



# Children's Voices

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A review of evidence on the subjective wellbeing of children excluded from school and in alternative provision in England

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# Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. It was written and researched by Kara Apland, Hannah Lawrence, Jeff Mesie and Elizabeth Yarrow at Coram.

[Coram](#) is the children's charity that has been supporting vulnerable children for almost 300 years, and is still finding new ways to help children in the UK and worldwide. Coram's vision is that every child has the best possible chance in life, and its mission is to develop, provide and promote best practice in the support of children and young people.

# Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Introduction	3
Objectives of the review	3
Scope	3
Methodology	4
Rapid review approach	4
Search strategy and terms	4
Quality appraisal	5
Synthesis of evidence and drafting the report	5
Ethics	5
Limitations in the literature	5
Children excluded from education and in alternative provision: definitions and subgroups	6
Findings	8
Children’s perceptions of being excluded	8
Children’s experiences of being excluded	9
Institution: the alternative provision	9
The curriculum	10
Views on exclusion and punishment	12
Support from other agencies and staff	12
Indicators of wellbeing	12
Self-esteem	13
Relationships with peers	14
Family relationships	15
Relationships with teachers	17
Hope and aspirations	19
Agency	22
Feelings of safety	24
Stress, anger and fear	25
Emerging themes	28
References	29
Appendices	30
Appendix 1: Quality appraisal tool	30
Appendix 2: Profile of literature	35
Peer reviewed	35
Grey literature	36

# Introduction

This report explores findings from an evidence review of the views, perspectives and experiences of children who have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from school and children in alternative provision, on matters related to their subjective wellbeing.

The report forms part of a series of studies examining the subjective wellbeing of vulnerable groups of children in England. This series was produced as part of a larger project focused on improving evidence about childhood vulnerability.

## Objectives of the review

The main objectives of the review were:

- > to identify, appraise and synthesize published qualitative evidence on the subjective wellbeing of children in detention in England
- > to draw out key findings and conclusions from the evidence, as well as identifying any important gaps.

## Scope

The review was limited to the exploration of qualitative evidence concerning the subjective views and experiences of children in England, published from 2007 to 2017.

The review focused on studies that captured and presented the direct voices, and first-hand accounts, of children. Adult perspectives on childhood experiences, and studies with excessive mediation and intervention by the author interrupting children's accounts, were avoided or deprioritised. The team considered accounts by children of their own experiences, as well as their perceptions and reports of the experiences of their peers.

The review only considered literature containing evidence on the experiences and views of vulnerable children ages 17 years or under. Retrospective accounts of childhood, provided by adults from 18 years onwards, were generally avoided, due to the methodological limitations of such studies; however, decisions regarding the inclusion of studies containing retrospective accounts were made on a case-by-case basis (see Appendix 1: Quality appraisal tool).

Methodological criteria for the inclusion of studies were broad and flexible (see Appendix 1). There was no minimum sample size threshold for the inclusion of a study in the review; given the qualitative, personal and subjective focus of the research, diary studies of a single young person were considered eligible for review.

Finally, the review prioritised studies which had entailed the collection of primary data; secondary literature based on analysis of pre-existing data was generally avoided, except where this information was necessary fill important gaps in evidence

# Methodology

## Rapid review approach

The ten week timetable for the project demanded the use of rapid review methodology. Whilst the review aimed to be as comprehensive as possible, strict time constraints necessitated placing limits on the numbers of articles reviewed, such that either:

- > thirteen items/ publications were reviewed, or
- > saturation was achieved and two or more researchers agreed that continuation was unlikely to yield any new insights.

## Search strategy and terms

A mixed search strategy was adopted, which included both manual and automated methods. Automated methods involved entering combinations of relevant search terms into databases, digital libraries and search engines. Given the rapid nature of the review a 'guided' approach was adopted to conducting automated searches: rather than systematically reviewing all hits resulting from a certain combination of search terms. Researchers scanned search results for relevant papers to review, and ran additional targeted searches when it appeared that all relevant papers had been retained. In addition, sources were accessed through bibliographies and works cited pages of shortlisted publications. Finally, particularly given the focused nature of the literature search, an independent expert was asked to identify any key papers that related to the subject.

Automated searches were conducted primarily on Campbell Collaboration, Google, Google Scholar and JSTOR. Searches included combinations of: a context related term (such as "England"), a population related term (such as "child"), a method related term (for example "qualitative") and a relevant indicator (for example "alternative provision").

Researchers experimented with different combinations of search terms to obtain the most relevant set of results. The search terms and operators used were adjusted according to the requirements and restrictions of specific databases.

Search terms for children excluded from education and alternative provision

Context related terms: England, UK, Britain

**Population related terms:** child\*, young\*, juvenile\*, girl\*, boy\*, infant\*, toddler, minor\*, adolescent\*, teen\*, youth\*, pre-pube\*, pube\*

**Methodology related terms:** perspectives, views, voice\*, qualitative

**Relevant indicators:** education, "alternative provision", ("temporary" or "permanent") exclusion/ded, "pupil referral unit"

Researchers conducted an initial scan of titles and abstracts to discard all immediately irrelevant hits. Items which appeared to meet basic relevance requirements were retrieved as full texts, and retained for further review.

## Quality appraisal

Quality appraisal criteria (Appendix 1) were developed to as part of a quality appraisal tool to evaluate the relevance, coherence, methodological suitability, objectivity and ethics of each retained study. Those studies that failed to meet key quality criteria were excluded from the review.

Thirty-eight studies were identified as potentially relevant to investigating the subjective wellbeing of children excluded from education and alternative provision. Twenty-three of these were excluded during the quality appraisal process and fifteen studies were retained. Details about retained studies are included in Appendix 2: Profile of literature.

## Synthesis of evidence and drafting the report

Subsequent to quality review, the team extracted and coded data on children's subjective experiences and wellbeing from selected studies. This was done through the use of NVivo software.

Wherever possible, researchers prioritised coding direct quotes from children (rather than focusing on the language and analysis of study authors), in order to foreground children's own articulations, views and perspectives of relevant matters.

## Ethics

The study was shared with the chair of Coram's Research Ethics Committee. The chair judged the project to be outside of the criteria for a full ethical review (for example there were no human subjects included in the study and no personal data was accessed).

The study was delivered in line with Coram's safeguarding and data protection policies. The staff allocated to the review had enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks.

## Limitations in the literature

Methodological limitations and sources of bias were discussed in several of the studies that explored children in alternative provision (AP) and those excluded from education. These included: small sample size and a lack of representation (for example Martin 2012); lack of quantitative data collection used over time to measure longer term change and outcomes; researchers imposing their assumptions on the qualitative data (Farouk 2017) and; children included in studies who were willing to take part and therefore were the most engaged young people (Harriss 2008).

There were also several gaps in the literature that was reviewed in collecting the subjective wellbeing of children excluded from school. Some studies included data from interviews with young people as part of a larger study with other data sources, such that the authentic voice of young people was not prominent in the publication. Research conducted was often about effective teaching and service provision and less about the children themselves. Furthermore, much of the literature was focused on secondary school age and limited information was found about primary age children.

While there is a lot of literature focused on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), which includes disengaged young people, the studies identified did not meet the inclusion criteria for this review (due to age of the young people typically being 18 to 25 years).

Relatively few AP programmes are rigorously evaluated and monitored by schools and AP providers. It remains a largely uninspected and unregulated sector. There was also potential selection bias by looking at AP services that were thought of as doing well or displaying innovative practice.

