An exploration of the change experienced by children and their families who are involved in moving from mainstream school into a therapeutic setting

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The damaging effects and negative outcomes for students who are excluded from school are well documented in educational literature. Societally, it is often the young people who are excluded from school who come at a great cost to support later in life due to antisocial behaviour, as well as a loss in terms of their unrealised potential. There is limited research that explores parents’ and students’ perspectives on the exclusion process, and their experiences of alternative provisions and whether they have proven helpful in solving their children’s behaviours.

A new model for supporting families who have experienced exclusion from school has been proposed, with little research being done on the outcomes for families so far. This research highlights pupil and parent experience in this new alternative provision, as well as suggested changes highlighted by them.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the histories/events that have led to children and parents having experienced a managed move to a therapeutic alternative provision?
2. What are the experiences of parents and students leading up to and whilst attending the therapeutic alternative provision?
3. What are the perceptions of change reported by children and parents having experienced a managed move to a therapeutic alternative provision?
4. What did participants think allowed for change to take place?
5. What do parents and children perceive to be the strengths and limitations of the therapeutic alternative provision?

DESIGN

Parents and students were asked about what they thought allowed for the change to take place. Strengths were listed as having group activities that allowed for parents and students to connect and problem solve together. The holistic approach adopted by the setting was valued by participants, where academics as well as emotional and social functioning were dealt with from a family systems perspective.

Reported limitations of the setting were the lack of clarity around transition, as many parents and students were unsure of what the next steps were for them in terms of reintegration into mainstream. Parents also mentioned that they’d liked to have a longer school day with more time for academics. The absence of a playground or an open space for students to run around in at break times was also a theme arising when asked about limitations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EP PRACTICE

Potential role for EP’s for looking at behavioural problems from a family systems perspective. Parents and students interviewed in this school found this support helpful.

EP’s have the skills to implement principles of containment and holding in settings where there are a high level of expectations, and to model and promote these at a systemic level (McLoughlin. 2010).

With the new SEND reforms and the emphasis on tackling mental health in schools, EP’s are in a position to reach families who are in need and to highlight the link between behaviour and mental health.

EP’s are able to promote a more inclusive ethos in schools, and take a preventative stance to exclusion by tackling misconceptions at a systemic level.

REFERENCES


Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties


