

RELATIONSHIPS IN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

A review of the
literature

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Forward

This literature review was commissioned by the Relationships Foundation in 2020 and completed by Dr Andrew Malcolm of the University of Bedfordshire's School of Applied Social Sciences. It was funded by Porticus as part of the IntegratED programme, a broad partnership which aims to reduce preventable school exclusions and improve the quality of education for children excluded from school.

As part of the IntegratED programme, the Relationships Foundation is exploring how factors like closeness, trust and relatedness in alternative provision settings support efficacy, and seeking to identify what it is that enables good relationships within settings and in the wider system, to support sustainable improvement.

In the 25 years since its launch, the Relationships Foundation has explored different ways in which public policy, organisations, and individual behaviour shape the relationships that influence the wellbeing of individuals, communities and organisations. Our vision is to improve society by strengthening the quality of relationships between people ... and where better to start than with children in schools. Through this work, we aim to demonstrate the efficacy of a more relational approach in the leadership and management of schools, and vitally in the practice of teaching. We generate evidence and develop new knowledge to show how more relational strategy in these areas can have a positive impact on outcomes for young people, their communities, and wider society.

We are delighted to present this review, together with two sibling documents which focus in on the nature of staff relationships, engagement and wellbeing, and on the importance of relatedness across the system of organisations involved in the provision of education for children excluded from mainstream schools.

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Key messages for practice ...

- 1** Supportive structures for staff are widely recognised as important within the body of research. There is a need to ensure staff working in AP settings receive appropriate and helpful support for working in what can be a significantly challenging environment. There is scope to explore models of effective management, more explicit psychological support as well as hybrid approaches.
- 2** There is a need to develop an empowering framework of ideas for staff to draw on in their practice. The research suggests fairly widespread use of ideas from attachment theory which can risk developing deficit accounts of students and approaches which lack the capacity to draw on students' cultural roots and lived experience. In line with this there is also a need to reflect on the limitations inherent in some relational cultures of AP, particularly for students who are not relationally motivated or who have less capacity or incentive to engage on these terms.
- 3** Transferable gains are developed in AP settings and successfully maintained in post AP destinations. This notion can aid measurement of the impact of AP settings, and consideration of how to develop effective practice. An example would be to focus on building relational capability - research suggests that there is potential for group work in AP settings to improve peer relationships. This is particularly important in relation to the gender difficulties reported in the research.

Key messages for policy ...

- 1** The government guidance for using AP implicitly supports a repair and return model. It currently suggests students can be "directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour" (DfE, 2013, p3). This should be changed to read, 'students can be directed by schools to off-site provision to better understand the support required to enable their educational success'.
- 2** There is scope for the importance of the relationships developed in AP to be recognised more fully in policy. One way of doing this would be to provide for an explicit, funded role for pre-16 provision to play in post-16 support, somewhat akin to 'staying put' arrangements for looked after children in foster care.
- 3** There is a need to contextualise any measures of success used to assess AP. A number of suggestions are made in the research and these have been collated in the discussion. It would seem that a basket of measures which look beyond individual student outcomes may provide the best approach. For example, quality of collaboration could be an important measure of success.

Key messages for research ...

- 1** The research suggests that engagement with AP can aid engagement with other services. If true, this is a valuable insight which could aid local service provision beyond the remit of AP. Staff in AP are presented as well placed to bridge cultural misunderstandings between home and school. The value of positive relationships in AP to professionals beyond these settings is an area for further exploration.
- 2** There is a need to more fully account for progress made in AP; to develop robust measures which appropriately contextualise success in this setting. This may be aided by focusing on disruptions to young peoples' progress over time and connects to the ongoing need to better understand the long-term impacts of attending AP.

Executive summary

The review

This report presents the findings of a literature review which focused on relationships in alternative provision (AP) settings and the way in which these are related to outcomes for young people. It was commissioned by Relationships Foundation to support their involvement in IntegratEd¹ - a collaborative research project which seeks to reduce preventable school exclusions and improve the quality of education for children excluded from school.

For the purposes of this review, AP is considered to be an educational setting away from the mainstream site which is attended by young people who have experienced marginalisation and exclusion from school. For a study to be included in this review it needed to have been undertaken in, or with a focus on, at least one AP setting in England. A total of 114 studies were identified for inclusion in this review. The evidence base is somewhat limited by a tendency for research to be exploratory and undertaken on a small scale, involving the collection of qualitative data and the thematic analysis of the experiences and perceptions of those connected to AP settings. That said, there is a high level of consistency across the evidence base and future studies are well placed to build on findings to date with larger scale research.

The findings

Section 1: Which relationships are important in AP?

Of the 114 studies, 107 explicitly make use of the term relationship or relationships (see Appendix A for an analysis of the contexts in which these terms are most frequently used). The importance of relationships in AP is a pervasive theme throughout the body of research. In terms of relationships with staff, the idea that they can 'hold the story' for young people captures the important role that relationships can play in AP settings. The research also suggested that the AP context and practical and productive learning experiences can provide a helpful forum for developing staff-student relationships. Relationships with peers can be an important part of social learning in AP and it is suggested that there is potential for group work in AP settings to improve peer relationships. This is an important area to consider given some of the gender difficulties reported in the research.

Research suggests that parental engagement with AP can aid engagement with other services. Communication with home was presented as enabling AP staff to be aware of out of school wellbeing and meant that information was more easily shared. When considering relationships between those in AP and a student's previous and next mainstream school the positioning of AP as a site where students are sent to be fixed before reintegration back into a mainstream setting was referred to as 'repair and return'. This framework of understanding was presented as problematic within the research and does not sit well with many of the other findings of this review.

¹ <https://www.integrated.org.uk>

Section 2: What factors influence these relationships?

Personalisation was a strong theme when considering how organisational context influences relationships. However, the research suggests a student's choices were not always possible and that personalisation in AP is more often thought of as social and in relation to welfare rather than learning. The idea that within AP students have to conform to the relational approaches to care found within these settings was suggested as a potential issue for some young people. Ethos would seem to have the most potential for variation across AP settings with the research evidence supporting this. Research could usefully explore the underlying values and beliefs of practitioners about the young people with whom they work and seek to explore whether and how this shapes the outcomes for students in these settings.

Section 3: Staff as a key influence on relationships in AP

When considering the importance of skilled staff and the difference they make, the notion of a framework of ideas which staff draw on in their work was suggested as something which could be explored further in future research with the potential to positively shape the work undertaken in AP settings. The prominence of relational knowledge may constrain young peoples' post AP trajectories if this knowledge doesn't transcend AP.

Participants in one study referred to seeing their role as a teacher and not responsible for the welfare issues of students, while other studies referred to flatter structures with all staff being fully engaged with the young people in their care. There is clearly a balance to strike between differentiation of the necessary roles which provide welfare support in AP settings and flatter structures where all staff hold this responsibility. The limitations and benefits of these models could be explored further in future research.

When considering things that hinder staff in AP the idea of staff holding deficit views of young people was raised and will be important to explore to further understand the dynamics and beliefs which shape these views. It was suggested that the blend of professional backgrounds had a significant influence on the ethos and approach in AP settings. The ability to work at a greater and lesser emotional distance is an important skill for staff in AP and stable and skilled staff teams are an important ingredient for best practice. Supportive structures for staff seem to be able to take the form of good management and more formal psychological approaches including supervision and work discussion group models. Future research should seek to further explore the most effective way to provide supportive structures for staff working in AP settings.

There is a need to provide supportive structures for staff who work in AP settings. This should include consideration of the most helpful framework of ideas to support practice in this context

Section 4: The role of relationships in generating outcomes

When considering the role AP settings can play in the provision of pastoral support for present challenges the ideas of transferable gains was raised, with the suggestion that some progress made in AP will transfer more easily to post AP settings. Personalisation was often framed in terms of content or care and the provision of a therapeutic environment with the suggestion made that there is scope to explore personalisation in relation to young peoples' experiences of learning and what works for them.

The findings which explored the broadening out of educational experiences suggested that respecting students' cultural roots and lived experiences is important when seeking to empower

young people in AP. Choice and the notion of voluntary association were often described as present in AP settings however there was some evidence of more disciplinary approaches and one study which considered change over time suggested that there has been a move towards greater use of behaviourist strategies in AP settings.

The relational base of AP may work against some students, particularly those who are less inherently motivated by relationships. The idea of a poor student-AP or student-staff match was raised in relation to this and personalisation of the focus of AP or its content may help to build a context where relationships can develop.

There is a need to consider whether gains made in AP are transferable, particularly when they stem from relationships, and how greater transferability can be encouraged

Section 5: Outcomes measured

Reviewing the evidence about the outcomes of AP shows that there is limited evidence beyond the perceptions of those in the AP environment although there is significant consistency in the reporting of perceptions across the research accounts. There are frequent reports of concerns about the equivalence and breadth of qualifications available to young people in AP settings, this has been a running theme in the body of research over the years and does not, as yet, seem to have been systemically addressed.

The research suggests that difficulties can be exacerbated in AP. This includes some young people starting to offend and others becoming more entrenched in these behaviours. Discontinuities in provision, part time timetables and shorter school days are presented as issues in relation to this with the risk that young people fall out entirely from education if AP breaks down. There is a need to further study the experiences of those who do not engage with AP and to consider what can be done to best support these young people.

An outcome of AP can be reengagement and the intention to continue in education. Research suggested that there is potential to use a stable base in AP to support young people to gain experience elsewhere, for example in work and college environments. The research also suggests there is considerable variation in the tracking of post-16 destinations; this is related to the need to consider how gains made in AP can be transferred into other settings.

A significant theme in relation to the outcomes of AP is the need to contextualise success. In a number of studies academic outcomes were perceived as better than they would have been had the students remained in mainstream. With one study presenting data to back this up by comparing grades vs predicted grades. Given the challenges of measuring success in AP this is an important finding. Young people in AP report transformational educational experiences and experiences of stability in the midst of adverse life experiences. Given this, it is important to think about how they might be measured. Indeed, measures of success should be designed so that they look beyond the young people who learn in these settings. The research suggests seeking measures of success which avoid placing all the weight of assessment on young people in AP may involve measures at provision level and assessment of the quality of AP at a local authority level.

There is a need to consider and develop contextual measures of success for the work undertaken in AP

Introduction

This literature review was commissioned by Relationships Foundation to support a research project examining ways in which relationships shape the quality of alternative provision for excluded students (AP). These include, for example, the relationships between students, between students and staff, staff relationships within AP settings, the relationship between AP and other schools, and the wider system of relationships involved in the commissioning and provisioning of AP as well as other agencies working with AP students and their families. This project is part of the IntegratEd programme run by a number of organisations to reduce preventable school exclusions and improve the quality of education for children excluded from school.

AP is accessed by children and young people who have experienced marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream schooling. In England the guidance from government defines AP as:

“education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour” (DfE, 2013, p3).

AP is thus defined by exclusion from relationships and entry into AP is predominantly triggered by the breakdown of relationships with peers and/or teachers. Relationships are not a unique factor in AP. The wellbeing of all children and adults is closely linked to the relationships they experience. Indeed, learning is a relational process for all students. All organisations require many different relationships to work well in order to be effective, but it is important to recognise that the fundamental context in which AP operates is the breakdown of, and exclusion from, relationships.

This study is specifically focused on what the existing research tells us about relationships in AP and will inform Relationships Foundation’s work on assessing relationships in this context. It does not review the wider policy literature although it is recognised that many aspects of policy, practice and culture can be major factors in shaping relationships. It begins by outlining the methods used to undertake this literature review. This will be followed by the substantive review in five sections which will cover; the relationships found in the research, the factors which influence these relationships, the importance and prominence of staff in the body of research, the role relationships play in generating outcomes, and the outcomes of AP. Key ideas that have emerged from the review will be considered in the discussion before concluding the report with a summary of areas for future research to explore and recommendations.

The shortening AP will be used throughout to denote all forms of alternative provision including pupil referral units (PRUs), AP free schools, AP academies, and independent alternative provision.

Review methods

This section outlines the search and selection process undertaken for this literature review before providing an overview of the body of research included in the review and an assessment of the evidence base.

Search and selection

The search terms were designed to return sources reporting research undertaken in AP settings in England. The exact search terms used, a list of databases searched and the number of sources returned is provided in Appendix B. Following the completion of these searches and the removal of duplicates a total of 479 sources remained. Sources from the Times Educational Supplement and Children and Young People Now were removed along with irrelevant or duplicate titles which were not picked up by the earlier electronic sort. This left 250 sources of which 178 were journal articles the other 72 being theses, books, book sections or chapters or reports.

A group of all sources which presented research undertaken in or with specific relevance to AP settings was created with 142 sources from the 250 results. Of these there were 9 sources where one of the (46) theses had then been (in part) written up as a journal article. These were only included if the research reported was solely relevant to an AP context, focused on educational experiences and if the author had not gone on to publish this work in the form of one or more journal articles. This reduced the number of sources from 142 to 129. Finally, Journal articles were considered so as to remove any articles where the focus was on something other than educational experiences, this reduced the overall number of sources from 129 to a final 114. This is similar in scale to the literature review undertaken to support the Timpson review in 2019 which focused on school exclusions and included 115 sources (Graham et al., 2019).

The final selection of sources were uploaded to a qualitative data analysis programme (NVivo) and a thematic analysis was undertaken by the researcher. To begin with analysis was initially structured around four questions (which relationships are important in AP?; what are the factors that influence these relationships?; the role of relationships in generating outcomes and the outcomes of AP). Within these four areas, a thematic analysis was undertaken and additional themes outside of these areas also emerged when analysing the body of research. The final structure of the review broadly follows the flow of the original questions but the themes within each of the sections are the product of the analysis as is the emergence of an additional area which explores the importance and prominence of staff in the research on AP.

Overview of the body of research

An overview of the studies included in this literature review is included in Appendix C. Studies focusing on AP are a developing area of research with over half of the included studies (58 of 114) published in the last six years and over three quarters (N=88) in the last ten years. The 114 studies include 67 journal articles, 29 theses, 13 reports, 4 book chapters and one conference paper. Just over a quarter of the sources are theses, this is a fairly sizable number and is frequently doctoral research undertaken by educational psychologists in training or other professionals working within AP contexts. This is reflected in the fact that the research for 23 of the 29 theses being undertaken on a single site.

Research in this field tends to be fairly small scale. Of 109 studies (five of the 114 reanalysed data collected and reported in earlier sources) 22 were conducted within or across local authority (LA) areas, the other 87 were conducted in one or more AP settings. Only five of the studies focused at an LA level were conducted in five or more authorities with 14 of the 23 undertaken in a single LA. Fifty four of the 87 studies conducted at an AP level were undertaken in just one institution with just 12 studies reporting research undertaken on five or more sites. Research tends to be focused on the secondary school context – only 11 of the 114 studies were undertaken wholly or in part within a primary school context.

Types of research, scale by approach

Number of participants (banded)	Qualitative	Mixed Methods with Institutional Data	Mixed Methods	Quantitative	Total
up to 10	25	3	2		30
11 to 20	15	2	4	1	22
21 to 30	7	1	4		12
31 to 40	4	5	5		14
41 to 50	3	2	2		7
51 to 100	6	2	1	3	12
more than 100		8	3		11
n/a, see note	6				6
Total	66	23	21	4	114

Note: Five of these re-analysed data included in the bands above. One was large scale (17 case study locations) but didn't identify a specific number of participants.

Assessment of the body of evidence

The evidence base is somewhat limited due to the fact that the research focused on out of school AP in England undertaken to date tends to be exploratory, undertaken on a small scale, involve the collection of qualitative data and the thematic analysis of the experiences and perceptions of those connected to AP settings. That said, there is a high level of consistency across the evidence base. Indeed, a literature review focused on quality in AP suggests research evidence on the topic is remarkably consistent across time and location (Thomson, 2014). While the proliferation of small-scale qualitative research studies cannot, in isolation, make significant research claims, the body of evidence presents a largely consistent picture of AP. There is however clearly scope and contribution to be made by large scale studies which are in a position to build on findings to date by exploring themes and connections which emerge from the largely small scale, qualitative evidence base.

Section 1: Which relationships are important in AP?

The literature review looked first at the relationships considered within the body of research and their characteristics. The key relationships involved AP staff; peers; parents, carers, families and communities; outside professionals and mainstream schools.

Relationships with AP staff

Within the body of research, relationships with staff are often described in positive terms with the importance of respect being a recurring idea. Staff having the time to listen and taking an approach through which students experience care and a close school community, often framed as a family environment, will be discussed. We end with a consideration of the need for students to interact with relatable staff who they experience as genuine, and the negative aspects of staff student relationships found in the research.

In general, within the research in AP settings relationships with staff were described positively (Attwood et al., 2003; Levinson and Thompson, 2016; Cockerill, 2019) and were often contrasted with experiences in mainstream (Kendall et al., 2003; Daniels et al., 2003; Bello, 2004; Leather, 2009; Hart, 2013; Jarvis, 2018). Thomson and Pennacchia provide a helpful overview of the kind of positive relationships found in AP with students describing staff who:

“listen; are patient, prepared to have fun and are less formal; are fair, kind, and firm about rules; are prepared to negotiate; have clear, high and achievable expectations; see them as ‘teachable’ rather than as deficient in some way.” (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014, p23).

An important point which goes beyond the generally positive relationships found within AP and highlights the difference specific relationships can make is shared by Pirrie et al (2011):

“Young people and their families derived clear benefits from established relationships with a service provider who ‘held their story’, who knew them well and had a clear holistic overview of how their needs had evolved over time and of their history of engagement (or lack of engagement) with services” (Pirrie et al., 2011, p536).

This notion of staff who can hold the story of young people in AP captures something important which is developed more fully in the rest of this section.

Staff provide both academic and emotional support (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016) and the strength and quality of relationships in AP is identified as key to success (Leather, 2009). Indeed, there was universal agreement across pilots in a large-scale government funded project that relationships are pivotal to success in AP (NFER, 2012). In the words of one participant from research undertaken by Evans (2010), it is an ‘unforced relationship’. These relationships are variously described as intense and personal (Farouk, 2014), requiring the investment of emotional energy (Leather, 2009), striking and distinctive to AP settings (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018), the primary factor in enjoyment of AP schooling (Cook, 2005; Dean, 2018) and as facilitated by productive

and practical experiences (Leather, 2009; Kinsella, 2017). Staff being fun or being able to have a laugh is referred to in a number of studies (Pomeroy, 1999; Leather, 2009; Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Mutual respect and being treated like an adult were the most common characteristics of relationships in AP discussed within the research. Respectful relationships are reported (Pomeroy, 1999; Cullen and Monroe, 2010; Hunter, 2015) and are often described by young people as being treated like an adult (Attwood et al., 2003; Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016; White and Laczik, 2016, Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). This approach is seen as leading to mutual respect which young people can respond to (Kendal et al., 2003). Respect is conceptualised as a key characteristic of the relationships that are modelled within AP and something that new entrants have to learn by participation in the school community (Jones, 2013). It is also one of the ways in which young people contrast relationships in AP with previous experiences of mainstream school (Jones, 2013; Nicholson and Putwain, 2018; Cockerill, 2019). Malcolm (2018) identifies AP as a network of relationships within which behaviours are modelled and learnt in highlighting staff willingness to apologise to students, underscoring the more equal nature of relationships often found in AP settings. Relationships that are not authoritarian or controlling (Vincent, 2016; Corbett et al., 2019) and non-confrontational approaches (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014) are also connected to the respect found in AP and to mutual respect in particular (Vincent, 2016). There is a reported emphasis on negotiation rather than direction and on cooperation as being a part of mutual respect (Kinsella, 2017).

Staff provide both academic and emotional support and the strength and quality of relationships in AP is identified as key to success

Staff having the time to listen to students, getting to know about one another (Leather, 2009) and sharing personal issues (Martineau, 2018) are reported as important, as is staff believing both sides of a story (Jarvis, 2018). Feeling listened to can connect to engagement. Students may complain about work as boring or too hard but being listened to and having space to articulate difficulties can lead to engagement (Putwain et al., 2016). Open and approachable staff were framed as a key distinction from mainstream by students in one study (Corbett et al., 2019) and elsewhere being listened to connected to feeling in control of what will happen upon referral (Mills and Thomson, 2018). The research also reports AP settings eliciting feedback and wanting to listen to so as to improve practice (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Open and approachable staff were framed as a key distinction from mainstream by students in one study

Students in AP perceive staff as caring (Martin, 2015). The following up of non-attendance and pursuing relationships even when there is distance is perceived as staff 'actually caring' (Scott and Spencer, 2013). Other examples include wanting to know what is going on for young people (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018, Farouk, ND), staff as helpful, caring, engaged and valuing young people (Leather, 2009; Pomeroy, 1999; Farouk, 2014), giving attention (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014; Johnston and Bradford, 2019), and being approachable (Corbett et al., 2019) are all framings of this in the research. One paper written by a young person frames this as staff having, 'a lot of faith in you' which she connected to motivation (Bello, 2004).

There are many instances within the literature of students articulating the positive, caring relationships they experience in AP in terms of 'family' (Leather, 2009, Nicholson and Putwain, 2015; Jarvis, 2018, Corbett et al., 2019; Malcolm, 2019), sometimes using the language of staff as more akin to friends or AP as friendly (Attwood et al., 2003; Riley and Docking, 2004; Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). An interesting insight from participants in a study focused on young peoples' experiences of gangs conceptualised the school family as being part of the same gang – a network of relationships which took priority, at least within the AP context (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018).

Staff being relatable and genuine (Martineau, 2018) is referred to in the research as a willingness to both share one's own life and experiences (Cullen and Monroe, 2010) and to be interested in the lives of students and their cultural experiences (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014; Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). This personal connection, along with the shedding of titles used in mainstream school, helped to leave behind the roles which usually shape the dynamics present in the school context (Dodman, 2016; Kinsella, 2017). These genuine relationships helped engage students in their learning (Farouk, 2014) and led to students having a greater level of trust in staff and a willingness to take and follow their advice (Scott and Spencer, 2013; Daniels et al., 2003)

Negative aspects of staff-student relationships were often the converse of positive characteristics outlined above: authoritarian, not listening, like teachers in mainstream. More commonly these were referred to in relation to individual members of staff but could also be about practice in AP more generally (Leather, 2009; Michael and Frederickson, 2013). Unfair treatment by adults in AP was also reported as leading to negative relationships (Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson and Putwain, 2018) along with one instance of inappropriate sharing of information which led to the student concerned losing respect for staff (Briggs, 2011). The most prominent aspect of negative staff student relationships in AP related to students trying to gain control of situations. This was sometimes related to students being skilful in capitalising on adults' own emotional difficulties (Cullen and Monroe, 2010). In relation to this Ellis-Martin (2015) reports students knowing when they have gone too far and apologising, and Dodman (2016) reports a challenging situation faced by a Head in dealing with inappropriate sexually offensive behaviour of some students which was causing distress to some members of staff. The Head was seeing some success in establishing better relationships through creative interventions.

Relationships with peers

The research which considers peer relationships in AP settings recognises they can have a negative impact. Positive aspects include making friends and relationship dynamics in AP, the provision of support for peers, new expectations, connections and the development of confidence. The research also notes the way in which gender shapes student experience in AP.

Although there were more references to negative peer than negative staff experiences within the body of literature, the balance was still firmly towards more positive experiences of peer relationships. The negative aspects mentioned were pre-existing poor relationships when transitioning into AP (Briggs, 2011; Martineau, 2018), the potentially negative influence of other students (Kendall et al., 2003; Dodman, 2016), the lack of opportunity to socialise due to small cohort size and limited ability to sustain friendships, either with those from a previous mainstream setting or new relationships at the AP, due to geographical dispersal (Martin, 2011; Martineau, 2018; Jarvis, 2018), negative influence on behaviour or learning within the AP setting (Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Stahl, 2017), and students setting themselves apart from a low view of AP and other students by responding negatively or creating a separate identity (Dean, 2018; Johnston and Bradford, 2019). Connections are made in the research between the continuation of poor pre-existing relationships into the AP setting making positive behaviour change less likely (Martineau, 2018). The converse of this, new peer relationships acting as a facilitating factor, is considered below.

The body of research discusses the potential for the AP environment to aid students with building new peer relationships (Hart 2013). While in some ways this is an obvious outcome of being in a new setting, students reporting less difficulty in making friends after attending AP is particularly significant for those who have previously experienced bullying (Kendall et al., 2003). There is limited mention of 'having a laugh' and peer group 'banter' within the literature but

these are important peer group dynamics which can present staff with challenges and require skill to navigate (Dray, 2018). Interestingly, Dray (2018) suggests that there is space for this within AP because learning is viewed as more of a social, as opposed to scientific, endeavour. In one study a sociogram is used to explore peer group relationships finding that students who are more confident, who see themselves as leaders, are perceived by peers as those they are least likely to work well with (Ellis-Martin, 2015). This somewhat contrasts with the work of Irwin-Rogers and Harding (2018) who suggest the social field of the school can take priority over the social field of the gang, at least within the geography of the school, with students from different gangs rubbing alongside each other in AP. The point of contrast is that they find gang involved young people to be better behaved, highly socially confident and a source of support for a positive learning environment. The positive impact of peer dynamics is also reported by Malcolm (2019) in relation to new arrivals learning from their peers the kind of social space that AP is, and about the respect between staff and students. This dynamic is also noted by Putwain et al., (2016) in relation to peers acting as role models.

There are a variety of ways in which the peer relationships experienced in AP are reported as supportive within the research, starting with the role of peers in experiences of acceptance and reassurance upon arrival in AP (Martin, 2015) and beyond this to calmer and improved behaviour (Murphy, 2011; Kendall et al., 2003; Jarvis, 2018). Connections are also made to improved attendance (NFER, 2012) and collaboration – helping one another in lessons (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015 and 2018). The recognition of shared experiences is noted within the research and can both support the development of these relationships (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015) and help build a more positive acceptance of self (Vincent, 2016). Somewhat similarly it is also noted that advice or encouragement can be particularly potent when received from peers (Vincent, 2016; Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016) and Levinson and Thompson (2016) report more trusting relationships between students in AP.

A change in peer group and the move to a new social context is noted in the research and connected to feelings of confidence and belonging

A change in peer group and the move to a new social context is noted in the research and connected to feelings of confidence and belonging (Dean, 2018; Cockerill, 2019), particularly no longer feeling like the one who is different or who peers expect to act out (Dean, 2018). The potential for positive influence, adapting to behavioural norms, is sometimes as a result of mixing with older students for example in FE AP (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003; Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). The potential for positive impact in a new peer group because of being away from peers involved in offending is reported by Kendall et al. (2003) although this sits alongside some of the negative peer influences reported above. Somewhat similarly, commenting on both the positive and negative implications for pre-existing relationships to carry over into the AP setting, it is suggested that it is important for students to “feel able to make a new start and move away from prior identities following their transition” (Martineau, 2018, p114). Tellis-James and Fox (2016) report students’ feelings of connectedness to AP because of knowing peers from this setting all of their life. Perhaps the best way to view this is the opportunity for building new identities in a new culture as part of the experience in AP. Although in a study of an AP setting on a mainstream school site, this is also reflected in the reporting of a part time AP group:

“The development of better peer relationships was at the heart of the learning process here, and the girls’ new images were, in part, bound up in the image of the group. For two days a week they had a shared uniform and a new shared status as role models in the school, as they were reading mentors for younger students” (Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016, p76).

Within AP there would seem to be opportunity for young people to be themselves. This social connection is reported as particularly important for those who have been out of school and experienced social isolation (Kendall et al., 2003), and would seem to be made possible by more relaxed learning environments and the opportunity to have a laugh without being told off (White and Laczik, 2016; Jarvis, 2018). Martineau (2018) gives the example of students preparing food for one another as both providing time to socialise and opportunity to develop practical skills. Dean (2018) reports AP as developing young peoples' sense of communality and Nicholson and Putwain (2018) refer to school belonging, again using student's language of being a 'big family'. They also note the classroom community bringing the opportunity for students to experience meaningful personal connections (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). Kendall et al. (2003) note the potential for group facilitation to improve peer relationships and further build on the positive peer dynamics found within AP that have been reported above.

