UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

School of Psychology

Parental Involvement in Primary School Interventions to Support Children's Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being: A Systematic Review of the Literature and Exploration of StoryLinks

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND EXPLORATION OF STORYLINKS

Joanna Ruth Spragg

There is considerable emphasis in research literature and educational policy on the importance of parental involvement in supporting children's academic and social outcomes. Much of this is based on correlational, rather than experimental evidence. Also, the focus has been on children's academic outcomes and attainment, as opposed to emotional and social outcomes. A systematic review of existing literature was conducted to evaluate recent empirical studies of school-based interventions that actively involve parents in supporting and promoting children's mental health and emotional well-being. It aimed to describe the characteristics of such interventions and to consider whether there is research evidence supporting the 'added value' of these. Results suggested the interventions promoted a range of positive outcomes related to children's mental health and emotional well-being. However, further work is needed to understand to what extent positive outcomes are related to the specific approaches and methods used, especially as there is much variation in the types of interventions used. Currently there is little robust empirical evidence for the additional benefits of actively involving parents in interventions to support children's emotional well-being. Also, further research needs to be undertaken that seeks to consult with the parents, children and professionals facilitating these complex interventions to better understand potential barriers and facilitating factors of parental involvement in school-based programmes.

The empirical paper aimed to explore the experiences and views of parents, children and facilitators who have been involved in the StoryLinks intervention. StoryLinks is an individualised, parent-partnership intervention that involves children, parents and school in the co-creation of

stories to support children's emotional well-being and literacy skills (Waters, 2010). StoryLinks is based on the principles of therapeutic storywriting and attachment theory, including the use of metaphor to explore feelings and story-making as a way of supporting relationships. There is some preliminary evidence that the intervention may have a positive effect on children's emotional and social well-being, behaviour and rates of exclusion, as well as the parent-child relationship (Water, 2014). The current exploratory study drew on the multiple perspectives of parents, children and facilitators who have been involved in the intervention. The research aimed to gain a better understanding of their experiences of the implementation, process and outcomes of StoryLinks. Semi-structured interviews with eight participants (four facilitators and two parent-child dyads) were conducted and thematic analysis was applied to the transcripts. The findings for each group were analysed and presented separately. There were some commonalities between groups, suggesting that participants had mostly had a positive experience of StoryLinks and considered it to be a collaborative intervention. Outcomes identified by participants included that StoryLinks had supported relationships and adults felt they had developed greater insights into their child's emotions and behaviour. Findings were discussed in the context of relevant literature and research related to therapeutic storywriting approaches and parental involvement in interventions. Consideration was also given to implications for future practice and research.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, JOANNA SPRAGG declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Parental Involvement in Primary School Interventions to Support Children's Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being: A Systematic Review of the Literature and Exploration of StoryLinks

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission:

Signed: .....

Date: .....

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Abbreviations

DfE Department for Education

DoH Department of Health

FamilySEAL Family Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

FSS First Steps to Success

MC Making Choices

MCP Making Choices Plus

PATHS Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

RCT Randomised Controlled Trial

SEAL Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

SLF StoryLinks Facilitator

SCK Stay Cool Kids

TIK Tuning Into Kids

WoE Weight of Evidence

Chapter 1: Parental Involvement in School Based Interventions to Support Children's Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being: A Systematic Review of the Literature

1.1 Introduction

International research highlights the importance of promoting children's social and emotional skills to improve health, well-being and life outcomes (Adi, Killoran & Janmohamed, 2007). Families, schools and communities have an integral role in supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people to promote positive outcomes (Mendez, Ogg, Loker & Fefer, 2013). Evidence suggests that good mental health and emotional well-being is a protective factor against emotional and behavioural problems, criminal activity and alcohol or substance misuse (Adi et al., 2007).

The World Health Organisation (WHO; 2014) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community". This is the preferred definition for the current review, as it recognises that positive mental health is not just the absence of a disorder, but includes social, emotional and psychological well-being. Furthermore, it reflects current trends in this area of research, which has seen a shift from a focus on negative aspects of individual's functioning, and the presence of emotional and behavioural 'problems', to a consideration of positive dimensions of functioning, such as emotional health, happiness and life satisfaction and how these can be promoted (Banerjee, McLaughlin, Cotney, Roberts & Peereboom, 2016). The term mental health is often used in parallel with a range of terms, including 'emotional literacy', 'emotional and social competence' and 'well-being' (Weare, 2010). The current review uses the terms mental health and emotional well-being to encompass the development of individual skills that support and promote positive mental health (i.e. ability to manage feelings, social skills and self-awareness), as well as the contextual factors that may impact on this (i.e. school environment). Both terms are used to reflect the wide range of terminologies utilised in this field. Mental health has historically been associated with the health profession and perhaps has more medicalised connotations, although, as discussed earlier, it is becoming more widely used and recognised in other fields (Weare, 2010). The broader term 'emotional well-being' is included, as this is more commonly

used in educational settings (Weare, 2010), as well as health and social care contexts. It also reflects the focus of the current paper on emotions and their role in supporting children's well-being.

Parental involvement in school is argued to be a key factor for children's well-being and school attainment (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008). The current review aims to explore the current evidence base for parental involvement in school-based interventions that promote and support primary-aged children's mental health and emotional well-being. This introduction will consider the role schools currently play in supporting children's mental health and emotional well-being. The concept of parental involvement will be defined, leading to an exploration of potential psychological frameworks that inform this area and key reviews. The introduction is followed by a systematic review which considers recent contributions to the empirical knowledge base for school-based interventions targeting the development of children's mental health and emotional well-being, that include an active parent component.

1.1.1 The Role of Schools in Supporting Children's Well-being

Schools are concerned with academic outcomes, but also equipping their pupils with the skills they may need to lead a happy and productive adult life. Academic achievement, emotional and social competence and physical and mental health are fundamentally interrelated and schools should promote all of them to maximise the well-being of children and young people (Diamond, 2010). This can then impact positively at an individual and wider societal level (Murphy & Fonagy, 2012). There have been recent developments in UK policy that emphasise the importance of supporting children's mental health and emotional well-being (Department of Health [DoH], 2014; DoH, 2015). Prevalence estimates in the literature vary, however the most recent British surveys carried out by the Office of National Statistics in 1999 and 2004 indicated that 10% of children and young people aged 5 to 15 years old had a clinically diagnosable mental health disorder. Schools play a significant role in prevention and early intervention work to promote mental health and emotional well-being (Weare & Nind, 2011). Furthermore, as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) struggle to cope with limited resources and increased pressures, there is an increasing responsibility on schools to support vulnerable individuals and groups (DoH, 2015).

A vast range of interventions are currently used in schools to support children's mental health and emotional well-being and these are delivered at individual, group and systemic levels. These include strategies to promote positive well-being, as well as prevention and intervention to reduce emotional and behavioural difficulties in children (Banerjee et al., 2016). Guidance

published by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2008) provides some clear recommendations for schools about best practice for promoting mental health and emotional well-being in primary education settings. Research supports a tiered approach, meaning schools should implement universal, whole school approaches, with targeted interventions for those children and young people identified as vulnerable. Further recommendations include training for teachers to identify children at risk, effective liaison between schools and outside professionals and working closely with parents (Shucksmith, Jones & Summerbell, 2010). The positive impact of parental involvement on school outcomes and children's well-being is recognised in research, legislation and policy (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Mendez et al., 2013; Weare & Nind, 2011; Department for Education [DfE], 2015). The perception that parental involvement has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes has been influential in the development of policy and interventions. However, reviews of the research suggest the evidence is largely correlational and evaluations of interventions are technically weak, for example using small samples or not having baseline equivalence between the comparison groups (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Gorard & See, 2013). Furthermore, there is limited evidence for effective ways to involve parents in school-based programmes specifically aimed at supporting children's mental health and emotional well-being (NICE, 2008).

This report will consider the evidence for interventions that are delivered to support children's mental health and emotional well-being in primary schools, with a focus on those that seek to engage parents. Schools are accessible and well placed to facilitate parental involvement in interventions. Furthermore, they may be perceived by parents as a more acceptable setting than an external clinic, supporting enrolment and attendance (Cheney, Schlosser, Nash & Glover, 2014). Despite this, targeted parent interventions to support children's mental health are still mainly facilitated in clinical settings and these have been the focus of research (Mendez et al., 2013).

Findings from a review of school-based mental health initiatives (Shucksmith et al., 2010) suggested that there are barriers to understanding the effectiveness of parental involvement. These included a lack of robust and quality research and heterogeneity in the way that parents are involved in interventions, for example parents may ask to become involved in parent skills training groups or be invited to attend parent and teacher meetings.

Taken together, it is concluded that further analysis is required to develop understanding of the features of parental involvement in such interventions and how these may contribute to positive outcomes.

1.1.2 Defining Parental Involvement in School

The concept of parental involvement is a complex one, with different interpretations in both literature and research. Epstein (1996) proposed six different categories of family involvement; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. This is one of the most well recognised frameworks in the literature and much of the research draws on this framework. However, it is important to note that Epstein's framework is not based on empirical evidence, but is better conceived of as a reflection of the sort of things parents might do, or the ways in which they get involved (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). This model does highlight that the concept of parental involvement includes a wide range of behaviours and activities, both direct and indirect.

Shepherd & Carlson (2003) suggested that parent involvement is just one type of family intervention in schools and this should be considered separately from home-school collaboration, parent education, parent training, consultation and therapy with parents. Home-school collaboration is focused on the nature of the relationship between school and family and is perhaps more a partnership than parental involvement. Parent education involves information from a planned and broad curriculum being delivered, typically in a group format, whereas parent training involves a less broad curriculum and more of a focus on specific skills, such as a behaviour management strategy. Consultation involves a parent and professional working together to develop a plan to deal with a specific identified problem. Finally, parent or family therapy is a direct intervention, with the focus of change being the person receiving the therapy.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) proposed a theoretical model of the process of parental involvement, in which they outlined why parents may become involved in their child's education and how this may influence children's educational outcomes. They posited three influential factors that impact on parents' decision to become involved with school; parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of invitations to be involved and parents' personal life context. Motivational beliefs encompass parental role construction of involvement and sense of self-efficacy. Invitations may include general invitations from school to parents, or specific invitations from the class teacher or children. This model highlights that parental involvement is a dynamic and interactive process. It is important to expand understanding beyond the individual parent and their participation in an event, but also the situational and contextual factors that influence the decision to take part, such as the relationships involved and the resources available (Barton, Drake, Perez, St Louis & George, 2004). Parental engagement may be best conceptualised as involving some feeling of ownership of an activity, rather than just taking part, likely resulting in a greater commitment than involvement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

In the current review the term parental involvement will be used, as it is felt that this is the more widely recognised term in this field and it captures the different activities of parents when actively involved and included in school-based interventions. It is recognised that interventions may involve parents in different ways and through this involvement they may feel more engaged, with a sense of partnership with the school.

1.1.3 What are the Psychological Frameworks and Perspectives that Underpin Parental Involvement in Interventions?

Much of the literature concerned with parental involvement is focused on the association with pupils' academic outcomes rather than emotional and social outcomes (El Nokali et al., 2010). This may be in part that many of the behaviours conceptualised in definitions of parental involvement are of an academic nature, such as helping with homework or volunteering to support pupils' reading in school. Key influential factors in terms of attainment have been identified, such as parents modelling educational values and high aspirations, as well as engaging in discussion and educational activities with their child (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Some school-based interventions to support children's emotional and social well-being involve parent training or parent education programs, such as the IncredibleYears (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Stoolmiller, 2008). These programmes are based on the premise that children's negative behavioural and emotional outcomes are linked to parents inconsistently using, or lacking, key parenting skills and that these skills can be improved (Axford, Lehtonen, Kaoukji, Tobin & Berry, 2012). Shucksmith et al. (2010) concluded that there is substantial support from research that parent training is associated with positive parenting, improvements in the parent-child relationship and a positive change in teacher ratings for children's behaviour in school. These programmes typically involve training parents on behavioural approaches, based on social learning principles (Havighurst et al., 2015) and may include teaching strategies such as modelling skills, ignoring undesired behaviour and using positive reinforcement for desired behaviours.

It could be argued that the focus of behavioural approaches on observable behaviours, and external factors that may shape these, neglect underlying emotional processes (Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2002). Havighurst et al. (2015) highlighted potential factors that may impact on the effectiveness of a behavioural approach to parent training, such as difficulties in attachment relationships, parents' own emotional regulation and parental depression or marital conflict.

Alternative approaches to parental involvement in interventions to support children's emotional and social well-being include those that focus on relationships and how parents may support emotional competence. This can be defined as how one understands, discusses and

regulates emotions (Greenberg, Kusche, Cook & Quamma, 1995). Research suggests that parents' own emotion socialisation practices play a critical role in the development of children's emotion competence and self-regulatory capacities (Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2002). Interventions based on this theoretical model are based on the premise that targeting the way parents and teachers respond to and teach a child about their emotions, shapes the child's knowledge of, and ability to regulate their own emotions. Havighurst et al. (2015) proposed this as a potential pathway through which a child's social and behavioural functioning is supported. A meta-analysis of parent training programmes found that encouraging and promoting emotional communication in the parent-child relationship was one of the most powerful components of these (Boyle, 2008).

Approaches that involve and engage parents in school-based interventions to support children's mental health and well-being are often based on an ecological framework, recognising and emphasising the interactions and relationships among significant systems in an individual's life (Brofenbrenner, 1979; El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). These systems include school, family, community and peers. The ecological framework posits that an individual's outcomes are influenced by multiple factors and their complex interactions over time. Furthermore, it emphasises interventions that focus only on 'within-child' factors or the school disregard the significant influence of family within a child's life (Shepard & Carlson, 2003).

Parental involvement in school-based interventions allows two key contexts (i.e. home and school) to interact and influence children's outcomes and creates continuity across both contexts; for example, behavioural and social development may be supported through the development of consistent disciplinary approaches and shared expectations between different settings (El Nokali et al., 2010).

Consideration of the wider contextual factors within which interventions are placed is necessary. Bennett (2000) highlighted that parenting behaviours are complex and moderated by many factors, including social relationships, socio-economic circumstances and parents' own experiences of being parented. It is arguably not enough to simply involve the parent in an intervention, with the assumption that this then ensures the success of the programme. Instead further research is needed to develop our understanding about 'what works best for whom and in what circumstances' (Shucksmith et al., 2010, p.24).

1.1.4 Recent Relevant Reviews

Recent reviews have given more consideration to the association between parental involvement in schools and academic attainment, than the role of parental involvement in the

promotion of social and emotional well-being (El Nokali et al., 2010). The next section summarizes those reviews that have considered the latter.

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger (2011) published a comprehensive review of universal school based programmes for social and emotional learning (SEL), including those with a parental component. Their review suggested that overall SEL programmes had significant positive effects on targeted social-emotional competencies, as well as attitudinal, behavioural and academic domains. They did not find an additional benefit for multicomponent programmes over single-component and suggested that this perhaps related to difficulties with implementation, due to the complexity of co-ordinating the various components. They also highlighted that few studies directly compared the effects of single component programmes with those that involved multiple components and suggested that further research is needed to determine the extent additional components add value to universal interventions.

Weare and Nind (2011) conducted a critical review of 52 systematic reviews and meta-analyses of mental health in schools. Ten of these reviews concluded that the involvement of parents was a critical component of effective multi-component interventions targeting a range of outcomes, including stress and coping interventions, preventing mental disorders through targeted interventions, and pro-social youth development. The limited evidence for multi-component programmes being more effective compared to those that only involve work at school level was highlighted, with reference to the potential difficulties with implementation of these complex programmes. Weare and Nind (2011) concluded that involving families and communities can potentially contribute strength to work in schools, when they are appropriately involved. However, Weare and Nind (2011) did not expand on what appropriate involvement may look like and which evidence-based interventions in the literature have the most support.

Efforts have been made to review research that looks specifically at parental involvement in school-based interventions. Mendez et al. (2013) published a review focused on parental involvement in school-based mental health services and considered how these are implemented within a multi-tier model of delivery. They synthesised empirical research published between 1995 and 2010. Group parent training sessions were found to be the most common method of involving parents, with the majority of interventions taking the approach of enhancing parenting skills to prevent, or to address, externalising behaviours in children. Limitations of the literature that they highlighted included a lack of research on targeted school-based interventions focused on supporting children with internalising behaviour problems. They also suggested that further work was needed to consider whether formal group parent training was the most effective way of involving all parents.

1.1.5 Summary

Taken together, there is considerable emphasis in research literature and policy on the importance of parental involvement in supporting children's academic and social outcomes (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; DfE, 2015). Much of this is based on correlational, rather than experimental evidence and the focus has been on academic outcomes and attainment, as opposed to emotional and social outcomes (El Nokali et al., 2011). Furthermore, there is heterogeneity in the types of intervention being delivered and the approaches they are based on.

The current review aims to address this gap by identifying, describing, and evaluating recent empirical studies of school-based interventions that actively involve parents in supporting and promoting children's mental health and emotional well-being. There are cost and resource implications for schools in facilitating multicomponent interventions and involving parents. In the current educational climate, with growing budget and resource restrictions, it is important to update the evidence base to inform decision making.

The following research questions frame the present review:

1) What are the characteristics and key factors of interventions that involve parents?
2) What does research suggest is the impact or 'added value' of parental involvement?

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Data Sources and Search Strategy

To identify published, peer-reviewed, evaluation literature of school-based interventions that aim to support primary-aged children's mental health and involve an active parental component, I conducted electronic searches using three online databases; PsychInfo, Web of Science, and the Educational Research Information Centre (ERIC). The initial searches were carried out in September 2016. These searches were carried out again in March 2017 to update the literature and to ensure no further studies needed to be included in the review. No further studies were identified at this time.

Information from previous reviews (Evans, Harden, Thomas & Benefield, 2003) and early search strategy development suggested that narrowing the search with terms referring to 'parental involvement' or 'intervention' may have excluded relevant studies. As a result, the initial search of the databases was kept broad, with combinations of key terms relating to emotional well-being and school, to maximise the likelihood of capturing relevant literature. A full list of search terms can be found in Appendix A.

To reduce the risk of identifying only the most accessible research, further records were identified through a manual search of the reference lists of eligible studies. Furthermore, during preliminary reading, two interventions developed and delivered in the UK were identified, namely Family Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and StoryLinks. Although there was only limited research available, those studies which existed (n = 2) met inclusion criteria and were therefore included in the final group of studies for review.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the systematic search strategy used for this review. The figure is based on the PRISMA template (Moher, Liberate, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009).

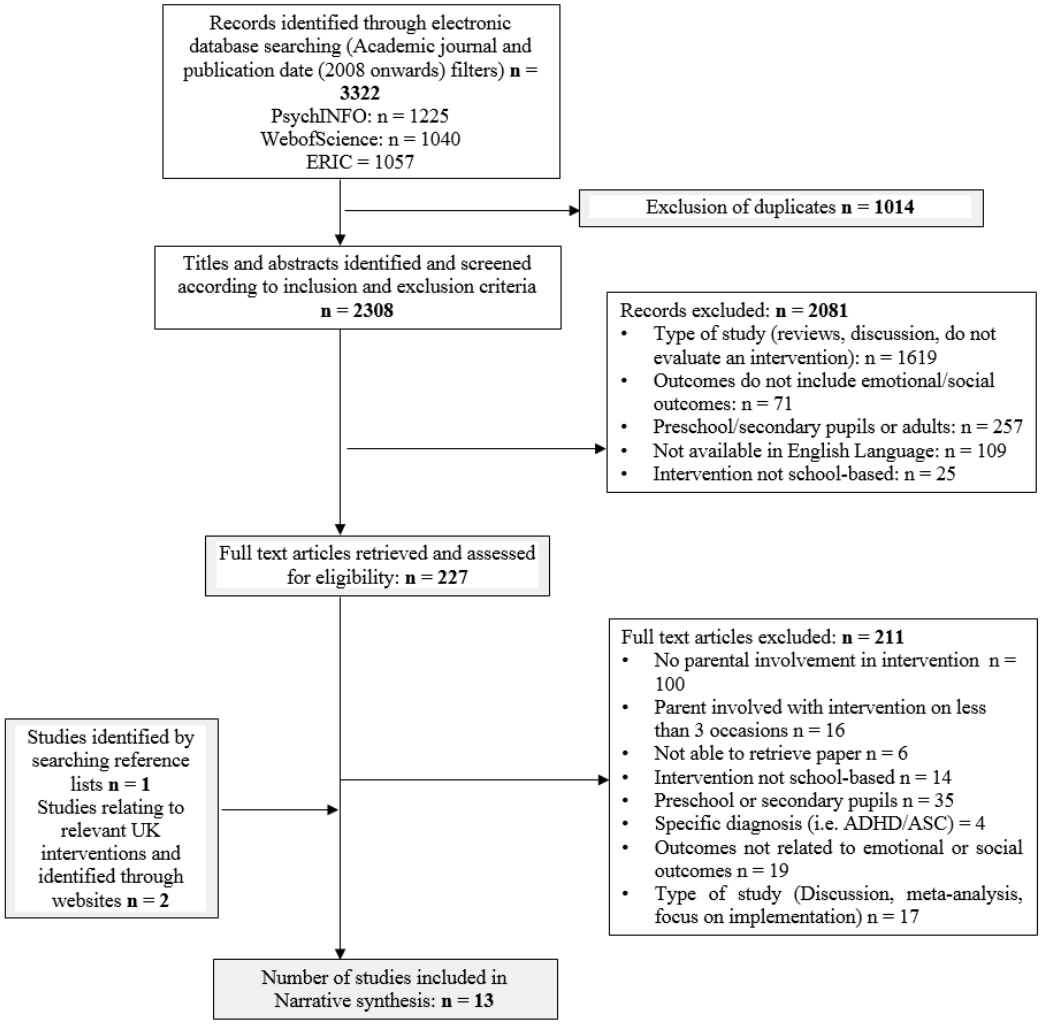


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Study Selection Process

1.2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 1. provides a summary of the inclusion and exclusion criteria that were applied to the studies. These were developed in relation to the research questions and aims of this review.

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Selection of Studies

Study Item	**Inclusion Criteria**	**Exclusion Criteria**
Participants	Primary aged children	University students
		Preschool children
		Secondary aged children
		Specific diagnosis (ADHD/ASC)
Intervention	School-based interventions	Clinic-based interventions
	Active parental involvement	Home-based only
	Universal or targeted	Parent involved on less than three occasions
Outcomes	Outcomes related to mental health or emotional wellbeing	Academic outcomes
		Health outcomes
Language	English	Not in English
Type of research	Outcome evaluation	Secondary literature or opinion piece e.g. review, discussion
	Peer-reviewed, published studies	Unpublished studies e.g. conference papers, dissertations
Date of publication	2008 onwards	Before 2008

Studies eligible for inclusion in the review were published after 2008. The decision to exclude published research prior to 2008 was based on the identification of earlier reviews that had a similar focus to the present paper. Durlak et al. (2011) published a comprehensive review of universal school based programmes for social and emotional learning. They included interventions with a parental component and considered studies up till December 2007.

