

# Altered Provision Project – Review of a Pilot Project

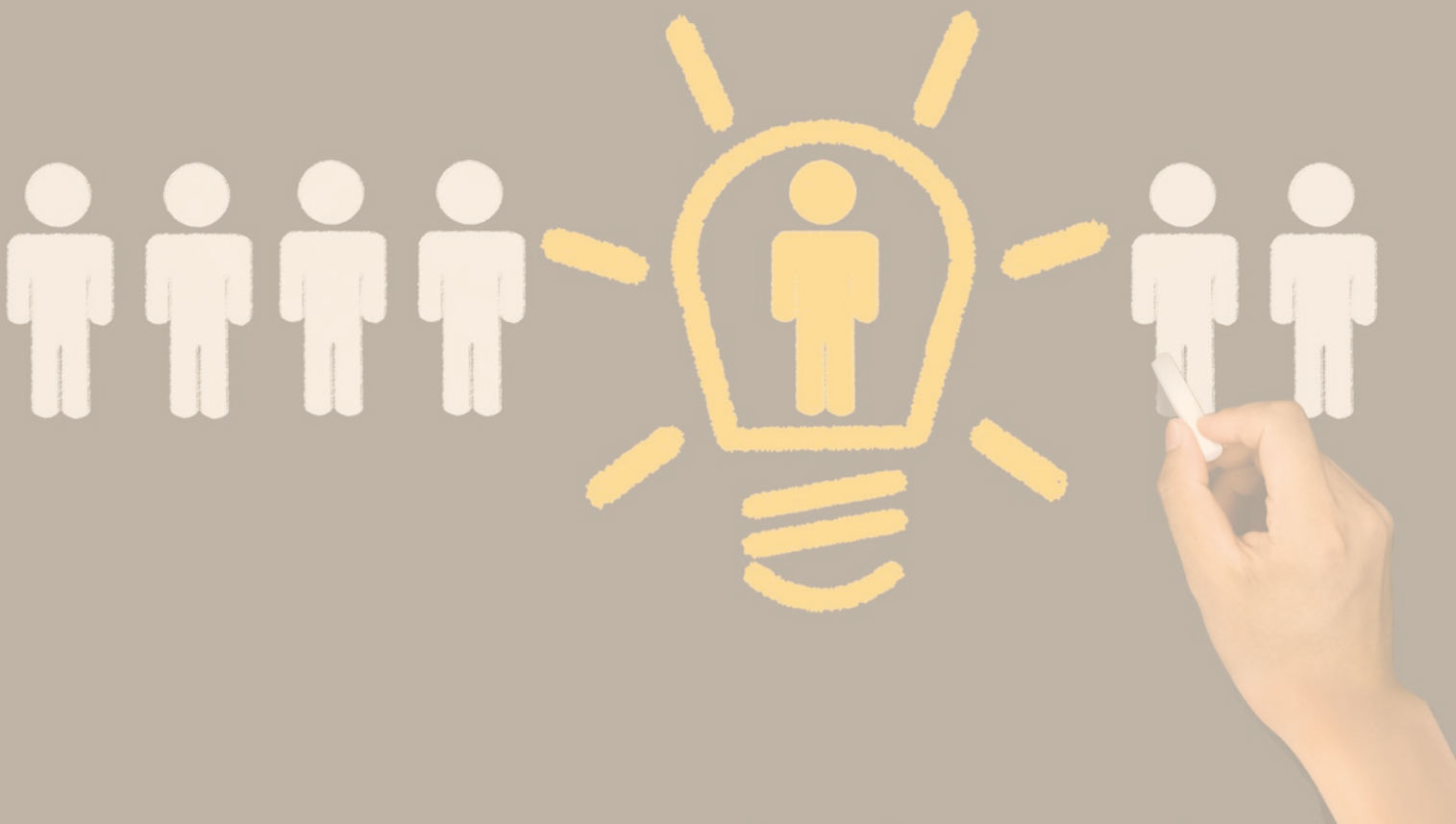
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2018



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## Keywords

Emotional Disturbance/Behaviour Disorder; Inclusion; Altered Provision Project; Policy; Team Teaching.

## Abstract

The Altered Provision Project (APP) was an alternative model of provision of support for students with Emotional Disturbance/Behaviour Disorder (EBD) where schools were provided with resources, in the form of 11 teaching hours, as opposed to 32 hours of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) provision where there were significant care needs.<sup>1</sup> The remit of the research was to review the APP pilot with the aim of identifying the strengths and benefits, drawbacks and areas for development. A multi-method qualitative approach was used, where primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and secondary data were collected through documentary analysis. The findings from the research indicated a commitment on the part of the DES and the respective schools in supporting students with EBD. Positive benefits were reported for the students. Depending on the specific needs of students, both an additional teacher and/or a SNA may be required and therefore flexibility in the allocation of resources for students with EBD is necessary. Supporting students with EBD should encompass the social, emotional and vocational/life skills, as well as academic needs.

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1 The Altered Provision Project involved the replacement of one SNA post (as opposed to 32 hours of SNA provision) with 11 teaching hours.



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# Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APP	Altered Provision Project
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorders
BESD	Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CAT	Cognitive Abilities Test
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EBD	Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Disorder
EPESEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ETB	Education and Training Boards
FRIENDS	Feeling worried, Relax and feel good, I can do it, Explore solutions and coping step plans, Now reward yourself, Don't forget to practise, Stay cool!
GOI	Government of Ireland
GRT	Group Reading Test
HLO	Home Liaison Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IRIS	Inclusive Research in Irish Schools
JCSP	Junior Certificate School Programme
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LS/R	Learning Support/Resource (teacher)
NBSS*	National Behaviour Support Service
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Educational Welfare Board
NRIT	Non-Reading Intelligence Test
PE	Physical Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SEBD	Severe Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Disorder

SEN	Special Educational Needs
SESCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENO	Special Educational Needs Organiser
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SESS*	Special Education Support Service
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TOAD	Talking out-of-turn, Out-of-seat, Attention Problems, Disruption
TT	Team Teaching
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WRAT	Wide Range Achievement Test

\* This organisation no longer exists. The services it provided are now provided by the NCSE.

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

In 2013, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) piloted an alternative model of provision for students with emotional disturbance/behavioural disorder (EBD) titled the Altered Provision Project (APP). It involved the provision of additional teaching hours, rather than the allocation of new special needs assistants (SNAs), who support care needs, to engage with the student with EBD, therefore it was a cost neutral alternative.

APP was focused on students attending post-primary schools as research data has indicated that there is a large category of students with EBD in receipt of SNA support at this educational level (National Council for Special Education (NCSE), 2012). Primarily, APP was a school-based intervention, where schools were provided with resources, in the form of 11 teaching hours as opposed to 32 hours of SNA provision<sup>2</sup>, to support students with EBD and were given autonomy in how they utilised these hours. APP was perceived as a way of resourcing post-primary schools to assist students with EBD in accessing the curriculum and engaging with it, as well as providing for students' emotional needs and wellbeing. The rationale behind APP was that students with EBD require additional teaching in self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than care support provided by a SNA (NCSE, 2013).

### Remit of the Review

The remit of the research was to review the APP pilot with the aim of identifying strengths and benefits, drawbacks and areas for development.

### Background

Irish education legislation and policy has embraced the concept of supporting students with EBD in post-primary schools to learn in an inclusive environment (as appropriate) with the provision of resources to enable the students to achieve their potential. In Ireland, students with EBD are supported by a continuum of provision (including SNA support) which reflects the continuum of need associated with EBD. There is ample guidance and advice available for post-primary schools to assist them when planning and organising their support for students with EBD (DES, nd; DES, 2014a; DES 2014b; NCSE, 2014; NCSE, 2013; NCSE, 2012; National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), 2010a; NEPS, 2010b; National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), 2008; National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), 2008; DES, 2007; NCSE, 2006).

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2 The Altered Provision Project involved the replacement of one SNA post (as opposed to 32 hours of SNA provision) with 11 teaching hours.

At the time of the commencement of the review (September 2015), the pilot was beginning its third year. The pilot project initially recruited four post-primary schools (Phase 1) in September 2013. In 2014, a further nine schools were included and were considered as Phase 2 schools. Two Phase 2 schools withdrew from the project after one academic year. All 13 schools participated in the review. At the time of the review, the number of students involved in APP varied from school to school, ranging from 1-22, with a total of 28 students in the school year 2013-2014, 65 students in 2014-2015, and 64 students in 2015-2016.

At the project inception, it was recognised that qualified teachers are best suited to providing additional teaching supports that are required by post-primary students with EBD (NCSE, 2012). It was envisioned that the teaching provision allocated would be used, for the most part, in a team teaching<sup>3</sup> delivery model (DES, 2014a; 2013a). While no written guidelines were developed for the schools, generic guidance and advice about how resources may be used were provided by the DES personnel who managed the project. A Steering Committee was also established to support the project and their role included monitoring the project, visiting the participating schools, and organising cluster meetings where principals and teachers involved in APP came together to share experiences.

## Methodology

An interpretive paradigm guided the research and the qualitative methods allowed personal views of the research participants to be ascertained. Due to the timing of the review, it was not possible to collect standardised baseline information and this presented a challenge for the research. A mixed methods approach was used, where primary data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with school stakeholders (principals, teachers, students, parents, special needs assistants (SNAs)), as well as external personnel, including representatives from the DES, NCSE (at both management and Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO level)), Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and the NBSS who engaged in tele-interviews. The content of the research instruments was determined by the nature and focus of the pilot. Secondary data was collected through documentary analysis. This involved scrutiny of school documentation including policy documents, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), student attendance records and assessment data. The sample comprised all 13 schools involved in APP. All were post-primary schools: 12 were co-educational, one was an all-boys school. Geographically, there were 10 schools in the south, two in the north east, and one in the east. Schools were informed by the DES that the review was taking place and they were encouraged to be part of the review process; all 13 agreed to participate. However, two Phase 2 schools in the sample withdrew from APP after one year<sup>4</sup> and while the time involved in the project was limited, the data from these schools was still used. The total number of participants across 13 schools was 109. In addition, seven external personnel were interviewed.

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3 Team-teaching involves 'two teachers timetabled to share equally instructional and other responsibilities, for a single group of students in the same room and on a regular basis across the school week' (Murphy, 2011, p. 9).

4 The reasons for the withdrawal of these two school is outlined in the Findings section.

Analysis of the data was guided by the phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2013). The effectiveness of the process was ensured through the involvement of all four researchers independently coding all semi-structured interviews transcripts (Creswell, 2007) and analysing the documentation received. Inter-rater reliability was ensured through triangulation, and an inductive process whereby the researchers discussed the emerging codes and subsequent themes, until consensus was agreed. As data gathered in this study was of a qualitative nature, it was necessary to have a consistent interpretation of data presented and terminology used in the report. The terms *all*, *most*, *many*, *some* and *few* were used consistently to present and discuss findings. However, the actual numbers of participants denoted by these terms varied, reflecting the different numbers of school personnel interviewed.

## Limitations

A number of limitations must be acknowledged in this review. Some wider limitations which were outside of the researchers' control included the lack of baseline data, including both quantitative and qualitative data, such as student outcomes or perceptions before the project commenced for comparison purposes. A lack of objective quantitative data collected throughout, and the small sample size, were considered other limitations. Other variables such as level of involvement of outside agencies, the individual nature of SEN, school practice in relation to the use of individual resource allocation hours and APP hours, length of school involvement in APP may have impacted on the perceived outcomes associated with APP. This impacted on the researchers' ability to move beyond viewing perspectives as opposed to objective measurable data. Therefore, perceived benefits and drawbacks have been reported as opposed to outcomes.

## Findings

The findings are summarised under three distinct themes: APP Operationalisation at School Level; the SNA Scheme in the Context of APP; and Planning, Teaching, and Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD.

### APP Operationalisation at School Level

There were significant variances between the 13 pilot schools regarding the operationalisation of the project, largely due to the autonomy given to schools by the DES with regard to the provision, and in part due to the varying cultures that existed within the schools. Aligned with this was the perceived lack of clarity around the project itself with all schools commenting on the need for guidelines to assist them in the operationalisation of APP. However, all schools commented on the value of the cluster meetings in providing greater clarity on the project through the shared experiences of the schools involved. Most participants acknowledged there were varying levels of understanding about APP across the 13 pilot schools, and only those who needed to know were really aware of it.

Based on the autonomy afforded to schools, staffing of APP varied across the 13 pilot schools.

Many schools attested to the difficulties that had arisen with regard to the staffing of APP particularly where the APP teacher changed year-on-year and also the issue with over-reliance on one teacher. Aspects, such as being labelled as the behaviour teacher and abdication of responsibility by other teachers, prevented a whole-school approach to EBD.

The roles and responsibilities of the APP teacher varied from school to school with most having a very specific teaching role depending on the model of support used; a few having more of a mentoring role with regard to behaviour; while most had a combination of both teaching and mentoring. While the intended group of students to be supported by APP were those with an EBD diagnosis<sup>5</sup>, schools reported that many students involved in APP had either a diagnosis of EBD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)<sup>6</sup> and/or co-morbidity<sup>7</sup>, or were presenting with extreme behaviours<sup>8</sup> or complex needs<sup>9</sup>. It could not be established how many students presented in each or some of these categories.

All schools endeavoured to organise and structure the additional resource allocation so that the targeted student(s) could gain maximum benefit in terms of engagement with the education system. In some schools, the APP hours were merged with the student's individual allocation of low incidence resource hours. Hence, the APP hours were used in a variety of ways: for withdrawal, teaching small groups, and/or for time-out, and team teaching. In some instances, where the behaviour issues were extreme, it was necessary to utilise the majority of the 11 hours in one-to-one provision and time-out periods. Many of the schools offered small group withdrawal support. In those instances, the groups were organised so that specific areas of need were targeted and focused on.

Most participants regarded team teaching as a highly effective approach for teachers and students alike and, where schools had a culture of team teaching, this aspect of APP occurred organically. Most participants perceived that team teaching increased student focus, enhanced student learning, enabled the use of various teaching methodologies and improved student output. However, team teaching posed some difficulties. A few participants questioned whether or not team teaching was the most appropriate approach in dealing with students with extreme behaviours believing that there was need for more intensive work on self-awareness, self-management and self-control.

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5 Students diagnosed with EBD are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school (DES, 2014a, p.10).

6 Autism is a lifelong complex developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people. The main areas of difficulties are social interaction and communication, and repetitive behaviours. Under DSM 5, these are known as the 'Dyad of Impairments' (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), 2013).

7 Co-morbidity or co-existing or co-occurring disorders means the presence of two or more conditions or disabilities (Kring *et al.*, 2007).

8 Generally, teachers equated extreme behaviours with severe EBD. According to NCSE, these are children and young people with a clinical diagnosis of EBD/severe EBD whose levels of challenging behaviour prevent them from attending and/or engaging with school and from achieving their own individual potential (NCSE, 2012).

9 Students with complex needs have special educational needs arising from any one or more of the following: very significant difficulties in physical and/or sensory functioning; very significant difficulties in cognitive and adaptive functioning, or very significant difficulties in social communication and social interaction, combined with rigid and repetitive patterns of behaviour (NCSE, 2014).

There was general consensus that the cluster meetings were a positive aspect of the pilot. However, dissatisfaction was expressed by some participants with these meetings in that they were largely directed towards the APP teacher and this expertise was then lost to the school if the teacher left.

### **SNA Scheme in the context of APP**

In all contexts, there was recognition of the valuable work carried out by SNAs in relation to meeting the primary care needs of students with SEN. Some schools acknowledged that, depending on the specific needs of the students and the number of students in a class with EBD, both an additional teacher and a SNA were necessary to be present. There was recognition that the SNA, heretofore, had a significant presence in the school throughout the school day with regard to students with EBD, particularly during transition times. However, alienation and stigma were highlighted as issues associated with over-reliance on SNA support. All schools indicated that both APP and the SNA Scheme had a place in the continuum of support as students' needs change over time.

### **Planning, Teaching, and Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD**

Assessment practices in schools varied. The dominant assessment focus in most schools was on academic ability and did not measure aspects of behaviour. The findings indicated that there were varying levels of planning design in the 13 schools ranging from advanced planning in a few cases to little or no formal planning in others. IEP design and implementation appeared to be at an early and emergent stage.

Findings indicated that individual schools did not generally implement any specific behavioural type intervention programmes, for example, the Alert programme (Williams & Shellenberger, 1996) during this pilot. Instead their interventions encompassed general academic programmes with a strong examination focus and general behaviour management strategies focusing on positive behaviour and reward systems, which were inherent in the behaviour and code of discipline policies in the various schools. Most schools offered alternative programmes (for example, pastoral care, counselling, extra-curricular, and mentoring) to complement the more academic and behavioural type interventions in schools, but these were not specifically implemented as a result of APP to address the individual needs of students with EBD. Approaches such as restorative justice<sup>10</sup> and cognitive behavioural approaches, such as FRIENDS for Life (Barrett, 2012), were at a preliminary, underdeveloped stage in many schools.

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10 Restorative justice is concerned to move away from a retributive justice approach and the primacy of assigning blame and punishment to an alternative means of preventing, managing and controlling behaviour by finding a mutually agreeable way forward by negotiation... The prime focus in a restorative justice approach is on 'putting things right' between all those involved or affected by wrongdoing. Such initiatives have shifted the focus on to whole communities and away from a focus only on the victim or on the perpetrator (Wearmouth *et al.*, 2007).

The findings demonstrated that much of the monitoring and evaluation of APP was informal and that there was no methodical process for examining perceived outcomes. However, the findings indicated that APP facilitated the positive engagement of most students with EBD in the pilot schools, which resulted in the development of positive behaviour and academic success and attainment. It was acknowledged that other factors may have also contributed to improved behaviour, including, for example, increased student maturity, the role of outside agencies and the use of medication.

## **Conclusions**

The remit of the APP review was to identify the strengths and benefits, and the areas for development and drawbacks of the project. Conclusions are provided in relation to the influence of APP at student, school and system level.