In a frequently male dominated context, peer relationships can be guided by gendered expectations (Bello, 2004; Murphy, 2011) and similar behaviours can be interpreted more severely for female students (Russell and Thomson, 2011; Martin, 2015). There is some evidence of the potential positive impact but minimal opportunity for all female groups (Murphy, 2011; Ellis-Martin, 2015). Interestingly, Russell and Thomson (2011) note that some female students remain quiet, their greater relational distance may well be an indication of capacity and agency in a context dominated by male peers and that this potential opportunity will often be missed and left unexplored.

Parents, carers, families and communities

The following section will consider the themes which emerge from the research where relationships with parents, carers, families and communities are studied. It will begin by considering communication between AP and home, the role that AP can play in facilitating further engagement and parental criticisms of AP. The constrained social geographies of some students in AP will be covered and will be followed by discussion of family as a positive, the impact of home on young people and finally the potential for AP to lead to a positive impact on a student's home relationships.

Positive experiences of communication between home and AP can begin with parents/carer involvement in induction (Kendall et al., 2003; Jarvis, 2018) and can be particularly positive if relationships already exist because of outreach work (Mills and Thomson, 2018). There is significant evidence of communication with home. AP settings commonly make use of often daily phone calls but also report use of text messages, home visits and interviews (Cook, 2005; NFER, 2012; Solomon and Thomas, 2013). Cajic-Seigneur (2014) reports AP staff spending on average an hour a day on home-school contact and Thomson and Pennacchia (2015) found some providers had a member of staff dedicated to this communication.

Parents are reported to appreciate the positive tone of this contact in contrast to their previous experiences (Solomon and Thomas, 2013; Jarvis, 2018). This positive tone carries through to concerns about issues such as school non-attendance (Mills and Thomson, 2018) and practice can involve parents in disciplinary issues so as to avoid misunderstanding (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). Frequent updates are reported as important for engaging parents in their child's education (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016), with broad recognition of this from AP leaders and LA professionals (Daniels et al., 2003; Mills and Thomson, 2018). In another study AP staff put parents at the top of their list of those with whom it is important to work, suggesting that if parents aren't responsive, it is hard to engage students (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). This is supported by McLoughlin (2010) who presents a case study where the development of

parent-staff relationships, facilitated by an educational psychologist, supported greater collaboration and enabled the young person to make progress in their learning. Indeed, engaging parental collaboration is recognised as important to successful reintegration (Grandison, 2011).

Kendall et al. (2003) report that it is rare for parents to be involved in their child's education. This can be because of their own negative educational experiences, difficulty in getting to meetings and reticence to engage (NFER, 2012; Bristow, 2013). Bristow (2013) suggests that a person-centred approach to planning can provide opportunity to build more positive relationships and Browne (2018) reports parents not feeling judged when staff had been flexible and had understood the complexity of their situation. Successfully increasing parental participation can aid their child's attitude and relationships in AP (NFER, 2012) and improved parental relationships with education and with staff can lead to the provision of advice and support directly to families (Kendall et al., 2003; Evans, 2010; Cooper and Grandin, 2014). Corbett et al. (2019) report that at times the AP they were investigating brought families in to help with working through a student's difficulties and to plan out what could be done to improve the situation. Daniels et al. (2003) sound a more cautious note, suggesting that on-going support from AP developed young people and families' appreciation but that active involvement of young people was not guaranteed by parental engagement (Daniels et al., 2003)

Communication with home is also seen as an opportunity to check on out-of-school wellbeing (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018) and as leading to information being more easily shared (Jarvis, 2018). There is evidence of AP settings undertaking specific work, such as in school groups, to engage parents (Malberg, 2008; Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Ward (2012) suggests parents can experience support in this kind of context from being with other parents who are in a similar situation with their children out of mainstream school. Another study summarises communication and the home school relationship well:

“They simply wanted to: be listened to, for someone to care enough about the pupil, a little support, an understanding of what the pupil needs, and regular open lines of communication - a ‘human’ relationship” (Wood, 2012, p110)

There is some evidence to suggest that the relationships developed with staff in AP settings and the more informal setting can aid the engagement of parents and families with other support agencies such as mental health and social care services (York, 2009; McLoughlin, 2010). Indeed, York (2009) found that over half of participating young people and families in a school based mental health initiative had previously been referred but had not engaged and Evans (2010) suggests some AP settings' non-statutory status may help with gaining families' trust and confidence. McLoughlin (2010) suggests that parents are more willing to engage with those who they feel know their child. This is supported by Browne (2018) who reported parental perceptions of AP settings and CAMHS as better understanding their child's needs and were therefore viewed more favourably in comparison to mainstream schools and the educational welfare service.

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There are some reports of parents being concerned about AP not being full-time and that their child is missing out when not in mainstream school (Daniels et al., 2003; Evans, 2010). Most of the reported parental concerns about AP relate to a lack of knowledge prior to their child starting to attend (Mills and Thomson, 2018). These concerns commonly relate to violence, the negative influence of other students and the stigma of attending AP (Daniels et al., 2003; Walsh, 2017). Sometimes these worries are well founded (Daniels et al., 2003), but it would seem more common for parental perspectives to change once their child is settled into AP (Walsh, 2017), with some parents seeing achievement and progression as more likely in AP and

therefore keen for their child to stay on rather than return to mainstream school (Levison and Thompson, 2016).

In some instances, parents are more actively involved in finding an AP placement for their child and pushing to have them referred (Mills and Thomson, 2018), although the authors also report parents finding this process arduous with referrals instigated by parents taking longer than those initiated by schools. This kind of difficulty is also explored by Macleod et al. (2013) with parents sometimes perceived as colluding in their child's non-attendance and considered as troublemakers when attempting to exercise their rights from a 'lower' position in an unequal society:

“This structural lack of respect seemed to be compounded by a fundamental lack of respect from service providers, even as they strived to do a good job in challenging circumstances. In sum, parents appeared to be partners in name only” (Macleod et al., 2013, p398).

The research suggests that some students have significantly confined social geographies within which they feel comfortable and find it challenging to consider opportunities outside of these (Cullen, 2000). One study refers to perceptions of college and training environments as threatening, as similar to mainstream school which was 'too big and frightening' (Cullen, 2000). Another study revealed very limited dialogue between students and parents at home (Cullen and Monroe, 2010). Lack of support from home, pressure not to attend and to be working or earning (Kendall et al., 2003) can be compounded by limited social contacts and employment role models (Cullen, 2000). Indeed, another study refers to young people from disadvantaged families who are reluctant to work with statutory and voluntary services (Bruder and Speksley, 2015). Mills and Thomson (2018) present conflicting evidence of parental involvement in their study. Two thirds of AP leaders suggested parents were engaged but sufficient interviews with parents were hard to organise in their case study visits where Headteachers reported limited parental engagement. Challenging home contexts and poor educational experiences were cited as underlying factors for this, and the referral and induction process noted as a key time to develop relationships (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

It can be difficult for AP settings to mitigate against community peer relationships and associations with other young people out of school, particularly when linked to offending (Kendall et al., 2003). Indeed Briggs (2011) suggests that attending AP may mean this situation is amplified with increased time out of school in situations where crime and victimisation can occur. Similarly, increased risk of becoming missing from education altogether is reported if AP breaks down (Gazeley, 2010). Traumatic events and chaotic contexts outside of school can be triggers for disengagement and poor behaviour although young people tended to be protective in discussions of their families (Dean, 2018). Events outside of school, particularly for those involved in gangs, can impact on students' concentration in AP, it is not always possible for the social field of AP to take priority over the gang field (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018).

Counteracting the influence of the enormous stress and pressure of some students' home backgrounds presents an extreme difficulty for AP (Kendall et al., 2003). This is recognised by a recent large-scale study which suggests that:

“In some cases, the family dynamic played a crucial role in the child's behaviour, well-being and engagement with learning and having this information at an earlier stage was believed to allow the APs to put appropriate support in place from the beginning” (Mills and Thomson, 2018, p83).

AP needs to recognise the realities of constrained social geographies, limited social and employment contacts and concerns of college and training as threatening (Cullen, 2000).

The positive influence of family is recognised within a number of the studies. Connections are made to offending (Kendall et al., 2003) and attendance (Michael and Frederickson, 2013) with other studies considering family support in more general terms (Ward, 2012; Tellis-James and Fox, 2016; Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Capstick (2005) provides evidence of the significance of home for young people in AP with both a good phone call home and a good end of term report rated positively by young people as rewards. The former was similarly recognised by staff, but the latter was not considered as significant by staff (Capstick, 2005).

In addition to finding family support to be of great significance to the stories of young people involved in their study, Tellis-James and Fox (2016) also referred to positive role models, sometimes immediate family but also within the wider family and community, and sometimes chosen so as to bypass less helpful role models closer to home. There is evidence of family and community networks shaping the aspirations (Kinsella, 2017) and opportunities (Daniels et al., 2003) of young people in AP with some indications of the latter being gendered with male students reporting greater awareness of informal networks (Kendall et al., 2003). Participants in another study suggested that a partner with positive expectations could be a steadying influence in their lives (Ellis-Martin, 2015). Michael and Frederickson (2013) reflect that although family support wasn't part of their study of AP outcomes, a number of students had made mention of it and suggest further research on this area could be valuable. This recommendation still seems pertinent given the limited number of studies which have investigated the positive influence of family.

The knock-on effect that exclusion or non-attendance can have on a family's home situation can be significant with studies referring to parental mental health, financial difficulties resulting from a need to change employment arrangements, and strain on relationships within the family (Pirrie et al., 2011; Browne, 2018). Pirrie et al. (2011) mention this in the context of AP not being in place which suggests the positive impact on home life of a stable AP placement should perhaps be part of a wider range of outcomes considered in relation to successful AP.

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There is some evidence that, similarly to mainstream teachers, AP staff locate the cause of challenging behaviour within the home and family but also express understanding of why this may occur (Martin, 2015). Cullen (2000) suggests that even if the content of AP is geared to a young person's interests, their home cultural context including parental support but also black-market activities and unemployment, may limit the attendance of some young people. This suggests that relationships, rather than content, are more fundamental to the success of AP. Another study suggests the need for APs to actively promote the broad and long-term benefits their work can have to their communities (NFER, 2012).

There is fairly significant evidence from the research of the positive impact AP can have on home relationships with reference made to positive interactions, improved communication and fewer arguments (Kendall et al., 2003; Milner, 2003; NFER, 2012; Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016; Mills and Thomson, 2018). The positive home impact of AP was contrasted with the negative impact mainstream school had had on home life by some young people (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). In one study half the young people and all parents and carers involved recognised the positive impact of AP on home relationships, in one instance playing a significant role in keeping the family together (Kendall et al., 2003). Parents and carers in another study had

many more positive than negative comments (Cook, 2005). Reflecting on this the author suggests AP can have a positive impact on parents who may have previously played a part in their child's limited school attendance. Indeed, positive communication between AP and parents and carers can lead to rewards at home and a positive impact beyond the AP context (Jarvis, 2018).

While parents appreciated the value of communication, their own experiences at home were the clearest measure of the success of AP with calmer and improved relationships cited as well as reference made to a child who, for the first time since starting secondary school, now laughs at home (Mills and Thomson, 2018). There is evidence of AP providing opportunity for change in parental attitudes towards their child's behaviour and achievements (NFER, 2012). Walsh (2017) provides a detailed study which illustrates powerfully the way in which attendance at AP can enable a parent to tell a different story about their child. AP can provide a context within which stability across relationships and expectations can be built. Ward (2012) provides an example of this where parents attended a group workshop with their children; parents felt that a 'joined up' approach was key in supporting improvements in behaviour. The positive of consistency across home and school relationships is also evidenced by the work of Jarvis (2018).

Outside professionals

Participants in many studies noted the importance of external professionals taking a collaborative approach and working together in multi-agency networks. There is, of course, a distinction to be made between proactive and reactive approaches; between external professionals whose expertise staff in AP draw on to support young people and those whose roles and responsibilities lead them to engage with staff in AP settings. The research would seem to suggest that the former, where systemic collaboration across services is in place to support young people in AP, is more effective.

The studies which focus on the importance of multi-agency working considered communication, understanding one another's roles, shared understanding facilitating appropriate support, and AP as part of a wider package of support to be key (Kendall et al., 2003; Richards, 2004; Ruddock, 2011; Cajic-Seigneur, 2014; White and Laczik, 2016; Trotman et al., 2019). York (2009) provides an account of successful interagency working between health and education and in other research a combination of educational and social care priorities was found to be particularly positive (NFER, 2012). It is particularly important to have a multi-agency approach in place to provide support and knowledge of students' background during times of transition (Ruddock, 2011, Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016), with those in AP well placed to help bridge cultural misunderstandings between school and parents thereby helping to embed multi agency working (Evans, 2010). Analysis of the government funded AP pilots (NFER, 2012) suggested partnership working and advocacy programmes could enhance the impact of AP content. Further to this, the benefits of taking a multi-agency approach were considered to be the way in which it helps students and families to feel safe, cared for, respected, and it's potential to transform practice (Richards, 2004). Indeed, alternative providers in one study saw collaboration as extending to work with schools and other APs with a view to ensuring young people's entitlements were realised (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

A number of studies found either mixed or poor multi-agency practice with instances of a lack of input from other services (Kendall et al., 2003; Daniels et al., 2003; NFER, 2012; Trotman et al., 2019) and AP staff experiencing isolation from other professionals despite a commitment to collaboration (Wood, 2012). Collaboration with social care was most often noted as lacking (Kendall et al., 2003; Daniels et al., 2003) reflected by teachers in one study most frequently selecting social care as the service from which they felt their students were in need of support

(Hackett et al., 2011). Woodley (2017) provides an account from practitioner research in which outside agencies came in, essentially as strangers, and asked very personal questions of students. This is evidenced by a detailed account of a social work professional who called to ask for the AP practitioner's opinion regarding the situation of a child in their care but swiftly pushed aside the input which was given (Woodley, 2017). Within the literature, reports of the poorest relationships were with the police. Greenwood (2012) presents a disconcerting account of students from one AP setting attending a community meeting where the police sergeant opening words undermined any opportunity for meaningful engagement. Participants in another study saw the police as corrupt and undependable (Stahl, 2017).

The research evidence would seem to suggest a gradual improvement in multi-agency collaboration over time although the need to improve inter-agency working for excluded students and the variability of practice by local authority found by Daniels et al. (2003) is likely to persist with good practice still instigated by individuals rather than being a function of the system.

There is evidence that key personnel from local authorities are in a good position to facilitate partnership working for students in AP (NFER, 2012). Another study reported that a monthly multi-agency forum with participation by a wide range of agencies involved in the lives of young people in AP helped to enhance understanding of each agency's work and supported flexibility and co-ordination (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). It is important to note that having more than one agency involved in a young person's care does not necessarily mean that adequate coordination will occur, and that it is how the networked relationships are facilitated that drives effectiveness (Daniels et al., 2003). It is also suggested that the local authorities' capacity to deliver this coordination has reduced since 2010 due to austerity (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). Trotman et al. (2019) note the need for professionals working around AP to receive training in collaboration and present multi-agency working as an antidote to the 'repair and return' model of AP which limits the success of reintegration.

Previous and next mainstream school

Whilst there is some recognition in the literature of positive relationships between AP and mainstream schools, there is far more discussion of the challenges. This is perhaps understandable given that the body of research under review explores the impact this will have on young people in AP. The difficulties discussed range from referral (Garner, 1996; NFER, 2012), through monitoring (Armstrong, 2017; Cockerill, 2019) and expectations (Bristow, 2013; Trotman et al., 2019), and are often related to reintegration (Gazeley, 2010; Hart, 2013).

Whether a placement is short or long term, AP participants in a large-scale study saw value in mainstream school remaining involved and invested in the progress of young people (Mills and Thomson, 2018). This connected to discussion of a preference for dual role placements and seeing these as having an impact on transition, reintegration and post-16 outcomes. Dual role placements are presented as having a positive impact on the experience of rejection from mainstream school and helping to equalise AP-mainstream relationships (Mills and Thomson, 2018). This is not a panacea however, with another study suggesting some young people who had dual role placements felt the time in AP had a positive impact on their experience of returning to mainstream schools, whilst others wanted to remain exclusively in AP (Learning & Skills Development Agency, 2003).

Whether a placement is short or long term, AP participants in a large-scale study saw value in mainstream school remaining involved and invested in the progress of young people

Referrals to AP can be hampered by inadequate referral information (NFER, 2012) and, hopefully now historic, expectations about instantaneous placement (Garner, 1996). Some referrers and parents are reluctant about information sharing due to concerns it might mean the student isn't accepted into AP (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). Approaches to the pressure on APs to be responsive to mainstream schools from whom they receive funding differ with some taking a 'this is us, take it or leave it' approach (Dean, 2018). Others note the financial incentive for schools to get students back into mainstream school from AP (Deakin and Kupchik, 2016). Some providers offer outreach work, even making this a prerequisite for referral to AP, thereby supporting schools to retain students, reducing referrals and making the referral process easier because of the existing relationship with the student (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

A lack of monitoring can lead to further deterioration of a young person's connection to their mainstream school (Cockerill, 2019) and perhaps to missed opportunities. AP staff in one study suggested a closer relationship with mainstream school might mean they could help a greater number of their students achieve GCSEs (Garner, 1996). There can be a lack of clarity about who is taking responsibility for the child, particularly in relation to reintegration (Gazeley, 2010). This can be exacerbated in the event of polarisation and 'them and us' relationships between AP and mainstream school (Lawrence, 2011). Indeed, both staff and students are reported as feeling looked down on by their mainstream counterparts (Garner, 1996). AP staff attending reintegration meetings report feeling the need to 'sell the child' as ready to return and focus on positives thereby experiencing tensions between honesty, needs and the best interests of the child (Bristow, 2013). AP staff report the challenge of ensuring support is in place on return to mainstream school and difficulties surrounding this process because mainstream school staff can expect students to be repaired upon their return (Hart, 2013). Hart goes on to recognise that staff can have particular concerns about reintegration to a student's original mainstream school and the question of whether within-child factors are sufficient for reintegration to succeed looms large (Hart, 2013). Indeed, Trotman et al. (2019) mirror this, suggesting that young people face profound and unnecessary difficulty because of the repair and return model which schools can have in mind when engaging with AP.

When considering positive reintegration practice, relationships between AP and mainstream school were consistently identified as fundamental. Specific practices which aid this include supporting relationships and communication, which can involve regular feedback and monitoring of progress (Kendall et al., 2003; Mills and Thomson, 2018), and the sharing of successes in AP so they can be built on and celebrated by staff in mainstream school (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Where students perceive positive relationships between AP mainstream school, they experience a greater sense of school belonging and positive affect (Cockerill, 2019).

It is important that AP is valued by school partners as a way to best support young people, sharing information and assuming joint responsibility (NFER, 2012; Mills and Thomson, 2018; Cockerill, 2019). This can be as simple as viewing AP as a solution (Evans, 2010), but can also involve opportunities for mainstream school staff to visit AP settings and develop a better understanding of the AP offer (NFER, 2012). It is important for schools and APs to spend more time talking in general, over and above discussion of specific young people. This can help with the appropriate selection of young people to attend (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Senior leaders in AP view the maintenance of quality relationships with schools and vital personnel in these setting as an essential part of their role in a mutually dependent relationship (Dodman, 2016).

In order for reintegration to be successful, young people need to experience a consistency in the approaches taken by both their AP setting and their mainstream school (NFER, 2012), and benefit from AP staff providing support in mainstream school following reintegration from the

AP placement (Evans, 2010). Common expectations that the placement is time limited are also needed (NFER, 2012). Indeed, it would seem that a shared explicit aim of reintegration can underpin more positive relationships between AP and mainstream school (NFER, 2012). In addition to clear structures and strong relationships between AP, mainstream school, parents and other professionals involved in supporting reintegration, it is also important to be flexible about timing so that professional judgment about individuals can inform decisions. Staff in one study refer to this as a 'window of opportunity' (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). Similar findings in relation to needing to get the timing of reintegration right are reported by Martin (2011).

Maintaining a focus on the network of relationships which surround the young person is also important. To avoid further fragmentation, and even to begin to repair and reengage, constructive communication between AP, school, parents and young people is key. When this is the case, young people feel valued by mainstream school and mainstream school remembers AP is not a long-term solution (NFER, 2012). Some providers make considerable effort to maintain and rebuild relationships between the young people and their school with an example given of an AP where young people were encouraged to write to their school about the progress they were making (NFER, 2012). It will also be important to remember peer relationships as part of this network as reintegration can be more challenging when the student lacks peer relationships in the new mainstream school or is not accepted into social groups (Lawrence, 2011).

In order for reintegration to be successful, young people need to experience a consistency in the approaches taken by both their AP setting and their mainstream school

Conclusion

This section has considered the themes which emerge from research into relationships in and around AP. A number of key ideas have emerged, and these will be returned to in the discussion section. In terms of student relationships with staff, the idea that they can 'hold the story' for young people is important. It was also suggested that practical and productive learning experiences in AP can provide a helpful context for developing staff-student relationships and that students can be skilled in capitalising on staff weakness. In AP, relationships with peers can be seen as providing social rather than subject learning (as is the case in mainstream school). The question of whether confident peers are a help or a hindrance was raised; two studies present differing accounts with staff suggesting they are helpful to group learning but peers suggesting that these students are poor to work with. It is suggested that there is potential for group work in AP settings to improve peer relationships. This is an important area to consider given some of the gender difficulties reported in the research. Indeed, the idea that for some female students, relational distance may be best conceptualised as a strength is an important finding to which we will return.

When considering relationships with parents, carers, families and communities it was suggested that parental engagement with AP can aid engagement with other services. Communication with home was presented as enabling AP staff to be aware of out of school wellbeing and meaning that information was more easily shared. The point that full-time AP means young people have no down time on the streets was referred to in a number of studies and connected to the importance of staff following up non-attendance. Given these points it is possible that positive impact on home life could be a measure of success for AP settings. In terms of relationships with outside professionals, staff in AP are considered well placed to bridge cultural misunderstandings between home and school. This is somewhat similar to the finding that parental engagement with AP can facilitate engagement with other services.

There were fairly diverse findings in terms of collaboration between AP settings and external professionals, developing robust information on the quality of collaboration should be an aim for future research. When considering relationships between those in AP and a student's previous and next mainstream school, the positioning of AP as a site where students are sent to be 'fixed' before reintegration back into a mainstream setting was referred to as 'repair and return'. This framework of understanding was presented as problematic within the research and does not sit well with many of the other findings of this review. This will be considered further in the discussion.

Section 2: What factors influence these relationships?

The second area under consideration in this literature review is the factors which influence relationships in AP. The most prominent influencing factor within the research was staff and, given the extent of their influence, they will be considered separately in section 3. The factors discussed in section 2 are demographics, models of provision, organisational context, the contexts and opportunities for relationships, and ethos.

Demographics

The life experiences of those excluded from school were characterised as “a grim catalogue of misery” (Ofsted in Brodie, 2001, p20) in an early Ofsted report on exclusion. While exclusion is one of a number of routes by which a young person can end up attending AP, the life situations and experiences recorded across this body of research paint a picture of young people missing out on the intergenerational transmission of advantage. Indeed, one study noted that for over half of their AP cohort disconnection from school was not due to dislike but was rather the product of unique and personal stories (Cook, 2005).

Experiences of family dysfunction and breakdown (Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Farouk, ND), loss of close relatives and caring responsibilities (Ellis-Martin, 2015; Cook, 2005), the involvement of social care and being in care (Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Kendall et al., 2003; Cook, 2005) and trauma (Richards, 2004; Malcolm, 2018) were persistent experiences with there being a notable association between changes at home and the emergence of school difficulties (Attwood et al., 2003; Farouk, ND). Involvement with the police, experiences of offending (Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Daniels et al., 2003; Ellis-Martin, 2015; Corbett et al., 2019), gang involvement (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018) and the issue of neighbourhood tensions (Ellis-Martin, 2015) are mentioned for some young people.

Young people in AP often have experiences of special educational needs (Daniels et al., 2003; Cajic-Seigneur, 2014; Browne, 2018) or present below national expectations in terms of ability (Ellis-Martin, 2015; Dodman, 2016). Experiences of bullying and non-attendance (Kendall et al., 2003; Attwood et al., 2003; Cook, 2005; Ellis-Martin, 2015), the involvement of CAMHS (Bruder and Spensley, 2015), and getting lost within the mainstream system (Kendall et al., 2003) are common. Poverty and experiences of material deprivation are frequently noted (Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Cook, 2005; Wilson, 2014; Ellis-Martin, 2015; Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016; Corbett et al., 2019) and will be intrinsically connected to many of the above characteristics. Reflecting on case studies across a number of locations over time, Trotman et al. (2019) make the observation that referrals in disadvantaged localities are often related to behaviour and attachment while those in more middle-class areas were likely to be for SEN or performative related anxiety. Somewhat similarly, Briggs (2011) noted that young people involved did not present significant behavioural problems, learning difficulties, or suffer home abuses, but rather their cultural norms sat uneasily alongside the mainstream school performative culture leading to their exclusion into AP. Indeed, Daniels et al. (2003) note that Black students are less likely

to have a good relationship in school while participants in another study explicitly referred to students as bright (Cullen and Monroe, 2010). As such, while the notion of a catalogue of misery is still relevant, it is also important to be aware of and consider the impact that school culture has on young people and the way in which it interacts with marginalisation and exclusion into AP settings.

The difficulty of successfully holding together such a varied 'clientele' is considered (Kendall et al., 2003; Daniels et al., 2003) with one study presenting conflicting views from different members of staff on this issue (Dodman, 2016). In general, providers reported successful practice with young people however some noted that they could be less successful with young people with serious experiences of abuse or trauma or severe emotional and behavioural difficulties (Kendall et al., 2003; Daniels et al., 2003). Indeed, it was noted that AP can provide a helpful context - a 'different deal' to that which was available in mainstream (Solomon and Rogers, 2001) - but that young people will still need to exert agency (Corbett et al., 2019) or perhaps conform (Johnston and Bradford, 2019) to make the most of this. This will be more possible for some young people than others (Johnston and Bradford, 2019; Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). This presents an important dynamic which can only be addressed by the on-going reflection of skilled practitioners.

Models of provision

AP caters for students of all ages from primary school through to post 16 but the vast majority of young people who attend AP are in the latter years of high school. The body of research reflects this with just 11 of the 114 studies undertaken in part or wholly within primary settings while most focused on secondary level AP.

AP can receive funding directly from government with additional resource negotiated locally (as for PRUs, AP free schools, AP academies and FE AP) or be solely reliant on locally commissioned places (often described as independent AP). The research suggests that in addition to placements funded from the high needs block, one in five primary schools and three in four secondary school make placements into AP (Bryant et al., 2018). The work of Thomson and Pennacchia (2015) provides a helpful framework for considering AP. Three modes of schooling are discussed, with Mode A representing mainstream, Mode B offering fulltime enrolment but a modified curriculum, and Mode C offering complementary provision to supplement Mode A or B schooling. Bryant et al. (2018) suggest Mode C provision can play an important role in the functioning of local AP systems. Other research suggests that around half of AP is full time (or Mode B), around 30% a mix of full and part time and around 20% is solely part time (or Mode C, though this tends not to be registered as a school and in the main receives referrals from other APs (Mills and Thomson, 2018)).