There were few studies that utilise the views of young people with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) (O'Connor 2011) and there is limited investigation of the experiences of girls in AP (Russell 2011).

## Children excluded from education and in alternative provision: definitions and subgroups

Alternative provision (AP) is defined as: education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour<sup>3</sup>.

AP varies in how it is delivered. The findings from Ofsted's 2016 three-year survey of schools' use of off-site AP reported that the type and make-up of alternative providers visited varied widely. Providers included colleges, workplaces, charities, work-based learning providers, special schools and academies, free schools, independent schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and units that were run by a group of local schools for pupils who were in danger of being excluded. Some catered for large numbers of pupils from many schools, others for very small numbers. Some had a very specific focus, others taught many of the subjects found in any school curriculum. There were providers that were part of a chain of providers, and very small one-off establishments.

The forms of exclusion or alternatives to exclusion can be summarised as follows:

- > additional within school resource such as behaviour staff or specialist staff (counsellors)
- > alternative within school provision for example behaviour facility or special educational need (SEN) facility
- > alternative non-school provision for example college or vocational placement or short term specialist behaviour provision
- > fixed term exclusion such as afternoon school/seclusion or internal isolation
- > a managed move to another school
- > permanent exclusion for example long term alternative specialist provision.

PRUs are the main type of out-of-school AP. They are local authority maintained and cater for a wide range of students such as those who refuse to attend school and those who have been permanently or temporarily excluded. Pupils may be registered solely with the PRU or be dual registered,

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1 Tate, S., Greatbatch, D., 2017, Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition, DfE

2 Ofsted 2016

3 Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2013), Department for Education

4 Ofsted (2016). Alternative provision. The findings from Ofsted's three-year survey of schools' use of off-site alternative provision

attending both their mainstream school and the PRU on a part-time basis. There is a broad range of other AP on offer, provided by independent schools, further education colleges, charities and businesses. AP may be therapeutic in nature, for example for children with BESD and mental or physical health issues (including hospital schools), or it may offer vocational learning.

In 2014/15 5,800 state-funded primary, secondary and special school students were permanently excluded from schools and 302,980 children were temporarily excluded (fixed period exclusion)<sup>5</sup>. Many children who are referred to PRUs and AP come from the most deprived backgrounds<sup>6</sup>. National statistics reveal the school exclusions disproportionately affect boys, SEN children, those from low income families/ accessing Free School Meals (FSM) and those from black and ethnic minority (BME) backgrounds<sup>7</sup>.

This review focuses on children who have been excluded both permanently and for a fixed period from mainstream education usually due to behavioural issues. The review considers children who are in off-site AP, typically PRUs, and those who are excluded but still attend mainstream school. These children may have to take part in alternative forms of the curriculum within the school, attend lessons in a seclusion unit or spend part of their week off-site at an alternative provider.

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<sup>5</sup> Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2014 to 2015 (2016), Department for Education

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, C. (2012). Improving alternative provision. Department for Education

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012) "They never give up on you": Office of the Children's Commissioner School Exclusions Inquiry, (London, Office of the Children's Commissioner)



# Findings

## Children's perceptions of being excluded

Children who were excluded, or were at the risk of exclusion, repeatedly described themselves as having been labelled “bad” or “naughty” and reported varying degrees of self-identification with these labels:

“I want to go to the PRU because I will see other people being naughty and then I will see how I behave... like how other people feel when I be naughty... disrupting the learning and that...” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“My head teacher told me that my behaviour was bad because I wasn't brought up with a dad in my life.” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

“I come to the [PRU] because I got expelled from X school 'cos I was a very bad girl, I used to get in trouble all the time so they kicked me out .... They said I either had to leave or I'd get expelled so I left .... I wanted to go back to X but they wouldn't take me back” Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

Young people's descriptions of “good” learners included those that were “more-quiet” and “really organised”. Descriptions of “bad” learners included “crazy”, “going mad”, “messaging around”, “acting cool” and “being naughty”. (Students at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16) (Sartory, 2014).

Some excluded children intimated experiences of discrimination from their teachers, and suggested alternative explanations, such as laziness, for their challenging behaviour:

“Some teachers say ‘you're so stupid, I'm going to refer you to a PRU’ and then they tell you that ‘you won't be able to handle it in there’.” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

“My old school used to blame my anger issues on me and send me out the class”. Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"I have some really bad, really bad problems with my writing. They sort a solution out here. They gave me a special pen to write with. At school they said that I was perfectly fine ... they just said that I couldn't be bothered and I was lazy." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Some young people from the Eastman (2011) study reported that they found their exclusion to be an enjoyable experience:

“Most kids like it [being excluded for a fixed term].” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

“No-one sees [fixed term exclusion] as a punishment...” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

## Children's experiences of being excluded

### Institution: the alternative provision

This section discusses children's experience of their AP. Generally children were positive about their experience at AP, and about the teachers at the AP. One of the reasons that children found AP a positive experience was because they felt they could focus better on their studies and were away from distraction:

"[Work] is the only thing to do... so you're concentrating on your work more." Male secluded student, aged 11 to 16 (Barker 2010)

"I can do my work. I don't get silly and tap people on the head." SEN student in a specialist residential school, aged 9 to 11 (Harriss 2008)

"I get into a bit of trouble at school and I can keep out of trouble here" Student, aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

Several young people appreciated that the AP was calmer and quieter:

"In the lessons when you go to [mainstream school] you cannot get on with your work...You step into your classroom, a million people knock on your door, 'come out, come out' ... Here [at the AP] it's really quiet, nice work, easy work, you can get help if you need it." Student in off-site AP, aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

"[The classrooms] are big, quiet, got quite a lot of adults in them." SEN student in a specialist residential school, aged 9 to 11 (Harriss 2008)

In the Berridge (2017) study, students enjoyed that the AP was located outside of London, where they lived:

"I think it's really nice cause you get fresh air, it's not crowded like in the city, you get freedom and space, there's a lake there. It's not really dirty like the city, it's clean round here." Student in off-site alternative provision, aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

"I think it's better because if I was in London I'd be out on the street, buy more weed, smoking, selling, getting in trouble with the police, stuff like that." Student in off-site alternative provision, aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

There were other young people, however, who found AP restrictive. This usually related to when they were excluded within school, for instance put in a "seclusion" area:

"You're not allowed to interact with other students...you just work on your own, you're not allowed to speak until break, there are boards in-between (desks) so you're not allowed to talk to other people while you're doing your work and stuff." Secluded male student, aged 11 to 16 (Barker 2010)

"It's just like walls where you're blocked off and you just have to sit there facing the wall." Male secluded student, aged 11 to 16 (Barker 2010)

"It's boring. You have to work in silence and in isolation. There were no breaks and we had to go off-site for lunch." Student aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

One young person viewed the behavioural management approach in the AP as more lenient:

"What I like about Y is just you can talk in class, muck around, just get up, walk around the class, walk out of the class, walk into other classes, just sit down and then I just think it's funny listening to the teachers try and tell ya, but it just don't work." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

Other young people felt that AP still had consequences and sanctions:

"They put you in time out if you're naughty in class to stop you from distracting everyone'. If you're bad they just send you home. It works because then when you come back you have to do loads of work to catch up on what you missed." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"Discipline... they've kicked me out of lessons bare times... like loads of times and it makes me realise that if I carry on I'm gonna keep getting kicked out... it's fucking annoying!" Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

