur. Ultimately, there is no absolute system that successfully achieves all the goals of welfare states. It is always going to be important to focus on subjective, marginalised stories because expert generalisations from empirical studies can function to reinforce and reproduce constructions about risky behaviour, and unnecessarily restrict freedoms (Taylor, 2016). The normalisation of stories like those of the four young people in this research is important but the

problematisation of how trauma is narrated in mass cultural memories is equally relevant. It would be a profound shift indeed to see an analysis as controversial as Arendt's 1963 review of Eichmann's trial in relation to decision-making in children's social work in the current political milieu but analysis such as Jones' 2014 *The Story of Baby P: Setting the Record Straight* have offered moving critiques of particular cases.

Adding to the general store of knowledge and developing appropriate tools is especially difficult to achieve in the current political climate of austerity and recession because the resources that are allocated to local authorities (where most social workers are employed) are stretched. (Indeed, this research was put on hold three times due to the financial pressure of funding part-time study alongside full-time work.) However, social work is strongly orientated towards action, values and social justice (Smith, 2012) making pragmatism the most appropriate paradigmatic approach. The rationale for evidence-informed development of practice tools and policy change is clear, and has been linked to the drive to be better value for money (Pollock, Shaoul & Vickers, 2002).

Regarding the development of tools, critical mindedness and pluralism is important because preference for functionalist methodologies can lead to problematic deterministic and reductionist accounts (Winter, 2006). Equally, drawing heavily on psychological and medical frameworks to analyse human behaviour (White, 1997) has created a tendency to adopt an individualised focus in which views are typically elicited using questionnaires or other survey methods (Gilligan, 2009; Cassidy, Jones & Shaver, 2013). Diversity can enrich the debate.

This study focused on the early intervention stage of children's services but future studies might involve participants TAF at later periods – perhaps even *following* particular young people at different points along their journey. Longitudinal approaches are associated with different issues but they bring with them the possibility of rich and interesting information about changing experience over the course of time. They also centralise the unfolding story of the young person (or whomever is being 'followed') which can de-mystify *both* the substantive content of social work and the applicability of research to practice (for practitioners and service-users alike). Tracing service-user routes through provision could build greater awareness about the different strands of children's care, as well as the transition

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to adult support. To illustrate the point, I was not fully aware of the advantages that therapeutic ways of working could bring to early intervention until I moved from a generic safeguarding team to Looked After services, for example. Similarly, and in an extension of the argument supporting case-based research, the context of the locality is a crucial aspect to understanding dynamics within families, services and TAFs (De Visscher & Bouverne De Vie, 2008) and this therefore makes it an important dimension to future research.

Future studies in social work may utilise social constructivism because it emphasises that privileged stories are not inherently more important than those that are marginalised. The implications are appealing - the idea that certain players in TAFs are not intrinsically flawed (but are merely constructed to be so) presents the opportunity to resist and reframe adverse stories. Social workers are not solely concerned with dominance through social capital in relationships because practice also emphasises *capacity building*. Fook highlights that there is no choice "about who can be empowered" (Fook, 2002: 48). Power is diffuse in TAFs and more can be done to facilitate decision-making in the arena. However, whilst the design, methodology and critical interpretation of results flowed from social constructivism, application of results is tempered with the fact that "social construction analyses do not always liberate" (Hacking, 1999: 2). Social constructivism does not prescribe ways of researching phenomenon but sharing *relatable* research findings grounded in actual work with young people and their families could build skills, knowledge and interest to generate future enquiry. Building and supporting research expertise with service-users should include younger children or those with capacity-related or other barriers to social inclusion to avoid a situation where invisibility is replicated (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008).

7.5.2. Limitations to the study.

This research, although situated in an applied field, does not present answers to the challenges presented by children's social work. It was a glimpse of life in four early intervention TAFs at a particular moment in time. By avoiding the "methodological dissection" of R-methodologies (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 12), the process of undertaking this study mirrored the reality that TAF members face in their joint endeavour to collaborate. To some extent the trade-off for richness, authenticity and specificity came in the form of generalisability. To demonstrate this, data was collected during a period of change and uncertainty in the local authority which may have shaped some of the characteristics of the

factors. Similarly, some of the unique characteristics of the factor solution may have related to how familiar TAF members were with each other and the particular stage they were at in terms of their progression through services. Notably, participants generally enjoyed positive working relationships (which is not always the case in this field). Reflection on these issues (through relational tools or not) is essential but taken to its endpoint, it can unhelpfully disconnect human beings from feelings of shared understanding and mutual experience. As situated actions are deconstructed, subsequent tensions beg the question 'whose account is most helpful?' which explicitly raises concerns about the effectiveness of collaboration given the operation of power. In other words, perpetual enquiry should be a characteristic of social work. This research should not be thought of as a typology of TAF players but as a moment of subjectivity based on a sample of a concourse. This can be seen to be resistant of ever-rationalised provision, moving away from static labels and symptoms (Zufferey & Kerr, 2004: 351). It highlights that at any one time, different views exist but the expression of them is constrained by the materials available.

No single study can claim to have saturated all stories or 'flows of communicability' about a given concourse. The four factor analysis and the emergent narrative themes may not be representative of other TAFs or other areas of children's social work – all parents do not take an anti-interventionist stance, nor do all psychiatrists claim to be total experts, for instance – but that was never the point. Instead, this research presents a case for greater investment in work of this kind to engender a stronger and *more diverse* evidence-base than is currently widely accessible in order to promote "the general store of knowledge that will sooner or later lead to more humane and more effective services" (Hudson, 1982: 173-4). It is of course important to recognise that emphasis on subjectivity and whole persons should not imply that there is not a number of *variables* that influence how families negotiate and interpret safeguarding services. There are ethical and methodological reasons for adopting an integrated qualiquantilogical approach because there is no standalone means of enquiry that universally covers all dimensions of the substantive research area. Certainly, one of the limitations for research of this kind relates to cultural context. If the appetite for learning lessons remains low, then any potential service improvement becomes subjugated and opportunities for practice-led transformation are missed.

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As with any research, participants may have varied in systematic and interesting ways that were not captured in the exploration (Scott et. al., 2014). Although a critical approach to conceptualising power was adopted, capturing subtle shifts and imbalances between the social actors who participated (including the researcher) could not have been fully captured. Utilising a methodology such as Q creates the possibility of challenging unhelpful stories that replicate and reinforce risks for children but power is a shifting phenomenon which makes tackling imbalance of it difficult. There may have been differential effects of anxiety across the P-set, for instance, with some participants feeling particularly obligated to place items where they imagined they ought to go according to criteria not explicit to analysis. Similarly, some participants may have felt uncomfortable about statements they found ambiguous - along with the requirement to infer meaning to them (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

The finite list of statements, the form the array shape took and other aspects of Q-sorting both structured and constrained the ways participants could respond (Stainton Rogers et. al., 1995). Development of materials in Q is heavily frontloaded, and the main issue relates to the coverage of the concourse (Brown, 1980). Only social workers, social work students and managers contributed to the development of materials in focus groups which means that the Q-set could have been more inclusive of all TAF players from the initial stage. This was primarily due to the tentativeness of ethics panels about exposing service-users and their families to sharing their experience of safeguarding. Not all participants completed follow-up interviews which had the effect of limiting the opportunity to enrich analysis with the absent views – if drop out was systematic, then results may have suffered from the selective exclusion of voices captured in the data (Smyth & Williamson, 2004). It is also relevant to highlight again that being a researcher-practitioner raised complex issues about insider-outsider status. Although these have already been discussed, the notion that researchers are not neutral instruments returns the reader to ideas about relational knowledge formation and power.

Having noted some of the difficulties and limitations to this enquiry, involvement in the research seemed to be enjoyable for participants. This may have been because it afforded them a voice and a means of expression they otherwise may not have had, which was a central goal of the work. In addition, the 'common-sensical' character of material may have made it more accessible in a way that acted to normalise safeguarding research for

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participants (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). This supports findings that sharing accounts can be cathartic and/or esteem building, can overcome boredom and may promote self-awareness and understanding (Warwick, 1982). As noted by the team manager in Daniel's TAF (a non-loader),

> This has been alright because it gave me a chance to let off steam.

And echoed by Beth's mother (an Anti-Interventionist),

> It's nice to know someone thinks I know what I'm talking about.

Participants were often keen to talk reflectively about materials and this provided rich data that was especially useful for interpreting contentious statements. In this way, some of Angen's (2000) criteria for evaluating interpretivist research appear to be met. Namely, the ethical and political implications of research (including the meaningfulness of findings to the population) were considered throughout. The recommendation about adopting relational tools in TAFs provides an example of this. Reflection about other possible explanations was a key aspect of analysis, and human experience was centralised in the way that the research problem was framed, and how respectfully participants were included (in terms of creating equity by examining individual subjectivity). The insightfulness of researcher understanding was supported by mirroring material and interpretations back to participants at all stages, the use of a research diary and of course, supervision.

7.5.3. The final word.

This thesis has shown that young people, their families and the professionals involved in early help support can voice their views in an equitable, comparative way. It is clear that there are challenges associated with shifting practice to adopt strategies of this kind. However, methods like this have the capacity to illuminate viewpoints that would otherwise remain invisible. Whilst the legal framework gives social workers authority to act, party politics can lead to core ethical dilemmas. Forums that permit all stakeholders of children's safeguarding services in the UK to dynamically engage in debate may be the best strategy to shape progressive change.

Whilst Stephenson's original inception of Q was behaviourist in orientation, the rationale for a qualiquantilogical interpretation focused on a pragmatic interpretation of how findings emerge. Stephenson questioned his career in his later years (using Q-methodology) and, whilst it is speculative, perhaps he would have reinterpreted his original works had he had more time. The use of Q in this research as a tool for reflection is illustrative of the potential that exploring lived experience can bring to children's safeguarding when emphasis is given to the nature of the medium.

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1. Appendix One. Selected timeline for social work.

1601 Poor Law Act.
1723 Workhouses introduced.
1834 Poor Law Amendment Act.
1945 13 year old Dennis o'Neill dies in foster care leading to a public inquiry and the creation of a committee into the care of children – the Curtis Committee.
1948 Children Act.
1949 Beveridge Report.
1946 Curtis Committee.
1947 Younghusband Report.
1959 Mental Health Act.
1963 Children and Young Person's Act.
1968 Seebohm Report.
1969 Children and Young Person's Act.
1970 Local Authority Social Services Act.
BASW launched.
1983 Mental Health Act.
1989 Children's Act.
1990 NHS and Community Care Act.
1994 Diploma in Social Work launched.
2000 February, Victoria Climbié dies.
2001 GSCC established.
2003 Social work begins professional registration. Role has a protected title.
Lord Laming's inquiry into Victoria's death completed and presented to Parliament
Keeping Children Safe report.
2004 Children Act amendment.
2012 HCPC replaces GSCC.
Welfare Reform Bill.
2014 Children and Families Act.

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2. Appendix Two. Final list of 36 statements.

Number	Statement
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.
29	Parents always know best for their children.
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.
31	People who hurt children are evil.
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.

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3. Appendix Three. Outputs from the PQMethod programme.

3.1 Correlation matrix.

	1a	1b	1c	1d	1e	1f	1g	1h	1i	1j	1k	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e	2f
1a	100	29	39	38	57	46	17	50	19	28	12	15	17	17	49	25	11
1b	29	100	38	47	28	36	-11	36	10	38	17	25	33	37	24	15	30
1c	39	38	100	38	40	58	25	40	35	24	28	18	15	16	42	39	24
1d	38	47	38	100	25	52	27	66	46	56	36	10	33	36	56	60	43
1e	57	28	40	25	100	55	23	49	32	48	4	-16	-6	-7	55	35	41
1f	46	36	58	52	55	100	16	64	37	35	19	9	14	11	70	38	28
1g	17	-11	25	27	23	16	100	25	14	18	25	-20	1	-3	22	54	12
1h	50	36	40	66	49	64	25	100	38	51	22	12	14	18	49	61	47
1i	19	10	35	46	32	37	14	38	100	17	33	9	23	23	41	35	32
1j	28	38	24	56	48	35	18	51	17	100	35	-16	17	14	44	40	83
1k	12	17	28	36	4	19	25	22	33	35	100	21	40	40	37	24	33
2a	15	25	18	10	-16	9	-20	12	9	-16	21	100	43	42	9	-14	-2
2b	17	33	15	33	-6	14	1	14	23	17	40	43	100	96	35	17	7
2c	17	37	16	36	-7	11	-3	18	23	14	40	42	96	100	34	20	6
2d	49	24	42	56	55	70	22	49	41	44	37	9	35	34	100	43	31
2e	25	15	39	60	35	38	54	61	35	40	24	-14	17	20	43	100	33
2f	11	30	24	43	41	28	12	47	32	83	33	-2	7	6	31	33	100
2g	32	35	40	54	23	33	33	40	48	42	85	21	40	40	52	36	37
2h	28	6	30	59	19	26	59	48	33	41	40	13	17	17	42	59	40
2i	23	13	27	57	19	30	64	44	25	43	44	-6	10	12	46	57	32
3a	10	33	12	19	-23	8	-23	-1	20	2	32	67	73	72	17	-16	9
3b	13	38	13	46	3	16	-9	25	35	27	35	15	69	72	25	27	17
3c	17	33	17	28	2	10	-25	23	39	14	28	24	57	60	9	14	18
3d	-41	-49	-46	-64	-46	-54	-19	-72	-25	-49	-6	-23	-14	-21	-41	-54	-48
3e	12	14	20	43	35	48	-1	39	73	25	33	-7	18	23	46	33	31
3f	17	17	15	32	19	19	16	38	15	76	38	-7	15	14	24	43	80
3g	30	33	37	72	26	41	30	49	54	57	82	8	44	46	57	48	52
3h	26	15	38	65	20	35	56	50	36	45	54	6	20	23	55	59	36
3i	11	-12	18	22	26	22	85	33	38	10	29	-20	-6	-6	23	41	19
4a	16	22	30	19	-7	4	2	-1	15	1	-2	36	54	52	20	2	-2
4b	28	21	6	41	27	12	23	15	25	30	17	25	31	31	40	5	23
4c	32	35	37	75	33	36	38	56	33	46	48	11	24	23	48	72	38
4d	-12	-14	4	-5	-17	-10	3	-44	7	-13	18	2	28	21	11	-13	-28
4e	91	20	36	34	49	46	20	49	27	19	11	15	14	16	44	25	7

Correlation matrix continued.