### **Student level**

It is to be concluded that APP impacted positively on most students supported during the course of the pilot. Positive benefits included increased school engagement which resulted in academic, behavioural and social gains.

### **School level**

At school level, it can be concluded that APP was a positive initiative. Areas of strength highlighted the value of APP in supporting students with EBD, in line with their individual needs. In addition, the development of constructive, collaborative approaches between teachers through team teaching practices resulted in a sharing of responsibility for behaviour management and the advancement of learning of students with EBD in many of the pilot schools.

The areas of development which should be considered include greater monitoring and evaluation of APP support, more rigorous methods of planning, and support being tailored to meet the unique needs of students with EBD, and addressing the social, emotional and vocational/life skills, in tandem with academic needs. Whole school issues which should be addressed include, a whole-school approach to supporting the behavioural needs of students with EBD, the importance of managing these students in less structured settings, and whole-staff continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of EBD.

### **System level**

APP is consistent with inclusive policy and practice. Considering the autonomous nature of APP, schools would benefit from greater support in the form of specific guidelines around its implementation. Flexibility in the allocation of resources to schools in relation to supporting students with EBD is necessary to reflect the continuum of need. In order to better support students with EBD in mainstream post-primary schools, the establishment of a NCSE Support Service is welcomed, in that greater levels of collaboration, joined-up thinking and enhanced alignment of behavioural type supports/interventions will be facilitated.

## 1. Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the review of the Altered Provision Project (APP). APP is explained and the rationale for APP outlined. The management, development and monitoring of APP is detailed with reference to specific features of the APP pilot. Interviews with representatives from the DES/Steering Committee informed the background and context for the project. The remit of the review is outlined and the underpinning policy and provision context relevant to APP is presented. Finally, limitations of the review are referenced and the chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the review report.

### 1.1 What is APP?

APP was an alternative model of provision of support for students with emotional disturbance/behavioural disorder (EBD). Primarily, APP was a post-primary school-based intervention, where schools were provided with resources, in the form of teaching hours, to support students with EBD, and given autonomy in how they utilised these hours, rather than the allocation of a special needs assistant (SNA) (care support).<sup>11</sup> APP was perceived as a way of resourcing schools to assist students with EBD in accessing the curriculum and engaging with it. It was acknowledged by Department of Education and Skills (DES) personnel that an additional teaching allocation provided to the school for students with EBD would be a more proactive and holistic approach because it could address education and wellbeing needs, as opposed to an allocation of SNA support which was regarded as a containment approach.

The rationale behind APP was that students with EBD require additional teaching in self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than care support provided by a SNA (National Council for Special Education (NCSE), 2013). At DES level, a concern about the SNA scheme in relation to students with an EBD diagnosis was identified. It was recognised that SNAs were being provided as an automatic response once the student had a diagnosis, and adult care support was being provided, without any real consideration as to whether a SNA was the appropriate response.

### 1.2 Management, Development and Monitoring of APP

The development of APP reflected the current policy and provision context in which it was situated. At the time of the commencement of this review (September 2015), the pilot was in its third year in some schools. The pilot project initially recruited four post-primary schools in September 2013 through the Cork and Kerry Education and Training Boards (ETBs). These four schools were considered to be Phase 1 of the APP pilot. In 2014, a further nine schools were included and were considered as Phase 2 schools. Two Phase 2 schools withdrew from the project after one academic year. Table 1 outlines the different phases of schools involved in the project.

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<sup>11</sup> The Altered Provision Project involved the replacement of one SNA post (as opposed to 32 hours of SNA provision) with 11 teaching hours.

**Table 1: Phase 1 and Phase 2 Schools Involved in the APP Project**

School	Region	Phase 1 (2013 onwards)	Phase 2 (2014 onwards)	Designation of School	DEIS Status	No of students in APP 2013-2014	No of students in APP 2014-2015	No of students in APP 2015-2016
A	South	√		ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 220 approx.)	√	15	9	9
B	South		√	ETB Community College (mixed gender, enrolment 500 approx.)			8	withdrew
C	South		√	ETB Community College (mixed gender, enrolment 400 approx.)			1	withdrew
D	North-east		√	ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 1,260 approx.)	Band 1 status		6	6
E	South		√	ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 520 approx.)			5	5
F	South		√	ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 1,300 approx.)	√		1	1
G	South	√		ETB Community College (mixed gender, enrolment 600 approx.)		2	3	6
H	South		√	ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 620 approx.)	√		2	2
I	South	√		ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 800 approx.)		2	2	2

School	Region	Phase 1 (2013 onwards)	Phase 2 (2014 onwards)	Designation of School	DEIS Status	No of students in APP 2013- 2014	No of students in APP 2014- 2015	No of students in APP 2015- 2016
J	South	√		ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 500 approx.)		9	7	8
K	South- east		√	ETB (mixed gender, enrolment 500 approx.)			4	2
L	North		√	Voluntary Secondary (Boys single sex, enrolment 600 approx.)			1	1
M	East		√	Community School (mixed gender enrolment 400 approx.)			16	22
Total						28	65	64

The 13 schools involved in the pilot differed in terms of the support allocated under APP. The majority of the schools received 11 teaching hours in lieu of one SNA position while 3 schools (A, G and M) received 22 teaching hours in lieu of two SNA positions. The number of students supported by APP ranged from 1-22, with a total of 28 students in the school year 2013-2014, 65 students in 2014-2015, and 64 students in 2015-2016.

At the project inception, it was recognised that qualified teachers are best suited to providing the additional teaching supports that are required by post-primary students with EBD (NCSE, 2012). It was envisioned that the teaching provision allocated would be used, for the most part, in a team teaching delivery model (DES, 2014a; 2013a). The use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and related plans were also detailed in the outline of the project (DES, 2013a). Aligned with the policy of involving parents and students in decisions regarding their education (NCSE, 2006; Government of Ireland(GOI), 2004), it was clearly documented in the project parameters that it was expected that all concerned would be informed of the pilot project, including students and parents (DES, 2013a).

A Steering Committee was established to support the project. Organisations involved in APP included the DES, ETBs [Southern Region], and the NCSE. Appendix 1 details all the personnel who were members of the Steering Committee. The role of the Steering Committee included monitoring the project, visiting the participating schools, and organising cluster meetings where principals and teachers involved in APP came together to share experiences.

Key objectives of APP were identified by members of the Steering Committee. First, the desire to see better outcomes for students was to the forefront of the project. It was hoped that APP would enable students with EBD to receive additional support through teaching. Furthermore, it was envisioned APP would result in students not being labelled or identified as different within their post-primary setting. Moreover, an engagement of the students in the education system was anticipated as a result of APP. Additionally, APP was designed to ensure that SNA support was only provided when it was the best option for the student. It was acknowledged from the outset by members of the Steering Committee, that APP hours would not be appropriate for all students with EBD and that, for some, SNA support remained the more suitable form of support.

The financial objective of the project was that it would be a cost neutral project. Initially, it was set up to support students with EBD entering post-primary schools. For the purpose of the pilot project, each SNA allocation of 32 hours was determined as equating to 11 teaching hours. Additional low incidence resource hours<sup>12</sup> that a student was entitled to (ranging from 85 per cent of 3.5 hours for each student with EBD and 85 per cent of 5 hours for each student with severe EBD (NCSE, 2012) were added to the APP support provided at school level (DES, 2013a). Generally, schools merged APP related hours with additional low incidence resource hours. Most schools utilised these merged hours autonomously based on the needs of the individual students.

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<sup>12</sup> With the implementation of the New Model (NCSE, 2017), schools will receive a single unified allocation for special educational teaching needs, based on that school's educational profile. This single allocation will allow schools to provide special education teaching support for all students who require such support (DES, 2017).

The Steering Committee designed the project and had an overseeing role, but the project was regionally managed. The DES considered the management role as essential from a quality assurance perspective. The role of managing the project included supporting and monitoring the project; reporting to and liaising with the DES about the project; organising cluster meetings; supporting participating schools; organising and in some cases funding continuing professional development (CPD), as well as the sharing of resources between schools.

Organisations including the NCSE, National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Special Education Support Services (SESS) were involved with APP to varying degrees. The NCSE was involved in APP on a number of different levels from its inception and had the central role in the allocation of teaching and SNA support to schools. In relation to APP, the NCSE did not move outside the usual allocations policy framework as there were no new resources allocated to the schools. Rather, with DES sanction, one resource was substituted for another within a particular set of criteria. On another level, the NCSE were involved through the contribution of the Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs). The SENOs' role was to ensure that there was a clear understanding of what being involved in the pilot would mean from a resource allocation perspective. The SENOs also attended some cluster meetings with the purpose of seeing whether there were any issues which might require their further involvement.

Organisations that became involved in the Altered Provision Project after its establishment included NBSS, NEPS and the SESS. The role of the NBSS in APP primarily included supporting schools by giving input at cluster meetings. A few of the pilot schools were more directly involved with NBSS as they were also being supported through the Positive Behaviour Liaison Programme and had an allocation of a Positive Behaviour Liaison Teacher prior to APP. While the two initiatives complemented one another at school level, they appeared to exist independently of each other. The support schools received from NEPs did not change as a result of being involved in APP. However, some schools implemented the *Friends for Life* programme (Barrett, 2012) to varying degrees and received training prior to commencement. Likewise, the SESS within their remit for the provision of CPD, continued to work with these schools in a manner similar to the way they worked with them prior to APP.

A noteworthy feature of APP from its beginning was the degree of autonomy given to schools in relation to how they deployed the teaching hours that they were allocated. While there was an acknowledged emphasis on team teaching in the project, schools had freedom to utilise the allocated teaching hours as they felt appropriate to their own setting and context. Aligned with the autonomous nature of the project, there were no written guidelines developed for the schools. However, generic guidance and advice were provided through support from the DES personnel who managed the project.

Another significant feature of the project was the scheduling of regular meetings for school personnel directly involved in the project. The schools involved in APP were supported through the mechanism of cluster meetings which took place regularly, once a term, over the course of an academic year, and which were seen as part of the information process and as a form of CPD. Both the principal and the APP teacher were encouraged to attend these meetings. The role of the cluster meeting was to promote the sharing of expertise, experience and examples

of good practice as well as to problem-solve in relation to any issues that may have arisen as a result of APP. Different members of the Steering Committee attended the cluster meetings on occasion. Furthermore, different organisations for example, the National Behaviour Support Service, presented at the cluster meetings. The cluster meetings enabled teachers to share materials and information in relation to CPD courses that they had engaged in and felt would be beneficial to the other schools.

From a management perspective, the cluster meetings were the main means in which APP was monitored. As detailed above, it was at the cluster meetings that the principals and the teachers involved shared their experiences, learning and issues arising as a result of their involvement in APP. Information gathered from the cluster meetings was reported to the DES and the Steering Committee. The DES received updated reports on a regular basis regarding APP to determine its viability. It was acknowledged that there was an absence of a formal structure by which to monitor the project, and this was recognised as an area of need. Schools were encouraged to track student engagement, behaviour, attendance and attainment in the school and classroom but they were not provided with any formal guidance on how to do this.

Some evaluation reports in relation to APP were available. The four Phase 1 schools submitted Interim/Evaluation Reports to the Steering Committee in 2014. In line with the autonomous nature of the project, these reports were quite different in presentation and approach. Generally, however, each presented a school profile, student profiles, information regarding the utilisation of APP teaching hours, information on methodologies and resources in use, a section on building capacity and case studies of students supported by APP. Significantly, each report outlined a series of recommendations at school and project level. It was unclear what has happened in the intervening time in relation to these recommendations.

### 1.3 Remit of the Review

The remit of the research was to review the APP pilot with the aim of identifying the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks. Tasks included to:

- Collect and analyse relevant material and data to document the process of development and implementation of the pilot – aims, methods, roles, responsibilities, recruitment and communication materials (e.g. to schools, parents), pilot project meetings/workshops, etc.
- Collect and analyse relevant documentary material and data from each of the participating schools.
  - Student profile data, such as student diagnosis/assessed need; level and type of support provided to the student before and after the project commenced and how this support was/is provided; IEPs, etc.
  - School profile data (school type, enrolment numbers, overall number of students with SEN and EBD, staffing and other supports within the school).
  - Data collected as part of the pilot, e.g. monitoring/outcome data, school plans, interim reports etc.

- Interview a sample of students involved in the pilot project to ascertain how they perceive the support provided compared to previous support provided where relevant. Interview a sample of parents/guardians to ascertain their views.
- Interview pilot school principals, participating teachers, SNAs and other staff as appropriate in relation to their experience of the operation of the pilot; the impact of the alternative provision at school/student level and how they think the alternative provision compares to previous support arrangements.
- Interview a sample of teachers in the pilot schools who are not participating in the scheme to ascertain their views on regular provision for students with EBD, not involved in the APP.
- Interview a sample of relevant external personnel involved in the project such as SENOs and NBSS representatives as well as members of the pilot steering group to seek their views on the development and implementation of the pilot.
- Document any other findings emerging from the project.
- Set out briefly the relevant policy and provision context for understanding the findings of this review.
- Identify what did or did not work well in this project and why, the perceived benefits arising, drawbacks or issues arising.

## 1.4 Policy and Provision Context

Post-primary educational policy and provision for students with EBD is firmly embedded in a context of inclusion. Irish education legislation and policy has embraced the concept of supporting students to learn in an inclusive environment (as appropriate) with the provision of resources to enable the students to achieve their potential (NCSE, 2014; NCSE, 2013; DES, 2014a; DES, 2007; DES, 2005; Government of Ireland (GOI), 2004; 1998; 1993).

### 1.4.1 Defining EBD

Before discussing how students with EBD are supported in the Irish educational system, it is important to define EBD. A wide range of terminology, definitions and indeed questions (Williams *et al.*, 2009) exist in the deliberations on EBD, however, Cooper and Jacobs (2011) state that it refers to

a group of children within an educational setting who present with disturbing and/or disruptive behaviour that interferes with social functioning and academic engagement. Their behaviour may be termed 'acting-out' (disruptive) or 'acting-in' (showing withdrawal and/or avoidance)... Emotional disturbance is often an associated feature of both 'acting-in' and 'acting out' types as either an underlying or outcome factor. (p.8)

The DES has defined two categories in relation to EBD: 'emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems' (EBD) and 'severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems' (SEBD) for the purposes of resource allocation and categorisation of special schools and classes (NCSE, 2012, p.23). EBD is outlined as follows

Such pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school. (DES, 2014a, p.10)

It is accepted that EBD occurs on a continuum. This continuum extends from difficulties which are milder, developmentally appropriate and transient, to significant and/or persistent difficulties which may require clinical referral and intervention (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011).

### **1.4.2 Supporting Students with EBD in Post-Primary Schools**

The APP pilot developed as a result of concern over the provision of support for students with EBD in mainstream post-primary schools. Students with EBD are supported by a continuum of provision which reflects the continuum of need associated with EBD. This continuum ranges from full-time enrolment in mainstream classes with supplementary support which may be in the form of in-class differentiated support and/or additional teaching support provided by a support teacher and SNA support, where there are significant care needs arising; to placement in a special school for students with EBD or severe EBD; or to placement in a special class for students with EBD within a mainstream school (NCSE, 2012). EBD is classified as a low incidence SEN. Students require a professional assessment and formal diagnosis of EBD before resources can be sanctioned (2 hours, 58 minutes for each student with EBD and 4 hours, 15 minutes for each student with severe EBD (NCSE, 2012)).

However, policy on how students with SEN in general are supported in schools has undergone change (DES, 2017). A new model is in place for the allocation of additional teaching resources to mainstream schools which is based on the profiled need of each school, without the need for a diagnosis of disability (DES, 2017; NCSE, 2014; Desforges & Lindsay, 2010). Aligned with this model, is the establishment within the NCSE of a new Support Service which comprises the SESS, the NBSS and the Visiting Teacher Service.

In recent years, there has been a heightened awareness of EBD and a focus on developing and implementing policy specific to supporting students with EBD. In 2011, the NCSE published a research paper *Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Children with Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Difficulties: An International Review* (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). An NCSE policy advice paper *The Education of Students with Challenging Behaviour Arising from Severe Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Disorders, NCSE Policy Advice Paper No. 3* followed in 2012, which used this research paper as part of its evidence base. The policy advice recommendations address areas such as the continuum of provision to support students with EBD, as well as early, timely and appropriate interventions, and appropriate supports for mainstream schools.

Specific guidelines in relation to supporting students with EBD are provided for schools by the DES and the relevant education services. Three key guidelines are focused on here. First, the *Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) – A Continuum of Support Guidelines* (NEPS, 2010b) sets out three levels of support for students with EBD. These levels reflect the developmental stage of the students and the complexity of the post-primary school system. The first level, Support for All, situates the intervention process in the mainstream classroom where it is co-ordinated and carried out by the class teacher. At the second level, School Support (for Some), the assessment process is co-ordinated by the learning support/resource (LS/R) teacher working alongside the class teacher and additional interventions to those provided through classroom support are implemented. These two levels incorporate effective, preventive teaching and screening processes at school level. The third level, School Support Plus (for a Few) is geared towards students with more complex and/or enduring difficulties. It is characterised by the involvement of relevant external services and generally involves more detailed assessment and development of intervention programmes.

The second document which has been identified as particularly pertinent to supporting students with EBD is *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* (National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), 2008). This document was issued by NEWB (now incorporated into the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)) and sets out a framework of good practice to assist schools in the preparation of their code of behaviour. The code of behaviour is a key policy in assisting schools to support the learning of every student.

The final document relevant to this review is *The Guidelines for Supporting Students with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties, An Information Guide for Post-Primary Schools* (DES, nd). This document supports post-primary schools in responding to the needs of students presenting with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties by summarising information from the following documents:

- A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers (NEPS, 2010a)
- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (NEWB, 2008)
- Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process (NCSE, 2006)
- Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs, Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, 2013b)

This Information Guide (DES, nd) presents a framework which should be used flexibly by schools, with interventions tailored to the individual needs of students. Schools are advised that the timing and pace of implementation of interventions vary depending on the level of need and the nature of the presenting difficulties.