Furthermore, Mendez et al. (2013) conducted a review of parental involvement in school-based mental health services and included literature from 1995 to 2010. Thus, it was decided that focusing on publications from 2008 onwards would allow for the extension of extant findings and consideration of recent developments in this area.

In order to be included in this review, interventions had to be school-based, with an active parental component. During the screening stage, it was found that some interventions reported involving the parents indirectly, for example sending home a newsletter or requests for parents to complete homework related to the aims of the intervention. There was no additional information provided about the extent that this was completed. To ensure that the interventions included a substantial and active parent component, those that did not aim to directly involve parents on three or more occasions were excluded. Interventions that were not delivered in the school setting (e.g. only home or clinic based) were also excluded.

1.2.3 Data extraction and synthesis

Data was systematically extracted from the 13 eligible individual studies and key details about the features and outcomes of these were captured in a table to inform the review (Appendix B). This included information about the intervention being evaluated, as well as the sample size and sample characteristics, study design and outcome measures. A qualitative approach to data synthesis and analysis was used to critically review the literature.

1.2.4 Study Quality Assessment

There were some considerable differences between the type of studies identified; for example, some articles had small samples sizes and limited control measures, while other studies were larger and used a randomised control design, with a range of conditions that children were assigned to. As there were only 13 studies identified, no further exclusion due to specific study designs was applied. Instead all available studies were included but it was recognized that there was substantial heterogeneity in study designs and thus findings needed to be evaluated with this in mind.

As a result, the EPPI-Centre Weight of Evidence (WoE) tool was used to appraise the quality and relevance of the evidence provided by the 13 included studies (Table 2). Three criteria (A, B, C) were used to assess the quality of each study and these are combined to give an overall judgement of the weight (D) of the evidence from that particular study in answering the review question (Gough, 2007). The criteria are: A. Internal methodological coherence and quality, regardless of appropriateness to present review. B. Relevance of research methodology in

answering the current review's questions. C. Relevance of the study's focus (population, topic, setting) in relation to the current review's questions. Additionally, checklists and guidelines adapted from the Cochrane EPOC checklist (Greenhalgh, Robert, Bate, Macfarlane & Kyriakidou, 2005) were used to inform decision making about the methodological quality of the studies identified.

Table 2 Weight of Evidence

	A **Internal methodological coherence**	**B** **Relevance of design**	**C** **Relevance of focus**	**D** **Overall WoE**
Universal Interventions				
Downey & Williams (2010)	Low	Medium	High	Medium
Fraser, Lee, Kupper & Day (2011)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium/High
Terzian, Li, Fraser, Day, & Rose (2015)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium/High
Kiviruusu et al. (2016)	Medium/High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Malti, Ribeaud & Eisner (2011)	High	High	High	High
McClowry, Snow, Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez (2010)	Medium/High	High	High	Medium/High

McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, Hill & McClowry (2016)	Medium/High	High	High	High
O'Connor, Cappella, McCormick, & McClowry (2014)	Medium/High	Medium	Medium	Medium
O'Connor, Rodriguez, Cappella, Morris & McClowry (2012)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium/High
Targeted Interventions				
Havighurst et al. (2015)	Medium/High	Medium/High	High	Medium/High
Stoltz et al. (2013)	Medium	Low/Medium	Medium	Medium
Walker et al. (2009)	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Waters (2014)	Low	Medium	High	Medium

1.3 Systematic Review Results

The results of the systematic review are organised in the following way. Firstly, an overview will be provided of the final thirteen studies' key characteristics, including the geographical location of the research, the design and the measures used. This is followed by a narrative synthesis of the identified studies and the interventions that they evaluated. Studies are grouped according to whether they are evaluating a universal or targeted intervention, reflecting the NICE guidance (2008) and research support that advocates that primary schools should adopt a tiered approach to support children's mental health and emotional well-being. The results will then be discussed in relation to the review questions.

1.3.1 Study characteristics

Table 3 summarises key characteristics from the thirteen included studies, with further considerations provided below.

Table 3 Characteristics of Included Studies

Reference	Intervention evaluated	Country	N of schools involved	Sample size (Children)	% male	Mean Age (yrs)	Ethnicity	Parental attendance, including mean number of sessions attended (M)
Universal								
Downey and Williams, (2010)	Family SEAL	UK	7	Not clear	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Fraser et al. (2011)	Making Choices & Making Choices Plus	USA	2	443	51.2	8.9	Maj. Latino	Not reported
Terzian et al. (2015)	Making Choices & Making Choices Plus	USA	2	479	50	8.7	Maj. Latino	27% participated in at least one session
Kiviruusu et al. (2016)	Together at School	Finland	79	3704	48.6	8.1	Not reported	73% had individual discussions with teachers

Reference	Intervention evaluated	Country	N of schools involved	Sample size (Children)	% male	Mean Age (yrs)	Ethnicity	Parental attendance, including mean number of sessions attended (M)
Malti et al. (2011)	PATHS/ Triple-P	Switzerland	56	1675	52	7.45	Not reported	19% present all four units. M = 3.07
McClowry et al. (2010)	INSIGHTS	USA	6	116	53	6.7	Maj. African American	M = 8 of 10 sessions
McCormick et al. (2016)*	INSIGHTS	USA	22	435	52	5.38	Maj. Black non-Hispanic	25% present for all 10 sessions M = 5.93
O'Connor et al. (2014)*	INSIGHTS	USA	22	435	52	5.38	Maj. Black non-Hispanic	25% present for all 10 sessions M = 5.93
O'Connor et al. (2012)	INSIGHTS	USA	11	202	56	6.07	Maj. African American	47% present for all 10 sessions M = 7

Reference	Intervention evaluated	Country	N of schools involved	Sample size (Children)	% male	Mean Age (yrs)	Ethnicity	Parental attendance, including mean number of sessions attended (M)
Targeted								
Havighurst et al. (2015)	Tuning Into Kids	Australia	37	204	74	7.05	Not reported	34.1% attended all 8 sessions. M = 6
Stoltz et al. (2013)	Stay Cool Kids	The Netherlands	48	264	72	10.1	Maj. Native Dutch	Not reported
Walker et al. (2009)	First Steps to Success	USA	34	200	73	7.2	Maj. Hispanic	94% of home sessions delivered
Waters (2014)	StoryLinks	UK	7	12	75	Not reported	Not reported	42% present for all 10 sessions

1.3.1.1 Geographic Location

As shown in the table above, the 13 included studies took place in a variety of countries. It is important to exercise caution when generalising effects across contexts and cultures, especially in consideration of the differences in education systems. Replication studies of outcome research demonstrate mixed results, suggesting that intervention content and structures may be more context and culture bound than previously recognised (Fraser et al., 2011). This suggests that it is important to consider the congruence of the programme with the population for which it is intended, as well as adaptations that may need to be made for effective implementation.

1.3.1.2 Participants

This review included studies that took place with primary-aged children. There are some differences between countries in terms of the age that formal primary education begins, however in line with UK primary schools the ages of the children included ranged from 4 to 11 years old.

While all studies considered children's outcomes, four also considered outcomes for the parents (Downey & Williams, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2012; Havighurst et al., 2015; Waters, 2014). Both quantitative and qualitative measures were used to do this. Teachers were also included as participants in some studies, in terms of their assignment to the intervention or control conditions, however none of the studies included measures of teacher outcomes.

Interestingly, the gender of children was balanced in those studies that looked at universal interventions, however those that considered outcomes for targeted interventions showed a bias towards the inclusion of males. This may reflect a focus of interventions on the presence of externalising behaviours as selection criteria. Research suggests that there are gender differences in terms of emotion expression, with males potentially more likely to express externalising emotions and associated behaviours (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013).

1.3.1.3 Research design

The majority of studies (11) utilised data from participants that they recruited themselves. Two studies built on data from earlier studies to explore their research questions, with regards to the INSIGHTS Into Children's Temperament intervention (McCormick et al., 2016; McClowry et al., 2010).

As previously identified, there was considerable heterogeneity in the research designs employed. Eight studies (Kiviruusu et al., 2016; Malti et al., 2011; McClowry et al., 2010;

McCormick et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2014; Havighurst et al., 2015; Stoltz et al., 2013; Waler et al., 2009) used a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design, with all but one (Walker et al., 2009), using the school as the unit of randomisation. RCTs are often argued to be the most appropriate design for evaluating the efficacy of an intervention, as they are able to control for the bias of unmeasured confounding factors (Harrington, Cartwright-Hatton, & Stein, 2002).

Three studies (Fraser et al. 2011; Terzian et al. 2015; O'Connor et al, 2012) employed a quasi-experimental design, meaning that there was no control group or they lacked random assignment, increasing the potential for selection effects between conditions on observed and unobserved factors. Researchers recognised this as a limitation and noted that they tried to control for bias, for example by including multiple variables for child and family factors in their analysis. The internal methodological coherence and quality of these studies were assessed to be of medium quality. Their quality was impacted on by high attrition rates and only pre- and post-measures taken, with no follow-up.

The two UK studies (Downey & Williams, 2010; Waters, 2014) identified both used less rigorous research designs, in this instance a mixed-methods case study and pilot study. The small sample sizes and lack of a control group limit the generalisability and causal inferences from findings, however they were considered to provide some useful information about two current interventions developed and delivered in the UK.

1.3.1.4 Measures

Twelve of the thirteen studies (Downey & Williams, 2010; Fraser et al., 2011; Terzian et al, 2015; Kiviruusu et al., 2016; Malti et al., 2011; McClowry et al., 2010; McCormick et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2014; Havighurst et al, 2015; Stoltz et al, 2013; Walker et al., 2009; Waters, 2014) used teacher report measures pre- and post-intervention to examine outcomes for children. Most of these were validated outcome measures, although some were adapted from validated measures for the purposes of the study. Two of the studies (Fraser et al., 2011; Kiviruusu et al, 2016) exclusively relied on teacher reports, however the rest of the studies used reports from a range of stakeholders. Teacher ratings of primary school child behaviour are widely recognised as valid (Fraser, Lee, Kupper & Day, 2011), however in the identified studies teachers were often involved in the delivery of the intervention and this could have biased their responses. Furthermore, evaluation of a child's behaviour in a range of settings and from different perspectives is considered good practice (Adi et al., 2007).

Some direct assessments of children's skills relating to behaviour or social competence were also utilised in five studies (Terzian et al., 2015; McCormick et al., 2016; O'Connor et al.,

2014; Havighurst et al., 2015; Stoltz et al., 2013). These were used pre- and post-intervention and included assessments of children's mastery of social information processing skills and emotion knowledge. Some studies also reported on outcomes that are not directly relevant to the current review, such as reading achievement and academic engaged time, and these were not extracted.

Interestingly, although all the included studies evaluated interventions which included some aspect of active parental involvement, only four examined outcomes related to parents (Downey & Williams, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2012; Havighurst et al., 2015; Waters, 2014). The outcomes considered included parents' self-reports of parenting efficacy, self-expressiveness in the family, and maternal emotional style.

1.3.2 Synthesis of results

1.3.2.1 Universal

Eight studies evaluated four different universal interventions. These were Making Choices Plus (Fraser et al., 2011; Terzian et al., 2015), Together at School (Kiviruusu et al., 2016), Triple P and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS; Malti et al., 2011) and INSIGHTS Into Children's Temperaments (McClowry et al., 2010; McCormick et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2014; O'Connor et al., 2012). In addition, a pilot study of FamilySEAL (Downey & Williams, 2010) was also included. Although developed as a targeted intervention, this pilot study implemented FamilySEAL as a universal programme due to recruitment constraints and difficulties engaging some families.

All nine studies provided information about the interventions and their implementation. In keeping with their universal nature, all the interventions delivered their curriculum content to children through classroom based sessions. The interventions were all manualised and an external facilitator was involved in the delivery of all but one of the interventions (Together at School). Instead, Together at School involved an extensive training programme for teachers prior to implementation, including four training modules delivered over 10 months. There was considerable variation in the frequency and duration of the classroom components of the interventions, with INSIGHTS comprising of ten weekly sessions, each lasting 45 minutes and the PATHS curriculum consisting of an average of 2.4 sessions a week over a one year period.

The social and emotional competencies targeted by the interventions varied. For example, Terzian et al. (2015) and Fraser et al. (2011) reported on Making Choices Plus (MCP); a multi-element version of Making Choices (MC), which involved parents and teachers in behaviour generalisation activities. The programme utilised a curriculum based on a cognitive-behavioural

approach, which aimed to enhance children's emotional regulation and social information processing skills to reduce aggressive behaviour. Parents were offered five voluntary information sessions, about the programme's content and school services, as well as monthly newsletters with enrichment activities. A limitation of the Fraser et al. (2011) study is the lack of information about parental attendance at these meetings. Importantly, in a later study, Terzian et al. (2016) reported that attendance at sessions was low, with only 27% of children in MCP having a parent who participated in at least one of the five sessions offered. Fraser et al. (2011) compared effects of the single component intervention MC with the extended, multi-component MCP and a control group. Both programmes showed a reduction in children's levels of aggression compared to the comparison group but the effects of the MC versus MCP versions did not differ. A later study also reported that both MC and MCP found a large effect size on children's aggressive behaviour, however the comparison between the effect sizes of the two interventions was not significant (Terzian et al., 2015). However, MCP was found to be more efficacious than MC in terms of positive effects on children's social information processing skills, in particular improved response decision and lower hostile attribution.

Malti et al. (2011) evaluated PATHS and Triple P, which are both established and widely used preventative interventions. Both of these programmes used a cognitive-behavioural approach; PATHS promotes social-cognitive development and emotional understanding, with the aim of reducing externalising behaviour problems and supporting children's social competence (Malti et al., 2011). Triple-P is a group-based parental training programme, that aims to promote positive and effective parenting and, as a result, to reduce aggression and externalising behaviour. Malti et al. (2011) considered the single and combined effects of these programmes, when delivered as universal interventions in school and family contexts. The PATHS and Triple-P components took place separately, with no clear opportunities for school and home to work collaboratively. The attendance of parents at the four Triple-P sessions was low; 27% of the target population attended at least one session, with 19% completing all four units. Malti et al. (2011) reported that children in the PATHS intervention showed a reduction in aggressive behaviour and impulsivity, according to teacher and parents reports and these effects were sustained over time. The effect sizes were moderate according to teacher reports, whereas parent reports found small effect sizes. Interestingly, differences were found between the children's self-report and other sources, as no differences were found pre- and post-intervention in children's self-reports of externalising behaviours. This highlights the importance of multiple sources of information when evaluating intervention effects. This study also found that the combined PATHS and Triple-P condition did not have stronger effects on externalising behaviours than the PATHS intervention alone.

The INSIGHTS, FamilySEAL and Together at School interventions were guided by systemic and psychotherapeutic principles, which focused on the building of relationships, as well as skills teaching. Downey and Williams (2010) reported on a pilot study of the FamilySEAL programme. FamilySEAL built on the whole-school and universal SEAL programme. It aimed to enlist parents as partners in enhancing children's social and emotional competence, which was also targeted through structured teaching in the curriculum. Parents took part in group sessions, in which they were provided with information and training on different social and emotional skills, as well as discussion and modelling of the approaches used by school in the SEAL programme. This is arguably more aimed at home-school collaboration than the previous interventions. Children were also involved in the sessions, joining their parents for the second half of the group sessions to participate in structured activities, focused on consolidation of strategies and relationship building. The qualitative evidence from the pilot study of FamilySEAL (Downey and Williams, 2010) points to parents identifying some general benefits of the programme, such as opportunities for social networking and quality time with their child. However, there was no control group, meaning the evidence for specific gains from engagement with FamilySEAL resources and activities is limited.

Four of the included studies (McClowry et al., 2010; McCormick et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2014; O'Connor et al., 2012) evaluated INSIGHTS, which aimed to improve the goodness of fit between individual children's temperaments and the demands, expectations and opportunities of the environment (McClowry et al., 2010). Temperament theory was used as a framework to enhance children's attention and behaviour repertoire, supporting self-regulation. INSIGHTS also aimed to enhance children's empathy for others and to teach problem-solving skills. Parents were involved in parent training groups, focused on training parents in temperament based strategies, to reduce children's externalising behaviours and enhance their self-regulation. Parental involvement was more intensive than in both MCP and Triple P, with a total of 10 weekly sessions. The average number of sessions attended by parents varied between studies, ranging from 5.93 (O'Connor et al., 2014) to 8 sessions (McClowry et al., 2010). The intervention also involved sessions for teachers being run in parallel, as well as a classroom programme for children. All four studies found significant reductions in children's aggressive and disruptive behaviours. O'Connor et al. (2014) also reported that children in the INSIGHTS group demonstrated increases in their sustained attention.

O'Connor et al. (2012) compared the original programme with an adapted collaborative version, which involved joint teacher and parent sessions. This aimed to enhance the communication and collaboration between parents and teachers. O'Connor et al. (2012) found that children whose parents and teachers were involved in the collaborative sessions showed a

lower level of behaviour problems post-intervention than those in the parallel model, also their levels of disruptive behaviour declined at a faster rate. McCormick et al. (2016) analysed how parent participation in INSIGHTS moderated programme effects on children's outcomes. Interestingly, INSIGHTS effects on sustained attention and a reduction in disruptive behaviour was greater for those children whose parents participated at lower levels in comparison to high levels. The authors highlight an important difference between these two groups at baseline; those children whose parents participated at lower levels were more likely to be at risk for negative behavioural outcomes and poor attention, which probably resulted in larger intervention gains. This finding highlights the importance of considering the children and parents most likely to benefit from a parenting component in a universal intervention and to target resources at their recruitment and retention.

Kiviruusu et al. (2016) evaluated the Together at School programme. This utilised a whole school approach, which aimed to integrate and promote children's social and emotional skills in the curriculum. The classroom climate, school-work environment and relationships were also targeted through the intervention. In terms of parental involvement, The Together at School programme focused on home-school collaboration and the parent-teacher relationship. It included individual meetings with parents, as well as a parents' evening. These are facilitated by the class teacher, which likely also supported the relationship between teacher and parents. Kiviruusu et al. (2016) monitored the teachers' use of the various methods throughout the intervention and reported that 73% of teachers carried out individual discussions with all parents and 13% with over half of the parents. 93% of teachers also organised a parents evening. Kiviruusu et al. (2016) found no intervention effects of the Together at School programme on children's socio-emotional skills or psychological problems when looking across all the grades. However, exploring effects within each grade, a significant reduction of psychological problems was reported for third grade boys, but not for girls. Intervention dosage moderated effects highlighting the importance of ensuring proper resources are invested to allow for effective implementation. The study considered the short-term effects of a complex whole-school approach and the authors suggest that the lack of main effects may be related to the short follow-up and intention of the intervention to become part of the school curriculum and environment, which needed time to be embedded in the school system.

1.3.2.2 Targeted

Four of the identified studies considered targeted interventions, where children and their parents were specifically selected. The targeted nature of these interventions potentially allowed for parents to be included and involved more specifically and intensively than in the earlier

discussed universal interventions. All of the interventions were manualised. The majority of interventions (3) targeted children demonstrating high levels of externalising behaviours. These were Stay Cool Kids (SCK, Stoltz et al., 2013), Tuning Into Kids (TIK, Havighurst et al., 2015) and First Step to Success (FSS, Walker et al., 2009). Waters (2014) reported on StoryLinks, which was described at targeting children at 'risk of exclusion', who may be experiencing difficulties with externalising or internalising behaviours, as well as poor literacy skills.

Three of the studies (Havighurst et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2009; Waters, 2014) reported on levels of parental attendance; this continued to be variable for the targeted interventions, although this was generally higher than in the universal interventions. Parents attended an average of nine of the ten StoryLinks sessions, six of the eight TIK sessions and 94% of home sessions were implemented in the FSS programme (Walker et al., 2009). There were potentially more resources available to recruit and retain parents in the targeted interventions, which may have impacted on their attendance levels.

Three interventions (TIK, SCK and FSS) were facilitated by non-school based staff, such as psychologists, social workers or specifically trained practitioners. In FSS, the class teacher did take over the implementation of the classroom intervention for the child, although they continued to be supported and monitored by the outside facilitator. The professionals delivering the StoryLinks intervention varied, although most were school-based, for example a Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo) or learning mentor. Similar to the universal interventions, there was variation in the frequency and duration of the different programmes. In terms of the child component, TIK and SCK both involved eight weekly sessions lasting about 45 minutes but SCK was delivered individually while TIK was delivered to the group. StoryLinks was delivered over ten, 30-minute weekly sessions involving both parent and child, and FSS involved a classroom intervention lasting three months.

The interventions all took different approaches despite all of them aiming for an outcome of a reduction in children's externalising behaviours. Stoltz et al. (2013) reported on SCK, which involved children in individual, cognitive based behavioural training focused on targeting problems with social information processing to reduce externalising behaviour problems. Parents and teachers were involved in three meetings. Stoltz et al. (2013) provided limited information about the nature of this involvement, although they did report that the individual analysis of the child's needs and competencies were discussed with the parents and teachers, suggesting that there was some element of parent consultation. Parents also received information following the training session about the content and were asked to practice the skills with the child. Stoltz et al. (2013) found that SCK significantly reduced children's aggressive behaviours according to teacher,

parent and children reports. The effect sizes were small to moderate, which the authors argue is comparable to similar interventions. Children also reported significantly higher levels of self-perception post intervention

TIK targeted children's emotion competence and parents' emotion socialisation practices (Havighurst et al., 2015). This included a school-wide component, with schools implementing either PATHS or a professional learning package, both of which are universal interventions. Children identified at risk for conduct disorder were selected to take part in eight weekly group sessions. Parents were involved in parent training groups. These focused on emotion coaching strategies and supported parents to consider the emotions underlying their child's behaviour and encouraged parents to reflect on their own emotional regulation skills. TIK provided limited opportunities for parents to collaborate with schools, as the group sessions took place with two external facilitators.