	2g	2h	2i	3a	3b	3c	3d	3e	3f	3g	3h	3i	4a	4b	4c	4d	4e
1a	32	28	23	10	13	17	-41	12	17	30	26	11	16	28	32	-12	91
1b	35	6	13	33	38	33	-49	14	17	33	15	-12	22	21	35	-14	20
1c	40	30	27	12	13	17	-46	20	15	37	38	18	30	6	37	4	36
1d	54	59	57	19	46	28	-64	43	32	72	65	22	19	41	75	-5	34
1e	23	19	19	-23	3	2	-46	35	19	26	20	26	-7	27	33	-17	49
1f	33	26	30	8	16	10	-54	48	19	41	35	22	4	12	36	-10	46
1g	33	59	64	-23	-9	-25	-19	-1	16	30	56	85	2	23	38	3	20
1h	40	48	44	-1	25	23	-72	39	38	49	50	33	-1	15	56	-44	49
1i	48	33	25	20	35	39	-25	73	15	54	36	38	15	25	33	7	27
1j	42	41	43	2	27	14	-49	25	76	57	45	10	1	30	46	-13	19
1k	85	40	44	32	35	28	-6	33	38	82	54	29	-2	17	48	18	11
2a	21	13	-6	67	15	24	-23	-7	-7	8	6	-20	36	25	11	2	15
2b	40	17	10	73	69	57	-14	18	15	44	20	-6	54	31	24	28	14
2c	40	17	12	72	72	60	-21	23	14	46	23	-6	52	31	23	21	16
2d	52	42	46	17	25	9	-41	46	24	57	55	23	20	40	48	11	44
2e	36	59	57	-16	27	14	-54	33	43	48	59	41	2	5	72	-13	25
2f	37	40	32	9	17	18	-48	31	80	52	36	19	-2	23	38	-28	7
2g	100	50	55	27	36	29	-29	32	33	90	65	33	8	36	58	6	27
2h	50	100	91	15	31	15	-40	10	36	54	93	50	5	31	64	9	23
2i	55	91	100	2	31	7	-34	13	30	57	93	56	-9	23	60	12	20
3a	27	15	2	100	52	54	-6	18	6	27	15	-27	38	33	9	29	12
3b	36	31	31	52	100	88	-23	38	9	48	34	-4	24	19	33	20	10

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3c	29	15	7	54	88	100	-20	40	7	36	16	-14	15	8	14	5	17
3d	-29	-40	-34	-6	-23	-20	100	-23	-39	-42	-40	-19	-10	-25	-38	49	-31
3e	32	10	13	18	38	40	-23	100	14	49	20	20	-12	14	30	7	25
3f	33	36	30	6	9	7	-39	14	100	48	33	15	1	7	34	-25	11
3g	90	54	57	27	48	36	-42	49	48	100	68	32	6	35	64	-1	26
3h	65	93	93	15	34	16	-40	20	33	68	100	46	5	31	64	9	23
3i	33	50	56	-27	-4	-14	-19	20	15	32	46	100	-9	14	26	-12	17
4a	8	5	-9	38	24	15	-10	-12	1	6	5	-9	100	38	9	26	17
4b	36	31	23	33	19	8	-25	14	7	35	31	14	38	100	36	26	31
4c	58	64	60	9	33	14	-38	30	34	64	64	26	9	36	100	7	28
4d	6	9	12	29	20	5	49	7	-25	-1	9	-12	26	26	7	100	-5
4e	27	23	20	12	10	17	-31	25	11	26	23	17	17	31	28	-5	100

3.2 Factor characteristics.

Table to show statistical factor characteristics of Expert Judges, Anti-Interventionists, Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators.

	Expert Judges	Anti-Interventionists	Hopeful Reflectors	Collaborators
Number of defining variables	9	7	8	4
Average reliability coefficient	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800
Composite reliability	0.973	0.966	0.970	0.941
Standard error of factor scores	0.164	0.186	0.174	0.243

3.3 Statistical description of the factor arrays in the four factor solution, and charts.

Table to show the output describing where each Q-sort statement was located in each factor – that is, the statistical description of the factor array. Z scores are shown in brackets.

Statement		Factor one	Factor two	Factor three	Factor four
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-2 (-0.913)	-2 (-0.845)	-1 (-0.471)	-1 (-0.508)
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	1 (0.389)	4 (1.936)	2 (1.051)	4 (1.812)
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	3 (1.445)	0 (0.187)	1 (0.695)	2 (0.851)
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	1 (0.677)	-3 (-1.018)	1 (0.490)	0 (0.141)
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	1 (0.638)	-2 (-0.852)	4 (1.686)	3 (1.364)
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	-4 (-1.958)	1 (0.460)	-3 (-1.256)	-2 (-0.835)
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	2 (0.965)	4 (1.875)	4 (2.158)	-1 (-0.634)
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	0 (-0.076)	-1 (-0.611)	0 (-0.230)	-3 (-1.409)
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	-3 (-1.514)	0 (-0.104)	1 (0.676)	1 (0.211)
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	2	-3	1	2

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		(1.027)	(-1.454)	(0.502)	(0.302)
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	-1 (-0.603)	1 (0.283)	-4 (-1.407)	-3 (-1.497)
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-1 (-0.508)	-4 (-1.722)	0 (-0.055)	1 (0.222)
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	0 (-0.150)	0 (0.084)	1 (0.471)	-1 (-0.336)
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	1 (0.441)	-2 (-0.887)	-3 (-1.343)	-4 (-2.010)
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	2 (1.025)	-1 (-0.272)	3 (1.279)	-1 (-0.171)
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	3 (1.615)	2 (1.099)	-2 (-1.081)	-2 (-0.717)
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	-1 (-0.484)	-1 (-0.733)	0 (0.207)	3 (1.315)
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	4 (1.664)	1 (0.271)	3 (1.233)	2 (1.309)
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	-1 (-0.587)	2 (0.929)	-1 (-0.692)	-2 (-1.016)
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	0 (0.115)	1 (0.683)	-1 (-0.578)	1 (0.458)
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	0 (0.034)	1 (0.437)	3 (1.264)	0 (-0.114)
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-4 (-1.860)	-2 (-0.928)	0 (-0.452)	-4 (-1.829)
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-3 (-1.269)	0 (-0.066)	-1 (-0.865)	2 (0.638)
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	-1 (-0.564)	2 (1.110)	-4 (-1.349)	1 (0.222)
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	0 (-0.049)	-4 (-1.543)	-3 (-1.227)	0 (0.181)
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	4 (1.659)	3 (1.580)	1 (0.836)	4 (1.710)
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	-3 (-1.094)	0 (0.090)	-1 (-0.469)	-1 (-0.144)
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	3 (1.173)	1 (0.225)	-1 (-0.474)	0 (0.139)
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-2 (-0.968)	-1 (-0.735)	-2 (-1.108)	0 (-0.122)
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	-1 (-0.454)	3 (1.305)	-2 (-1.140)	-2 (-0.790)
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-2 (-0.894)	-1 (-0.737)	0 (-0.389)	0 (0.165)
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	1 (0.793)	-3 (-1.335)	-2 (-1.135)	2 (1.035)
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	0 (-0.300)	-1 (-0.825)	2 (0.986)	-3 (-1.513)
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	2 (1.073)	0 (-0.268)	2 (0.911)	3 (1.641)
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	1 (0.224)	3 (1.382)	2 (1.038)	-1 (-0.496)
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	-2 (-0.711)	2 (1.000)	0 (0.240)	1 (0.425)

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Chart to show factor one from tabulated data above.

			30	33	35			
			24	25	32			
		36	19	21	14	34		
	27	31	17	20	5	15	28	
22	23	29	12	13	4	10	16	26
6	9	1	11	8	2	7	3	18
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Chart to show factor two from tabulated data above.

			33	34	28			
			31	27	21			
		22	29	23	20	36		
	32	14	17	13	18	24	35	
25	10	5	15	9	11	19	30	7
12	4	1	8	3	6	16	26	2
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Chart to show factor three from tabulated data above.

			28	36	26			
			27	31	13			
		32	23	22	10	35		
	25	30	20	17	9	34	21	
24	14	29	19	12	4	33	18	7
11	6	16	1	8	3	2	15	5
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart to show factor four from tabulated data above.

			35	31	36			
			27	29	24			
		30	15	28	20	32		
	33	19	13	25	12	23	34	
22	11	16	7	21	10	18	17	26
14	8	6	1	4	9	3	5	2
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

3.4 Statistical loadings of each sort onto factors in the four factor solution.

Significant loadings are noted with *.

Sort	Factor one	Factor two	Factor three	Factor four
1a	0.1040	0.1107	0.8102*	-0.0030
1b	-0.0952	0.4006	0.3833	0.3878
1c	0.2459	0.1591	0.5736*	0.0915
1d	0.4914	0.3063	0.4281	0.4116
1e	0.1091	-0.1890	0.7166*	0.2752
1f	0.1748	0.0674	0.7299*	0.2430
1g	0.7912*	-0.2745	0.1662	-0.1427
1h	0.2896	0.0196	0.6274*	0.5007
1i	0.3521	0.2862	0.3070	0.1965
1j	0.2919	0.0535	0.2191	0.7553*
1k	0.5866*	0.4139	-0.0903	0.2745
2a	-0.1045	0.5812*	0.1701	-0.1411
2b	0.1412	0.8788*	0.0596	0.0261
2c	0.1273	0.8800*	0.0744	0.0608
2d	0.4143	0.2388	0.5984*	0.1510
2e	0.5808*	-0.0440	0.3309	0.3517
2f	0.2306	0.0268	0.1169	0.8184*
2g	0.6235*	0.3961	0.1812	0.2862
2h	0.8348*	0.0948	0.1654	0.1604
2i	0.8792*	0.0087	0.1268	0.1584
3a	-0.0288	0.8714*	-0.0096	-0.0253
3b	0.1870	0.7413*	0.0123	0.2691
3c	-0.0382	0.7080*	0.0426	0.2956
3d	-0.1321	-0.0653	-0.5955*	-0.5239
3e	0.1727	0.2429	0.2833	0.3467
3f	0.2542	0.0087	0.0168	0.7375*
3g	0.6200	0.4038	0.1834	0.4870

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3h	0.8579*	0.1444	0.1807	0.2041
3i	0.7061*	-0.2888	0.1573	-0.0325
4a	-0.0136	0.5328*	0.2341	-0.2611
4b	0.2953	0.3538	0.3013	-0.0838
4c	0.6188*	0.1873	0.3133	0.3020
4d	0.2556	0.3693	-0.2001	-0.5023*
4e	0.1197	0.1125	0.7963*	-0.0913
Variance explained	19%	16%	15%	12%

3.5 Summary of sorts loading significantly onto each of the four factors.

Table to show which sorts loaded significantly onto which factor.

	TAF one	**TAF two**	**TAF three**	**TAF four**	**Total sorts**
Expert Judges	1g, 1k	2e, 2g, 2h, 2i	3h, 3i	4c	*n = 9*
Anti-Interventionists	none	2a, 2b, 2c	3a, 3b, 3c	4a	*n = 7*
Hopeful Reflectors	1a, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h	2d	-3d*	4e	*n = 8*
Collaborators	1j	2f	3f	-4d*	*n = 4*
None	1b, 1d, 1i	none	3e, 3g	4b	*n = 6*
Total	*n = 11*	*n = 9*	*n = 9*	*n = 5*	*N = 34*

* This sort loaded on the factor negatively.

3.6 Statistical loadings of each sort onto factors in the five factor solution.

Significant loadings are noted with *.

Sort	**Factor one**	**Factor two**	**Factor three**	**Factor four**	**Factor five**
1a	0.1196	0.1758	0.7981*	0.0679	-0.0553
1b	-0.0794	0.4306	0.3418	0.4498	0.0621
1c	0.2416	0.1632	0.5628*	0.1045	0.1026
1d	0.4814	0.2744	0.3980	0.4030	0.2527
1e	0.0890	-0.2316	0.7215*	0.2368	0.1715
1f	0.1432	0.0005	0.7285*	0.1883	0.2846
1g	0.8135*	-0.2054	0.1724	-0.0972	-0.1557
1h	0.2860	0.0029	0.6052*	0.5023	0.1709
1i	0.2596	0.0613	0.3215	-0.0127	0.6901*
1j	0.3027	0.0442	0.1786	0.7736*	0.1408
1k	0.5415	0.2884	-0.1056	0.1685	0.4532

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2a	-0.0677	0.6868*	0.1342	-0.0169	-0.1578
2b	0.1259	0.8461*	0.0228	0.0268	0.2669
2c	0.1092	0.8389*	0.0373	0.0546	0.2914
2d	0.3850	0.1801	0.5908*	0.1047	0.2956
2e	0.5717*	-0.0745	0.3189	0.3275	0.1761
2f	0.2321	-0.0126	0.0791	0.8081*	0.2013
2g	0.5905*	0.3081	0.1611	0.2180	0.3863
2h	0.8544*	0.1412	0.1422	0.2081	-0.0008
2i	0.8862*	0.0231	0.1127	0.1700	0.0626
3a	-0.0375	0.8551*	-0.0457	-0.0088	0.1997
3b	0.1312	0.5936*	-0.0119	0.1579	0.5472
3c	-0.1032	0.5363	0.0236	0.1627	0.5876*
3d	-0.1619	-0.1274	-0.5572	-0.6084*	0.0311
3e	0.0554	-0.0530	0.3045	0.0724	0.8544*
3f	0.2756	0.0194	-0.0250	0.7730*	0.0584
3g	0.5739	0.2724	0.1597	0.3832	0.5128
3h	0.8583*	0.1424	0.1611	0.2066	0.1366
3i	0.6899*	-0.3206	0.1756	-0.0835	0.0949
4a	0.0260	0.6545*	0.2040	-0.1278	-0.2034
4b	0.3151	0.4191	0.2787	-0.0102	-0.0501
4c	0.6170*	0.1780	0.2894	0.3056	0.1641
4d	0.2225	0.3136	-0.1836	-0.5657*	0.1686
4e	0.1182	0.1407	0.7948*	-0.0607	0.0297
Variance explained	18%	14%	14%	11%	10%

3.7 Summary of sorts loading significantly onto each of the five factors.

Table to show which sorts loaded significantly onto which factor.

	TAF one	**TAF two**	**TAF three**	**TAF four**	**Total sorts**
Factor one	1g	2e, 2g, 2h, 2i	3h, 3i	4c	*n = 8*
Factor two	None	2a, 2b, 2c	3a, 3b	4a	*n = 6*
Factor three	1a, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h	2d	None	4e	*n = 7*
Factor four	1j	2f	-3d*, 3f	-4d*	*n = 5*
Factor five	1i	None	3c, 3e	None	*n = 3*
None	1b, 1d, 1k	None	3g	4b	*n = 5*
Total	*n = 11*	*n = 9*	*n = 9*	*n = 5*	*N = 34*

* This sort loaded on the factor negatively.

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3.8 Statistical loadings of each sort onto factors in the three factor solution.

Significant loadings are noted with *.