### 1.4.3 SNA Support

The development of APP cannot be considered without some reference to the historical context of policy and provision around SNA support. With the policy and provision supporting inclusion, there was an unprecedented growth in numbers of students with SEN in Irish mainstream schools and, consequently, an expansion in the number of SNAs. According to the NCSE (2017), there were approximately 2,568.50 SNAs in January 2017 working with students in post-primary schools. Of these, students with EBD or severe EBD represented the highest number of students supported.

The role of the SNA is described by the DES as a care role including duties of a non-teaching nature only (DES, 2014b; 2005; 2002). The DES *Value for Money and Policy Review of the SNA Scheme* highlighted the need for clarity with regard to understanding the role of the SNA and found what it termed as 'the delegation of educational instruction to support staff' (DES, 2011, p.12) to be inappropriate and unacceptable.

The provision of a SNA as an automatic response where care needs are identified, without any real consideration as to whether a SNA was the appropriate response, was highlighted by Cooper and Jacobs (2011) and subsequently discussed in NCSE (2012). Circular 0030/14 (DES, 2014b) was issued to schools, the aim of which was to provide clarification on the role of the SNA. This circular emphasises the role of the SNA in assisting with 'significant additional care needs' (DES, 2014b, p.5) of students with SEN. In relation to supporting the care needs of students with EBD, the SNA is seen as 'an assistive support to try to improve and adjust behaviours in a managed way over a period of time' (DES, 2014b, p.12). The role of the SNA with respect to EBD is to assist the teacher to meet the care needs of the student by:

- preserving the safety of the pupil and others with whom the pupil is in contact
- assisting to ensure the prevention of self-injurious or destructive behaviour
- reinforcing good behaviour on the child's part and acting as a positive role model for the child
- assisting with recording data in relation to pupil behaviour and behavioural development. (DES, 2014b, p. 12)

Current policy advises that the school has a clear plan in place as to how a SNA resource will be utilised to support the student(s) with EBD and that a timeframe is set out for which this resource is expected to be required. It is clearly stated that the sanctioning of SNA support is not a long-term, permanent support solution for students with EBD, and that the school should document time-bound targets for the development of independence skills and the reduction of SNA support.

Circular 30/2014 (DES, 2014b) also outlines an appropriate school response to supporting students with EBD. The circular emphasises that students 'should be supported by their mainstream class teachers, other school staff members, and by whole school policies on the management of behaviour in schools' (DES, 2014b, p.9). An emphasis on education outcomes

remains in cases where access to SNA support is granted, as overall progress continues to lie with the classroom teacher (supported by LS/R teacher) and it is clearly documented that 'the student should not be excluded for extended periods of time from the classroom setting' (DES, 2014b, p.11). The development of well co-ordinated interventions in response to the student's identified needs are promoted which may include both the provision of appropriate teaching and health supports, as required, so as to lead to improved educational outcomes for students with EBD or SEBD.

## 1.5 Limitations

There are a number of limitations that must be acknowledged in this review. Some wider limitations which were outside of the researchers' control included the lack of baseline data, including both quantitative and qualitative data such as student outcomes or perceptions, before the project commenced for comparison purposes. A lack of objective quantitative data collected throughout, and the small sample size, were considered other limitations. The impact of wider variables such as level of involvement of outside agencies, the individual nature of SEN and how school practice in relation to the use of individual resource allocation hours and APP hours varied, may have impacted on the perceived outcomes associated with APP. As structured outcomes and how these might be measured were not primarily focused on in the implementation of APP, the research reports perceived benefits of APP.

Moreover, the length of school involvement in APP was also a variable to be considered. Schools entered the pilot at different times and were known as Phase 1 and Phase 2 schools. As Phase 1 schools had a longer engagement with APP, they were at different stages in terms of development from Phase 2 schools. Furthermore, it was noted that some students, who presented for interview, were in first year in post-primary school. As interviews for the review took place in November, these students might only have experience of APP for 8-9 weeks and this could have influenced their ability to give relevant data. However, other students who were interviewed had greater experience of APP as they were at different stages of their post-primary education, with some in second year, others in third year and some having moved into senior cycle. The teachers and SNAs interviewed had different levels of involvement in APP in their respective schools and this may have impacted on their contribution to the research. A final variable was the turnover of APP teachers in many schools which might have resulted in a loss of knowledge regarding the pilot. In some instances, this was due to the temporary nature of the contract associated with the employment of many APP teachers.

## 1.6 Structure of the Review Report

The review report is structured into five chapters. This chapter provides an introduction to the review report and explains APP. Chapter 2 outlines the methodology employed in the review process detailing research procedures. Chapter 3 presents the findings of the review. Chapter 4 discusses these findings. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the review.

## 2. Methodology

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology utilised to review the APP pilot. The research aim, ethical issues, methods used for data collection and analysis are outlined.

### 2.1 Research Aim

The aim of the research was to identify the strengths and benefits, drawbacks and areas for development of APP.

### 2.2 Ethics

Consideration of ethical issues in educational research is a core element of any research project. This study was conducted in accordance with the *National University of Ireland Galway Code of Practice for Research* (2012) and also the British Educational Research Association's *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2011). The research protocol was approved by the National University of Ireland Galway Ethics Committee prior to commencement of the research process.

Informed consent was sought from all participants. The researchers provided details of the study to all participants including background information on the review (Appendix 2 and 3) and interview schedules (Appendix 2 and 3), prior to data collection. Confidentiality was assured and the researchers were sensitive to the information sought. Assurance was given that engagement was entirely voluntary and that participants could decline to take part or withdraw at any stage during the research. Participants were asked for permission to digitally record the interviews.

All participants were coded to replace actual names of participants and schools. Details of this coding are presented in Appendix 4. The researchers complied with the legal requirements in relation to the secure storage and use of personal data as set down by the Data Protection Act, 1988 and Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003 (GOI, 2003; 1988), hence preventing any breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

The study involved researching minors with EBD and the researchers were very aware of ethical issues that could arise as a result. Core issues included minimising risk of harm; ensuring informed consent and assent; confidentiality and anonymity; child protection principles; legal obligations and policy commitments in relation to minors, and ensuring a child-centred, inclusive approach to research (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2012). Garda clearance was completed by all researchers prior to commencement of the research. The presence of a second adult was requested when students were being interviewed. Other factors considered included the student's language competency level, keeping students focused during the interview, and the importance of being interviewed in their natural settings.

Further issues considered during the project included dependability and objectivity of sources, and the need to be mindful of bias in the selection, analysis and presentation of findings. This also applied to the data extracted during documentary analyses.

## 2.3 Methodology

An interpretive paradigm guided the research. The central aim of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). It uses qualitative methods that allow the researchers to get the personal views of the research participants. A key aspect of the interpretive paradigm is that it doesn't claim to represent all potential respondents, rather it holds that information gained from this approach can provide vital evidence (Reid, 1996).

Qualitative research is a systematic approach to understanding qualities or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a certain context (Brantlinger *et al.*, 2005). It seeks to create an understanding of a concept from the perspective of the chosen population of the study (Kothari, 2004) and it is concerned with subjective assessment of opinions, social contexts, attitudes and behaviour through the use of research tools such as document analysis, and interviews. A multi-method qualitative approach comprising semi-structured interviews and document analysis of secondary sources (See Table 2) was used to review the APP in schools. This allowed for a detailed investigation of the development, implementation and operation of the project and the perspectives of those involved.

## 2.4 Data Collection: Interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews was deemed the most appropriate means of collecting the data. The interview is a useful method of exploring people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality (Punch & Oancea, 2014). This was paramount in establishing the participants' views in this study. The participants were able to discuss their perception of the strengths and benefits, drawbacks and areas for development of the project during the interview process.

According to Punch and Oancea (2014), the type of interview selected should be aligned with the strategy and purpose of the research. Hence, it was considered that the use of semi-structured interviews was a suitable method for data collection. This accorded the researchers considerable freedom in the sequencing of questions, in their exact wording and in the amount of time and attention given to different topics (Corbetta, 2003; Robson, 2002).

The interview schedules broadly included the following: introductory and explanatory comments; list of topic headings and themes; key questions and sub-questions under those headings, and a set of associated prompts and closing comments. Having key themes and sub-questions in advance provided the researchers with a 'sense of order from which to draw questions from unplanned encounters' (David & Sutton 2004, p. 87). While interview schedules followed a similar structure, questions differed according to personnel. In total, seven different interview schedules were designed, which are included in Appendix 2.

Prior to the formal face-to-face interviews, the researchers established rapport with participants demonstrating sensitivity to their concerns. Most interviews were digitally recorded and these were transcribed by an external transcriber. Handwritten notes were taken by one researcher where a small number of participants declined to be recorded.

Key themes explored in the interviews conducted with school personnel, students and parents included:

- Understanding of the project
- School operationalisation
- Comparing APP and SNA support
- Planning and Teaching
- Impact of APP
- CPD

External personnel, including representatives from the DES/Steering Committee, engaged in tele-interviews so as to inform the background and context for the project. These included 3 DES representatives, 1 NCSE representative and 1 ETB representative. Other external personnel interviewed included 1 SENO and 1 representative of the NBSS. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Information gleaned from these interviews supported the development of Chapter 1. Key themes explored in these interviews included:

- Rationale for the project
- Role and involvement of the external agency
- Projected outcomes

These interview schedules are included in Appendix 3.

## **2.5 Data Collection: Document Scrutiny**

The gathering of documentary evidence was an important element of the review process. Schools were requested to provide documentation in relation to APP including school-specific information, relevant documentation on students involved in the project, and assessment and monitoring data of students' progress. To ensure confidentiality, schools were requested to remove identifiable information on students. The researchers also scrutinised background documentation on the development of the pilot including the parameters of the project, Phase 1 Interim/Evaluation Reports and information from cluster meetings. Examples of documentation scrutinised can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: Documents Requested from Schools**

Project Documentation	School Documentation School Profile Data	Student Documentation	School Based Data collected as part of the project
Development of Project	School Type	Diagnosis and Assessment	Monitoring/Outcome Data
Implementation of Project	Enrolment Numbers	Level and type of support before and after project commenced	School Plans
Communication Materials	Overall number of students with SEN and EBD	Provision of Support Individual Education Plans	Interim Reports
	Staffing		
	Other supports within the school		
	School Policies/Plans		

Documents were evaluated and critiqued on four criteria: namely, authenticity (genuineness); credibility (accurate, free from bias and errors); representativeness (typical of its type); and meaning (clear and unambiguous) (Denscombe, 2004). Details on the variety of documentation provided by individual schools to researchers can be found in Appendix 5. In some cases, documentation was forwarded by schools prior to the interviews. In other cases, documentation was collected during on-site interviews.

## 2.6 Sample

The sample comprised all 13 schools involved in APP. All were post-primary schools, 12 were co-educational, one was an all-boys school. Geographically, there were 10 schools in the south, two in the north east, and one in the east. Schools were informed by the DES that the review was taking place and they were encouraged to be part of the review process; all 13 agreed to participate. However, two Phase 2 schools in the sample withdrew from APP after one year (as indicated in Table 1) and, while the time involved in the project was limited, the data from these schools was still used.

A variety of school-based participants as well as students and parents were interviewed. Schools were invited by the researchers to select suitable individuals to contribute to the review. The researchers provided detailed criteria regarding the selection of same (Appendix 2). Ten participants were invited to take part in each school including:

- 2 students involved in the APP and their respective parents/guardians
- 1-2 teachers who were allocated APP hours
- 1 SEN coordinator or home-school community liaison coordinator, or pastoral care tutor
- 1 mainstream subject teacher (e.g. language, maths, practical)
- 1 SNA who has experience of working with students with EBD
- Principal

Therefore, 130 participants were invited for interview. However, the final number of participants across the 13 schools was 107. All interviews were conducted on school sites over a one- or two-day period by four researchers. The number and designation of participants in the APP schools are given in Table 3.

**Table 3: Number and Designation of School Interviews**

Schools	Principal	Students	Parents/ Guardians	APP Teacher	Other supporting staff (SEN Co- ordinator <sup>13</sup> / Pastoral Care Tutor/Home Liasion Officer)	Other teachers – One of these subject areas randomly selected per school (Language, Maths, Practical)	SNAs	Total
A (1)	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	<b>10</b>
B (2)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	<b>9</b>
C (2)	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	<b>6</b>
D (2)	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	<b>5</b>
E (2)	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	<b>8</b>
F (2)	1	1	1	3	1	1	0	<b>8</b>
G (1)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	<b>9</b>
H (2)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	<b>9</b>
I (1)	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	<b>11</b>
J (1)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	<b>9</b>
K (2)	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	<b>8</b>
L (2)	1	0	1	1	1	3	0	<b>7</b>
M(2)	1	3	2	2	1	1	0	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>109</b>

Key to Codes (1= Phase 1; 2= Phase 2)

The number of participants varied over the schools. Eighteen APP teachers participated and this number reflected the different practices that schools engaged in regarding APP. For example, school F distributed their 11 APP hours among 3 existing staff members while, in School I, both the current and previous APP teachers were interviewed. In relation to the selection of SNAs for interview, this also varied between schools. For instance, in some schools, there was no SNA

<sup>13</sup> The abbreviation SENCO was utilised by the researchers when referring to the SEN Co-ordinator at school level. This is not a formally recognised role in the Irish Education system.

available for interview. In other instances, SNAs were not specifically linked to students with EBD in APP, but students had access to their support. The number of students supported ranged from 1-22, with a total of 28 students in the school year 2013-2014, 65 students in 2014-2015, and 64 students in 2015-2016. While it was envisaged that 26 students would be interviewed, 20 students were interviewed. These included students who were currently supported and also students who had graduated from APP.

## 2.7 Stages of the Research

Researchers followed a staged approach to the review which is outlined in Table 4 below. This allowed for a timely progression of instrument development, data collection and data analysis.

**Table 4: Stages of the Research**

Stages of the Research	Actions	Timescale
Stage 1 Instrument Development	Development of all interview schedules Pilot study in one school	September – October 2015
Stage 2 In-school Data Collection	Interviews with school personnel, students and parents (13 schools) Collection of school documentation	November 2015
Stage 3 Data Collection from other stakeholders	Interviews with personnel from the DES, NCSE, regional ETB and the NBSS	October 2015 – February 2016
Stage 4 Document Analysis	Analysis of information provided by schools	January – March 2016
Stage 5 Data Analysis	Analysis of all data Production of draft report	January – September 2016
Stage 6 Writing the Report	Draft report Submitted report	September 2016 June 2017

During Stage 1, a pilot was conducted to ensure reliability, and to assist the researchers in determining flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design. This allowed for the necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study (Kvale, 2007). The pilot comprised interviewing school personnel, students and parents in one of the schools involved in APP. It should be noted that this school was also included in the main study. In consultation with the NCSE, this was deemed appropriate as it was felt that all schools involved should be represented in the final review as the sample was so small. During the main study, researchers interviewed different school personnel from the pilot, where possible. The findings from the pilot were not used as data for the study. The piloting process highlighted some issues for the researchers in terms of the interview schedules. These included repetition of certain questions, language used and the timing of interviews. Amendments were made as appropriate to the interview schedules.

## 2.8 Data Analysis

According to Hatch (2002), data analysis is a systematic search for units of meaning. It allows for the breaking down of data into smaller units to demonstrate 'characteristic elements and structure' (Dey, 1993, p.30). Analysis of the data was guided by the phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2013). This involved the researchers familiarising themselves with the data from the interviews conducted and documents gathered, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. The effectiveness of the process was ensured through the involvement of all four researchers independently coding all semi-structured interview transcripts (Creswell, 2007) and analysing the documentation received. Inter-rater reliability was ensured through triangulation, and an inductive process whereby the researchers discussed the emerging codes and subsequent themes, until consensus was agreed. This iterative review process aimed to alleviate potential researcher bias and ensured dependability and credibility of the research (Patton, 2002). While thematic analysis was the dominant approach used, quantitative analysis of the qualitative data was also utilised to enable consistent interpretation of the data.

As data gathered in this study was of a qualitative nature, it was necessary to have a consistent interpretation of data presented and terminology used in the report. Table 5 describes the terms used to quantify data gathered from interviews with school personnel. The terms *all*, *most*, *many*, *some* and *few* are used consistently to present and discuss findings. However, the actual numbers of participants denoted by these terms vary, reflecting the different numbers of school personnel interviewed.

To illustrate this, the following examples are provided:

- 4-6 schools presented information to parents on APP. Therefore, 'some' schools presented information on APP to parents.
- 9-12 parents remarked on over-reliance on SNA support. Therefore, 'many' parents remarked on over reliance on SNA support.
- Where the term 'all schools' is used, this refers to the 13 schools involved in APP.

**Table 5: Definition of Terms**

	All	Most	Many	Some	Few
<b>Schools</b>	13 schools	10-12 schools	7-9 schools	4-6 schools	0-3 schools
<b>Principals</b>	13 principals	10-12 principals	7-9 principals	4-6 principals	0-3 principals
<b>Students</b>	20 students	13-19 students	9-12 students	5-8 students	0-4 students
<b>Parents</b>	19 parents	13-18 parents	9-12 parents	5-8 parents	0-4 parents
<b>APP teachers</b>	18 APP teachers	14-17 APP teachers	9-13 APP teachers	5-8 APP teachers	0-4 APP teachers
<b>SENCOs</b>	13 SENCOs	10-12 SENCOs	7-9 SENCOs	4-6 SENCOs	0-3 SENCOs
<b>Subject teachers</b>	16 subject teachers	11-15 subject teachers	7-10 subject teachers	4-6 subject teachers	0-3 subject teachers
<b>SNAs</b>	8 SNAs	7 SNAs	5-6 SNAs	3-4 SNAs	0-2 SNAs

## 3. Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected in the 13 pilot schools. The findings are presented under three distinct themes: APP Operationalisation at School Level; the SNA Scheme in the Context of APP; and Planning, Teaching, and Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD.