Placements in AP tend to be for a minimum of 6 months with most AP types offering a mix of short- and long-term placements. PRUs and AP academies are most likely to offer solely short-term placements, 30% and 25% respectively (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Short-term placements will likely mean that the focus is on reintegration. After a reported reduction due to austerity (NFER, 2012), there is some evidence from providers that use of AP has increased in recent years due to performance pressures on schools although AP free schools and FE AP were less likely to report this (Mills and Thomson, 2018). In terms of academic focus and qualifications, over 80% of AP institutions offer English and maths. Those which don't tend to be part-time and used for dual placements (Mills and Thomson, 2018). GCSEs are frequently offered at KS4 although independent APs are more likely to offer level one and two functional skills qualifications (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

An analysis of the AP market undertaken recently (Bryant et al., 2018) showed that most local authorities work with either PRUs, AP academies or AP free schools to provide the majority of AP placements with independent AP accounting for only 14% of places in AP. The extent to which a LA is urban or rural seems to shape this profile with rural authorities reporting greater use of independent AP. Just over three quarters of LAs had a centralised arrangement for placing students in AP with just under a quarter utilising a devolved system with responsibility at the school or local partnership level. There was some evidence that a devolved system may lead to improved outcomes in terms of exclusion rates and a more preventative approach in place (Bryant et al., 2018). Mills and Thomson (2018) suggest that the strategic central role can be played by either the LA directly or by a PRU. In addition, they also note a hybrid model where permanent exclusions are referred through the LA while schools make use of AP for short-term placements. The underlying dynamic which the devolved model may help to create is a situation where schools take strong individual and collective responsibility for students in AP. This is essential for well a functioning AP system and LAs, even in a devolved model, play a key strategic role in facilitating this (Bryant et al., 2018).

Research with providers has reported perceptions of market dynamics within the AP context (Malcolm, 2018). If one provider or sector provides almost all AP placements it can be a challenge to provide the right range of provision (Bryant et al., 2018), with inconsistencies in provision reported in the research (Thomson and Russell, 2009; Dean, 2018). And, if a new provider enters the local market, this can create duplication and undermine local strategy (Bryant et al., 2018). This finding is in contrast with the analysis of government funded AP pilots which suggested diversification and new providers could raise local standards (NFER, 2012). This divergence can be explained by noting that the AP pilots will have been well funded and networked into local systems, thus confirming the importance of strong localised strategy to support a well-functioning system of AP. Unfortunately, if this is not the case, Heads of provision can be in conflict with the local authority (Dodman, 2016) and AP can be experienced as a fragmented system which is challenging and wearing to negotiate (Lanskey, 2005).

If one provider or sector provides almost all AP placements it can be a challenge to provide the right range of provision

There are conflicting accounts of the monitoring of AP. It has been suggested that although AP is underfunded, it is not held to the same performance pressures as mainstream schooling by parents and local officials (Deakin and Kupchik, 2016). However, other research has suggested an increasing academic focus across AP (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2016a; Malcolm, 2018) with Thomson and Pennacchia (2016) suggesting that this is filtering down to systematic monitoring and data collection on young people's attendance, conduct and learning within full time AP. The broader context within which an individual AP setting is located will also have a bearing on the experiences of young people who attend. This is visible within the research which focuses on FE AP settings but will also have implications for other sites, for example if a school chooses to run its own AP on site.

Eight of the studies make mention of AP in the FE context. While the majority of this research presents similar relational dynamics to those found within AP more broadly, there are a few differences which are worth noting. There is some evidence that the practices found within the FE environment can unhelpfully shape the AP on offer. Daniels et al. (2003) report staff preparation and training issues in relation to developing FE AP. This is also noted by Cajic-Seigneur (2014) in connection to the challenge presented for management in terms of developing familiarity with both pre and post 16 guidance and regulations. There are also some concerns expressed about the amount of free time young people have compared to when they were at school (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003). However, some perceptions of FE AP are more favourable than other types of AP (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Heslop (2018) also notes

the 14-16 college model as significantly different to other AP in that students can choose to attend.

This study found young people in this situation reported specific examples of policy, systems and relationships which they had tried to resolve but ultimately led to their disaffection with mainstream schooling and taking up a place in FE AP (Heslop, 2018). There is some suggestion that the relationship with other students in the FE environment may be uneasy with assumptions they are brighter and more privileged (Ellis-Martin, 2015) and young people in AP reporting hostility from other college students including physical harassment and being told to go back to school (Johnston and Bradford, 2019). Indeed, in this study (Johnston and Bradford, 2019) participants reported wanting to escape the bubble of FE AP and participate in normal student life. This was hampered by the separation of FE AP from other college life and the organisation of appropriate activities for these students which limited their opportunities to develop a broader range of social relationships which could have been important in shaping future prospects.

Organisational context

The small scale of AP was by far the most commonly cited organisational characteristic within the body of research. Indeed, one study suggested that students were more likely to drop out when class sizes and cohorts were bigger (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). Some studies simply mention the small scale on which AP is undertaken (Hill, 1997; Daniels et al., 2003; Ruddock, 2011; Jones, 2013; Vincent, 2016; Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Most, however, make connections to the implications of this for relationships and experiences in AP with positive connections made to having time, receiving attention and less disruption. A number of sources also identify some of the challenges that the small scale of AP can present.

Having time to listen and talk (Daniels et al., 2003; Hart, 2013; Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014; Kinsella, 2017) means that young people feel supported (Martineau, 2018). In one study, a member of staff in AP who had previously taught the same students in mainstream reported better relationships in AP, making the connection to there being time and space for this (Ellis-Martin, 2015). Opportunity for sensible staff-student discussion will help students to navigate their world outside of AP with topics including bodily self-expression, for example, addressing issues such as tattoos, piercings or hairstyles (Greenwood, 2012). Having time will mean students receive more attention. This supports the building of relationships (Kendall et al., 2003; Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003; Martin, 2011; NFER, 2012; Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Hart, 2013) and engagement (White and Laczik, 2016), while understanding context means staff are sympathetic to difficulties and are more likely to be asked for help (Martin, 2015). Friendlier, nurturing, more positive, emotionally invested and intense relationships are reported (Leather, 2009; Hart, 2013; Martin, 2011; Hunter, 2015) with young people focusing on being known (Malcolm, 2019). In one study, the authors suggest the marketisation and truncation of education in mainstream schools because of the focus on standards and outcomes led to diminished opportunities for relationships (Meo and Parker, 2004). This had a particular impact on some young people, leading to their exclusion from mainstream and meaning that they could struggle with trust and collaboration even in a setting where there was time to pursue an educational approach based on relationships (Meo and Parker, 2004).

Friendlier, nurturing, more positive, emotionally invested and intense relationships are reported, with young people focusing on being known

Fewer peers in smaller classes reduces disruption and supports the flow of lessons (Kendall et al, 2003; Martin, 2011; Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson and Putwain, 2015; Putwain et al., 2016; Jarvis, 2018; Nicholson and Putwain, 2018; Corbett et al.,

2019), meaning that the environment is calmer and quieter (Martin, 2011; Hart, 2013) and that students feel more safe and secure (Hart, 2013; Hunter, 2015). There is usually sufficient resource for a student to remain in the classroom if conflict occurs thus remaining engaged (Mills and Thomson, 2018) though the opportunity to respond positively to difficulties with space to calm down is also reported (Levinson and Thompson, 2016).

The limited space in AP can impact on privacy for both students (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003) and staff (Meo and Parker, 2004) and for staff may mean limited emotional space for reflection (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019). Smaller sites can mean fewer facilities (Jarvis, 2018) and can be claustrophobic, presenting particular challenges when behavioural incidents occur (Stahl, 2017). The scale of AP can also place a restriction on the level of expertise within the organisation and therefore the breadth of curriculum (Vincent, 2016) meaning that there can be a mismatch in ability and interest (Lanskey, 2015). Part time and non-attendance can lead to a need for GCSEs to be compressed thereby having a systemic impact on the qualifications young people in AP can access (Stahl, 2017). Thus, choices about learning are not always present in AP despite the importance placed on personalisation (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014), although Vincent (2016) notes a greater range of teaching and learning strategies. Elsewhere, AP is characterised not as less demanding but as being characterised by a very different approach to learning, focusing on size and personalisation (Trotman et al., 2015). It is interesting that this small and personal approach is what underpins AP rather than any specific pedagogical approaches (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Indeed, with regards to personalisation it would seem the emphasis is weighted more towards welfare and social needs with less of an emphasis placed on personalisation of learning (Lanskey, 2015).

Contexts and opportunities for relationships

The importance of eating together is mentioned by a number of studies and could involve breakfast, tea breaks and lunch with a focus on the kind of social space this offered, for the development of both positive peer and student-staff relationships (Greenwood, 2012; Daniels et al., 2003; NFER, 2012; Lanskey, 2015; Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014; Martineau, 2018; Jarvis, 2018). In one study the structure of the day in AP is referred to as short bursts of academic learning and afternoons focused on life-long learning to help keep students all day (NFER, 2012), with a study in a primary setting noting a consistent structure and timetable with a variety of activities to punctuate the day (Jarvis, 2018). Travel is mentioned, with one setting moving from use of taxis to supporting young people to use buses to aid with post-16 transition (Woolford, 2012), and another using a minibus to overcome barriers to engagement by transporting young people to activities (White and Laczik, 2016). These almost diametrically opposed approaches make sense within the overall context of AP, within which it is first necessary to achieve the engagement of young people before it is possible to move on to learning and empowerment.

Safety and safeguarding were mentioned by all programmes in one study (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014) and police presence and continued surveillance reported in a study in a PRU in London (Stahl, 2017). Any necessary discipline seems to be considered to be fair if there is space to be heard (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). In one study parents and students made a connection between positive relationships and clear and consistent behaviour policy (Ward, 2012), with another noting the approach in AP as clear, consistent and fair (Jarvis, 2018).

Variation of staff and students within an AP setting and the short day can limit relationships (Meo and Parker, 2004). The importance of a consistent staff team is noted (Jones, 2013) and the transitory nature of AP is flagged as presenting difficulties to the maintenance of institutional ethos (Stahl, 2017). Sudden transfers of students out of AP settings is also mentioned with

research undertaken by a visiting practitioner, reporting that staff tended to underestimate the impact of this as it was out of their control (Long, 2013). The researcher then facilitated a session focusing on loss which was well received by staff and students alike. Staff were initially hesitant believing that young people wouldn't be able to concentrate within a session of this nature presenting a somewhat low view of the young people with whom they work (Long, 2013).

Staff working across split sites hampering staff team working is noted (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019) and the potential for visitors to interrupt learning is also raised by a student in one study (Jarvis, 2018). Connected to the small scale of AP, limited CPD opportunities for staff and poor networking connections are reported (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). This can also impact on provision and issues of equity of access to support for students because additional funding opportunities require these connections as well as skill and persistence (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). In another study, AP leaders recognised staff training and CPD as vital and connected these to raising standards of teaching and helping to retain teachers in a situation where progression opportunities are limited in comparison to mainstream school (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

Ethos matters

The ethos which underpins the work in any AP is consistently reported as both important and variable between settings. In one study, ethos is characterised as the values and aspirations held for students by staff (Martin, 2015). In another, the emphasis is on respectful relationships, kindness, and a relaxed and friendly family atmosphere (Corbett et al., 2019). A family atmosphere can shape the learning which stems from this context (Jarvis, 2018), and another study reported an expressed aim of developing social and emotional competence and self-worth in AP (Ward, 2012).

Statements about ethos can point to how the environment and teacher behaviours promote calm (Trotman et al., 2015; Jalali and Morgan, 2018), and there can be a focus on tangible outcomes and diversionary class activities as supportive of students with difficult emotional issues (Kinsella, 2017). Pastoral support is at the fore (Kendall et al., 2003) and onsite therapeutic or other additional support and intervention such as art or theatre are reported (Dillon and Pratt, 2019; Kinsella, 2017; Preston, 2013). The limited hierarchy within AP is also reported (Pomeroy, 1999; Daniels et al., 2003; Meo and Parker, 2004) and at times conceptualised as an informal or relaxed approach (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003; Daniels et al., 2003), with a young person participating in one study shocked by the way the environment changes you (Kendall et al., 2003). Similarly, another study noted how new settings made for remarkable changes in young people (Attwood et al., 2003) and how the qualitatively different social space of AP can provide a context within which a young person's trajectory can change for the better (Malcolm, 2019).

Another study noted how new settings made for remarkable changes in young people (Attwood et al., 2003) and how the qualitatively different social space of AP can provide a context within which a young person's trajectory can change for the better

Flexibility and personalisation are reported (Evans, 2010; Jalali and Morgan, 2018), with another study of provision for pregnant young women noting flexibility with regards to health needs which had not been apparent in mainstream school (Vincent, 2016). An example of being able to listen to music when working highlights a different approach to power relations and the way in which this can shape conditions for learning in AP (Trotman et al., 2015). Indeed, feeling more in control and valued is also reported as aiding the development of attachments to staff (Martineau, 2018). In one study, flexibility and engagement with young people is reported as enhanced where the AP setting was not focused on GCSE achievement (Dean, 2018). This

study goes on to note that in one of the settings in which the research was undertaken, the provider focused on academic achievement. This was underpinned by an ethos which saw young people as a problem because being outside mainstream meant they were also outside of society. Interestingly, young people in this setting felt they had no freedom despite considerable flexibility compared to when they had been in mainstream. In other AP within the same study, strict rules were in place for health and safety reasons, but the young people did not challenge these (Dean, 2018).

It is reported that the use of restraint in exclusion varies quite widely by provider culture (Malcolm, 2018). Indeed, within the body of research, there are references to authoritarian approaches (Stahl, 2017), and it is also suggested that informality and a lack of hierarchy does not equate to commitment from young people (Briggs, 2011). This research also noted young people just hanging around the AP setting, perhaps as a result of poor staff practice. Inappropriate sharing of personal information leading to relationships with staff being damaged was also reported (Briggs, 2011). Stahl (2017) suggests the lack of uniforms in one AP meant street culture and notions of ‘trackies and hoodies’ played out in the setting while in another study participants saw AP as an alternative to gangs (Corbett et al., 2019). There is something playing out here which relates ethos to culture. This is best expressed by one study which suggests it is possible for the school social field to take priority over the social field of the gangs to which some young people in the study were allied (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018). Importantly, they also report that most student participants noted a correspondence between the presence of gang members and outbursts of violence and, more generally, a tense atmosphere. This highlights the challenging context within which some AP settings will be working. However, the research suggests that the challenge is to create a social field in AP where violence does not enhance social capital (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018). Connections can be seen here to the other studies in which AP is seen as a family or even a gang. The authors of this study suggested that if young people are gang involved but perceive school as safe, they are less likely to bring weapons into school. They summarised their findings as:

“if gang-involved young people are given the opportunity to leave the street casino - with all its associated pressures and risks - and transition into a school social field with a different internal logic, they will often embrace it. When this happens, the negative effects associated with the presence of rival gangs within a school fade, and gang involved young people simply become young people in need of a decent education.” (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018, p477)

This suggests that despite the intensely difficult context within which many AP settings work it is possible to create a culture within the AP setting which promotes positive relationships. This would seem to be underpinned by the ethos in any AP setting and the fundamental beliefs which underpins the work undertaken by staff in that setting.

Despite the intensely difficult context within which many AP settings work it is possible to create a culture within the AP setting which promotes positive relationships

Conclusion

This section has focused on demographics, models of provision, organisational context, the context and opportunities for relationships, and ethos. When considering demographics, the idea that AP students have to conform to the relational approaches to care found within their settings was indicated as a potential issue for some young people. Personalisation was a strong theme when considering organisational context but the research suggests that the characteristics of AP settings mean that a student’s choices cannot always be met and that personalisation is

considered in social or welfare terms rather than with respect to learning. Ethos would seem to have the most potential for variation across AP settings with the research evidence supporting this. Research could usefully explore the underlying values and beliefs of practitioners about the young people with whom they work and seek to explore whether and how this shapes the outcomes for students in these settings.

Section 3: Staff as a key influence on relationships in AP

As mentioned above, staff were by far the most discussed factor with respect to influencing relationships in AP. This section will cover four areas; the importance of skilled staff and the difference they make, staff qualities and approaches, things that hinder and things that help.

The importance of skilled staff and the difference they make

After exploring the importance of skilled staff in shaping the experiences of young people in AP, this section will consider the opportunities which result from staff student interactions, the commitment of staff to young people in AP, and the notion of crossing professional boundaries.

The importance of skilled staff and the difference they make is widely noted within the literature. Whether this is conceived of as skilled staff being crucial to outcomes (Daniels et al., 2003; NFER, 2012) or the success of AP as being rooted in staff expertise and their interest in young people (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014), staff have a clear impact on relationships with and the participation of children and young people (Martin, 2015). Indeed, a participating AP leader in one study noted that staff are one of the biggest challenges to successful work, placing a burden of responsibility on himself and colleagues to connect with young people (Leather, 2009). The importance of skilled staff is evidenced by the prominence of positive relationships reported by young people who attend AP. There is wide recognition of the importance of attracting and keeping quality staff (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014) and the need for staff teams to be working under skilled leadership so as to meet the challenging dynamics in AP (Daniels et al., 2003). AP leaders talk of staff who regularly go above and beyond in terms of giving time and resources to support the young people in their care (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Staff in AP play an important role in shaping students' experiences and opportunities. In terms of experiences, staff recognise the importance of being interested in students and having positive aspirations for them (Wood, 2012). Staff in one study saw themselves as part of a collective which had internalised the values and methods of the setting; an approach which involved caring in the present and believing in students, so they are enabled to commit to their future. This authentic engagement fostered a sense of community and of being valued (Greenwood 2012). Another study notes that effective relationships are formed with young people by the 'human presence' of staff in their professional roles (Preston, 2013) and students describe AP as a family environment in which they experience interest, respect and genuine care (Jarvis, 2018).

Staff are fundamental to children and young people's experiences in AP and therefore having a shared understanding of their needs is vital (Hart, 2013). Indeed, students' experiences of care, such as concern about absences, develop the belief that staff want to listen to them (Corbett et al., 2019). This will mean staff learn more about students' lives and are in a better position to support them with the challenges they face. The demonstration of warmth and commitment to young people in AP is reflected by the ability of staff to recount in detail and without blame the situations and outcomes of those with whom they have worked (Cooper and Grandin,

2014). Staff are genuine with young people and engage in positive interactions, for example casual conversations and accepting students regardless of what they do or say, thereby helping students relate to staff and feel accepted and understood (Vincent, 2016; Martineau, 2018). Students described this as engendering a feeling of belonging and suggested staff see the best in them and stand up for them (Martineau, 2018). AP leaders and learners in one study noted staff were there because they wanted to make a difference (White and Laczik, 2016), and Martin (2015) suggests that even practices such as restraint are more positively experienced when underpinned by good staff-student relations.

Young people feel valued in AP, often for the first time in their education (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). The body of research suggests that this results from staff who affirm students as capable by positively embracing them and all aspects of their experiences and choices (Vincent, 2016). Whether the students are there for short or longer periods of time, APs see young people as good and redeemable rather than in need of 'fixing'. Indeed, short-term AP seeks to disrupt pre-existing patterns and longer-term placements support young people to 're-write their lives' (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Staff see success in terms of individual young people overcoming challenges rather than cohorts performing well and are united by an "empathetic understanding and a non-judgemental, non-confrontational approach" (Dodman, 2016, p242) and an "unshakeable belief in the value of the PRU's work and the worth of the young people" (Dodman, 2016, p257). In a study undertaken by a practitioner-researcher, being fully oneself was connected to the deepest relationships with students but while significant depth of relationship can be achieved in AP due to its scale and the approaches used, staff-student relationships are also fragile and vulnerable to environmental changes (Woodley, 2017).

Young people feel valued in AP, often for the first time in their education

The ability of staff to manage behaviour and differentiate the curriculum helped with students' feelings of safety in AP (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Indeed, staff can set an example to students in terms of responding calmly in the face of challenge with a participant in one study suggesting this 'showed you a different way' (Malcolm, 2019). This leads to the opportunities that are an outcome of staff-student interactions.

Staff in AP know students as individuals, can sense the difference they are making to them and are motivated by being able to contribute to enhanced life chances (Farouk, 2014). Professionals (EPs and other practitioners) working in AP can support young people to construct new identities, moving away from negative labels and developing their agency (Wilkinson, 2014). Indeed, a study exploring transitions into AP found staff expectations shape young peoples' perception of AP as an opportunity for positive change, with the relationships built with staff noted as the most supportive element of a transition into AP (Martineau, 2018). The approach taken by staff in AP can enable students to move away from stigmatising labels and develop positive personal identities. In a setting in one study, case files were only considered by a small selection of staff where there were relevant risks: other than this, staff intentionally developed relationships with students from a place where preconceived ideas were not possible (Dean, 2018).

Staff perceptions of student capacity are also important. Research in one AP setting found the staff team focusing on helping students work towards achievement outcomes and qualifications with the explicit intention of enabling young people to believe in their future success alongside mainstream peers (Dodman, 2016). This differs to the research in another setting (Dean, 2018) which suggested an academic focus depleted engagement. This was, however, set alongside reports of staff in this setting holding deficit views of young people which would therefore seem to be the more important factor in disengagement of young people in AP. Indeed, positive

reinforcement from staff in relation to any goals developed by students was considered to increase motivation (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Diverse staffing backgrounds bring different perspectives and can mean greater potential for providing inspiration as role-models for young people. Key to this is the demonstration of positive opportunities that are possible for young people in AP (NFER, 2012). This can inspire and motivate young people to attend, engaging first with the AP and subsequently with learning.

The research suggests that post-16 destinations and broader career and life ambitions are a key area in which opportunities are shaped by the quality of interactions with staff. Young peoples' post-AP destinations are shaped by staff knowledge and awareness (Kendall et al., 2003), with one large scale study reporting staff working with students to complete applications or providing additional information to colleges to help with post-16 destinations (Mills and Thomson 2018). Students report staff who care about their futures and seek to support them in their aspirations, with students making connections between experiencing staff who believe in them and developing their own self-belief and determination to succeed (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). Staff also believe their positive aspirations for young people enhances their achievement and progression (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014), with another study finding that staff commitment to young people in AP can expand young peoples' horizons vis-a-vis future opportunities (Malcolm, 2018). Indeed, staff belief in the potential of young people is captured in one study which reports a setting where staff ceased offering a level one qualification so they could focus solely on level two, leading to improved levels of achievement (Jones, 2013).

The impact that staff have in AP stems from their considerable commitment to the young people with whom they work (Garner, 1996). Committed and highly skilled staff (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014) who are kind and often 'hold the story' for individual young people (Pirrie et al., 2011) exude a sense of being there for their students (Greenwood, 2012). This underpinning commitment leads to high expectations aspirations for young people (NFER, 2012), with staff drawing on notions of justice, inclusion and attachment to underpin their work (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018). Leaders in AP are passionate about the mission of their work (Leather, 2009) and often see students as victims of life and educational circumstance. This doesn't mean they pity the young people they work with, but rather that they see injustice and individuals who need extra help (Leather, 2009). Staff in AP are committed to the young people and their wellbeing, they enjoy their company and have a shared belief in their worth. It is a demanding but satisfying context and they are happy to be there (Dodman, 2016). Staff commitment to young people in AP is underpinned by the success they see in their lives (Malcolm, 2018). The risk related to how staff proceed when they do not experience success will be considered below in relation to the notion of work in AP as 'emotional labour'.

The impact that staff have in AP stems from their considerable commitment to the young people with whom they work

The commitment of staff to the young people with whom they work can lead to the crossing of professional boundaries beyond education into care and support. This can involve employing social work professionals as part of an AP set up to provide additional support, in particular to families and carers (Kendall et al., 2003). Teaching staff in one study noted their early experience of working in AP and becoming personally involved in trying to support and rehabilitate young people (Farouk, 2014). After reflection these teaching staff came to view their role as providing education rather than extensive pastoral support as the most constructive approach (Farouk, 2014). Teachers and the Head of AP in another study suggested they undertook considerable pastoral care work and collaboration with external agencies (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). In larger-scale study of AP settings, providers worked to ensure the basic needs of their students were met - clothing, food, personal care, and housing - and were active in supporting young people with experiences of addiction and more generally the promotion of healthy life choices (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Another study noted that parents were able to contact the AP for support in distressing family situations (Jarvis, 2018). In one study of an AP which provided one to one tutoring, a number of the staff interviewed noted the challenge of working in complex family environments and frequently being drawn in to providing support beyond their educational remit. Participants saw meeting these needs as an enabler to learning but were also concerned about whether they really had the training to provide this kind of support (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). It is interesting that participants in some studies gravitate to a purely educational role and while others report taking a far more multifaceted approach to support. There would seem to be a balance to strike here between the differentiation of roles and responsibilities on an AP site and a flatter structure. In the former, some staff would simply comprise teachers and others responsible for pastoral support and engagement with families, while in the latter all staff would share a similar level of responsibility for providing pastoral support and engaging with issues outside of learning.

Staff qualities and approaches

When considering staff qualities and approaches, the key themes present in the research were mutual respect and building trust, the tension between authority and discipline, knowing how far to push each student, managing behaviour, and remaining calm in the face of conflict, including the use of humour.

The notion of mutual respect is a repeated idea in the body of research when the approach of staff in AP is considered (Daniels et al., 2003; Leather, 2009; NFER, 2012). Mutual respect is considered to help establish trust (Kendall et al., 2003) and boundaries, leading to moral authority to which young people respond positively (Richards, 2004). Building trust is also connected to the idea of students having opportunities to start again with a clean slate (Greenwood, 2012), and of staff having a positive and non-judgemental view of students' circumstances (Vincent, 2016). A quality of staff considered important by AP leaders in one study was that they were happy to be their authentic selves (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014) with another noting the importance of being genuine (Dean, 2018). It is also suggested that for staff, bringing oneself to the staff-student relationship enhances the ability to connect relationally (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019).

Building trust is also connected to the idea of students having opportunities to start again with a clean slate, and of staff having a positive and non-judgemental view of students' circumstances

In one study an AP leader reported the multifaceted relationship between staff and student, noting the benefits of adults' capacity to take up the roles of teacher, friend, parent, facilitator, uncle, youth worker, and social worker (Leather, 2009). Another study notes the roles of mum, friend, and figure of authority (NFER, 2012). This leads to the tension between authority and discipline that staff in AP navigate. This can involve non-threatening discussion of consequences (Richards, 2004) and clear boundaries and discussing transgressions (Kendall et al., 2003). It is suggested that behaviour is managed through relationship, with this leading to a relaxed atmosphere where boundaries are firm if behaviour is dangerous and in which authority stems from practitioners who are 'for' the young people they work with and who don't hold grudges (Greenwood, 2012). One study notes student autonomy as carefully negotiated so as to be supportive of learning (Kinsella, 2017). Another suggests that a teacher's sensitivity to emotions enable them to know when and how to apply pressure. Indeed, the Headteacher involved in this study drew on the psychological studies of Rogers to suggest staff earn authority through reinforcing adult reactions (Dodman, 2016). In another study the AP setting had a partnership pledge with a student suggesting 'it's disciplined but it's not disciplined', and a member of staff suggesting a dynamic where students shouldn't mistake their kindness for weakness (Corbett et al., 2019). This is also referred to as staff being chilled and relaxed but in

control of lessons (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). The tension between authority and discipline is navigated by skilful staff in AP with one study reporting ‘there is a different culture but also skilled staff engagement where this culture has not yet begun to shape student behaviour’ (Malcolm, 2019).

There are a number of references to staff using differentiation or similar approaches to support student learning in AP with a participant in one study suggesting ‘we’ll differentiate like you wouldn’t believe’ (Corbett et al., 2018). Staff seek to make learning relevant to students’ contexts, adapt to needs, see time as flexible and give opportunities for students to be themselves (Greenwood, 2012), adjusting teaching approaches and learning materials to needs (White and Laczik, 2016). Practical work, creative approaches and the ability to innovate are all suggested as approaches used by staff (NFER, 2012), with this referred to as being willing to try anything to make a difference. Reference is also made to breaking down tasks and joining in alongside students (Kinsella, 2017), breaking lessons into group and individual tasks (Putwain et al., 2016), and using continuous reinforcement and constructive commentaries (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018). Approaches can involve explaining content, ensuring understanding and frequently communicating behavioural expectations (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018), and diversions can be used to continue learning and also to contain conflict (Kinsella et al, 2019). One paper explored and provided an outline of successful instructional practices, focusing on how teaching happened in a way that was underpinned by attempts to develop students’ belief in the value of self and learning. It suggests that teaching in this way helped students internalise the value of learning, building up their ability to regulate their own learning (Putwain et al., 2016).