Sort	Factor one	Factor two	Factor three
1a	0.0621	0.1255	0.6776*
1b	-0.0449	0.4102	0.5268*
1c	0.2301	0.1669	0.5208*
1d	0.5332	0.3074	0.5548
1e	0.1115	-0.1758	0.7514*
1f	0.1746	0.0797	0.7381*
1g	0.7439*	-0.2838	0.0370
1h	0.3335	0.0282	0.7843*
1i	0.3674	0.2870	0.3442
1j	0.3981	0.0540	0.5734*
1k	0.6336*	0.4028	0.0373
2a	-0.1246	0.5860*	0.0626
2b	0.1549	0.8775*	0.0422
2c	0.1461	0.8793*	0.0737
2d	0.4056	0.2444	0.5648*
2e	0.6109*	-0.0462	0.4433
2f	0.3526	0.0263	0.5234*
2g	0.6576*	0.3900	0.2720
2h	0.8416*	0.0850	0.1886
2i	0.8855*	-0.0026	0.1546
3a	-0.0174	0.8713*	-0.0364
3b	0.2390	0.7386*	0.1319
3c	0.0192	0.7095*	0.1815
3d	-0.1844	-0.0758	-0.7754*
3e	0.2151	0.2462	0.4121*
3f	0.3678	0.0263	0.5234*
3g	0.6863*	0.3980	0.3805
3h	0.8713*	0.1346	0.2230
3i	0.6778*	-0.2968	0.0918
4a	-0.0583	0.5374*	0.0501
4b	0.2680	0.3550*	0.1916
4c	0.6452*	0.1840	0.3962
4d	0.1881	0.3606	-0.4534*
4e	0.0643	0.1267	0.6182*
Variance explained	20	16	19

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3.9 Summary of sorts loading significantly onto each of the three factors.

Table to show which sorts loaded significantly onto which factor.

	TAF one	**TAF two**	**TAF three**	**TAF four**	**Total sorts**
Factor one	1g, 1k	2e, 2g, 2h, 2i	3g, 3h, 3i	4c	*n = 10*
Factor two	None	2a, 2b, 2c	3a, 3b, 3c	4a, 4b	*n = 8*
Factor three	1a, 1b, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h, 1j	2d, 2f	-3d*, 3e, 3f	-4d*, 4e	*n = 14*
None	1d, 1i	None	None	None	*n = 2*
Total	*n = 11*	*n = 9*	*n = 9*	*n = 5*	*N = 34*

* This sort loaded on the factor negatively.

3.10 Numerical charts showing the arrays for the five factor solution.

Factor one.

			30	33	35			
			24	25	32			
		36	19	21	14	34		
	27	31	17	20	5	28	26	
22	23	29	12	13	4	15	10	18
6	9	1	11	8	2	7	3	16
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Factor two.

			33	34	28			
			17	27	21			
		31	15	23	20	36		
	32	29	14	13	18	30	35	
25	22	8	5	9	11	24	26	7
12	10	4	1	3	6	16	19	2
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Factor three.

			31	28	36			
			27	22	26			
		30	23	17	10	35		
	32	29	20	13	9	34	33	
24	25	16	19	12	4	18	21	7
11	14	6	1	8	2	3	15	5
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Factor four.

			35	31	36			
			29	28	23			
		30	27	25	12	32		
	33	19	13	24	10	20	34	
22	11	16	7	21	9	18	17	26
14	8	6	1	15	4	3	5	2
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Factor five.

			33	35	29			
			32	34	27			
		24	31	18	25	28		
	23	16	20	9	22	21	36	
19	14	12	15	8	17	10	30	26
1	5	11	6	3	13	4	2	7
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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3.11 Numerical charts showing the arrays for the three factor solution.

Factor one.

			36	25	35			
			33	21	20			
		31	30	17	10	32		
	23	29	24	14	5	28	34	
22	9	27	12	13	4	15	18	26
6	1	19	11	8	2	7	16	3
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Factor two.

			31	34	28			
			29	27	21			
		33	17	23	20	36		
	32	22	15	13	18	24	35	
25	10	14	8	9	11	19	30	7
12	4	1	5	3	6	16	26	2
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

Factor three.

			31	36	35			
			28	22	33			
		30	27	20	13	26		
	32	25	23	17	10	18	34	
14	29	19	6	12	9	15	21	7
11	24	16	1	8	4	3	2	5
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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3.12 Amount of variance explained by the first ten unrotated factors.

Table to show the derived eigenvalues and associated percentages of explained variance associated with each and subsequent factors from the 34 sorts in the P-sample.

	Eigenvalues	**Eigenvalues as percentages (to two decimal places)**	**Cumulative percentages (to two decimal places)**
Factor one	11.26	33.11	33.11
Factor two	4.58	13.47	46.57
Factor three	2.96	8.70	55.27
Factor four	2.30	6.77	62.04
Factor five	1.85	5.45	67.49
Factor six	1.50	4.41	71.90
Factor seven	1.25	3.68	75.58
Factor eight	1.11	3.28	78.86
Factor nine	1.09	3.22	82.07
Factor ten	0.99	2.91	84.99

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

4. Appendix Four. Information packs.

4.1 Professional pack.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
0191 2888 400

Dear colleague,

I am a research student interested in your views and experience.

I would like to invite you to read some statements and decide how much you agree or disagree with them. This is called Q-sorting. There are 36 statements to sort which takes 15-30 minutes. I would be there with you during the sorting. If you do agree to take part, we can meet at a convenient date and time for both of us.

There are two parts to this research. This Q-sort is just the first part. If you complete the Q-sort, I will later invite you to take another look at your sort and see how it compared to others in the sample in a follow-up interview.

I would like to audio record our meeting. Apart from me, only my supervisors at the University would be able to listen to the recording before it was destroyed. It is completely your decision if you would like to take part. You can withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason and this would not affect the Team Around the Family (TAF) work you are part of.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have and have included my contact details on this letter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

With thanks,

Rachel Sempija

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
0191 2888 400

Overview of the research.

Understanding how people think and feel about being part of Team Around the Family (TAF) work can help improve it. There is very little research about this and so I would like to ask about your experience and that of the other members of the TAF you are currently part of.

In this study, Q-sorting involves deciding how much you agree or disagree with some statements. Q-sorting can sometimes allow people to express views that might be difficult to share. These statements came from lots of different sources and you might strongly disagree with some of them. Using interviews after Q-sorting can help researchers better understand a person's views.

Purpose of the research.

The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAF work. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

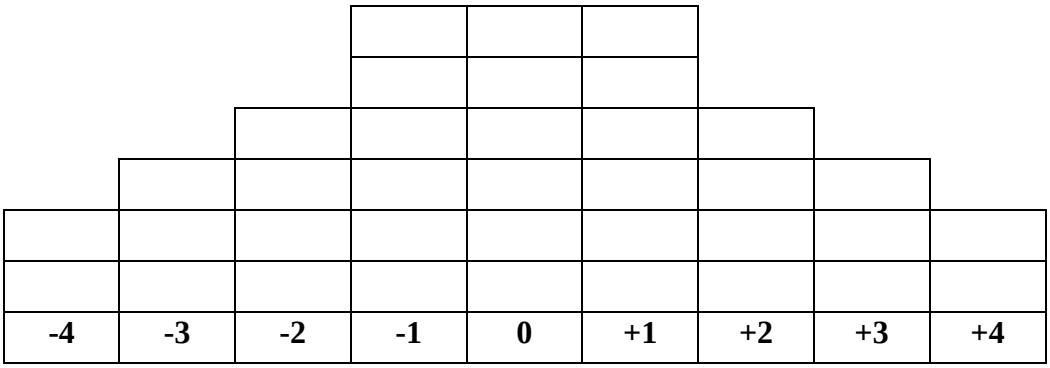
Why have you been asked to take part?

Your views are important. Listening to and understanding how people think and feel when they are involved in TAFs can improve the way services are provided.

What will taking part involve?

- Q-sorting takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete.
- The researcher shuffles a set of 36 cards which have the statements written on them. You sort these into three roughly equal 'agree', 'disagree' and 'unsure/neutral' piles.
- The two statements you most agree with from your 'agree' pile are then taken out and recorded in the +4 column in the diagram below. The next three boxes are filled with the statements you mostly agree with out of those left. This continues until the agree pile is gone.
- This is repeated with your disagree pile on the '-' side of the diagram.
- The whole process is started again with the remaining pile until all the cards are gone.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.



You do not have to give a reason if you decide not to Q-sort, and TAF working would not be whatever you decided. If you decide to Q-sort now and later change your mind, you also do not have to give any reason and TAF work would not be affected.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?
No-one apart from the researcher will know the choices you made when sorting.

I will invite you to a follow-up interview to talk about your sort. If you are unable or do not wish to attend, I will post my analysis to you, with an explanation.

Everything you say is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to take part in a Q-sort about my experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this Q-sort will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect my confidentiality.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Dear colleague,

Thank you for being involved so far. I have now looked at your Q-sort and would like to share the results with you.

I would like to invite you to talk to me about your Q-sort on _____ at _____. This interview is the last stage of this research. This interview is expected to take 30-40 minutes but we can finish as early as you choose. I have attached an interview guide in an information sheet. You are free to answer as many or as few questions as you choose if we meet.

Like last time, I would like to audio record our time. Apart from me, only my supervisors at the University would be able to play the recording before it was destroyed at the end of the project.

It is completely your decision if you would like to take part. You can withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason and this would not affect any decisions in the TAF.

With thanks Rachel Sempija

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Overview of the research.

Understanding how people think and feel about being part of Team Around the Family (TAF) work can help improve it. There is very little research about this and so I would like to ask about your experience and that of the other members of the TAF you are currently part of.

In this study, Q-sorting involves deciding how much you agree or disagree with some statements. Q-sorting can sometimes allow people to express views that might be difficult to share. These statements came from lots of different sources and you might strongly disagree with some of them. Using interviews after Q-sorting can help researchers better understand a person's views.

Purpose of the research.

The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAF work. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

Why have you been asked to take part?

Your views are important. Listening to and understanding how people think and feel when they are involved in TAFs can improve the way services are provided.

Interview question guide.

- Now that you have looked at your Q-sort again, do you think there is anything you would change about it?
- If you have made any changes, why do you think you made them?
- Please tell me about any other aspects of your experience as part of your TAF that might not have been captured by the Q-sort.
- What have been the most important things to you in your experience of TAF work?
- Is there anything you would like to have been different about your experience?
- Do you have any other comments?

If you decide to participate now and later wish to withdraw, you also do not have to give a reason and TAF work would not be affected.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

No-one apart from the researcher will be able to link your interview comments to you. After the follow-up interview, I will post you a summary of the research. If you would like to meet with me again to talk about this, we can arrange this.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

Everything you say is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinios in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to take part in a follow-up interview about my experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this follow-up interview will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect my confidentiality.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Support after your Q-sort or interview.

Being involved in safeguarding can raise difficult emotions and questions. It can affect your wellbeing. The care team is in place to help you but further sources of advice and support are available, including;

- Your GP.
- Counselling services (available through school or your GP, for example).
- Your local One Point Hub (who are a source of early help for a wide range of needs).

In addition, you may have concerns about how this research was conducted and it is your right to express this view. Your concerns will be taken seriously. You may like to contact;

- My university supervisor - Dr Sam Hillyard, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Sociology, Room 204, 32 Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HN. sam.hillyard@durham.ac.uk 0191 3346836
- The complaints department at University of Durham (03000 267 007).

Finally;

- If you're worried about a child or an adult, 03000 267979 is the number for the First Contact team who respond to the information you provide.

4.2 Parent pack.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Dear parent,

I am a research student interested in your views and experience.

I would like to invite you to read some statements and decide how much you agree or disagree with them. This is called Q-sorting. There are 36 statements to sort which takes 15-30 minutes. I would be there with you during the sorting. If you do agree to take part, we can meet at a convenient date and time for both of us.

There are two parts to this research. This Q-sort is just the first part. If you complete the Q-sort, I will later invite you to take another look at your sort and see how it compared to others in the sample in a follow-up interview.

I would like to audio record our meeting. Apart from me, only my supervisors at the University would be able to listen to the recording before it was destroyed. It is completely your decision if you would like to take part. You can withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason and this would not affect the Team Around the Family (TAF) work you are part of.

If you are happy for you and your child to be involved, please sign the attached consent forms.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have and have included my contact details on this letter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

With thanks,

Rachel Sempija

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Overview of the research.

Understanding how people think and feel about being part of Team Around the Family (TAF) work can help improve it. There is very little research about this and so I would like to ask about your experience and that of the other members of the TAF you are currently part of.

In this study, Q-sorting involves deciding how much you agree or disagree with some statements. Q-sorting can sometimes allow people to express views that might be difficult to share. These statements came from lots of different sources and you might strongly disagree with some of them. Using interviews after Q-sorting can help researchers better understand a person's views.

Purpose of the research.

The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAF work. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

Why have you been asked to take part?

Your views are important. Listening to and understanding how people think and feel when they are involved in TAFs can improve the way services are provided.

What will taking part involve?

- Q-sorting takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete.
- The researcher shuffles a set of 36 cards which have the statements written on them. You sort these into three roughly equal 'agree', 'disagree' and 'unsure/neutral' piles.
- The two statements you most agree with from your 'agree' pile are then taken out and recorded in the +4 column in the diagram below. The next three boxes are filled with the statements you mostly agree with out of those left. This continues until the agree pile is gone.
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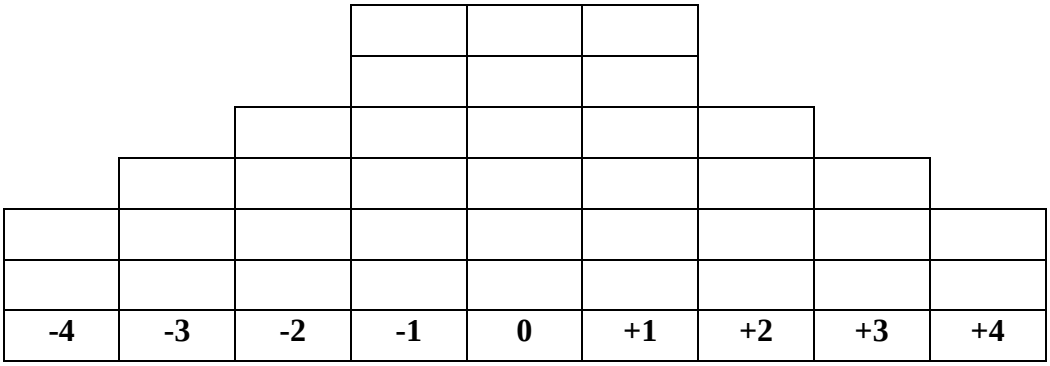
Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.



You do not have to give a reason if you decide not to Q-sort, and TAF working would not be whatever you decided. If you decide to Q-sort now and later change your mind, you also do not have to give any reason and TAF work would not be affected.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?
No-one apart from the researcher will know the choices you made when sorting.

I will invite you to a follow-up interview to talk about your sort. If you are unable or do not wish to attend, I will post my analysis to you, with an explanation.

Everything you say is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to take part in a Q-sort about my experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this Q-sort will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect my confidentiality.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to allow my child to take part in a Q-sort about their experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this Q-sort will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my child's comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect his/her confidentiality.	
I understand I and/or my child can withdraw my consent at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Dear parent,

Thank you for being involved so far. I have now looked at your Q-sort and would like to share the results with you.

I would like to invite you to talk to me about your Q-sort on _____ at _____. This interview is the last stage of this research. This interview is expected to take 30-40 minutes but we can finish as early as you choose. I have attached an interview guide in an information sheet. You are free to answer as many or as few questions as you choose if we meet.