## The curriculum

Generally young people's experiences of the curriculum at the AP was different to their mainstream experience. This difference was viewed both positively and negatively. Children experienced a more vocational, activity based curriculum at the AP. Some children did not see this as "proper work" (student in off-site provision, aged 12 to 16, Berridge 2017):

"You do better work than in mainstream. See the work yeah? Some of the work is like bare easy innit." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"I'm not even gonna lie, we don't do much here. Well we do, but we don't do a lot of writing and when we do we do get a lot done but it's...we don't do... we only do like ICT, maths and English and like PE and food technology. That's it, you don't do science and none of that." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

For this young person, he found that the qualifications he was undertaking at the AP would not be accepted at college:

"... I've applied to places like College A and College B and they've said that if I can't get GCSEs then I will have to do GCSEs there. And then I phoned College C and they said that they take OCNs so I'll probably go there ..... If I had GCSEs I would go to College B but College C is nearest to me so College C would be my feeder college." Student aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

And this young person wanted to do history but it was not on offer at the AP:

"I just really love history, I did history as an option and I got predicted like Bs and that, so that's something I'd wanna do but they never would so." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

However, other young people welcomed the different activities and the choice offered at AP:

"[Alternative curriculum] my best lesson because you do everything in it. Not just writing, sports and that. You do an action plan of what you've done, where you've been, how much it cost and then produce a review. Written work is linked with the trips. I loved the sailing. My mum came to see me and was thrilled." SEN student accessing alternative curriculum, aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

"The good things about X is that they do vary... topics like they take us out on trips and they take us to play football, they take us out and they do good lessons and they try to help us." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"They don't make us stay in all the time, they take us out places and they treat us different, sort of thing, from like mainstream." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"Researcher: So did somebody sit you down and ask you what you wanted to do as a work placement?"

Young person: Yeah.

Researcher: And what did you say?

Young person: Mechanics or the building trade. And there wasn't much work coming into the garage so we were just sitting around doing nothing. So I had a word with [worker] and she sorted me out with another one that I suggested ... so I went down there and they gave me an interview and I've been working there for three weeks and it's alright. ....And he's offered me a job when I've done my six-week work placement.

Researcher: So you do six weeks on your work placement?

Young person: Yes, but if you like it you can stay and if you don't like it they'll find you another one."

Student, aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

The curriculum and activities were sometimes tailored to the young persons' career goals and focused on their next step after the AP:

"Like where I wanna be a mechanic when I'm older like, they send you to a mechanic thing three times a week to like, help me." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"We are already doing a college thing and we are doing it two days a week. Well we are starting it soon and no one else is doing it and it's costing £600 each. And they said that we would be a year forward of all the other people in the school because we are starting now and it's better really." Student aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

## Views on exclusion and punishment

As discussed, some young people wished to be excluded from mainstream school so that they could attend AP. Other young people feared permanent exclusion and for some that had been excluded, they wished to return to mainstream school. In relation to fixed term exclusion, some young people viewed this as a chance to relax and spend time with friends:

“There were ten to 11 of us in my area who weren’t at school. We used to go for long bike rides.” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

“I slept all day until my mates got home or went up to my nan’s or played on Xbox.” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

However, others did not enjoy their experience of fixed term exclusion:

“I got bored and angry. Everything kicked off at home because I was around too much.” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

“I got bored. I didn’t want to go home...” Student, aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

## Support from other agencies and staff

A few of the young people in the studies were accessing additional support alongside their mainstream education. All the young people who discussed this support talked positively about their experience:

“Everything should be alright because I’ve got this meeting thing with something called [CAMHS support group]. It sounds really weird but it is a meeting thing that you go to which helps you with your self-esteem...” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“Well they brung in a behaviour support person for me, J, sort of thing. She just talks to me about everything; home and that and I usually just talk to a teacher here that I’m quite close to about everything so it helps me a lot. If I’ve had a bad day at home, I’ll bring it into school and take it out on everyone so... there’s more opportunity for teachers to listen here than in mainstream.” Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

“We have someone... and... he helps, he helps us calm down when we’re angry and he talks to us. He’s actually doing a boys group for us where we do stuff, we learn about like cultures and all that just to help us calm down.” Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

## Indicators of wellbeing

This section examines children’s reports of their own wellbeing and the impact of being excluded from education has on this. The indicators of wellbeing that are explored are: self-esteem; relationships with peers, teachers and family; hope and aspirations; agency; feeling safe and stress, anger and fear.

## Self-esteem

The AP had a positive effect on many young people's self-esteem. Children reflected that they felt more confident about their abilities, to communicate when they do not understand and more enthusiastic about learning:

"I've been learning how to say long words, I've been spelling good. It feels like I don't have dyslexia anymore. I kept asking people how to spell this, how to spell that, now I can spell it out in my head and I can do it. The teachers helped me" Student in off-site alternative provision aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

"I'm not afraid to ask questions. If I know the answer I put my hand up. I didn't used to. If I'm not sure I sometimes put it up and have a go." Student accessing an alternative curriculum, aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

"It's made you think more about the work. Like you used to get a piece of work and think I really can't be bothered to do this. But now you look at it and think it was only a piece of work. You think of all the work you've done in your [alternative provider] folder and think this ain't nothing! So, yes it's changed our attitude to work." Student accessing an alternative curriculum, aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

"It's improved my confidence. One of the biggest things we had to do was presentations in front of the whole class. I'm usually shy, but I did the presentation no problem." SEN student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

Young people in the studies also said that they felt happier after moving to the AP:

"I've been coming [to the AP] for a couple of months. I still go to school three days and do my maths and English and that. I'm OK at school, but I'm happier now. I learn a lot more. They talked to me about it, told me what it was all about. They told me I could work with the animals and I thought it sounded good." SEN student at alternative provision, aged 14 to 19 (Martin 2012)

"[I'm] quite happy about things ... Because, with me moving here, I've stopped messing about as much and I'm not always prating about in lessons, like in drama, at my old school, I'd be running up ladders and swinging on lights and stuff." Student aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

For this student, their experience at AP gave them more confidence to deal with peers at their mainstream school:

"They laugh at you in this school, but not in [alternative provision]. In this school if you don't dress right, or you're different, you get laughed at. Some people in this school don't like it, they like you to look how they look. It's hard being at school 'cos you can get bullied if you look different but when you're in [alternative provision] they don't take the mick out of you. They accept you for who you are and what you look like. So if anyone gets bullied it helps being in [alternative provision]." Student accessing an alternative curriculum, aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

Several young people in the studies had a strong belief in their capabilities, despite young peoples' reports of being labelled "bad", "naughty" and "lazy":

"I've always been smart. Everyone has already said that I am not that dumb. Even I was rude, I was never dumb. That's why they kept me in so long because they knew that academically wise I was good at subjects. I was smart. I was rude as a person, but, yeah, when it comes to tests and stuff I have always tried because I knew I was good at it [...] They gave me quite a lot of chances and the reason they gave me so many chances is because I was smart..."

Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"I don't like it here, I wanna go to mainstream school coz I'm in a unit because I moved here halfway through an exam season. That's not my fault. I should be in a mainstream school coz I'm really smart actually. Really, really smart." Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"I do work quite quickly when I'm by myself I am not stupid..." Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

### Relationships with peers

Children who had been excluded, or who were at risk of being excluded, reported a variety of relationships with their peers. Some young people reported that they were being, or had been, bullied. These experiences were sometimes related to their movement between schools or the reason they were excluded:

"There were a couple of people that used to pick on me. I was always picked on because of my weight, my appearance." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"It's hard moving around all the time, when you are older in secondary school it's harder to get new friends, 'cause you get closer in secondary school than in primary school. I think I've picked the group of wrong people because I was like I've picked the naughty people because that's easy for you to fit in with ..." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"... they could help me more, stop the people from bullying me but they didn't, and pupils kept bullying me... it was a chain reaction [...] kids were bullying me and basically I took things in my own hands because teachers weren't doing anything. So I just used to beat them up because they beat me up and teachers didn't like that, and I got suspended [...] they could just sit me down and talked to me. But they never did. Then they didn't like what they got after..." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Young people commonly cited peers are the reason they were distracted at school.