### 3.1 APP Operationalisation at School Level

Operationalisation, in the context of this study, refers to how each school managed APP. This theme is structured under the following sub-headings:

- Autonomy
- Understanding and Awareness of APP
- Student Selection
- APP Teacher
- Cluster Meetings
- School Ethos
- Models of Support
- Team Teaching

#### 3.1.1 Autonomy

There were significant variances between the 13 pilot schools regarding the operationalisation of the project, largely due to the autonomy given to schools with regard to the provision, and in part due to the varying cultures that existed within the schools. The DES promoted the underpinning concept of autonomy while acknowledging the challenge for schools. It was believed that this autonomy would result in schools developing their own capacity in relation to supporting students with EBD. Views among principals and APP teachers regarding the autonomy of schools under APP were mixed with many schools acknowledging the positive aspect of being able to structure the provision to meet the needs of students with EBD. All schools valued the flexibility of the model as it recognised the uniqueness of each school context, and enabled the school community to utilise the hours for the engagement of the targeted students. They were free to deploy resources as they considered necessary to facilitate students engaging with the curriculum. This flexibility allowed schools to experiment and develop confidence in their ability to support students.

There is so much flexibility with it and that's how it is successful to date because you can chop and change the model you have in your school. (E, APP)

There was a degree of autonomy given to the school and we had access to what was possibly good practice and then again, we could see that the autonomy given to the school was a good thing because it allowed you to plan around the student or students that you were targeting. That was a good aspect. (L, Pr)

However, some schools considered the autonomy to be a negative aspect of the project. Aligned with this was the perceived lack of clarity around the project itself with all 13 schools commenting on the need for guidelines to assist them in the operationalisation of APP at the outset. There was notable confusion, frustration and anxiety reported by most participants with regard to the lack of clarity that existed about APP.

We weren't given any clarity as to how we would employ those hours. (E, APP)

We came away very nervous following a 2 hour input on APP at a cluster meeting. What do we actually do? There were no real guidelines. (L, Pr)

It's a pilot programme initially, I don't think anyone can put their finger and say, this is definitely what it is, this is definitely what it's going to do or this is definitely how to do it. (F, APP1)

### 3.1.2 Understanding and Awareness of APP

While responses varied with regard to schools' understanding of APP across the 13 pilot schools, all school managers, APP teachers, coordinators of SEN, and teachers involved in team teaching understood the purpose of APP to be a provision that allowed for engagement of the student with EBD rather than containment, as was perceived to be happening heretofore under the SNA resource allocation.

My understanding whereas before a student might have been allocated an SNA for their behaviour, on the basis of this project they would be allocated teaching hours to the school so that the type of support you're providing to the child would be based on a teacher actually being able to intervene with the child and coach them and teach them how to cope and how to problem solve and manage their behaviour rather than just the child is misbehaving and the SNA has to escort them from class when it's become necessary for them to leave class essentially. (J, SENCO)

That it's half a teacher, 11 hours, in place of SNA support... It's to support children that have emotional behavioural difficulties that may have difficulty with concentration in the classroom, sometimes discipline, issues with self-esteem, with completing tasks, all the things you would associate with an EBD diagnosis. Whether that be in class support or one to one mentoring or getting them involved in extracurricular activities that would be my understanding of it. (I, SENCO)

While those personnel directly involved in APP posited that all staff members were made aware of the extra teaching resource provided by APP at staff meetings and/or through specific presentations on APP, most perceived there were varying levels of understanding, and only those who needed to know were really aware of it. From the responses provided it was apparent that not all staff were aware of APP.

A lot of staff would have a passing understanding of it but wouldn't know the nuts and bolts of it... I wouldn't say that beyond knowing that it's there, people would have a huge understanding of it and I would say that would apply to the APP programme as well at the moment. (F, Pr)

In my opinion, not all mainstream colleagues. Only the teachers who are directly involved so teachers who I'm team teaching with, class tutors, year heads and then teachers who have the students who are involved in APP. Some who were outside of all that, they wouldn't really know anything about it. (G, APP1)

While schools attested to informing parents of APP, the level of information provided varied between the different schools. Some schools presented explicit information to parents on APP while others were less explicit, describing it as a support to improve their child's education in a holistic manner.

I don't think the actual APP phrase was used with parents but it would have been explained to them, that my support was with particular students. (C, APP1)

It wasn't put to them as an APP programme but it was rather put to them as an opportunity for their sons or daughters to really improve their education in a holistic manner. (B, Pr)

Most parents seemed unaware of the specifics of APP, seeing it as part of the whole school provision in the support of their child.

She just said how they were going to give him extra help and she mentioned the word but I didn't really understand it fully. I feel it's resource hours. (J, P1)

I wasn't aware of the project in the first place. I understood that [name of student] was getting SNA support during break times where he was having difficulty socially but for his education side of things, I'm not aware of what he's actually getting in extra hours or extra help. (G, P1)

With regard to student awareness and understanding of APP, most schools reported that they did not explain the provision to students as it was considered to be another resource that would occur seamlessly with existing provisions. Most schools also acknowledged the importance of not highlighting the extra provision so as to avoid any stigma being associated with it. Moreover, as one principal remarked, if a particular student was made aware of the provision he would not have engaged, a view shared by the parent of the student concerned.

The student had no awareness because if we had told him about the programme, it was dead in the water. (L, Pr)

No, he wasn't aware that was for him because otherwise he wouldn't have gone in. I think he thought they were student teachers coming in to see how it was done. (L, P1)

### 3.1.3 Student Selection

While the intended group of students to be supported by APP were those with an EBD diagnosis, schools reported that many students involved in APP had either a diagnosis of EBD, ASD and/or co-morbidity, or were presenting with extreme behaviours. At the time of the review, the number of students involved in APP varied from school to school, with a few schools having the full complement of 11 hours directed towards one student, whereas three schools were awarded 22 hours, and in one instance, those hours were sub-divided between two teachers, each taking a caseload of up to 11 students. All schools targeted the resource at the most vulnerable students. Due to the autonomous nature of APP, schools had flexibility in how students were selected.

We have divided the programme with two teachers that we have here. We gave them 11 hours each and maybe it would be different than other schools. I asked them to take 11 students each and prioritise them so it might mean that number 10 [student] would not be very needy at all. It might be somebody they might check in on, the odd occasion. (M, Pr)

EBD, and children we felt needed additional support. It was children in first, second and third year who we identified as having an EBD diagnosis who needed extra support. (C, SENCO)

### 3.1.4 APP Teacher

Findings in this section pertain to the recruitment of the APP teacher, their roles and responsibilities and issues arising from this position.

#### 3.1.4.1 APP Teacher Recruitment

Staffing of APP varied across the 13 pilot schools. Five schools managed the project by deploying existing staff. Their responses indicated the need for experienced teachers to be involved, particularly if the model of provision was team teaching. In addition, there was agreement that the teacher(s) leading APP needed to have the personal attributes and competences to work with the targeted students.

Existing staff. We felt it was really important, the credibility of teachers was of primary importance in making this work. We felt that it wasn't just going to have to be existing staff, it was going to have to be staff who were perceived by their colleagues as being exceptionally good teachers with some experience of team teaching themselves. (D, Pr)

When we got the APP hours, I had to identify a teacher that I felt would work with the programme and [name of teacher] is very dynamic and I felt that she would work very well with the programme and we needed somebody who could build the programme really, because there wasn't a programme per se to start with. (J, Pr)

Eight schools employed new teachers to accommodate the provision of the designated APP hours. Their rationale for doing so was based on it being a new provision and hence, it was considered to be more appropriate to recruit an additional teacher for this purpose.

Because we had to hire and recruit 2 new teachers, they started with the school in that October. They were new to the school as well... we saw this as an addition or a supplement that would improve what we already had in the school. (A, Pr)

As part of the recruitment process for new teachers, all schools highlighted that the specific subject disciplines of English and Maths were of particular importance in meeting the needs of students with EBD. Three schools highlighted the importance of physical education (PE) for recruitment purposes. Having a qualification in SEN was also considered worthwhile.

We targeted the subjects. Maths would have been a key subject and English... It was a Maths teacher who had experience from a DEIS school of working with students with EBD. (L, Pr)

The emphasis on PE for myself is coming from my initial meetings with the other schools. The school that it worked particularly well with used a PE teacher. The PE had worked well for us. In our experience so far, the EBD students have been boys and boys with testosterone etc. have in my opinion, a greater need to expend their energy physically. (K, Pr)

The new APP teacher is qualified in SEN. Very good. (I, Pr)

Whether the teacher involved was part of the existing staff or newly appointed for the purposes of APP, there was general agreement among all pilot schools that the teacher's positive rapport with the student was crucial. The positive student-teacher relationship was considered by many parents and students as highly important so as to encourage student engagement.

Because the kids know that there is someone there for them. That's really important. They're being minded and looked after and that people understand that things aren't always easy. (I, SENCO)

First and foremost, the APP teachers have a responsibility to develop a positive relationship with the child and it is quite relationship based. [APP teachers] are quite expert at doing that, be it through extracurricular or a trip or whatever, it is to develop that [relationship] but then within the learning [APP teachers] teach their own classes as well and I think that's very important that they're seen as teachers. (M, SENCO)

If a teacher pulls you aside and tells you, I know you can do better or whatnot, then when you misbehave you feel that guilt and I think guilt works better in getting them [students] to work straight and doing their work... for example, honours Maths – I'm doing brilliant in that. He gave me the chance and I haven't let him down. (F, S)

Most principals commented on the need for a particular type of personality when dealing with students with EBD. One APP teacher highlighted that having an interest in mental health was useful for the role and acknowledged the importance of encouraging students towards self-acceptance. Another APP teacher commented on the need for expertise when dealing with students with EBD.

I took a lot from my interest in mental health and what I could do to improve positive experiences in school and giving them the coping mechanisms. I was very conscious of the fact that I didn't want to be the perfect teacher for them and stop everything from happening and protect them... I had to let them fail and I had to let them succeed and just be good enough for them and be aware that I couldn't be the teacher that all the other teachers came to, to sort this guy out. That's not my role and giving them the language to make sense of what they're feeling. (J, APP)

It's up to the teachers in the school and a lot of it is if you get the right teachers in the environment around the student, it helps a lot as well... I think it really is important that you have somebody who has training or experience in how to deal with students that have extreme behavioural difficulties. (I, APP)

With regard to teacher selection, the gender of the APP teacher and the provision of a good male role model for students with EBD was highlighted by a few participants, particularly principals.

[name of student] has always found it easier with males, [name of student] would always look up to male role models more. (K, Pr)

The previous APP teacher was here, he was new and doing resource quite a bit. He seemed to be very good at it because he was Mr Sporty with PE and English. He seemed to fit and the lads were so comfortable with him. One of the things, when he was finished a class and walking down to the staffroom, he would be still talking to them about sport and saying, 'keep doing this and if you do that...'. There was that great rapport there. Rapport, trust and confidence. (I, Pr)

#### **3.1.4.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

From the responses received, it was apparent that the roles and responsibilities of the APP teacher varied from school to school with most having a very specific teaching role: either on a one-to-one, small group withdrawal or team teaching basis; a few having more of a mentoring role with regard to behaviour; while most had a combination of both teaching and mentoring. In a few instances, APP teachers were also responsible for co-ordinating and planning timetables in relation to the APP hours.

My role here is more like a mentor for them – checking in with them and seeing how they are getting on, if things arise and see if I can have a quick intervention and get the parents involved and get the core team involved to make things smoother and easier for them. (I, APP2)

He goes to X [name of APP teacher] one or two mornings... for his organisation, she helped him with his locker and reads through his notes and has a little chat with him about what to do and what not to do, but he really likes it. He seems to really like her and he listens to her. I find her very good on an academic basis but on a personal level as well, it's very good for him. She gives him great confidence. She makes him feel good about himself. (J, P2)

It's 22 hours and in that there's team teaching, one-to-one support and meetings. Then there's also the four periods of planning so at the start, I made my own timetable. I had all the students' timetables in front of me and it was up to me to make the timetable myself. (G, APP)

### 3.1.4.3 Issues Regarding APP Teacher

There was consensus by all schools that the allocation of 11 hours did not cover the actual time spent on APP and that all teachers directly involved in the project engaged in extra hours outside the official time allocation.

It is hard work but there are a lot of hours extra you have to do yourself. We're aware of that but you have to do that in order for this to work. There are only so many hours in the day that you can meet up with people. (M, APP2)

This teacher could make a difference to several children, it needs to be more generous because losing 32 of somebody being here and reliable to 11, that's the crunch point. Why is it half a teacher to 32. I'm not saying it should be 32 hours of a teacher, but it definitely has to be more. (C, Pr)

Many schools attested to the difficulties that had arisen with regard to the staffing of APP where the APP teacher changed year-on-year. This was sometimes due to contract issues with non-permanent teaching staff. This lack of continuity was reported to have been problematic as it caused particular difficulties for vulnerable students.

The continuity is essential. He invested a lot in it. His position, due to the Ward report, was re-advertised and he wasn't re-appointed so we're going through the process again and the continuity is broken. I know that for one of our kids, that has been a trauma that the continuity was broken. (K, Pr)

[on continuity] It's vital. With this particular individual, in terms of his condition, if there's any alteration to the expected schedule, it throws him off completely. If a new teacher walks in, it throws him completely. If there's a different subject on or a class cancelled or whatever, anything that is unexpected throws him off. (L, SENCO)

Another issue that was raised by many schools was the over-reliance on one teacher. Aspects, such as being labelled as the behaviour teacher and abdication of responsibility by other teachers, were seen as central to this. There was agreement among many participants that over-reliance on the APP teacher could lead to them being seen as the teacher who deals with students with behaviour issues.

The drawback is the teacher gets labelled, becomes disillusioned. (E, Pr)

It was, oh he's your problem almost. [Teacher's name] will sort him. They were nearly going to her instead of the year head when it was a behaviour or a discipline issue. (C, SENCO)

It is important that the APP teacher also has mainstream teaching hours in order to keep them... viewed as a subject teacher as opposed to a support teacher only. It is also important that subject teachers do not view the APP teacher as a support teacher only. (G, Pr)

One principal reflected on how in retrospect the school could have unintentionally created an over-reliance on the APP teacher. While training was accessed by the APP teacher, one participant identified the lack of whole school training as contributing to an over-reliance on the APP teacher to deal with behaviour issues.

Maybe looking back, we should have done things differently and created less of a reliance on that one person for that student and that's the way it happened and that's the way we did it. (K, Pr)

Maybe the APP teacher needs specific training on behaviour strategies in the classroom but that needs to be done for the wider school population as well because you don't want to be seen as you're the person that deals with behaviour. (E, APP1)

### 3.1.5 Cluster Meetings and CPD

There was general consensus that APP had developed and evolved since its inception. Greater clarity had been provided on the operationalisation of the project at school level through the shared experiences of the schools involved. There was agreement in all schools about the value of the cluster meetings in assisting schools to this end. The participation of principals/senior management and APP teacher at these cluster meetings was considered important by most participants involved.

We've had a lot of cluster meetings over the years where different schools have come together and spoke about how they were managing it and how it was working for them. The teachers themselves have had sessions together and have kept contact with each other in relation to sharing of ideas and templates and paperwork they have been using. (J, Pr)

[cluster meetings] because you get new ideas and you are able to bring that back and see how that goes and you are able to listen – this is what can work and what can't work and you get new ideas. (L, APP)

I felt that we had met as a group, principals and their teachers over about six periods which I found absolutely invaluable. The sharing of experiences, the coming together of professionals, the understanding when we spoke about particular cases and the realising that you were not alone and the learning of different ways and techniques different teachers were using. (B, APP)

One school expressed the view that there was need to extend the cluster-based model so as to facilitate the sharing of practices and build communities of learners.

I can certainly see scope for an extension of the cluster-based model, not just to incorporate comparing experiences and sharing ideas but maybe to get some input from experts in the field, the more traditional model maybe. (F, Pr)

The strength is awareness and building understanding and developing a group of people that can work on the whole notion of a person experiencing SEBD and how to deal with them and work with them. (F, SENCO)

Some schools reported accessing off-site CPD with regard to EBD. It was considered that this training had taken place as a direct result of APP. In particular, participants reported that APP allowed for up-skilling of the APP teachers themselves. Having a teacher with greater expertise in the area of EBD was considered a strength of APP.

Through APP, X [name of APP teacher] and I accessed NBSS in-service and was facilitated through NBSS. (C, SENCO)

FRIENDS for Life, it was because of APP that I received that training. (D, ST)

Because of the work that's done in the programme, they have a chance for behavioural support. X [name of APP teacher] has got training on this, so it adds a level of expertise. I would say it's a lot better than it has been. If other teachers had the same training, it would be hugely effective and it would make a big difference day to day for the students. (J, ST)

However, due to the lack of continuity with the APP teacher in some instances, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the training model as it was largely directed towards the APP teacher and this expertise was then lost to the school if/when the teacher left.

Yes, in terms of training – that if you have a teacher who has the hours, there are other people involved who should get access to some kind of training... We had a case where the investment was made in a teacher who has now moved on so all the qualities and resources and expertise that she brought to it has now gone from the school. (C, SENCO)

Moreover, with regard to CPD, all schools commented on the need for formal training and remarked on the ad-hoc nature of CPD. Participants highlighted the need for additional training on team teaching and on specific strategies and approaches for dealing with students with EBD. Some remarked on the lack of availability of training courses and that, when they tried to access particular courses, they were fully booked.