An evaluation of the TIK intervention identified that teacher and parent reports demonstrated a significant reduction in the behaviour problems of children in the intervention group, with moderate effect sizes (Havighurst et al., 2015). Direct assessments of children's emotional knowledge using the Kusche Affective Inventory-Revised (Kusche et al., 1988) found a significant effect of time in both the control and intervention group, perhaps due to natural maturation. However, in the intervention group children demonstrated significantly greater change in their emotional understanding, especially in terms of complex emotions. Havighurst et al. (2015) also considered outcomes for parents involved in the intervention. According to self-report measures, parents in the intervention group reported being significantly less emotionally dismissing and more empathic in comparison to the control group. A moderate effect size was found for both outcomes.

FSS utilised a multi-component approach, with each of its components guided by behavioural principles. This intervention did not include a universal component however, rather a classroom intervention that targeted the individual child and utilised clear targets, monitoring of behaviour and reward criterion. This was generalised to the child's home setting through individual parent training, which focused on parents teaching and encouraging prosocial skills and behaviour in their children. This took place through six weekly home visits and linked to the classroom intervention that was implemented at the same time. Walker et al. (2009) reported that children involved in the FSS intervention showed significant reductions in their problem behaviour symptoms compared to the comparison condition and effect sizes were large. Significant gains were also found for children's adaptive behaviours and social skills.

Waters (2014) reported on StoryLinks, which is grounded in attachment theory and psychotherapeutic principles, such as the use of joint storywriting and the metaphors generated, to encourage parents to reflect on their child's emotional and social well-being. The intervention involves the parent, child, member of school staff and StoryLinks faciliator in the co-creation of a story. An individual classroom behaviour target for the child was also agreed, which is monitored by the class teacher and reviewed during the session. Waters (2014) described StoryLinks as a parent partnership programme, reflecting the focus on home-school collaboration. Parents were involved in the individual sessions, which used therapeutic storywriting as a therapeutic context. This aimed to support them to develop their understanding of their child's emotional and social well-being. Waters et al. (2014) reported that, according to teachers' reports on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997), children showed a reduction in their total difficulties score and an improvement in peer relationships, as well as a reduction in their behavioural difficulties scores. This study did not employ an experimental design and there was no control group, therefore it is not possible to infer causality, however the qualitative information provided by interviews with parents, children and teachers suggested that this was felt to be a positive outcome of the intervention. A positive impact on various relationships was also identified, including the parent-child and home-school relationships.

1.4 Discussion

The objective of this systematic literature review was to update the evidence base for school-based interventions targeting children's mental health and emotional well-being and which included an active parental component. The aim was to consider how parents are involved in school-based interventions to support children's mental health and emotional well-being, also to gather a systematic understanding of what works when involving parents in such intervention. Thirteen studies were identified, which evaluated nine interventions. There was considerable heterogeneity in these studies, including the research design employed, the quality of the studies and the measures they used to assess outcomes relating to supporting children's mental health and emotional well-being. However, it was necessary to include this wide range of studies to reflect the complexity involved in evaluating these multi-component interventions and the variety available to schools. The following section will consider the results in relation to the specific research questions of this review.

<u>What are the characteristics and key factors of interventions that involve parents?</u>

All of the interventions reviewed in this report were manualised, ensuring implementation fidelity and replicability. Consistent with previous reviews, the ways in which parents have been

involved in school-based interventions varied considerably (Mendez et al., 2013). Six of the interventions (FamilySEAL; INSIGHTS; Together at School; TripleP; TIK; MCP) involved parents in group sessions; these were both universal and targeted in scope. Group sessions potentially provided parents with opportunities for peer support and discussion, as identified through qualitative information collected from parents taking part in FamilySEAL (Downey & Williams, 2010). However, comparison of the rates of parents' attendance across studies, targeted and universal, suggests that those parents involved in more individual sessions had better attendance rates.

The studies varied in terms of the amount of information they provided about the parental component of the intervention, however the information available suggested that many of the interventions were flexible and took account of situational constraints, for example by providing childcare vouchers or transport. The time commitment required by parents in the interventions ranged significantly; Together at School and SCK involved three meetings, whereas INSIGHTS asked parents to attend 10 sessions, each lasting for two hours. Time demands and logistical issues have previously been found to be one of the main barriers to parental participation in parenting programmes (Axford et al., 2012). Findings from one of the studies suggested that parents of children who may be considered to already be at an advantage, in terms of their social and emotional skills, were most likely to participate in the parental component of a universal intervention (McCormick et al., 2016). It is evident that sufficient effort and resources need to be allocated as part of multi-component interventions, to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families are able to access them.

Three of the interventions (SCK; FSS; StoryLinks) employed individual sessions with parents and children, although the focus of these varied and included; home-school collaboration, sharing information and consulting with parents and parent training on specific behavioural management strategies. Interestingly, only three interventions appeared to involve the parent and child in joint sessions (FamilySEAL, StoryLinks, FSS). Engaging in joint sessions may be a valuable way of supporting the parent-child relationship, as well as giving the parent and child opportunities to practice and embed skills with support from the session facilitator if required.

In line with previous review findings (Mendez et al., 2013), the majority of targeted programmes selected children at risk of or exhibiting externalising behaviours. There continues to be a need for further work to be done to contribute to the evidence base for school-based interventions that involve parents and support children internalising their behaviour.

The majority of the intervention programmes were facilitated by an external professional (all but Together at School, and StoryLinks). While a previous review found that school staff could

effectively conduct social and emotional learning programmes (Durlak et al., 2011), these did not focus particularly on programmes involving parents. Arguably, involving teachers in the implementation of programmes may allow for wider dissemination, reduce the cost and mean that the interventions are used more regularly (Stoltz et al., 2013). Furthermore, evidence suggests that parents may be more likely to attend if the person facilitating the intervention is known to them (Axford et al., 2012).

Analysis of the studies indicated that there were a range of psychological approaches that underpinned the interventions. The heterogeneity of the studies limit conclusions that can be drawn about what approaches appeared to be most effective. Those programmes that were primarily grounded in a behavioural approach (Triple P and FSS) utilised parent training and education, whereas the whole-school and systemic approaches, such as Together at School, appeared to employ a more consultative and potentially more collaborative approach with parents. Kiviruusu et al. (2016) found that the whole school approach of Together at School did not show any main effects on children's socio-emotional skills or psychological problems. This is in line with previous reviews' findings, that also did not find significant effects for multi-component interventions when compared with interventions involving only one aspect of school life (Weare & Nind, 2011). The potential explanation offered is that the broad scope of such interventions may dilute the intensity and result in weaker implementation. Kirviruusu et al. (2016) provided further support for this, as they found that some intervention effects were found when the intervention was carried out with the intended intensity. This highlights again the importance of interventions being carried out with fidelity and commitment with sufficient resources, for these complex interventions to have a positive and meaningful impact on outcomes. Evidence from previous reviews suggests that a whole-school approach, when well-implemented, has the potential to be more effective and have long-term outcomes in comparison to a skills-focused, curriculum-based approach (Weare & Nind, 2011).

What does research suggest is the impact or 'added value' of parental involvement?

Many of the included studies demonstrated significant and positive outcomes for the children following interventions. Improved outcomes spanned across multiple domains and included reductions in disruptive behaviour, improved emotional understanding and social competence. Two studies also reported improved outcomes for parents, specifically an increase in self-reported parenting self-efficacy (O'Connor et al., 2012) and increased self-reported levels of empathy and decreased emotion dismissing (Havighurst et al., 2015). These may constitute important mediators for better outcomes for children, as well as maintenance of these over time.

Four papers allowed for some consideration of the differential impact of actively involving parents in the interventions. For example, both Fraser et al. (2011) and Terzian et al. (2015) compared the single component MC programme with the multi-component MCP and when first considering the data one may conclude that additional activities to involve parents had no significant benefits. However, despite no differences in the effects of the interventions in reducing aggressive behaviours, MCP was found to be more effacious than MC in terms of positive effects on children's social information processing skills. This suggests that it is important for research to consider a range of outcomes when evaluating such interventions to support understanding of their effectiveness.

Surprisingly very few of the studies measured outcomes for parents, yet change in parental behaviour or attitudes following interventions is argued to be a potential mechanism that facilitates positive outcomes for children. For example, one study (O'Connor et al., 2012) compared parents' perceptions of parenting efficacy across two versions of the INSIGHTS intervention; a collaborative model, which involved teachers and parents together in group sessions, and compared this with the original programme where parent and teacher sessions took place in parallel. Parents in both groups reported an increase in parenting efficacy and these changes mediated children's disruptive behaviours. Evidence suggests that parents report greater levels of parenting efficacy when they feel a partnership with their children's teachers and school (O'Connor et al., 2012). Considering this, it is interesting that few of the interventions, especially those that were universal, employed an approach that explicitly encouraged collaboration between school and home.

One study compared the effectiveness of two universal programmes, Triple-P and PATHS (Malti et al., 2011). It looked at outcomes for children who received either of these programmes, as well as a combination and a control group. Their results suggested that Triple-P did not have a significant effect on children's externalising behaviours. Furthermore, the combination of PATHS and Triple-P was no more effective than either of the two separately. As a result, the study concluded that combining universal school and family based interventions has no additional effect. However, it is important to note that this evaluation sought to compare two different interventions, that had been developed separately and for different purposes. Therefore it may not be appropriate to apply these findings to a comprehensive, multi-component, school-based intervention developed with the intention of involving parents in supporting their child's mental health.

McCormick et al. (2016) was the only study identified in this review that looked specifically at the parenting component of a universal intervention and how parent participation moderated

children's outcomes. This was done using data from a previous intervention trial which was not designed for this purpose and this is a major limitation of their study. Their results were surprising, as their analysis demonstrated larger intervention effects on academic, behavioural and attentional outcomes for children whose parents participated at lower rates. These results were explored in consideration of descriptive findings, which indicated that those children whose parents participated at higher rates were already performing better in school at baseline. There is evidently a need for further work to explore whether greater participation would have resulted in larger programme effects for those children with lower scores pre-intervention.

Two papers (Downey & Williams, 2010; Waters, 2014) included qualitative data about parental views of participating in an intervention and the benefits they perceived. While these data may be limited in terms of their generalisability, these data offer valuable information to guide the development of interventions and areas for future research. Waters (2014) reported that parents noted a positive impact on their relationship with school as a result of taking part in the StoryLinks intervention. Parents taking part in the FamilySEAL groups identified benefits of participations as spending quality time with their child and opportunities for peer support.

There were considerable limitations in the data collected and the designs of the studies, in terms of considering the differential impact that including parents in the intervention may have. All of the interventions involved multiple components, such as a classroom based intervention (FSS) or the development of whole-school approaches to behaviour management (Together at School) and the researchers noted that further work was needed to understand and draw conclusions about the relative effectiveness of the different components. Furthermore, many of the studies reported difficulties with recruitment and low attendance rates of parents, which is a further barrier.

Analysis of the studies indicates that addressing the questions of additional benefit of involving parents in school-based interventions to support children's mental health and emotional well-being is complex. Interventions often involve multiple components, which can make it difficult to identify which parts are effective and relate to skills development or behavioural change in children. Interestingly, despite earlier reviews identifying a need for robust and quality evaluation research to identify the key features and effectiveness of parental involvement in school-based interventions (Shucksmith et al., 2007), recent studies have not achieved this.

1.4.1 Review Limitations

This review applied strict inclusion and exclusion criteria to achieve meaningful focus on the research questions. For example, the search was limited to studies published in peer-reviewed

journals, which may have resulted in a publication bias, meaning papers that found significant results are more likely to be published and therefore identified for inclusion in the review. This criterion was intended to ensure that the included studies had undergone rigorous reviews, however it is possible that this then excluded relevant unpublished studies on interventions taking place in schools. A wide range of terms related to emotional and social development were included, however it is possible that there remained some studies that were not identified through the searches.

For the purposes of this review, empirical studies that aimed to evaluate school-based interventions were considered. It is possible that there are studies concerned with the implementation of school-based interventions that include parents, which would include the parent and child voice and would have provided further information to inform the research questions. It is hoped that the included studies did succeed in providing a snapshot of the work in this field, developing understanding of the current knowledge base and directions for future research.

1.5 Conclusions

It is not the researcher's intention to imply that including parents is not beneficial to interventions that aim to support children's emotional and social well-being, rather that there is little robust evidence about the additional benefits of this. The studies and interventions reviewed in the current report support the argument that school-based interventions have the potential to promote a range of positive outcomes related to children's mental health and emotional well-being. This is in line with findings from previous relevant reviews with a similar focus (Durlak et al., 2011; Weare & Nind, 2011). It is less clear however to what extent the positive outcomes for children are related to the specific approaches and methods used. Further work is needed to develop understanding of the specific types of parental involvement in these interventions and their potential influence on positive outcomes for all those that are involved. It is important to continue to build on the evidence base to inform decisions about interventions and develop understanding of what works, for who and when (Shucksmith et al., 2007).

A key message from this paper's findings was that the intervention dosage and implementation fidelity had the potential to impact on participants' outcomes. This is an important consideration when thinking about how interventions can be implemented in real world conditions, without the extra resources that are often available as part of a research project. Wolpert et al. (2015) noted that schools often need to modify manualised programmes to suit their context and local circumstances, however this may result in difficulties with good quality

implementation and fidelity to the programme. Many of the studies reported difficulties with recruitment and low attendance of parents, which suggests that this was a challenge even with the additional resources of the projects.

It is important to recognise parental involvement as a dynamic and interactive process. A limitation of the included literature is the lack of information about reasons why parents may or may not choose to participate in the parent component of interventions. As noted in the introduction, parenting behaviours are complex and need to be understood in the context of social and environmental factors (Bennett, 2010). The majority of the studies utilised a quantitative approach and their attempts to consider parental participation in the interventions were focused on the individual, rather than considering the situational and contextual factors that may have been influential. Consideration of these factors may develop understanding about parent engagement in interventions and how they move along the continuum from involvement to engagement, which may encompass a greater feeling of ownership and commitment. Many studies provided attendance figures and information about how the intervention aimed to involve parents, however from this it is not possible to determine parents' engagement. Two studies included qualitative data from parents about their views of involvement (Downey & Williams, 2010; Waters, 2014), however there are considerable limitations to both studies' designs and analyses and the focus of this data was limited to process and outcomes. Further research needs to be undertaken that seeks to consult with the parents, children and professionals facilitating these complex interventions to better understand potential barriers and facilitating factors of parental involvement in school-based programmes. This is the case for both universal and targeted interventions and the conclusions of this systematic literature review apply to both.

Chapter 2: StoryLinks: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitators' perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

2.1 Introduction

Involving parents in schools is based on the assumption that children's learning and development will be maximised when parents are actively involved in their education (Sheridan, Holmes, Smith & Hoen, 2015). A considerable body of research has documented an association between parental involvement in schools and better educational (e.g., Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) and social (e.g., El Nokali et al., 2010) outcomes in children. As a result, school policy and professional guidelines increasingly highlight the importance of including parents in their child's education and school (Mendez et al., 2013).

When schools implement interventions to enhance children's emotional well-being and mental health they may wish to involve parents. Such interventions which involve parents may be implemented at a universal and preventative level or delivered as more targeted support for specific children experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties (Mendez et al., 2013). The studies reviewed in the previous chapter provided support for the argument that school-based interventions involving parents have the potential to promote a range of positive outcomes related to children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. However, there is still much work to be done to better understand the 'added value' of parental involvement in interventions. It was also highlighted that further work is needed to better understand the experiences of those involved, so that stakeholders' voices can inform how interventions are implemented in real-life school settings (Natasi & Schensul, 2005).

Children who are experiencing difficulties relating to their social, emotional and behavioural functioning may demonstrate a wide range of behaviours that cause others concern. They may internalise their emotional state and become withdrawn and isolated, or externalise and engage in behaviours that are perceived as challenging by others. These behaviours may have a significant impact on children's educational engagement and progress, as well as conferring risk of social and school exclusion (Panayiotopoulos, 2004). It is important to consider personal, contextual and environmental factors when trying to better understand children's needs (Norwich & Eaton, 2015). School-based interventions that involve parents recognise that children's

outcomes are influenced by multiple, interacting factors and seek to involve the various influential systems in a child's life to influence change (Shephard & Carlson, 2003).

Existing school-based interventions involving parents are based on a variety of theoretical frameworks and principles (Barlow et al., 2004; see also chapter 1). Many are based on behavioural approaches, which emphasise the use of rewards and sanctions to promote desired behaviours (Mowat, 2011) and much of the research focuses on these approaches. However, the need to support underlying emotional processes to promote and support children's emotional health and wellbeing has also been stressed (Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2002). Mowat (2011) proposed that approaches that focus on developing an understanding of self and others and facilitate positive interpersonal relationships are key to achieving behavioural changes and their maintenance over time. Interventions underpinned by humanistic or psychodynamic principles are an example of more relationship-focused approaches. Such interventions consider how emotional competence may be supported in the context of interpersonal relationships. School-based interventions based on these principles have received less research attention yet they may offer a promising alternative to behavioural approaches (Havighurst et al., 2015). One example of a collaborative intervention that seeks to develop intra- and interpersonal skills is StoryLinks (Waters, 2010).

2.1.1 StoryLinks

StoryLinks is an individualised, parent-partnership intervention that involves children, parents and school in the co-creation of stories to support children's emotional well-being and literacy skills (Waters, 2010). The intervention targets children identified as in need of support with emotional or behavioural difficulties and with reading skills below age-expected levels. It is based on the principles of therapeutic storywriting, such as the use of metaphor to explore feelings and story-making as a way of supporting relationships and attachment (Waters, 2014).

The intervention comprises a 10-week programme, led by a trained StoryLinks facilitator (SLF), where a child, their parent and a teaching assistant participate in weekly joint story writing sessions. The SLF is typically an educational professional, such as a Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator, teacher or Educational Psychologist, who has attended a three-day training course. Figure 2 outlines the structure and format of the sessions detailed by Waters (2010):

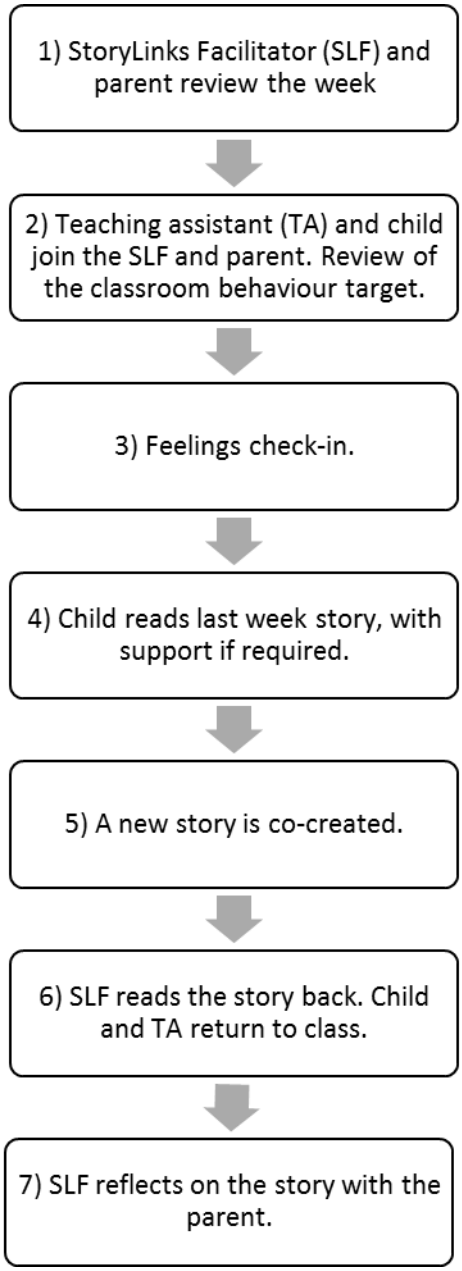


Figure 2 Structure of StoryLinks session

The story is typed up by the SLF, so that a copy can be shared with both school and home to read during the week. The child is encouraged to illustrate their story, which Waters (2014) claimed helps the child to engage with and deepen the metaphor.

Waters (2014) framed the StoryLinks model using theories from a psychodynamic perspective. The creation of the story and use of metaphor is a key element of StoryLinks. Waters (2010) proposed that the metaphors presented in the stories provide useful insight into the child's emotional and social needs. Metaphors and stories have been used in therapy and teaching, as a medium to explore feelings, reflect, and problem solve (Sunderland, 2000). Using stories to

explore feelings is based on the premise that people identify with the characters and gain greater insight into their emotions (Vale Lucas & Soares, 2013). Stories provide a way of indirectly communicating about experiences and outcomes that may help solve a problem and offer new coping strategies (Burns, 2004). Stories have been told for centuries and are a tradition that can be found in all cultures (Golding, 2014). Sunderland (2000) suggested that stories and metaphors may be the natural language of feelings for children, rather than the more rational and cognitive language used in daily life. It is argued that metaphors connect the physical and concrete world with more abstract ideas and concepts, as well as the inner emotional experience (Golding, 2014). After the StoryLink sessions, the parent is supported by the SLF to reflect on the metaphor of the story and their understanding of their child's behaviour (Waters, 2010).

Another central element of the StoryLinks model is the involvement of parents to support children's emotional well-being. Waters (2014) draws on attachment theory as the theoretical basis for StoryLinks. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) stresses the importance of relationships, with a child's attachment security with a primary care-giver providing the foundations for healthy social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural development (Hughes, 2004). Siegel (2001) suggested five basic elements that can foster secure attachments; 1) Collaboration; 2) Reflective dialogue; 3) Interactive repair; 4) Coherent Narratives; 5) Emotional communication. Waters (2014) suggested that the co-creation of the story provides a fun and a mutually enjoyable activity, promoting positive attachments through shared enjoyment. Also, the attachment relationship may be supported as the stories may allow children to confront potentially uncomfortable situations and then to experience security and reassurance from their attachment figure (Frude & Killick, 2011). Furthermore, sessions potentially facilitate attunement and co-regulation of affect, as parents and children are given the opportunity to share their feelings, both in the feelings check-in and through their contributions to the stories.

It has been argued that storytelling can be viewed as a play activity (Frude & Killick, 2011), with the story providing a 'container' for children to safely explore their fears and uncomfortable feelings through the metaphor. Waters (2010) draws on the psychoanalytic concept of emotional containment in the StoryLinks model. This is based on the work of Bion (1897-1979) and can be understood as the process in which uncomfortable thoughts and feelings are projected to another, processed and re-represented by them, so that they can be tolerated and understood. This process can then restore the individual's capacity to think and process their emotions. Waters (2010) suggested that StoryLinks provides emotional containment for the parent and child through its consistency and structure, feelings check-in, use of the story as a container for ideas and feelings, and the SLF's use of active listening skills.