"If someone mucks around in class, you wanna muck around as well. Because that's just how we all are. It's funny, it's a distraction, it's a laugh." Male student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

When young people were separated from their peers they expressed that they were then able to get their school work done:

"I was out of science for two weeks and the good thing is I did twice as much work in the [alternative provision] than I did in the lesson I do more work up there than I do in the actual lesson because I have no one to talk to or get in trouble with." Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

Some young people reported positive support from peers, and that this support helped them to keep going with school:

“Sometimes when I go to bed and I think I don't want to go to school the next day I put on \*(social media) that I really don't want to go tomorrow and stuff and my friends would send really nice messages saying like I will be here for you and stuff like that...” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

Young people who attended AP felt a sense of belonging and comradery to be with other young people who had experienced difficulties at school:

“The first day I came everyone made me feel welcome. And when I was here for a couple of weeks all the group here were asking me to go to dinner and stuff like that.” Student aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

“...there are loads of other people who are going through the same thing and you're not the only one and it helps” Student at risk of exclusion, attending “inclusion base”, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

### Family relationships

Children reported that parental support could influence their and their peers' attendance and performance at school. One young person in the Michael 2013 study explained that he now attends his AP because he lives with a family member and before this his carers just “never made me go”.

Other young people reported:

‘My mum makes me come in [laughs]’. Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

“I don't think you are born clever but if you study really hard... If your parents are more pushy then you are more clever.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

Other young people discussed some of the challenges that they had faced in their family lives. Some of the difficulties included: bereavement; witnessing and experiencing domestic violence and abuse; living with family members with mental health issues; and family members' involvement with the police. Children related some of these experiences to the behaviour that they displayed at school:

“When I was in Year 7, my granddad passed away and I was there with him when he passed away. I was actually holding his hand and that has not helped. Because I had to come back to school and I got suspended straight away. Because I was angry about him dying ... it didn't deserve him to die. I am still angry about it. It is like I went crazy for a little while and I just started behaving really bad and I got suspended .... and every time I get angry I think about him. I don't want to, it just comes into my head and it makes me feel really angry. I do try not to. But when I get angry I see him dead in the bed and that makes me flip.” Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

“My dad started being kind of quite rough with us and then he walked out, well he didn't walked out, my mum kicked him out [...] I know that my dad is a good person. I just can't get over when he was being harsh to my mum and bitten up my mum. I just can't get over that” Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)



"My mum is a bit, she was a bit depressed. She feels like she can do nothing. My Mother's mum has been depressed for years ... she just came back from hospital." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"My dad's been arrested and stuff, so that's hard ... he got arrested for something to do with drugs. He is in prison for conspiracy to supply drugs. So he is just there for the moment, but hopefully he will get bounce so ... but I'm just upset cause I don't know how long he can get. He tells me that it could be between five to twenty years and I am just like, well it's gonna be really long. It's gonna be really hard without him. So that's also putting a lot of pressure on me and stuff because it upsets me and I think about it and it upsets me." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

There were children, however, who did feel that their parents understood and supported them with their behaviour and their exclusion:

"...we always talk and that, my nan is there for me. She doesn't want to see me hurt and that. She worries about me. I ring her about every night and tell her about school. And when I've had a good day she would just say "Oh, I'm proud of you". But when I've had a bad day she would just say "Ignore them all, they can see who you really are ...." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"[My parents] wanted to figure out why these fights happened first and what was my story. They always want to find out what's going on first." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Young people discussed their family's reaction to their exclusion. Exclusion led to arguments within the family but also some young people felt supported and encouraged by their family:

"We [herself and her mother] had an argument about it (exclusion) this morning as I was just saying how she doesn't like encouraging me when things are bad, like now, and I was just saying, yeah, if you work hard you will get a job and she was saying you will get shit work when you are older." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"They are not really angry. They are more disappointed, because they know what I can do. This is what they keep saying to me. They know that I can do it well and this is why they are disappointed." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"My mum and dad backed me up all the way because they knew how it was like. My sister went in the same primary school [...] and she knew what was going on too. And mum used to come in school and talk to them [...] we had a lot of talks at home and we were trying to sort it out." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Some young people discussed how it was their parents' decision to move them from a school to keep them away from trouble or to give them an opportunity for a better life, in and out of school:

"When I was ten I moved up here. And the reason I moved up here was because I've lost a friend with a knife ... because London ... gangs. [...] In London you have to have a bit of attitude and I was getting involved in things that I shouldn't be getting involved in, like I was with some eighteen-year-old, sixteen-year-old and I was ten. And I shouldn't... My dad wanted to move, my mum wanted to live somewhere else, because of my safety they didn't want me back there. So I moved up here. [...] she said that I didn't want you to have that life.

She said if you got bad temper now, imagine what would happen next." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"When I was in London I was only little and my dad found it really rough and he didn't want me around all these stabbings and all these stuff that was going on so he just moved me to X because he thought it was better." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

For some, the move to AP had helped their relationships at home:

"Dad had been getting letters threatening him with court because I wasn't going to school. These stopped with [alternative provision]. I started talking to him about [alternative provision], about problems. We had more to talk about. We weren't in each other's faces. We started talking without shouting." Student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

### Relationships with teachers

Many children expressed that they felt they had been treated unfairly by teachers. Children in the studies frequently expressed feeling singled-out, ignored and not understood by teachers:

"They (teachers) don't understand me and that is the reason why I go to the inclusion base." Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

"The teachers are annoying. They don't listen to my point of view all the time or when I need them to. They just think that it's all about them really." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"She only bothered with like the geeky people, no offence to them, but that's what she bothered with. We were sitting there. She just ignored us, walked by us and left us. And it was like three quarters of the class was sitting down doing nothing and then it was like her class was consisted by three people and no one else so I don't feel that was very fair..." Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"Do you know what it feels like? It is not like he picks you up on things – he goes out the way to see what is wrong. Do you know what I mean ... to look for a fight" Excluded student aged 14 to 16 (O'Connor 2011)

Children felt that they did not get a chance to have their say about what had happened when they got into trouble at school. They wanted teachers to listen to them and understand them better:

"...they never let you explain they just have a go at you." Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

"They just make me sit down all the time when other people are standing up.

They pick me more. They annoy me.... I just walk away while they talk to me. I swear to them." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"I'd change the teachers so they could all listen to me and they could all understand me." Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013).