Like last time, I would like to audio record our time. Apart from me, only my supervisors at the University would be able to play the recording before it was destroyed at the end of the project.

It is completely your decision if you would like to take part. You can withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason and this would not affect any decisions in the TAF.

With thanks Rachel Sempija

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
0191 2888 400

Overview of the research.
Understanding how people think and feel about being part of Team Around the Family (TAF) work can help improve it. There is very little research about this and so I would like to ask about your experience and that of the other members of the TAF you are currently part of.

In this study, Q-sorting involves deciding how much you agree or disagree with some statements. Q-sorting can sometimes allow people to express views that might be difficult to share. These statements came from lots of different sources and you might strongly disagree with some of them. Using interviews after Q-sorting can help researchers better understand a person's views.

Purpose of the research.
The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAFs. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

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Why have you been asked to take part?
Your views are important. Listening to and understanding how people think and feel when they are involved in TAFs can improve the way services are provided.

Interview question guide.

- Now that you have looked at your Q-sort again, do you think there is anything you would change about it?
- If you have made any changes, why do you think you made them?
- Please tell me about any other aspects of your experience as part of your TAF that might not have been captured by the Q-sort.
- What have been the most important things to you in your experience of TAF work?
- Is there anything you would like to have been different about your experience?
- Do you have any other comments?

If you decide to participate now and later wish to withdraw, you also do not have to give a reason and TAF work would not be affected.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

No-one apart from the researcher will be able to link your interview comments to you. After the follow-up interview, I will post you a summary of the research. If you would like to meet with me again to talk about this, we can arrange this.

Everything you say is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else.

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Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

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32 Old Elvet
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rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to take part in a follow-up interview about my experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this follow-up interview will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect my confidentiality.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to allow my child to take part in a follow-up interview about his/her experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this follow-up interview will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my child's comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect his/her confidentiality.	
I understand I and/or my child can withdraw my consent at any time and up to three months after this interview.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Support after your Q-sort or interview.

Being involved in safeguarding can raise difficult emotions and questions. It can affect your wellbeing. The care team is in place to help you but further sources of advice and support are available, including;

- Your GP.
- Counselling services (available through school or your GP, for example).
- Your local One Point Hub (who are a source of early help for a wide range of needs).

In addition, you may have concerns about how this research was conducted and it is your right to express this view. Your concerns will be taken seriously. You may like to contact;

- My university supervisor - Dr Sam Hillyard, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Sociology, Room 204, 32 Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HN. sam.hillyard@durham.ac.uk 0191 3346836
- The complaints department at University of Durham (03000 267 007).

Finally;

- If you're worried about a child or an adult, 03000 267979 is the number for the First Contact team who respond to the information you provide.

4.3 Young person pack.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Dear young person,

I am a research student interested in your views and experience.

I would like to invite you to read some statements and decide how much you agree or disagree with them. This is called Q-sorting. There are 36 statements to sort which takes 15-30 minutes. I would be there with you during the sorting. If you do agree to take part, we can meet at a convenient date and time for both of us.

There are two parts to this research. This Q-sort is just the first part. If you complete the Q-sort, I will later invite you to take another look at your sort and see how it compared to others in the sample in a follow-up interview.

I would like to audio record our meeting. Apart from me, only my supervisors at the University would be able to listen to the recording before it was destroyed. It is completely your decision if you would like to take part. You can withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason and this would not affect the Team Around the Family (TAF) work you are part of.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have and have included my contact details on this letter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

With thanks,

Rachel Sempija

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
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Overview of the research.

Understanding how people think and feel about being part of Team Around the Family (TAF) work can help improve it. There is very little research about this and so I would like to ask about your experience and that of the other members of the TAF you are currently part of.

In this study, Q-sorting involves deciding how much you agree or disagree with some statements. Q-sorting can sometimes allow people to express views that might be difficult to share. These statements came from lots of different sources and you might strongly disagree with some of them. Using interviews after Q-sorting can help researchers better understand a person's views.

Purpose of the research.

The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAF work. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

Why have you been asked to take part?

Your views are important. Listening to and understanding how people think and feel when they are involved in TAFs can improve the way services are provided.

What will taking part involve?

- Q-sorting takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete.
- The researcher shuffles a set of 36 cards which have the statements written on them. You sort these into three roughly equal 'agree', 'disagree' and 'unsure/neutral' piles.
- The two statements you most agree with from your 'agree' pile are then taken out and recorded in the +4 column in the diagram below. The next three boxes are filled with the statements you mostly agree with out of those left. This continues until the agree pile is gone.
- This is repeated with your disagree pile on the '-' side of the diagram.
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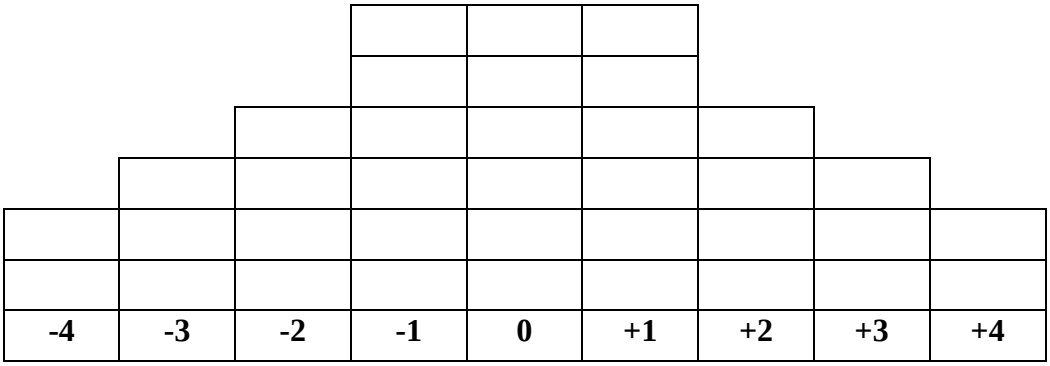

You do not have to give a reason if you decide not to Q-sort, and TAF working would not be whatever you decided. If you decide to Q-sort now and later change your mind, you also do not have to give any reason and TAF work would not be affected.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?
No-one apart from the researcher will know the choices you made when sorting.

I will invite you to a follow-up interview to talk about your sort. If you are unable or do not wish to attend, I will post my analysis to you, with an explanation.

Everything you say is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else.

Sam Hillyard, Kim Jamie, Jim Good. School of Applied Social Sciences.
Rachel Anne Sempija. Trevelyan College, University of Durham.

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to take part in a Q-sort about my experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this Q-sort will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect my confidentiality.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Durham
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

rachel.sempija@nhs.net
07527 055904

Dear young person,

Thank you for being involved so far. I have now looked at your Q-sort and would like to share the results with you.

I would like to invite you to talk to me about your Q-sort on _____ at _____. This interview is the last stage of this research. This interview is expected to take 30-40 minutes but we can finish as early as you choose. I have attached an interview guide in an information sheet. You are free to answer as many or as few questions as you choose if we meet.

Like last time, I would like to audio record our time. Apart from me, only my supervisors at the University would be able to play the recording before it was destroyed at the end of the project.

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With thanks Rachel Sempija

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Understanding how people think and feel about being part of Team Around the Family (TAF) work can help improve it. There is very little research about this and so I would like to ask about your experience and that of the other members of the TAF you are currently part of.

In this study, Q-sorting involves deciding how much you agree or disagree with some statements. Q-sorting can sometimes allow people to express views that might be difficult to share. These statements came from lots of different sources and you might strongly disagree with some of them. Using interviews after Q-sorting can help researchers better understand a person's views.

Purpose of the research.
The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAFs. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

Purpose of the research.
The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of being involved in TAF work. There are not many research studies that compare how people in TAFs think and feel about their involvement.

Why have you been asked to take part?
Your views are important. Listening to and understanding how people think and feel when they are involved in TAFs can improve the way services are provided.

Interview question guide.

- Now that you have looked at your Q-sort again, do you think there is anything you would change about it?
- If you have made any changes, why do you think you made them?
- Please tell me about any other aspects of your experience as part of your TAF that might not have been captured by the Q-sort.
- What have been the most important things to you in your experience of TAF work?
- Is there anything you would like to have been different about your experience?
- Do you have any other comments?

If you decide to participate now and later wish to withdraw, you also do not have to give a reason and TAF work would not be affected.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

No-one apart from the researcher will be able to link your interview comments to you. After the follow-up interview, I will post you a summary of the research. If you would like to meet with me again to talk about this, we can arrange this.

Everything you say is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else.

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Qualitative case by case analysis of factors influencing service-user and service-provider opinions in 'Team Around the Family' work (section 17 of the Children Act 1989/2004).

I consent to take part in a follow-up interview about my experience of Team Around the Family work.	
I have received a letter introducing how this follow-up interview will contribute to a research degree.	
I understand that my comments will be recorded but that they will be anonymised if they are quoted in any publications to protect my confidentiality.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time and up to three months after this Q-sort.	
I understand I can raise comments or questions with the researcher, her university supervisor, an appropriate member of University of Durham and anyone else, if required.	

Signed: Date:

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07527 055904

Support after your Q-sort or interview.

Being involved in safeguarding can raise difficult emotions and questions. It can affect your wellbeing. The care team is in place to help you but further sources of advice and support are available, including;

- Your GP.
- Counselling services (available through school or your GP, for example).
- Your local One Point Hub (who are a source of early help for a wide range of needs).

In addition, you may have concerns about how this research was conducted and it is your right to express this view. Your concerns will be taken seriously. You may like to contact;

- My university supervisor - Dr Sam Hillyard, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Sociology, Room 204, 32 Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HN. sam.hillyard@durham.ac.uk 0191 3346836
- The complaints department at University of Durham (03000 267 007).

Finally;

- If you're worried about a child or an adult, 03000 267979 is the number for the First Contact team who respond to the information you provide.

5. Appendix Five. Example of an interview transcript.

Student social worker in Anna's TAF, female, age 22.

Statements used in the main body are highlighted in yellow.

Interviewer: Now that you have looked at your Q-sort again, do you think there is anything you would change about it?

Participant 1j: No, I thought about it a lot when I was doing it really because it's a… thought provoking thing to think about your… how you work and so on. I will look though.

(Looks at the Q-sort quietly for a couple of minutes.) No, but I can see the whole thing now…doesn't it look complicated in one thing?!

Interviewer: I remember you thought about each statement.

Participant 1j: (Laughs.) I try.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about any other aspects of your experience as part of your TAF that might not have been captured by the Q-sort?

Participant 1j: (Looks again at the sort and pauses for a couple of minutes.) I think, on here, maybe there is something… like, for me, it's the developmental side of TAFs. Like, opinions change in professionals and also the families. I mean some things got me thinking. Abuse and neglect are different in some ways but the effects can be just as profound, and actually the need for external professionals to support families is just as high. It is our job to prevent any harm, yes to understand and debate it… but in my experience they happen at the same time. The current story the papers and politicians give out is social work is broken, we're not good enough, systems and local authorities are bust. We are getting privatised, writing on the wall, it's getting dismantled and going commercial… it's set up, strip the services of resources and then say 'oh, look at that, look at how badly they're failing our vulnerable children, and what is this? We're all paying for it!'

Interviewer: It sounds that you have had a range of experiences, both helpful and unhelpful.

Participant 1j: Yes, I have, even just being on placements. Like, I came into children's social work because I cared but I will leave because I care. I can't deliver what I should be because the resources don't exist. It's one of those jobs that you really don't know if it will be for you until you try it.

One thing is, like, you have to be balanced. TAFs identify problems and ask for change utilising strengths. That job is harder when

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strengths are hard to find. If you're on the bottom, it's pointed out to you and then you have to pull yourself and the kids out of it. Very hard that often. I think 'if I was you, I couldn't do it'.

Interviewer: What have been the most important things to you in your experience of TAF work?

Participant 1j: Safeguarding is everyone's job, that's the thing on everyone's minds and it should be. It is easy to start out with a case in black and white and know that the child is at the centre of it but it can drift away from it, where I suppose that's where supervision comes in. The focus of all work should be on life from the perspective of the child. It's drummed into you but even then, it can be put off by, like, dominant parents or grandparents, it depends. The families and young people themselves are best placed to put solutions to their problems together sometimes but it takes a bit of faith.

And, yes, now I think that you realise at some point that we're all just trying to survive… everything is a compromise… [which] is why we need the conversations. An expert is only an expert if what they think is relevant and what they do works.

Interviewer: That's a great point to make. It seems to bring to life that the work is so complex and specific to each case.

Participant 1j: Yes, me too.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to have been different about your experience?

Participant 1j: I think I would have liked to work more like, with families, like interventions with a beginning, a middle and an end rather than just the paperwork side where you are constantly covering your back… or like, justifying it. And also it works well when they work with us rather than against us. It just saves all that energy in the fighting into actually doing what needs to be done.

Interviewer: Do you have any other comments?

Participant 1j: Erm, just like, I enjoyed it. Doing the participation made me think about it all, this job and so on. And I was in a TAF and was like 'I wonder what the others would be thinking is important on the statements'. I am a student and I don't feel I have the experience or like… stories to go armed with, people demand a lot of answers and clarity and I am still questioning. I don't want to go into social work and it was an accident getting here to be honest. I thought it would be more about helping people empower themselves and all that but it feels like I am focusing on the things they fail at and saying 'be more like me', and I am not sure I am the right person to speak truthfully about what the best way of doing things should be.

And I mean, I sometimes still think that a lot of it depends on your own life outside of work.

Interviewer: Your personal life?

Participant 1j: Yes, some of it you can share with them, like, I had a lovely upbringing, but the area I was a child in was not lovely at all. But my parents gave me loads of opportunities and I wanted to get on. So it's not just the environment, upbringing is so important. In my case, I went to the professional side of social work but could have been a service-user. I think that sometimes makes me wonder if how much of me is… was in the decision to do this sort of job in the first place.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time. You have signed the consent form so that I can include your interview in the write up. Is that still ok?

Participant 1j: Yes, fine. I would let you know!

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6. Appendix six. A fuller account of the three and five factor solutions.

6.1 Five factor solution.

The five factor solution explained 67.49% of the variance in the sample. Table 6.1(a) demonstrates which participants formed the basis of each of the five factors and indicates how many participant sorts contributed to them.

Table 6.1(a) to show where participants loaded onto the five factor solution.

	TAF one	**TAF two**	**TAF three**	**TAF four**	**Total sorts**
Factor one	1g	2e, 2g, 2h, 2i	3h, 3i	4c	*n = 8*
Factor two	None	2a, 2b, 2c	3a, 3b	4a	*n = 6*
Factor three	1a, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h	2d	None	4e	*n = 7*
Factor four	1j	2f	-3d*, 3f	-4d*	*n = 5*
Factor five	1i	None	3c, 3e	None	*n = 3*
None	1b, 1d, 1k	None	3g	4b	*n = 5*
Total	n = 11	n = 9	n = 9	n = 5	*N = 34*

* This sort loaded on the factor negatively.