Developing staff-student relationships is recognised as an important way to increase awareness of what each student needs and how far to push them (Greenwood, 2012). This is repeated in other studies as a connection between individual attention and knowing how to bring calm (Dean, 2018), although judging how much to press disengaged young people during lessons is described as a difficult balance (Putwain et al., 2016). Giving students space to calm down if there are behavioural issues in AP and using this space to explore and identify triggers is reported as an approach that can lead to positive results over time (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). Another study, however, suggests that this relational knowledge that recognises students’ special talents or capacities may constrain students if it isn’t shared and therefore doesn’t transcend AP (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018).

Managing behaviour in AP tends to be about focusing first on social and emotional needs, often alongside making use of de-escalation and restorative justice. The importance of staff skills in behaviour management and the development of restorative approaches are mentioned (NFER 2012), as well as a positive orientation to behaviour and participation (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). A whole institution approach to dealing with behaviour and a system where issues can be dealt with by any member of staff are reported (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016), with the approach of one setting referred to as a relationship policy rather than a behaviour policy (Deakin and Kupchick, 2016). Elsewhere, approaches which are first and foremost about relationships are reported, with care and support described as being foregrounded alongside the use of de-escalation and restorative justice (Corbett et al., 2019). AP leaders focus on de-escalation and the creation of calm learning environments and safe spaces for the young people with whom they work (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Leaders in this study also suggested that an ability to connect relationally and handle challenging situations is more important than a background in education for entry level roles (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Indeed, elsewhere it is suggested by participants that staff need to understand group dynamics and be able to ‘get the kids behind you’ (Cullen and Monroe, 2010).

Even with a focus primarily on meeting needs, disruption can still impact the whole school, but an understanding of de-escalation can help to move things back to calm (Corbett et al., 2019). Indeed, an ability for staff to remain calm in the face of conflict and anger is reported in a number of studies as important. This can be variously referred to as resilience (NFER, 2012; Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014), not taking it personally (Cullen and Monroe, 2010), and being tolerant of known weaknesses and avoiding triggers (Daniels et al., 2003). One study importantly suggests that the skill of absorbing and deflecting challenging behaviour can be learned (Dodman, 2016). One of the skills that is reported to be used effectively by staff in AP is humour, which is connected to remaining calm in the face of anger in one study (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). The use of good humour to de-escalate (Daniels et al., 2003) and more generally for maintaining a calm atmosphere are mentioned (Trotman et al., 2015; Matrineau, 2018), as is the practice of using humour to build relationships (Jarvis, 2018). One study reports staff mentioning the use of banter to navigate the tension between authority and discipline (Malcolm, 2019). This is a theme developed elsewhere with reference to skilled staff mediating in 'precarious moments' between banter and classroom dialogue, diffusing potential disruption by skilful engagement with young peoples' cultural practices (Dray, 2017). However, another study in an FE context includes accounts from young people of staff as not engaging with banter, of being 'stuck up and boring' and therefore missing out on the possibility of successful engagement with this group of young people in AP (Johnston and Bradford, 2019). As such, the body of research would seem to suggest there is a skill here which is sometimes present and sometimes not.

An ability to connect relationally and handle challenging situations is more important than a background in education for entry level roles

What hinders?

In the research there are a number of areas which can hinder staff delivering successful practice in AP settings. These include being under-resourced and undervalued, the tension between an academic focus and a broader understanding of education, the use of deficit models, the notion of work in AP settings as emotional labour and the professional and personal backgrounds of staff.

Staff in AP settings have been reported as under-resourced and undervalued since the early 2000s, with the difficulty of getting appropriate quality applicants noted (Kendall et al., 2003). There are also reports of a lack of professional respect towards AP staff with views of them either not being qualified or not being good enough to work in mainstream schooling (Richards, 2004). A more recent study notes attracting and keeping quality staff as difficult because of resources and reputation (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014) and makes reference to Scotland and Northern Ireland where a secondment model is used. Limited opportunities for career progression (Dodman, 2016) and the tensions that can result from staff having multiple roles (Putwain et al., 2016) are also noted, with another study suggesting providers look for staff who can teach across multiple areas (Mills and Thomson, 2018). This study also suggests leaders in AP want to provide more training to their staff but lack the resources, and also that recruitment is more of a challenge than retention (Mills and Thomson, 2018). There is some suggestion of staff lacking autonomy with decisions undertaken by managers, and of a dissonance between management directives and staff perceptions of effective working or worthwhile objectives (Kinsella, 2017). Tensions are reported elsewhere between staff and Heads in relation to student interests conflicting with pressures for delivery of core subjects and maintaining staff-student ratios (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Staff also report high anxiety and stress from organisational change and the experience of not being heard (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019).

There is a tension found in the research between academic focus and letting AP exist in a different educational space to mainstream schooling. Daniels et al (2003) were concerned about whether there would be time to engage with student needs if the academic focus in AP increased as predicted in the early 2000s, whilst more recently, concerns have been expressed about the increase in behavioural approaches in AP (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2016b), with this framed as conflicting with pastoral rationales (Malcolm, 2018). This is important because unfair treatment can lead to negative relationships with teachers (Michael and Frederickson, 2013) and although most staff-student relationships are reported as positive, there are instances of confrontational approaches (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). In some studies, academic learning seems to be low on the priority list with meeting students' needs and the avoidance of conflict taking priority. This can involve staff reframing lessons as social skills (Meo and Parker, 2004) or sometimes using activities like films (Kinsella, 2017) to divert challenging student dynamics. This study notes AP staff as effective in building harmonious and stable classroom relations, but facing greater challenges in relation to the development of the competencies and autonomy needed for learning (Kinsella, 2017). It is noted that individualistic approaches can hamper strategies and attempts at relationships with certain students (Meo and Parker, 2004), and that approaches to contain or avoid escalation can be calming and caring for some students while being punitive and neglectful for others (Kinsella, 2017). The difficulty of addressing a wide range of educational objectives in a short period of time leads to a conflict between vocational and academic pursuits: for some, vocational study is not relevant while others have social and emotional needs which have to be put first to provide a stable base from which learning can develop (Kinsella, 2017).

Staff appreciate the freedom to judge the value of the work undertaken in AP as about the value the young people experience rather than scoring points for the school (Greenwood, 2012). Staff in an AP free school saw themselves as free from competitive mainstream practice and able to take a more pastoral approach, although the authors note that they seemed to assume a lack in young people and thought of AP as compensatory education (Farrell et al., 2017). This leads on to the notion of deficit models reported elsewhere in the research. In a setting where staff focused on building relationships rather than accredited outcomes, fewer staff used deficit views for explaining why students had been excluded from mainstream school, while staff in another setting which focused on accredited outcomes tended to view their provision as a last resort (Dean, 2018). Another study suggests that negative aspects of students can be pathologised by use of pseudo-science, limiting staff involvement and placing student behaviour outside the socio-emotional sphere and in a biological sphere (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018). Similarly, it is suggested that staff can protect themselves by seeing others as all good or all bad when they feel threatened (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019). This would seem to suggest that appropriate training in relation to emotional processes and psychodynamics would benefit staff in AP, alongside greater as support in relation to self-care and reflection. The former would enable staff to see the whole young person rather than fracturing their identity, while the latter will help staff to feel more secure themselves in providing the support and emotional stability needed by young people in their contexts.

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The experience of working in AP is conceptualised as 'emotional labour' in a number of studies and there is some evidence of burnout and turnover (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Of participants involved in one study, experiences included an emotionally harmful first day, a perception that the setting required them to 'grow up', and the potential for moments perceived as constructive to turn destructive quite quickly (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018). AP is a challenging emotional environment to work in, with staff requiring patience, humour, stamina, determination and good mental and physical health (Dodman, 2016). Persistence is needed to chase up young people (Briggs, 2011) and staff can be shocked at first by students' disaffection

and apathy. Even though learning about students' backgrounds helps develop empathy, working in this context exerts a strain on staff mental health (Corbett et al., 2019). Younger students can be very willing to discuss highly personal stories with staff, leading to difficult and unequal dynamics and the need to maintain appropriate distance (Woodley, 2017). Students in AP can be skilled at capitalising on staff vulnerabilities (Cullen and Monroe, 2010). In one study a member of staff refers to experiencing negative attitudes and derogatory comments but of remaining committed to their work (Dodman, 2016). Even experienced staff can find themselves and their resilience tested by students to the point at which they become more aware of their own insecurities (Farouk, 2014). This study indicates that opportunities for staff to reflect on their experiences is key. For example, one participant spoke of learning to understand that their own desire to be valued was influenced by their experience of working with students who rejected her efforts on a regular basis (Farouk, 2014).

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Interactions in AP are personal and intense while progress can be sporadic and limited. This leads to a tension between giving fully of oneself and recognising that one's influence on young people is limited (Farouk, 2014). A participant who had left mainstream to work in AP responded to finding that they couldn't save young people by focusing on their learning instead. Another said that they had consciously become more personally detached from the context so as to benefit students, believing that trying to therapeutically support substantial and insurmountable problems in class does not benefit students. Nevertheless, they still sought to demonstrate engagement and care towards young people so as to facilitate learning (Farouk, 2014).

The concept of give-and-take is also present in the research. For example, staff involved in one study all reported positive connections with students, though some referred to rewarding relationships whilst others referred to relations that needed hard work without offering reward (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). Indeed, a lack of reciprocity can become problematic for tutors, for whom emotional dissonance limits their ability to invest in a relationship and thereby making the work harder. In one-to-one work, a lack of connection may mean a change of tutor (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). The importance of a good tutor-student match for a successful working relationship is reported elsewhere too (Cook, 2005), but the process of switching tutors to suit student needs presents difficulties in such a relationally invested environment where students need consistency and are sensitive to changes in staff (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). Malcolm (2018) presents diversion or separation as an option if a negative staff-student dynamic emerges, but only as one option alongside encouraging a more relational engagement or reorienting the member of staff to approach the child with more care. Workers in AP need the space to develop emotional and mental strength beyond teaching classes (Corbett et al., 2019). Staff meetings can be an important forum for constructive discussions (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014), although other research notes the need to also manage some emotional and physical demands more informally (Martin, 2015). This connects to the research considered below about what sort of interventions and structures might provide appropriate and supportive spaces for staff reflection.

There is evidence that staff who have previously worked in mainstream settings are motivated by the detection of unmet needs and feel a developing distance from a system which they feel has marginalised and excluded some young people (Cooper and Grandin, 2014; Corbett et al., 2019). In one study three teachers who had moved to work in AP from mainstream were all motivated by working with individual students for whom they were concerned and none of them wanted to return to mainstream education (Farouk, 2014). The professional backgrounds of AP staff are broad and include education, youth work, social work, psychotherapy, mentoring, and many others (Richards, 2004; Kendall et al., 2003; NFER, 2012). This diversity is recognised as

an important strength of AP with staff able to draw on a range of strategies to engage young people (NFER, 2012). A large-scale evaluation of AP settings suggests the blend of professional backgrounds had a significant influence on the ethos and approach in each setting (Kendall et al., 2003). One study identified this variety of professional backgrounds - or rather the relative lack of coherent specialism - as a limitation on student achievement in literacy and numeracy, although this was seen as more of an issue where settings aimed to provide a young person's full educational entitlement (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

AP staff will sometimes share similar life experiences to those of the young people in AP. For example, two teaching assistants were motivated to work in an AP setting after it had successfully helped their own children (Greenwood, 2012). In another study the Head, counsellor and teaching staff all reflected that they had presented challenges when they were themselves at school (Dodman, 2016). The Head believed that this experience did not provide him with a more profound understanding of his students and highlighted the importance of staff putting aside their own experiences and issues in order to alleviate those faced by their students (Dodman, 2016). Participants involved in another study also reported being disengaged from school as a young person, believing this enhanced their ability to empathise and connect with their students (Dean, 2018). In another study participants again report similar backgrounds and experiences to the children and young people with whom they work in AP (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018). It is clear from the research that in many staff teams there will be individuals who have similar life experiences to the young people in AP. Whilst an obvious motivator for working in AP and also a potential strength and opportunity, this can also lead to unhelpful and risky dynamics. The literature suggests that careful support for staff reflection can help with this (McLoughlin, 2010).

What helps?

The research suggests a number of supportive factors for staff working in AP. These include developing a better understanding of the context, specialist training, supportive structures and teamwork. There is evidence that staff in AP identify a significant sense of purpose in their work, with studies suggesting that participants had left mainstream schools to find moral purpose and creative stimulation in AP settings (Farouk, 2014) and that Headteachers in AP settings perceive mainstream schooling as ineffective and their work having greater impact than their mainstream peers (Malcolm, 2018).

Understanding the student is presented as crucial to forming relationships, with participants in one study linking poor understanding to poor performance (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). As well as the obvious connection to the emotional demands of work in AP, research also suggests that a good understanding of individual students' backgrounds is essential for staff (Dodman, 2016), enabling them to empathise more effectively (NFER, 2012), and improving their awareness of the challenges young people face in their home and social lives (Dean, 2018). Indeed, an early study notes the importance of staff understanding of the socio-political context of their work with marginalised and excluded young people (Garner, 1996).

In relation to training, the literature suggests that high performing staff sought to understand the broader context in relation to policy and research (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014), and that an understanding of SEBD helped staff to use appropriate strategies (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Several studies raise concerns about the availability of advanced training in SEN and academic norms, with only some providers paying for training (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Perhaps most importantly, experienced educators have learnt to deal with the swing between greater and lesser emotional distance which is part of working with young people in AP (Alvarez-

Hevia, 2018). While the important skill of being able to work at both greater and lesser emotional distance connects to the presence of supportive structures for staff in AP covered below, there are also implications here for the relational focus of AP. This suggests it is not as simple as encouraging staff to develop relationships in AP settings, but rather that there is a need to understand and accept both the greater and lesser relational dynamics which will be part of day-to-day life. Staff will need to facilitate and hold a relational space where young people can come and be supported relationally, even if they have taken a number of steps backwards from where they had recently seemed to be. The emotional competencies that seem to be needed to work successfully in AP suggest the need for staff to have opportunities to develop their own reflective capacities (Alvarez-Hevia, 2018), and for AP settings to provide these. The nature of supportive staff structures will be considered below.

There is wide recognition in the body of research of the importance of supportive structures for staff working in AP settings. One study noted that stress resulting from Ofsted visits and job insecurity, undermined people's ability to support young people in their setting and led to reactive responses (Long, 2013). Other studies suggest that reflection had helped staff to become aware of their own motivations (Farouk, 2014), and that successful working relationships between staff was correlated with improved student engagement and outcomes (Martin, 2015). In one study, an educational psychologist helped to develop more cooperative relations between staff and a parent, leading to a positive impact on the young people when at the AP and improved motivation for staff (McLoughlin, 2010). Another notes the importance of staff reflection for effective engagement with young people, in particular supporting their understanding of why relationships either become more distant or even break down altogether (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). The authors suggest that supportive structures which aid staff reflection may enhance the ability of staff to work with challenging students and expand the contexts in which they feel able to work effectively (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019).

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Within the research concerns are shared about a lack of supervision or structured opportunities to reflect and off-load with colleagues in contexts where staff had to respond to young people's personal and social difficulties (Kendall et al., 2003; Meo and Parker, 2004). Systemic stressors in one context were found to have inhibited staff's capacity to model reflective behaviour for young people and sometimes meant that staff behaviour actually mirrored that of the young people in the AP (Long, 2013). Another study notes a lack of systematic support for staff, with some members of the staff team claiming to have an intuitive understanding how to deal with behaviour and a greater level of resilience than others (Dodman, 2016). The Head at this setting had bought in some short-term training to help staff focus on modelling adult reactions to the young people in their care, and this was considered highly successful to begin with but did not have lasting effect (Dodman, 2016). This would seem to suggest that supportive structures that enable reflective practice are of great importance to effective practice in AP, but that they need to be long-term.

There are a number of studies which report on support being provided to staff from external professionals such as educational psychologists and psychodynamics-trained facilitators. One such study reported on the development, use and adaptation of Work Discussion Groups (WDG) to facilitate staff reflection (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019). Staff in this setting had experienced exhaustion and a lack of emotional space for reflection. While facilitation was important to begin with, participants in WDGs did develop their ability to organise themselves and take a more positive approach to discussions of their concerns (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019). This potential for WDG-type work to build capacity for self-reflection and ongoing staff-led support is discussed

further in other studies, for example Jackson (2002). The authors suggest that leadership buy-in is important for this kind of support to be effective and that there are other approaches to providing supportive structures although the adapted WDG had the advantage of being able to draw on psychological concepts (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019). Another study also reporting on the use of a WDG with staff suggested that helping staff recognise the connections between young peoples' backgrounds and the challenging behaviour they present helped staff to respond with more compassion and greater creativity (McLoughlin, 2010).

Online supervision for staff was noted by Cook (2005) as highly beneficial and time efficient. In a study which explored support for young women in an AP through the use of an art programme, one finding was that staff were able to use this space to reflect, identify and meet their own needs with the author suggesting this reflective space can be important for staff working in a demanding environment (Murphy, 2011). Dillon and Pratt (2019) note the importance of support for staff working in AP with a participant in their study suggesting that after the staff team had received therapeutic support, they felt more able to discuss challenges with others and draw on coping strategies. Another study reports the work of an educational psychologist in an AP where group supervision had previously failed leading to an escalation of tensions. Boundaries and goals were stipulated at the start of the process and over time staff developed their capacity and refined their aims for working in AP (Malberg, 2008).

The impact and importance of leadership in providing supportive structures in AP is also reported in the research (Leather, 2009), with reports of high-quality settings being strongly committed to the development of their staff (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Identifying and owning emotions was intrinsic to practice in one AP studied, with this supported within the daily team meeting (Greenwood, 2012). In another study the leadership were presented as supportive and accessible, holding supervision and regular development meetings (Richards, 2004). This project also offered training opportunities and postgraduate qualifications, and staff were encouraged to separate out their own needs from those of the young people with whom they work (Richards, 2004). Another study also focused on the importance of supportive structures for staff to be able to reflect on their own experiences of working in AP and think about what shaped students' challenging behaviour (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). This study draws on the psychodynamic concept of 'containment', suggesting that the needs of students in AP can be best met by attending to the professional needs of staff working in AP. In this setting, weekly staff consultation meetings were part of this process (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). A review of government funded pilots in AP discussed the supportive role of leaders and the importance of opportunities for reflection for aiding the development of staff skills and capacity. The latter was provided to varying degrees by AP sites in the study (NFER, 2012). A Head involved in one of these noted the challenge of supporting staff who are not reflective by trying to help them see where issues might be of their own making and to be more open to learning about new ideas and approaches to their work (Deakin and Kupchik, 2016).

It is clear that the consistency and flexibility which is fundamental to AP practice is supported by staff monitoring, reflection and clarity on decisions made (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). A more developed understanding of student needs and experiences which can draw on a greater number of conceptual frameworks (i.e. appreciating system issues and dynamics around the individual) can aid staff in supporting students (Bruder and Spensley, 2015). The research clearly shows the importance of leadership in AP settings but also the need for supportive structures which provide staff with space to reflect on their practice. As a complex process, this would seem to need to be facilitated - at least first - by external professionals and then

While facilitation was important to begin with, participants in WDGs did develop their ability to organise themselves and take a more positive approach to discussions of their concerns

through effective leadership and structures in the AP setting. If support is provided by external professionals, there needs to be leadership engagement and ideally the commitment needs to be ongoing for positive improvements to be sustained. In a study undertaken to assess the impact of staff support in one AP setting, recommendations included the provision of social work training for staff or the employment of social work professionals within the staff team with a view to avoiding burnout and enhancing staff resilience (Corbett et al., 2019). This study takes a less psychological view of staff support although still uses the concept of resilience. It is important to be aware that there are a wider range of models that could be used to the same effect in terms of supporting staff resilience by developing supportive structures.

The research clearly shows the importance of leadership in AP settings but also the need for supportive structures which provide staff with space to reflect on their practice

As well as the role of leadership there is also the staff experience of peer support in AP settings, with reports of a shared ethos and consistent approaches (Leather, 2009). Staff in an AP setting which was due to close, talked of it as a very special place and connected this to the experience of teamwork in the setting (Greenwood, 2012). Good relationships between colleagues can mean staff are able to draw on practice from a range of disciplines, for example policing, social care and psychotherapy (Richards, 2004). One large scale study reported a mixed picture in terms of quality but the best practice corresponding to stable and skilled staff teams (Daniels et al., 2003). Ellis & Wolfe (op cit) suggested the importance of initially giving time over to the development of the work discussion group. Participants in two studies noted the importance of dialogue and of sharing the developing picture they had of young people, their experiences and the best ways of supporting them (Corbett et al., 2019, Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). Staff teams will sometimes be highly effective in AP but where they are not there will first need to be space held to develop the group. This again points to the importance of skilled leaders in AP settings.

There are reports of cohesive teams with an easy flow of information both up and down the hierarchy, with team leaders getting involved and getting to know the young people and staff referring to positive staff dynamics of cooperation and supportive working (Kendall et al., 2003). In a setting reported in one study the importance of teamwork alongside clear communication and collaboration with opportunities for staff to develop and achieve led to the production of a 'practice framework' which set out 'why we do what we do'. This was regularly reviewed and shared with colleagues in other agencies and new members of staff (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). In an intensive investigation of an AP site, one study found that a number of members of staff were positive about the team spirit and teamwork they experienced while others seemed to hold a view that management should act on their behalf (Dodman, 2016). This could lead to frustrations on both sides when support was not necessarily forthcoming. Upset among staff was also caused by managers in the setting seeming to flout the same behaviour policy they expected staff to adhere to (Dodman, 2016). The study concludes that there is significant risk of overload of issues to deal with at the top of the AP structure while overlooking the contribution of others with inclusive management strategies as a way to counter this. They also suggest clear and shared expectations are important while making a distinction between rules and expectations (Dodman, 2016). Given the challenging context all members of AP staff have to work in, this study underscores the importance of approaches which empower all members of staff to respond to challenging behaviour, the importance of a shared collective approach and a supportive space for staff teams to reflect on issues and challenges from the day or week.

Conclusion

This section has considered how the research on AP prominently features the need to support staff. A number of ideas have emerged which will be returned to in the discussion. When considering the importance of skilled staff and the difference they make, justice, inclusion and attachment were suggested as ideas which guide the work of staff in AP. This notion of the framework of ideas which staff draw on in their work is both interesting and important. It is something which could be explored further in future research and has the potential to shape the work undertaken in these settings. The most helpful and appropriate framework of ideas to support staff in their work will be explored further in the discussion. Participants in one study referred to seeing their role as a teacher and not responsible for the welfare issues of students, while other studies referred to flatter structures with all staff being fully engaged with the young people in their care. It was noted that there is a balance to strike between differentiation of the necessary role which provide welfare support in AP settings and flatter structures where all staff take responsibility for engaging in this way with student. The limitations and benefits of these models could be explored further in future research.

When considering the qualities of staff and the approaches they take, it was suggested that the prominence of relational knowledge may constrain post AP trajectories if this knowledge doesn't transcend AP. The use of humour and the ability to engage in banter with young people was also presented as a skill of staff in AP settings. When considering what may hinder staff in AP, the idea of holding deficit views of young people was raised and will be important to explore to further understand the dynamics and beliefs which shape these views. It was suggested that the blend of professional backgrounds had a significant influence on the ethos and approach in AP settings. It would be helpful for future research to consider what the most helpful blend of professional backgrounds might be.

Personal backgrounds were also found to be important, with numerous studies reporting staff in AP as relating to the lived-experience of the young people with whom they work. It will be important to better understand whether this kind of embodied experience supports or hinders staff in their work and what would best support staff in this position. When considering the things that help it was suggested that the ability to work at a greater and lesser emotional distance is an important skill for staff in AP to develop. It was suggested that stable and skilled staff teams are an important ingredient for best practice and the idea of providing supportive structures for staff working in AP was raised. Supportive structures seem to be able to take the form of both models of good management and more formal psychological approaches including supervision and work discussion group models. Future research should seek to further explore the most effective way to provide supportive structures for staff working in AP settings.

Section 4: The role of relationships in generating outcomes

There are a variety of ways in which relationships play a role in the outcomes generated in AP settings. These include the provision of pastoral support for young peoples' present challenges, broadening educational opportunities and opening up worldviews, choice and voluntary association, young people being engaged and present in AP, personalisation, stability, and preparation and support post-AP.

Pastoral support for present challenges

The strong pastoral focus of AP recognises the relationship between social and emotional well-being and educational performance (Kendall et al., 2003). Students across a number of studies recognise the pastoral care and emotional support they experience in AP as reducing difficulties and as important in facilitating their engagement with education (Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Cajic-Seigneur, 2014; Nicholson and Putwain, 2015). In AP students feel able to talk about personal issues (Martineau, 2018) and giving attention to the basic needs of students is identified, alongside a number of other areas, as contributing to re-engagement with education in AP (Putwain et al., 2016). Staff see it as their task to know about students' difficulties beyond school and note students' moods change once they feel listened to (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Indeed, students appreciate staff who notice how they are feeling and give them opportunities to talk, recognising that simple things like this can mean they are better able to engage in their schoolwork (Corbett et al., 2019).

Another study reports that the immediate need to support young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs might be viewed as a base from which educational aims can be met, with a key concern being the transfer of these gains to post-AP destinations (NFER, 2012). The complexity of the issues young people present in AP will likely dictate the potential for gains to transfer to post-AP contexts. One study gives the example of a young person who, only after developing a trusting relationship with staff in AP, revealed their difficulties with learning which transpired to be dyslexia (Cooper and Grandin, 2014). In another study the AP site was found to be a respite for gang-involved young people, with an example given of a staff member personally transporting a young person to hospital for treatment for stab wounds they had initially decided not to get treated due to concerns about being labelled a snitch (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018). It was because of the strength of supportive and trusting relationships with staff in AP that the social field in the AP was able to displace these concerns (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018). The first of these examples is likely to be a transferable gain while the second presents far greater challenge.

The provision of a safe and secure environment can mean young people start to address their problems and needs and can begin to think about their next steps and future progression (Kendall et al., 2003). There is space for behaviour to be acknowledged and understood rather than controlled (Zeal, 2011). This role of AP - as a consistently calm presence in some young peoples' lives - is acknowledged by staff as a motivator for being consistent in their relationships with students (Greenwood, 2012). Teachers and managers in AP report the importance of high-quality pastoral support given the broader life contexts of excluded young people (Trotman

et al., 2015) and Heads of AP discuss supporting young people through present difficulties (Malcolm, 2018). AP can offer stability to young people with particularly chaotic lives, for example experiences of homelessness and hostel accommodation, with reports of staff intervening to stabilise situations (Kendall et al., 2003). In these kinds of contexts staff need to provide emotional support to children and young people whose ongoing experience may be of other adults in their lives not being there for them and this causing distress (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). With this in mind it is perhaps no surprise that in one study students identified the support they receive from staff as the main strength of the provision (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016).

The provision of a safe and secure environment can mean young people start to address their problems and needs and can begin to think about their next steps and future progression

Broadening educational opportunities and opening up worldviews

The broadening of educational opportunities for children and young people in AP can be opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities and school trips but also opportunities to learn about things that would not usually be focused on such as local politics and current affairs (Jarvis, 2018). For some young people, AP offers them their first trip out of their locality or even their first holiday. For others it involves being trusted to take on responsibilities alongside older students for their own personal development (Corbett et al., 2019). Students also experience interactions with staff in lessons where they are encouraged to explore topics and try things out (Kinsella et al., 2019), something which is facilitated by the small scale and relational nature of AP.