Some pupils perceived that certain teachers treated them differently because they "didn't like" them or care about them:

"There were some teachers basically they provoked me, they just wanted to see me angry, because they didn't like me." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"I think they were just like "we don't like this person, so we don't really want him, so we are not gonna treat him as good as we treat other people." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"Yeah, they don't care you could get hit by a lorry tomorrow and they wouldn't be arsed." Excluded student aged 14 to 16 (O'Connor 2011)

This treatment led to children feeling marginalised, left out and rejected:

"She made me put by myself when she let everyone else to sit near their friends. And I was just felt left out." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"I was kicked out of V because I never went, I hated school so much 'cos they never paid attention to me and didn't give me what I needed to learn, they weren't good teachers so I was sent here." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

There were several excluded students did have a positive view of some teachers both in their mainstream school and in their AP. Pupils appreciated teachers who were calm, fair and that understood their anger:

"He wouldn't shout at you, wouldn't tell you off, he gives you a second chance when you do something wrong. He is a really good teacher. And we learnt a lot more ... Yeah, I was enjoying his class. And they got some sense of humour too. They are teachers who care about pupils, who know that pupils need education to get a better life." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"Some teachers understood why I get angry sometimes [...]. If they know that

I'm gonna get angry, if it was that type of teacher, then I just sit in the classroom and do whatever they tell me to do because I would respect them more. If I liked the teacher, I would sit down and do my work. As if I didn't, I wouldn't do my work." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Young people also appreciated it when teachers brought some fun into the classrooms. Children found that they were then able to learn better:

“The teachers make it a fun experience, so you can have fun and read. You don’t even know that you’re doing a lot of work and you’re doing really good” Student in off-site alternative provision, aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

“We can all sit together like a family and no-one gets left out. It doesn’t really bother me that I miss my family cause we’re like a family here. The adults are like our parents and we’re like the children.” Student in off-site alternative provision, aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

Several young people observed a difference in the approach of teachers in mainstream school and in their AP. These young people found teachers at the AP calmer, more caring, encouraging and helpful:

“The big difference between a PRU and school is sincerity. Schools don’t care, but PRUs want to help you” Student aged 11 to 16 (Eastman 2011)

“They encourage you and always tell you that you CAN do things.” Student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

“They don’t shout. They just tell us to calm down and that, whereas other teachers just shout at us.” Student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

“they actually help you when you’re having trouble with work ... like they actually help you with the work and stuff like that.” Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

### Hope and aspirations

In the immediate future, some young people acknowledged that their current situation and the pattern of getting excluded was not helpful to their lives. Some wanted to change and had found solutions and support to help them with their behaviour:

"I don't want to take it anymore. I want to stop fighting. So I started boxing. As soon as I started that, I just got calmer and tried to find solutions about what I can do instead of fighting." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"I know what is happening and I am getting help as well, because I wanna stop myself. I don't wanna be suspended anymore. When I get so angry, I should walk away from the problem and then I could come back when I am calm instead of just exploding ..... I nearly got excluded forever, permanently, nearly. And I just didn't have any problems since then, because I was just terrified that I would be expelled forever, and I didn't want that ... "

Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Some young people who were excluded expressed a desire to be accepted back into mainstream education:

“... I’m gonna try and get back to mainstream... I’ve got one permanent exclusion and a managed move so I can still get back to mainstream. I’m gonna try fight for that but if not I’ll probably go” Male student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"I want them to give me one more chance and go back to school [...] If I go back now, I would be perfect, I would do nothing wrong, because I want my education back... I've missed so much, I've missed a year and a half so obviously I've missed a lot of work so I wanna catch up. So if I were back to mainstream I would knuckle down. As soon as I was out, I wanted to go back. I regret it now obviously but I am still here .... I am just waiting to give me another chance." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"Yeah, I loved it. I loved it. I wish I could go back I really do. I'd go, like, in the morning and I'd be perfect, right, but after I'd had me dinner and something to drink and that's it. I'd go back to school and just be a bit cheeky and a bit naughty." Student aged 11 to 16 in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

Others wanted to change schools but felt they did not have many options:

"I am only supposed to be here – well, every kid is only supposed to be here a few weeks but I think I have been one of the longest. I don't want to go to school A because I got attacked on the bus there so as soon as I go into that school I am going to start fighting and get a bad reputation then I am probably going to get thrown out. I don't want that to happen – that is why I picked the other school." Excluded student aged 14 to 16 (O'Connor 2011)

Some young people had a clear indication of what they would like to do after the PRU and held an optimistic view about their future:

"When I make more records I hope to get more famous and make more money." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"Hopefully in college . . . a beauty course, it's like you do hairdressing and beauty, that's if I get in. I want to go to Oxford Street." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"I want to go to college . . . not sure what to do – probably media studies and English and then I want to go to university . . . I want to be a journalist." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

Others felt less sure about what they wanted to do, or how they could do it. Children discussed future possibilities being too difficult for them or not a possibility because of a lack of qualifications:

"I don't know what I could do." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"I don't see myself going anywhere. I'd like to but I can't see myself going anywhere..... I don't think I'll be able to go anywhere where I'd like to, I'll probably end up in a shop or something, but I'd like to do something a bit more . . . something where . . . go somewhere where you have to have a lot of things like GCSEs and things like that but I don't think I will get them so I can't." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"I really want to be a lawyer, man, but it's just hard you know, by the time I'd finished that I'd be 21. There'd be no time for raving, no time for nothing and I'd just be an old woman by the time I'd finished the course wouldn't I though?"

Researcher: asked how one became a lawyer:

I'm not sure, but I know that you have to go to college and get some GCSE . . . study law itself. That's basically what I know about it at the moment, but I know it's hard." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

This young man at a PRU viewed his future negatively because:

"I don't come to school, for a start and I always like . . . muck around in class, and I'm with the wrong people . . . and my writing is a mess, my reading's a mess, my spelling's a mess." Aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

Or young people were easily able to discuss the negative future outcomes that they hoped would not happen. These included avoiding prison, not dying young and not being unemployed or homeless so that they are able to be independent:

"Don't want to go to prison. The only time I go to prison is to visit somebody, it's not good." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"Go to jail, really, yeh, go to jail. I wouldn't like that to happen to me at all . . . I've had too many cautions already so..." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"...it's very dangerous and I think the group I hang around with . . . there is just trouble all the time and too many people are dying now. I reckon I will die. I've known quite a few people, about three . . . my brother's close friend . . . and another died of cancer . . . and other one got shot." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"I reckon I'm going to die before I'm 20." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"To be on the dole, depend on everyone else." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"To not have somewhere to live." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"End up a tramp on the streets, without a home, no one to care for me." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

"Staying at home, doing nothing, getting bored." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

For others, their fear was leaving education without any qualifications:

"That I don't get anything out of my exams, I don't get anything and I just . . . cos that's what annoys me, if you go to school for all those years, you still work and afterwards you still come out with nothing, just fail everything, that's what I don't want." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

Young people viewed some options in their future lives as an impossibility for them:

"A big business job, that's impossible for me to do, 'cos I wouldn't know the first thing about all this paper stuff and all that . . . and I'd hate to do it even if I did . . . that'd be impossible for me." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

“Don’t think I could ever get into the Houses of Parliament, I don’t think I could do that. I’ll never meet the Queen, don’t think I could do that.” Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

“I’ve always doubted myself about going to university so I suppose that’s the only thing I doubt I could do but I’ll try.” Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

“I don’t think I’m going to university – I mean I know – looking at how much my boyfriend does at A level and how much work he puts in that I wouldn’t be able to cope with all the pressure.” Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

This young woman felt that her AP may hinder her future job prospects:

“I might not get a job when I’m older because of this school.” Female student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

## Agency

In relation to agency, excluded children discussed the choices that they had, the choices they wanted to make and the lack of choice for them in areas such as choice of school and say about the curriculum. There were children who expressed a desire to go to AP or leave their mainstream school:

“I might be going to the PRU... I want to... I am naughty enough... It is good there I would like it there. I want to go there.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“Good thing because I left the school. ... I just had to get out. I didn’t want to get kicked out I just wanted to leave.” Excluded student aged 14 to 16 (O’Connor 2011)

Young people who were at risk in exclusion in mainstream school (these children may have previously been excluded or attend some form of AP within their school) wanted some more choice in what lessons they took up and what they could do within lessons:

“Researcher: What would make lessons better?