It is also possible to consider other theoretical explanations, beyond a psychodynamic perspective, for how the StoryLinks intervention may impact positively on child and parent. For example, feeling a sense of partnership with their child's school impacted positively on parents' reports of their parenting efficacy (O'Connor et al., 2012). In turn, parenting efficacy is positively associated with children's social and emotional development (Weaver, Shaw, Dishion & Wilson, 2008). As StoryLinks develops partnership between a parent and school, it may help to support parents' feelings of efficacy. Parenting efficacy can be understood in terms of social cognitive theory (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997); parents' beliefs and interpretations about their abilities to effectively exert influence over their children's outcomes may impact on their willingness to engage, the goals they set and their persistence and commitment to those outcomes.

From a developmental perspective, modelling emotional language is another possible mechanism through which positive child outcomes are promoted in the Story Links intervention. The feelings check-in and co-creation of the story provides opportunities for adults to model talking about comfortable and uncomfortable feelings. Accordingly, the StoryLink intervention may impact positively on children's development of emotional vocabulary and understanding, which is an important pre-requisite to emotional and behavioural regulation (Santiago-Poventud et al., 2015).

Storytelling has been suggested as a potential means of supporting children to develop their emotional and social skills. For example, Killick and Frude (2009) posited that listening to stories may impact on children's self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social competence. The link between storytelling and literacy development is well established in research (Saracho & Spodek, 2010), however limited research has explored the potential benefits for children's emotional and social development.

To date, there is only one published and peer-reviewed evaluation of the StoryLinks intervention (Waters, 2014) and the lack of an evidence-base is a significant limitation of the intervention. A case study design was used to evaluate the impact of a 10-week StoryLinks intervention for twelve parents, children and teaching assistants. Measures included a standardised behavioural questionnaire, standardised reading assessment, and thematic analysis of stories and interviews with adults and children. The findings provided some preliminary evidence that the intervention may have a positive effect on children's emotional and social well-being, behaviour, and rates of exclusion, as well as the parent-child relationship. Waters (2014) argued that the co-created stories addressed the child's emotional and social difficulties through the metaphor. However, there are a number of methodological limitations to the study, such as

limited information about the approach taken to analyse the qualitative data. Furthermore, the research was conducted by the author of the intervention, therefore there is a potential bias due to an invested interest in the results. There was also no evidence that the intervention impacted positively on children's reading ability, which is one of the intended outcomes of involvement in StoryLinks. It can be argued that the aims of the intervention are too broad, with the proposed mechanisms of change not defined clearly enough to allow for evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention.

Clearly further work is needed to assess whether and how Story Links is effective in supporting children, families and schools. Anecdotal accounts suggest that there are some challenges in recruitment and implementation of the intervention. Furthermore, many of the studies evaluating school-based interventions which aim to involve parents highlight the challenges to securing parental participation (see Chapter 1). Therefore, more information needs to be gathered about people's views and experiences of taking part in such interventions to better understand the potential facilitators and barriers to parental involvement. StoryLinks is a complex intervention involving multiple components; therefore it was felt that qualitative research would provide important insights into potential factors that affect engagement and outcomes. Furthermore, the inductive methods in qualitative research are more likely to capture issues that are of relevance to participants and highlight processes that may not be considered by quantitative measures (Cunningham et al., 2016).

Due to the limited research on Storylinks, the purpose of the current study was exploratory. The research was guided by the views and experiences of participants and aimed to provide them with an opportunity to talk about their experience of involvement with StoryLinks and the impact they felt it had. It aimed to draw on the diverse perspectives of parents, children and facilitators who have been involved in the intervention. This was with a view to gaining a better understanding of their experiences of the implementation, process and outcomes of StoryLinks. A further aim was to better understand potential barriers and facilitating factors of parental involvement in the intervention. This was done by considering the identified themes in the broader context of literature and research related to therapeutic storywriting approaches and parental involvement in interventions.

In summary, the research question was; what are parents', children's and SLFs' experiences and views of involvement in the StoryLinks intervention? An objective of this paper was to consider how the themes developed can help us to better understand the barriers and facilitating factors of parental involvement in a collaborative storytelling intervention.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Ontology & Epistemology of Research

The epistemological and ontological assumptions of the research inform and guide its structure, including the type of evidence that is gathered, from where and decisions about interpretation (Gray, 2014). Ontology is concerned with the study of being and beliefs around the nature of reality, whereas epistemology considers the questions of how knowledge is possible. To assess the knowledge contribution of research, it is important to have a clear understanding of the epistemological stance of the researcher (Chen et al., 2011).

As the researcher, my position is that of Critical Realism. Critical Realism asserts that an individual's beliefs and expectations, as well as the wider context, impact on the way that the world is perceived (Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000). This means that knowledge is partial and inextricably linked to individual experience and perceptions. This fits with my research assumptions that the exploration of participants' experiences will tell us something about what is going on in the 'real' world, but I also recognise that it will not be a direct reflection of reality and that ultimately reality is complex and constructed (Willig, 2008).

A Critical Realist perspective is concerned with understanding the underlying mechanisms of how and why things occur within a given context (Mertens, 2010). However, it is also recognised that all events may be impacted on by various mechanisms and are explicable by more than one theory. As the researcher, I recognised that any differences observed by participants in the research may be the result of various mechanisms, including biological, social and emotional. It was not the aim of this research to find a causal relationship between StoryLinks and specific outcomes, but rather to consider the experiences of those involved from multiple perspectives.

2.2.2 Research Approach

In line with the aims and epistemological position of the research, it was felt that a qualitative methodology would be most appropriate in addressing the research questions, as this could provide detailed data that captured individual perspectives (Howitt, 2010). Qualitative research has many different definitions. However, it is typically considered as an approach that allows for the exploration of personal and social experiences, including an individual's construction of reality (Smith, 2003). Researchers endeavour to understand psychological constructs, reflected in thoughts, language, and behaviour, from the perspective of the participants (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

2.2.3 Research Design

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with parents, children and SLFs. These data were interpreted using the 6-step method of Thematic Analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Further information about how data were collected and analysed will be provided in the method section of this chapter.

2.2.4 Rationale for Thematic Analysis

Qualitative research approaches are diverse and varied, with some overlap between epistemology and procedures, for example the development of themes (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood, 2013). Holloway & Les Todres (2003) suggested that this flexibility can sometimes result in inconsistency and a lack of coherence. Choices about the methods used should be guided by the goals of the research and the questions being asked. Both Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Thematic Analysis (TA) share many features and both were considered for use in the current study.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is concerned with a detailed and in-depth exploration of individuals' lived experiences. It is informed by three key theoretical influences; idiography (concerned with the particular), hermeneutics (theory of interpretation) and phenomenology (study of experience; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The active role of the researcher in the interpretation of the accounts from participants is also recognised. IPA provides clear and systematic guidelines, which support the process of identifying and integrating themes from the data (Willig, 2013). However, IPA tends to work with homogenous samples (Smith et al., 2009) and it was identified early on in the development of the current research that there would potentially be some variation within the groups. For example, SLFs may be a member of school staff or an external professional, such as an Educational Psychologist. In consideration of the current research aims and epistemology, it was felt that IPA's idiographic and individual focus was less appropriate for the current study than Thematic Analysis, which would allow for a broader focus.

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a 'method for recognising and organising patterns in content and meaning in qualitative data' (Willig, 2013, p. 57). It is a flexible approach and compatible with different epistemological paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is both a strength and a potential limitation of the approach. Therefore, it is important to locate analysis within a theoretical and epistemological framework and to make the research assumptions explicit (Willig, 2013). The decision to use TA followed primarily from its suitability to address the research question, because TA permits examination of the experiences across different individuals involved with

StoryLinks and identification of similarities and themes across the whole data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis also allows for acknowledgement and consideration of the impact of the broader social context on these experiences, which is compatible with a Critical Realist epistemology.

2.2.5 Methods

2.2.5.1 Participants

The study aimed to explore StoryLinks from multiple perspectives; SLFs, parents, and children involved in the intervention were all considered as potential participants. Decisions about the sampling procedure were guided by the research aims and design, as well as practical and ethical considerations (Marshall, 1996). Due to the qualitative nature of the study, purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants were able to offer insight into the experience of StoryLinks (Smith et al., 2009). StoryLinks is not a widely used intervention, therefore a flexible approach was employed to maximise recruitment opportunities. Communication with the intervention's developer, Trisha Waters, and one of the trainers based in the South of England was utilised to identify potential appropriate channels for recruitment to the study. The inclusion criteria for participants were that they had been involved with StoryLinks within the last 6 months, this was to ensure that they would be able to recall their experience.

There is considerable debate around sample size in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2016) and recommendations vary. Qualitative studies often have small sample sizes, to allow for depth and focus of analysis. Answering the question of 'how many?' should be guided by methodological and epistemological considerations, as well as acknowledging practical factors, such as the time available and the accessibility of participants (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Data saturation is often suggested as a guiding principle (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016) but this is best understood in the context of Grounded Theory research. Braun and Clarke (2016) suggest that frequency should not be the primary determinant in the development of themes, rather patterning across data items and relevance of the data in addressing the research question should also be considered. The current research aimed to gather and analyse data from more than one perspective, which offered potentially greater depth to the findings (Hood, 2016). The aim was to recruit up to ten parent-child dyads and ten SLFs for the study. Within the practicalities and time constraints of the research, a total of eight participants were recruited; four SLFs and two parent-child dyads.

Information about the participants of the current study is provided in Table 4, with those participants on the same line having taken part in the same intervention. The recruitment process is expanded on below.

Table 4 Information about Participants

Setting	Time since last involved in StoryLinks	StoryLinks Facilitators	Parents	Children
Primary School 1	Less than 3 months prior to interview	Female, School-Based, Had run previous Interventions	Female, attended all 10 sessions	Male, Year 2, attended all 10 sessions
Primary School 2	Less than 1 month prior to interview	Female, External Professional, First Intervention	Female, attended all 10 sessions	Male, Year 3, attended all 10 sessions
Primary School 3	Less than 3 months prior to interview	Female, School-Based, First intervention		
Primary School 4	Less than 1 month prior to interview	Female, External Professional, First Intervention		

2.2.5.2 Recruitment Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the School of Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Southampton (Submission Number 24165, ethics documents included in Appendix C). SLFs were recruited through an email that was sent to those professionals, who had been trained in the intervention prior to September 2016, inviting them to take part in the study. Their email details were provided by the trainer and the email provided participant information, as well as a school information sheet with details of the proposed study. The professionals based within schools were asked to share the letter and information sheet with the school's headteacher, seeking their permission to undertake the research at the school. An advert was also placed in a newsletter that is regularly disseminated to professionals who have received training in

StoryLinks. Please see Appendix D for examples of the recruitment materials. Four professionals volunteered to take part in the study.

Recruitment of parents and children utilised a referral method, where gatekeepers (SLFs) were asked to approach potential participants. They provided parents with some written information about the study and sought their permission to be contacted in relation to the study. Two parents agreed to be contacted. A meeting was then arranged to conduct the interviews. Parents were also asked to provide consent for their child to take part. Once this had been obtained, children were provided with written and verbal information about the study and asked for their assent.

2.2.5.3 Data collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The topic guide included open-ended questions with some follow-ups and prompts (Appendix E). This allowed for detailed information to be collected about personal experiences and views (Leech, 2002), with the structured format enabling specific dimensions of the research questions to be addressed, but also allowing participants room to offer their own insights (Galletta, 2013). Children's interviews were adapted to support them to take part and elicit their views. These included tools that did not rely on language and gave the child choice over how they wished to express themselves (Fargas Malet, McSherry, Larkin & Robinson, 2010), such as pictures of different aspects of the intervention (Appendix F), post-its to add things they considered important, and scales. The interview schedules and tools were trialled and refined in supervision and with peers. The interviews were carried out in a location of the participants' choosing and recorded using an audio recording device.

2.2.5.4 Data analysis

Transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using the six-step process of Thematic Analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This provided clear guidelines for rigorous data analysis, whilst also recognizing that the processes of coding and development of themes are 'organic, exploratory and inherently subjective, involving active, creative and reflexive researcher engagement' (Braun & Clarke, 2016, p. 741). For the purposes of the current study, themes were understood as constructed from codes and as capturing the essence of some recurrent meaning across the data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Analysis was at the semantic and explicit level; codes were based on what the participant had said and were not attempting to examine the underlying meaning. The process moved from description, where data was organised and patterns were summarised, to the development of the coding manual and interpretation of wider

meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A full outline of the steps employed at each stage of data analysis is provided in Table. 5. Examples of the different stages of analysis are provided in Appendix G, including a transcript, analytic memo and initial codes.

Table 5 Stages of Thematic Analysis (Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Stage	**Description of Process**	**How this was Applied to Current Research**
Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas	As the researcher, I completed the interviews and the transcriptions of interviews. These were transcribed verbatim and anonymised. I also kept a research diary, comprising of reflective notes after each interview and analytic memos. This included notes of initial ideas about the data. I immersed myself in the data, through repeated reading of the transcripts. Also, I explored my initial ideas in supervision and conversations with peers.
Generating Initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code	The different groups (children, parents, SLFs) were coded separately. The first iteration of coding was done by hand. The data was coded in a systematic way, with the entire data set considered and coded for as many potential themes as possible. During the initial coding process, the data was explored using an exploratory and eclectic approach to coding (Saldana, 2016). A list of initial codes was generated,

Stage	Description of Process	How this was Applied to Current Research
		including In Vivo codes (participants' own words and phrases), descriptive codes, evaluation codes and process codes. Codes were mainly inductive (data-led) and at a semantic and explicit level. Analytic memos were used to reflect and expand on the code choices and emergent patterns and concepts. There was also ongoing dialogue with my supervisor throughout the analysis. Analysis then moved to the computer software NVivo to assist with the analytic process. First cycle coding methods were used to recode the data, allowing for reflection on the initial codes. The codes were compiled in a list for initial categorisation.
Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	A code mapping technique was used to explore the initial codes that had been developed from the data (Saldana, 2016). The codes were compared and sorted into different groups. Codes that were conceptually similar were merged and codes that no longer seemed

Stage	Description of Process	How this was Applied to Current Research
		relevant to the data corpus were dropped. The remaining codes were considered in relation to the research question and those that were relevant were considered. A provisional list of themes and sub-themes were developed. The transcripts were then recoded on NVivo using this list.
Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	The coded extracts for each theme were reviewed to check for cohesion. This was discussed with a peer. Data extracts that did not seem to fit were re-analysed and further themes were developed if needed. Those themes that did not have sufficient support were discarded and some sub-themes were combined, as they seemed to convey the same ideas. All transcripts of the corresponding group were reviewed, to ensure that themes worked in relation to the entire data set. The analytic memos were also reviewed, as a way of further facilitating reflections on the data set and themes. Thematic maps were developed to

Stage	Description of Process	How this was Applied to Current Research
		demonstrate and explore the links between themes and sub-themes.
Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	A coding manual was developed (Appendix H), and themes were defined further. This enabled a further check of cohesion. The names of themes were reviewed and changed if felt appropriate. The thematic maps were refined.
Producing the report	Selection of vivid extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis	The findings section was used to report the final themes. Thematic maps and data extracts were included to illustrate the themes and how they were related.

2.2.5.5 Quality Control

Considerable debate exists around the usefulness and relevance of applying the concepts of reliability and validity to qualitative research paradigms (Golafshani, 2003). However, it remains important to establish some criteria to help the reader evaluate the quality of research. A number of guidelines have been developed as an alternative to traditional judgements of quality that may be found within a positivist paradigm (Elliot, Fisher & Rennie, 1999; Stiles, 1993; Yardley, 2000). The current study employed Yardley's four principles for validity in qualitative research; sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; impact and importance (Yardley, 2000).

Table 6 Quality Criteria (Adapted from Yardley, 2000)

Principle for Validity	How this was Shown in Current Research
Sensitivity to Context Theoretical; relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural setting; participants' perspectives; ethical issues.	Introduction to current paper includes a review of relevant theoretical literature. I tried to show sensitivity to participants' perspectives by respecting all voices in the research and using open-ended questions in the interview to explore what they considered relevant.
Commitment and Rigour In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence and skill; thorough data collection; depth/breadth of analysis.	I was involved in all parts of the data collection and analysis process, included conducting and transcribing the interviews. I used clear guidelines (Braun and Clarke, 2006) for my data analysis. At the start of my research I attended StoryLinks training, to familiarise myself with the intervention.
Transparency and Coherence Clarity and power of description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and method: reflexivity.	Throughout this paper I have endeavoured to be explicit about my research design, collection and analysis. Quotations from participants are used to illustrate the sub-themes. In terms of reflexivity, I provide some reflections below and excerpts from my research diary in Appendix I.
Impact and Importance Theoretical (enriching understanding); socio-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers).	Consideration was given to how the 'voices' of my participants may inform future delivery of StoryLinks. Areas for future research were also identified in the discussion section of this paper.

2.2.5.6 Reflexivity

I recognise that as a researcher I cannot be separated from the findings of the current study and that my own experiences and assumptions have played an influential role in the analytic and interpretive choices I have made (Braun & Clarke, 2016). In this section, I aim to reflect on some of the factors that may have shaped the research process and to acknowledge my role and position in the research. This is a summary of the reflection that I have engaged in throughout my research journey, both in written entries in a reflective journal (Appendix I) and in conversations with my supervisor and peers.

Firstly, it is important to consider how my personal history and values have led me to an interest in the topic and informed my decision-making about the research. Prior to beginning the Educational Psychology doctorate, I worked with children and young people within a behaviourist paradigm. This gave me valuable insights into how psychology could be applied within an educational setting, however at times I felt constrained within the priorities and principles of the theoretical framework. My professional experience as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) has supported me to develop my interests in other therapeutic approaches, especially those rooted in a more humanistic paradigm. Exploring StoryLinks as an intervention has allowed me to learn more about one such therapeutic intervention from the perspectives of those who have been involved with it. Eliciting the views of others to inform my understanding is a central part of my work as a TEP, as well as supporting schools and families to work collaboratively in the interests of children and young people. My experiences of the positive impact this can have, as well as the sometimes associated challenges, influenced my decision to focus on the collaborative StoryLinks intervention, with an emphasis on individuals' personal experiences and views.

I received training on the StoryLinks intervention at the start of my research project; this was with the intention of familiarising myself further with the intervention and to develop my understanding of the key principles. As part of this training I also delivered the StoryLinks intervention in a school. I feel that receiving training on the intervention supported my understanding and added further depth to my research, however I also recognise that this may have influenced the interviews and analysis of my data. I addressed this through discussions in supervision and keeping a reflective journal throughout the research, as a way of exploring how my own experiences and assumptions may be impacting on the study. I also used an inductive and data-led approach in my analysis of the data, as a way of remaining close to the participants' own words and experiences.

It is also important to acknowledge how external pressures and constraints impacted on the research, for example it proved difficult to recruit participants, especially parents and

children. I decided to use a gatekeeper approach, as I felt that parents would likely feel more comfortable being approached by the SLFs, with whom they already had an established relationship. This did mean that I felt reliant on others and had to balance my own need for participants with respecting others' busy schedules. Recruitment proved frustrating at times, however my personal belief was that it was central to the research, and my understanding, to include the voices of parents and children and to ensure that they had the opportunity to participate. It is hoped that my respect for all those who participated in my research is conveyed throughout my findings, with equal weight being granted to all voices.

2.3 Findings

2.3.1 Introduction

The following section provides details of the themes developed in relation to the research questions. A rich thematic description of the entire data set has been utilised, as opposed to a detailed account of one particular theme, or group of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was felt to be most appropriate to address the aims of the research, which were deliberately broad, due to StoryLinks being an under-researched area.

The views and experiences of children, parents and SLFs were obtained for the purposes of the research. These were analysed independently of each other, therefore the themes from each group are presented separately, before consideration of the overarching themes that were identified from these. The themes and sub-themes developed from each group are presented in a thematic map, to provide a visual representation of the relationships between them. These are expanded on with a narrative analysis of the themes and sub-themes, with data extracts from participants' interviews utilised to further illustrate these (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Extracts have been anonymised and are formatted consistently, in italics and indented. The participant number is also prefixed with a letter, to identify the interview excerpt as being from a StoryLinks Facilitator (SLF), Parent (P) or Child (C).

2.3.2 What are the experiences and views of parents, children and SLFs involved in the StoryLinks intervention?

2.3.2.1 StoryLinks Facilitators' (SLF) views

Data from the four semi-structured interviews with SLF were analysed and led to the development of four main themes, with thirteen sub-themes. These are presented below (Figure 3)

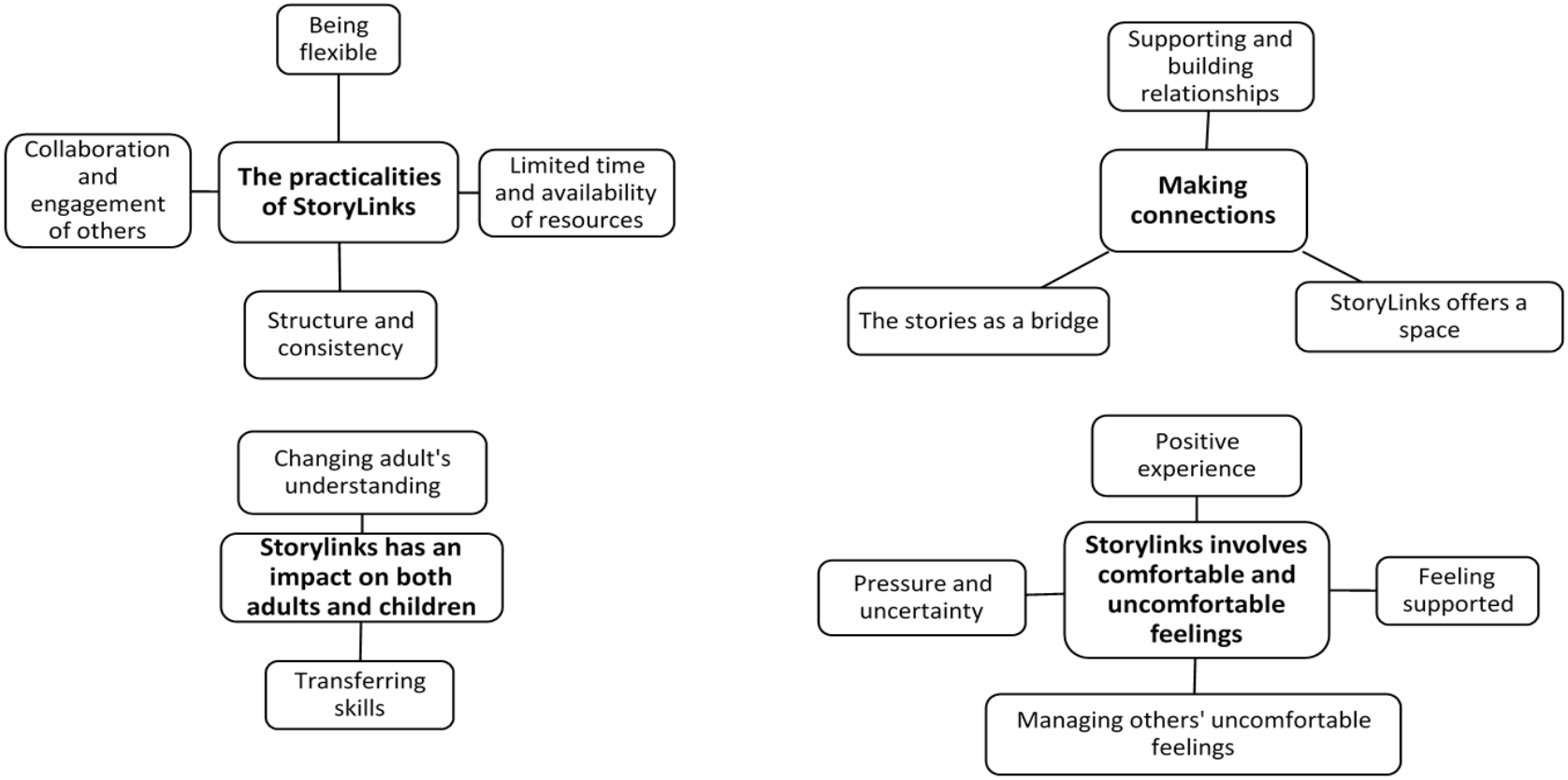


Figure 3 Thematic Map Illustrating Themes and Sub-Themes from SLFs

Theme 1: The Practicalities of StoryLinks

This main theme captures the SLFs' experiences and understanding of the process and implementation of the StoryLinks intervention. This includes the key approaches they identified as important and the barriers to delivery. They identified factors that influenced their experience at an individual level, as well as the impact of the wider context and dynamics involved.