Definitely, the team teaching. Managing a classroom with a colleague and students that have needs. How to plan. The different models of team teaching... that was hard to figure out on your own because you're constantly examining and reflecting and why is this like this and you're wondering are you doing it right. (A, APP1)

I was interested in developing as much as I can to benefit these students involved. There was one *Challenging Behaviour Pathways to Prevention* I think it was called and it was completely booked out months in advance. I know this has come up in the APP meetings. I think it's vital that teachers are properly trained in relation to the emotional wellbeing and behaviour and the planning and all that. (G, APP)

Some participants reported they had not received any training, and were of the opinion that there was need for whole school training. A few participants also indicated that, any training they received, they had accessed themselves and that this was not organised through APP.

I didn't receive any... Useful if we had been to training together. There are students in nearly every class with those issues so it's not just the learning or SEN department any more. (C, ST)

No specific training, schools/individual teachers take own initiative regarding what CPD is required. (G, Pr)

Directly? None. Indirectly, I was put forward by our Vice Principal for an entrepreneurial education one. No, there was no behaviour element to it but it was all about creativity and flexibility and risk taking in education... no direct behaviour training. (E, APP)

### 3.1.6 School Ethos

All schools welcomed the additional allocation and some commented positively on the benefits of APP in promoting the schools' ethos of inclusive education. The schools' promotion of inclusive education was further evidenced in their school policies. The 13 schools presented a variation of school policies and procedures on admission/enrolment, child protection, codes of behaviour, and anti-bullying. The underpinning principle in all policy documentation was the centrality of the student, the promotion of inclusion and diversity, and the protection and wellbeing of the school population. Many schools presented specific SEN/Inclusion policies. The level of detail within the policy documentation varied, and some policies presented were in draft format. All policies endeavoured to foster a whole-school approach to inclusive education.

School personnel acknowledged the importance of a whole-school approach in their school ethos when meeting the needs of all students. In keeping with the underpinning philosophy of APP, all schools remarked that students were now receiving additional support through teaching and that those students did not necessarily recognise that they were being supported; they were no longer identified as being different.

I think the fact that youngsters can come in here, have their difficulties and not be singled out or be made different from anybody else... That's what inclusive schools are about. That's our ethos. (H, Pr)

First and foremost, we're a very inclusive school. I would say almost 25% of our school population would be SEN. All the teachers would have a clear understanding that we are teaching students with special educational needs. (M, SENCO)

One principal, who acknowledged the inclusive culture that already existed in his school, reported that the inclusion agenda was further enhanced as a result of APP. There was agreement that the utilisation of resources provided through APP to promote in-class support facilitated greater inclusion of students with EBD.

We have a very good relationship with parents through our Home School Liaison Teacher. We have high expectations of them when they come into school. The APP probably adds to that but we have always been good with the way we have managed and we have a very pastoral response. We have a care team in place. We have always very extensive structures anyway in terms of managing students and their behaviour. We have a high level of supervision. I'm out among them all the time and so is the Deputy Principal. (M, Pr)

I would see, this year, very much [APP hours] as an additional support and it gives us more leeway with in-class support. (E, SENCO)

### 3.1.7 Models of Support

The model of provision varied from school to school due to the empowerment/flexibility APP allowed. It was dependent on the number of students with a diagnosis of EBD, ASD or co-morbidity, and the specific needs of the student(s) concerned. All schools endeavoured to organise and structure the additional resource allocation so that the targeted student(s) could gain maximum benefit in terms of engagement with the education system. All schools were enabled to become proactive in meeting the needs of students. Resourcing schools through the provision of teaching hours rather than SNA support allowed schools to address learning issues more effectively and to develop awareness and understanding around supporting students with EBD.

That a teacher was a much higher quality resource to a school in the context of behaviour than a SNA allocation. It reinforced to me that the teacher, by remediating the behaviour and addressing some of the learning issues enabled a number of students... to actually catch up and be much more engaged in the class to the extent that the behaviour was beginning to remediate and was no longer an issue. (M, SENCO)

Over the course of the pilot, the APP hours in all of the schools were used in a variety of ways: for withdrawal, teaching small groups, and/or for time-out, and team teaching, depending on the needs of the students at different times. In some instances, where the behaviour issues were extreme, it was necessary to utilise the majority of the 11 hours in one-to-one provision and time-out periods. In addition, a few schools were able to utilise a portion of the hours for planning purposes.

We have a teacher who has 11 hours designated to the scheme and in effect, it's a mixture of withdrawal and team teaching. They are our two basic methods of provision currently. (E, SENCO)

... that person [APP teacher] then who received the majority of the 11 hours would have been involved in terms of team teaching, some one-to-one and would also have been involved in small setting teaching. (L, Pr)

He [student] is happier with the balance of whole class and individual tuition. If it was primarily individualised, he might have an issue with that for socialisation and be made to feel special or different... to be quite frank, class after class after class of a whole class environment doesn't work for him. He needs that venting period for maybe letting off steam. (F, Pr)

I was told to include the four periods of planning and it's vital for planning with class teachers especially in relation to team teaching, planning for students-behaviour plans and IEPs, and also phone calls with parents. (G, APP)

There were mixed opinions on the models of provision with many schools using the one-to-one withdrawal model for some students. It provided an opportunity to work at a more relaxed pace, and students were listened to when expressing anger or frustration.

That's what I found with the one-to-one, you can have a way more relaxed environment with him [student] on a one-to-one basis... I'm able to relate to him in this particular circumstance, so it has worked with him. (F, APP1)

Yes, so he would just come to me for two classes a week. Technically, it's literacy but trying to get him to write is near on impossible. Now I seem to be the person that he gets on with. That's it. I spent a lot of last year in particular calming him down. He was quite frustrated and very angry. I spent a lot of the lesson listening to him. (L, ST3)

Some parents also commented on the value of one-to-one support as the students felt more supported and secure. As a result, students were more engaged in their learning.

Yes, because she found it very difficult to settle. With her getting one-on-one, it's made her comfortable and able to understand the work easier. (M, P2)

I also think the extra support [one-to-one]... he's getting, when he's going on to his next class which is full of pupils, he's more calm because he's after having that time out. (L, P1)

I found last year really good because he had 1 class a day with [name of APP teacher]. He [name of APP teacher] did 1 class a day, took him out and they bounced a ball,

they played basketball and he did a lot. One class they had typing, just because he is dyspraxic, so we thought it might be useful for his exams if he needed it. [Name of teacher] was great. He did all Manchester United and statistics and they built up a really good relationship. (K, P2)

However, many participants considered the one-to-one withdrawal model to be less effective for certain students and their responses indicated that student isolation and student stigma can result from exclusive use of this model.

The hardest thing would be, I think at the moment, it would be the isolation because he's out of so many classes and getting the one-on-one. He finds that very isolating... I think he feels that he's not getting the same education as all the other kids, so he feels different. (F, P)

Withdrawal can lead to a degree of stigmatising as well, and students now prefer to be in smaller groups or support through the team teaching model and that's the way we need to stay. (A, Pr)

If it was every class getting one-on-one, he's never going to learn how to deal with his peers. (L, P1)

[discussing one-to-one] I think I learn a lot more in a class. (F, S)

All schools offered small group withdrawal and, based on responses, this model of provision was also considered successful. In those instances, the groups were organised so that specific areas of need were targeted and focused on. This was perceived to be an effective use of the additional hours and other students also benefited. Small group support was identified as one means of improving students' school experiences.

Some of the withdrawal groups were based on his particular needs or interests in the aim of trying to engage him more positively towards the school... we have used it [referring to APP] in some withdrawal aspects where he is exempted from a subject... so he would have been taken out with a small group. There would have been other people who benefited from the additional hours because the character in question doesn't like to be isolated or seen as different although he will not conform with that either. (L, SENCO)

All schools acknowledged the specific emphasis placed by members of the Steering Committee on team teaching as an approach to encourage student engagement over the duration of the pilot.

The basic message that we got from it was that by having team teaching and by using the half of a teacher for team teaching in a classroom setting, that was going to improve students' behaviour. To be honest, I had my, and have my reservations about it as a model for dealing with EBD but I got a considerable amount of evidence from [name of inspector]. He would have emailed me a lot of research documents that would show that team teaching done well has benefits for a wide group but also will have benefit for the students in question. (K, Pr)

We understood it was for the children with EBD. We understood that it was, in the main, to be in a team teaching capacity and we have kept to that to nearly 100%. There may be the odd occasion where yes, they do take them out. (M, Pr)

The culture of the school appeared to have an important influence on the success of team teaching. Eight schools reported that they had a tradition of team teaching and so this aspect of APP occurred organically in those contexts. The teachers had established positive working relationships and they acknowledged the benefits of collaboration and collegiality that occur as a result of team teaching. In addition, the students were familiar with having 2 teachers present in the classroom and were unaware of any change because of APP.

They have a good working relationship anyway and team teaching isn't new by any means to the school... we have team teaching in a lot of subjects so there are set procedures within the school as to how team teachers will relate to each other and discuss their plans. (J, Pr)

I know team teaching is here eight or nine years at this stage... it has taken time but now nobody bats an eyelid because we've all had team teaching in some shape or form. It used to be just Maths and English and now it's practically every subject. (I, APP2)

Most participants in the 13 APP schools attested to the positive impact of team teaching. It was regarded as a highly effective approach for teachers and students alike. Based on the perceptions of the respondent, team teaching increased student focus, enhanced student learning, enabled the use of various teaching methodologies and improved student output. Being present more regularly in class, rather than withdrawn as a result of behaviour issues, resulted in greater academic success.

It just gives them more support... they get more teaching. This is the big difference to me between having a SNA with them and a teacher is that you can come in at a different angle with a different perspective or put it in a different context. (H, ST)

One of the kids in the English class especially, he's very able but doesn't necessarily stay on task. I would be watching his behaviour and making sure he's on task and helping, if necessary, with him. (K, APP)

Definitely, more homework and class work being corrected, more consistently more often and a shared marking scheme or way of marking between the two of us. There was more peer work and more group work happening. There was more collaboration in terms of who you would pair with people. More thought went into that and definitely much more output of students' work being corrected and assessed. (C, ST)

One APP teacher remarked that team teaching ensured students were organised for learning while a subject teacher commented that it also facilitated a 'second pair of eyes' in the room in relation to preventing off task behaviour and in providing supplementary support in the form of note taking, reading, examination support and recording homework.

When I'm team teaching, if I'm in the support role, I will ensure that the students arrive into class on time. We're trying to prevent this negative behaviour starting before the class even begins. Making sure that the student is organised... then in relation to the academic side, the student is offered support in relation to note taking, reading, if there's an exam then exam support, going through questions... if they start messing or talking out of turn or somebody takes out their phone or just stands up in class and walks out the door, I'm trying to monitor all of that and trying to help keep them engaged with the learning. (G, APP)

The other teacher was really good at the floating method where one teacher is at the front trying to work and the other teacher is trying to assist and monitor and encourage and mark. It's like having an extra pair of eyes. (K, ST)

Most students themselves confirmed the value of team teaching and how it enabled them in greater class engagement and learning.

The team teaching is very handy in Maths more than anything because one person would be taking down notes for class and sometimes I can miss out, so I can call the teacher over that's helping in the classroom and it would run smoothly. (H, S1)

I suppose extra help from a teacher, to be honest. If you didn't know what one teacher was saying, the other teacher might know and have an easier way of explaining it. (E, S1)

The targeted needs of the students dictated how the support was utilised, in that, most students required extra support in core subject areas, English and Mathematics, while some students needed specific support to stay on task in practical classes, such as Woodwork.

We targeted the subjects. Maths would have been a key subject and English, he was doing honours English so we wanted to maintain that. What we would have done was, he [student] would have been in the mainstream class three times a week and a small group setting in honours English once a week and we would have tried to put a team teacher in one class a week. Now with Maths, he was doing ordinary level Maths... We put full support into the Maths class. (L, Pr)

I'm in double Woodwork twice a week. Woodwork wouldn't be my specialty at all and there are nine EBD students in Woodwork. The difference since the two teachers are in the room – they are on task, they know there's one at the top and one spread out. It's minimising students leaving the class and it's just fantastic for us at the end of the lesson to say, another class and the work was done. (M, APP2)

Some schools acknowledged not having had a culture of team teaching resulted in some reservations about it at the outset. However, upon its implementation, they commented positively on team teaching as a model of support. With regard to the impact for teachers, it removed teacher isolation, enhanced teacher collaboration, and resulted in a safer, more controlled working environment for everybody. Notably, this was a shared view by most of the subject teachers involved.

I had never been involved in team teaching before so it was a whole new way. I was a bit daunted by it initially but I very quickly got to see that it was just a great way of tackling an issue. I thought it a very safe, very controlled and consistent way of teaching people with a lot of challenging issues. (C, ST)

Last year there was an English group and there was another male teacher who was in with me. He was there specifically for one student but had a really positive teaching role. Team teaching can work really well if it's done well. It's only new to us and from a teacher's point of view, that means changing the mould a little bit and trying to step outside the role. (K, ST)

I really felt that the team teaching was more for the health and safety of students because he was becoming very aggressive. For other students, I felt it was really helpful and beneficial for that. (L, ST1)

There was recognition by all schools that the teachers involved in team teaching needed to be positively predisposed to working with another teaching colleague. All schools commented on the significance of quality professional relationships while also acknowledging the skill-set of the teachers involved. The success of team teaching was, in some instances, undermined when teacher attitude was less positive.

The team teaching works if you have good team teaching pairs... we have had some combinations that clicked straight away. We had some combinations that started off great and didn't continue. We had combinations that started off slow and they're inseparable. (H, Pr)

Some teachers are more accepting of it than others... in one case I was just told to stand down the back. I do feel that some of them [teachers] are more open to it than others. Some of them don't want you to be team teaching. (K, APP1)

Moreover, a few participants questioned whether or not team teaching was the most appropriate approach in dealing with students with extreme behaviours believing that there was need for more intensive work on self-awareness, self-management and self-control.

I'm not sure that team teaching is the most appropriate model to address the emotional and behavioural disturbance issue for students... I think that it's not as powerful a way of addressing the issues of emotional and behaviour disturbance compared to more intensive work with the students around emotional self-awareness and emotional self-control and emotional education and the development of emotional intelligence. (K, Pr)

Most schools acknowledged difficulties associated with the planning and management of team teaching. There was general consensus that it required a significant amount of planning time if it were to be operationalised successfully. Most SENCOs and APP teachers commented on the minimal time that was currently spent on planning and the lack of time to plan with colleagues. They also acknowledged that for the APP project to work well, additional planning time was required.

I do feel the whole team teaching thing, I think it is fantastic if it's done properly but if you just dish it out without any great thought or plan or who is going to be doing it – then it doesn't work. (I, SENCO)

The sheer lack of any planning time and I mean it is so necessary because if you get it wrong, it can go really wrong. You need that time with your colleague to plan effectively for students that have a lot of needs and to make the programme and the project work very well, you need that time in your timetable to meet that person when you're free and they're free to sit and talk about the APP project and what we're doing. (A, APP1)

Teachers agreed that in the main, planning was informal and that team teaching plans did not exist but acknowledged the need to formalise planning. Teachers who team taught usually met before class to go through the structure and content of the lesson but solely from an academic point of view and this planning was enhanced if teachers enjoyed a good working relationship.

It's something [planning for team teaching] we do need to formalise. What we're doing currently is informal between the subject teacher and the team teacher or the APP person. It's something we would need to formalise alright. (E, SENCO)

There is a certain element of teachers making it [team teaching] up as they go along because that's how the dice has been rolled for us. We're told, this person is going to be in your classroom on Monday but there's no opportunity to sit down and figure out how this is going to work. Ideally, it would be great to have time between classes to do this but ideally is fantastic but it doesn't work. (K, ST)

[Planning] Ad hoc. Yes. You still do it because you always talk but it was never formal. If you have a good relationship with the teacher, which I had, it just happened. (L, ST)

## 3.2 SNA Scheme in the Context of APP

This theme discusses the SNA scheme within the context of APP. The theme is presented under the following sub-headings.

- Role of the SNA
- Engagement versus Containment
- Sensitivities regarding APP and the SNA Scheme

### 3.2.1 Role of the SNA

In all contexts, there was recognition of the valuable work carried out by SNAs in relation to meeting the care needs of students with SEN generally. There was acknowledgement of the role of the SNA in meeting the primary care needs, for example, of students with a physical disability. The responses showed the distinct role of the SNA in this regard.

SNAs completely have a role in schools, they do but I think their allocation needs to be very specific. Students with a physical disability, hands down a SNA is vital for them. (E, APP)

It was more of a caring function and a behavioural function just to keep them focused and assist them with writing and stuff like that sometimes as well. They wouldn't necessarily be sitting next to them the whole time but just to keep an eye on them. (H, ST)

They [SNAs] were very hands on in the classroom. They were very hands on at break times and at gauging and measuring the appropriateness of the level of supervision and care that students would need. (K, Pr)

Prior to APP, one SENCO remarked that SNAs had a specific role with regard to health and safety within the classrooms, in particular with regard to practical classes, and one principal attested that the SNAs would have been involved in withdrawing students from classes for time-out periods if the need arose.

Role of the SNA in the school prior to APP with regard to supporting students with EBD was to meet the health and safety in practical classes. (G, SENCO)

Yes, they [SNAs] would have done the withdrawal. (K, Pr)

All SNAs outlined their roles, responsibilities and relationships with regard to students with EBD prior to APP. They perceived their role as helping students in class as well as out of class settings and highlighted the importance of their relationship. One SNA commented on being present in the classroom with the student with EBD that she had supported previously, but was not now involved.

I would have sat at the back of the class and kept an eye on students with EBD. I usually wouldn't have singled them out during class but then I might help them afterwards if they didn't have their homework done or maybe help them with little projects they would have had to do. The main thing is they feel very comfortable with me. I'm kind of like their Mom in the class. (I, SNA)

My previous role was to support them [students with EBD] inside and outside the classroom. Being in the classroom, because I was seeing them 9 classes a day whereas the teacher in English or Irish was only seeing them once a day; I was aware of the triggers and before the disruption happened, I could give an opt out option and we could do a time out and come out. That was my previous role so now, even though I could be in there for another student with care needs, and looking across at a student who would be there with EBD that I'm not there for, and I'm looking and I can see the triggers and the behaviour erupting and the disruption of the class, it's very hard not to intervene. (H, SNA)

It was evident from responses provided by all principals that the role of teacher and the role of SNA were considered very different in terms of responsibilities and purpose.