Chart 6.1(b) shows that the first factor in the five factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty' and families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do and TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families. To a lesser extent, factor one was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system', no-one should assume they know best about how to help families, and textbook theory is less valuable than experience. The first factor also reflected strong agreement that TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with, people in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information and funding cuts have made child protection less safe. Factor one was most similar to Expert Judges in the four factor solution, which is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. In fact, the only difference was participant 1k (the team manager in Anna's TAF), who contributed to factor one in the four factor solution but did not contribute to any factor at all in the five factor solution.

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Five factor solution

Chart 6.1(b) to show factor one.

			Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Neglect is very different to abuse.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.			
			Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.			
		Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.		
	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	People who hurt children are evil.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Parents always know best for their children.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart 6.1(c) shows that the second factor in the five factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers and people listen to 'my voice' in TAFs. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that every child has the right to be loved and cared for and that children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them. To a lesser extent, factor two was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that people who hurt children often have mental health problems, parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty', and people in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information. The second factor also expressed strong agreement that customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and still turn out well, TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with and the media have got it right about social workers because 'there's no smoke without fire'. Factor two was most similar to Anti-Interventionists in the four factor solution. In fact, the only difference was participant 3c (Claire's mother) who contributed to the Anti-Interventionists in the four factor solution but contributed to the fifth factor in the five factor solution.

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Five factor solution

Chart 6.1(c) to show factor two.

			Neglect is very different to abuse.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.			
			Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.			
		People who hurt children are evil.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.		
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Parents always know best for their children.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	
Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
People listen to my voice in my TAF.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart 6.1(d) shows that the third factor in the five factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do and you can't win when you're involved with social workers. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that every child has the right to be loved and cared for and early help prevents families getting into crisis. To a lesser extent, factor three was characterised by strong disagreement that people who hurt children often have mental health problems, parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers and safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers. The third factor also demonstrated strong agreement that neglect is very different to abuse, workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made and good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe. Factor three was most similar to Hopeful Reflectors in the four factor solution. In fact, the only difference was participant 3c (Claire's mother), who contributed to the hopeful Reflector array but to the fourth factor in the five factor solution. Interestingly, participant 3d (Claire's maternal uncle), contributed negatively to this solution and the four factor solution. This is discussed in more detail later.

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Five factor solution

Chart 6.1(d) to show factor three.

			People who hurt children are evil.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.			
			Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.			
		Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.		
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Parents always know best for their children.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	Neglect is very different to abuse.	
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart 6.1(e) shows that the fourth factor in the five factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty' and safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with and that children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them. To a lesser extent, factor four was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that neglect is very different to abuse, you can't win when you're involved with social workers and lots of form filling turns people into numbers. The fourth factor also demonstrated strong agreement that abuse and neglect are often hidden, everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned and early help prevents families getting into crisis. Factor four was most similar to the Collaborator array in the four factor solution. In fact, as already mentioned, the only difference was participant 3d (Claire's maternal uncle), who contributed (negatively) to factor three in the four factor solution, perhaps making him an 'Anti-Collaborator'.

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Five factor solution

Chart 6.1(e) to show factor four.

			Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	People who hurt children are evil.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.			
			Parents always know best for their children.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.			
		Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.		
	Neglect is very different to abuse.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart 6.1(f) shows that the fifth factor in the five factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that the media have got it right about social workers because 'there's no smoke without fire' and if policies were stricter, children would be safer. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with and every child has the right to be loved and cared for. To a lesser extent, factor five was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that no-one should assume they know best about how to help families, safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers and early help prevents families getting into crisis. The fifth factor also demonstrated strong agreement that money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems, professionals ask families to change without showing them how despite children have been raised the same way for generations and that children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them. Factor five was comprised of only three sorts. Two sorts (participant 1i, an agency social worker for Anna and participant 3e, the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF) did not load onto the four factor solution whilst one participant (3c, Claire's mother) loaded on the Anti-Interventionist array on of the four factor solution.

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Five factor solution

Chart 6.1(f) to show factor five.

			Neglect is very different to abuse.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	Parents always know best for their children.			
			People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.			
		Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	People who hurt children are evil.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.		
	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	
The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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This analysis shows that the first four factors in both the five factor and the four factor solution were very similar in terms of the participants that contributed to them and therefore the content of the choices in each array. The fifth factor was comprised of only three participants and seemed to emphasise that understanding reality from the perspective of family members was just as important as the right of children to be loved and cared for. It appeared to say that policy strictness and the role of the media were not considered to accurately represent families' lived experience. These three participants also suggested that investment in local resources and including families in decision was more important than early help in preventing crisis because "safeguarding is a community responsibility on some level" (the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF) and those with experience can assume they know best. Although the fifth factor did provide a slightly different perspective to the others, it was not one that added to the overall conciseness of the analysis. The five factor solution only explained a further 5.45% of sample variance when compared to the four factor solution.

6.2 The three factor solution.

The three factor solution explained 55.27% of the variance in the sample. Table 6.2(a) demonstrates which participants formed the basis of each of the three factors and indicates how many participant sorts contributed to them.

Table 6.2(a) to show where participants loaded onto the three factor solution.

	TAF one	**TAF two**	**TAF three**	**TAF four**	**Total sorts**
Factor one	1g, 1k	2e, 2g, 2h, 2i	3g, 3h, 3i	4c	n = 10
Factor two	None	2a, 2b, 2c	3a, 3b, 3c	4a, 4b	n = 8
Factor three	1a, 1b, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h, 1j	2d, 2f	-3d*, 3e, 3f	-4d*, 4e	n = 14
None	1d, 1i	None	None	None	n = 2
Total	n = 11	n = 9	n = 9	n = 5	N = 34

* This sort loaded on the factor negatively.

Chart 6.2(b) shows that the first factor in the three factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty' and families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with and funding cuts have made child protection less safe. To a lesser extent, factor one was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that no-one should assume they know best about how to help families, textbook theory is less valuable than experience and if policies were stricter, children would be safer. The factor also demonstrated strong agreement that abuse and neglect are often hidden, TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do and that TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families. Factor one was most similar to Expert Judges in the four factor solution. In fact, the only difference was participant 3g (Claire's maternal auntie), who

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contributed to factor one in the three factor solution but then did not correlate with any factor in the four factor solution.

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Three factor solution

Chart 6.2(b) to show factor one.

			Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.			
			Neglect is very different to abuse.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.			
		People who hurt children are evil.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.		
	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Parents always know best for their children.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart 6.2(c) shows that the second factor in the three factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers and individuals have their voice heard in TAFs. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that every child has the right to be loved and cared for and children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them. To a lesser extent, factor two was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that people who hurt children often have mental health problems, people in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information and complicated families need more than short term help. This factor also demonstrated strong agreement that customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well, professionals ask families to change without showing them how despite children being raised the same way for generations and TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with. The factor two array was most similar to Anti-Interventionists in the four factor solution. In fact, the only difference was participant 4b (the social work manager in Daniel's TAF), who contributed to factor two in this solution but then did not correlate with any factor in the four factor solution.

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Three factor solution

Chart 6.2(c) to show factor two.

			People who hurt children are evil.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.			
			Parents always know best for their children.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.			
		Neglect is very different to abuse.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.		
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	
Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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Chart 6.2(d) shows that the third factor in the three factor solution was characterised by very strong disagreement that safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers and that you can't win when you're involved with social workers. Participants loading onto this factor very strongly agreed that every child has the right to be loved and cared for and early help prevents families getting into crisis. To a lesser extent, factor three was characterised by strong disagreement with the idea that people who hurt children often have mental health problems, parents always know best for their children and social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do. The factor solution also reflected strong agreement that abuse and neglect are often hidden, workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made and that children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them. Factor three appeared to be a merged version of Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator arrays in the four factor solution. In fact, the only differences were that participants 1b (Anna's CAMHS nurse) and 3e (the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF) did not correlate with any factor in the four factor solution but did contribute to this array.

The three factor solution explained less of the variance in the P-sample than the others and seemed to over simplify some of the complexity in it. It does, however, suggest that Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators have more in common with each other than Expert Judges and Anti-Interventionists.

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Three factor solution

Chart 6.2(d) to show factor three.

			People who hurt children are evil.	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.			
			There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	Neglect is very different to abuse.			
		Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.		
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	Parents always know best for their children.	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	Complicated families need more than short term help.	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.
Very strongly disagree	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*	*Slightly disagree*	*Neutral*	*Slightly agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Very strongly agree*

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7. Appendix Seven. Analysis of middle range sorting choices in the four factor solution.

7.1 Middle range sorting choices of Expert Judges.

7.1.a Moderate sorting choices.

Echoing views expressed more strongly in other parts of the factor array, Expert Judges indicated a view that investment in community resources should not be prioritised over statutory social services (statement 36). Formal, regulated and monitored solutions were consistently favoured by these participants so that non-evidence-based ideas (such as parents inherently know best, people who harm children are evil and policy strictness improves quality – statements 29, 31, 1) were dismissed as they asked "where's the evidence?" (the team manager in Anna's TAF) and "if I put my name to something it has to stand up to scrutiny" (the manager in Beth's TAF). As the agency social worker for Beth commented during Q-sorting, "local culture can be a real clash for families and social services, so it's not that people are evil… or even know best… you have to show them an alternative or a range of options in bringing up their children".

Expert Judges also suggested that good multidisciplinary collaboration and open information sharing (statements 15 and 10) were crucial to effective safeguarding because abuse and neglect were often hidden but all children had the right to be cared for (statements 34 and 7). Information sharing and managing risks with evidence and professional training were valued by these factor-loaders because "it is information sharing that's important if we're piecing together a picture to make hidden harm visible" (Claire's school nurse). Expert Judges went on to say that the justification for evidence gathering and information sharing related to young people not always being able or safe enough to express their unmet needs. In other words, these participants suggested TAF workers have a duty to act on young people's behalf (as Daniel's psychiatrist noted "it's my job" and Claire's social worker commented "if it makes a difference to one child, then I'm happy with that").

Table 7.1(a) to show moderate sorting choices of Expert Judges.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Disagree (-2 pile)	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	36
	People who hurt children are evil.	31
	Parents always know best for their children.	29
	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	1
Agree (+2 pile)	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	34
	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	15
	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	10
	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	7

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7.1.b Slight sorting choices.

Slight sorting choices reflected opinions that were less centrally held than those discussed already. In this part of the array, decisions were occasionally contentious and there was often a discussion of the statement "just tipping the balance on one side" (Anna's father, during Q-sorting). Contentious statements included the idea that people who hurt children often have mental health problems. Accordingly, there was variation within individual Expert Judge loaders in this part of the array. However, the choices shown in table 7.1(b) illustrate that intergenerational customs and care styles in families (statement 35) were considered to be valuable "because they can be safe" (the team manager in Anna's TAF) and can be addressed through TAF support (statement 30). These ideas tied in with the selection of statements about being able to 'win' with social workers, professional practice being less harmful than familial care and the media 'getting it wrong' (statements 11, 24 and 19). Media reporting about actors in safeguarding, as already noted, was mentioned in relation to Ellie Butler by Claire's school nurse ("the newspapers got it wrong with Ellie Butler but never apologised, just found someone else to blame in that judge").

However, in a slight way, individuals contributing to this factor suggested that their voice was less heard than others (but Beth's safeguarding link teacher acknowledged "it's not all about me though!") and safeguarding led to a small amount of extra worry (statement 17) "due to extra work and no more time" (Daniel's psychiatrist). Feeling slightly less heard and slightly more worried during safeguarding involvement may have been related to the opinion that safeguarding was mainly the job of social workers ("safeguarding is not my core role all of the time", Daniel's psychiatrist).

Slight agree or disagree choices such as that children and their families should be more involved in decision-making, complicated families need more than short term help and early support reduces the likelihood of crisis (statements 4, 2 and 5) revealed that Expert Judges tended to feel these were contingent, qualified rights and services. For example, Claire's school nurse commented "children and their parents don't always know what's best for their them or their children… [and]… parents have to take opposing views on board".

Table 7.1(b) to show slight sorting choices of Expert Judges.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Slightly disagree (-1 pile)	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	30
	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	24
	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	19
	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	17
	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	12
	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	11
Slightly	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in	35

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agree (+1 pile)	different ways and they still turn out well.	
	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	32
	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	14
	Early help prevents families getting into crisis	5
	Complicated families need more than short term help.	4
	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	2

7.1.c Neutral sorting choices.

The neutral pile is perhaps misleadingly titled. Participants rarely held a neutral view. Instead, they often argued that their opinion was highly contingent on the circumstances surrounding an event at a particular time, as was the case with the suspicion of parents/carers (statement 25), learning from mistakes (statement 21), defensiveness during safeguarding (statement 20) and different coping styles (statement 13). Table 7.1(c) shows statement 33 was placed in the neutral pile but the similarity of neglect and abuse was contested by Expert Judges who noted "it depends if you mean causes or outcomes because it often co-occurs" (Daniel's psychiatrist) and "sometimes I think neglect is treated like its more tolerable because it's more commonplace in [this area] but it's just as hard for the child" (Claire's social worker). Expert Judges seemed to resist the view that form filling necessarily 'turns people into numbers' and Beth's grandfather commented that this research used numbers (when observing the backs of cards during sorting) and "it's just shorthand". As with most parts of the factor array, Expert Judges forwarded the view that a skilled practitioner, an expert, would be able to use numbers and reduce data in a way that was meaningful and appropriate.

Table 7.1(c) to show neutral sorting choices of Expert Judges.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Neutral (0)	Neglect is very different to abuse.	33
	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	25
	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	21
	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	20
	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	13
	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	8

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7.2 Middle range sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists.

7.2.a Moderate sorting choices.

To a lesser extent, table 7.2(a) shows that Anti-Interventionists disagreed that parents/carers should be innocent until proven guilty (statement 22) and seemed keen to explain they did not think that parents have the right to hurt their children but "you will always find people who do that, anywhere in the world at any one moment" (Beth's mother) and that "keeping kids safe starts at home" (Claire's father). Some Anti-Interventionists explained that their views tended to be more polarised and the "middle ground isn't so big on this subject" (Beth's mother) and although the -2 and +2 sort piles were for moderate choices, these participants tended to very strongly agree or disagree. For example, Claire's mother commented that the media have 'got it right' ("yes, I agree there's no smoke without fire because there are always stories where [social workers] overdo it with some parents and totally ignore kids who are getting… tortured"), also echoing the view that social workers can do more harm than parents/carers (statements 24 and 19).

Moderate sorting choices indicated that investment in local resources rather than workers who were "too busy" (statements 36 and 16) was preferable, again reiterating the centrality of family and community in their opinion. Claire's family worker added another dimension about resourcing by commenting "I go in some houses and think, where do you start?" However strict the policy, it can't put carpets in a child's bedroom". Echoing this, Daniel explained that he thought early help would not help a family getting into crisis (statement 5) "if it was interference", and Claire's mam argued "it is so often middle class bullshit anyway". In other words, Anti-Interventionists tended not to agree that children would be safer if policies were stricter and they expressed scepticism that safeguarding is mainly the job of social workers rather than that of family members or universal services (statements 1 and 14), with Claire's family worker noting "policies get stricter everywhere so health and education feel it too, and it's mainly teachers who first notice a problem when the children are that age".