Young person: A least be able to do our own thing... For at least 10 minutes... Read our own thing or go on our phones... Go on our tablets and read a book ... But listen make sure you're listening and make sure the teacher asks you questions to check you have been listening if you haven't that should be a [disciplinary]... Let us swing on our chairs but make sure we have something behind us... That makes the lesson a bit more fun and helps us get on with the work quicker... If we can do our own thing we will enjoy it more... If we don't behave for the first 10 minutes of the lesson we won't do it... But if we do (behave) then we should be able to go on our tablets.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“I've only chosen one lesson that's it they put me in all the rest because of my behaviour.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“give us more freedom of speech... because they say they treat us like adults but they don't treat us like adults” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

Students at APs appreciated the choice and flexibility that the school and staff offered in classes and the work:

“They let you go outside and chill out for a bit. We can ask for time out and stand outside for a while.” Student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

“They gave me an exit card so I can walk out from a lesson. I walk away and just stay out of the lesson for a bit to relax.” Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

“We do an action plan most of the time. This makes you enjoy the trip more. Because you think about it. Once this trip is over you’ve got to write it up. You personalize it. Usually you get teachers saying write this and write that but you get to write your own.” Student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

Young people recognised that this choice and ownership over their actions was different from their mainstream schools and they welcomed this. This choice that they had consequently improved their behaviour and wellbeing:

“Being able to leave [the lesson] helped because otherwise I would have been sent out and would have got a detention. I was able to let out everything that I was thinking... I was wandering around school to get it out and then went back in and then it was alright ..it's like just asking if I can get out of the classroom for a bit.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“One thing that has made me happy I actually got the lessons that I wanted so I don't actually mess around in them.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

“Now we are in year 10 and get to pick our lessons... we don't get in trouble.” Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

This increased choice meant that children felt that they were treated more like adults in AP:

“I didn’t like it at school, teachers were snotty all the time, but I’m treated better here. They treat you like normal people. I was quite bad at school, to be honest, but I’m better here. They don’t have a go at me all the time if I’m in a bad mood, they’ll just leave me alone for a bit then see if I’m OK. I can talk to them if I want.” SEN student at alternative provision, aged 14 to 19 (Martin 2012)

“It’s more like real life than in school. You learn more about the adult world.” Student accessing alternative curriculum, aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

“[Alternative provision] staff and teachers are nothing like each other. If you treat the [AP] staff with respect then they treat you like adults with respect. Teachers aren’t like that.” Student attending alternative provision aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

Some children reported that they did not have much control over the AP they attended. This 12 year old student felt that he was moved around without having much say. He had been to five schools/PRUs before his current placement:

“Well I started in the infants’ primary school. I got excluded from there and then I went to A, and B and then I started in C and then I went to D .....

R: So how come you moved from there to here?



Because we moved into this county and where we were weren't providing, like, a unit like this.

R: So you come here rather than going to school or do you see this as school?

I see it as school.

R: Do you remember what you were excluded for?

In which one?

R: The last one.

Taking a penknife to school.

R: Do you remember what happened?

Not really.

Student in alternative provision (Thomson 2007)

Other children reported being excluded but then experienced difficulties in finding an alternative provider:

"I just kept getting put on them negotiated transfers for like six weeks and no one wanted to accept me. They just kept saying, 'Oh no we are going to do another six just so we are sure' and after that other six weeks would be up I would go back and they would just say 'Nah we don't want him.'" Excluded student aged 14 to 16 (O'Connor 2011)

For this one young person, AP was their last resort. This young man explained that he was at the PRU because he: "had nowhere else to go, either that or I got expelled and then loafed it on the street."

### Feelings of safety

Children in the literature in general did not express that they felt unsafe within their schools, apart from the accounts of bullying (discussed above). However, this young woman discussed how she moved schools due to fear of being attacked:

"Well before I came I used to go to the [PRU] and I got bullied and so my Mum pulled me out of the school and she found this study centre. People were after me with their knives . . . every time I was doing my course work they would beat me up .... it was alright for about the first few months and then someone, I don't know who – set my hair on fire so, it was all . . . smelt a burning smell and I found out that it was my hair. I was literally petrified to leave the house." Female student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

A few other young people discussed some of the risks that they faced outside of their school in their local area. This related to involvement with the police and being attacked by their peers:

"I've been in trouble with the police quite a few times . . . I've been arrested for theft and I've been arrested for TDA, taking and driving away." Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009)

“...getting rushed by enough . . . a lot, about 20 people, getting stabbed or . . . no stabs alright but getting shot, have to go through all your hospital things where they cut your belly open.” Male student at PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Mainwaring 2009) Stress, anger and fear

Throughout the literature children reported feeling angry. Several students who had moved to AP reported feeling calmer in their new school:

“I can’t go to mainstream because there’s too many kids and I’ll get in a fight, be angry. If I go back to [the Academy] I’ll get back in trouble, being arrested and stuff like that. Here I’m calm.” Student in off-site alternative provision aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

“I’ve learnt to respect my work, not get angry with myself or others. My ability to work [has improved].” Student in off-site alternative provision aged 12 to 16 (Berridge 2017)

“I used to smash things, used to climb trees. I used to punch adults ... [now] I just swear, and just – calm down ... me and [another pupil], we just talk about it and we tell the adults ... They try and make us learn how to [talk about it] ... If you just mess around you don’t get what you actually want.” SEN student in a specialist residential school aged 9 to 11 (Harris 2008)

Children linked this change to how they were treated by staff, the school environment and the type of lessons and activities they were participating in:

“At [the AP] I enjoy gardening. I like things where I feel calm. I don’t like kicking off.” Male student at AP as part of managed move, aged 11 to 16 (Evans 2010)

“You learn respect. That’s helped in school. Teachers used to shout at me and I’d shout back. Now I’ve respect and I stay quiet. I used to complain I was picked on. You learn to calm down.” Student in alternative curriculum, aged 14 to 16 (Hallam 2007)

“Not as much people in the classroom...I’m just more calmer in the school. In mainstream school there’s much more people in there which makes it a more tense atmosphere.” Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

In the studies, some children reflected on their anger and reasons for exclusion, acknowledging how their behaviour contributed to this:

"I've always had bad temper, always. At the time when I am angry, I think this is horrible. When I calmed down ... what idiot I've been and why did I do it, just WHY did I go to that level, extreme, when I could have done it in another way. But, it's just like instinct, for me, for some reason." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

“I can't even remember most of the reasons I think it was just I was acting out with teachers I wasn't listening and stuff and answering back, and they would say get out of my lesson. I would answer back .... and then when I get out of the classroom and realise what I have just done, and I am Oh, my god why did I just do that.” Female student in PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Farouk 2017)

"Because of my behaviour... they just couldn't keep control of me basically." Excluded student, aged 13 to 14, aged (Loizidou 2009)

Other young people discussed the physical violence that they displayed in school, typically towards other students. Students described feeling out of control:

“I just feel like I was different from other kids, these kids really had some manners. I didn't have manners... I quite had a big mouth and I was getting into fights every single day.” Excluded student, aged 13 to 14, aged (Loizidou 2009)

“I would get into fights easily. If another girl is all mouthy and giving me the big I am, I would have to fight her straightaway. I would completely lose it and smash her up.” Female student in PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Farouk 2017)