In the research there is reference to challenging students with a view to opening up their views of the world and their place in it. In AP, relationships with staff are developed where they can challenge students to reach targets and their advice is accepted (Daniels et al., 2003), with another study suggesting a gradual stretching of goals (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Indeed, this study sets out the overall mission of AP as to:

“‘interrupt’ existing learned patterns of behaviour, to ‘challenge’ young people to do and be different, to ‘stretch’ their boundaries and sense of possibilities, and to ‘transform’ by offering new ways of being and becoming” (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014, p28).

These authors suggest that if provision is only short-term then the first three are possible but only to start the journey towards transformation (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Reflecting this, changed identities were an important outcome of AP for pregnant and young mothers who learned they could be capable mothers and pursue education with staff striking a balance between encouraging without pressurising and giving suggestions rather than direct advice (Vincent, 2016). Other studies reference the importance of understanding young peoples' aims so as to guide them effectively (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018), and working to help students develop self-awareness in relation to making informed decisions (Richards, 2004). Staff suggest their work in AP gives students direction in life, helping them move from a short-term frame of reference to a capacity to see the 'bigger picture', finding what they care about and developing the skills they need for life post-AP (Corbett et al., 2019). Students interviewed in the study suggested wider activities, personalised learning and development helped them get the most out of their time in AP (Corbett et al., 2019). A participant in another study reflected on their interactions with staff in AP, suggesting that they had felt both supported in achieving their ambitions and challenged to expand their horizons (Malcolm, 2019).

The lead teacher in one setting captured the delicate balance between developing young peoples' aspiration without undermining their cultural roots by acknowledging rather than turning away from them (Greenwood, 2012). The importance of staff being attuned towards and respecting students' culture is reflected in other studies too. In one, the provision manager was referred to as 'streetwise' and willing to challenge young people about their habits, thereby gaining their respect (Scott and Spencer, 2013). In another, respect became a key theme of the groupwork after the facilitating professional challenged the young women with whom she was working to avoid the use of certain swear words which demeaned women (Milner, 2003). In the AP learning environment, both students and staff are reported as drawing on their wider social identities and it is suggested that allowing space for this diminishes power imbalances as everyone is an expert in their own personal experience. It is also noted that this provides space for students to integrate their lived experience and school learning, enabling them to make meaningful connections (Kinsella et al., 2019). There is evidently an important balance for staff who need to encourage students to see new possibilities and transform their expectations without pressuring them or undermining their personal and cultural life experience.

Choice and voluntary association

Choice is frequently reported by participants in studies of AP and while there is an extent to which choice is possible without the need for relationships between staff and students, the research suggests that choice promotes engagement in AP and is therefore relevant to relationships. In addition, the notion of voluntary association - of giving the option to not engage in sessions - is also discussed and is an important relational dynamic in AP. With respect to choice, students' recollections of AP suggest that flexibility, alongside the relational approach, is fundamental to the AP experience (Malcolm, 2019). Where AP settings run a flexible curriculum, staff can focus on the elements which most successfully re-engage students in their education (Irwin-Rogers and Harding, 2018).

Young people and parents appreciate the choice of curriculum in AP with connections made between choice and enthusiasm for learning, behaviour and commitment. One parent noted they were now waking their child up at half-past six two days a week for their work placement (Kendall et al., 2003). In a study of FE AP, young people felt that they exerted choice in the decision-making process of attending the AP even when they had been excluded and there weren't other options (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003). In this study, the choice of which courses to take was left to students although some sending-schools exerted pressure regarding choices (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003). Students report autonomy and choice about their learning as helping them engage in tasks and how the experience of choosing the subject they studied on one day of the week helped motivate them in their other lessons (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015). In one study, choice could be as simple as the specifics of what to focus on within a lesson with students reporting enhanced enjoyment and interest and improved quality of their work (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018).

Young people and parents appreciate the choice of curriculum in AP with connections made between choice and enthusiasm for learning, behaviour and commitment

While variety and choice in the vocational offer at one AP could engage students and help them find a focus for their future, students also appreciated the core curriculum subjects provided by the school and saw the achievement of GCSEs in core subjects as important for their future (Corbett et al, 2019). Indeed, a lack of choice can be systemic; while variety across AP activities seems apparent, due to the small scale of some settings, choices can be very limited for some students. One study reported students in settings which specialised in curriculum areas which did not align with their interests (Dean, 2018). This study also found

that only a limited number of students interviewed felt they had been able to exert choice in relation to the AP setting they attended although, despite this, the majority preferred it to their experiences of school (Dean, 2018). This reflects that systemic constraints do not necessarily limit experiences. One setting investigated had a highly constrained environment with two activity rooms and a small yard within which students spent their whole day, yet despite this, a sense of freedom was created at least in part by allowing students to choose what they wanted to spend their time on each day (Dean, 2018).

The option to make changes to choices is also reported in the research. AP practitioners suggest that, alongside students being active participants in the selection of their programmes, the opportunity to make changes to their initial choices is crucial for re-engagement and post-16 success (White and Laczik, 2016). In another setting where a whole day was set aside for students to choose from a programme of activities, the flexibility to move between and mix and match the options was appreciated by students (Corbett et al., 2019). Staff are also reported as willing to negotiate and even change their plans for a lesson entirely with students suggesting this helped them feel comfortable, that the AP 'understood' them and how they would best engage and learn (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018).

Willingness to negotiate with students and take the lead from them in terms of engagement aligns with youth work approaches which are noted in the research as engaging young people for whom traditional classroom methods had not worked (Evans, 2010). A small example of this in one study was a student who was allowed to listen to music as a personalisation of their workspace (Trotman et al., 2015). More generally, staff see attendance as a choice that students make every day, even building in opportunities to talk to students about their choices, seeing this as powerful (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). They also recognise the importance of choice more generally, seeking to provide meaningful choices as a way to enhance students' experiences of agency and control (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). The approach taken by artists in residence in working in one AP was to respect students' choices and to be flexible in their approach so that students' needs could come to the surface (Greenwood, 2012). This could involve offering them space to observe without having to participate, something which was more generally practiced throughout the AP site with the exception of a work-focused lesson. Reflecting on their initial internal criticism of this practice the research reflects later:

"Certainly, the opting out was not ideal. However, pupils were often living with unpredictable change and uncertainty outside of the AP site. They had to remain in that uncertain space sometimes for years. Therefore, at times, when let down by something such as books not arriving for the session, a pupil might become unsettled or stressed. It was a 'safe' disappointment to become angry at or withdraw from, whereas situations outside of the site were less conducive to reaction" (Greenwood, 2012, p122).

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Similarly, the importance of students being able to build up their attendance over time is reported elsewhere (White and Laczik, 2016). An important observation from one large study was that the majority of AP settings present students with the option of either conforming or resisting with only two out of 17 sites having no penalty for non-participation (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2016a). Given the prominence of choice and flexibility in the research this is really important. Do AP settings engage young people through choice or, as Thomson and Pennacchia suggest, has there been a conformist-behaviourist turn in AP practice?

Young people being engaged and present in AP

Relationships are reported in the research as playing a clear role in young people being engaged and present in AP. In one large study staff at all sites investigated saw relationships as fundamental to educational and social re-engagement (Kendall et al., 2003). From relationships, engagement in structured activities could be built with less formality and greater personalisation facilitating this (Kendall et al., 2003). Young people report positive relationships with tutors (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003) and relationships with staff were the main reason all but one of the students in a study of FE AP preferred this context to school (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). Students report strong, positive relationships with staff as facilitating re-engagement (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015), and in one study all participating staff saw developing a relationship with students as a pre-requisite for learning, framing this as the need to find a hook to gain students interest and engagement (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019).

Relationships and a sense of belonging engaged young people back into learning in one AP setting studied (Dean, 2018). Similarly, experiences of 'family' and belonging were important to students in AP, particularly at secondary level where a lack of connection to mainstream education was more common than for primary students (Jalali and Morgan, 2018). Indeed, social contact can be a motivator for engagement in AP (Vincent, 2016). This was particularly within the context of a study with young mothers who were otherwise isolated but will also be relevant to other young people excluded from school.

The approaches to building engagement are varied. Reduced hours and shorter days can initially be a positive experience for young people in AP, and staff using politeness and respect is seen as something young people can respond to (Kendall et al., 2003). This both reflects a context in which students are allowed to be more in control of engaging at their own pace. An AP Head in one study suggested the need for an adult service model, framing this as respecting young people and promoting motivation rather than resistance (Daniels et al., 2003). Similarly, another study characterises AP by mutual respect and the aim of learning being interesting and interactive (Riley and Docking, 2004). Staff focus on building relationships with students by intentionally minimising hierarchy, taking account of behavioural histories and seeing this as a journey, taken together, which enables students to experience safety and thus to learn and grow (Greenwood, 2012).

Staff focus on building relationships with students by intentionally minimising hierarchy, taking account of behavioural histories and seeing this as a journey, taken together, which enables students to experience safety and thus to learn and grow

For young people, engaging in an AP setting can mean new peer relationships. In one study young people who had reduced levels of offending connected this to having less time and boredom (Kendall et al., 2003). Young people most commonly identify relationships with staff as the thing that enabled positive academic and social-emotional outcomes (Michael and Frederickson, 2013). Students in one study claimed that it was easier to learn when you were enjoying yourself, while staff noted improved family relationships resulting from engagement in AP (Kendall et al., 2003). There is evidence that relationships developing with staff and peers supports increased attendance (NFER, 2012) and the family atmosphere - or sense of belonging - in AP supports young people to discuss and resolve problems and build resilience (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). This sense of belonging is reflected by students in one study simply wanting to be at AP with this leading to broader outcomes in relation to volunteering and achievement (Corbett et al, 2019).

While the relational basis of AP is clear both in its existence and positive impact, there is also some evidence of cause for concern. With success in AP reported by staff as dependent on engagement from young people and parents, there are greater challenges with young people who don't engage or attend, didn't acknowledge they had a problem or responded with conflict even in less disciplinary AP environments (Kendall et al., 2003). There are similarities here to the notion of students having to resist or conform in AP as noted above. In another study staff felt students needed to be willing to have a go and, further to this, identified extroversion as factors for effective AP (Hart, 2013). This suggests that the relational base of AP may work against some students, in particular those who are less inherently motivated by relationships.

Personalisation

There is a clear role for relationships in the personalisation of both content and approaches in AP and of young peoples' experiences of support more generally. The research suggests that learning tailored to interests and personalised wherever possible promotes better attendance (Corbett et al., 2019) with value placed on effort put into the development of a meaningful personalised curriculum beyond the core programme (Dodman, 2016). A wide curriculum with additional opportunities and a balance of real world and academic knowledge can increase the likelihood of students 'finding their element' (Corbett et al., 2019).

The tailoring and personalisation of work is frequently enhanced by the relational knowledge staff have of young people and therefore their ability to draw on interests to engage students (Malcolm, 2019). One study suggests engaging in conversation and listening to students helps staff to find out what makes them 'tick' (Leather, 2009). Similarly, another study sees personalising as connecting to students' interests while also being attendant to learning difficulties and mental health problems (Corbett et al., 2019). This personalisation can also happen within lessons with an example given of a visiting artist aligning the task in a lesson to the interests of a young person leading to a greater level of creative involvement from the student (Kinsella et al., 2019).

Staff report knowing students well and feeling they provide learning experiences which are highly personalised (Hart, 2013) and belief that this approach reflects their care for their students (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). All staff in one study stressed the importance of tailored provision to re-engage young people and as a crucial first step before teaching and learning could proceed (White and Laczik, 2016). Staff are reported as willing to understand and listen to students' problems (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016) with students reporting that staff get to know them on a personal level (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015). Programmes tailored to their individual needs, and staff who understand the broader complexities in their lives and how these may complicate their education, are also highlighted (Vincent, 2016).

Young people experience being treated as individuals in AP (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). In one study students reported greater willingness to learn and an increased drive to achieve when they could relate personally to lesson activities (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). In this study students also report staff as personalising work and pitching it at the right level of complexity as well as being able to respond quickly if work was too simple or challenging (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). With an ex-student in another study reflecting, 'they push you towards what you want to do' and an example given in the research of subjects being added to the curriculum in response to students' interests (Corbett et al., 2019).

Students reported greater willingness to learn and an increased drive to achieve when they could relate personally to lesson activities

Personalisation can be highly rigorous with a study of quality in AP noting that approaches to monitoring varied but the tracking of behaviour and attainment on a lesson-by-lesson basis allowed teachers to adapt their lessons and approaches to best meet students' needs (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). This study also found that personalisation tends to focus on content rather than approaches with little conversation with students about how they learn, their experiences, and what works for them (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). The authors suggesting that the emphasis on care and a therapeutic environment limits these kinds of conversations (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Stability

There are a significant number of references to the stability that young people experience in AP, with some studies viewing this through the lens of attachment theory. This is reflected by a large-scale study which reported most students as positive about AP with the main difference being good relationships with staff (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Another study suggested that trust and reliability are important, with practice hinging significantly, though not entirely, on relationships (Richards, 2004). The underpinning context for AP success is a relationally focused environment which is experienced by students as safe and secure which develops a sense of belonging and identity (Corbett et al., 2019). AP is characterised by closer and more trusting staff-student relationships (Vincent, 2016) and students in one AP experienced staff who valued them and enjoyed their company, with this enabling them to develop bonds and a sense of belonging to the AP community (Greenwood, 2012). The AP environment supports students to feel calm through relationships with staff who care about and respect them (Jarvis, 2018).

The underpinning context for AP success is a relationally focused environment which is experienced by students as safe and secure which develops a sense of belonging and identity

Interviewees across a large-scale study saw the development of a close relationship with a trusted adult as important (NFER, 2012). This sometimes took the role of a mentor who could support the young person when engaging with other services (NFER, 2012). Relationships built between students, families and staff are reported as the bedrock for addressing emotional and social needs, with many parents and young people referring to staff as becoming 'significant others' to them (Daniels et al., 2003). This notion is referred to elsewhere with a participating staff member in one study suggesting their aim was to become a 'significant other' to young people in AP (Leather, 2009). The researcher reflected that due to the scale of the AP, all adults took on the role of a 'significant other', with this also presenting a potential weakness to successful functioning if a poor relationship developed (Leather, 2009).

A young person participating in one study referred to a teacher who they were 'quite close to' providing them with emotional support (Michael and Frederickson, 2013), and students in another referenced receiving both academic and emotional support from staff (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016). Some young people in one study suggested positive relationships in AP were a new experience for them, with reference made to a teacher telling one student they were intelligent, something no teacher had told them previously (Dean, 2018). Students believe that staff care for and support them, providing the security they require to invest in relationships with staff (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018).

Participants in one study suggested school difficulties originate from their wider social context with this presenting a need for stability and continuity in their educational provision (Gazeley, 2010). In another, interviewees repeatedly focused on students' unmet needs and articulated therapeutic and relational responses, and a commitment to showing emotional warmth to

young people (Cooper and Grandin, 2014). One participant framed his role as to do with the rehabilitation of students by giving them stability, with the authors suggesting this positions students in deficit and beyond normal limits (Farrell et al., 2017). It is suggested that AP staff need to demonstrate care and engagement to enable students to learn (Farouk, 2014), and participants in one study identified trust as key to relationships in AP with this supporting participation and the expression of needs (Martin, 2015).

The psychological concept of attachment is mentioned a by a number of studies in the context of building safe and stable relationships in AP. Attachment to the AP is mentioned alongside pastoral support and personal commitment to young people with staff in AP providing students with positive influence (Kendall et al., 2003). One study draws on attachment theory, suggesting that AP may offer a secure base for young people but that this requires staff themselves to also feel they have a secure base, supported by the structures discussed above (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). Support from adults and attachment relationships are considered to create safety, meet basic needs and support learning (Hart, 2013). Students' accounts of not feeling judged by staff and feeling wanted were referred to in one study as attachment-based relationships which promote feelings of belonging in young people (Martineau, 2018). The author suggests staff were skilled in building relationships with new students which promote belonging, a sense of security, and support behaviour change and learning (Martineau, 2018). Another study referred to evidence of attachments between staff and students in their research, finding that these promoted self-esteem, social competence, and educational engagement and further suggesting that this process could break cycles of disaffection (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014).

Drawing on similar psychological concepts, a visiting practitioner-researcher in one setting used storytelling with young people. This was found to provide an experiential opportunity for young people to be 'soothed', suggesting that this calming presence supported the young people to regulate themselves and produce the behaviour they knew AP staff expected of them but which they frequently struggled to present (Long, 2013). The author suggests students require more than just insight into their behaviour and that there is an important role for staff to play in the creation of an environment where students can self-regulate (Long, 2013). Reflecting this, a counsellor in one AP studied suggested quality learning can only develop from quality therapeutic strategies with a need to strike an effective balance (Dodman, 2016).

The impact of these ideas on practice is clear. One study referenced the development of trusting relationships as planned into all programmes, noting one which spent the first term building stable relationships before beginning to work on qualifications (White and Laczik, 2016). In a study where a number of students mentioned experiencing trust, the authors suggest conceptualising AP as a therapeutic milieu in which experiences of rejection can be addressed (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). This study also reports a tension between this and turnover in the cohort of students, suggesting if turnaround is too rapid these restorative elements of AP can be lost (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). AP is similarly reported as a source of stability for young people which can mean leaving is potentially traumatic and therefore requires emotional preparation (Kendall et al., 2003). Elsewhere young people are reported as returning to AP to see staff. Although this suggests that young people had formed trusting relationships with staff, it also indicates that they perhaps struggle to form similar relationships in their post-AP destinations (Kendall et al., 2003). Similarly, another study suggested building trusted relationships with staff supported students to modify their assumptions about other adults, but that young people moving on were leaving a context where feeling safe connected to feeling able to learn (Hunter, 2015).

One study suggests that even in the AP context opportunities for deep relational engagement may be limited (Murphy, 2011). A finding from this study was that a specially focused art session

solely for female students had provided opportunities for AP staff involved with the students in this session to have deeper conversations than they had previously had time for (Murphy, 2011). This suggests that even in a highly relational environment, there is perhaps opportunity to create contexts which promote the development of deeper relationships. It is also important to reflect on the framework of ideas in use in AP settings, with the accounts above suggesting there can be underlying deficit views of the young people inherent in these frameworks.

Preparation and support post-AP

Relationships in AP play a role in making plans for the transition to post-AP destinations, as well as the level of success in sustaining engagement in these. In one large scale study, although all APs were monitoring destinations, there was a need to carefully ensure students didn't become lost disengaged, and the quality of this detailed monitoring varied considerably (Kendall et al., 2003). Another large-scale study suggested longer-term providers see it as their responsibility to support pathways to post-AP destinations, with some providing networks of support in the first year after leaving AP (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

Managers of AP refer to the importance of students having a say in what they want to do post-AP (White and Laczik, 2016) and having staff accompany students to careers interviews (Kendall et al., 2003). One teacher referred to staff helping students to find opportunities, apply and even taking time out of their weekends to help (Corbett et al., 2019). Examples are given in one study of Year 11 students attending college with AP staff, with this support withdrawn gradually over time (Kendall et al., 2003). Participants in this study also suggested the role of a 'transitional worker' could provide vital post-AP support (Kendall et al., 2003).

Students in one study referred to staff who provided support beyond their time in AP (Corbett et al., 2019), and staff in AP settings often refer to young people coming back for help with application forms and other similar tasks after they have left (Kendall et al., 2003). Another study also reports one young person who was allowed by staff to return to complete a post-16 course but only on the understanding they would accept their support to apply for and then attend a college course (Malcolm, 2019).

Concerns are expressed by one study which sees success in AP as reliant on extensive support and confidence gained as fragile (Farouk, ND). This study suggests the importance of promoting resilience, self-organisation and motivation, with a focus on students in AP becoming independent learners (Farouk, ND). A Deputy Head involved in one study saw as vital the work of colleagues who supported students in work experience placements which provide an:

“important opportunity to mix with adults in different environments where they will be judged according to the task in hand and on their ability to learn new skills, make relationships and work as a team” (Dodman, 2016, p233).

This work is clearly a challenge with frequent breakdown of placements, but at best it can be the start of a post-AP job (Dodman, 2016) and is an important approach which addresses some of the concerns identified above about maintaining the gains made in AP into other contexts. Another study also notes the problem of students' success as reliant on the relationships in AP and the need to provide the tools which will enable them to succeed post-AP (Woolford, 2012). The response of this AP was to take a vocational approach at Key Stage 4 with the aim of creating a work environment which would act as experiential preparation for post-16 destinations (Woolford, 2012).

Conclusion

This section has considered the way in which relationships shape and generate outcomes in AP settings a number of areas have emerged from this section which will be revisited in the discussion. When considering the role AP settings can play in the provision of pastoral support for present challenges the ideas of transferable gains was raised. It was suggested that some progress made in AP will transfer more easily to post-AP settings, with examples taken from the research of getting a diagnosis for dyslexia and the provision of support involvement in gang related activity with the former more likely to successfully transfer to post-AP settings. The findings which explored the broadening out of educational experiences suggested that respecting students' cultural roots and lived experiences is important when seeking to empower young people in AP. Choice and the notion of voluntary association were often described as present in AP settings, however there was some evidence of more disciplinary approaches and one study which considered change over time suggested that there has been a move towards greater use of behaviourist strategies in AP settings. Large-scale research will be well positioned to explore these dynamics more fully.

It was suggested that young people being engaged and present in AP can provide social contact but also that the relational base of AP may work against some students, particularly those who are less inherently motivated by relationships. The idea of a poor student-AP or student-staff match was raised in relation to this and personalisation of the focus of AP or its content may help to build a context where relationships can develop. Personalisation was often framed in terms of content or care and the provision of a therapeutic environment, with the suggestion made that there is scope to explore personalisation in relation to young peoples' experiences of learning and what works for them. When considering stability, it was suggested that tying this to notions of rehabilitation and attachment risks viewing young people in deficit terms. This connects to the potential to explore the framework of ideas used by staff in AP. Any framework will need to recognise the fundamental importance of relationships and should seek to empower both students and staff in AP settings. The research suggests that turnover can impact relationships in AP settings and, because relationships in AP are so strong, that leaving can be traumatic. It will be important to consider these issues alongside the difficulties reported in the research in relation retention in post AP destinations and retaining gains upon transition away from AP.

The research suggests that turnover can impact relationships in AP settings and, because relationships in AP are so strong, that leaving can be traumatic

Section 5: Outcomes measured

Measurement of the outcomes of AP is challenging and evidence often comes in the form of perceptions and accounts from those participating within AP settings. When addressing each theme outlined below, some general comments will be made followed by the consideration of any robust evidence before presenting the perspectives of research participants, usually AP staff and students. The themes from the research which considers the outcomes of AP are as follows; re-engagement and the intention to continue in education, behaviour and social outcomes, crime, maturity and reflection, confidence, expectations and aspirations, attendance and retention, academic outcomes, broader educational outcomes, reintegration, post-16 destinations, long term outcomes, and contextualising success.

Before proceeding with a review of the themes in this section, the small number of studies (N=10) which mention specific metrics will be discussed. These were either used as part of the study or by the institution which was being researched. The most common of these was the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which was used by five of the ten studies. Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) was referred to in three studies and measures of Emotional Literacy in two. In addition, Edridge et al. (2019) report a randomised control trial (RCT) of a mental health intervention (mHealth) looking at primary and secondary AP sites (N=4) and primary mainstream schools (N=2). It is notable that these metrics are all focused on the measurement of social and or emotional qualities. This underscores that the focus of the work undertaken in AP settings is often first on creating a space in which social and emotional learning can develop. Three of the five studies which mention the SDQ provide details in relation to outcomes or findings: One was focused on a primary context to assess the outcome of a 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' project (Ward, 2012); another on a secondary context where the SDQ was completed by teachers and used to compare AP and mainstream schools (Hackett, 2011); the other on census data about the outcomes of looked after children where it turned out to be a surprisingly good predictor of KS4 academic outcomes (Sebba et al., 2015).

Re-engagement and the intention to continue in education

Staff and Heads in AP settings see re-engaging young people with education as a core aim (Malcolm, 2018) and parents perceive AP as working to re-engage students with learning (Davies et al., 2006). There are multiple accounts in the research of students in AP coming to see the value of learning and education. Young peoples' accounts reflect changed attitudes to learning with greater enjoyment and consideration of education in their plans for the future (Kendall et al., 2003; NFER, 2012). They see AP as making re-engagement possible for those who were disaffected and enhancing the academic achievement of others (Vincent, 2016). Indeed, students report the school atmosphere in AP as supporting re-engagement, changing their perception of the value of education with newfound determination to engage and achieve and some students reporting starting to work outside of school hours (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015; Putwain et al., 2016). In one study students were evidently engaged in their learning and attendance was

significantly improved, given the previous difficulties of young people in AP the authors of this study reflect on engagement as success (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). Staff in AP perceive that young people no longer see education as a threat, instead seeing the possibility of enjoyment (Kendall et al., 2003). In another study many staff saw the change in young peoples' perceptions of the value of education as most significant (NFER, 2012). Re-engaging with education and coming to value learning is also connected with being prepared to try and even to tackle learning with confidence with these reported as educational outcomes of AP (Kendall et al., 2003). Indeed, young people in another study of AP describe enhanced self-belief in their ability to learn (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016).

Staff in AP perceive that young people no longer see education as a threat, instead seeing the possibility of enjoyment

One study suggests young people became more engaged in education in AP but that it was unclear how prepared they would be for mainstream college courses (Dean, 2018). In another study, young people who attended AP on a regular basis were positive about the support they received and, although disappointed about missing GCSEs, they were optimistic that they would gain qualifications in the future (Briggs, 2011). Elsewhere, examples are given of a student who became more engaged during their time in AP and another who had attended college while at AP, built relationships with college staff who saw her as committed, and thus gained a place even though she had no GCSEs (Greenwood, 2012). After experiencing success in AP some young people express the desire to continue into post-16 education (Kendall et al., 2003). This study suggested fewer young people were unsure about their future progression after AP with greater awareness of available opportunities (Kendall et al., 2003). Findings also showed increased desire for training which reflected more realistic expectations (Kendall et al., 2003). In this study of pre- and post-AP responses to the statement 'I want to stay in education', data shows clear re-engagement, particularly in a high crime sub-sample where respondents strongly agreed that they would want to continue into post-16 education (Kendall et al., 2003). In another study, young peoples' accounts suggested they were enjoying their studies and many planned to continue, with nearly three quarters of young people in one study expecting to engage in education or training in the future (Attwood et al., 2003). Interviews in this study strongly suggested this was underpinned by perceptions of relevance to future employment (Attwood et al., 2003).

Behaviour and social outcomes

Some young people interviewed cite social rather than educational outcomes of AP (Kendall et al., 2003), with one study reporting that AP enabled students to take part in constructive social activities (Evans, 2010). In one setting studied, breakfast was eaten together, and some students enjoyed washing up as it was a sociable activity (Greenwood, 2012). In another, communal meals and taking students out for coffee were used to develop social skills (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). Over the course of art projects in one AP, students gradually became less self-protecting and willing to express themselves (Greenwood, 2012). Another study suggests students in AP improve in their capacity to communicate and maintain positive relationships, giving more respect and taking more responsibility (NFER, 2012). Over time, most students adapt to fit in with the ethos of mutual respect in AP (Jones, 2013). Far lower behavioural expectations compared to mainstream are reported in one study: the young people involved considered this an improvement on school while the researcher raised concerns about the learning environment (Briggs, 2011).

Over time, most students adapt to fit in with the ethos of mutual respect in AP

A study which notes evidence about AP outcomes as inevitably soft found that for students involved in part-time complimentary AP alongside attendance at mainstream,

one group had developed their verbal communication while the other were noted by their peers to be taking a more positive approach to their work in school (Cullen, 2000). More than three quarters of the students interviewed in one large scale study of AP reported improved behaviour (calmer; less confrontation) and better relationships in AP (Kendall et al., 2003). Students in another study of an FE AP, were asked about their relationships with teachers and peers in school and upon having transitioned into AP. Relationships with teachers and peers were reported as improving significantly with positive responses rising from 26.9% to 92.3% and 42.3% to 84.6% respectively and negative responses dropping to zero from 38.5% and 19.2% respectively (Attwood et al., 2003).