Table 7.2(a) to show moderate sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Disagree (-2 pile)	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	22
	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	14
	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	5
	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	1
Agree (+2 pile)	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	36
	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	24
	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke	19

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	without fire.	
	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	16

7.2.b Slight sorting choices.

Table 7.2(b) shows the slight sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists. These statements reflected attitudes expressed in more extreme parts of the array, albeit to a lesser extent. For example, Anti-Interventionists indicated that collaboration isn't always helpful, there isn't enough help for families, 'you watch your back' and 'can't win' with social workers and families are not trusted enough (statements 15, 28, 20, 11 and 6). In another vein, slight choices reflected stronger parts of the array that considered that parents don't always know best but people who hurt children do so for complex reasons and, as Beth noted, "you worry about social workers just in case they find something they don't like" (statements 29, 31 and 17).

Anti-Interventionists took a less extreme view about form filling turning people into numbers, workers learning from serious mistakes and TAFs being of value if members followed through on their actions (statements 8, 21 and 18). Some views varied across Anti-Interventionists, such as those relating to statement 34 - Daniel suggested "neglect might be if you don't have the money for things" whilst Beth said "neglect is just as bad as abuse if you are left on your own".

Table 7.2(b) to show slight sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Slightly disagree (-1 pile)	Neglect is very different to abuse.	34
	People who hurt children are evil.	31
	Parents always know best for their children.	29
	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	17
	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	15
	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	8
Slightly agree (+1 pile)	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	28
	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	21
	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	20
	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	18
	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	11

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	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	6

7.2.c Neutral sorting choices.

Anti-Interventionists discussed statements in the 'neutral' pile in regards to their own experiences of TAFs but argued that some of these statements depended on the situation in hand. They are shown in table 7.2(c). Taking the issue of whether funding cuts make child protection less safe (statement 3), Claire's mother said "I haven't noticed a difference but we are not on the child protection list" and Claire's father commented "it's not just the social workers, it's the cuts to jobs and that has a knock on effect on how we live and what we buy". In fact, Claire's family worker explained that her job was created out of changes to the council being reorganised noting "I wasn't around before, but the others in the office say it's just bad in a different way now".

Similar contestation was found about the extent that abuse and neglect are hidden, whether or not Looked After children are treated with dignity, if assumptions should be made, whether TAF members cope in different ways and the value of theory over experience (statements 34, 17, 28, 13 and 9).

Table 7.2(c) to show neutral sorting choices of Anti-Interventionists.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Neutral (0)	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	34
	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	27
	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	23
	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	13
	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	9
	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	3

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7.3 Middle range sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors.

7.3.a Moderate sorting choices.

Table 7.3(a) shows that this factor disagreed that people who hurt children often have mental health problems, as indicated by Anna's therapeutic social worker with, "saying mental health is the reason for abuse just stigmatises mental health, because if you meet anyone's needs, whatever they are, they will thrive". The idea of the importance of meeting individual needs was echoed in the sorting of statements 30 and 35 – indicating that customs are important but also that change, where needed, can be facilitated through TAFs. This group expressed the opinion that they had respect for intergenerational traditions, customs and culture because "they make life rich" (Daniel's youth advisor during Q-sorting).

Consent and mutual negotiation were important to Hopeful Reflectors and this was the rationale for the view that parents don't always know best (statement 29), with many participants reflecting on their own parenting experiences to justify this. Given the sorting of statement 16, the aspirational view that TAF workers are not too busy to help ("we make time because it's so important to value people", Beth's teacher) or, as statement 2 suggests, not too busy to collaborate with young people and their families during in decision-making ("I think about how I like to be treated", Anna's first social worker).

Hopeful Reflectors suggested that whilst neglect was very different to abuse, they both tended to be hidden (statements 34 and 33). Most of these participants advocated for a structural explanation for abuse and neglect, with Anna's therapeutic social worker noting "if we are to help, we have to destigmatise and seek to avoid shaming people for not being so-called ideal". Anna's mother echoed this by saying "there is more than one way to be". One of the differences between participants in this array and others was the view that neglect could be more easily repaired with skilled intervention but that abuse survivors faced the additional barrier of stigma – as Beth's teacher commented "getting a label of having been abused can stick around for a long time and become the main thing about the child" (statements 34 and 33).

Table 7.3(a) to show moderate sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Disagree (-2 pile)	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	32
	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	30
	Parents always know best for their children.	29
	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	16
Agree (+2 pile)	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	35
	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	34
	Neglect is very different to abuse.	33
	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions	2

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	that affect them.	

7.3.b Slight sorting choices.

Table 7.3(b) demonstrates the slight sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors. They indicated a preference for experiential knowledge and a rejection of the idea that policy strictness makes children safer (statements 1 and 9). Mirroring this, some of these participants felt that "experience is a rich source of knowledge because we're all human beings" (Anna's mother) and that legitimate claims to knowledge can be made through this in order to make meaningful assumptions (statement 23) but also that workers should consider the position of young people (statement 26). Hopeful Reflectors felt there were still enough services to help at the present time despite funding cuts (statements 28 and 3) but that TAF members could be more open about sharing information, and that young people were treated with dignity (statements 10 and 17).

Hopeful Reflectors felt that social workers could do slightly more harm than parents (with Beth's teacher commenting "social workers can do more harm but often don't") but disagreed that the media have got it right, noting "let's be honest, it's about balanced realistic appraisal, we can do harm because we have that professional trust but if you believe the Daily Mail, we would live to hurt families" (Anna's first social worker). Despite this, some of the participants loading positively onto this factor may have drawn on the particular circumstances leading to Anna's involvement with early help services to argue "we didn't watch our backs because we hadn't done anything wrong… Anna had a rough start before we were her parents" (Anna's adoptive mother), perhaps contributing to the sorting of statements 20 and 4.

Table 7.3(b) to show slight sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Slightly disagree (-1 pile)	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	28
	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	27
	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	23
	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	20
	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	19
	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	1
Slightly agree (+1 pile)	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	26
	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	13
	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	10
	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	9

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	Complicated families need more than short term help.	4
	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	3

7.3.c Neutral sorting choices.

Table 7.3(c) shows Hopeful Reflectors were neutral (or, felt statements "had a story to tell on both sides" – Anna's mother) about the idea that about money should be spent on local resources for reasons such as "the most needy children may not use local resources" (Beth's teacher). They also seemed to have an ambivalent attitude to statements about parents being innocent until proven guilty and worrying when safeguarding was mentioned (statements 22 and 17) because "everyone in every family has rights and wrongs and no-one is perfect" (Anna). Anna's therapeutic social worker and Anna's first social worker said, respectively, that they placed statement 31 in the neutral pile "because there is no other place to put it" and "because it is so alien to my thinking". Hopeful Reflectors discussed that people listen to 'my voice in my TAF' "when I need to say something" (Anna) and it depended on the circumstances if lots of form filling turned people into numbers (for examples, "some TAF leads are form fillers but ultimately we work in a place where if it isn't recorded, it didn't happen" – Anna's first social worker).

Table 7.3(c) to show neutral sorting choices of Hopeful Reflectors.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Neutral (0)	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	36
	People who hurt children are evil.	31
	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	22
	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	17
	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	12
	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	8

7.4 Middle range sorting choices of Collaborators.

7.4.a Moderate sorting choices.

To a more moderate degree, table 7.4(a) shows that Collaborators tended to hold the view that professionals did not ask families to change without showing them how (but, as Beth's social worker noted, "it depends who is your social worker and who is the parent, and for that matter who is the child!") and as Claire stated "they showed mam new things". Whilst the senior social worker in Daniel's TAF gave a counter view in that "you can't expect social workers to agree with, say smacking, because everyone has always smacked the kids" and

"it's a fact, the more senior you are, the busier you are and you work with complex families in the court arena", this Q-sort was an inverse of the 'Anti-Collaborator' array. In relation to statement 16, the core view of the positively loading Collaborators was that "yes we're all busy and spread thinly but that's where teamwork and families taking control with advice kicks in" (the student social worker in Anna's TAF). In other words, increased work demands for Collaborators implied greater shared responsibilities in the TAF. The Anti-Collaborator perspective seemed to imply that increased work demand was appropriately managed by individual TAF members in a more tiered, rationalised service. Regarding statements 19 and 3, funding cuts were agreed to have placed a strain on resources but that the media "was a joke" (Beth's social worker).

This factor agreed that people who hurt children often have mental health problems (statement 32) but "that's common in all people" (Claire) and "mental health is not a separate part of the overall wellbeing of how a whole person functions" (the student social worker in Anna's TAF). Collaborators reflected on their experience about the association between mental health problems and the harm of children. For example, Beth's social worker said "depression and anxiety thrive in local authority staff and this is a massive problem."

In relation to statements 6 and 18, Collaborators felt that "trust is a two-way thing but we are talking safeguarding, not child protection… let's try and see if things work is a good approach" (the student social worker in Anna's TAF) and "personally, I show change with examples of my family life, good and bad but also in being respectful of everyone in TAFs – I mean… showing everyone is important enough to have a say" (Beth's social worker). Claire commented that "you don't believe people if they let you down" during Q-sorting, reinforcing that TAF members should do what they say (statement 18). Echoing this, Collaborators agreed that no-one should assume they know best about how to help (statement 23) because "eight heads are better than one… if we all get along" (the student social worker in Anna's TAF) and "you have to listen to advice to make things better" (Claire).

Table 7.4(a) to show moderate sorting choices of Collaborators.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Disagree (-2 pile)	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	30
	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	19
	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	16
	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	6
Agree (+2 pile)	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	32
	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	23
	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	18

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	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	3

7.4.b Slight sorting choices.

As with the other factors, slight choices did not differentiate the opinions of Collaborators as much as other sort piles. Slight sorting choices are shown in table 7.4(b). However, follow up interviews added depth to some of the choices made by these participants. For example, Collaborators appeared to place such emphasis on shared rights and responsibilities that they slightly disagreed with the idea that every child has the right to be loved and cared for. When thinking about this during Q-sorting, the student social worker in Anna's TAF commented "every person, not just every child, deserves to be loved and cared for" and "if everyone is respected, it's better… everyone benefits" (Beth's social worker). Collaborators appeared to take the view that the principles of working together could extend beyond TAFs because policy strictness, good collaboration within TAFs, social workers, local resources or local customs alone cannot keep children safe (statements 1, 15, 24, 36 and 35).

Collaborators also tended to believe that their voice was heard in their TAFs and Looked After Children are treated with dignity (statements 27 and 12), again reiterating a sense of confidence in statutory systems for children. However, Collaborators again highlighted some of the barriers experienced by some members of society – including a feeling of threat (statements 20 and 24) and challenges to openness when sharing information. To support this idea, Claire noted "sometimes when I get to the meetings I don't say much because it's all been said by everyone else". Ultimately, though, the valuing of lived experience over textbook theory and an appreciation of individualised coping styles was again reflected in the Collaborator view. For example, Beth's social worker said that her approach "takes people as I find them, and working with that."

Table 7.4(b) to show slight sorting choices of Collaborators.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Slightly disagree (-1 pile)	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	35
	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	27
	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	15
	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	13
	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	7
	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	1
Slightly agree (+1 pile)	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	36
	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	24

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	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	20
	People listen to my voice in my TAF	12
	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	10
	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	9

7.4.c Neutral sorting choices.

Table 7.4(c) shows the neutral sorting choices of Collaborators. Choices in this sort pile included the idea that people who hurt children are evil, parents always know best and are treated with enough suspicion, and complicated families need more than short term help. These choices perhaps further reflect the view that problems, needs and solutions can be co-defined together.

Table 7.4(c) to show neutral sorting choices of Collaborators.

Sort pile	Statement	Statement number
Neutral (0)	People who hurt children are evil.	31
	Parents always know best for their children.	29
	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	28
	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	25
	Workers should learn from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	21
	Complicated families need more than short term help.	4

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8. Appendix Eight. Z scores for all statements and all factors.

8.1 Distinguishing statements for factor one.

Table 8.1(a) shows statement number and description, along with the location of each item in the factor arrays of the four factor solution. Z scores are shown in brackets and all statements shown reflect differences between factor one scores and others that are significant at $p<0.05$. Differences significant at $p<0.01$ are asterisked (*).

Table 8.1(a) to show distinguishing statements for factor one.

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families (16).	3 (z=1.61)	2 (z=1.10)	-2 (z=-1.08)	-2 (z=-0.72)
Funding cuts have made child protection less safe (3).	3 (z=1.44)	0 (z=0.19)	1 (z=0.69)	2 (z=0.85)
There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers (28).	3 (z=1.17)*	1 (z=0.22)	-1 (z=-0.47)	0 (z=0.14)
People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information (10).	2 (z=1.03)	-3 (z=-1.45)	1 (z=0.50)	1 (z=0.30)
Every child has the right to be loved and cared for (7).	2 (z=0.96)*	4 (z=1.88)	4 (z=2.16)	-1 (z=-0.63)
Early help prevents families getting into crisis (5).	1 (z=0.64)	-2 (z=-0.85)	4 (z=1.69)	3 (z=1.36)
Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers (14).	1 (z=0.44)*	-2 (z=-0.89)	-3 (z=-1.34)	-4 (z=-2.01)
Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them (2).	1 (z=0.39)*	4 (z=1.94)	2 (z=1.05)	4 (z=1.81)
Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well (35).	1 (z=0.22)	3 (z=1.38)	2 (z=1.04)	-2 (z=-0.50)
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 (z=-0.30)	-1 (z=-0.83)	2 (z=0.99)	-3 (z=-1.51)
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 (z=-0.56)*	2 (z=1.11)	-4 (z=-1.35)	1 (z=0.22)
You can't win when you're involved with social workers (11).	-1 (z=-0.60)*	1 (z=0.28)	-4 (z=-1.41)	-3 (z=-1.50)
Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems (36).	-2 (z=-0.71)*	2 (z=1.00)	0 (z=0.24)	1 (z=0.43)
Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system' (27).	-3 (z=-1.09)*	0 (z=0.09)	-1 (z=-0.47)	-1 (z=-0.14)
Textbook theory is less valuable than experience (9).	-3 (z=-1.51)*	0 (z=-0.10)	1 (z=0.68)	1 (z=0.21)
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives (6).	-4 (z=-1.96)*	1 (z=0.46)	-3 (z=-1.26)	-2 (z=-0.84)

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8.2 Distinguishing statements for factor two.

Table 8.2(a) shows statement number and description, along with the location of each item in the factor arrays of the four factor solution. Z scores are shown in brackets and all statements shown reflect differences between factor two scores and others that are significant at $p<0.05$. Differences significant at $p<0.01$ are asterisked (*).

Table 8.2(a) to show distinguishing statements for factor two.