They are two distinct roles. Teachers are teachers, and when they are deployed to look after EBD students, the goals and targets for them are always for improvement, always with an educational plus in it. To be fair to a SNA, what they are trying to do is make sure they have the right colour coded books there and is he in uniform and is his locker locked and that kind of thing. That goes back to the mantra of improvement rather than containment... it would be unfair to both the teacher and an SNA to be comparing in any way what they do for them. (I, Pr)

We've always kept it very separate in relation to if a student has a care need and needs support of a SNA, then that hasn't been affected. If a student needs SNA access for a care need, they would still have that access. (J, Pr)

They see the APP teacher as helping them out and they don't see the SNA as a teacher. They see them as a minder. The APP teacher has a function of a teacher and they're also a minder but they [students] see them differently. In fairness, the SNAs do superb work here but it is a different role and that has come across a lot. (E, Pr)

However, despite the distinction in the role of SNA and APP teacher, in a few contexts it was reported that the APP hours were used to support the student in a similar way to the SNA support heretofore. It was considered by a few participants that the only difference with the new provision was a change in personnel.

The odd day if I could sense that [name of student] was going to have a bad day, because often he would have forgotten his books or he would have been late or something, I would have asked the teacher [APP Teacher] to take him out and sort him, as in take him to his locker and give him a pep talk for the day and get his books so he wouldn't get in trouble during the day. That would have been managed during that time as well. (H, ST)

Our SNAs were very hands on in the classroom and again, with the supportive role and even though they had their student that they looked after, they nearly acted as a team teacher without having a teaching qualification. They would keep children focused, keep them on task, they would be able to watch behaviour and say, give them a sign. They were very much doing what the APP is doing so we may not have been the best school to pilot this in I. don't think it [APP] has made a huge difference to the type of support, it's just being given by a different person... Those students, their behaviour has improved over a period of time but our SNAs are always here at break times and lunchtimes keeping an eye on things... They would still be monitored at transitions. (K, SENCO)

Some schools acknowledged that depending on the specific needs of the students and the number of students in a class with EBD, that both an additional teacher and a SNA were necessary to be present. In those instances, the SNA was still supporting students with EBD in class.

Both [SNA/teacher] are necessary for some students. For some students, definitely both... I can think of one child in particular where it is simply a case of the SNA being available because the child would be a danger to themselves or others. They would be a flight risk. (J, SENCO)

The class that I have with the team teaching, we still have a SNA. We would have about five people [students] with emotional problems and having two teachers in there, we find a massive help. I don't see it as replacing the SNA but certainly as an alternative, what I find is where the SNA is specific to one or two people within a group, with the extra teacher you are sharing the workload really. (H, ST)

Participants were asked if they had a preference for SNAs over teachers or vice versa in meeting the needs of students with EBD. The responses indicated that it was largely dependent on the needs of the specific student.

It's essentially making sure we know the child's behaviour – inside in class is not necessarily that disruptive but it's between classes that we do need the SNAs. That's something an APP teacher really can't do, is to be available between every class to monitor a student. (J, SENCO)

It depends on the student. I would say there was one lad in the group that I had and he couldn't function without a SNA there... he benefits from the team teaching as well but maybe not to the same extent as the others. (H, ST)

SNAs completely have a role in schools, they do but I think their allocation needs to be very specific... from what I've experienced, students with behaviour issues, yes they'll respond to a SNA but I think they respond better to a teacher. (E, APP1)

While acknowledging the worth of extra teaching, one parent remarked on the importance of the relationship between the SNA and her son in providing emotional support.

I think he seems to talk more to the SNA if he has any issues. I think... she's more regularly with him than the teachers would be, because there are different teachers. I think the extra teaching is good for the extra support for all the kids and my son included but the SNA, she deals more with the emotional end of it and if he needs somebody to talk to other than a teacher because a lot of kids don't seem to like to talk to the teachers. (M, P1)

Some students also acknowledged the value of the support they received from SNAs in the past, with one student in particular acknowledging the need for an additional adult being present whether that was an extra teacher or a SNA.

The odd time, because I know when I'm going to explode, I used them once in first year. It was in a Maths class and I was fuming and couldn't get what was happening and I had to get out of the classroom. I got up and gave him [referring to the SNA] the nod and they came out with me and everyone understood. It was just to catch a breath because sometimes I can boil over. I boil over and can get frustrated with myself. I get angry with myself more than anything but they brought me out and calmed me down. (J, S).

### 3.2.2 Engagement versus Containment

There was general agreement that additional teaching was beneficial for most students with EBD as it led to engagement rather than containment of students in the education system. Many participants recognised the value of having students with EBD engaged in their academic learning through additional teaching hours provided through APP.

It's engagement, not containment. We're here about teaching and learning and that would be the difference between that and the SNA. The SNA is containing a situation where we're trying to get these students engaged and get the best we can for them and it's all about teaching and learning. (E, Pr)

I think the students benefit more so from having support from a qualified teacher as opposed to a SNA. I think the qualified teacher can offer support not only academically but in relation to behaviour and emotional support also whereas a SNA meets care needs only. (G, Pr)

At second level schools, a lot of students don't want somebody following them around or sitting near them in the class. The team teaching is different... the fact that the teacher can teach the students and help things in a preventative manner is definitely better than the SNA support. Obviously, we need SNAs for the care needs of the students so it wouldn't work across the board but for the EBD, I definitely find it works. (J, Pr)

In addition, alienation and stigma were highlighted as issues associated with over-reliance on SNA support. A SENCO in one school commented on the fact that students with EBD resented being labelled as different and the presence of a SNA reinforced the labelling stigma. A SENCO in another school recognised the value of the SNAs but acknowledged that the majority of teenagers were more at ease with support from a qualified teacher.

I just think that, particularly EBD kids, they don't want a label or to think that they are different. They see the SNAs as being there for people with significant needs and they don't see themselves in that category, nor should they... definitely, there's less of a stigma with a teacher working with you, than there is with a SNA. (I, SENCO)

I think some students are quite resistant to SNA support and certainly as they hit the teenage years but depending on their personalities. Some students like that they have one person helping them and minding them and it's kind of that parental almost role... but the majority of teenagers are more comfortable when it is a support within the classroom of another professional qualified teacher. That's where I would see the positives. (D, SENCO)

Quotes from two parents also remarked on a negative aspect of SNA support. In addition, they attested to the need for their sons/daughters to feel included in the education system rather than feeling alienated from it.

The likes of [name of student] wouldn't want to come to school if he thought there was someone watching him. He would think he was different and he doesn't want to be different. (E, P2)

The support in school, the SNAs in first year in particular were put on him on break times which was suggested because that was the time he was having the trouble with 700 students having lunches and the noise, the sounds, the lights, everything – it was overwhelming him. But they [referring to SNAs] didn't know how to deal with him. They weren't trained on how to deal with somebody with Asperger's so he felt like he was in a jail scenario with a prison officer tied to him. I think a teacher is better overall. (G, P2)

Some concerns were expressed with regard to the specific role SNAs had in terms of dealing with students with EBD. One principal expressed the view that there was over-reliance on withdrawal. Another principal commented on the unfairness of a system where the least qualified person was placed with the most demanding student in the school.

I've had SNAs in the past for behavioural reasons and I didn't feel it was much benefit to be honest... like I said, sitting down next to the student, an extra pair of eyes keeping them focused but in terms of the subject or the content, not a whole lot of expertise maybe. Emotionally as well for support, I don't know how much benefit it was. (J, ST)

Sometimes in relation to the SNA, it's just a matter of pulling the kid out if they're misbehaving whereas if the teacher is there, they would be trained more to deal with the students and be able to even teach prevention rather than just straight to the stop the gap or mop it up afterwards. (J, Pr)

We were putting the least qualified person [SNA] with the most needy and demanding child in the school and what did we expect to get out of it? (M, Pr)

The promotion of independence was highlighted by many participants as crucial for students at post-primary. The additional hours provided through APP were considered instrumental in achieving this.

In my view, of course letting them be independent and encouraging them to be independent is a lot more beneficial than giving them an artificial reality with an adult who, fair enough, might make it easier for everyone else in the room and the teacher but they're not meeting the emotional and social needs of the child by doing that. (J, APP)

The idea of having a teacher there who can intervene and support the child is far superior. It's the whole idea that you want the children to become independent. You want them to be able to manage themselves eventually... boys who have had SNA access because of emotional behaviour disturbance, they will come right out and say, I will actually act out because there is a SNA velcroed to me. They want more independence. They want to show that they can take on greater responsibilities for themselves. (J, SENCO)

While acknowledging the value of the SNA at the outset of post-primary, most students preferred additional teaching as opposed to being singled out by the presence of a SNA. In some instances, students valued their independence, and considered additional teaching to be more equitable.

I had a SNA in first year and they are a great help but after first year, they are still there, but I branched off. They had notes for me and I was using them in first year constantly, every day. Then I came to second year and branched off and started using my own notes. Stuff like that, I started growing out of it. In third year, I didn't need them at all. It's funny enough, it was the hardest year and I was well able to do it. (J, S2)

To put it simply, when kids come into secondary school, all they want to do is fit in and having an adult follow you around constantly and having that adult have the name of a SNA, which is a special needs assistant, it just labels you. The last thing some kid wants when they're coming into first year is to be labelled as a special needs kid. All they do is get made fun of. (G, S)

I don't like an SNA sitting right next to me, on top of me. That embarrasses me and also, it would kill my reputation. Everyone, my friends, if people thought I had problems. I don't tell anyone that I had problems, but if they thought I did, they wouldn't be friends with me because they're judgemental and they judge people on how funny they are or that sort of thing. I've worked very hard to earn their respect and to try and keep it. (F, S)

We all would. I was assigned a SNA but I didn't want it. You're singled out if you have a SNA but with the team teaching, everyone is equal and everyone has help. That's the better way. I would prefer extra help from a teacher more than a SNA because they know what to do. (H, S1)

### 3.2.3 Sensitivities regarding APP and SNA Scheme

It was clear that sensitivities existed within most schools because of APP, and the perception that SNA hours could be lost to schools because of altered provision. All schools expressed concern that APP would not replace the SNA Scheme. One school in particular, commented on replacing a full SNA with 11 APP hours.

... here's an argument to be made that having the SNA for the 32 hours a week as opposed to having the APP provision for 11 hours. The 11 hours then being divided between two or three or four students, I remain to be convinced that the model as we have it in the school would be as beneficial to all students as the SNA. (K, Pr)

Those students need SNA support as well and I'd be concerned that you're replacing a smaller number of teaching hours for a full time SNA. Those students, the likes of X [name of student] – he is engaged here in school, he's working in school, he's not getting into major difficulties in school except seldom but that's because if we see anything, X [name of SNA] is our first person to go to. (K, SENCO)

Responses received from all SNAs showed their anxiety and vulnerability. The inherent loss of a new SNA post associated with APP was considered a drawback by SNAs interviewed.

The drawbacks of SNA jobs I've found is that their hours were either reduced or cut because one SNA job is 11 teaching hours so now, she is no longer in the school, and we have one SNA whose hours were cut. (I, SNA)

The worry there is of the future of SNAs. Is the APP going to take over the future of SNAs? Are SNAs being outed and pushed away? The other thing is, like I said earlier – a teacher has 36 minutes to build a relationship, we have 32 hours a week. (K, SNA)

Some responses showed the importance of having SNA support during transition times. There was recognition that the SNA has a significant presence in the school throughout the school day and because they have a 32-hour involvement they are very much aware of the student's changing moods over the course of the day. This knowledge and understanding was considered paramount and the ability of the SNA to monitor behaviour and report collaboratively to teachers was seen to be a key aspect of their care role.

They spend the whole day with them which is a good thing as well because she [SNA] can tell me, this is what happened for the whole day. (M, APP1)

It's the SNAs between classes and at break times... in between classes and outside at break time when there could be behavioural problems as well. We're there on supervision. (I, SNA)

I would say it [transitions] has disimproved on the basis that we would otherwise have an extra SNA or extra SNA hours. That for us is one of the essential times when SNAs are so valuable, is the between class transition times. You couldn't benefit by losing that. (K, ST1)

Overall, the reduction in contact hours and loss of knowledge from a close relationship between SNA and students were highlighted as critical aspects to be considered.

Around the fact that you're replacing 32 hours with 11 hours and that the children that we have had here, even in the past, have such a good relationship with their SNAs. We've had students here before that would not have been in school had it not been for the SNAs but the fact that the SNA was there at any time and could be called on. That is one of the reservations about this project that... is that person is not always available because they have mainstream classes as well. (K, SENCO)

With regard to the two schools who opted out of APP, their rationale for doing so was based on meeting the specific care needs of incoming students. As a result, it was considered at school level that there was greater need for SNA support rather than APP support. It was felt that in those circumstances that 11 APP hours were insufficient and that the SNA support of 32 hours was vital to fully include these students. Both schools referred to a reduction in the SNA allocation despite the very specific needs of the schools, with one school having to employ a SNA from their own budget in order to fully meet the needs of one particular student. In both instances, APP was perceived as undermining the SNA allocation that was available to the schools heretofore.

The changes really came about ... we were dealing with different students this year that had greater needs. We have a quadriplegic student in a wheelchair and she requires an SNA with her basically all of the time. We have a couple of other new students in as well, one with Down's Syndrome and another student who has difficulty regarding his mobility. There were quite clear care requirements there that needed to be met. (B, Pr)

Then I had to employ from my own budget somebody to help manage [name of student] in a wheelchair. If the SNA had been here and we didn't have the APP programme, there would have been 32 hours dealing with one child. With the APP programme, we only had 11 hours. Somebody needed that level of care need and support that wasn't there. I just wasn't meeting the care needs of the children and that's why I had to go back. (C, Pr)

### 3.3 Planning, Teaching, and Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD

This theme presents the findings regarding planning, interventions, and perceived benefits for students with EBD in the 13 schools involved in APP. The section is sub-divided according to the following headings:

- Assessment
- Planning
- Interventions
- Monitoring
- Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD

#### 3.3.1 Assessment

Assessment was discussed by some participants as a precursor to determine the learning and behavioural needs of students engaged in APP provision. It emerged that most schools had been actively involved in administering formal assessment, generally in the form of ability assessments and reading/mathematics screening tests on entry to post-primary school before the APP pilot. However, it was acknowledged that these assessments had really only focused on academic ability and didn't measure aspects of behaviour. Most schools also consulted primary school data which had been forwarded at the point of students' transfer. All schools also referred to the importance of screening tests prior to beginning first year especially if it was known that

a student entering had a formal identification of EBD. In light of this information, one school provided more in class support, and engaged in less rigid streaming in terms of mixed class composition which facilitated students having good role models in relation to behaviour.

We don't do check lists or rating scales [in relation to behaviour]. They do an entrance assessment which is cognitive. It's CAT3 we use. We do a group reading test with them as well. The GRT, the new Group Reading Test. We get all the information from the primary schools and they give us their scores and we compare to see did we get it right. Yes, but those tests are really giving us an academic profile which isn't always an issue. (I, SENCO)

Before students enrol in the January before they start, they take the NRIT test [Non-Reading Intelligence Test]. They do the WRAT4 [Wide Range Achievement test] for Maths computation. They do the Nelson Reading Test which is context and comprehension. We get a sample of their writing... That's used then for the Principal and the Deputy to determine the composition of the classes. It will often be the case if we have several students who might have challenging behaviour that we might actually not stream so rigidly and move them around a bit to fit them in and give them a chance with students who might be better role models with regard to behaviour. (J, SENCO)

In relation to determining baselines in the area of behaviour during APP, some schools referred to the use of informal assessments in the form of checklists from NEPS, SESS and NBSS, whereas academic needs were determined from consultation with examination results or examining students' copies. Students' views were determined through informal questionnaires such as 'My Thoughts about School' (NEPS, 2010a), and subject teachers' opinions and observations were also sought. One participant referred to the TOAD (Talking out-of-turn, Out-of-seat, Attention Problems and Disruption) observation schedule (NEPS, 2010b) in determining off task behaviour. Another participant referred to the limited number of behavioural type assessments available to the school but acknowledged some use of informal assessment through the FRIENDS for Life Programme (Barrett, 2012).

We didn't have assessments throughout the year except for the teacher observation checklist or the My Feelings about School Checklist. (C, APP1)

The NBSS have a number of check lists, the SESS have check lists and I use some of those just to get a barometer as to where he is now. (F, SENCO)

TOAD assessment... we try to assess them every term basically... we will look at them and start drawing on their actual goals, so what their problem is in the class – have they improved, has it got a little bit better or is it still the same... (D, APP2)

We don't have any assessment tool specific to behaviour. We have acquired one through FRIENDS for Life which is a measure for phobias, and another one that measures general levels of anxiety which we have started using with a class this year. (J, SENCO)

### 3.3.2 Planning

The findings indicated that there were varying levels of planning design in the 13 schools ranging from advanced planning in a few cases to little or no formal planning in others during APP. Some schools indicated that planning prior to APP focused on academic areas, particularly if results from formal assessment were used and acknowledged that this may not necessarily have been the correct area of focus. Additional issues were identified by many schools where sometimes supplementary support in academic areas were addressed by teachers who were not resource teachers, and where these subject teachers had little experience or expertise in designing IEPs. With greater recourse to teacher, student and parent collaboration and informal questionnaires, some SENCOs were of the opinion that more comprehensive planning, particularly in the area of behaviour, had taken place since the initiation of APP.