Students perceive positive change in their behaviour in AP (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015) with reports of improved relationships at home and a connection made to improvements in communication with parents attributing improved family relationships to AP (Kendall et al., 2003). Students interviewed in a primary AP setting commonly reflected on improvements to their ability to manage their anger and frustration (Jarvis, 2018). One young person who had previously been bullied and become hostile towards others felt more relaxed in AP after experiences of care from others in the setting (Kendall et al., 2003). Young people interviewed in another study suggested AP had helped them learn how to behave, in particular to respond more calmly in situations where anger would have previously been their response (Leather, 2009). In one study, a student articulated a reduction in their emotional and behavioural difficulties (Michael and Frederickson, 2013), while most students in another study suggested their behaviour improved because of AP (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). Students described improved behaviour as a result of one AP project with this backed up by school data (Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016), whilst students elsewhere see time in AP as about enabling social change (Jalali and Morgan, 2018).

Crime

In a study which considered school exclusion and crime, those who offended pre-exclusion usually continued to do so and others started to offend (around a third who previously hadn't offended) with some young people becoming more deeply involved in crime (Daniels et al., 2003). One study of AP suggested increased likelihood of involvement in crime post-exclusion with two students involved in crime pre-exclusion, but an additional seven post-exclusion (Briggs, 2011). One participant in this study suggested travel out of their area to AP increased the potential for violent confrontation and victimisation (Briggs, 2011). Another study suggested an increasing number of students in the AP setting studied were known to the police, representing a significant proportion of the student body (Ellis-Martin, 2015).

One study focused on crime found half of young people across six AP settings were known to the police for offending, although half of those who self-reported offending were not found in these records (Kendall et al., 2003). While the total number of offenses recorded across the intervention year increased from 224 to 286, this was attributable to certain AP settings and to specific young people within these settings. Six fewer young people were convicted and so, while more crimes were committed, fewer young people were responsible for them (Kendall et al., 2003). Three quarters of young people self-reported that they had either ceased or reduced offending by the summer term after attending AP (Kendall et al., 2003). Overall, this study found a decline in young peoples' involvement in criminal activity with self-reported involvement dropping from 63% to 35% after attending AP (Kendall et al., 2003).

One study suggested that reduced offending of young people in AP resulted from changes in attitude and realising the consequences of criminal activity (Kendall et al., 2003). Indeed, four

participants in this study connected reduced offending to improved relations at home (Kendall et al., 2003). Participants also suggested maintenance or increase in offending could be a consequence of non-attendance at AP - this was evidenced by early leavers from AP committing a greater proportion of offenses (Kendall et al., 2003). Disengagement from placements was also found to relate to offending in another study and parent participants suggested inadequate services and too much time without productive activity as factors for increased involvement in crime post exclusion (Daniels et al., 2003). Similarly, a study of government funded AP pilots found a reduction in offending to be an effect of AP attendance connecting this to the role AP played in providing activities which filled the daytime for young people outside school (NFER, 2012) and a reflective narrative written by a young person in AP suggested boredom as a factor in involvement in crime (Bello, 2004).

Maturity and reflection

Changed attitudes including maturity and reflection are discussed in the research on AP and it is suggested that conversations about misbehaviour give students the opportunity to accept responsibility (Solomon and Thomas, 2013). One young person in an AP setting suggested that 'Because people are taking you more maturely, you actually mature for real' (Scott and Spencer, 2013). Participants in another study saw AP as a fresh start and an opportunity for positive change and the development of a new identity (Martineau, 2018). AP is discussed as calming and as providing a space for the imagining of new possibilities (Malcolm, 2019) and community activities available in one AP environment incentivised agency for some young people who wanted to be able to participate in these (Corbett et al., 2019).

'Because people are taking you more maturely, you actually mature for real'

Changed attitude - including maturity and consideration of their family's feelings - is noted as an outcome of AP (Kendall et al., 2003). A student's attitude to school and self is measured by a specific metric (GL's PASS product) in one study with dramatic improvements evidenced for some students (Leather, 2009). Overall, the author suggests that for those remaining for a 12-week placement a positive effect on most measures was evident for most students. One study across a range of AP pilots captured considerable evidence of attitude change in students, including contentment and more positive outlooks (NFER, 2012).

Students in one setting studied, referred to maturing and being less angry as a result of attending AP (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015) and two final year students in one study reflected their attitudes and behaviours had changed as a result of attending AP (Dodman, 2016). In another study, a young person who had previously dyed their hair a range of colours let it return to its natural state once in AP and in conversation about this change suggests 'I don't need pink hair here' (Levinson and Thompson, 2016).

Confidence

The development of confidence is mainly evidenced by the perceptions of students. Increased confidence as a result of taking small steps and experiencing success in AP is discussed in one study (Daniels et al., 2003) while a study reporting an AP project which students attend for one term and gain a qualification suggests positive impact on their self-esteem (Evans, 2010). One study discussed increased confidence in an AP setting where the focus was on learning and development and staff were reported as providing significant levels of encouragement to students (Putwain et al., 2016). AP provides a context for positive learning experiences which enable young people to recognise their skills and develop appreciation of the options available

to them (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016). Another study connected the time staff have for students in AP as supporting increased social confidence (Malcolm, 2019). This study also referred to the development of confidence as related to experience of encouragement and care from staff and as having an impact on students' belief in their learning ability and future as well as social confidence (Malcolm, 2019).

Young people in one study referred to increased confidence with a member of staff suggesting that those who had previously been bullied could make significant progress in this area (Kendall et al., 2003). The authors of this study suggested that increased confidence was reflected in young peoples' positivity about their future (Kendall et al., 2003). Elsewhere, staff suggested that students in AP need therapeutic support to overcome previous rejection and develop self-esteem (Martineau, 2018).

Student participants link the personalisation and individualisation of work to developing confidence in their academic ability (Michael and Frederickson, 2013). Students identify that the experience of staff believing in them promotes their own belief in what they could achieve (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015). A student participant in another study identified supportive relationships with staff as a reason for growing confidence with the author suggesting that staff conveying belief that young people in AP can succeed as important (Vincent, 2016). This study also recognises that staff providing non-stigmatising recognition of young peoples' positions with an implicit assumption of educational progress was important in facilitating increased confidence in education (Vincent, 2016). One study reported an AP setting which explicitly sought to increase students' resilience by developing their confidence (Corbett et al., 2019) and most students interviewed identified improved confidence as a result of attending AP. That they also suggested they felt more responsible, suggests increased confidence can develop resilience (Corbett et al., 2019) and most students involved in one study identified confidence alongside the ability to work with others as what they had gained from AP (White and Laczik, 2016). Young people in a large-scale study frequently identified becoming more confident as a result of making progress in AP with this connecting to both their social skills and future prospects (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

Students identify that the experience of staff believing in them promotes their own belief in what they could achieve

Expectations and aspirations

Changed expectations and the development of aspirations by young people in AP is reported within the research. One study suggested attending AP could develop young peoples' prospects and lead to more realistic expectations making connections to college and work experience developing detailed understanding of the requirements for their chosen path (Kendall et al., 2003). Another study suggests that some providers - generally complementary AP - explicitly seek to provide opportunities for students to try out different ways of being in a new setting (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Other researchers reporting AP as an opportunity which can support students to develop their self-understanding (Levinson and Thompson, 2016).

In one study young people responded to the statement 'I feel positive about my future' pre- and post-AP with a reduction from 13 to just two responding negatively (Kendall et al., 2003). This study also suggested employment aspirations were both raised and became more realistic as a result of AP attendance, this was evidenced by an increase from two to 11 young people wanting to train for a job and a reduction from 27 to 19 wanting to go straight into employment post-AP (Kendall et al., 2003).

A reflective narrative from a young person who had attended AP suggested self-belief - 'I'm going to make something of myself' - and increased involvement in civic life as a result of their experiences (Bello, 2004). In one study some students were referred to as curious about their teachers' relationships which could be stable and long-term, with some evidence from participants' accounts suggesting this could begin to change students' ambitions (Ellis-Martin, 2015). Students in another study had internalised the value of education in relation to future employment opportunities and reported increased motivation to do well academically (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). Secondary students' aspirations are shaped in AP with student comments noting the importance of education for progression and clarity on future ambitions (Jalali and Morgan, 2018). Some students experience AP as transformative with participants in one study connecting this to finally understanding their learning disabilities and the positive impact relationships in AP had had on their progression (Corbett et al., 2019). In another study, a student referred to experiencing motivation in AP which had not been part of their experience when attending mainstream school (Malcolm, 2019). Indeed, one study suggested many student participants saw AP as a turning point in their lives (Tellis-James and Fox, 2016) and another suggests AP can provide an important opportunity for young people to reinvent themselves outside of the constraints of mainstream schooling (Dean, 2018). This study suggested that not having to build on or repair previous educational damage supported freedom for reinvention (Dean, 2018).

Well over four fifths of students in one study perceived activities in AP as relevant to their future (Attwood et al., 2003) while another suggested many of the young people involved held very limited ambitions (Daniels et al., 2003). Students in AP are less likely to offer positive possible selves than their mainstream peers, with less awareness of potential difficulties and alternative options (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010). Indeed, AP participants in this study spend a significant amount of time discussing negative future selves when asked, producing a wide range of possibilities. This led the authors to suggest that for these young people, fear of a negative future self was quite considerable (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010). One study suggested reduced motivation for students attending AP resulting from reductions in attendance requirements from five days in school to two or three days in AP (Briggs, 2011). Another reports many older AP students perceiving their educational opportunities to have passed, presenting their experiences leading to AP and the reduced opportunities it presents as shaping their horizons for action (Lanskey, 2015).

For these young people, fear of a negative future self was quite considerable

Attendance and retention

Attendance of AP and retention at AP settings is considered by a number of studies. In one, for a young person who would clearly not return to mainstream, attending was reported as a positive influence of the AP (Leather, 2009). Some AP staff see non-attendance of some young people as a 'lifestyle choice' with poor AP-school communication blurring responsibility and widening the cracks through which young people can fall (Briggs, 2011). One study reported an expectation that attendance would be 93% in the AP which made for a frequent cause for concern (Dodman, 2016) and those involved in a large-scale study saw improvements in attendance as a way to judge success (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

The majority of students indicated improved attendance at AP (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014; Nicholson and Putwain, 2015). A young person in one study reported increased attendance in AP, citing the shock of removal from mainstream as a significant motivator (Dean, 2018). Analysis of data for a study of one AP setting gave a more mixed picture, with some students' attendance improving and others deteriorating. In two of the three cohorts, the proportion with improved attendance

levels was higher but in one year a greater percentage of students had a deteriorating level of attendance (Ellis-Martin, 2015).

A large-scale study of a number of AP settings reported a median attendance rate over 50% with staff reporting students who had previously refused to attend school now quite motivated to attend AP (Kendall et al., 2003). The vast majority (89%) of students reported good attendance compared to when they had been at mainstream although retention rates for AP settings ranged from 35% up to 97% with the most common reason for leaving a placement reported as non-attendance (Kendall et al., 2003). One project studied retained 46 of 50 students and had a 79% average rate of attendance with 12 students attending every session on offer (Cook, 2005).

One study suggested their data evidenced AP as making a substantial contribution to the participation level of those most disaffected (Richards, 2004). A staff member in one study suggested significant increases in attendance for young people who even remained after school hours (Greenwood, 2012). A large study of government funded AP pilots referred to significant evidence of improvement in attendance and punctuality, with attendance considered an important outcome for young people who had previously been missing from, or non-attenders of, school. Even if this was limited it was considered a base from which AP staff could build (NFER, 2012). Another study reported improved attendance as an outcome with both school data and students' perceptions evidencing this (Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016). Staff in another study cited major improvements in attendance (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018) and the Head of one setting studied suggested attendance could improve from between zero and 30% right up to eighty to 90% (Corbett et al., 2019).

Academic outcomes

Academic outcomes are frequently reported in the research and framed as allowing young people to gain accreditation and experience success. AP Heads in one study were clear that qualifications and academic achievement were part of their aim which they saw as developing their students' opportunities (Malcolm, 2018). Although the curriculum was not always perceived as relevant by young people in one study, they did develop a new appreciation for core subjects, feeling that staff understood them as learners and that they could make academic progress (Martineau, 2018). Students in another study saw their AP as a last opportunity to gain the GCSEs which they perceived as key to progression (Corbett et al., 2019). Gaining accreditation and experiencing success is referred to as important and, given previous educational experiences, it shows these young people can achieve and thus have a place in the educational community (Kendall et al., 2003). Indeed, an important element of AP is offering qualifications that enable students to experience achievement, sometimes for the first time in their educational careers (Kendall et al., 2003).

An important element of AP is offering qualifications that enable students to experience achievement, sometimes for the first time in their educational careers

Staff in AP suggest that gaining accreditation over a short time frame works to motivate young people (Daniels et al., 2003). In one study, students suggested continuous assessment as preferable to end of year exams although documentary data showed equally positive outcomes for both types of qualification (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). In another study qualifications and the use of portfolio assessment were perceived as important for re-engaging young people in AP (White and Laczik, 2016). Using an online assessment package, one study reports that some students made significant progress in AP, particularly in English, with most making some progress (Ellis-Martin, 2015). In one study, 28.6% of young people for whom there was data had passed

a GCSE (Daniels et al., 2003) while in another, all but one young person achieved a qualification, with half gaining ASDAN Silver Award (Cook, 2005).

A number of studies report young people as proud of their achievements and increased academic achievement after starting in AP (Kendall et al., 2003; Nicholson and Putwain, 2015). Students perceive that their academic outcomes in AP were better than they would have been had they remained in mainstream school (Kendall et al., 2003; Vincent, 2016). Similarly, in another study the majority of students suggest their final achievements in AP are higher than predicted grades in school with this backed up by analysis of students' files (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). A large-scale study of government funded AP pilots notes young people securing a range of formal and transferable qualifications which reflect their circumstances although these are generally below mainstream levels of achievement (NFER, 2012). In this study, all with a stake in the AP process (AP staff, school representatives, LA officers, students and their parents) agreed that the achievements of young people in the AP pilots were greater than had they remained in mainstream or another AP (NFER, 2012). Another large-scale study suggested APs involved believed their approach to be shown as successful in improved academic outcomes for students (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

A persistent theme in relation to academic outcomes is the limits placed on qualifications and subjects on offer to young people in AP. The educational backgrounds of students in AP provide context to AP outcomes where accreditation achieved is often not comparable to GCSEs (Kendall et al., 2003). This can, however, affect young people. One student in this study was less confident about their educational future as the range of options for GCSE had been limited outside of the mainstream environment while four other students were concerned about equivalence (Kendall et al., 2003). Two students in this study reported having to work more slowly in AP and for one student the qualifications they worked on in AP seemed easy after being in top sets at school (Kendall et al., 2003). Some young people perceive the lesser value of non-GCSE qualifications in AP (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). In this study students said they weren't being sufficiently stretched and were particularly focused on Maths and English as an important requirement for college and something they would have to continue to study if they didn't achieve a grade C or equivalent (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Students value the well-recognised qualifications on offer in mainstream school and perceive alternatives in English and Maths as less relevant which impacts their motivation - lack of access to normative qualifications also reinforces feelings of underachievement and inferiority (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). In another study, staff unanimously perceived this impact (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). Analysis of grades did, however, show better performance in the alternative qualifications than in GCSEs for English and maths, this may be because these tests can be taken as and when the student is ready (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). In one study, restricted curriculum and quality of qualifications were raised by participants with confusion evident over the way in which the latter connected to progression routes and uncertainty about the equivalence of their achievements (Vincent, 2016). One study reported a re-engagement and respite scheme which was incorporated into a KS4 AP model for three London boroughs. All students on the re-engagement scheme took five GCSEs including English and Maths, with initial data showing 94% had achieved at least 7 passes (Scott and Spencer, 2013).

Some students felt their academic ability, in particular in Maths and English, declined in AP and had not made connections between the qualifications they would achieve in AP and their post AP aspirations (Dean, 2018). One of the settings researched in this study had no provision for Maths and English although it suggested schools could fund external tutors (Dean, 2018). One study reports a young person who made numerous attempts - without great success - for their AP placement to reflect their desire to achieve academically (Briggs, 2011). This study also suggests there was a lack of understanding from AP Heads about whether they could administer

GCSEs (Briggs, 2011). An AP setting in one study did not pursue GCSEs once a student had secured a college place, while in another a student was not able to take higher tier exams and disengaged from the AP (Malcolm, 2019). The restricted number of GCSEs available is identified in one study as a disadvantage (Martin, 2011) and, while students perceive that the support of staff enables them to achieve academic success, examples are given of disappointment about lack of availability of GCSE subjects in AP (Michael and Frederickson, 2013). In one study, set against largely positive responses, some who had attended AP were critical of both a lack of opportunity and support and encouragement from staff to work towards GCSEs (Scott and Spencer, 2013). A staff member in one study suggested the inability to offer a wide range of GCSEs limited the benefits of AP (Dodman, 2016), while a member of staff in another suggested the focus on choice and a non-academic offer in their AP limited the future academic options for some young people who were academically able due to a lack of time (Kinsella, 2017). This was reflected by one student in this study whose perception of AP was that it diverged from the high academic standards of their previous mainstream school (Kinsella, 2017).

One study reports a young person who made numerous attempts - without great success - for their AP placement to reflect their desire to achieve academically

In a recent large-scale study, most students reported they were able to study for the qualifications they desired although some who were focused on GCSEs experienced a narrower range than in mainstream and expressed concerns about how this might limit their progression (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Although one study notes observations of lessons with learning being connected explicitly to GCSE grades, these findings suggest that the concerns raised in relation to breadth and equivalence of qualifications in AP still persists (Putwain et al., 2016).

Broader educational outcomes

In terms of broader educational outcomes discussed in the research, it is suggested that AP can provide a context in which young people discover and develop their abilities and talents which lead to successful outcomes (NFER, 2012). One study refers to students having opportunities to express themselves in AP (Woodley, 2017). Consistent staff support can aid the development of a sense of mastery for students in AP (Solomon and Thomas, 2013) and learning in AP is designed to fill gaps in young peoples' experiences in life and general knowledge with these social and 'real world' learning opportunities viewed as important for post AP progression by staff (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014).

In one study, the proportion of young people agreeing with the statement, 'The things I learn are important to me' increased from 51% pre-AP to 89% post-AP, with marked improvements for those considered disaffected or involved in crime (Kendall et al., 2003). A similar metric in another study of FE AP saw significant increases upon transition in students positively reporting interest in the curriculum and perceptions of if usefulness. Positive responses increased from 11.5% to 53.8% and 38.5% to 84.6% respectively upon moving into AP from school (Attwood et al., 2003). Students in another study all indicated they had changed and made progress in AP (Hart, 2013) and those involved in another refer to being supported to be more in control of their anger and being able to reconcile differences (Jarvis, 2018). Students report increases in attendance, enjoyment, perceptions of the value of education, wellbeing, and achievement in AP attributing these to positive relationships between staff and students (Nicholson and Putwain, 2018). In one study all parents and students reported academic and emotional needs were met well in AP (Wood, 2012). Young people identify the development of new interests in AP (Kendall et al., 2003) and accounts from young people in AP refer to learning new things or developing existing skills (Leather, 2009). One study reported young people articulating the fostering of agency in learning in AP

(Greenwood, 2012). In another study most students valued the extracurricular activities on offer in their AP (Michael and Frederickson, 2013). One study which focused on developing student voice in an AP setting suggested students were keen to develop their understanding of their rights and responsibilities and the structural inequalities in society and also to learn how to engage with those in authority effectively (Jones, 2013).

Practitioners report AP as a setting where they can channel young peoples' emotional experiences in creative expression (Greenwood, 2012). With staff in another study suggesting the AP curriculum should be based on social justice so as to empower students to engage with authority and to exert autonomy in their own social context, seeing literacy as an important element of this (Jones, 2013). Staff also report perceptions that cross curricular activities develop skills for post AP progression (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014; Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). Staff in another study refer to students learning how to communicate in a respectful manner, AP as offering diverse experiences of learning thereby helping students develop their skills and interests (Corbett et al., 2019). This included engaging young people with a different side of their local area that may not have been their experience to date in life with all of this viewed as part of the transformative experience AP can offer (Corbett et al., 2019).

Negative aspects of the broader educational impact of AP are considered to be the restricted curriculum (Martin, 2011), that young peoples' difficulties can be exacerbated by AP and in particular discontinuities in provision (Pirrie et al., 2011). The narrowing of extracurricular opportunities is mentioned by another study which also makes reference to difficulties in maintaining experiences such as teams, clubs and school productions (Dodman, 2016). A participant in one study noted a narrower curriculum and range of extra-curricular opportunities in AP but did not see this as a disadvantage, more just a reality of being able to continue education (Vincent, 2016).

Reintegration

In one study a couple of the AP settings considered reported success in reintegrating students back into mainstream schools. One was a 'school type' provision while the other worked with students with significant needs including severe EBD. Students at this latter provision were generally younger, had been on a dual placement and some were reintegrated into special school (Kendall et al., 2003). Another study suggests that reintegration often fails unless the receiving school is highly inclusive and additional support is provided or if the student is highly motivated to reintegrate (Daniels et al., 2003). In a study of government funded AP pilots, students who successfully returned to mainstream school had generally been in short-term AP and ongoing support, including consistency and positive relationships across mainstream and AP, were needed for reintegration to be sustained (NFER, 2012). This study also suggests that for some students, reintegration will mean returning to mainstream full time while for others a dual placement of AP and mainstream would be considered success (NFER, 2012).

Another study suggests that reintegration often fails unless the receiving school is highly inclusive and additional support is provided or if the student is highly motivated to reintegrate

One study reports around half of KS4 students in one provision being re-integrated into mainstream school; students' accounts from this study also present reintegration as success (Leather, 2009). In an AP where reintegration was the aim a study reports that this was successful with nearly all students from this setting (Evans, 2010). Staff in a study of one AP setting discussed a falling rate of reintegration by age, from around 90% at primary down to 75% in the first two years of secondary school, around half for students in year

nine and only 10-15% in years 10 and 11 (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). This falling rate of reintegration is supported by a large-scale market analysis of AP which suggested 65% of primary and 64% of KS3 students return to mainstream school, falling to 53% for year 10 and 10% for year 11 students (Bryant et al., 2018).

One large-scale study of AP found leaders expected reintegration was more likely when students were referred by the NHS or came to AP via a managed move and least likely for students who had been permanently excluded (Mills and Thomson, 2018). This study also found that 90% AP leaders expected some of their full-time students to reintegrate and around 25% aim for all students to reintegrate (Mills and Thomson, 2018). One study recounts the experiences of a young person who had initially been motivated when attending AP because of hope of reintegration, something suggested as possible by both school and AP, however after 18 months in AP this student's commitment had lessened and he withdrew (Briggs, 2011).

In a study which explored the broad outcome of shared placements between mainstream and AP, all students either engaged positively in both settings or engaged solely in AP, with none disengaging from both (Cockerill, 2019). Indeed, this study found that strong relationships with staff in AP were consistent across students where reintegration was both possible and not, and therefore suggested the high sense of belonging in AP is not related to successful reintegration (Cockerill, 2019). While it is possible that a high sense of belonging to AP is not related to successful reintegration it is also plausible that it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for reintegration to succeed. Staff in a provision where research was reporting a football project, voiced concerns that student enjoyment might undermine efforts at reintegration (Cullen and Monroe, 2010).

Post-16 destinations

Post-16 destinations are of obvious importance when a young person does not reintegrate back into mainstream school. Participants in one study saw time in AP as raising awareness of the opportunities available (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003). This study was undertaken in FE AP and students were inclined to continue in the same setting as they felt comfortable there (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003). The aim in one AP studied was for students who would not reintegrate to gain sufficient qualifications to progress to college or into training (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). One large-scale study found that AP settings see post-16 success as important for validating their provision and that while some tracking information is available most providers rely on keeping in direct contact with ex-students (Mills and Thomson, 2018). AP Heads see connections with employers as important for successful post-16 transition and sought to provide students with positive experiences and relationships (Mills and Thomson, 2018). One study notes the polarisation of vocational and academic options in education and explored the role an apprenticeship for young women had played in shaping the aspirations of one student (Trotman et al., 2019).

In one study which considered students leaving AP, an unknown destination was most common. This was followed by employment and then equal numbers transitioning to education and training (Kendall et al., 2003). A large-scale analysis suggested no significant association between sustained engagement post-AP and time out of school before first placement (Daniels et al., 2003). The authors suggest this may be mediated by parental perceptions of the peer group in AP with some parents willing to wait for what they perceived as a positive placement (Daniels et al., 2003). This study presents some interesting findings in relation to engagement in education, employment or training two years after exclusion which suggest that, although placement in a PRU is initially less well engaged with than a placement in a new mainstream school (60% vs

70%), engagement two years later was higher for students whose first placement had been into a PRU (40% vs 30%) (Daniels et al., 2003). Interestingly, this study also suggests that where first placement was into a college engagement was highest (84.6%) and was broadly maintained two years later (76.9%) (Daniels et al., 2003).

In one study of the 26 young people progressing onto post AP destinations, 18 secured places at college or on training courses and six were seeking employment (Cook, 2005). Another study reported the impact of a focus on post-16 transition in one setting as reducing the initial (October) rate of those not in education employment or training down to 3% from a historical average of 11% (Woolford, 2012). This scheme focused on post-16 success, made use of financial incentives and saw results in particular in relation to less overdependence on adults and better educational self-esteem (Woolford, 2012). One study found that qualifications gained helped around 80% of students in one FE AP to progress to further education but that around 10% of these dropped out by January (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016).

Almost all students in one study saw their course in FE AP as qualifying them for a particular job and while they appreciated the relationships formed in the setting their dominant motivation was instrumental (Attwood et al., 2003). Students report significant support from staff in relation to future employability (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015) and students in one study identified personal confidence alongside qualifications as supporting post-16 transition success (Vincent, 2016). This study also found that two female students who were initially directed into hairdressing qualifications found it hard to move outside of this trajectory once it was established despite interests elsewhere (Vincent, 2016). A student in another study noted a friend who had been supported to make employment connections by AP staff (Corbett et al., 2019). Young adults involved in one study articulated the interest of staff in AP as focusing their ambitions and getting them onto the paths they pursued post-AP (Malcolm, 2019).

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Staff report tension between tangible outcomes for funders and their approach of building relationships with colleges and their focus on work experience (Greenwood, 2012). While parents of students in AP were found in one study to diverge in their opinions of support for post-16 destinations with some appreciating the work of APs to secure positive destinations, often in vocational options which had been unavailable in mainstream, but others seeing AP as reducing the breadth of qualifications on offer and opportunities for more traditional routes of progression through college and on to university (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

Successful transfer to and retention at destinations is highlighted by one study as important alongside noted success in securing positive post-16 destinations (NFER, 2012). One study in an FE based AP suggested students enjoyed this environment and progressed to post-16 courses but that retention was not satisfactory (Cajic-Seigneur, 2014). A large-scale study found quality AP which had been long term provided ongoing support by keeping in touch with young people upon their post-16 transitions (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Significant drop out in post-16 destinations is reported with examples of positive destinations dropping from 96% to 75% from September to January and elsewhere a third of students not taking up their place in one sixth form in the September after leaving (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Heads and staff in AP suggested students' out of college contexts and the return to mainstream settings with transition support often tapering out as reasons for drop out (Mills and Thomson, 2018). This study provided an example of coordination instigated by an AP leader to provide support in FE settings to those at risk of dropping out, other examples are also given of AP staff working with relevant college staff to improve their pastoral care (Mills and Thomson, 2018).

Long-term outcomes

Staff in one study were focused on longer term impact of their work seeing what they do as enabling their students to become responsible citizens, not immediately, but over the longer term (Leather, 2009). The author notes this view as firmly held and as potentially significant for the ongoing motivation required to work with challenging students (Leather, 2009). Another study reported too few former students were able to be contacted to develop meaningful data on the longer-term outcomes of the AP being studied (Corbett et al., 2019). Elsewhere, it is suggested that while qualifications in AP may facilitate progression to further education they will not do so for higher education (Vincent, 2016). However, another study notes participating young adults as academically able with two progressing on to higher education and three attending evening classes to develop their careers (Malcolm, 2019).