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations (30).	-1 (z=-0.45)	3 (z=1.31)*	-2 (z=-1.14)	-2 (z=-0.79)
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 (z=-0.56)	2 (z=1.11)*	-4 (z=-1.35)	1 (z=0.22)
TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families (16).	3 (z=1.61)	2 (z=1.10)	-2 (z=-1.08)	-2 (z=-0.72)
The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire (19).	-1 (z=-0.59)	2 (z=0.93)*	-1 (z=-0.69)	-2 (z=-1.02)
Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives (6).	-4 (z=-1.96)	1 (z=0.46)*	-3 (z=-1.26)	-2 (z=-0.84)
You can't win when you're involved with social workers (11).	-1 (z=-0.60)	1 (z=0.28)*	-4 (z=-1.41)	-3 (z=-1.50)
TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do (18).	4 (z=1.66)	1 (z=0.27)*	3 (z=1.23)	2 (z=1.31)
Funding cuts have made child protection less safe (3).	3 (z=1.44)	0 (z=0.19)	1 (z=0.69)	2 (z=0.85)
No-one should assume they know best about how to help families (23).	-3 (z=-1.27)	0 (z=-0.07)	-1 (z=-0.86)	2 (z=0.64)
Abuse and neglect are often hidden (34).	2 (z=1.07)	0 (z=-0.27)*	2 (z=0.91)	3 (z=1.64)
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 (z=-0.30)	-1 (z=-0.83)	2 (z=0.99)	-3 (z=-1.51)
Early help prevents families getting into crisis (5).	1 (z=0.64)	-2 (z=-0.85)*	4 (z=1.69)	3 (z=1.36)
Complicated families need more than short term help (4).	1 (z=0.68)	-3 (z=-1.02)*	1 (z=0.49)	0 (z=0.14)
People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information (10).	2 (z=1.03)	-3 (z=-1.45)*	1 (z=0.50)	1 (z=0.30)
People listen to my voice in my TAF (12).	-1 (z=-0.51)	-4 (z=-1.72)*	0 (z=-0.06)	1 (z=0.22)

8.3 Distinguishing statements for factor three.

Table 8.3(a) shows statement number and description, along with the location of each item in the factor arrays of the four factor solution. Z scores are shown in brackets and all statements shown reflect differences between factor three scores and others that are significant at $p<0.05$. Differences significant at $p<0.01$ are asterisked (*).

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Table 8.3(a) to show distinguishing statements for factor three.

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made (21).	0 (z=0.03)	1 (z=0.44)	3 (z=1.26)*	0 (z=-0.11)
Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them (2).	1 (z=0.39)	4 (z=1.94)	2 (z=1.05)	4 (z=1.81)
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 (z=-0.30)	-1 (z=-0.83)	2 (z=0.99)*	-3 (z=-1.51)
TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with (26).	4 (z=1.66)	3 (z=1.58)	1 (z=0.84)*	4 (z=1.71)
Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned (17).	-1 (z=-0.48)	-1 (z=-0.73)	0 (z=1.21)*	3 (z=1.31)
There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers (28).	3 (z=1.17)	1 (z=0.22)	-1 (z=-0.47)	0 (z=0.14)
Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned (20).	0 (z=0.12)	1 (z=0.68)	-1 (z=-0.58)*	1 (z=0.46)
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 (z=-0.56)	2 (z=1.11)	-4 (z=-1.35)*	1 (z=0.22)

8.4 Distinguishing statements for factor four.

Table 8.4(a) shows statement number and description, along with the location of each item in the factor arrays of the four factor solution. Z scores are shown in brackets and all statements shown reflect differences between factor four scores and others that are significant at $p<0.05$. Differences significant at $p<0.01$ are asterisked (*).

Table 8.4(a) to show distinguishing statements for factor four.

Statements.	Factor one.	Factor two.	Factor three.	Factor four.
Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned (17).	-1 (z=-0.48)	-1 (z=-0.73)	0 (z=0.21)	3 (z=1.31)*
No-one should assume they know best about how to help families (23).	-3 (z=-1.27)	0 (z=-0.07)	-1 (z=-0.86)	2 (z=0.64)
Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do (24).	-1 (z=-0.56)	2 (z=1.11)	-4 (z=-1.35)	1 (z=0.22)*
Parents always know best for their children (29).	-2 (z=-0.97)	-1 (z=-0.74)	-2 (z=-1.11)	0 (z=-0.12)*
Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well (35).	1 (z=0.22)	3 (z=1.38)	2 (z=1.04)	-1 (z=-0.50)
Every child has the right to be loved and cared for (7).	2 (z=0.96)	4 (z=1.88)	4 (z=2.16)	-1 (z=-0.63)*
Lots of form filling turns people into numbers (8).	0 (z=-0.08)	-1 (z=-0.61)	0 (z=-0.23)	-3 (z=-1.41)*
Neglect is very different to abuse (33).	0 (z=-0.30)	-1 (z=-0.83)	2 (z=0.99)	-3 (z=-1.51)

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Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers (14).	1 (z=0.44)	-2 (z=-0.89)	-3 (z=-1.34)	-4 (z=-2.01)

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9. Appendix Nine. Consensus statements and similarities between factors.

9.1. Expert Judge factor pair similarities.

Table 9.1(a) shows the statements that were sorted into similar piles by participants contributing to Expert Judge and Anti-Interventionist arrays. There were six statements that differed by less than 0.3 of a sort pile. They include the consensus statement for the full solution. Statements suggest that Expert Judges and Anti-Interventionists tended to agree that workers should understand what life is like for children in TAFs. To support this, Claire's school nurse (an Expert Judge) noted "it should be about the young person, not politics" and Beth's mother (an Anti-Interventionist) suggested "if it doesn't make sense to the child, it's window dressing".

Remaining areas of concurrence between these two factors tended to take place in slightly agree or disagree piles (due to the way factor analysis organises data). Given this, these participants adopted a similar view that safeguarding does not cause worrying, policy strictness does not promote the safety of young people, parents don't always know best but people who hurt children are "not evil, just screwed up" (Claire's father, an Anti-Interventionist) or "probably let down themselves, it's a cycle" (Daniel's psychiatrist, an Expert Judge). Both Expert Judges and Anti-Interventionists tended to place statement 13 (particular TAF members cope in different ways) in the neutral pile which may have been due to a view that role (either as an expert or as a family member) is an important predictor of how TAF members engage with the experience rather than being an individualised, role-independent phenomena.

In this way, Expert Judge and Anti-Interventionist factors held a common view that a young persons' perspective is essential to accurately formulate need, but the reasons why young people are placed in unsafe situations are complex.

Table 9.1(a) to show statements sorted less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart in Expert Judge and Anti-Interventionist arrays.

Statement (number)	Expert Judges	Anti-Interventionists	Difference
Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned (17).	-0.484	-0.733	0.248
TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with (26).	1.659	1.580	0.079
If policies were stricter, children would be safer (1).	-0.913	-0.845	-0.068
People who hurt children are evil (31).	-0.894	-0.737	-0.157
Parents always know best for their children (29).	-0.968	-0.735	-0.233
Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways (13).	-0.150	0.084	-0.235

In a comparison between Expert Judge and Hopeful Reflector arrays, table 9.1(b) shows there were six statements that were less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart. These participants tended to indicate that good collaboration (over longer periods of time for complicated families) helped

to keep children keep safe – possibly because parents didn't always know best, and harm is often hidden. These participants also tended to report similarly neutral/contingent views about the dehumanising effect of form filling but that the media was "sometimes right, it just depends" (Beth's safeguarding link teacher, an Expert Judge).

In this way, these two factors held a common (albeit slight) view that professional intervention is helpful because some children are not adequately protected by their parents/carers.

Table 9.1(b) to show statements sorted less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart in the Expert Judge and Hopeful Reflector factors.

Statement (number)	Expert Judges	Hopeful Reflectors	Difference
Complicated families need more than short term help (4).	0.677	0.490	0.187
Abuse and neglect are often hidden (34).	1.073	0.911	0.162
Lots of form filling turns people into numbers (8).	-0.076	-0.230	0.154
Parents always know best for their children (29).	-0.968	-1.108	0.140
The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire (19).	-0.587	-0.692	0.105
Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe (15).	1.025	1.279	-0.254

Expert Judges and Collaborators had six statements in common that were less than 0.3 of a pile apart. Table 9.1(c) demonstrates that adopting the perspective of the child and not assuming the innocence of parents were equally important to these participants. They appeared to take the shared (but slight) view that mental health difficulties in perpetrators should be considered when young people have been harmed. However, they were more ambivalent about how suspiciously parents are treated in TAFs, whether people cope with safeguarding in different ways, and if workers should learn lessons from the most serious cases. To reiterate this, Beth's social worker (a Collaborator), commented "assuming a parent is guilty or innocent is not just on me, but either way it's not wise to make up assumptions without evidence".

In this way, these two factors held a common (albeit modestly expressed) view that professional curiosity was valuable and avoiding assumptions (or weighing up evidence) was helpful.

Table 9.1(c) to show statements sorted less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart in Expert Judge and Collaborator arrays.

Statement (number)	Expert Judges	Collaborators	Difference
Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways (13).	-0.150	-0.336	0.186
Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious	0.034	-0.114	0.148

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mistakes have been made (21).			
Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty' (22).	-1.860	-1.829	-0.031
TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with (26).	1.659	1.710	-0.051
Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers (25).	-0.049	0.181	-0.230
People who hurt children often have mental health problems (32).	0.793	1.035	-0.242

9.2. Anti-intervention factor pair similarities.

Table 9.2(a) shows that two statements differed by less than 0.3 of a sort pile between Anti-Interventionists and Hopeful Reflectors. This was the lowest number of similarly sorted items for all factor pairs. Sorters contributing to these arrays tended to slightly-moderately concur that children have the right to be loved and cared for, and mental health problems are less important in explaining why young people are harmed.

Table 9.2(a) to show statements sorted less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart in Anti-Interventionist and Hopeful Reflector arrays.

Statement (number)	Anti-Interventionists	Hopeful Reflectors	Difference
People who hurt children often have mental health problems (32).	-1.335	-1.135	-0.201
Every child has the right to be loved and cared for (7).	1.875	2.158	-0.283

Table 9.2(b) shows that the six most similar statements between Anti-Interventionists and Collaborators included the idea that understanding the perspective of young people and involving them and their families in decision-making was important. To support this, the student social worker in Anna's TAF (a Collaborator) commented "the families and young people themselves are best placed to put solutions to their problems together sometimes but it takes a bit of faith" and Beth's mother (an Anti-Interventionist) added "the families should be involved, it's their lives at the end of the day". To a much lesser extent, Anti-Interventionists and Collaborators tended to agree that people are initially cautious about safeguarding processes, more help could be offered to families and good collaboration was less pertinent than other actions in TAFs intended to keep children safe. Both Anti-Interventionists and Collaborators were neutral about whether or not young people are treated with dignity in corporate care.

In other words Anti-Interventionists and Collaborators expressed similar, although slight, views that families and young people should be fully included in safeguarding work.

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Table 9.2(b) to show statements sorted less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart in Anti-Interventionist and Collaborator arrays.

Statement (number)	Anti-Interventionists	Collaborators	Difference
Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system' (27).	0.090	-0.144	0.235
Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned (20).	0.683	0.458	0.225
Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them (2).	1.936	1.812	0.123
There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers (28).	0.225	0.139	0.086
Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe (15).	-0.272	-0.171	-0.101
TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with (26).	1.580	1.710	-0.130

9.3. Hopeful Reflector factor pair similarities.

Hopeful Reflectors and Collaborators demonstrated the greatest number of similarly sorted statements (seven), as shown in table 9.3(a). These included the item that did not differentiate any factor in the solution (statement 1). Although these participants tended to neither agree or disagree that their voice is heard in TAFs, they more often slightly agreed that TAFs would work better if everyone honoured their promises, funding cuts have made child protection less safe and you can 'win' with social workers. To support this, Beth (a Collaborator) commented "to have trust you have to stand by your promises, it's basic" and Beth's teacher (a Hopeful Reflector) added "mostly people do have good intentions and it's only time and energy that causes promises to be broken in reality". They also concurred, albeit to a much lesser extent, that improving local resources and openness when sharing information were equally important.

In other words, Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator arrays tended to overlap in terms of their belief in the benefits of TAF work when professionals worked together and adopted a flexible approach.

Table 9.3(a) to show statements sorted less than 0.3 of a sort pile apart in Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator arrays.

Statement (number)	Hopeful Reflectors	Collaborators	Difference
People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information (10).	0.502	0.302	0.200
You can't win when you're involved with social workers (11).	-1.407	-1.497	0.090
If policies were stricter, children would be safer (1).	-0.471	-0.508	0.037
TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do (18).	1.233	1.309	-0.077
Funding cuts have made child protection less safe (3).	0.695	0.851	-0.156

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Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems (36).	0.240	0.425	-0.185
People listen to my voice in my TAF (12).	-0.055	0.222	-0.277

9.4. Descending differences between Expert Judge and Anti-Interventionist factors.

Number	Statement	Expert Judges	Anti-Interventionists	Difference
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	1.027	-1.454	2.481
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	0.793	-1.335	2.128
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	0.677	-1.018	1.695
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	-0.049	-1.543	1.494
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	0.638	-0.852	1.490
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	1.664	0.271	1.394
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	1.073	-0.268	1.341
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	0.441	-0.887	1.328
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	1.025	-0.272	1.297
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	1.445	0.187	1.258
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-0.508	-1.722	1.214
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	1.173	0.225	0.949
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	-0.076	-0.611	0.536
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	-0.300	-0.825	0.526
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	1.615	1.099	0.516
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	-0.484	-0.733	0.248
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	1.659	1.580	0.079
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-0.913	-0.845	-0.068
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-0.894	-0.737	-0.157
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-0.968	-0.735	-0.233
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	-0.150	0.084	-0.235
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	0.034	0.437	-0.402
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	0.115	0.683	-0.567
11	You can't win when you're involved with social	-0.603	0.283	-0.887

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	workers.			
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	0.965	1.875	-0.910
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-1.860	-0.928	-0.932
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	0.224	1.382	-1.158
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	-1.094	0.090	-1.185
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-1.269	-0.066	-1.203
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	-1.514	-0.104	-1.410
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	-0.587	0.929	-1.516
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	0.389	1.936	-1.546
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	-0.564	1.110	1.674
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	-0.711	1.000	-1.711
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	-0.454	1.305	-1.760
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	-1.958	0.460	-2.418

9.5. Descending differences between Expert Judge and Hopeful Reflector factors.

Number	Statement	Expert Judges	Hopeful Reflectors	Difference
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	1.615	-1.081	2.696
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	0.793	-1.135	1.928
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	0.441	-1.343	1.783
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	1.173	-0.474	1.647
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	-0.049	-1.227	1.178
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	1.659	0.836	0.823
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	-0.603	-1.407	0.804
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	-0.564	-1.349	0.786
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	1.445	0.695	0.750

20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	0.115	-0.578	0.693
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	-0.454	-1.140	0.686
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	1.027	0.502	0.526
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	1.664	1.233	0.432
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	0.677	0.490	0.187
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	1.073	0.911	0.162
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	-0.076	-0.230	0.154
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-0.968	-1.108	0.140
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	-0.587	-0.692	0.105
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	1.025	1.279	-0.254
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-1.269	-0.865	-0.404
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-0.913	0.471	-0.442
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-0.508	-0.055	-0.453
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-0.894	-0.389	-0.505
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	-0.150	0.471	-0.621
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	-1.094	-0.469	-0.626
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	0.389	1.051	-0.662
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	-0.484	0.207	-0.691
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	-1.958	-1.256	-0.702
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	0.224	1.038	-0.814
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	-0.711	0.240	-0.951
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	0.638	1.686	-1.048
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	0.965	2.158	-1.193
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	0.034	1.264	-1.230
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	-0.300	0.986	-1.286
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-1.860	-0.452	-1.408
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	-1.514	0.676	-2.190

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9.6. Descending differences between Expert Judge and Collaborator factors.