“I used to have fights quite a lot. Somebody would say something and I would have to fight them... I didn't like being treated like no one, and if you let it slide once they are going to do it every day.” Male student in PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Farouk 2017)

“I broke the keyboard and chairs and stuff, because I had an argument with some boy in the classroom and I have to fight with him he called me four eyes and I said what, and I threw drumsticks at his head and he got up (and he's like a proper strong, he's big) I must have been dashing chairs at him he got bruises all up his legs and I smashed the keyboard against him and I broke my knuckle because I punched the wall.... I went mad because somebody keeps saying something to me, even if they are doing it as a joke, but he does it is a joke every lesson and I am like” can you stop!” Female student in PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Farouk 2017)

“... staff in my school were being sexist towards girls about our jewellery so.... I started flipping and I started fighting and swearing and smoking in school and started smashing windows ...” Female student in a PRU, aged 14 to 16 (Russell 2011)

One young man was able to link the stress and anger he experienced to difficulties in his family life:

“Like, some things happened with my dad, and that caused stress ... there was them problems with my dad, and then there was them other boys who push my buttons at school, so putting them both together wasn't a nice combination. Back then I had a temper on me as well. In the end it got to a stage where if they [other students] physically touched me ... I would, let's say, smash their face in, and I would be the one to get into trouble even though I told the teacher to try to prevent it, I would hurt them because all the anger about my dad that was all bottled up came out, which ain't really good.” Male student in a PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Farouk 2017)

Others described not being aware they were doing anything wrong at the time, and felt they were given confused messages about the way in which they should behave:

“... I didn't see I was doing anything wrong. The only thing I think I was doing wrong was thinking I wasn't doing anything wrong, cos to me, what's wrong with speaking up? But you are not supposed to. Like, you are arguing, I am arguing, you are a teacher I learn from you. Because, since I was young I was taught to speak my mind and when I was 10 [at primary school] they liked that, it shows intellect and intuition, but they don't like that a high [secondary] school. It's yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir, it's get your grades and get out.” Male student in PRU, aged 15 to 16 (Farouk 2017)

A few children believed that their exclusion was an unfair consequence and viewed that others in the school were treated more leniently. Although most accepted some of the blame:

"The time I got expelled (permanently) was because of the incident with that

Other person and I would expect him to get a detention or to get into some trouble, but he didn't. And I got all of it. I did quite deserve it, yeah ... but the other person should have had some sort of a punishment as well." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"It's their fault. They made things look worse than it was. They made it a big deal. That's what it is. So, I get more in trouble" Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"Sometimes I'll get sent out for stuff I don't do. Like um, they accuse me of throwing a pen and I get sent out and then, it wasn't me that did it and... Just them accusing us of stuff. That's what makes us even more angry because we feel like 'I haven't done this, so why am I getting blamed for it?' It's unfair." Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

"Getting put in time out. The way they do it is actually disgusting. It just really pisses me off, like sorry for my language, but it does... But like half the time they just treat me like an idiot and they're like, 'no... blah, blah, blah', and I always get put in there and it's just well... It's not just me though, they do it to a lot of people so... It's the way they do it, it's just like, 'Oh, you're on red, oh, you're on green, two seconds later you're on orange, oh you're on red, get out!" Student in AP, aged 12 to 16 (Michael 2013)

Other young people took responsibility for the exclusion:

"Obviously in my eyes I don't think it's fair because it's me. Obviously I don't

want to kick myself out. But, I don't know... maybe they think that they gave me enough chances and it was time to kick me out ... they gave me enough chances. Yeah, probably it was fair." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"It's no one else's fault. It's my fault. They can't control what I'm doing." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"It's actually my life and I am the one who controls me. It's my fault." Excluded male student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

Some young people believed that because they had been in trouble or expelled before that it was pointless to stop this pattern. These young people seemed to give up on trying to be anything else but "naughty" once they had reached a certain point:

".... And I was getting into trouble as well. So I thought, why not be bad myself if I'm getting the blame anyway, so I did that, and then I ended up getting expelled again and then, Oh God... " Excluded female student, aged 13 to 14 (Loizidou 2009)

"Still here...still getting into trouble everyday." Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014)

"..as soon as I get below 4 I give up (talking about his report card)" Student at risk of exclusion, aged 11 to 16 (Sartory 2014).

## Emerging themes

The literature about the wellbeing of children who are excluded from school or in AP is limited for several reasons. Sample sizes in the studies were problematic due to their small size, and consequent lack of representativeness, and sampling bias, for example conducting studies with children in AP that demonstrated good or innovative practice. Furthermore, research conducted into AP was often about effective teaching and service provision and less about the pupil experience.

The review has highlighted some common themes in the literature about children who have been excluded from education, were at risk of exclusion and/ or in alternative provision. This review has focused on children who have been excluded both permanently and for a fixed period from mainstream education, usually due to behavioural issues.

Children who were excluded, or were at the risk of exclusion, repeatedly described themselves as having been labelled “bad” or “naughty”: “I come to the [PRU] because I got expelled ... ‘cos I was a very bad girl” (Mainwaring 2009). These views were sometime reinforced by the language that teachers used about the children involved in the studies. Despite these negative labels, children still expressed self-belief in their capabilities, for instance viewing themselves as “smart”.

There were varying levels of culpability that children reported. Some young people understood how their behaviour had led to an exclusion whilst others felt they were victimised and treated unfairly by their teachers.

Children generally were positive about their experience of AP and the teachers that taught them. Pupils reported that they felt they were able to better focus on their school work and were away from distractions from their peers. Others enjoyed the physical space that their AP offered (for example students who attended AP away from London) and the chance to be in a calmer, quieter environment. On the other hand, there were some pupils that reported that their AP was restrictive and imposed strict rules on them around interacting with their peers. These instances usually referred to on-site “seclusion” units.

Students’ experiences of the AP curriculum was different to their mainstream experience – both in a positive and negative way. Some students found the school work at AP more activity-based – some saw this as “bare easy” and found that the subjects would not be accepted at colleges they wanted to attend, however, others welcomed the chance to explore subjects that were different to the traditional curriculum subjects.

Young people discussed challenges that they had faced in their family lives and some linked these to the behaviour that they displayed at school. Difficulties that young people had experienced included bereavement, violence and abuse and living with family members with mental health issues.

Children felt better and calmer when they had more choice over the lessons they could do and the activities that they could do in lessons. They wanted to be treated as adults.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Quality appraisal tool

Summary Information	Criteria	Possible fields	Inclusion criteria (where applicable)
	Citation	Author, year, title, publisher, journal & issue, page numbers.	n/a
	Is the source publically available (published)?	Yes/No	Exclude if not publically available
	Publication year		Exclude if published before 2007
	Peer reviewed	Yes/No	n/a
	Did the study involve the collection of primary data?	Yes/No	Exclude if no
	Does the study contain information about children within England?	Yes/No	Exclude if no (unless the study contains information of significant relevance that is not identified elsewhere. If study is to be retained state reason.)
	Geographical scope of study	Multi-country; national; regional; sub-regional; single case	n/a
	Study type	Qualitative/quantitative /mixed methods	Exclude if study is exclusively quantitative