Contextualising success

Setting up appropriate performance indicators for work in AP is a challenge (Richards, 2004) and success in AP can be accepted as involving small steps and what could be considered slow progress (Evans, 2010). Indeed, a young person in one study described the outcome of AP as intrinsic to individuals rather than objective achievements (Malcolm, 2019). However, another study suggests AP is ineffective in supporting long term behavioural change; that while behavioural improvements are perceived, underlying thought processes - including external attribution of difficulties - remain (Jalali and Morgan, 2018). This highlights the need to be able to supplement evidence in the form of staff and student perceptions with institutional or other form of research data. In a population scale study exploring the educational outcomes of looked after children, school type (including AP) is noted as “perhaps the most powerful predictor of GCSE performance”, leading the authors to argue that “there is powerful selection in the English secondary education system into school types related to perceived academic potential, which is not adequately accounted for by students’ prior attainments and special educational needs” (Sebba et al., 2015, p27). This suggests that comparisons of outcomes from AP against mainstream would be somewhat similar to comparisons of outcomes for grammar schools and secondary modern settings.

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When considering reasons for some students in AP not succeeding, it is suggested that the variety and severity of challenges experienced by students and limited resources may account for the lack of success (Kendall et al., 2003). A member of staff participating in one study reflected that they were least successful where students have significant additional issues outside of those related to school, with the researcher reflecting that while AP can be successful it is not a panacea (Leather, 2009). Staff in one setting who had moved from mainstream to AP recognised their students in AP had far more substantial and ongoing problems than their mainstream peers (Farouk, 2014). This again reinforces the need to consider how to measure success in AP when comparisons to mainstream present such difficulty.

One study of an AP setting recognises the limitations of effecting positive change when provision is for a short period (at most two years in this case) and young people are faced with significant and sustained difficulties in their lives (Corbett et al., 2019). The authors see the approach in AP as providing stability, reducing the difficulties faced by students in their lives and increasing the possibility of a transformational educational experience (Corbett et al., 2019). Another study conceptualises AP as mitigating against adverse life experiences:

“that there may well be ways in which successful AP exists as a bulwark against further adversity at a time of significant instability in a young person’s life” (Malcolm, 2019, p94).

One study found the most prominent outcome of non-attendance of AP identified by staff, students and parents participating in the research was maintained or increased levels of offending (Kendall et al., 2003). This suggests attendance at an AP setting is a more significant form of success than it may seem on face value. A large-scale study of government funded AP pilots found that attendance of students can be significantly impacted by the wider context of young peoples’ lives, and suggests average attendance data for AP settings may therefore miss the significance and value of temporary improvements, with this being compounded by the small scale of many AP settings (and indeed the potential for small number of cases to skew the overall data) (NFER, 2012). This suggests it would be worth considering whether, when progress made in AP is disrupted, this progress is lost or maintained when stability returns. This will likely differ by case but, if evidence can be developed for a level of maintenance even when progress has been disrupted, this would help with contextualising and developing appropriate monitoring for AP. Another study which considered exclusion and crime among African-Caribbean boys in London again recognises the value of holding students within the education system, with the authors suggesting this gives young people time and space to mature rather than being left to the risks on ‘the street’ (Scott and Spencer, 2013). Re-engagement with education, including attendance but also enjoyment and investment, is suggested by one study as success when viewed in the context of these students’ previous disconnection and poor attendance (Nicholson and Putwain, 2015).

One study refers to students gaining employment, even if insecure, as a positive outcome and as evidence of a fundamental shift in their attitude to work (Kendall et al., 2003). Best practice in longer term provision is argued to involve baseline assessments when young people arrive in AP against which progress can be measured alongside networks for staff to ensure judgements of academic success are appropriate (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014). Another study also suggests formal assessed learning outcomes may not accurately reflect the value of progress made by students in AP as discussed above in relation to attendance (NFER, 2012).

It is clear that contextual factors present significant difficulties when considering successful outcomes for AP, including the way in which relationships help shape these outcomes. One study suggests that relationships in AP are understood as valuable social learning and are key to a young persons’ success; as integral to AP as opposed to a ‘precondition for learning’ or by-product of teaching (Thomson and Pennacchia, 2014, p25). While there is abundant evidence of the importance of relationships in AP it is also argued that:

“policy aimed at bringing about ‘a step change in improvement’ (in terms of educational attainment and achievement) (DCSF, 2008) cannot provide adequate conceptual resources fully to embrace young people who challenge the boundaries of the educational system” (Pirrie et al., 2011, p536).

Indeed, this study suggests that whole scale social reforms are needed to make effective changes to young people who experience marginalisation and exclusion from education (Pirrie et al., 2011). One approach to broadening success is suggested by a large-scale study of government funded AP pilots which proposes that as well as monitoring individual outcomes for students, provision-level achievement and the performance of providers should be undertaken by LAs and

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commissioners of AP (NFER, 2012). This is interesting as it suggests widening the assessment of the quality of AP beyond the normal frame in which the weight of evidence falls on the backs of young people.

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Conclusion

In reviewing the evidence about the outcomes of AP, this section has clearly shown that there is limited evidence beyond the perceptions of those in the AP environment, although there is significant consistency in the reporting of perceptions across the research accounts. An important problem to address in further work on the outcomes of AP is consideration of how to contextualise success appropriately. This section has covered a number of outcomes which will be returned to in the discussion, including re-engagement and intention to continue in education. It was suggested that there is potential to use a stable base in AP to support young people to gain experience elsewhere, for example in work and college environments. In a number of studies, academic outcomes were perceived as better than they would have been had the students remained in mainstream. One study presented data to back this up by comparing grades vs predicted grades. Given the challenges of measuring success in AP this is an important finding.

There are frequent reports of concerns about the equivalence and breadth of qualifications available to young people in AP settings, and this has been a running theme in the body of research over the years and does not, as yet, seem to have been systemically addressed. When considering broader educational outcomes, the research presents evidence of AP settings engaging young people with aspects of their localities with which they are unfamiliar. This has the potential to widen a student's field of visions and enhance the cultural and social upon which they can draw. The research also suggests that difficulties can be exacerbated in AP. This includes some young people starting to offend and others becoming more entrenched in these behaviours. Discontinuities in provision, part-time timetables and shorter school days are presented as issues in relation to this, with the risk that young people fall out entirely from education if AP breaks down. There is a need to further study the experiences of those who do not engage with AP and to consider what can be done to best support these young people.

The research also suggests there is considerable variation in the tracking of post-16 destinations. This is related to the need to consider how gains made in AP can be transferred into other settings. A significant theme in relation to the outcomes of AP is the need to contextualise success. The research suggests that AP is a context in which there is an increased possibility of students having a transformational educational experience and that AP settings can provide stability to young people who are in the midst of adverse life experiences. Given these are some of the outcomes young people in AP report, it is important to think about how they might be measured. The research also suggests that progress made in AP is often disrupted and thus does not show up in the existing outcomes measured for this stage of education. This raises the question of whether when progress made is disrupted, is it entirely lost or is some of it maintained when it is possible once more for the young person to engage with education. Exploring these issues may provide helpful points of reference with which to contextualise the outcomes of AP settings.

The final suggestion from the research in this section is that measures of success should be designed so that they look beyond the young people who learn in these settings. The research suggests seeking measures of success which avoid placing all the weight of assessment on young people in AP may involve measures at provision level and assessment of the quality of AP at a local authority level.

Discussion

The literature demonstrates the importance of relationships in AP. For students, their relationships with peers and staff are the context within which outcomes are achieved. For staff, the support they receive within AP and the wider system - including their relationships with mainstream schools, parents, and other agencies - influence the ways in which staff shape students' experience of AP. This relational context for staff is in turn shaped by a range of organisational factors such as size, commissioning and resources, as well as the demographics of their students. Within each section of the literature review that explores these topics, a number of themes meriting further consideration have been identified, including:

- the need to consider whether gains made in AP are transferable - particularly when they stem from relationships - and how greater transferability can be encouraged;
- that, notwithstanding the overall importance of relationships in AP, there are some contexts and some young people for whom a degree of relational distance may be appropriate;
- the importance of providing supportive structures for staff who work in AP settings including consideration of the most helpful framework of ideas to support practice in this context; and
- the need to consider and develop contextual measures of success for the work undertaken in AP.

The discussion will now consider the importance of these ideas more fully.

Continuity of relationships supports transferable gains

The important role that AP staff can play in the lives of young people is perhaps best captured by the notion that they can 'hold the story' for young people. It is suggested that stable and skilled staff teams correspond to settings where best practice is found and that if the rate at which students move on from AP with new students replacing them is too high, the culture and relationships in a setting can be harmed. Indeed, leaving is characterised as having the potential to be experienced as trauma given the strength of relationships which can have developed. This is backed up by a number of studies which refer to ex-students returning to visit their old AP setting. There is scope for the importance of these relationships to be recognised more fully in policy, perhaps with an explicit, funded role for pre-16 provision to play in post-16 support. Given the discontinuities students in AP will have experienced in their education, creating stable ongoing support for these young people may begin to redress some of inequity they will otherwise likely experience. There is precedent for this in the 'staying put' scheme which allows young people who are in foster care to remain with the carers beyond the usual limit of 18 years of age. Development of support along these lines would also address the variation in post-16 tracking of students leaving AP settings.

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The research identified that a concept of ‘repair and return’ is sometimes in place when young people are referred into AP and that this presents problems, in particular for reintegration. An example of AP which moves away from this is presented by Pennacchia and Thomson (2016). While not strictly within the remit of this review (one AP considered is on a school site while the other is a week-long residential), consideration of these issues is vital. Framed as complementary AP, this required the support of the mainstream environment, a commitment to a broader vision of education and a much closer relationship between school and AP (Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016). There were two ways in which the examples outlined in this paper evidenced similarity of approach. Firstly, the positive impact this could have on the school community as a whole, extending the impact beyond those who take part in the intervention. Secondly the focus on developing both peer and adult relationships for those involved (Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016). There is also the potential for improved communication and relationships between AP and mainstream if on the same site (Mills and Thomson, 2018). It is perhaps unsurprising that some commissioners of AP will have a ‘repair and return’ model in mind given the government guidance for using AP suggests students can be:

“directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour” (DfE, 2013, p3).

A better framing of this last part of the guidance would read, ‘directed by schools to off-site provision to better understand the support required to enable their educational success’.

Personalisation is a key framing of what happens in AP and is predicated on relational knowledge. The research, however, also suggests choice is not always possible and personalisation is often in relation to social and welfare support rather than learning. Personalisation in AP should seek to shape learning support by exploring students’ experiences of learning and what works for them. Indeed, one study reviewed suggests that work in AP should not generically seek to raise self-esteem, rather aiming at raising self-efficacy in specific curriculum areas so as to be located within context of regular schooling (Solomon and Rogers, 2001). Given young people have to study English and Maths up to GCSE grade C equivalent, AP is quite possibly the best place to aim to achieve this given the personalisation of support that is possible in this context. This review has also identified ongoing concerns in relation to equivalence and breadth of qualifications available to students in AP. This does not have to be the case. In one AP, students were positive about the quality of the teaching they received because skilled teachers came to the setting from a mainstream school involved in the project encouraging them to work hard. This led to them feeling like they were learning and contrasted with other out of school educational experiences they had had (Scott and Spencer, 2013). While it is important not to pursue a one size fits all model of educational success, this issue is persistent. Similarly, another suggestion from the research - and from practice in Scotland - is the use of secondment. This would no doubt present its own challenges but would also improve relational connections between AP and mainstream settings.

Personalisation is a key framing of what happens in AP and is predicated on relational knowledge

Agency in relationships with peers and staff

AP is recognised as providing social contact for young people and it is suggested by one study that the interactions of young people in AP reflect socially constructed truth rather than more conventional notions of scientific truth which tend to overlay traditional educational practices (Dray, 2017). One of the studies reviewed found students in an FE AP setting evidenced agency in sustaining their identities and resisting stigmatising practices (Johnston and Bradford, 2019). Resistance and the assertion of agency in the AP environment connects to the idea that some

students may not respond to the relational base of AP and the notion of a framework of ideas upon which staff draw when working in AP.

The research suggests that there is potential for group work in AP settings to improve peer relationships. One study refers to the use of a short course in one AP setting to develop communication and confidence with some staff reporting this as valuable (Kendall et al., 2003). Another suggests specific peer-group relationships work (for example giving one another feedback) can have a beneficial impact on young people in AP settings and could also support experiences of school and wider school culture more generally (Pennacchia and Thomson, 2016).

Work to support the positive development of peer group relationships in AP settings seems of particular importance in relation to some of the difficulties reported in relation to gender in AP. Although a number of studies report all female groups, it would seem more productive, particularly given the framing of AP as a social learning environment, to work on positive peer group interactions. One study refers to the need to better understand the gendering of relations in AP suggesting that removing male students would not suffice and that research should explore the experiences of female students in male dominated environments (Russell and Thomson, 2011). Interestingly, maintaining relational distance was identified as a strength for some female students within the research. This leads to the other key finding within this section on relationships, that there are important ways in which the dominance of relationships in AP settings may constrain and undermine the work in these settings.

The body of research suggests that the prominence of relational knowledge may constrain post AP trajectories if it doesn't transcend AP. This is supported by evidence in the research of fairly significant drop out from post-16 settings. This is not to undermine the importance of relationships to the work undertaken in AP setting but recognition of the limitations of this approach allows for mitigating actions to be considered. This point will be returned to below when considering the measurement of success in AP. The other limitation to the dominance of relationships in AP that is reported in the research is the idea that it requires students to either conform and engage in relationships or resist. It is suggested that the specific relational cultures of AP may work against some students, particularly those who are less inherently motivated by relationships and those with less capacity to engage on these terms. In this context, personalisation of content seems highly relevant; this can involve helping young people to find their element or finding the hook to engage students on more instrumental terms. This then has the potential to build a context where relationships can develop; indeed, practical and productive experiences are recognised as providing a helpful context for developing staff student relationships within the research. Where students are not motivated by relationships, or have less capacity to engage on these terms, staff in AP settings should be willing to move outside a focus on the relationship itself as the medium of engagement and work with students on more instrumental terms which both requires and enables a different style of relationship.

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Staff support

The research suggests that staff are guided in their work by notions of justice, inclusion and attachment. There would seem to be scope to explore more fully a framework of ideas upon which staff in AP settings can draw within their work. There is a risk that tying together notions of stability, rehabilitation and attachment leads to views of young people as deficient in some way. Indeed, one study suggests the risk that AP, in particular AP free school policy, can obscure complex systemic failures and allow the state to shift responsibility onto those within these

settings at the same time as disabling the relevant established agency - the local authority (Farrell et al., 2017). As such it will be important to develop ideas for an empowering framework which continues to recognise the fundamental importance of relationships. As mentioned elsewhere in the research, it will be important that any framework respects students' cultural roots and lived experiences. It should seek to empower young people and engage them with aspects of their localities with which they are not familiar, thereby expanding the cultural and social frame of reference while at the same time respecting and learning from their own experiences of life.

The research suggests there is a balance to strike between differentiation of roles, for example teaching staff as solely teachers with additional staff with pastoral responsibilities, and a flatter structure where all staff in AP hold similar levels of responsibility for engaging relationally with the young people in their care. It is suggested in the research that working at greater and lesser emotional distance is an important skill for staff in AP to develop. This once more brings a level of complexity to the relational base of work in AP, being able to practice in both close and distant relationships is an important staff skill.

The emotional toll of working in the AP environment is discussed within the research with this conceptualised as 'emotional labour' in a number of studies. Indeed, it is suggested that students can be skilled in capitalising on staff weakness. This leads to the finding in the research of the need for supportive structures for staff. There is no clear consensus on what this should involve, though both supportive and effective management, and formal approaches including supervision and work discussion group models are explored. It is suggested that research should explore how to support staff to develop relationships, and whether an understanding of psychodynamic concepts and attachment theory, along with supervision, would support the work undertaken in AP (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019). Similarly, a study which researched the use of a work discussion group in AP suggests the need for formal pre- and post-intervention evaluation along with follow up to explore lasting change (Ellis and Wolfe, 2019). The research suggests supportive structures like work discussion groups are of great importance to effective practice in AP and that support of this kind may provide the space staff need to draw on and develop both their critical capacity and emotional resilience. In this vein, one study suggests that longer term, large-scale research across LAs is needed to inform interventions which seek to support staff wellbeing, thereby addressing students social and emotional development (Martin, 2015).

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Measuring success

Contextualising outcomes is fundamental to any measurement of success in AP settings and the research illuminates several aspects of this extremely challenging task. There are a number of studies in which findings suggest that, if AP is full time, young people have no down time on the streets. Connections are made between this and desistance from criminal activity and the importance of staff following up non-attendance. This suggests engagement with, retention in, and good levels of attendance at AP settings is a more valuable outcome than it may appear on face value. In relation to this, a number of studies, particularly those with a greater focus on exclusion, suggest that difficulties can be exacerbated in AP. This can include some students starting to offend and others becoming entrenched in offending behaviour. As such, it may be worth considering the use of police data as part of an overall basket of measures to assess the performance of AP settings.

There are numerous studies in which AP outcomes are perceived to be better than they would have been had the student remained in mainstream school. One study found evidence to support this by cross referencing grades in AP with earlier predicted grades from mainstream (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016). It would be worthwhile to explore whether these comparisons could be extended throughout the AP system.

The research recognises that progress made in AP settings can be, and often is, disrupted by the complex life challenges young people in these settings face. It would be interesting to consider the disruption of progress made in more detail: does disruption lead to loss or are some gains maintained? If the latter, taking measures of success at regular intervals may better capture the successes of AP. In relation to the potential for disruption of progress by adversity, the research suggests that AP can provide stability within adverse life experiences for young people in AP. This may mean that measuring the impact of AP on home life (perhaps using the SDQ) could be another way of appropriately measuring success in this complex context.

The notion of transferable gains may be helpful in further thinking through and developing practice and measures of success in AP settings. An example of this from the research is the comparison of a student receiving a diagnosis for dyslexia with the support provided to a young person in relation to their involvement in gang related activity. The former has much greater potential to be transferred into post AP settings. This is not to minimise the value of the latter but may stimulate consideration of what transferable gains might look like in this context. Developing thinking along these lines has the potential to address the issues reported in the research in relation to difficulties of retention in post AP destinations. One finding from the research suggests the potential to use the stable base of AP to support students to gain experience elsewhere, for example in work or college settings to which they can then transfer post AP. This means students have a stable base, in the form of the AP setting, to which they can return if things don't work out. This approach puts in place relationships between AP and post-16 destinations which may mean it is possible for gains made in AP to be more easily transferred to post AP settings.

In many cases, the research frames work in AP as an endeavour that increases the possibility of transformational educational experiences. While this is an extremely challenging concept to measure, it may be possible to explore whether this sort of transformational experience has occurred by looking at how students' cultural and social frames of reference have been widened and enriched, as discussed above. Further consideration of the nature of transformational educational experiences is required if this is to be considered more systemically as an outcome of AP.

In many cases, the research frames work in AP as an endeavour that increases the possibility of transformational educational experiences

The research also makes an important point about the need to broaden out the measures of success beyond those where the weight of evidence falls on the individual outcomes for young people in AP. Suggestions from the research include measures of provision-level success, and localised measures of quality. Given the importance of relationships between AP settings and referring schools, receiving schools and post-AP destinations, it would seem that considering the strength and quality of relationships across a locality may well provide a good measure of system health and effectiveness, and enable the identification of weaknesses.

Future research

This review has highlighted a number of areas where future research could usefully focus. Consideration of the methods used and scale of the studies within the body of research suggests there is a need for future investigations to move beyond exploratory research into AP practice on a small scale. The eight areas for future research in that context are identified below:

- 1** The development of peer relationships in AP is an area in which young people express desire to see improvements (Martineau, 2018). This is currently under-researched. One study suggests that it may be supportive to help 'at risk' students to develop their ability to make friends quickly, self-reflect and evaluate environments and the behaviour of others (Hamilton and Morgan, 2018). Elsewhere, two studies suggest differing perceptions of confident peers, with staff suggesting they are helpful to group learning but peers identifying these students as poor to work with. There is clearly the scope to further explore peer relationships within AP settings and indeed the facilitation of positive relational development as identified above.
- 2** The research suggests that engagement with AP can aid engagement with other services. If true, this is a valuable insight which could aid local service provision beyond the remit of AP. It was found that communication with home enables AP staff to be aware of out of school wellbeing and supports information being shared more easily. Similarly, those in AP are presented as well placed to bridge cultural misunderstandings between home and school. The value of positive relationships in AP to professionals beyond these settings is an area for further exploration.
- 3** Given the importance of effective collaboration for successful reintegration and post-AP outcomes, robust data on the quality of collaboration should be a research aim in future studies. Research with practitioners should focus on developing models which support mainstream and AP settings to collaborate and co-operate (Cooper and Grandin, 2014). This is particularly important given the differing approaches often taken in these settings, there is a need to explore how young people experience transitions between these different approaches, how this affects schools' and APs' ability to work together, how consistency of response is shaped, and how continuity of support is provided when a student is reintegrated to mainstream (Deakin and Kupchik, 2016).
- 4** The body of research suggests that the ethos which guides practice seems to have a fairly significant potential for variation across AP settings. Research could usefully explore practitioners' underlying values and their beliefs about the young people with whom they work. It could seek to explore whether and how this shapes the outcomes for students in these settings. In relation to this, it will be important to explore which dynamics shape deficit views of young people and to consider what the most helpful blend of professional backgrounds is as this can have a significant influence on the ethos and approach in each setting.

- 5** One study suggests that not enough is known about the desires of those who work in AP and how this influences their practice and performance (Dean, 2018). This suggests that further research of this type could inform training for AP staff and aid in recruitment and retention. The study also considers where staff in AP have themselves experienced educational disengagement, suggesting this will aid their work and that they will oppose a deficit model of student disengagement (Dean, 2018). More broadly, the research raises the question of whether personal backgrounds that are somewhat similar to those of young people in AP help or hinder staff in their work. It will be important to consider what support staff in this situation require.
- 6** There is a wealth of evidence that young people in AP experience significant levels of choice but there is also concern that practice has become influenced by behaviourist approaches. This may mean students have to choose between resistance or conforming. Large-scale research could provide evidence of the extent to which AP settings base their practice on behaviourist understandings and how this relates to what appears to be the fundamentally relational orientation of much AP practice.
- 7** As identified above, there is a need to more fully understand progress made in AP, in particular focusing on whether disruption means that progress is entirely lost or whether it can be 'picked up' at a later date when the young person is ready. This connects to the ongoing need to better understand the long-term impacts of an AP education on students as they become adults, including when and if they re-join mainstream society and which people and events influence this (Ellis-Martin, 2015).
- 8** The research highlights the risks posed by discontinuities in provision, part time placements and shortened days, with a risk of falling out of educational provision entirely if AP breaks down. There is an obvious need to further explore this area.
- 9** It is shown in the research that staff in AP benefit from a range of support structures and interventions, including supervision, work discussion groups and training in psychodynamic concepts and attachment theory. It is suggested that there is a need for formal pre- and post-intervention evaluation to explore the short- and long-term impact of such interventions on staff wellbeing and performance, and on student outcomes.
- 10** Finally, and in relation to the idea that AP is an attempt to transform the educational experience of the young people who find themselves outside of mainstream schools, it is suggested that research might explore both the nature of such transformation, and how it might be measured as a systematic outcome of effective AP practice.

Recommendations & conclusion

This review has highlighted the fundamental importance of relationships within AP settings. It has explored the relationships that are of most importance, the factors that shape these relationships, the prominence and importance of staff, and the role that relationships play in generating the outcomes of AP. In addition to the suggestions for future research (above), nine recommendations have been identified as follows:

- 1** There is scope for the importance of these relationships to be recognised more fully in policy. One way of doing this would be to provide for an explicit, funded role for pre-16 provision to play in post-16 support.
- 2** Individual relationships are shaped by and in turn shape the systems of which they are part. Funding, commissioning and accountability processes should therefore consistently consider their impact on the relationships that are essential in achieving the desired outcomes.
- 3** The government guidance for using AP currently suggests students can be “directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour” (DfE, 2013, p3). This should be changed to read, ‘students can be directed by schools to off-site provision to better understand the support required to enable their educational success’.
- 4** Research suggests that there is potential for group work in AP settings to improve peer relationships. This is particularly important in relation to the gender difficulties reported in the research.
- 5** Recognition of the importance of relationships with peers and staff must accommodate the needs and preferences of those students who are not relationally motivated or who have less capacity to engage on these terms. Relational practice and organisational culture should foster agency on the part of students while staff need the skills to personalise this approach.
- 6** There is a need to develop an empowering framework of ideas for staff to draw on in their practice. The research currently suggests fairly widespread use of ideas from attachment theory which may be taken to present students as inherently deficient in some way, and which fails to recognise and encourage staff to capitalise on students’ cultural roots and lived experience.
- 7** Supportive structures for staff are widely recognised as important within the body of research. There is a need to ensure that staff working in AP settings receive appropriate and helpful support for working in what can be a significantly challenging environment. There is scope to explore models of more effective management practice as well as effective (psychology-informed) interventions to provide the support staff need.

8 Transferrable gains are those habits, skills, mindsets and practices which can be developed and supported in an AP setting and then transferred successfully to post-AP destinations. The notion of transferable gains is both something which can help with measuring the impact of AP settings, and inform considerations of how to develop efficacy in practice. This is not to underplay support provided to students which can stabilise precarious situations and avoid present difficulties becoming entrenched. As is recognised in the research, the provision of support for present challenges is an important aspect of work in AP. This leads to the final recommendation which considers the challenge that measuring effective practice in AP presents.

9 There is a need to contextualise any measures of success used to assess AP. A number of suggestions are made in the research and these have been collated in the discussion sections above. It would seem that a basket of measures may provide the best approach to measuring success.

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Appendix B:

Search strategy

Searches for the literature review were undertaken in December 2019. All databases were searched twice using the following terms:

Abstract: “Alternative educational provision” OR “alternative education provision” OR “pupil referral unit” OR “AP free school” OR “AP academy” OR “education otherwise than at school”

All text: England OR English OR UK OR Britain OR “united kingdom”

And,

Abstract: “alternative provision” AND (education OR educate OR school)

All text: England OR English OR UK OR Britain OR “united kingdom”

Additionally the following google and google scholar searches set out below were completed.

Databases searched	Number of sources returned
Discover database:	232
Social Care online:	None
Academic search elite:	101
Campbell Collaboration:	None
Directory of open access journals:	None
Web of science (ISI web of knowledge):	23
Sage Premier:	4
Jstor:	262
Scopus:	27

Google search:

(“alternative provision” OR “pupil referral unit” OR “ap free school” OR “ap academy” OR “education otherwise than at school”) AND (england OR english) AND (research OR report) filetype:pdf

Returns 134 sources

(“alternative provision” OR “pupil referral unit” OR “ap free school” OR “ap academy” OR “education otherwise than at school”) AND (england OR english) AND (research OR report) filetype:doc

Returns 161 sources

Google scholar search:

(“Alternative provision” AND school) OR “alternative education provision” OR “alternative educational provision” OR “pupil referral unit” OR “AP free school” OR “AP academy” OR “education otherwise than at school”) AND (England OR english OR UK OR Britain OR “united kingdom”)

Returns 981 results

Appendix C:

Research studies included in the literature review

Note: large scale studies with more than 50 participants or which were undertaken across five or more local authorities or AP sites are highlighted in green.