Number	Statement	Expert Judges	Collaborators	Difference
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	0.441	-2.010	2.451
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	1.615	-0.717	2.332
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	0.965	-0.634	1.599
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	-0.076	-1.409	1.333
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	-0.300	-1.513	1.213
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	1.025	-0.171	1.196
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	1.173	0.139	1.034
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	-0.603	-1.497	0.894
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	1.027	0.302	0.725
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	0.224	-0.496	0.720
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	1.445	0.851	0.594
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	0.677	0.141	0.536
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	-0.587	-1.016	0.429
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	1.664	1.309	0.355
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	-0.454	-0.790	0.336
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	-0.150	-0.336	0.186
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	0.034	-0.114	0.148
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-1.860	-1.829	-0.031
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	1.659	1.710	-0.051
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	-0.049	0.181	-0.230
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	0.793	1.035	-0.242
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	0.115	0.458	-0.343
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-0.913	-0.508	-0.405
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	1.073	1.641	-0.569
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	0.638	1.364	-0.726

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12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-0.508	0.222	-0.730
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	-0.564	0.222	-0.786
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-0.968	-0.122	-0.846
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	-1.094	-0.144	-0.950
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-0.894	0.165	-1.059
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	-1.958	-0.835	-1.123
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	-0.711	0.425	-1.137
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	0.389	1.812	-1.423
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	-1.514	0.211	-1.725
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	-0.484	1.315	-1.799
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-1.269	0.638	-1.908

9.7. Descending differences between Anti-Interventionist and Hopeful Reflector factors.

Number	Statement	Anti-Interventionists	Hopeful Reflectors	Difference
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	1.110	-1.349	2.460
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	1.305	-1.140	2.446
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	1.099	-1.081	2.181
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	0.460	-1.256	1.716
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	0.283	-1.407	1.690
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	0.929	-0.692	1.621
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	0.683	-0.578	1.261
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	1.936	1.051	0.884
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-0.066	-0.865	0.799
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	1.000	0.240	0.760

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26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	1.580	0.836	0.744
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	0.225	-0.474	0.698
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	0.090	-0.469	0.559
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	-0.887	-1.343	0.456
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-0.735	-1.108	0.373
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	1.382	1.108	0.344
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	-1.335	-1.135	-0.201
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	1.875	2.158	-0.283
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	-1.543	-1.227	-0.316
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-0.737	-0.389	-0.348
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-0.845	-0.471	-0.374
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	-0.611	-0.230	-0.381
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	0.084	0.471	-0.387
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-0.928	-0.452	-0.476
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	0.187	0.695	-0.508
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	-0.104	0.676	-0.780
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	0.437	1.264	-0.827
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	-0.733	0.207	-0.939
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	0.271	1.233	-0.962
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	-0.268	0.911	-1.179
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	-1.018	0.490	-1.509
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	-0.272	1.279	-1.551
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-1.722	-0.055	-1.666
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	-0.825	0.986	-1.812
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	-1.454	0.502	-1.956
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	-0.852	1.686	-2.538

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9.8. Descending differences between Anti-Interventionist and Collaborator factors.

Number	Statement	Anti-Interventionists	Collaborators	Difference
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	1.875	-0.634	2.509
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	1.305	-0.790	2.096
19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	0.929	-1.016	1.945
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	1.382	-0.496	1.879
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	0.099	-0.717	1.816
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	0.283	-1.497	1.780
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	0.460	-0.835	1.295
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	-0.887	-2.010	1.124
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-0.928	-1.829	0.901
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	1.110	0.222	0.888
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	-0.611	-1.409	0.798
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	-0.825	-1.513	0.687
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	1.000	0.425	0.574
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	0.437	-0.114	0.551
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	0.084	-0.336	0.421
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	0.090	-0.144	0.235
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	0.683	0.458	0.225
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	1.936	1.812	0.123
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	0.225	0.139	0.086
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	-0.272	-0.171	-0.101
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes'	1.580	1.710	-0.130

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	of young people they work with.			
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	-0.104	0.211	-0.315
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-0.845	-0.508	-0.337
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-0.735	-0.122	-0.613
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	0.187	0.851	-0.664
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-0.066	0.638	-0.704
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-0.737	0.165	-0.902
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	0.271	1.309	-1.038
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	-1.018	0.141	-1.160
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	-1.543	0.181	-1.724
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	-1.454	0.302	-1.756
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	-0.268	1.641	-1.909
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-1.722	0.222	-1.944
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	-0.733	1.315	-2.047
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	-0.852	1.364	-2.216
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	-1.335	1.035	-2.370

9.9. Descending differences between Hopeful Reflector and Collaborator factors.

Number	Statement	Hopeful Reflectors	Collaborators	Difference
7	Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.	2.158	-0.634	2.792
33	Neglect is very different to abuse.	0.986	-1.513	2.499
35	Customs in a local area are important because children can be raised in different ways and they still turn out well.	1.038	-0.496	1.534
15	Good collaboration in TAFs keeps children safe.	1.279	-0.171	1.450
21	Workers should learn lessons from cases where serious mistakes have been made.	1.264	-0.114	1.378
22	Parents/carers should be 'innocent until proven guilty'.	-0.452	-1.829	1.378
8	Lots of form filling turns people into numbers.	-0.230	-1.409	1.179
13	Particular workers and families cope with TAF work in different ways.	0.471	-0.336	0.808
14	Safeguarding children is mainly the job of social workers.	-1.343	-2.010	0.668
9	Textbook theory is less valuable than experience.	0.676	0.211	0.465
4	Complicated families need more than short term help.	0.490	0.141	0.349

19	The media have got it right about social workers. There's no smoke without fire.	-0.692	-1.016	0.324
5	Early help prevents families getting into crisis.	1.686	1.364	0.322
10	People in TAFs need to be more open when sharing information.	0.502	0.302	0.200
11	You can't win when you're involved with social workers.	-1.407	-1.497	0.090
1	If policies were stricter, children would be safer.	-0.471	-0.508	0.037
18	TAFs are all well and good if everyone did what they said they were going to do.	1.233	1.309	-0.077
3	Funding cuts have made child protection less safe.	0.695	0.851	-0.156
36	Money should be spent on improving local resources for young people rather than on workers who criticise families for having problems.	0.240	0.425	-0.185
12	People listen to my voice in my TAF.	-0.055	0.222	-0.277
27	Young people are not treated with dignity in the 'care system'.	-0.469	-0.144	-0.324
30	Professionals ask families to change without showing them how, even when children have been raised the same way for generations.	-1.140	-0.790	-0.350
16	TAF workers seem too busy to actually help families.	-1.081	-0.717	-0.365
6	Families are not trusted enough to make positive changes to their lives.	-1.256	-0.835	-0.421
31	People who hurt children are evil.	-0.389	0.165	-0.555
28	There is not enough help for families to make the improvements expected of them by workers.	-0.474	0.139	-0.612
34	Abuse and neglect are often hidden.	0.911	1.641	-0.731
2	Children and their families should be more involved in the decisions that affect them.	1.051	1.812	-0.761
26	TAF workers should 'put themselves in the shoes' of young people they work with.	0.836	1.710	-0.874
29	Parents always know best for their children.	-1.108	-0.122	-0.986
20	Everyone starts 'watching their back' when social workers are mentioned.	-0.578	0.458	-1.036
17	Everyone gets worried when 'safeguarding' is mentioned.	0.207	1.315	-1.108
25	Parents/carers are not treated with enough suspicion by TAF workers.	-1.227	0.181	-1.408
23	No-one should assume they know best about how to help families.	-0.865	0.638	-1.503
24	Social workers can do more harm than parents/carers could ever do.	-1.349	0.222	-1.571
32	People who hurt children often have mental health problems.	-1.135	1.035	-2.170

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10. Appendix Ten. Non-loading sorts.

10.1. Table to show non-loaders in the four factor solution.

TAF	Q-sort	Role	Age	Gender	Interview
1: Anna	1b	CAMHS clinician (nurse)	34	Female	No
	1d	Social worker, second	32	Male	Yes
	1i	Agency social worker	25	Female	No
3: Claire	3e	Deputy team manager	34	Female	Yes
	3g	Maternal auntie	34	Female	No
4: Daniel	4b	Manager	46	Male	Yes

The correlation matrix is the basis of deriving the factor solution and indicative of broad patterns of similarity in the P-sample. For sorts that did not load onto any of the factors in the favoured solution, between-participant correlations are useful. Individual sorts are analysable in their own right.

10.2. Non-loader A, Anna's CAMHS clinician.

Anna's CAMHS clinician (participant 1b) demonstrated the belief that neglect and abuse are similar (but tends to be hidden), complicated families don't need more than short term help, and every child has the right to be loved and cared for. Although she did not give a follow-up interview, some comments were made during Q-sorting to support this interpretation.

She correlated to the highest degree with Claire's maternal uncle (participant -3d) at r = -0.49. Claire's maternal uncle was an 'anti-Hopeful Reflector'. Her array suggested she felt that serious cases of harm are unrepresentative and therefore unhelpful to learn lessons from, harm (either in the form of neglect or abuse) has pervasive effects on a person's wellbeing, understanding the perspective of the child is difficult to do and there are restricted benefits for young people to share their deepest worries.

> In my line of work, I see kids who come with loads of worries and the [geographical] area I cover has problems with deprivation and families can be chaotic, living in tough communities.

In addition, and mirroring the anti-Hopeful Reflector array, the view that social workers can cause more harm than parents and as such, safeguarding processes are associated with feelings of defensiveness was indicated. The view that children and their families should not be more involved in decision-making was expressed – possibly because this could distort help, and generally there was not enough flexible support to accommodate this. As non-loader A commented,

> It's not about involvement being long-term, see, my work is usually six to eight weeks and then review. There's pressure in that… but it's about it being the right help at the right time.

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10.3. Non-loader B, Anna's second social worker.

Making the following comment during Q-sorting, Anna's second social worker felt most strongly that policy strictness would not make young people safer,

> I believe proper social work is not so much completing all the paperwork, or should I say computer work, it's meeting families and putting in the footwork, that graft, into building relationships.

He also appeared to take the view that parent/carer innocence should not be assumed, abuse and neglect are often hidden and children and their families should be more involved in decisions that affect them. To illustrate this, he added

> They're not your mates, but that comes in when you can get the trust because people let you guide them out of the problems.

Anna's second social worker (participant 1d) correlated with six other sorts above r = 0.60 as shown in table 10.3(a). This perhaps explains why this sort did not contribute to one of four factors because he correlated with a Hopeful Reflector and the anti-Hopeful Reflector to a similar extent, as well as Expert Judges and other participants who similarly did not load onto a factor.

Table 10.3(a) to show participants correlating with Anna's second social worker.

Participant		Factor load	Correlation
Anna's teacher	1h	Hopeful Reflector	0.66
The team manager in Beth's TAF	2e	Expert Judge	0.60
Claire's maternal uncle	3d	Anti-Hopeful Reflector	-0.64
Claire's maternal auntie	3g	None	0.72
Claire's school nurse	3h	Expert Judge	0.65
Daniel's psychiatrist	4c	Expert Judge	0.75

10.4. Non-loader C, the team manager in Daniel's TAF.

The team manager TAF suggested that neglect and abuse are very similar, early help prevents getting into crisis and every child has the right to be loved and cared for. He also appeared to feel that good collaboration in isolation does not keep children safe, adding

> "Being a manager in a case like this, you get to know a picture of the child's life and the fact is you can collaborate all you like but if you don't have the family on board you're wasting tax payers' money. For the most part I do believe we get it right to be honest."

The team manager in Daniel's TAF (participant 4b) correlated to the highest extent (r = 0.41) with Anna's social worker (1d, a non-loader).

> "I came from care jobs into this and teams were more integrated. It's too late now but I would have retrained if I was at the start of my career again, like

> becoming a psychologist… social work is not recognised, the slog of it is a lot to give for not much appreciation of the role."

10.5. Non-loader D, Anna's agency social worker.

Anna's agency social worker (participant 1i) made choices that suggested policy strictness does not make children safer, noting

> Policy is just the pretty face of what happens up and down this country… and newspapers are the ugly face. Not one of them is accurate... bottom line is knowing the kids and who is in their life.

She also expressed the view that the media are inaccurate and unhelpful, TAF members should put themselves in the shoes of young people they work with and every child has the right to be loved and cared for. This participant also agreed to comments made during Q-sorting to be included in the analysis including

> Being agency is when you're half in, half out… so I am easier to ignore if people don't like what I am saying… but you can make communities safer and child friendly, family friendly, just open is by investing in it as a thing with value in it.

Anna's agency social worker correlated with one other sort above r = 0.60, the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF (3e, another non-loader) where r = 0.73.

10.6. Non-loader E, the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF.

The deputy team manager in Claire's TAF (participant 3e) correlated to the highest extent with Anna's agency social worker where r = 0.73. There were notable differences between them, however, because the deputy team manager in Claire's TAF reported that early intervention was not always appropriate because minimal intervention was appropriate, noting

> There is smoke without fire though, lots of it and it can confuse the issue. I would love to talk to journalists but we aren't allowed to tell them how it relaly is… but it's the same with referrals, sometimes people need to calm down – teachers can over-panic about things they see in the classroom and some, not all, just don't get thresholds. You don't send the social workers in when little Johnny hasn't got a pencil for class.

10.7. Non-loader F, Claire's maternal auntie.

Claire's maternal auntie (participant 3g) correlated with five other sorts above r = 0.60, as shown in table 10.7(a). Four out of five of these were Expert Judge sorters and Claire's maternal auntie did reflect many of these views. Commenting, for example, that

> There's the interference that can be too much, like the way these meetings run it's taken-for-granted that the opinions are not going to hurt, or if they care about that at all.

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Table 10.7(a) to show participants correlating with Claire's maternal auntie.

Participant		Factor load	Correlation
Anna's social worker	1h	Non-loader	0.72
The team manager in Anna's TAF	2e	Expert Judge	0.82
Beth's agency social worker	3d	Expert Judge	0.90
Claire's school nurse	3g	Expert Judge	0.68
Daniel's psychiatrist	3h	Expert Judge	0.64

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