1A: Being Flexible

All of the SLFs spoke about how a flexible and responsive approach was key to the delivery of StoryLinks. They described how they needed to frequently problem solve and respond to wider contextual factors, in order to successfully implement StoryLinks.

> *"the school was in a lot of flux… we had to overcome those barriers and each week I was kind of going "ok, this didn't work let's problem solve it"" (SLF3)*

There was a sense from the SLFs that although they endeavoured to follow the structure of the StoryLinks model, the individual nature of its delivery meant that they had the facility to be person-centred and responsive to the individual.

> *"…he was very adamant it was going to be the same character and that was my way of engaging him, he got to choose the character, he got to name the character initially… cause I needed to get him to room" (SLF3)*

This need to be flexible was identified by the SLF as significant throughout the intervention, including planning and identifying a prospective child and parent, implementation and then managing the ending of StoryLinks.

> *"…we did 10 sessions, but because he wasn't ready to finish really, I then took him on to Lego Therapy" (SLF4)*

1B: Structure & Consistency

In contrast to the need for flexibility, there was a sense from SLFs that they found the structure of the StoryLinks sessions supportive when implementing it.

> *"I liked that it was structured, so meeting mum first, then us having the session together with the child and the learning support assistant, erm and then ending with meeting with mum" (SLF1)*

SLFs acknowledged that endeavouring to keep the sessions regular and predictable was beneficial; this supported not just them, but all the individuals involved. Establishing a routine was perceived as helping those involved to feel comfortable and to engage with the sessions.

> *"he enjoyed the consistency and the continuity of the activity as much as anything else. Yeah, erm it was kind of the security, I know what's going to happen and those kind of aspects I think he liked" (SLF3)*

1C: Limited Time and Availability of Resources

Practical barriers, such as lack of a physical space and computer resources, and difficulties with staying within the time allocated for sessions, was a common feature of SLFs' accounts.

> *"keeping within the time limit, that didn't happen. So in theory it should have been an hour a week, including the write up, might as well double that" (SLF1)*

The time commitment involved in implementing StoryLinks effectively was apparent in SLFs' descriptions of their experience. This could sometimes be a barrier to implementation, as SLFs felt that running StoryLinks effectively required a considerable investment on their part and often took more time than expected.

> *"I don't think that I could do more than one child at a time cause you know, I think there would definitely be a need for it, but I don't think time wise… those bits and pieces do take that extra time really and making sure it's done the same day, things like that, you really have to block out a lot more time than you'd think" (SLF4)*

Perhaps indicative of the difficulties of implementing an intervention within a school system, SLFs also reflected on the tension between their other commitments and ability to deliver StoryLinks consistently.

> *"that could be a problem if, you know, if I was to be called out… no matter how hard you try to protect 10 weeks of a session there can be child protection things that come up which is part of my role as well, so that would have to take priority" (SLF4)*

1D: Collaboration and Engagement of Others

Working collaboratively appeared to be a priority for all the SLFs when delivering the intervention.

> *"I think knowing that having us all singing from the same hymn sheet was really important" (SLF4)*

Their emphasis appeared to be on building a partnership with the parent, however consideration was also given to working within the wider school system, such as consulting with the class teacher. One SLF spoke about how she worked with staff to identify potential children and parents.

> *"we discuss as a school how… what children do we have that this would facilitate better or would be better for? So I talk to the Head, I talk to the year groups" (SLF2)*

SLFs identified that working with, and engaging, school staff was important, especially as the individual nature of the intervention sometimes meant that there was a lack of recognition from staff about their role in the system and in influencing change.

> *"I think school's perception might have been that this is more for mum this intervention, so I think a barrier was perhaps school's understanding and perhaps attitude towards it, erm even though they were invested, their level of investment after the session, in between the sessions perhaps didn't reflect a complete commitment to it." (SLF1)*

In terms of their work with parents, SLFs' accounts seemed to suggest that they endeavoured to work with parents and empower them, as opposed to giving direction or assuming an 'expert' role.

> *"a lot of it was wondering out loud and trying to keep mum in the parenting role and not giving the solution, but just saying well what do you think might work?" (SLF1)*

Some SLFs described parents as initially reluctant to participate in the intervention. However, as time progressed SLFs perceived a noticeable shift in parents' engagement and active involvement with the sessions. In part, this seemed to be related to the relationships that were built, which will be elaborated on in the 'supporting and building relationships' sub-theme.

Theme 2: Making Connections

This theme refers to SLFs' perceptions that StoryLinks influenced relationships and helped to build links between the different individuals involved. This theme also includes some of the key elements that SLFs identified as helpful in fostering these connections, such as the co-created stories and the physical and psychological space the sessions allowed.

2A: Supporting and Building Relationships

All of the SLFs gave examples of how relationships seemed to be supported through participants' involvement with StoryLinks. These included references to their own relationship with others, the home-school and parent-child relationships. SLFs described how the positive and collaborative nature of the intervention seemed key in helping to develop relationships between home and school.

> *"I think you know because it brought her into school, made her realise that we're not judging her parenting we want to work with her, we want to work with him, erm and so, yeah it just improved relationships all round really" (SLF4)*

> *"I think her relationship with school is not great and initially when I first met her she said 'well, you know, we're coming along, we're doing this and that's great, that's lovely but I'm going to take him out' … I think the StoryLinks really helped because she was coming into school to do something positive and really something she enjoyed and something he enjoyed, she could see the benefit of it." (SLF3)*

It was apparent in SLFs' accounts that already having an established relationship with parents supported their recruitment efforts. However, those SLFs that were not school based did not have these pre-existing relationships and they highlighted the importance of consulting with parents and ensuring that communication was transparent, to build these relationships.

> *"I checked in with her regularly at the beginning of every session to say, do you, are you still finding this useful? Just to show, making sure that she knows that I've heard her as well" (SLF1)*

2B: The Story as a Bridge

The potential of the story to support connections was acknowledged by all the SLFs. In their experience, the child often engaged with the story and appeared to make a connection with characters. They described examples of the child then using the story to express themselves or to explore emotions.

> *"In the last story I said [reading from story] 'Albie the Albatross flew slowly across the southern ocean feeling upset', the child said 'he didn't know why he was upset' so that's in line with how he, with all the uncomfortable feelings it was he didn't know, but then he went on, the child and his line was 'maybe because he was away he thought', so for me the positive is that he's, that was a sign of him trying to explore it whereas before it was 'I don't know'" (SLF1)*

The SLFs also reflected on how they used the story as a bridge to convey messages to the child in a non-directive way.

> *"I guess in quite a few of the stories, quite a lot of them focused on friendships and actually having friends that you could go and ask or talk to and then come back and help you sort your situation out, or they might come to you and I think that was something that he took away with him as well" (SLF3)*

2C: StoryLinks Offers a Space

All the SLFs expressed the view that the sessions provided a space to reflect on and explore feelings, both for the child and adults.

> *"It is an opportunity, a space, a moment to reflect, a moment to share, a moment to possibly resolve in a really safe and nice environment" (SLF2)*

> *"To see that everyone was buying in to a bit of time for just him, really important. Erm... cause home life as well was very hectic and his younger brother is very similar to him, so it was that time that was just his with mum or dad, and you know always with me and his 1:1" (SLF4)*

This space arguably related to both the protected time of the sessions, as well as the psychological space that was created by the SLFs using strategies such as active listening and the feelings-check in.

> *"I think it gave her [parent] some regular opportunities to be heard, not that we went into that in depth but it was, she did tell us how her week was and things. Erm, but also the emotions check in, the comfortable and uncomfortable feelings she would bring things to that. So I think she shared one week that her uncomfortable feeling was she was feeling lonely… for her to actually share that showed that she was feeling safe perhaps within that space and with the people" (SLF1)*

Theme 3: StoryLinks has an Impact on Both Children and Adults

Within the main theme of 'Impact on the Child', two sub-themes captured SLFs' perceptions of the outcomes of StoryLinks for the child. These included indirect changes, such as adults' developing a better understanding of the child and their behaviour. SLFs also described a direct impact on children's skills development and identified that these were then generalised outside of the sessions.

3A: Changing Adults' Understanding

SLFs identified that they noticed a shift in adults' understanding and perceptions of the child, as a result of their involvement with StoryLinks. SLFs spoke about how they noticed parents 'realising' and 'recognising' things and then changing their own behaviour as a result of this.

> *"I think mum thought a lot more about what she said to him, because he was very literal so she, if she said something flippant he took it literally and, so I think that she recognised that she couldn't be like that, so she changed the things that she used to say to him" (SLF4)*

The SLFs attributed this change to a variety of things, including the child's contribution to the story and reflecting with the parent after sessions.

> *"It brought up some interesting discussions with mum afterwards about his understanding and perception of what's rude and what isn't." (SLF1)*

3B: Transferring Skills

The SLFs all described examples of how children appeared to develop their understanding of emotions over the course of the sessions and the language to articulate these. SLFs perceived that the development of these skills then impacted on the child's behaviour. Also, that they demonstrated this progress not only in the sessions themselves, but outside of the context of the StoryLinks sessions.

> *"I think that really helped him cause he was then able to, if he was in a class situation, he was able to say 'I'm feeling der der der der der, because der der der der der' and kind of explain, rather than just exploding." (SLF3)*

Theme 4: StoryLinks Involves Comfortable and Uncomfortable Feelings

This theme encapsulates the SLFs' experience of a range of emotions whilst implementing StoryLinks. They all mostly described having a positive experience, however they also reflected on some of the perceived challenges and feelings that this evoked for them.

4A: Positive Experience

Delivering StoryLinks seemed to generate many positive feelings for the SLFs, including a sense of enjoyment and feelings of success. SLFs also perceived others' enjoyment during the sessions, which seemed to contribute to their own.

> *"I love it, I absolutely love it, we laugh, we joke." (SLF2)*

"I was really surprised by how it did all come together and it was, it did flow and we did have lots of giggles, but actually it was great, it was really good." (SLF3)

4B: Feeling Supported

SLFs' experiences seemed to differ in terms of the sense of support that they perceived from others. This included practical support from the school, in terms of commitment, time and resources. Most of the SLFs felt that they had this support and it helped them to implement the intervention effectively.

"The school's investment in it helped, you know so they were, erm they stuck to what we had agreed in the sense that there was a room available, the dates that we had arranged was stuck to" (SLF1)

However, two SLFs reflected on the challenges they had experienced due to schools taking less ownership and responsibility for the intervention. These were both external facilitators of the intervention, suggesting that there was a difference in how the intervention was perceived by school depending on whether the facilitator was internal or external to the school system.

"School was really tricky… they told me this has to work, this intervention has to work, we are at crisis point… and yet they were the ones where the room wasn't always booked or it wasn't the same room, it wasn't always the same TA, there wasn't the consistency about reading the story in school" (SLF3)

Supervision also appeared to play an important role for this sense of support and many of the SLFs described how they valued the chance to reflect on practice and to develop skills.

"It's about erm.. that reflective space to actually learn from this experience to then inform what you're going to do next, which I get from supervision essentially" (SLF1)

4C: Pressure and Uncertainty

In SLFs' accounts, it seemed that the collaborative nature of the intervention and need to manage different dynamics within the session could sometimes contribute to feelings of uncertainty.

"You never know whether you're getting it quite right with them, cause... it's really hard cause when you're in that session you want so much from it but at the same time you've got to let them go from it, it's really really, it's quite intense actually you feel quite a lot of pressure about making sure that you're getting the most from it" (SLF4)

Although also identified as enjoyable, there was a sense that SLFs felt a lot of personal responsibility for the creation of the story and ensuring that it was done 'correctly'. SLFs spoke about feeling that they 'should' or 'ought to' do things a certain way, which perhaps sometimes resulted in them experiencing some discomfort with this responsibility.

> *"I think I worried about 'well that story has to have the right beginning and it has to have the right, and what's the child's input and what's the parent putting in?' and I think I overanalysed" (SLF2)*

SLFs also identified school and others' expectations to produce results as a source of this pressure, which perhaps related to the intervention being delivered reactively rather than preventatively.

> *"School said we're at crisis point, he's at risk of exclusion cause he keeps running off and he won't listen and we can't manage his behaviour and you just need to come in and do it and we'll do StoryLinks" (SLF3)*

4D: Managing Other's Uncomfortable Feelings

As well as a recognition of StoryLinks evoking personal emotions for them, the SLFs described how they had to support others with their discomfort or uncomfortable feelings during the sessions. There was a need to do this proactively, in terms of planning for the ending of the StoryLinks sessions.

> **"***He was quite, you know frustrated and angry that this is going to stop. Erm, so we negotiated with the school that actually after Christmas that he could join a therapeutic writing group" (SLF3)*

SLFs also identified that they also had to do this reactively in the sessions themselves to respond to both children and adults when they seemed uncomfortable.

> *"There was one session where the LSA when we did the emotions check-in, didn't feel comfortable with it, she made a comment about 'oh I hate this bit' but said it out loud… so I had to think about how I responded to that in a sensible way" (SLF1)*

2.3.2.2 Parents' views

The analysis of data from two semi-structured interviews with parents resulted in the identification of three themes, with nine subthemes. These are presented below (Figure 4).

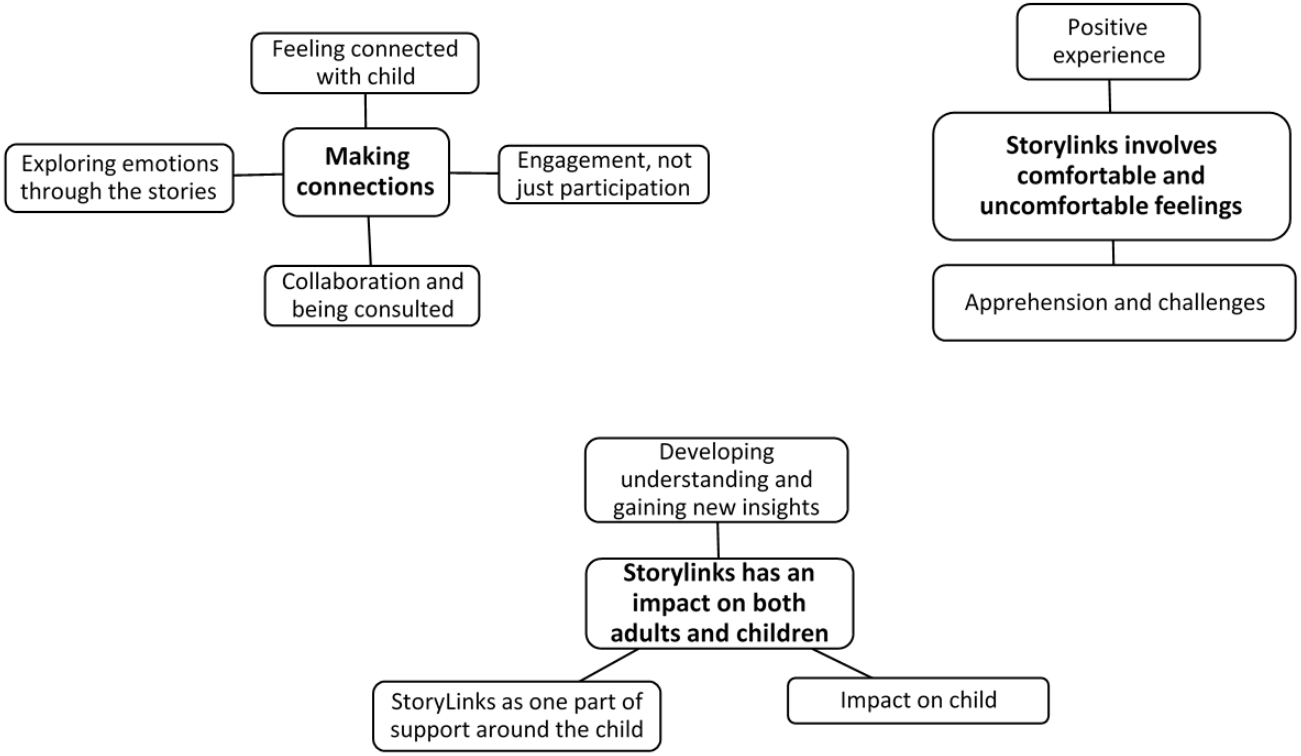


Figure 4 Thematic Map Illustrating Theme and Sub-Themes for Parents

Theme 1: MAKING CONNECTIONS

Similarly to the SLFs, parents perceived that StoryLinks impacted positively on relationships and helped to bring people together. This theme encompasses the links that parents identified StoryLinks had built, as well as some of the factors that contributed to this.

1A: Feeling Connected with Child

Parents seemed to value the opportunity to spend time with their child in school and they perceived a positive impact on their relationship with their child through their involvement with StoryLinks.

> *"It felt quite nice, because he generally wanted to, it kind of reassured me a bit about our bond, because he wanted to sit with me and things" (P2)*

This sub-theme relates to 'developing understanding and gaining new insights', as parents often attributed the change in their relationship to the fact that they had a better understanding of their child and behaved differently as a result.

> *"I realised that he doesn't necessarily always understand that things he says are perceived by myself to be rude or a little bit inappropriate, so I kind of learnt to have more patience with that kind of aspect of it." (P1)*

1B: Collaboration and Being Consulted

Parents felt they were partners in the intervention and that they were working together with the SLF and school. They described efforts of the SLF to liaise with them and to ensure they were part of the process.

> *"I guess hand in hand with the school rather than feeling a bit excluded" (P2)*

This suggests that SLF's efforts to be collaborative rather than directive were recognised by parents. According to them, they did not feel judged or patronised, which likely supported the relationships between them and the SLF.

> *"I think it's nice to be included in a non, kind of, sort of patronising way or.. to sort of feel like, one you are kind of helping your child because he's there too, so he's getting something from it, so by me being there I'm assisting with the help, I'm not running the show but I'm assisting." (P1)*

1C: Engagement, not just Participation

Perhaps supported by the collaborative focus, parents appeared to actively engage with the sessions and process of StoryLinks. It was evident that both parents were committed to the intervention, investing time in, and between, sessions.

> *"it was nice to pause in the day and not think about work and focusing on Storylinks." (P2)*

Both parents expressed that as a result of being included they felt supported and that they gained something. One parent viewed engagement with the intervention as essential, in order to 'get something' from the intervention.

> *"I think this one is probably more appropriate for the parent who does want to kind of, put in and take back. You know and get something for themselves as well as help with their own child." (P1)*

1D: Exploring Emotions through the Story

Both parents appeared to share the view of the SLFs that the stories provided a container for feelings, which allowed emotions to be explored. They perceived the stories as an important part of the intervention, both in terms of the insights it gave them and the messages they could convey.

> *"I guess it [story] gave an opening for emotion and building his understanding of emotions and how to deal with them, whereas if we'd have done something else, yeah it probably wouldn't" (P2)*

Theme 2: STORYLINKS INVOLVES COMFORTABLE AND UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS

This theme captures the complex emotions that parents described feeling during their involvement with StoryLinks. As with the SLFs and children, there is a sense that they generally found the sessions to be a positive experience. However, they did also reflect on some aspects that they found challenging and the feelings this evoked.

2A: Positive Experience

Both parents expressed that they had enjoyed their experience of StoryLinks and found it to be a positive one. Factors that seemed to contribute to this included the structure and consistency, as well as the individual nature of the approach.

> *"It was quite containing, it was quite structured, we knew what we were doing" (P2)*

Observing their child's enjoyment also seemed to impact positively on parent's experiences.

> *"I think that was probably one of the nicest parts, that he seemed to genuinely enjoy it." (P1)*

2B: Apprehension and Challenges

A sense of apprehension seemed to feature in both parents' experiences of StoryLinks. This was particularly the case at the beginning of the intervention, as parents felt uncertain about the process and how to contribute to the story.

> *"…a bit kind of anticipation about what I'm going to say in the story you know, so some anxiety about that, not a huge amount" (P2)*

This highlights the importance of the SLF establishing a relationship with parents and providing structure and consistency in the sessions, to support those involved to feel comfortable. One parent also spoke about how their previous experiences of parenting interventions meant that they felt unsure about taking part in StoryLinks.

> *"ever since then I was kind of anti doing anything because I felt it was patronising really, so I didn't see the point, but they offered this and I thought, mmmm I don't really want to do it, I didn't really want to do it" (P1)*

Theme 3: STORYLINKS HAS AN IMPACT ON BOTH ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Parents perceived that taking part in StoryLinks resulted in changes for both them and their child. Three sub-themes were developed to outline the commonalities in parents' descriptions of these changes.