Relevance	What is the research question/purpose of the research?	[Open]	n/a
	Does the study/ source include information about the subjective wellbeing of one of our 'primary groups'?	Yes/No	Exclude if no
	Which primary group does the study address?	List primary group	n/a
	Does the study capture and present the views and experiences of children under the age of 17 years?	Yes/No	Exclude if no
	What is the age range of vulnerable children participating in the study?	[Open]	Exclude if none were 17 or younger  Proceed with caution if studies include a mixed age group above and below 18 and comments are not attributed to ages
Methodology & methods	Are there any potential conflicts of interest? (i.e. related to the funding interests?)	Yes/No [Provide details]	Consider exclusion if yes
	Is it clear from the data source through what means evidence/ information/ data about children's views were collected?	Yes/No	Consider excluding if no
	Are the study design/ methods used appropriate to support	Yes/No	Consider exclusion if no (unless there is a compelling reason to



the evidence, analysis and conclusions presented in the source?		retain the article and state the reason for this.)
Does the methodological approach appear to have been consciously adopted with awareness about the methodological choices made, and the implications of these?	Scale 1-5 with 5 being highest level of awareness	Consider excluding if score is 2 or below.
How inductive/observation-based is the methodological approach?	Scale 1-5 with 5 being the most inductive approach (e.g. grounded theory), and 1 being highly deductive.	Consider excluding if score is 2 or below.
Were the methods of data collection used appropriate to ensure that children were given an opportunity for genuine self-expression, (e.g. non-directive opportunities to say what is on their mind, free from pressure/ coercion etc.)	Yes/ No/ not enough information about methods	Exclude if no Consider exclusion if 'not enough information about methods'
What is the mechanism through which the views of children have been documented and recorded?	[Provide details]	N/A
What is the context in which children were expressing their views,	[Provide details]	N/A (see inclusion criteria below)

	and the purposes for which the views were expressed?		
	How direct and authentic do you consider the presentation of children's voices to be?	(score from 1-6, 6 being the most direct presentation of children's views) Scoring criteria: 6. verbatim narrative 5. edited account 4. question and answer 3. use of selected quotations 2. paraphrasing/ interpretation of children's views 1. children's views are implied through secondary accounts, theoretical analysis and other means	Consider excluding if score is 2 or below.
	How were children accessed for the study?	[Open]	N/A
	What is the population from which children are drawn	[Open]	N/A
	Was the sample method appropriate to the purpose of the study	Yes/ No/ unclear	Exclude if no or unclear
	Is the study based on retrospective accounts of childhood by adults?	Yes/No [Provide details]	Consider exclusion if yes

	How many children are included in the study? (Sample size)	[Open]	N/A
	Are limitations discussed?	Yes/No [provide details]	Exclude if limitations are so significant that the evidence becomes highly questionable.
Ethics	Did the article undergo an ethical approval process? And was this approval granted?	Yes / no	Consider exclusion if no (and there is reason to believe there are ethical concerns)
	Do you have substantial concerns about the ethical implications of the research (effects on participants, researchers, etc.)?	Yes / no	Exclude if yes

## Appendix 2: Profile of literature

A focused search was conducted of Campbell Collaboration, Google, Google Scholar and JSTOR. Relevant indicators included: “excluded from education” and “alternative provision”. The qualifying terms: experience\* and qualitative were also used. Citation lists were hand searched for additional papers. Thirty-eight papers were shortlisted as potentially relevant (at April 2017). These were assessed using the screening quality appraisal process (Appendix 1). Twenty-three studies were excluded during the quality appraisal process:

- > Sixteen were excluded due to relevance (they contained no primary data from children about their subjective wellbeing)
- > Two were excluded due to methodological weakness (the ages of the sample were not discussed, the method of data collection was not clear, the voice of the child was not authentic)
- > One was excluded because the data about children covered Scotland only.

Fifteen studies remained, and data was extracted from these. Of the 15 studies, nine used mixed methods and six were qualitative. The qualitative studies, and the qualitative component of the mixed study, used interviews, focus groups, observations, information discussions and participatory activities with children to gather their views.

Eight studies were peer reviewed and seven were grey literature. The grey literature consisted of a DfE evaluation report, a report from the Centre for Social Justice, two PhD theses, a report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a report from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and a Barnardo’s study. The eight peer reviewed studies were from the following journals: Journal of Adolescence, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Ethnography and Education, Area and Research Papers in Education.

Both regional and national studies were found. The majority were regional and focused on one or two schools. Sample sizes ranged from three to 62 covering the ages nine to 19 (views from young people aged over 18 are not included in this report).

### Peer reviewed

- > Barker 2010 was a mixed methods study. The study aimed to understand the children’s experience of seclusion spaces in school. The study used interviews and focus groups with 11 to 16 year olds in one school. The sample size was not stated
- > Farouk 2017 was a qualitative piece that focused on what students have found to be obstructive and constructive in their school lives. The sample was 35 students aged 14 to 16 in a PRU who were interviewed.
- > Hallam 2007 was a mixed methods study that explored students’ experience of alternative curricula. Sixty-two interviews were held with students aged 14 to 16

- > **Harriss 2008** was a qualitative study that explored the perspectives of a range of stakeholders, including young people, regarding the benefits and disadvantages of attendance at a residential school for children with severe emotional and behavioural problems. The researcher interviewed five 9 to 11 year olds about their experience at a specialist residential school
- > **Mainwaring 2010** was a qualitative piece about PRU student's perception of their future selves. The regional study interviewed 16 15 to 16 year olds
- > **Michael 2013** was a qualitative study investigating what young people who attended PRUs viewed as enablers of and barriers to positive outcomes at school. The research used interviews with 16 12 to 16 year olds in two local authorities
- > **O'Connor 2011** was a mixed methods study that considers the development of an exploratory research strategy for harnessing the voice of children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The study analyses participatory techniques and interviews with 14 to 16 year olds who have been excluded from school. The sample size is not stated. The study is regional
- > **Russell 2011** was another mixed methods study that aims to understand the female experience of exclusion and alternative provision. The study interviews and observes three girls aged 14 to 16 in a PRU.

### Grey literature

- > **Berridge 2017** was a mixed methods study that evaluated the effectiveness of AP in one locality in improving the academic outcomes and behaviour of students. The study interviewed 21 12 to 16 year olds
- > **Eastman 2011** was a mixed methods study that reviewed educational exclusion nationally. The report includes quotes from 11 to 16 year olds but the method of data collection and the sample size has not been stated. For some studies we have been generous in our application of the quality criteria
- > **Evans 2010** used a mixed methods approach to understand the underlying reasons for young people being excluded. The study interviewed 14 SEN children in AP who were aged 14 to 19 (quotes for those aged over 18 have not been included in this report)
- > **Loizidou 2009** was a mixed methods PhD thesis that explored the views of children who had been permanently excluded and those who have experienced fixed term exclusions. The regional study interviewed 13 children aged 13 to 14.
- > **Martin 2012** used a qualitative approach to explore the ways in which SEN young people access and engage in AP in five local authority areas. The study interviewed 14 young people aged 14 to 19 in AP

- > **Sartory 2014** was a PhD thesis that used a qualitative approach. It aimed to elicit the voices of young people on the edge of exclusion (receiving alternative/part time curriculum provision within school due to persistent disruption and/or multiple temporary exclusions in the last three months and/or frequently excluded from lessons due to persistent disruption) and improve understanding of their educational needs. The study used open ended discussions, group discussions, observations, interviews with 10 students aged 11 to 16
- > **Thomson 2007** used a mixed methods approach to investigate the scope and nature of alternatives to exclusion covering children who attended several different provisions. It looked at the effects these provisions had on young people how long these lasted. The study interviewed 28 young people aged 11 to 16 in two areas in England.



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