There would have been planning around their resource and learning support where that was applicable but definitely, this [APP] has put a focus on behaviour management plans. That was probably an area that didn't get the focus it deserved until now. (E, SENCO)

Most resource teaching would have been focused around teaching and learning – not about behaviour... those students would have had IEPs and resource teaching, not necessarily from resource teachers. Depending on what teacher they were working with, they might have had support around individual behaviour planning. There's very few staff who have training around that. (J, SENCO)

There's more comprehensive plans drawn up [as a result of APP]. Absolutely. With the involvement of the parents and the kids themselves and the resource teachers. (I, SENCO)

Analysis of school documentation confirmed the use of individual learning plans, individual student plans or the NEPS' Student Support File. Other schools designed and implemented behaviour plans but had no IEPs. Some schools referred to their systems of collating information through the use of profiling in classrooms before planning for students prior to APP. One SENCO stated that, prior to APP, many subject teachers had a passing knowledge of students' IEP targets and that the 'nuts and bolts' would have been facilitated through supplementary resource or learning support hours.

There are behaviour plans. IEPs I don't think so. When we were doing reports up, we had to do them from the student files. (D, APP1)

We have a student support file using the model that NEPS have given us and we have adapted it to our school. We haven't gone down the road of IEPs and I'll tell you why – the number of SEN students compared to other schools is massive. (M, SENCO)

Prior to APP – The IEPs would be in place and worked on during resource or learning support classes. Teachers would be aware of the targets or the aims and objectives of them and they would have a role in that but the actual nuts and bolts really would be done through resource or learning support. (C, SENCO)

Some subject teachers were briefed on the learning and behavioural needs of students at the beginning of an academic year and a few received summary pages of these needs and learning methodologies that might suit the particular students. Other subject teachers felt, while they could refer to the resource teacher's IEPs in relation to how they would plan for their own subject, they were generally left to their own devices regarding the design of strategies for students with EBD.

Usually what would happen is it would be the resource department where that would stem from and a teacher might have a specific student for resource classes and the teacher would try their best to make an IEP and fill out monthly reports and basically, move forward with the student in question. For class teachers, it was their responsibility to plan for these students within their class... so as a subject teacher I might look at their [student] file and take these things into consideration and alter my plans depending on what the disability is or what level of emotional behavioural disorder I'm faced with. (J, ST1)

It would be based on basically the school briefing we get at the beginning of the year and then you get the sheet that recommends learning techniques for the student and what their problem is and what their needs are. You would then just fit it into your class and be aware of it but you have the whole class to teach and be conscious of – this guy needs to sit up the front and s/he needs to do this or that. (H, ST1)

At the beginning of the year, I would talk to the staff. The second day back, I do it every year and went into it in great depth this year about the IEP. I talk about how to do it and I try to make it sound easy. I show the overview page of the education report, the main recommendations and then I show the IEP. (H, SENCO/APP1)

Since the introduction of APP, one subject teacher subscribed their observations of students with EBD, which then fed into the design of behavioural plans. One parent acknowledged being consulted regarding her son's targets. Another school identified a difficulty in profiling and drawing up a programme for one student due to his extreme challenging behaviour and his non-engagement in school despite a willingness by the parents to be involved. There was an admission by many staff that profiling and IEP design were still at an early and emergent stage. APP appeared to have little direct influence on profiling and planning.

We get emailed the behaviour plans so we all would have done reports identifying targets or maybe key issues in our class and then they were collated together and from that, we have behaviour plans. (I, ST1)

The APP teacher would phone me at the start of the year and tell me what's going on and if she makes changes during the year, she would let me know what she feels is best for the child which is the main thing. (J, P1)

This is a student who railed against any aspect and was extremely difficult to manage. Even I could say, in terms of the APP teacher, who would have tried to meet him and generate a profile, wouldn't engage. (L, Pr)

Every child has been profiled and evaluated and the IEPs have been set up and plans have been put in place for each one although having said that, there's still a lot of work to be done on those. They're in an embryonic stage at the moment and one of our priorities is to make sure they are spelled out very well. (K, ST1)

A few schools had begun the process of student engagement in target setting as a result of APP while others had aspirations to do this in the future. By doing this, it was felt that students might have more ownership of their responsibilities and that they could be rewarded for achievement of personal goals and targets.

When we've done the IEPs and the behaviour targets, we get the students to come up with them because if they have ownership over them, and it's good for them to recognise what do they think their areas to work on are... we'll say how are we going to achieve them and they'll say, pay attention more or learn more. (E, APP1)

I would like to sit down now with each of the students that I have and make some sort of goals, small individual goals and work at it that way myself. I was talking to [other APP teacher] about it as well and she was saying the same, just to give them their own little targets that they have to meet and when they do meet it, then there is the reward at the end. (M, APP1)

Participants discussed IEPs and some of the current issues regarding same. One school referred to the fact that IEPs were always designed for students with more severe EBD and that this information fed into a behaviour plan. However, most schools acknowledged reservations in using IEPs due to the fact they were not statutory. Analysis of school documentation showed that in total, four schools supplied IEPs for the students in the APP. Many teachers lacked confidence in drawing up IEPs.

Prior to APP – In the most difficult cases, with students that would have a diagnosis of EBD, we would certainly have an IEP. As that progresses then, it works its way into behaviour plans where needed. (D, Pr)

That planning would have been always done. IEPs, not necessarily because they're still not a full requirement. (E, APP1)

I doubt if they would have had properly structured IEPs. Behaviour plans – very informal. One of the things that our school was not good at was IEPs. There was a myriad of reasons for it, one of them being the TUI [Teachers' Union of Ireland] had an issue with, I think it's still in place. Even calling them IEPs at the moment for us can be a difficulty. (K, Pr)

My biggest worry is and I'm sure you've heard this before, is the IEP. People are scared of it because they're looking at it and how am I going to do that. (H, SENCO/APP1)

Most schools preferred to use other planning templates, such as, the NEPS' Student Support File or learning plans, while others planned schemes of work at year level, or individual teachers submitted programmes of work in relation to their subjects. This finding was also confirmed through the analysis of documentary evidence submitted by the APP schools. One APP teacher was unsure if there were IEPs in his/her school.

I think that every teacher in [name of school] knows that they are teaching SEN students in all of their classes. We plan under schemes of work. We plan at year level under the year head system and the year heads meet on a weekly basis with senior management... Often the planning and provision for difficult students or students with EBD is addressed at that meeting. (M, SENCO)

We don't call them IEPs... but we had teaching profiles... We would have had targets and planned for them... it was part of their learning plan. (K, SENCO)

I haven't been informed of IEP or behavioural plans. (L, APP1)

In relation to target setting for students with EBD, the four schools who supplied IEP documentation were at varying stages of this process. Hence, sometimes IEPs were described as very general and, from the documentary material provided from schools, it was evident that, in some instances, the targets were of a more academic nature. In one school, subject teachers with APP hours negotiated informally through discussion what targets might be employed. There was an acknowledgement that it might be better to formalise these and put them in writing. Evidence from the documentary analysis of school documentation indicated that another school had highly focused and specific IEP targets, and regularly reviewed same. In addition, this school had very detailed behavioural plans where problem behaviours were identified and priority targets were set. In another school, the SENCO referred to the review of targets but that this process was informal.

Any negotiation that goes on around his targets, would be around X [name of subject teacher with APP hours] and Y [name of subject teacher with APP hours]. They would be the main ones. We rarely sit around a table and put hard facts into writing. Most of this is done through discussion but the reason it's done through discussion is that they are meeting so regularly. Sometimes maybe you're better off to put it in writing all the time. (F, SENCO)

They [IEPs] need to be reviewed regularly... every six to eight weeks. Every student has their behaviour plan so that will also be reviewed at the end of November. That's a separate plan to the IEP but keeping the students involved in that and keeping them going with the behaviour plan, I'm giving them weekly plans to go by. It's just keeping them on track. (G, APP1)

[behaviour] There are targets that are set but it's for a period, maybe a month and then those targets are either met or not. Then there's another set of targets and what worked and what didn't work. It's more informal as far as I'm aware. (H, SENCO)

Where IEPs were developed, a few teachers discussed the challenges of measuring and monitoring IEP targets especially if they were broad in design. Most APP teachers acknowledged that, while collaboration regarding progress occurred all the time, no formal evaluation had taken place. Monitoring of progress appeared more difficult to ascertain where the APP hours were divided among teachers.

That's a part that I've struggled with because it's very hard to measure some of the IEP targets that I might have set for myself. I've tried to keep them as open as possible so it might be keeping Irish, not dropping down to foundation level... with the team teaching, it could be that one student doesn't get any year head referrals because there won't be any behaviour management problems in class. (E, APP)

Not to date [evaluation of targets]. I presume as the year progresses that will be part of it. We certainly do discuss on a very regular basis, nearly on a daily basis, progress or issues. Formal evaluation has yet to be done. (F, APP1)

### 3.3.3 Interventions

Findings indicated that individual schools did not generally implement any specific named intervention programmes during the APP pilot. Practices that existed prior to APP continued and were complemented as a result of APP. Instead, schools' interventions encompassed general academic programmes with a strong examination focus and general behaviour management strategies. Most schools offered alternative programmes (for example, counselling, extra-curricular, and mentoring) to complement these. Reference was also made to team teaching in the academic and behavioural aspects of lessons, the classroom/school environment, behaviours for learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

#### 3.3.3.1 Academic

All students with EBD in APP received academic interventions. The focus of these interventions was mainly support in the areas of English, Maths as core subjects or the APP teacher's own subjects (for example, History, Technical Graphics, and Science) where they could support students in a team teaching situation, small group or individually. One APP teacher stressed the importance of identifying students' strengths and needs, and based on this information designing a curriculum to engage students and promote good school attendance.

The APP teacher would have provided support in English because they were an English teacher... and they would have provided support in other subjects – English and History were their subjects so they provided support in those areas. We always tried to put support in with a teacher appropriate to the subject. (L, Pr)

Probably in my experience... getting to know them, their strengths, their weaknesses and what they like and dislike. That would start off and then I would be able to design a curriculum around that; that entices them to continue working within the school and entices them to come to school. (L, APP1)

The academic nature of the interventions also featured in another teacher's comments regarding the fact that APP hours facilitated additional reading interventions for students with EBD with reading difficulties or in a particular subject where it was felt the student needed targeted help to pass a subject in state examinations. In another school, the focus was on making mainstream subjects accessible to these students and ensuring that behaviour did not jeopardise potential learning. Most parents were anxious that support might be more academic because of the examination driven nature of post-primary settings.

We have run individual reading programmes and more specialised reading programmes and under APP it has allowed us to do that because there are three of us team teaching in learning support in first and second year. (M, SENCO)

It's the mainstream curriculum and making sure they're accessing the mainstream curriculum and that their behaviour isn't stopping them from doing that. (K, SENCO)

I would be speaking to their class teacher about what specifically does this student need to do in this area and what can I do to get them across the line. (M, APP1)

Last year it was more academic support and she [parent] was ringing me saying, can you give him a hand with his Irish or his History because he's falling behind... I was able to do that last year, concentrate more on exam stuff. (J, APP1)

### **3.3.3.2 Supporting Students' Behaviour for Learning**

Other factors or interventions were alluded to by participants as being important for students with EBD particularly in relation to being ready to learn. These included aspects such as organisational skills including the use of a timetable, physical environment and also reference to the more unstructured times of the day. Most teachers stated the importance of coming to class prepared, with the correct books, materials and equipment and setting up students so they were ready to learn, hence preventing misbehaviour that would have otherwise occurred. The role of the APP teacher in helping students to be organised was documented.

With some, it might have been organisation so any chance I got, I would have a chat with them or check the journal. Colour coded timetabling was an obvious thing. (I, APP1)

Some teachers remarked that the physical environment, seating arrangements and physical proximity to students were important factors for preventing certain behaviours.

The seating plans... even if somebody was beginning to act up, just physically being able to be in close proximity to them... There were very clear expectations and to say what was acceptable and what wasn't and to model that. (C, ST)

Seating him up the front is useful and he's less likely to become distracted or to distract others, being seated away from the students I know he's very friendly with, works, in that there's less disruption. (F, APP1)

The APP teacher's role in fostering the correct behaviours for learning at more unstructured times of the day was recognised. One principal acknowledged the importance of the APP teacher 'looking out' for the student between classes and engaging in informal conversation with students in preventing unwanted behaviours. A SENCO, in the same school, also stated that there was still room to give more attention and time to break times when social and emotional difficulties could arise as opposed to focusing solely on what happens in the classroom. Although behavioural issues arose during these times, APP hours were allocated as class time only. It was felt that interventions needed to be broader than just classroom based.

They are done [hours to teach behaviour management, using positive behaviour strategies] informally really. When the particular student is with X [name of APP teacher] in a withdrawal situation or going down to the class as part of team teaching, she would invariably be walking with a particular student and she would be talking to them. (E, Pr)

Break times, but I do see those times as a priority for the project going forward that, in my opinion, it could be very beneficial if they were formally timetabled as hours because that is where a lot of social and emotional issues arise, like transfer times. Currently, and it's probably due to the number of hours, there is a focus on the classroom solely. (E, SENCO)

### 3.3.3.3 Behavioural Interventions

In terms of behavioural type interventions, specific behavioural programmes were not used by any school during the APP pilot. Most schools generally focused on positive behaviour and reward systems which were inherent in schools' behaviour and code of discipline policies as supplied by the APP schools. While many students with EBD had been suspended from schools on numerous occasions, little reference was made to other consequence type interventions. A few schools in the review used behaviour contracts as a form of intervention.

In relation to praise and promoting positive behaviour, some teachers commented that its worth was underestimated and it was a strong motivator for students with EBD as opposed to focusing on negative attention. One school had implemented a NEPS initiative with a focus on positive reinforcement prior to the commencement of APP. Nothing additional with regard to behavioural programmes was reported as a result of involvement in APP.

I found that positivity is a big thing for him and identifying positive behaviours and praising them. I found I was probably taking the opposite approach last year – you're doing this, stop doing that. Identifying when he is behaving well reinforces him. (F, APP1)

It meets their needs because having two teachers in the class, you get more contact time with them and having an extra person gives them more of a chance. There are some kids that wouldn't really like to put up their hand but you can go over and see their work and give them positive reinforcement and praise on their work. (E, APP)

None specifically [no specific behaviour programme]. NEPS had already implemented the PRAISE programme in school and a Parents Plus Programme where personnel worked with students initially and then parents. This was outside of APP. (G, SENCO)

The use of positive reports/cards/notes in engaging students in positive behaviour was emphasised. Class rules were perceived to be critical and the importance of implementing these through a whole school approach was highlighted.

What's very interesting is, one of the things that nearly every child wants is a positive report home. It's the simplest thing. We use the postcard system with the JCSP [Junior Certificate School Programme], a phone call home, a note home, certificates. (M, SENCO)

I know you can't ignore the bad behaviour but focus more on the positive stuff. With the stickers, a lot of teachers have said that they're great and have started to use them for different kids for different reasons. Again, they are very discreet in their journals. Small little reminders to help kids not to get into trouble. It's to set them up for positivity. (I, APP2)

Another very simple method and most teachers will have all of these things already but just to clarify that they really do help – having clearly defined class rules and consequences. I think it's really important as a whole-school approach and for consistency. (G, APP)

Rewards were viewed as being part of a positive approach to behaviour and an incentive to students to work hard at their academic subjects and behaviour. However, a few teachers noted some issues in relation to the correct use of rewards, while one SENCO admitted that more could be done in this area.

Give them a cinema ticket if they have good behaviour or answered a question good in class or improved their writing. If you have them in Room 23 for a class, you might let them play a board game. Just an incentive to say what you did here was good and we're going to improve on this and if you keep up this work, this is what will happen. You will get one little incentive to say well done, great work, keep it up. (M, APP2)

The only thing that I know of, that was tried, was that if particular students had behaved, that there would perhaps be a treat for them but it didn't last long and it didn't go down well with the other students. So if they behaved well they might get curry chips on a Friday. It just didn't work very well so fell by the wayside. To see somebody who isn't perfect lining up and getting a free lunch, and skip to the front of the queue. (L, ST)

I do think it has highlighted the need to put in positive rewards. I think we're quite good in adhering to a code of discipline but rewards would be something we're not great on. (D, SENCO)

In terms of other types of behavioural interventions, reference was made to the effectiveness of low level interventions in preventing disruptive behaviour, the use of time out as a consequence approach to avoid disrupting other students' learning and giving the student time to cool off.

Class support generally would be low level interventions with students. (J, SENCO)

Sometimes he [name of student] can be disruptive in a team teaching scenario, especially in German because he doesn't get German and as a result, often kicks off. One of our strategies there is, there's no point in him disrupting everyone in that class so one of the

teachers could take him outside, have a cooling off period and when he's calmed down and ready, to re-integrate him. He doesn't want to be taken outside the door anyway so sometimes it's a message to him – relax and take deep breaths now. (I, APP2)

### 3.3.3.4 Cognitive Behavioural Interventions

Cognitive behavioural interventions were discussed by participants in the APP schools. However, it appeared that these approaches were at a preliminary, underdeveloped stage in many schools. The principal approach mentioned was FRIENDS for Life (Barrett, 2012) and talking through issues and difficulties. Reference was also made to student self-monitoring and self-awareness.

FRIENDS for Life (Barrett, 2012) was alluded to in many schools and, while some teachers had received training in it as a consequence of APP, few schools had actually implemented the programme. One SENCO felt there was merit in having SNAs trained up on it as well. One school that had implemented the programme reported that its strengths included the pre-empting and prevention of serious behaviour difficulties, avoiding students leaving classes, encouraging positive behaviour and building strong emotional resilience.