3A: Developing Understanding and Gaining New Insights

Both parents seemed to feel that they had learnt something and gained a better understanding of their child through the stories and the sessions. One parent identified that, as a result, they felt better able to support their child to develop their emotional competence.

> *"…now I know that he's not there with some of those I can be more understanding of that fact and also kind of do the whole wondering out loud thing, like 'Oh, I'm wondering if you're feeling frustrated right now, or I'm wondering if you're feeling worried right now'." (P1)*

Developing their understanding was potentially a key component of change for their child, as parents reflected on how this greater understanding had impacted on their response and as a result their child's behaviour.

> *"I feel... I understand not necessarily what I'm doing wrong but how I can do things a bit differently, which I think makes him react in a different… he's quite reactive, which makes him kind of react in a different way" (P1)*

3B: Impact on Child

Gaining confidence was identified by both parents as a way that StoryLinks had supported their child. This appeared to mainly be attributed to the creation of the stories by parents, in terms of how this had empowered their child and helped them to feel comfortable sharing their ideas.

> *"I think that the StoryLinks probably were building his confidence you know, that he was creating a story, that it was something he'd put together, erm and you know to see it all come together I think probably was quite nice for him" (P2)*

> *"I think it's given him confidence with that, you know, what he says does have value and merit." (P1)*

Both parents also spoke about their child 'opening up' through the process, both in terms of their willingness to take risks with learning and their relationships. There was recognition from one parent that the impact was not necessarily immediate and the skills development was ongoing, however, they felt that StoryLinks had provided a useful step towards this.

> *"I think understanding the concept of the word and is a longer process, so hopefully like the stories were the kind of foundation layer and now we're building upon it, hopefully." (P1)*

3C: StoryLinks as One Part of the Support Around the Child

It was clear in parents' accounts that StoryLinks was one part of a wider system of support around the child. Parents reflected on the difficulties in identifying the unique contribution that StoryLinks had provided.

> *"I think there's so many different things that are happening that, you know I don't know how much you'd put it down specifically to StoryLinks" (P2)*

Despite this challenge, both parents emphasised that they felt it had a positive impact and they would recommend it to others. There was a sense that parents valued the relationships that StoryLinks had built with both school and their child.

> *"I do feel that it has made a big difference in itself when I think about it, because had it not have been there I think I would have felt, sort of.. yeah, I think it has brought things together, so yeah I do think it's played an important role and I'd definitely recommend it" (P2)*

2.3.2.3 Children's views

Two overarching themes, with five sub-themes, were developed based on the analysis of two semi-structured interviews with children. These are presented below in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Thematic Map Illustrating Themes and Sub-Themes for Children

Theme 1: MAKING CONNECTIONS

This theme encompasses the children's views that StoryLinks helped to build connections. The three sub-themes capture the connections children made with others, as well as with the story. Also, the sub-theme 'getting into a habit and practicing skills' captures how children felt they were able to transfer skills from the sessions, suggesting they were making links between different settings.

1A: Positive Impact on Relationships

Both children reported that they had enjoyed their parent coming into school for the sessions and the time invested in them.

"And what about mum coming into school?" (Interviewer)

"I liked that, because then I could have more time with mummy." (C2)

When initially asked if they felt StoryLinks had helped them in anyway, both children said 'no'. However, they then both went on to identify that they 'got on better' with teachers and parents after the intervention, suggesting that they felt closer with them.

"Did the story sessions make a difference at home?" (Interviewer)

"... Nope, yes". (C1)

"Yes? Can you tell me a bit more about that?" (Interviewer)

"Erm.. normally I fight with my mum and now I don't really do it" (C1)

1B: Getting into a Habit and Practising Skills

The children made references to how StoryLinks had helped them practice skills, such as their reading and 'being good'. One child described how having a tangible target each week gave them the opportunity to practice 'being good' and to receive a reward if successful. They felt this had helped them to then transfer and maintain their skills.

"I had to do that for 10 weeks, so I just got into a habit" (C1)

1C: Engagement with the Story

Both children spoke about how they collaborated on the stories and were able to bring in their own interests and ideas.

> *"well sometimes we made up stories together because sometimes I had suggestions, because I like to watch planet earth." (C1)*

At times, the co-construction of the story was perceived as challenging by the child, as they found it difficult to respond to others' contributions or wanted more ownership of the narrative.

> *"you know I told you that different people were making it up, well that made it harder because I had an idea, I had really good ideas but then they came up with something and then, and then my idea, my really good idea does not link. So, like when it was [1:1's] turn, she came up with something really good but it didn't link to my idea. So that was hard." (C1)*

However, both of the children chose to re-tell some of their stories from memory, suggesting they had been actively involved and engaged with these.

> *"There was a boat, and and also the monkey wanted bananas in the jungle and there weren't any and he was waiting for a long time for the boat, for the monkeys and the boat had sank and then, and I think, hang on the boat didn't sank but then it came and then the monkey had its bananas." (C2)*

Theme 2: COMFORTABLE AND UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS

This theme captures the varied emotional responses and feelings that children described when reflecting on their experience of StoryLinks. As with the parents' and SLFs' accounts, both children expressed that they had enjoyed many aspects of the sessions. They also identified that there were aspects that they found more challenging or would want to change, which were captured in the 'even better if' sub-theme.

2A: Positive Experience

There were common aspects of the sessions that the children reported that they liked, including their parent coming into school and drawing a picture for the story. They expressed this by sorting pictures under a happy or sad face and expanding on their choices as they did so. When reflecting on the sessions the children used words such as 'excited', 'fun' and 'funny', suggesting that they had enjoyed them and found them to be a positive experience.

> *"how did you feel about the story sessions?" (Interviewer)*
>
> *"Happy." (C2)*

"Happy. And what did you like about them?" (Interviewer)

"I liked that I could draw pictures and that I did it with my mummy." (C2)

2B: Even better if…

Although both children mainly expressed enjoyment of the sessions, they also identified that there were some aspects they found difficult or felt could be improved. One of the children suggested that they would also have valued their father's involvement.

"So you can't think of anything that could make the stories better?" (Interviewer)

"I think there is, if daddy came." (C2)

The other child reflected on how they disliked certain parts of the sessions, such as the feelings check-in. This seemed to be related to things they found challenging or perhaps valued less in the intervention, which resulted in a sense of frustration.

"Did you ever like doing the feelings check-in?" (Interviewer)

No, no, no, no, no that was just a waste of time. We could just get on with the story, but that just wasted the time. I know she wanted to hear our feelings to see if we were ok, but I feel like that was just a waste of time… (C1)

2.3.2.4 Summary of findings across groups

The findings for each group were analysed and presented separately. However, once all the data from the three groups had been analysed, some commonalities between the sub-themes for each group were identified and a further stage of analysis was undertaken to explore these further. The sub-themes for each group were considered together and organised into groups to reflect the patterns identified. This was initially done manually, with each sub-theme written on a post-it note to allow for flexibility. The extracts for each sub-theme were then explored on NVivo to ensure that there was cohesion within the groups identified and that the sub-themes captured similar ideas. Following this a label for the overarching category was developed. The decision was made to use the participants' own language for these categories, in particular some of the metaphors that participants had used to describe their experiences when interviewed. The categories and relevant sub-themes are presented in Table 7. A further overarching category was also identified for the SLFs. This category was labelled 'Juggling different aspects: role of professional' and included the sub-themes: 'being flexible', 'limited time and availability of resources', 'pressure and uncertainty' and 'feeling supported'. These findings will be discussed in the next section, with a particular focus on how the categories can help us better understand

parental involvement in StoryLinks and how this was experienced by those involved. Implications for future practice and research will also be considered.

Table 7 Summary of Findings Across Groups

OVERARCHING CATEGORY	GROUP		
	Children's sub-themes	Parents sub-themes	StoryLinks Facilitators sub-themes
StoryLinks as a (Mostly) Positive Experience	Positive Experience Even Better If…	Apprehension and challenges Positive Experience	Positive Experience Structure and consistency Managing others' uncomfortable feelings
Hand-In-Hand: Collaborative Process		Collaboration and being consulted Engagement, not just participation	Collaboration and engagement of others
Opening Doors and Building Bridges	Positive impact on relationships Engagement with the story Getting into a habit and practicing skills	Exploring emotions through the stories Feeling connected with child Developing understanding and gaining new insights Impact on Child StoryLinks as one part of the support around the child	Stories as a bridge Supporting and building relationships Changing adults' understanding Transferring skills StoryLinks offers a space

2.4 Discussion

2.4.1 StoryLinks as a (mostly) positive experience

Parents, children and SLFs in the current study all conveyed their enjoyment of the sessions and the positive feelings that they had experienced. Consistent with Water's (2014) previous findings, children expressed that they liked their parent coming into school. Gaining children's perspectives of parental involvement in school-based interventions is important, as research suggests children's views of home-school relations are complex and it should not be assumed that they automatically experience this as positive (Markström, 2013). Dunsmir and Hardy (2016) suggested that evidence for therapeutic approaches in schools should also include research that supports the viability of the approach with regards to the children's engagement and experience. The current study provides preliminary evidence that StoryLinks is acceptable and enjoyable for those involved, including primary-school-aged children, although further research is needed on a larger scale to explore this further.

The sense of fun and enjoyment conveyed by participants seemed to reflect the playfulness of creating stories together. Creating a sense of playfulness in the sessions may be important, as enjoyment, arguably, may better support children to engage with the story and its key messages (Killick, 2014). Moreover, parental involvement and the home-school relationship is likely facilitated by the focus of the intervention to invite parents into school for a positive activity with their child, as opposed to 'problem-focused' talk about their child's behaviour (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). However, participants from all groups also expressed that creating the stories could sometimes be challenging due to the unpredictable nature and feelings of uncertainty about what to contribute. This highlights the importance of StoryLinks sessions having a clear and consistent structure and routine, so that all parties are supported to contribute to the story and the SLF feels confident in scaffolding the story process.

2.4.2 Hand-In-Hand: StoryLinks as a collaborative process

The school working in partnership with the parent is a key focus of StoryLinks (Waters, 2014). Accounts from parents and SLFs in the present study suggested that they viewed the intervention as collaborative and that it was successful in engaging parents. This was reflected in both parents' and SLFs' sub-themes, 'collaboration and engagement of others', 'collaboration and being consulted' and 'engagement, not just participation'. Parents reported feeling actively involved, which potentially has important benefits for the effectiveness of the intervention

(Haine-Schlagel & Escobar Walsh, 2015). It is not clear from the findings that the collaboration perceived by participants resulted in a greater sense of parenting efficacy, as has been previously suggested in literature relating to parental involvement in school-based interventions (O'Connor et al., 2012). However, parents did feel that they had benefited from taking part and had found it useful. In particular, this seemed to relate to parents attributing positive changes in their relationship with their child to this involvement, which will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

The current study's findings reflect Barton et al's. (2004) assertion that parental participation in school is a dynamic process and influenced by individual, situational and contextual factors. For example, consistent with previous research findings, time demands and logistical issues appeared to be some of the main barriers to parental participation in StoryLinks (Axford et al., 2012). One parent also reflected on how previous experiences of feeling patronised during parenting interventions meant they were initially reluctant to participate in StoryLinks.

A pre-existing relationship between the SLF and parent appeared to be a supportive factor to recruiting and engaging parents, with SLFs reporting that parents were more likely to agree to take part in StoryLinks if they were known to the parent. For the two SLFs interviewed who were not school-based professionals, it was clearly important to build this relationship early on. Findings from the parent interviews provided some useful insights; for parents, it mattered to be heard and not judged by the SLF.

The findings suggest that the SLFs and parents felt a sense of partnership and formed a positive working relationship. However, working together with school seemed to present more challenges for the SLFs. This was particularly the case for those SLFs that were external to the school system. Barriers included practical issues, such as time constraints, as well as the attitudes and understanding of school staff about their own role in StoryLinks. In her evaluation of StoryLinks, Waters (2010) also found that SLFs reported difficulties in securing the class teachers' involvement in the intervention. Research evidence suggests that integrating interventions into school systems is likely to support positive outcomes (Segrotta, Rothwella & Thomas, 2013). Currently there is not a dedicated time for SLFs to communicate with school staff directly built into the StoryLinks intervention, however regular communication with the class teacher and teaching assistant would likely support better integration of StoryLinks into the wider school system and subsequently contribute to positive outcomes for the child.

2.4.3 Juggling different aspects: The role of the professional

The findings highlight the difficulties SLFs experienced in achieving implementation fidelity while also being flexible to suit context and individual circumstances, i.e. reducing the expectation on the child to illustrate their story and not consistently having a teaching assistant present in the sessions. It is not uncommon for adaptations to be made when interventions are delivered in 'real-world' settings to support the feasibility of delivering them (Wolpert et al., 2015). However, research suggests that there is a relationship between implementation fidelity and outcomes of programmes (Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012). Further research is needed to examine the implementation of StoryLinks in schools and how this may best be supported. Some adaptations may have benefits and contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes (Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012).

In the current study, SLFs identified that practical and professional support was important in supporting their confidence and ability to implement StoryLinks effectively in school. This support is recognised as an important aspect in the implementation of many social and emotional learning programmes (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk and Zins, 2005). Currently supervision and peer support is offered on a voluntary basis to SLFs. Effective delivery and outcomes for the child may be best supported by access to ongoing supervision and peer support and the value of this may need to be emphasised in training. Furthermore, this should be highlighted to schools when they are considering training staff in the intervention, so that SLFs can be supported at a school-wide level.

2.4.4 Opening Doors and Building Bridges: The Perceived Effectiveness of StoryLinks

The themes 'StoryLinks has an Impact on Adults and Children' and 'Making Connections' suggest that participants attributed several positive outcomes to involvement with StoryLinks. All groups perceived a positive change in relationships, including parent-child, teacher-child and home-school. Adults also felt that children demonstrated improvements in their ability to label and understand their emotions, which transferred to a positive impact on behaviour in the classroom. This is consistent with previous research which demonstrated that developing an emotional vocabulary contributes to children's self-regulation, as they are better able to discriminate between their feelings and to communicate effectively with others about these (Santiago-Poventud et al., 2015). The current study provides tentative evidence for the potential of StoryLinks to impact positively on children's emotional language, however further research is required to rule out the possibility that positive gains are not related to natural maturation or

simply increased attention. Furthermore, additional work is needed to establish the role of the various components of the StoryLinks programme and their contribution to outcomes.

The co-constructed stories were perceived by participants as having played an important role in both developing relationships and supporting the child's confidence and emotional understanding. The children in this study focused on tangible aspects of making the story that they had enjoyed, such as drawing a picture and contributing to stories with their interests. As captured in the sub-themes 'developing understanding and gaining new insights' and 'changing adults' understanding', parents' and SLF's accounts suggested that the stories had provided a space to explore emotions with the child. Also, that the stories helped parents to better understand the child and attune to their emotional state. SLFs identified that over the course of the intervention they observed changes in parents' understanding of their child. This view was shared by parents, who commented that they now had greater insights into their child's feelings and subsequently this had impacted on the way that they responded to their child. One interpretation of this could be that the attachment relationship was supported through parents' increased capacity to engage in reflective dialogue with their child. Reflective dialogue involves an adult recognising the signals sent by the child about their internal experience, an attempt from the adult to make sense of these in their own mind and then verbally communicating them back to the child in a way that enables them to make 'meaning' (Siegel, 2001). However, due to the exploratory nature of the current study and small sample size this can only be a tentative hypothesis at this stage and further work is needed to explore this as a potential pathway. The findings highlight the value of considering outcomes for parents, as well as children, when evaluating the effectiveness of parenting interventions in school. This is not only in terms of any specific benefit for the parent in their own right (e.g. increased confidence in story-telling), but also the benefit derived by the child as a consequence of their parent gaining a benefit (e.g. experience of positive interaction with their parent).

2.4.5 Limitations of Research

One of the main limitations of the findings is the small sample size and the implications this has for generalizing to other individuals involved with StoryLinks. This research aimed to gather and analyse interviews from multiple perspectives. Participants were recruited from each group, however there were fewer participants involved than originally intended due to recruitment issues and time constraints. Around thirty SLFs were initially contacted through email, however the response rate was low and some SLFs (n = 3) replied that they were not currently delivering the StoryLinks intervention. As discussed below, parents and children were recruited through the SLFs and this proved challenging due to the low response rate from SLFs. Parents also declined

invitations to participate in the research, due to personal and family circumstances. Recruitment required ongoing problem-solving throughout the research, for example after a few months the geographical location was widened and an advertisement was placed in the Therapeutic StoryWriting newsletter. This was not successful in recruiting further participants however, perhaps due to the indirect nature of the contact. Future research involving a larger and more diverse sample may be beneficial to determine whether the views shared by participants in this study reflect those held more widely.

A further limitation relates to the sampling technique that was used. Parents and children were recruited through the SLFs, as it was felt that recruitment would be more successful building on the pre-existing relationships that the SLFs had with parents and children. However, this may have resulted in a positive response bias in the findings, as SLFs were potentially more likely to approach those parents and children that they felt had a positive experience of StoryLinks. Also, those parents and children that felt enthusiastic about the intervention may have been more likely to agree to participate in this study. Future research could use a wider sample of parents and children to explore parental involvement in StoryLinks and include those families who chose not to complete the intervention.

Consideration should also be given to the potential methodological limitations of this study. Semi-structured interviews were utilised, as it was felt the format would balance addressing specific dimensions of the research questions and providing participants with opportunities to offer their own meanings (Galletta, 2013). However, it is possible that participants may have provided responses that they felt were socially desirable, rather than reflective of their own views (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Semi-structured interviews also rely on language and this may have been challenging for the children who participated. A variety of tools were used to support children to share their views in the interviews, including sorting pictures related to the intervention and a scaling technique. This was with a view to providing the children with choice over how to express themselves, as well as to assist with talking about the more abstract issues (Fargas Malet et al. 2010). These appeared to facilitate discussion, for example both children elaborated on why they had placed certain pictures under the happy or sad face. However, it is possible that they also primed the children to reflect on certain aspects of the intervention.

2.5 Conclusion

This exploratory study contributes to the limited research on the StoryLinks intervention, with an independent study focused on the views and experiences of children, parents and SLFs. Previous research has provided preliminary evidence that the intervention may have a positive

effect on the children's emotional and social well-being, as well as the parent-child relationship (Waters, 2014). Although small in scale, the findings of this qualitative study are consistent with this previous research and suggest that StoryLinks may offer a promising approach for schools wishing to work collaboratively with parents to promote children's emotional health and wellbeing.

However, further work is needed to determine the efficacy of StoryLinks and the key components that may influence outcomes. Currently there is no systematic evidence for the effectiveness of StoryLinks. One potential area for exploration highlighted by the current study is whether creating stories together and reflecting on these with the SLF impacted on parents' capacity to engage in reflective dialogues with their child.

The perspectives of children, parents and SLF provided valuable insights into factors that supported both parents' and childrens' involvement. From the limited data available, the view of StoryLinks as a positive and collaborative experience appeared to be consistent across the different groups, suggesting this it was acceptable to those involved. In part, this seemed to be supported through the development of a positive and non-judgemental relationship with the SLF and a structured and consistent approach. This highlights the important role of the SLFs' skills and experience in facilitating the active involvement of parents and children. These findings have implications for future practice, as ongoing supervision and support for the SLF may need to be prioritised to support effective delivery of the intervention. Consideration should also be given to how StoryLinks can be successfully integrated into the wider school system, as this would likely support positive outcomes for the child.