Title	Author(s)	Date	Participants	Data collection methods	Form of publication
A la recherche du temps perdu: Case-study evidence from off-site and pupil referral units	P. Garner	1996	7 pupils and 3 teachers between 1981-84 and 9 pupils and 2 teachers ten years later	Informal interviews (three questions) and diary	Article
Pupil Referral Units: "Are they effective in helping schools work with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties?"	R. Hill	1997	5 pupils, 1 unit teacher, 3 mainstream teachers, 8 (of 11) SENCos	Documentary analysis, Interviews (with pupils and teachers) and questionnaire (to SENCos)	Article
The Teacher-Student Relationship in Secondary School: Insights from Excluded Students	E. Pomeroy	1999	33 pupils self selecting - all invited to participate	Semi-structured interviews	Article
Alternative Curriculum Programmes at key stage 4	M. A. Cullen	2000	Questionnaires to all schools in 14 LEAs - 198 responses (of 366). 78 interviews with 75 partner organisations (AP), also 26 of 75 returned a questionnaire. 7 Mainstream and one special schools studied in depth with; 59 pupils, 3 former pupils, 18 parents and 26 teachers interviewed	Questionnaire and interviews (included control interview)	Conference paper based on research for an NFER report
The Protection of a Statement? Permanent exclusions and the SEN Code of Practice	J. Gross & MA. McChrystal	2001	Documentary analysis for 26 pupils (10 primary, 16 secondary). 6 cases explored in more detail with 12 semi-structured interviews undertaken with school staff (7), parents (3) and pupils (2)	Documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews	Article
Motivational Patterns in Disaffected School Students: Insights from Pupil Referral Unit Clients	Y. Solomon & C. Rogers	2001	Administrative data for 92 pupils, surveys returned from 67 yr10+11 pupils (of 300, 22% response rate). Interviews with 6 pupils and 16 practitioners	Admin data collated by LA staff. Survey used the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) scales (Midgely et al., 1997). Interviews so used.	Article
Narrative Groupwork with Young Women - and Their Mobile Phones	J. Milner	2003	5 young women from an AP context	Reflective practitioner account of weekly group work in (actually at another location) an AP context	Article
Re-engaging with education	G. Attwood, P. Croll & J. Hamilton	2003	26 young people, opportunity sample but purposive selection	Structured personal interviews - a mixture of open questions and prompts	Article

Title	Author(s)	Date	Participants	Data collection methods	Form of publication
My mates are dead jealous 'cause they don't get to come here!': an analysis of the provision of alternative, non-school-based learning activities for 14-16 year olds in the East Midlands	Learning and Skills Development Agency	2003	Over 80 young people	Scoping with key informants, semi-structured interviews with practitioners, group discussion or individual interviews with up to six young people at two provider sites, document collection.	Report
An evaluation of alternative education initiatives	S. Kendall et al	2003	162 YP included in evaluation. In addition, 100 interviews, with Young people (63), AP staff (18), parents (7), reps from other agencies (12).	Administrative data collection and interviews	Report (NFER)
Study of young people permanently excluded from school	H. Daniels et al	2003	Over-representation of at risk groups, 193 pupils, (156M, 37F) across YR9(86), Yr10(84) and Yr11(23). If refusal then replacement with same characteristics.	Administrative data collection and interviews with young people (first interview[116] final interview [88]), parents (first [105], final [63]) and staff {LEA and other agency} (first [185], final [12]).	Report (DfES)
Pulling No Punches: Young People Talk about Their Experiences at School	B. Bello	2004	One pupil's account	Reflective account	Article
Teachers, teaching and educational exclusion: Pupil referral units and pedagogic practice	A. Meo & A. Parker	2004	Fieldwork structured around a single cohort of 6 yr9 pupils	Ethnographic approach methods	Article
Voices of Disaffected Pupils: Implications for Policy and Practice	K. Riley & J. Docking	2004	Pupils (45 in location one) parents and teachers. Location two 18 pupils in two panels on in a PRU	Pupil panels in location one, questionnaire [with open section] to pupils (3291) and teachers (361) in location two. And two pupils panels (one with PRU pupils)	Article
Concept to practice - applied inclusiveness: an emergent model of socially inclusive practice	S. D. Richards	2004	Past service users, staff, consultants and project partners	Interviews (34), observations, diary, documentary analysis	Thesis
Finding a pedagogy	G. D. James	2005	Auto ethnography plus 13 interviews	Interviews and auto ethnography	Thesis
Pupil and staff perceptions of rewards at a pupil referral unit	J. Capstick	2005	Pupils (11) in yrs 7-9 and Staff (8) at a PRU	Questionnaire	Article
School without walls: Reconnecting the disconnected at 14+	L. Cook	2005	A number of YP case studies but not. 26 students and 21 parents tutors and referring agencies	Largely practitioner narrative. Analysis of organisational data, case studies of individual YP and survey data collected	Article
School exclusion and transition into adulthood in African-Caribbean communities	C. Wright, et al	2005	33 YP, 21M, 12F. 20London 13Nottingham, interviews also undertaken with parents or significant others (19) and individuals from the voluntary / statutory sector (22)	Individual and friendship group interviews - considerable drop out from first interview through group interview to final interview	Report - JRF

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To attend or not to attend? Why some students chose school and others reject it	J. D. Davies & J. Lee	2006	Students (13 non attending, 35 attending), parents and teachers (only one view included)	Discussions	Article
Refusing to be excluded: Finding ways of integrating psychotherapeutic modalities to the emerging needs of a Pupil Referral Unit	N. T. Malberg	2008	Practitioner case study	Reflections	Article
Girls with emotional and behavioural difficulties: an investigation into the provision being made to meet girls' needs	J. Katherine	2008	40 structured interviews with staff (20) and female pupils (20)	Structured interviews	Thesis
Developing a school team to improve links between education and mental health services	W. York	2009	Reflective narrative	Professional reflective narrative (CAMHS)	Article
An exploratory case study of a 'successful' pupil referral unit (PRU)	M. F. Leather	2009	23 transcripts of pupil diaries from 13 pupils, semi-structured interviews with two key leaders, focus group of 8 staff, field observations and 9 complete sets of PASS data	Used PASS (pupil attitude to school and self). Video diaries, semi structured interviews, focus groups	Thesis
Data, data everywhere - But not all the numbers that count? Mapping alternative provisions for students excluded from school	P. Thomson & L. Russell	2009	85 semi structured interviews with LA and school staff, pupils and parents/carers	Statistical mapping, survey, interviews and observations. And six ethnographic case studies.	Article
Concentric circles of containment: A psychodynamic contribution to working in pupil referral units	C. McLoughlin	2010	Educational Psychologist reflective narrative from work in PRU settings. Focuses on one YP in particular working also with their mother and with staff	Reflective narrative	Article
Using positive relationships to engage the disengaged: An educational psychologist-initiated project involving professional sports input to a pupil referral unit	K. Cullen & J. Monroe	2010	Educational Psychologist's account of working in a PRU with a sports project. 10 boys involved in project with ethnicity data. Interviews with project (football) staff and phone interview with parents	Semi-structured individual and group interviews, discussion with pupils in the PRU, unstructured observations, telephone interviews	Article
'Possible selves' of young people in a mainstream secondary school and a pupil referral unit: A comparison	D. Mainwaring & S. Hallam	2010	16 PRU pupils (9M7F) and 9 MS pupils (5M4F). All Yr11.	Individual semi-structured interviews framed around the psychological concept of 'possible selves'	Article
The role of school exclusion processes in the re-production of social and educational disadvantage	L. Gazeley	2010	48 semi-structured interviews with 31 respondents. 13 in secondary schools, 14 supporting secondary schools from the LA or working in other AP contexts, 4 mothers of excludees.	Semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and a small number of observations	Article
Not present not correct	J. Evans	2010	20 YP, also parents (2) and staff / professionals (28)	Interviews (individual and group) and documentary analysis	Report - Barnardos analysis

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Girls and gender in alternative education provision	L. Russell & P. Thomson	2011	Based on 2009, Thomson and Russell data	Ethnographic approach methods	Article
An art programme for excluded teenage females attending a PRU: an investigation of the experiences of pupils, staff and an educational psychologist researcher	C. Murphy	2011	Semi structured interviews with the Head of the KS3 PRU, two pupils (1 KS3 and 1 KS4), and three members of staff.	Reflective diary kept through plus semi structured interviews	Thesis
New Avenues to School Exclusion and Social Exclusion for Urban Young People in the UK	D. Briggs	2011	20 unofficially excluded young people involved. 8 Heads and 5 key school reps	Ethnographic methods - open ended qualitative interviews and observations. Also interviews with School Heads and other key school representatives	Book chapter
What factors can contribute to placing young people at risk of exclusion and what support interventions can help to reduce their risk of exclusion?	D. A. Ruddock	2011	9 Yr11 boys.	Semi structured interviews with 9 yr11 boys four of who had been excluded.	Thesis
What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project	N. Lawrence	2011	11 PRU staff, 6 mainstream staff and 1 member of the behaviour support service	Focus group	Article
School refusal and reintegration	K. J. Grandison	2011	5 YP and their mothers. A learning mentor from the short stay school and a mentor from the receiving mainstream school	20 semi structured interviews	Thesis
Reflecting on the experience of mainstream education: Exploring pupils' views in a pupil referral unit	D. Martin	2011	10 students interviewed by two male peer researchers. 20 pupils responded to the questionnaire, 6 YP aged 15-16 involved in the focus group	Focus group, questionnaire, peer interviews (2 interviewers)	Book chapter
Understanding the mental health needs of older adolescents with behavioural disorders	L. Hackett et al	2011	Study of 52 young people but data from returns from teachers and parents	Used SDQ. Supplemented with additional questions	Article
What happens to pupils permanently excluded from special schools and pupil referral units in England?	A. Pirrie et al	2011	24 YP trajectories. interviews with YP, parents / carers and various professionals	Based on interviews. Three waves that turned into ripples due to time constraints and difficulty in gaining participation	Article
Chaos, destruction and abuse: Dramatherapy in a school for excluded adolescents	E. Zeal	2011	Professional reflective narrative	Reflective narrative	Book chapter
Transforming troubled lives - A north east Pupil Referral Unit's response to the challenge of NEETs	C. Woolford	2012	Professional reflections and use of organisation data	Evaluation of an on-site project (LIFT)	Book Chapter

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An interpretative analysis of parents' and pupils' experiences of permanent exclusion and placement in a pupil referral unit: implications for successful reintegration	N. J. Wood	2012	6 parents, 6 pupils, PRU staff (#?)	Semi structured interviews with parents and children. Focus group with PRU staff.	Thesis
What is the impact of Family SEAL?: an evaluation of the Family SEAL intervention examining the impact of the programme on children and parent/carer participants	H. Ward	2012	Interviews with parents / carers (3PRU 5MS), children (2PRU [both8YO] 3MS [all9YO]), a class teacher (MS) and 2 behaviour support staff (PRU).	Pre and post measures of Emotional Literacy (child, parent and teacher) and SDQ (parent and teacher) Use of semi-structured interviews	Thesis
Outside the norm	M. Greenwood	2012	A 'lead' teacher, three specialist teaching assistants, two sets of artists in residence (1 musician one theatre group). 13 pupils (4F9M).	Grounded theory approach to an ethnographic case study. Used interviews (un/semi-structured), observations on site and of Facebook group and profile pages, and visual methods	Thesis
The impact of social class on parent-professional interaction in school exclusion processes: deficit or disadvantage?	L. Gazeley	2012	Professionals N=27 - 13 in secondary schools, 14 in out of school contexts and parents (mothers) N=4	48 in depth interviews with 31 respondents, 5 observations and a short questionnaire at the end of the research - 28 responses (from 31)	Article
The back on track AP pilots	NFER	2012	354 interviews and conversations with a range of stakeholders; Pilot project staff (129), School/PRU staff (41), Local authority staff (58), Young people (86), Parents carers. (21), Others (19)	Individual face-to-face interviews, informal discussions, focus group discussions, observations, documentary analysis. Measures used by some of the pilot settings; Pupil Behaviour Assessment System (PBAS), PASS, Emotional Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT), SDQ	Report - NFER for DfE although commissioned by DfCSF
Parents of excluded pupils: Customers, partners, problems?	G. Macleod et al	2013	22 interviews with 13 parents (or those in a parental role) plus interviews with 72 front line service providers	Interviews	Article
Supporting behaviour support: developing a model for leading and managing a unit for teenagers excluded from mainstream school	M. Solomon & G. Thomas	2013	Professional reflective narrative	Reflective narrative	Article
Therapeutic storytelling in a Pupil Referral Unit : the story of intersubjectivity	N. H. Long	2013	5 young people, one teacher, researcher's own reflections	Interviews	Thesis
What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)? An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff	N. Hart	2013	Six children aged 9-13 (5F, 1M). four staff members.	Semi-structured interviews framed around main themes in the emotional resilience research. Some scaling questions were used.	Article

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Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: pupil perspectives	S. Michael & N. Frederickson	2013	16 semi-structured interviews (18 YP invited to take part) with pupils aged 12-16. Gender and ethnicity data included	Semi-structured interviews (plus a small focus group for checking initial findings with three pupils)	Article
Managed hearts? Emotional labour and the applied theatre facilitator in urban settings	S. Preston	2013	Practitioner reflections, two vignettes and 25 survey responses	Survey and vignettes and reflection	Article
An exploration of the use of PATH (a person-centred planning tool) by educational psychologists with vulnerable and challenging pupils	M. Bristow	2013	Nine PATH gatherings considered. Participants; 9YP. 6 parents (5Mums 1Dad), 5 MS staff. 5 AP staff, 6 other professionals, 3 senior AP staff, 1 senior EP, the EP team	Semi-structured interviews (34), questionnaire (16 responses), 9 post-PATH reflection sessions	Thesis
Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education	J. Pillay et al	2013	13 learners aged 11-14, (3 girls, 10 boys). All parents, 7 mainstream teachers, questions via email, interviews with three professionals	Completion of sentences and life essays. Four invited to participate in interviews, all parents asked to complete a qualitative questionnaire and teachers answered questions via email documentary analysis	Article
School meets street: exploring the links between low achievement, school exclusion and youth crime among African-Caribbean boys in London	J. Scott & L. Spencer	2013	32 in school participants (3 staff, 29 pupils). 12 community participants.	Qualitative in depth interviews.	Report - Institute for Social and Economic research
Rebel without a voice : developing student voice in a pupil referral unit	E. J. Jones	2013	42 staff. 10 students (6 of whom were on the student council).	Focus groups involving staff (4 groups) and students (2 groups).	Thesis
From mainstream school to pupil referral unit: A change in teachers self-understanding	S. Farouk	2014	Three female teachers who had transitioned from MS to AP	Interviews, twice each	Article
'Sugar and spice and all things nice, that's what little girls are made of': considering the identity constructions of a girl labelled as SEBD who attends a PRU	J. G. Wilkinson	2014	1 female pupil but draws on naturalistic conversations with the girl and two adults who work closely with her	Draws on naturalistic conversation	Thesis
Working-class males and engagement with high school education	M. Wilson	2014	23 young men previously referred to an external organisation for 121 intervention	Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews	Article
Person centred planning in action	E. Corrigan	2014	Six young people aged 5-15 (5M 1F), (2MS, 4AP). 43 adults including parents and professionals.	Questionnaires with open questions as well as scale questions. Completed at the end of the PCP meeting and review meeting	Article
Alternative Provision for Students with SEBD in Australia and England	P. Cooper & R. Grandin	2014	Total of 58. 31 Frontline professionals (17Aus, 14Eng), Academic and public service stakeholders (9Aus, 18Eng). 25 institutions investigated, (16Aus, 9Eng)	Site visits and informant style interviews	Article

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The role of alternative educational provision for young people	M. Cajic-Seigneur	2014	Group discussions 8 staff, student questionnaire 98, 10 interviews with pupils, and two interviews with Heads	Group discussion with staff, documentary evidence, questionnaires with young people, semi structured interviews with a sample of students and with centre staff	Thesis
What's the alternative?	P. Thomson & J. Pennacchia	2015	17 AP sites	Snapshot case study visits	Report - prince's trust
'No-one knows what happens': enriching our understanding of the resilience of young people in a Pupil Referral Unit	D. H. Hunter	2015	4 YP	Semi-structured interviews	Thesis
An investigation into how girls identified as having Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and staff of one specialist education provision feel pupil participation in decision making and planning regarding their needs can best be facilitated	J. Martin	2015	5 staff members and four girls with SEBD	Semi structured interviews, photos and documentary analysis	Thesis
It's the best thing I've done in a long while	K. Vincent	2015	14 School girl mothers	In-depth semi-structured repeat interview (over 18 months) supplemented with interview with professionals	Article
Developing psychological services at a Pupil Referral Unit	C. Bruder & J. Spensley	2015	26 pupils offered regular psychological support (9 able to be involved in questionnaire), 6 of 11 staff questionnaires returned	Questionnaire with pupils, teachers and a focused discussion with management.	Article
Dare to be different, dare to progress: a case study of a Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit 2009-12	E. A. Ellis-Martin	2015	Staff 8 - 4 teachers, 4 Tas, 9 students	Documentary evidence, 4 group interviews (staff), 13 paired interviews (pupils), researcher observations	Thesis
Up or down and out? A systemic analysis of young people's educational pathways in the youth justice system in England and Wales	C. Lanskey	2015	32 Young People - purposive sample	Interviews with YP (26 interviewed twice, 6 once), practitioners (18 YOT and 27 school) and reps from national bodies (6), 2 school focus groups observations of educational contexts, documentary analysis	Article
Facilitating re-engagement in learning: A disengaged student perspective	L. J. Nicholson & D. W. Putwain	2015	35 students aged 14-16 (23M 12F)	Semi-structured interviews	Article
Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city	D. Trotman et al	2015	49 Year nine pupils (aged 13-14), (23F 26M), 8 behaviour coordinators from the schools (7MS, 2AP)	Ethnographic approach using semi-structured interviews	Article

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Linking care and education data	J. Sebba et al	2015	640,000 pupils eligible for GCSEs in 2013, sub-sample of 7852 CLA. Plus, interviews with 26 YP, 18 Carers and 43 professionals (20DT, 17SW, 6VH) identified by YP	Quantitative analysis of the data set plus interviews	Report - REEs centre
Complementing the mainstream: an exploration of partnership work between complementary alternative provisions and mainstream schools	J. Pennacchia & P. Thomson	2016	Case study of two complementary programmes	Various described above in detail (2015 study original)	Article
Disciplinary regimes of 'care' and complementary alternative education	P. Thomson & J. Pennacchia	2016	Case study of two complementary programmes	Various described above in detail (2015 study original)	Article
Positive narratives: the stories young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) tell about their futures	C. Tellis-James & M. Fox	2016	8 young people aged 14-16, 5F 3M.	Narrative methodology, unstructured informant style interviews	Article
Alternative educational provision in an area of deprivation in London	M. Cajic-Seigneur & A. Hodgson	2016	10 students interviewed not detailed numbers for anything else	Documentary analysis, group discussions with staff, semi-structured interviews with management, questionnaires and Semi structured interviews with students for previous cohorts	Article
Can PRUs work? : a search for an answer from within a lived experience	H. F. Dodman	2016	Head teacher, 8 members of staff, four pupils	Questionnaire with PRU Heads at a national conference 72 out of 120 Responses. interviews, four with the Head and	Thesis
I don't need pink hair here	M. P. Levinson and M. Thompson	2016	10 YP aged 11-16, 5 staff	Paired interviews with YP, semi-structured interviews with teachers	Article
Tough Choices: School Behaviour Management and Institutional Context	J. Deakin & A. Kupchik	2016	15 Teachers, 8US 7UK	Interviews with Heads / practitioners from a range of contexts	Article
Engaging disaffected learners in Key Stage 4 through work-related learning in England	C. White & A. Laczik	2016	4 onsite and 5 offsite programme managers and 34 learners. Telephone interviews with practitioners at 18 centres and 9 employers / trainers.	Interviews, observations and telephone interviews	Article
Hard to reach and hard to teach: supporting the self-regulation of learning in an alternative provision secondary school	D. W. Putwain et al	2016	29 hours of observations, 35 interviews with students, 23 Male 12 Female all aged 14-16. 37 staff members, 23 male 14 female	Semi structured interviews with staff and students and semi structured observations - both adapted from Roehrig and Christensen (2010)	Article
Permanently excluded and perceived as challenging: a narrative inquiry into a parent's perception of their child	J. Walsh	2017	1 parent	Voice recorded narrative interview	Thesis

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The moral frontiers of English education policy: governmentality and ethics within an alternative provision free school	F. Farrell et al	2017	3 members of staff, assistant Head, deputy principal, trainee teacher	Semi-structured interviews	Article
That's me when I'm angry: seeking the authentic voices of pupils and teachers from inside a Pupil Referral Unit through autoethnography	H. E. Woodley	2017	Data collected from a small group of pupils, three used as case studies	An auto-ethnographic approach. Detailed research journal kept	Thesis
The dynamics of learner engagement: a critical investigation of a visual arts initiative at a Pupil Referral Unit in the North-West of England	C. Kinsella	2017	Year-long project with 26 site visits. Individual semi-structured interviews with 5 members of staff and five students (plus questionnaire with students)	26 site visits over the course of the year. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation	Thesis
Identity matters: Language, practices and the (non) performance of rudeness in a Pupil Referral Unit	S. Dray	2017	Year-long ethnographic study, the PRU accommodates up to 16 14-16 year olds.	Ethnographic approach, a year-long study in two centres	Article
Pathologising the white "unteachable": South London's working-class boys' experiences with schooling and discipline	G. Stahl	2017	23 White working class boys (5 in a PRU)	Observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and visual methods	Book chapter
From Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to mainstream education: a Q methodological study exploring the perceptions of PRU and mainstream secondary school professionals on reintegration	H. Armstrong	2017	47 PRU and mainstream school professionals (16PRU 31MS), 14Male 33Female	A Q methodology study, preceded by a questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews to develop the q set.	Thesis
The importance of psychological need satisfaction in educational re-engagement	L. J. Nicholson & D. W. Putwain	2018	35 students aged 14-16 (23M 12F) and 37 members of staff (23 male 14 female)	Semi structured interviews and observations using an adapted version of the schedule developed by Roehrig and Christesen (2010)	Article
An exploration into the parental experience of Emotionally Based School Non Attendance in young people : an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	R. Browne	2018	5 parents	Semi-structured interviews	Thesis
The Emotional Learning of Educators Working in Alternative Provision	D. M. Alvarez-Hevia	2018	All staff involved: 2 qualified teachers and five mentors	3 months of observations plus 14 semi-structured focus group interviews with staff at the centre.	Article
An exploration of the factors that lead to the successful progression of students in alternative provision	P. Hamilton & G. Morgan	2018	8 semi-structured interviews with students aged 16-18	Semi-structured interviews	Article

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Exploring the experiences of excluded pupils: a case study at a primary Pupil Referral Unit	C. Jarvis	2018	8 male pupils	Semi-structured interviews	Thesis
From 'pushed out' to re-engaged: a grounded theory study into the experiences of young people who chose to transition to a 14 to 16 college	J. Heslop	2018	10 YP, 6 who attended 14-16AP, 3 MS and one home schooled	Focus group and semi-structured interviews	Thesis
One of ours: an exploration of inclusion and the use of alternative provision	Z. L. Brown	2018	Four school leadership team members, four alternative provision leads and four educational psychologists	Semi-structured interviews based around a vignette (BERT)	Thesis
'They won't let me back.' Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)	R. Jalali & G. Morgan	2018	13 pupils aged 7-16	Semi-structured interviews	Article
An appreciative inquiry of young people's transition into 'alternative provision'	S. Martineau	2018	8 students (4M4F) interviews, 2 staff focus groups - (13 staff)	Interviews and focus groups	Thesis
Heads of alternative provision: committed to realising young peoples' potential in an unregulated market	A. Malcolm	2018	23 Heads of AP - 3 interviews and 20 surveys	Survey and interviews (trialing the survey)	Article
Freedom and reinvention: the experience of disengagement from education for young people and their educators	C. Dean	2018	10 educators and 16 YP interviewed, observations-55YP, 21 educators. YP participating in visual activities 45.	Participatory research visual activities and informal interviews and observations	Thesis
Challenging the orthodoxy on pupil gang involvement: When two social fields collide	K. Irwin-Rogers & S. Harding	2018	20 pupils interviewed, (16M4F, 7 gang involved), interviews with 25 staff (14M11F)	Participant observation totalling 50 hours, interviews	Article
Alternative Provision Market analysis	B. Bryant et al	2018	Focus groups - 29 Las, survey, 118 Las, plus 15 fieldwork visits to Las	Survey to Las and three regional focus groups, online survey to all LA lead AP officers, in depth discussions with leaders and partners in the field of AP in the 15 local areas.	Report - gov
Investigative research into alternative provision	M. Mills & P. Thomson	2018	MS Heads 276, AP Heads or equivalent 200, studies in 25 AP settings selected for representation	Telephone interviews with Heads plus case studies which involved, face to face discussions with Heads, staff and pupils and a mix of face to face and phone interviews with parents	Report - Gov
Developing and maintaining the teacher-student relationship in one to one alternative provision: the tutor's experience	W. Fitzsimmons et al	2019	6 tutors (4F 2M)	Semi-structured interviews	Article
Pupils' views on mainstream reintegration from alternative provision: a Q methodological study	G. Atkinson & J. Rowley	2019	9 primary and secondary pupils aged 10-16. (7M2F)	Q-set developed from questionnaire and literature	Article

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You Heard Me Swear but You Never Heard Me! negotiating Agency in the pupil referral unit classroom	C. A. Kinsella et al	2019	Lessons 1 - illustrator, 2 male pupils, 2 TAs and researcher. Lesson 2 - engineering teacher, 2 female TAs, 3 male students and researcher	Field notes and audio recordings of two KS3 lessons where the first author was involved as a participant observer	Article
Turning points in a qualitatively different social space: young adults' reflections of alternative provision	A. Malcolm	2019	18 young adults (11M 7F)	Retrospective life-history interviews	Article
Facilitating work discussion groups for staff in complex educational provision	G. Ellis and V. Wolfe	2019	All staff. Special school 9 (7F2M), AP1 5 (3teachers 2TA), AP2 7 teachers with a management role (6F1M)	Themes shared back to the group at the end of each sessions, reflected on and written up and then shared again with the group	Article
Pupils attending a shared placement between a school and alternative provision: Is a sense of school belonging the key to success?	T. Cockerill	2019	19 staff, 11 pupils aged 10-16 (9M 2F)	Semi structured interviews. Also pupils completed - Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993)	Article
Alternative spaces of failure. Disabled 'bad boys' in alternative further education provision	C. Johnston & S. Bradford	2019	30 participants in interviews / focus groups, yr 10-11 all male	10 day blocks at beginning middle and end of college calendar (observations and documentary analysis). Also semi-structured one to one interviews and small focus groups.	Article
The implementation of an mHealth intervention – rezone	C. Edridge et al	2019	79 students, 8 teachers	Data collected for 79 students as part of a larger trial. Also, post-implementation consultation with staff	Article
An evaluation of the impact of an integrated multidisciplinary therapeutic team on the mental health and well-being of young people in an educational setting	J. Dillon & S. Pratt	2019	55 members of staff, 25 students, 8 families	Institutional data plus questionnaires to service users (pupils, parents/carers) and to staff	Article
Everton Free school social impact study	Corbett et al	2019	Survey c.200 former students, 18 in-depth interviews (6staff 12former students), observations during fieldwork period	Survey, non-participant observations and in-depth qualitative interviews. Also produced a database (documentary evidence?)	Report for EFS
Young people and alternative provision: Perspectives from participatory-collaborative evaluations in three UK local authorities	D. Trotman et al	2019	200 CYP, 30 managers / stakeholders, 8 parents, LA officers and governors	Multiple methods across four evaluations, A child rights perspective qualitative approach also using documentary analysis	Article
The life stories of students excluded from school and their engagement in education	S. Farouk	no date	35 yr 10-11 pupils (15F 20M). Phase two - four pupils and four staff	Interviews with pupils, an advisory group meeting with Heads, staff. Phase 2 - group meetings and questionnaires to pupils	Report