Appendices

Appendix A Search Terms for Systematic Literature Review

A.1 Search Terms for PsychInfo and WebofScience

“emotion* funct*” OR “emotion* competence” OR “emotion* literacy” OR “social competence” OR “social funct*” OR “emotional well-being” OR “social and emotional learning” OR “emotional and social learning” OR “emotional and behav* regulation” OR “psychological funct*” OR “psychological well-being” OR internali*ing OR externali*ing OR “emotional adjustment” OR “emotional development” OR "emotional and behav* difficulties" OR “social emotional and behav* difficulties OR mental health”	AND	“primary school” OR “primary education” OR “elementary education” OR “elementary school”

A.2 Search Terms for ERIC

Some search terms with * did not work, so used full terms/modified some terms

“emotional funct*” OR “emotional competence” OR “emotional literacy” OR “social competence” OR “social funct*” OR “emotional well-being” OR “social and emotional learning” OR “emotional and social learning” OR “emotional regulation” OR “behavioral regulation” OR “psychological funct*” OR “psychological well-being” OR internali*ing OR externali*ing OR “emotional adjustment” OR “emotional development” OR "emotional and behavioral difficulties" OR “emotional and behavioural difficulties” OR “social emotional and behavioral difficulties” OR “social emotional and behavioural difficulties OR mental health”	AND	“primary school” OR “primary education” OR “elementary education” OR “elementary school”

Appendix B Data Extraction Table

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
Downey & Williams, (2010)	Primary school Children - 4-11 years Does not specify how many participants. (Parent ratings N = 37 Teacher ratings N = 52) 7 schools UK	Pilot study Mixed methods	**Family SEAL (Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning)** – used within Primary SEAL programme. Parent workshops - 7 two hour sessions, covering themes of SEAL. After parent workshop, children join for an hour of structured activities with parents. External & Internal facilitator	Universal (originally aimed to be targeted)	<u>Children's social and emotional skills (Proximal outcomes)</u> – Parent & Teacher Emotional Literacy Checklists. 5 dimensions: 1) self-awareness 2) self-regulation, 3) motivation 4) empathy 5) social skills Qualitative information from parents - completed semi-structured evaluation questionnaire	1) No significant effect on parental ratings of children's social and emotional competencies 2) At-risk children – significant gains reported by teachers in all 5 domains. 3) Non-concern children – significant gains reported by teachers in self-awareness domain 4) Qualitative information from parents identified main benefits included social networking with other parents and individual quality time with child
Fraser, Lee, Kupper & Day (2011)	3rd Grade Comparison group (Routine Health curriculum) N = 151	Quasi-experimental, age cohort design 6-month follow	**Making Choices (MC)** – single element, cognitive behavioural intervention. Focused on social information processing skills. 22 sessions, 45 minutes each.	Universal	<u>Teacher ratings of 6 outcomes (distal outcomes)</u> - social competence - social engagement - cognitive concentration - physical aggression	1) Students who received MC and MCP rated by their teachers as significantly less aggressive at 6 month follow-up 2) Findings for MC & MCP

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
	Making choices group N = 141 Making choices plus group N = 151 USA	up	**Making Choices Plus Program** – all aspects of MC, with additional activities to strengthen parental and teacher involvement. Teachers delivered additional skills-practice activities between sessions & implemented classroom behaviour strategies. Parental involvement - monthly newsletters, home-based enrichment activities. Parents invited to five evening information sessions. Manualised. Implemented by external programme specialists.		- social aggression - overt aggression (Drawn from Carolina Child Checklist-Teacher Form/Social Experience Questionnaire/ Child Behaviour Checklist-Teacher Form)	programme did not differ.
Terzian, Li, Fraser, Day, & Rose (2015)	3rd Grade (N=479) Cohort 1: MC (N=156) Cohort 2: MC+ (N=193) Cohort 3: No	Quasi-experimental Lagged-comparison cohort	**Making Choices (MC)** Program – single element, cognitive behavioural intervention. Social information processing skills. 29 lessons, classroom based. **Making Choices Plus (MC+)** Program – multi-element. All aspects of MC, with additional	Universal	<u>Social Information Processing (SIP) skills (encoding, interpretation, goal formulation and response decision (Proximal)</u> The Skill Level Activity (SLA) instrument. Six short stories. Individual child assessment.	1) Effects on SIP skills were varied. For both interventions, no statistically significant effects on encoding and emotion regulation were found. 2) Both interventions - improved response decision

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
	intervention (Routine Health curriculum) (N=130) 2 schools USA		activities to strengthen parental and teacher involvement. Teachers delivered additional skills-practice activities between sessions & implemented classroom behaviour strategies (Good Behaviour Game). Parental involvement - Parents invited to Family Nights (5 evening, multifamily group information sessions) Manualised. Implemented by external program specialists.		<u>Emotion regulation & Aggression (distal)</u> The Carolina Child Checklist–Teacher Form (CCC–TF)	and lower hostile attribution. 3) On each outcome for which statistically significant effects were found, MC+ more efficacious than MC. Children in MC+ reported significantly greater improvement in hostile attribution, response decision and goal formulation than children in MC.
Kiviruusu et al. (2016)	Grade 1-3 (N = 3704) 79 schools (Intervention N = 40, control N = 39) Finland	Cluster randomised control Data collected at baseline and 6-month follow up Control = two 3	**Together at School** – 3 areas. 1) Classroom delivered content for children. Promote children's socio-emotional skills. 2) School work environment. 3) Teacher-parent methods. Including materials for meeting parent individually	Universal	<u>Teacher ratings</u> Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Multisource Assessment of Social Competence Scale (MASCS) – 4 subscales: Impulsivity, disruptiveness, cooperation, and	1) Across all grades, no intervention effect observed in improving children's socio-emotional skills or in reducing their psychological problems at 6-month follow-up. 2) Third graders, the intervention decreased

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
		hour lessons delivered by teachers. Covered general topics.	(twice a year) & Parent's Evening Built in to curriculum, not clear how long programme extends for. Manualised. Facilitated by the teacher.		empathy	psychological problems. Effect was significant among boys only.
Malti , Ribeaud & Eisner (2011)	1st Grade (N = 1675) Control group, N = 356 PATHS, N = 360 Triple-P, N = 339 PATHS + Triple-P, N = 306 56 Schools Switzerland	Cluster randomised controlled trial (Unit of randomisation= school) Longitudinal. Pre-, post-, 2 year follow up	<u>School component</u> **PATHS.** Universal classroom curriculum. <u>Parenting component</u> **Triple-P**. Group based. 4 weekly sessions & 4 follow-up phone-calls. **<u>Both components</u>** <u>Control</u> Both manualised programmes. PATHS implemented by teachers. Triple P implemented by external Triple-P providers.	Universal	<u>Externalising behaviour</u> Social Behaviour Questionnaire (SBQ). Teacher, child, parent rated. <u>Social competence</u> SBQ - Prosocial Behaviour subscale. Teacher, parent and child rated.	1) PATHS more effective than no intervention in reducing long-term impulsivity/ADHD & aggressive behaviour. According to teacher and parent reports. 2) No differences found in children's self-report of externalising behaviour pre- and post- intervention 3) Triple-P intervention had no significant effect on children's overt externalizing behaviour 4) PATHS & TRIPLE-P treatment did not have any stronger effects on

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
						externalising behaviour than PATHS alone 5) No intervention effect found for prosocial behaviour or problem solving skills
McClowry, Snow, Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez (2010)	1st – 2nd grade (5-9 years old, Age M = 6.7) N = 116 children & parents N = 42 teachers 6 schools USA	Randomised Controlled Trial (Unit of randomisation = school) Comparison group = Read Aloud intervention	INSIGHTS into children's temperaments - Social-emotional learning program. Framework of temperament theory used, focus on self-regulation: attentional control and disruptive behaviours. Group intervention (separate parent & teacher groups). 10 sessions, each 2 hours. Classroom program for children. External facilitator	Universal	<u>Child disruptive behaviour</u> Sutter–Eyberg Student Behaviour Inventory. Teacher-rated <u>Children's competence</u> Teacher's Rating Scale of Child's Actual Competence and Social Acceptance (TRS) 3 subscales: - cognitive competence - physical competence - peer acceptance	1) INSIGHTS intervention group – significant reduction in teacher's ratings of boys' overt aggression (d = .32) and attentional difficulties (d = .45), in comparison to Read Aloud group 2) Teachers in INSIGHTS group reported significantly fewer problems managing the emotional-oppositional behaviour, attentional difficulties, and covert disruptive behaviour of their male students. 3) Teachers in INSIGHTS group perceived boys as significantly more cognitively and physically competent

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
						4) No significant effects found for girls.
McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, Hill & McClowry (2016)	Kindergarten – 1st Grade (Age M = 5.38 at baseline) N = 435 children and parents N= 120 Kindergarten & first grade teachers 22 schools USA	Randomised Controlled Trial (unit of randomisation= school) Comparison group = supplemental reading programme	INSIGHTS into children's temperaments – Social-emotional learning programme. Teacher, parent & child components. Group intervention (separate parent & teacher groups). 10 sessions, each 2 hours. Classroom program for children. External facilitator	Universal	<u>Child sustained attention -</u> Leiter International Performance Scale–R. Direct individual assessment <u>Child disruptive behaviour</u> Sutter–Eyberg Student Behaviour Inventory. Teacher-rated <u>Reading and math achievement</u> Woodcock–Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Letter-Word Id & Applied Problems subtests)	1) Program impacts for children whose parents participated at high and low levels 2) Program effects on math and reading achievement and adaptive behaviours greater for children whose parents participated at lower levels
O'Connor, Cappella, McCormick, & McClowry (2014)	Kindergarten – 1st Grade (4-7 years at baseline) N=435 children and	Randomised control trial (unit of randomisation = school)	INSIGHTS Into Children's Temperament – Social-emotional learning program. Framework of temperament theory used. Teacher, parent &	Universal	<u>Child temperament</u> School-Age Temperament Inventory (SATI). 4 dimensions - negative reactivity/task persistence/ withdrawal/ activity. Parent-	1) Children in INSIGHTS demonstrated increases in math (ES=.31) and reading (ES=.55) achievement. Also in sustained attention (ES=

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
	parents N= 122 teachers 22 schools USA	Comparison group = supplemental reading programme	child components (see above)		rated. <u>Child sustained attention -</u> Leiter International Performance Scale–R. Direct individual assessment <u>Child disruptive behaviour</u> Sutter–Eyberg Student Behaviour Inventory. Teacher-rated <u>Reading and math achievement</u> Woodcock–Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Letter-Word Id & Applied Problems subtests)	.39), and decreases in behaviour problems (ES= .54) compared with their peers in the reading program 2) Effects on math and reading partially mediated through reduction in behaviour problems. Effects on reading partially mediated through an improvement in sustained attention.

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
O'Connor, Rodriguez, Cappella, Morris & McClowry (2012)	Kindergarten – 2nd grade (4-9 years old) N= 202 children & families N= 82 teachers 11 schools USA	Quasi-experimental group randomized Schools randomly assigned to parallel or collaborative model of intervention	INSIGHTS Into Children's Temperament (see above) 2 types (both involve classroom sessions being delivered for children): 1) Joint, collaborative parent & teacher sessions 2) Separate parent & teacher sessions run in parallel External facilitator	Universal	<u>Parenting Efficacy</u> Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC). Parent self-report <u>Child Disruptive Behaviour</u> Parent Daily Report (PDR). Parent report.	1) Children in collaborative version (joint parent and teacher sessions) demonstrated more rapid decreases in disruptive behaviour than children in parallel version 2) In general, children evidenced decreases in disruptive behaviours in both intervention models. 3) Parents reported increased parenting efficacy in both intervention groups.
Havighurst, Duncombe, Frankling, Holland, Kehoe & Stargatt (2015)	Preparatory – 3rd grade (N = 204) 191 mothers & 13 fathers 204 children (Mage = 7.05) Range of schools Australia	Randomised control trial Waitlist control	Emotion-focused, multi-systemic intervention. <u>Parenting component</u> **Tuning into Kids**. Emotion coaching. Weekly group. 8 sessions. <u>Child component</u> **Small group**. Emotional competence and social problem solving. Drew on existing materials from	Targeted Identified through screening as at risk for conduct disorder	<u>Parent report measures</u> Adapted version of the Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire (MESQ). Self-report Self-Expressiveness in the Family Questionnaire – Negative expressiveness subscale. Self-report. <u>Child Measures</u>	1) Parents in intervention group - significantly decreased emotion dismissing and increased empathy. (Moderate effect sizes for both). 2) Trend for less negative emotion expressiveness in intervention condition. 3) Both groups - Significant time effect on direct assessment of children's

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
			interventions, Exploring Together & fast Track. 8 sessions. <u>School component</u> Universal intervention. Social-emotional development. **PATHS or Professional Learning Package.** Manualised. Main facilitator external programme specialist. Co-facilitated by someone from school		Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory 6 (ECBI). Parent report. Kusche Affective Inventory – Revised (KAI-R). Direct assessment of child's emotional knowledge. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Teacher report. Social Competence Rating Scale (SCRC). Teacher report.	emotion identification. Intervention group-significantly greater change in emotion understanding, especially complex emotions. 4) Parents and teacher reports – significant reductions in behaviour problems of children in intervention condition

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
Stoltz, van Londen, Dekovic, de Castro & Prinzie (2013)	4th Grade (N=264) Intervention N = 191 children Control N = 73 children 48 Schools The Netherlands	Randomised Control Trial (Unit of randomisation = school) Control = care as usual	**Stay Cool Kids** – Cognitive Behavioural training. Social Information Processing Individually delivered 8 weekly 45 min sessions Parent & teacher met with at start, mid-point and end Parents & teachers received information after each session about what was done during the training. Also, asked to practise newly learned skill with the child	Targeted Identified through teacher nomination and Teacher Report Form – externalising scale (T-score > 60, indicating a (sub) clinical level of externalizing behaviour)	<u>Child aggressive behaviour</u> Teacher Rating of Aggression (TRA) Dutch version – reactive & proactive aggression Adapted parent and child versions of the TRA Externalizing subscale of the Teacher Report Form – to determine if child still in clinical range post-intervention <u>Self perception</u> Self Perceived Competence Scale for Children – Dutch version. Subscale: behaviour attitude. Child rated. <u>Hostile intent attribution</u>/ <u>Response generation</u>/ <u>Response evaluation</u> Social Information Processing test (4 hypothetical stories) – Child individual assessment	1) Intervention group showed significantly reduced aggressive behaviour according to children, parents and teachers, and clinical externalizing behaviour problems according to teachers. Children showed more positive levels of self-perception and reported lower approval of aggression. 2) For hostile intent attribution, response generation and enactment of aggression, there were no significant intervention effects

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
Walker, Seeley, Small, Severson, Graham, Feil, Serna, Golly, Forness (2009)	1st – 3rd Grade (M age = 7.2 years) Intervention group N= 100 Control group N= 97 34 schools USA	Randomised control trial Control group = care as usual	First Step to Success – multi-component programme. Behaviourist/social learning theory principles. 3 components – Screening Classroom intervention – 3 months Parent training – 6 home visits. 45 mins. Manualised. Co-ordinated and initially delivered by external behavioural coach.	Targeted Identified through screening for externalising behaviour problems	<u>Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)</u> Social skills, problem behaviours, and academic competence subscales. Teacher & parent rated. <u>Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders</u> (SSBD) Teacher rated <u>Student Academic Engaged Time</u> Observation data <u>Woodcock–Johnson III Letter–Word Identification Subtest & Oral Reading Fluency</u> Administered to pupils	1) Moderate to strong effects were achieved for First Step participants in all three outcome assessment domains 2) No significant effects found for the direct assessments of academic performance
Waters (2014)	Primary school children (aged 4-11 years) 12 parents and children. 10 StoryLinks	Case study. Mixed methods.	**StoryLinks** – therapeutic storywriting involving parent, teacher, child and facilitator. Based on attachment theory. 10 weekly sessions. 30 mins.	Targeted	<u>Quantitative</u> Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) completed by class teacher Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA) – individual assessment of reading accuracy and	Quantitative data - Post intervention pupils showed reduction in overall stress and improvement in peer relationships, according to SDQ - No significant improvement in NARA standardised

Author(s)	Participants (Age, Gender, N)	Design	Intervention (Type, duration, frequency, who delivered, how parent involved)	Universal/ Targeted	Outcome measures	Relevant key results
	teachers. UK				comprehension <u>Qualitative</u> Semi-structured interviews with pupils, parents, class teacher and StoryLinks teacher	reading score Qualitative - High degree of correlation between story character's feelings and pupils' own presentation/ stories written addressed pertinent emotional issues - Positive impact on relationships, including parent-child and home-school

Appendix C Ethics documentation (Information Sheet, Consent Form, Debrief Statement, Audio Recording Consent)

C.1 Example of Information Sheet (Parent)

Study title: Story Links: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitators' perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

Dear Parent,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of Southampton. I am carrying out a research project on StoryLinks as part of my degree. I would like to invite both you and your child to take part in my research study. I am wanting to explore StoryLinks and am especially interested in the experiences of the children and their parents.

I understand that you and your child have been involved in the StoryLinks sessions at school. I was hoping that you both might like to be involved in my project. I thought you might find the following information about the study helpful. I hope that it will answer any questions that you or your child may have about your participation in this research. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through my email: js14g14@soton.ac.uk.

What is the purpose of this study?
I would like to explore the experiences of those involved in the StoryLinks sessions. This is with a view to developing an understanding of how the sessions might be most effective in supporting children and parents. I am interested in finding out parents' and children's own opinions of StoryLinks and how it has supported them, as well as the views of the StoryLinks teachers. I also hope to find out more about what helps the sessions run well and the barriers to this.

Why have my child and I been invited to take part?
I am inviting parents and children who have taken part in the StoryLinks sessions from April 2016 to take part in my research.

Do my child and I have to take part?
No, you do not have to take part, it is for you and your child to decide. If you would like to take part in this study, please sign and *return the consent form attached* . If you agree to take part you and your child will still be free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, if you choose to do so. The information you have provided will be destroyed and there will be no implications for you or your child.

What will happen if I agree to take part?
I will ask to meet with you at a time that is convinient to you to talk about the StoryLinks sessions. This will be at your child's school. I will ask you some questions about your views and experiences of the StoryLinks sessions, as well as some questions that will ask you to think about your child. With your permission, an audio recording will be made of our conversations. This is to allow me to

write up an anonymous record following our meeting and no one else will listen to it. I hope that the interviews will be interesting for you and we will have the opportunity to debrief and discuss any questions or concerns at the end. In the event that you would like to discuss anything further following the interview, please contact (member of school staff identified by school).

With your permission, I would also meet with your child to talk to them about the StoryLinks sessions. I hope that our meeting will be fun for them. They will involve some different activities and questions, to explore your child's views and experiences of the StoryLinks sessions. I will record our conversation on a dictaphone, again this is only for the purpose of me writing up an anonymous record.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
It is hoped that this study will add to current knowledge about StoryLinks and contribute to best practice. The information gathered will allow the parent and child voice to be heard.

What will happen to my information?
Any information that you and your child give will be kept confidential and secure. Information will be kept confidential, unless there is a possibility that someone is at risk. The audio recording will be securely destroyed, once it has been typed up anonymously. Names will be changed on all data collected in order to ensure confidentiality. The data will be stored on a password protected computer and locked file. Once the study is completed, the data will be stored in a secure location for ten years, before being destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University of Southampton policy. It will not be made available for any other purposes. Schools will be provided with a summary of my findings, you can request a copy from them or contact me at js14g14@soton.ac.uk

I hope that you will be happy to take part in this project. If you are happy for your child to participate in this study, please complete the slip below, and return to the school office by _____. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Faithfully,

Joanna Spragg

Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton

Further Information

What if there is a problem?
If you have questions about your own or your child's rights as a participant in this research, or if you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee, Psychology, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ. Phone: +44 (0)23 8059 3856, email fshs-rso@soton.ac.uk

Who has reviewed this study?
This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Southampton, School of Psychology Ethics Committee. All necessary safeguarding checks and references have been successfully completed.

C.2 Example of Consent Form (StoryLinks Facilitator)

STORYLINKS TEACHERS' CONSENT FORM (V.1, 04.11.16, Ethics Reference: 24165)

Study title: Story Links: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitators' perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

Researcher name: Joanna Spragg

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (04.11.16, V.1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study ☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study ☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected ☐

I understand that an audio recording will be made of my interview. This will be used in writing up the interview, to ensure the record is accurate and complete. The audio recording will then be destroyed. ☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be anonymised. Information will be kept confidential, unless there is a possibility that someone is at risk. ☐

Name of Storylinks teacher (print name) ……

Signature ……

Date……

C.3 Example of Debrief Form (Children)

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Children's Debriefing Statement (V.3, 04.11.16, Ethics Reference: 24165)
Story Links: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitator's perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

Thank you for helping me with my project. I hope you enjoyed talking with me and sharing your experiences.

I wanted to find out what you thought about your special story writing sessions. Also, how the sessions might help children and parents at home and in school. The information you shared with me will help adults to think about how they can make the sessions the best they can be for children and parents.

The results of this study will not include your name, so no one will be able to tell which answers are yours.

If you have any questions about the project, or would like to talk to someone about how it felt to take part, please talk to your teacher or [Named staff member identified by school].

If you have any further questions for me, please contact me (Joanna Spragg). Your [mum/dad] or teacher can help you do this.

Thank you again for taking part in my project

C.4 Example of Audio Recording Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM (V.3, 4.11.16, Ethics Reference: 24165)

Study title: Story Links: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitator's perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

Consent for audio recording

Researcher name: Joanna Spragg

Please initial the box if you agree with the statement(s):

I continue to give my permission for the audio recording of my interview to be used for the purposes of this research. ☐

Name of participant (print name) .....

Signature .....

Date.....

Appendix D Examples of Recruitment Materials

D.1 Advert placed in Therapeutic Storywriting Newsletter

V 2 04.11.16

Study Id: 24165

Study title: Story Links: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitator's perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

Dear Story Links Teachers,

Would you like to take part in my research study which aims to explore the impact of the StoryLinks intervention on children and their parents?

My name is Joanna Spragg and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton. I am carrying out a research study about StoryLinks entitled, “Story Links: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitator's perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention.”

My aim is to contribute to understanding the experiences of those involved in the intervention and potential facilitating factors and barriers. I hope to contribute to best practice, as well as to explore the potential for StoryLinks to impact positively on children and their outcomes. I am hoping to interview StoryLinks teachers, parents and children who have been involved in the intervention. I would provide a summary of my research for your information.

My research is taking place in the South and South East of England. If you are delivering the intervention in this area and would like to know more about the study, please contact me at js14g14@soton.ac.uk. The study will take place between November 2016 and 31st July 2017.

D.2 Letter for Headteacher and Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton
School of Psychology

04.11.16 V.3
Ethics Reference number: 24165

Dear Headteacher,

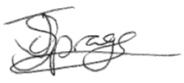
I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study of Story Links at your school. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the Doctoral Programme of Educational Psychology at the University of Southampton.

The study is entitled 'StoryLinks: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitators' perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention. I hope that the research will help to develop understanding of the experiences of those involved in the Story Links intervention and maximise the benefits to children.

I am hoping to interview parents and children involved in the Story Links intervention and StoryLinks teachers. Your participation would involve identifying parents and pupils who have taken part in StoryLinks. Specific details about the recruitment of participants and the procedures can be found on the information sheet that accompanies this letter. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. A summary report would be sent to your school at the end of the project which describes my findings and implications.

I would be very grateful if you could let me know if you would be willing for your school to take part in my study. I hope the summary report will be helpful to you, in terms of demonstrating the impact that Story Links is having, as well as contributing to best practice. If you feel that you would like to be part of this research or have any further questions please contact me on at my email address, js14g14@soton.ac.uk

Yours Faithfully



Jo Spragg

Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Southampton.

StoryLinks: An exploration of parents', children's and facilitators' perceptions of a collaborative storytelling intervention

04.11.16 V.3 Ethics reference: 24165

Start date: 04.11.16
End date: 31.07.17

Purpose

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Southampton. I am interested in exploring the experiences of those involved in the StoryLinks intervention. The purpose of this project is to explore parents', children's and StoryLinks teachers views and experiences of Story Links, as well as their perceptions of the impact of the intervention. A further aim is to consider the facilitating factors and barriers to a collaborative home-school approach.

The study

I am looking for a number of schools, who have participated in the Story Links training and who have implemented the Story Links intervention, to take part in my research.

The study will involve me visiting your school to interview the StoryLinks teacher and parents and children who have been involved in the intervention. Each interview should last no longer than 40 minutes.

Ethics

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Southampton Psychology ethics committee and research governance office. Once schools have agreed to participate, and identified parents and children who are involved in the Story Links sessions, I will ask you to share information letters and consent forms with parents. Children will only participate if consent has been provided by a parent. I will also seek the child's own consent. StoryLinks teachers will be asked for their consent to be interviewed.

Interviews will be audio recorded so that a transcript can be made and analysed, but all recordings will be kept on an encrypted memory stick and will be deleted as soon as a transcript is made. All data will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. No personal details of the parents, children or schools involved will appear anywhere in the study and a pseudonym will be used to replace names. Although quotes may appear in the study it will not be possible to identify any individual.

The researcher is certified by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

All these ethical procedures will be shared with parents on the information letter. I have provided a copy of this for your reference.

Requirements of the school

As well as assisting in identifying children and parents taking part in the Story Links sessions, with the support from the StoryLinks teacher, I would ask that the school provide a private space for the duration of the interviews. I am also asking schools to designate a member of staff that will be available to the participants should they want to talk to someone after the study.

Thank you for considering taking part in my research project.

Jo Spragg
Trainee Educational Psychologist – University of Southampton
Please contact me via email: js14g14@soton.ac.uk

If you have questions about participants' rights in this research, or if you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee, Psychology, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ. Phone: +44 (0)23 8059 3856, email fshs-rso@soton.ac.uk

Appendix E Topic Guides for Semi- Structured Interviews

E.1 Parent Topic Guide

Parent Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Aim: To explore parental views and experiences of their involvement with Story Links.

Welcome parent, introduce myself and ensure they have the opportunity to ask any questions and understand the information sheet. Clarify that they can ask to leave at any time or request a break. Rapport building.

1) Tell me about your experience of taking part in Story Links
    - Thinking back to when you first started, what did you expect the sessions to be like?
    - How did you find the sessions?
        - Was any aspect particularly positive/difficult?
    - Tell me about a particularly memorable experience from the Story Links sessions?
        - Why was it memorable?
    - What could have been done differently?
    - How did you feel being involved in the sessions?
        - Can you describe what helped?
        - Tell me about any barriers to taking part
    - Tell me about reading with X at home
        - Has this changed since the sessions?
        - How often/where/when?
        - Has StoryLinks changed this in any way?
    - How do you feel X felt about the sessions?
    - Have you noticed any differences in X following the sessions?
    - Have you noticed any differences in yours and X's relationship following the sessions?

2) Is there anything else you want to say regarding your experience of Story Links?

Summarise my understanding, check if they feel it's correct and if they want to change or add anything.

3) Do you have any questions for me?

General prompts Can you tell me a bit more about that?/Can you give me an example?/What do you mean when you say . . .?

Debrief

E.2 StoryLinks Facilitator Topic Guide

Welcome, introduce myself and ensure they have the opportunity to ask any questions and understand the information sheet. Clarify that they can ask to leave at any time or request a break.

Rapport building – Tell me a bit about yourself/How long been running SL sessions?

1) Tell me about your experience of running the Story Links sessions

- Thinking back to when you first started, what did you expect the sessions to be like?
    - What do you feel was helpful/supportive in running the sessions?
    - Tell me about any barriers to running the sessions
- How did you find the sessions?
    - Was any aspect particularly positive/difficult?
- Tell me about a particularly memorable experience from the Story Links sessions?
    - Why was it memorable?
- Tell me about how you approached parents and got them involved in the sessions
    - How about keeping them involved?
- How do you think StoryLinks supported the child(ren) you have worked with?
    - Home & School
- How do you think StoryLinks supported the parent(s) you have worked with?
- How do you feel X felt about the sessions?

2) Is there anything else you want to say regarding your experience of Story Links?

Summarise my understanding, check if they feel it's correct and if they want to change or add anything.

3) Do you have any questions for me?

General prompts Can you tell me a bit more about that? What do you mean when you say . . .?

Debrief

E.3 Children's Topic Guide

Introductions & description of study (10 minutes)

- *Welcome child, introduce myself and thank them for coming to talk to me. Read through child's information sheet with them and provide opportunity to ask any questions.*
- *Rapport building –*
    - *problem-free talk e.g. What they like doing at home/school?*
    - *Do a short activity of their choice together, such as drawing/playing with Lego*

Main interview (30 minutes)

I would like you to tell me what you thought about the Story Link sessions. I am really interested in finding out what you thought about them. There are no right or wrong answers. I have some pictures here for us to look at together.

- Pictures of different aspects of StoryLinks sessions (parent coming into school/making up story/reading story/behavioural target & reward/feelings check-in/reading story at home/reading story at school). Ensure child understands what they each represent.
- At this time, may ask them if they would be happy to look at Story Links book with me. This will be to help remind them of the sessions and focus on what we will be talking about.

1.) StoryLinks sessions

- **How would you describe the Story sessions to me, so I can understand what they are?**
- **How did you feel about the Story(Link) sessions?**
    - What did you like/dislike?
    - Ask children to sort the pictures under Happy & Sad face.
        - Why did you put that there?
        - Was it always there?
    - Any other parts of the sessions you would like to add to the pictures? (Have post-its, so can include any ideas they have)
    - Is there anything that could have made the sessions better?/If you could have changed one thing what would it be?

- Feedback my understanding of what they have shared. Check if that's right. If there's anything they wish to change/add.

2.) Have the SL sessions made a difference at school?

- How has it made a difference, what has changed?
- Has it helped you with anything?
- Differences to learning/reading/ behaviour/ relationships – use scaling here to support. E.g. Now – before. Could use sentence starters, 'Now I…'

- Feedback my understanding of what they have shared. Check if that's right. If there's anything they wish to change/add.

3.) Have the SL sessions made a difference at home?

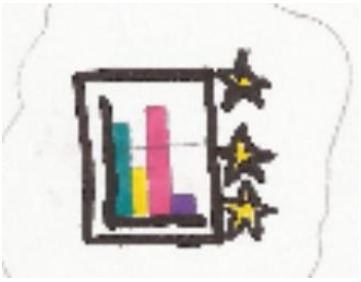
- How has it made a difference, what has changed?
- Has it helped you with anything?
- Differences to learning/reading/ behaviour/ relationships – use scaling here to support - use scaling here to support. E.g. Now – before. Could use sentence starters, 'Now I…'

- *Feedback my understanding of what they have shared. Check if that's right. If there's anything they wish to change/add.*

Those are all of my questions. Thank you very much for listening carefully and answering them. Do you have any questions for me now?

- *Talk through debrief information with child. Make sure they have the opportunity to ask any questions and continue to be happy for me to use the audio recording.*

Appendix F Pictures for Children's Interview

 READING AT HOME	 READING AT SCHOOL
 REWARD	 MAKING UP A STORY TOGETHER
 MUM/DAD COMING INTO SCHOOL	 READING MY STORY TO EVERYONE
 FEELINGS CHECK-IN	 DRAWING A PICTURE FOR MY STORY

Appendix G Analysis: Examples of Transcription of Interviews, Analytic Memo, Research Diary and Initial Codes

G.1 Example of Transcription from Parent Interview (Any names or details have been anonymised)

I: Ok, and could you tell me about a particularly memorable experience from the sessions?

P7: I think the most, the, I think the most memorable one for me, I can't remember which story it was, I think it was the one where we did mountain gorillas, I think it was mountain gorillas.. I think so and he was clearly.. putting himself in that, or I don't know if he was putting himself in that position or, anyway, he noticed a difference between the character and himself, which I've never.. kind of noticed and I thought 'ah you are identifying', so basically the gorilla had a favourite rock and he, I don't know, he went to hide behind his favourite rock or he went to put something, I can't remember what the actual thing was, anyway he had a favourite rock and Nick blurts out 'Well, I don't have a favourite rock' and I was like 'Oh my goodness, he's actually, putting himself in the story and kind of, seeing similarities' I was like, 'wow' That was quite towards the end I think, but I was like 'wow, that's pretty cool', it was just an off the cuff comment. I said to SLT4 afterwards, 'I can't believe he said that', like this is a child that reads non-fiction books, I don't know if he told you that, he likes to read Romans, we've been reading the Roman Empire in Britain at the moment and science facts, why spacemen can't burp, that's the other one we're

G.2 Example of Analytic Memos

Transition to using NVivo is proving quite challenging. Think I am reluctant to repeat the initial coding process, as feels that this will just be a repetition of earlier work. Wonder if this may be part of the process though? Helping me to refine some ideas and identify some of the key messages and codes that seem pertinent to me when looking through the data. This is time-consuming, but may be beneficial for later stages of analysis. Does pose the question of whether I should look back at previous codes, or just code again without specifically referencing these. Sure some of the same codes will be used even if I don't (although perhaps with different wording).

There are some parts of the transcripts that seem important, but I am uncertain how to code them. For some the in-vivo code seems sufficient for now, in terms of drawing my attention back to the code/extract at a later stage. For some this is not the case however and am not sure how best to conceptualise it. Maybe a thesaurus would be helpful, although this is hard to use if I can't articulate my initial thinking in the first place!

Initial thoughts - being flexible - refers to the ways that SL teachers have problem solved or adapted the intervention, to respond to their individual situation and context/skills of SL facilitator/feeling pressure (is this linked to the expectations of others and the sense that sometimes SL has been used when not sure what else to try)/

Experiences

Views - Positive! Invested in it as an intervention. Report positive outcomes for parent and child. Perhaps all also have own learning and messages to take away.

Interesting reflecting on research question and staying with participants' views and experiences, rather than jumping straight to interpretation. Also helped me to think about some of the assumptions that I may be bringing to the data e.g. how certain events/experiences may have left people feeling, when they have not expanded on this themselves. Also, may have jumped too quickly to 'barriers' and 'what helped' as themes. These were questions I asked, so no suprise that I identified them as themes! However, may be more relevant/appropriate to address in relation to my second research question.

Wrote out the codes on post-its and found it easier to play around with the groups and to think about different ways of doing this. Still important to go back to the data and reflect on the extracts and why I had coded them as I had. This helped me think about possible overarching themes.

Currently, trying to work out whether engagement and collaboration is more related to delivery and implementation, rather than 'making connections' grouping. Engagement, collaboration and relationships all seem to capture something about the dynamics involved in storylinks.

G.3 Example of First Iteration Codes – StoryLinks Facilitator

StoryLinks Teacher 4

Reflecting on previous experience
“parents would never engage”
Getting started
School based role
Positive experience
StoryLinks serves multiple purposes
Difficulties getting started
Child refusing to engage
Linking exclusion and storylinks
Directive vs collaborative
Individual approach
Being flexible
Engaging the parent
Sense of success
Within-child explanations
Child not going into class
“impact was huge”
Story as positive
Feeling pressure
“you want so much from it”
“it’s quite intense”
Trusting instincts
Building up demands
Target as helpful
Child not wanting sessions to end
Continuing the support
Family context
Engaging dad
Building home-school relationship
“he desperately needed to see dad was on board with everything”
Changing the activity
“quite a hefty process to get up and going”
paperwork
StoryLinks to “carry him through”
Keeping the link
Building relationships within the family
Engaging parents
Investment from SL teacher
Feeling manufactured
Feeling uncertain
Building on pre-existing relationships
Having a quiet space
routine
Competing demands
Interruptions and changes as challenging
“having us all singing from the same hymn sheet”
Working collaboratively
Being organised

Evaluating impact
Teacher-child relationship
Importance of not rushing
Positive experience for the child
Sense of achievement
“its got that potential”
Importance of consistency
Celebrating successes
“a bit of time just for him”
Hectic home life
Child making connection with the story
Parent involvement had positive impact
Story as insightful
Parent worrying about being judged
Other agencies involved
Building up trust between home and school
Positive experience for the parent
Parent gaining confidence with the story
“kept him in school”
“its about that time investment”
“mum thought more about what she said to him”
Positive impact parent-child relationship
Modelling skills
Promoting storylinks
Parent having capacity to engage

Appendix H Coding Manuals

H.1 Children's coding manual

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example	Number of sources/references
MAKING CONNECTIONS	Positive impact on relationships	This theme captures children's references to feeling closer with their parent or teachers through involvement with StoryLinks	I: … did the story sessions make a difference at home? Child1: ... Nope, yes. I: Yes? Can you tell me a bit more about that? Child1: Erm.. normally I fight with my mum and now I don't really do it	2/8
MAKING CONNECTIONS	Getting into a habit & practising skills	Children's view that StoryLinks helped them to practice skills and then transfer and use these later on.	"I had to do that for 10 weeks, so I just got into a habit"	2/5
MAKING CONNECTIONS	Engagement with the story	This theme captures the children's involvement with making the stories. Both children re-told stories, suggesting that they had engaged with the story when writing it.	I: "And you told me that you made a story up about a monkey. What happened in your story about a monkey?" Child2: "There was a boat, and and also the monkey wanted bananas in the jungle and there weren't any and he was waiting for a long time for the boat, for the monkeys and the boat had sank and then, and I think, hang on the boat	2/13

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example	Number of sources/references
			didn't sank but then it came and then the monkey had its bananas."	
COMFORTABLE AND UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS	"Even better if"	This theme captures the children's views about parts of StoryLinks that they disliked or ways that they felt the sessions could be improved.	I: Did you ever like doing the feelings check-in? Child1: No, no, no, no, no that was just a waste of time. We could just get on with the story, but that just wasted the time. I know she wanted to hear our feelings to see if we were ok, but I feel like that was just a waste of time…	2/6
COMFORTABLE AND UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS	Positive experience	This theme captures children expressing that they found the sessions enjoyable	Child 1: They were fun. I: Ok, you thought they were fun. Child1: And I thought they were funny.	2/14

H.2 Parent's coding manual

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example	Number of sources/references
Making connections	Feeling connected with child	Parent expressing that there has been a positive impact on their relationship with their child.	"he comes to me for cuddles and things a lot more, he's a bit more affectionate and erm, bit more open to that"	2/10
Making connections	Collaboration & being consulted	This sub-theme reflects parents' view that they felt they were working together with school and SLF. Also, that this was a collaborative, rather than a directive process.	"I guess hand in hand with the school rather than feeling a bit excluded" "I think it's nice to be included in a non, kind of, sort of patronising way or.. to sort of feel like, one you are kind of helping your child because he's there too, so he's getting something from it, so by me being there I'm assisting with the help, I'm not running the show but I'm assisting."	2/21
Making connections	Engagement, not just participation	Parents describing their active involvement with StoryLinks and how they felt a part of it.	"I think it's what you decide to do right, if you decide to sit there and just get on with it and then leave and don't think about it till the next week then you're not going to do much, you get out what you put in right, so if you think about things and, for me if I	2/14

			think about things and come back and then say to SLT4, 'oh I thought about this and de de de de' and then discuss it through it makes more sense to me.”	
Making connections	Exploring emotions through the story	Parents view that the story provided a ‘container’ for feelings and allowed for emotions to be explored.	“I guess it gave an opening for emotion and building his understanding of emotions and how to deal with them, whereas if we'd of done something else, yeah it probably wouldn't”	2/11
Comfortable & uncomfortable feelings	Positive experience	This sub-theme reflects the positive feelings that parents expressed about the StoryLinks sessions.	“it was quite containing, it was quite structured, we knew what we were doing” “It wasn't what I expected to be, it was better than I expected it to be”	2/13
Comfortable & uncomfortable feelings	Apprehension and Challenges	This theme captures parents’ descriptions of things they found difficult or challenging about their involvement with StoryLinks.	“a bit kind of anticipation about what I'm going to say in the story you know, so some anxiety about that, not a huge amount”	2/9

StoryLinks has an impact on adults and children	Impact on child	This theme reflects the parent's view that involvement with StoryLinks has impacted on their child.	"I think it's given him confidence with that, you know, what he says does have value and merit."	2/8
StoryLinks has an impact on adults and children	StoryLinks as one part of the support around child	Parents view and experience of StoryLinks as part of a wider system of support around the child.	"I think there's so many different things that are happening that, you know I don't know how much you'd put it down specifically to StoryLinks"	2/10
StoryLinks has an impact on adults and children	Developing understanding and gaining new insights	This sub-theme captures the parents view that taking part in StoryLinks has impacted on their understanding of their child and also of their own behaviour.	"now I know that he's not there with some of those I can be more understanding of that fact and also kind of do the whole wondering out loud thing, like 'Oh, I'm wondering if you're feeling frustrated right now, or I'm wondering if you're feeling worried right now'."	2/18

H.3 SLF's coding manual

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Example	Number of sources/references
The practicalities of storylinks	Being flexible	SLF views and experiences of needing to problem-solve or respond to the individual or context.	"we had to overcome those barriers and each week I was kind of going ok, this didn't work lets problem solve it" "all the children that I have done the intervention with have been very different and different reasons for wanting to do it"	4/29
The practicalities of storylinks	Structure & consistency	References to ways that sessions have regular and predictable and how this has supported those involved.	"I made up a visual timetable and you know its been the most helpful thing ever because it reminds me when we're in the process, rather than having a checklist I can just look at it and go, oh we've got to do our behaviour chart oh now we've got to do our feelings, oh what are we going to do."	3/11
The practicalities of storylinks	Limited time and availability of resources	References to SLFs' experiencing difficulties with logistics and keeping within the time	"keeping within the time limit that didn't happen. So in theory it should have been an hour a week, including the write up, might as well double that" "all the additonal logistics, so its supposed to be an hour where I come in, do the storylinks for an hour and then finish and actually it used to take me so much	3/14

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Example	Number of sources/references
			longer than that, by the time I'd made phone calls and booked rooms and chased people and made sure we had everything"	
The practicalities of storylinks	Collaboration & engagement of others	This sub-theme captures SLF emphasis on the important of collaborative working, with parents and school. Also, how they have supported them to become actively involved with the intervention.	"we discuss as a school how, and I do this with other things that I do within the school, how, what children do we have that this would facilitate better or would be better for? So I talk to the head, I talk to the year groups" "a lot of it was wondering out loud and trying to keep mum in the parenting role and not giving the solution, but just saying well what do you think might work?"	4/84
StoryLinks has an impact on adults and children	Changing adults' understanding	This theme captures descriptions of how adults' understanding and perceptions of the child have changed, as a result of their involvement with StoryLinks.	"actually one of the things mum had shared with me was that she'd assumed that he had got, he knew some basic emotions and she realised that actually you might know the word for an emotion but that does not necessarily mean you fully understand that emotion. So it's helped her, she said it's highlighted to her not to assume that he knows what that means."	4/15
StoryLinks has an impact on adults and children	Transferring skills	The theme captures examples of how children have demonstrated progress and skills outside of the context of StoryLinks sessions	"I think that really helped him cause he was then able to, if he was in a class situation, he was able to say 'I'm feeling der der der der der, because der der der der der' and kind of explain, rather than just exploding." "by the end of the ten weeks he wasn't running away from school and he was wanting to engage in classroom activities, and his behaviour dropped dramatically."	4/17

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Example	Number of sources/references
Making connections	Relationships	This theme captures the SLFs' perceptions that involvement in StoryLinks impacted on relationships. This includes their own relationship with others, the home-school relationship and parent-child also.	"I think you know because it brought her into school, made her realise that we're not judging her parenting we want to work with her, we want to work with him, erm and so, yeah it just improved relationships all round really" "StoryLinks showed me an opening to be able to, erm, have a better relationship, one with the parent, to be able to erm support a parent and child in a better and more rounded way"	4/24
Making connections	The story is a bridge	The SLFs' view that the story can build connections with the child or the experience of the child making a connection with the story and using it to express or explore an idea.	"I think that it's enabled him to explore emotions in a safe way, in a very depersonalising way through the characters in the stories." "the story is unfolding and then the child says something, that makes that connection that you can truly see, this is working, this is working"	4/18
Making connections	StoryLinks offers a space	SLFs' view that the sessions provide a space to reflect or explore feelings, both for the child and adults.	"it is an opportunity, a space, a moment to reflect, a moment to share, a moment to possibly resolve in a really safe and nice environment"	3/17
Comfortable & uncomfortable feelings	Positive experience	This theme captures SLFs expressing that they found the sessions enjoyable and felt that they were successful.	"I was really suprised by how it did all come together and it was, it did flow and we did have lots of giggles, but actually it was great, it was really good." "I love it, I absolutely love it, we laugh, we joke"	4/38

Theme	**Sub-theme**	**Description**	**Example**	**Number of sources/references**
Comfortable & uncomfortable feelings	Feeling supported	SLFs' perceptions of being supported, whether this be by the school setting or through supervision.	"I'm very lucky, I'm very lucky, I am so well supported in my role" "it's about erm.. that reflective space to actually learn from this experience to then inform what you're going to do next, which I get from supervision essentially"	3/10
Comfortable & uncomfortable feelings	Pressure and uncertainty	This theme captures the SLFs' description of feeling under pressure to produce results and experiencing some discomfort with the uncertainty of the sessions.	"you never know whether you're getting it quite right with them, cause... its really hard cause when you're in that session erm you want so much from it but at the same time you've got to let them go from it, its really really, its quite intense actually you feel quite a lot of pressure about making sure that you're getting the most from it" "I felt a lot of pressure on myself from the beginning because I thought that, you know the feedback that I got following the first session was.. sort of, made me feel quite worried and pressured around it"	4/24
Comfortable & uncomfortable feelings	Managing others' uncomfortable feelings	SLFs' references to times when they had to support others with their discomfort or difficult feelings.	"if he didn't know what to say he'd close down, so I wondered out loud or noticing, I notice that you've got your head down and I'm noticing that you're not feeling very happy about this I wonder if you're feeling frustrated, erm I wonder if you're feeing frustrated because you can't think of the word or you know, just	4/15

Theme	**Sub-theme**	**Description**	**Example**	**Number of sources/references**
			trying to get like an indication or a nod or something”	

Appendix I Excerpt from Research Diary

Research Diary

- Transcription: Participant 1 (3.03.17)

  Transcription is a time-consuming process, want to ensure that I am capturing the interview accurately, so find myself often rewinding and checking for little details, such as placing the qualifiers in the correct place and getting the correct turn of phrase. Interesting to reflect on my own role in the interview and how I responded to what I was hearing. Remember it being a challenge not to jump in and ask more questions/share my own experience, as that was not my role as interviewer. Wonder if it was a strange experience for the interviewee, as they were allowed to talk for long periods without interruption and seemed different from the flow of organic conversation. Already can identify some codes/threads in the interview around flexibility and being surprised by their experience. I have to remain reflective of immersing myself in the data set and listening openly and without assumptions/pre-conceptions, but am aware that I have had my own experience of the StoryLinks intervention and this may be impacting on my interpretation. Will be important to remain close to the data throughout coding and keep reflecting on what I may be bringing.

- Transcription: Participant 1 (13.03.17)

  Participant spoke a lot about the value of the intervention/wanting more schools to know about it. Need to consider this in my interpretation and possibility that there was a social desirability bias, as she was aware that I was doing research and perhaps felt that I wanted to hear positive things. I did try to ask about challenges and explore these with prompts/open questions, but also did not want to influence her answers and was conscious of not structuring the interview so much that her experience/perceptions was lost.

- Transcription: Participant 3 (19.03.17)
  I have noticed some differences between the experiences of this SL teacher who was based in a school, compared to previous SL teacher who was not. This is in terms of the relationships with parents/practicalities of running the intervention. I picked up on this during the original interviews and this has been highlighted again as I listen back. Will be interesting to see if next SL interview (with SL teacher not based in a school) will draw out similar things. Need to be careful not to let this thinking guide me too much/influence my questions, as want to allow for that individual's experiences and perceptions to lead our conversation.

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