The FRIENDS for Life programme is one that we are beginning to have a look at. We were going to introduce it for first years this year but we haven't yet. Again, we had somebody trained and they weren't re-employed so we need training again... On that, I think it would be great if the SNAs could be trained in those programmes. (K, SENCO)

We've taken on FRIENDS for Life for first years at the moment and I'm teaching it. I'm heavily differentiating and adapting it. That would have come about from going to our cluster meetings... other teachers and NEPS psychologists have recommended it and it's definitely something that we are going to administer every year. It's definitely opened my eyes as to what I can do individually with students but also in a group and I have adapted and taken things into my own class. (J, APP)

We want interventions to pre-empt problems as much as possible but to be whole school solutions as well... it's one of the reasons why we have the FRIENDS for Life thing. It's a whole school thing now with the first years and it's specifically because of the APP experience. The FRIENDS for Life is an attempt at positive behaviour because it's building up resilience that might help to pre-empt some of the behaviour problems. (J, SENCO)

Other participants mentioned the importance of teacher-student talk, discussion and problem solving in identifying and recognising emotions and feelings. This appeared to be fostered as a direct result of APP. Most teachers discussed the importance of teacher role modelling with students and talking through the appropriateness of some students' behaviours, as well as talking about how to behave socially and what actions to take in difficult scenarios that students found themselves in. One student also referred to this type of discussion with teachers referring to it being 'sort of like counselling' and helping the student to 'pull me back into perspective'.

I do a lot of emotional literacy when I'm working one-to-one. I adapt it. I do a lot of recognising emotions and maybe naming feelings and I think that's really important for the students with EBD... A lot of it would have been modelling as well for me and taking them aside and going through their relationships with people. (J, APP)

I would definitely try to explain to him that how things that he thinks are ok, are wrong and not appropriate and you can't say some of the stuff he says because people will find it offensive. Dealing with the social aspect and dealing with people, I definitely try to deal with as well and try to explain to him that sometimes walking away from situations is the best case scenario and that's what he should be doing. (F, APP2)

I have Miss X [name of APP teacher] for two classes on Monday and Thursday. We wouldn't be going over subjects, we would be more going over how I'm doing overall in school... it's sort of like counselling but not so much of a personal thing. It helps me get my head around why I am here because a lot of the time I would lose the point in why I am here and that helps me to pull me back into perspective. (G, S)

One APP teacher commented on students' increased self-awareness of their behaviour in school as a direct result of positive behaviour focus. Students had begun to engage in self-monitoring to regulate their behaviour and were more aware of both negative and positive consequences resulting from their actions and behaviour.

As a result of the work I'm doing with these kids and the focus on positive behaviour, they are now beginning to self-monitor... they're definitely more aware of their own behaviour and the consequences if they misbehave, and the positives as well if they do reach their targets and they are behaving, that it's recognised and they know that. (G, APP)

### 3.3.3.5 Alternative Interventions

Some schools engaged in restorative justice, emotional resilience, meditation and mindfulness programmes, however, it was unclear whether these were implemented as a direct result of APP. The programmes were used to help students acknowledge the positive aspects about themselves and to break the cycle of negative attention towards them. Two schools mentioned restorative justice as an approach to conflict management and conflict resolution but it was difficult to determine the level of its implementation in either school.

Restorative justice I would have been conscious of alright. (C, ST)

Restorative practice – I have three students I'm involved with and last year I took them for two periods a week where basically I looked at conflict management and conflict resolution and things like the transition between classes and what would happen in between class times. (D, APP)

It was felt by one APP teacher that the priorities in the areas of self-esteem, confidence, self-belief, learning to make and accept mistakes should be a prerequisite before the academic needs of students could be addressed.

How can I expect a child to access the academics if they don't have the self-esteem or the confidence or the belief in themselves? There have to be foundations before you can learn to learn. How do we expect a child to be good when they have no experience of being good? How do we expect them to lose graciously or get something wrong or understand they made a mistake unless we teach them how to do that? To me, I had to put in the foundations with a lot of the emotions and their social ability before I can move on to their academics. (J, APP)

Some teachers also referred to providing students with self-management techniques to help control anxiety, anger and frustration in an effort for students to recognise and realise their inherent good qualities. In one school, the SENCO made reference to outside personnel working with a group of girls around the areas of self-regulation, anger management and conflict resolution.

She [name of ST2 teacher] is doing emotional resilience training with them and meditation so she actually takes all the first year students and it's all about positive reinforcement. A lot of times, they are so used to people giving out and being negative about them that they forget that they have really good qualities about themselves. It just reinforces how good they are at something. Also, we give them little techniques that if they feel they are going to lose control in class or they are getting anxious or they can't sit still, that they have something to zone in on. (I, APP2)

We have outside programmes as well. I've a girls group going on with my second years and that's around self-regulation, anger management, conflict resolution and all of that. It's kind of embedded in areas of our curriculum. (M, SENCO)

Some schools in the review had adopted mindfulness and meditation programmes not just as standalone elements. A few schools had incorporated them into curriculum subjects. Mindfulness was used to bring students into a state of calm if they were angry, needed to self-regulate or if students needed to distance themselves from an emotionally charged situation as opposed to reacting with an inappropriate emotional response. The benefits of mindfulness and meditation observed included a state of calmness in subsequent class periods during the school day.

We've introduced mindfulness to our learning support programme. It grew to other subjects. I'm an English teacher also and we incorporated it within the classroom as well. (M, SENCO)

We might teach the class 20 or 30 minutes and then we'd do a down time at the end for ten minutes and that really worked... the feedback we'd be getting from other teachers, they'd say 'he came into our class having done meditation, and he was so calm after it.' (E, APP)

One subject teacher incorporated art therapy in conjunction with kindness meditation in exploring feelings and emotions with a first year group, which included a student with EBD.

Something else I did with them was kindness meditation and that was their favourite which I was surprised at. Kindness meditation was around themselves, others that they love or like, people they may have difficulty with and firstly, to emotionally regulate in that and maybe how to distance themselves in the immediate emotional response. They loved it. We did a bit of art work, some exploration that way. We also looked a small bit, and it wasn't in depth by any means at self-esteem and what were their traits and what were they good at. It was trying to anchor that for them, to anchor those qualities and the positive belief systems. (I, ST2)

Most teachers made reference to the mentoring and pastoral care systems in schools which were available to students with EBD. This included senior students being mentors to younger students, including those students with EBD.

In first year they would have had a mentor when they initially came in. The current sixth years would be mentors to the first years. (L, APP)

The Schools Completion Programme (SCP) as well as the JCSP were both mentioned by three schools as positive initiatives for students with EBD. The role of the pastoral care guidance counsellor was also acknowledged in helping these students.

A lot of them [students with EBD] would be involved in SCP which is the school completion programme. A lot of our EBD students with anxiety disorders would meet with our pastoral care guidance counsellor. (I, APP2)

He [student with EBD] is involved with school completion, pastoral care and they're all part of the JCSP programme as well. There's a huge amount of supports. The JCSP is fantastic and it's not all about the academic... that they're getting awarded for other things that they are good at, aside from exams. (I, SENCO)

Homework club and we have the school completion programme as well JCSP of course. Those children [students with EBD] are based in those classes. (H, SENCO/APP)

Extra-curricular activities, such as, sport were mentioned as being paramount for either diverting energy, aggression, venting anger and blowing off steam. Sport was also used as a motivator or a reward for positive behaviour.

Sport would have been a big one... getting them involved in sport as an outlet for the energy or aggression or whatever was going on for them. It is looking at what their interests are and seeing if you can use those as a carrot in some ways. (I, SENCO)

A lot of work done within physical education with him as well and opportunities to give him an opportunity to blow off steam. That's quite well built into his timetable. (F, APP1)

Even for one student that's absolutely mad for the hurling, I might take him out for a little puck around for ten minutes. Just something to say, you're after getting this now because look how well you're working, you're staying in class, your behaviour improved this week and see if we can keep it up this week. (M, APP2)

In addition, one school consulted with students, including the student with EBD, about alternative programmes they would like to engage in, for example the driver theory test. This occurred as a direct result of APP. These alternative programmes gave students a voice regarding programmes applicable to their future lives, as well as being an opportunity for those who may not have access to the appropriate technology to complete same.

There were certain ideas given to them [students] and they would like to do that programme or they're not inclined to work with that. One of the programmes was the driver theory test to get them started. Some may not have a computer or afford it, so the school provided funds to purchase the equipment and the text books so that the students could start working towards their driver theory. (L, APP)

### 3.3.4 Monitoring

The findings indicated that much of the monitoring and evaluation of APP was informal and that there was no methodical process for examining outcomes. Many schools simply provided verbal feedback and, while observations might indicate positive changes in students, it was acknowledged that more formal evaluation was necessary. One teacher with a number of APP hours stated that s/he had no specific input in monitoring outcomes.

We do monitor how it's going but it's all very much... Informal. (E, ST)

Not formally. I didn't monitor it formally. More personal feedback between my colleague and myself. (C, ST)

Again, given that he's [student with EBD] the first person involved, there isn't any formal methodical process by which he is evaluated but it's very much an ongoing thing. Certainly, I can observe changes but we could do more in terms of formal evaluation. (F, Pr)

One school discussed the difficulty regarding the methods of how to evaluate behaviour stating they did so by observing homework journals and/or notes home, but acknowledged the difficulty in monitoring behaviour type outcomes. Another school felt they monitored progress well through the compilation of reports.

That's always been one of the big things in relation to the programme is how do you monitor it. It's hard to see whether what you're doing is having an effect or not. Some of the things we've looked at is their journals and how many notes they've been getting or whether they've been suspended. X [name of APP teacher] has looked at samples of their work before, during and obviously as they're finishing out of the programme and looking at comparisons but it's a very hard thing to measure. It's not like you can sit them down and do a Maths test with them and get the result before they start the programme and do a test again and see the result afterwards. The ways of measuring are actually very difficult to see its effectiveness. (J, Pr)

It's monitored through the compilation of reports and progress and again this is monitored by the SENCO to make sure that progress is being made. (D, Pr)

However, most participants acknowledged that there was a need to engage in much more rigorous evaluation. By engaging in systematic evaluation, areas of improvement and development would emerge more clearly and more students in the future could avail of the approach.

Like anything new, it's probably only effective when it's evaluated properly and we can see areas that need to be improved on and developed. As a school, we need maybe to more formally sit down as a group of people involved in it and examine it from our point of view. (F, Pr)

### 3.3.5 Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD

This subsection focuses on how positive engagement in the school experience resulted in perceived benefits. The key benefits as a consequence of positive engagement were the development of positive behaviour and, academic success and attainment.

#### 3.3.5.1 Positive Engagement in the School Experience

The perceived benefits of APP for individual students varied. Having a positive school experience was emphasised as being crucial for students with EBD by all participants. APP was acknowledged to aid students with EBD in experiencing positive engagement with school. One APP teacher stressed the importance of providing emotional support and coping mechanisms to ensure that students were positive about school. Being positive about school as a result of the support APP offered had resulted in one instance in a student graduating from needing APP support. Most participants reported that the positive engagement of students with EBD through improved behaviour had resulted in increased academic progression.

It's [APP] effective because they're having the positive experience. If there is someone there who is giving them the emotional support and the coping mechanisms, things that would have been seen as massive mountains for them become achievable and surmountable. It's giving them the ability to engage and the ability to achieve which is maybe, what they mightn't even have been aware, that they did have. (J, APP)

There was actually a case which was our biggest success where one student after a year essentially graduated from it [APP]. He did not need extra help anymore. It had manifested to the stage where he matured and organisation was a massive issue for that student and he has no problems now... he has really immersed himself in school life since. (I, APP1)

It [APP] allows the academic progression to happen through the improved behaviour and the engagement and the gaining of the extra skills. The gaining of the social skills will allow them to focus on learning rather than anything else. (M, Pr)

The ability to support the holistic needs of the student was testified as a particular strength of APP and resulted in more positive school engagement for the students involved. The APP programme was perceived as good preparation for life after school. APP had resulted in one cited example of breaking the cycle of failure for a student.

In the particular case of this one student who presented with a number of issues, the support that the APP programme has allowed us to give him, has been positive... in terms of his academic development, in terms of his ability to access the curriculum, in terms of his social development and in terms of his behaviour management. (F, Pr)

One student, in particular, that I can think of in second year, I would think that he's actually coming on quite well. That cycle of failure has been broken for him because he's been given an opportunity to make greater effort in class and be valued by people who know him and will get him through disrupting the class and allow him to establish his identity a different way. (J, SENCO)

In addition, most schools testified to the rise in independence, confidence and development of social skills of students with EBD as a perceived benefit of APP which resulted in an increase in school engagement. Responsibility taking and participation in extracurricular activities were perceived as positive holistic gains for many students involved in APP. This enhanced the student's relationships with their peers and teachers. One parent commented on the mind-set change of her son in terms of faith in his own ability academically and, in addition, his increased happiness and ability to get along socially with his peers.

I know the two students have come along incredibly because of their confidence in themselves in school and their attainment in state exams but also they've stepped out of themselves. They have broader experiences of school and have moved into extracurricular stuff and taken on greater responsibilities. They just seem to be a little less needy and more independent... they have better social skills. They have more positive relationships with their peers and with staff. (J, SENCO)

When he came to this school two years ago, he was under the impression he was totally stupid and his confidence was completely gone. He's very confident and he feels he's clever and can keep up with everybody else... he's managing fine socially... he's happier and a more confident child. Last year I used to have to drag him out of bed in the morning crying to get him to school. Now he's first up and has his shower and downstairs ready for school. He's happy and content. (J, P2)

However, the stability of the home environment was acknowledged by a few participants as a factor which impacted on how well the student engaged in school. One APP teacher commented:

These kids have progressed massively in the last two years to the point where I don't know how much they really need it [APP] as much anymore. They came from very bad places and in the last two years have made fabulous progress. I think both of them are from very unstable homes and they're now in stable environments. (K, APP)

### 3.3.5.2 Behaviour

Most school personnel were cognisant of the improvement in behaviour since the initiation of APP. Previously, many students were in constant conflict with school authorities, the discipline systems and their peers, but this type of behaviour had diminished as a result of better student teacher relationships and further focus in the area of behaviour. Trust was stressed as a crucial element that emerged in the schools between many students and teachers. The trust that grew between the student and teacher was reported to facilitate students requesting help from teachers.

There definitely seems to be less negative happenings with X [name of student]. Last year, what I found was that there was a bit more fighting, a bit more aggression and getting involved with people that are maybe trying to rise him. This year it definitely seems an awful lot less. I reckon it definitely has a bit of a positive impact, the APP, definitely to date. (F, ST)

It's better behaviour really. There's a great rapport between the students and the teachers from what I can see. Positive behaviour is a huge thing and how I feel about myself. This is our second year and I can see it quite clearly. (H, SENCO/APP)

There's a good few of them I get on really well with. I could go to them if I have problems and they'd help me out and I would work hard in their classes because they give me that chance. (F, S1)

They have built more of a trust with teachers and are able to communicate what they need and that's sometimes very difficult for a student. (C, APP)

Most teachers acknowledged the increased time in mainstream classes for students with EBD. In the past, students had been removed from class due to their disruptive behaviour but improved behaviour had resulted in full inclusion in mainstream classes.

It's certainly more positive for them because a lot of these students would be used to constantly being given out to or thrown outside the door or sent to the office whereas, because behaviours are managed or controlled, there isn't that huge burst out or shouting and roaring and screaming. Last year at times X [name of student] behaviour was so unmanageable, she actually had him taken out of Art for a number of weeks but he's back now and totally integrated. (I, APP2)

It [APP] has reduced his time of being outside the class. I am in a large number of his classes that he would normally have to be removed and they haven't been that many in the last number of weeks which is a big difference. (M, APP)

Most school personnel referred to the decreased rate of detentions and suspensions for students with EBD in APP. In some instances, the rate of attendance improved. One principal referred to the fact that parents had noted a remarkable change in behaviour at home and related this directly to the influence of the APP teacher employed.

Definitely with having this [APP] there are less interventions needed from our year heads and from our Deputy Principal. There are less children being sent to Room 23 which means, and it was set up for the children with EBD. (M, Pr)

If you were to look at it in terms of suspensions, hugely reduced in the case of X [name of student]. Attendance and incidents, attendance much improved. Incidents greatly down... it worked in that the incidents coming through the year head system and the pastoral care system were greatly reduced because we took out the hot spots. (L, Pr)

She [name of parent] said that APP had made the difference in his behaviour because everything else at home seemed the same. It seemed to be the only variable that had changed and this was the one [APP] that made the difference. It wasn't that the teacher was interacting with him any more than anybody else but he felt that the teacher was keeping an eye on him. (K, Pr)

Another strength in relation to APP was the retention of students supported by the project which was reported by most participating schools. The supports in the form of extra personnel resources that individual schools put in place for students enabled needs to be met, and resulted in a greater rate of retention for these students. Many schools had been concerned that students would be lost through expulsion or school refusal where there was an inability to implement timely prevention programmes. Some of these students had now completed junior cycle and had moved to senior cycle.

We have a greater chance of actually retaining people and them completing school. A child with EBD would end up just not coming to school anymore. I think with one or two students definitely this model of intervention has actually prevented that. Up until APP, SNA support around EBD was what you had along with resource teaching that might have been inconsistent but none of the support actually was there when it mattered which was before problems actually arose. It was grand to have an SNA to remove a child from class and they could organise that but it's preventing the problem that was always the issue. (J, SENCO)

He's more willing to come to school. (L, P)

I think I notice X [name of student] is a bit more positive. At one point at the beginning of Junior Cert year, I thought he is going to be gone out of school from after his Junior Cert if he even makes it that far. It was very, very bad. Within himself... I feel now he is a bit more positive and talking more about going on to do the course that he would like to do, which would mean doing his Leaving Cert. (I, Pr)

Nevertheless, it was strongly reiterated by most participants that APP did not work in isolation in the school environment and therefore other variables had to be acknowledged, for example, increased student maturity, the role of outside agencies, and use of medication. It was evident that maturity played a major role in the progression and perceived benefits of APP. As the students with EBD progressed through the school, the challenges their behaviours presented reduced. Many schools reported that students took increased responsibility for their learning.

He has matured and from a behaviour point of view, he's much more settled in a small scenario, either a small group scenario or a one to one scenario. (F, SENCO)

One of the obvious things is they are taking more responsibility for their learning and they are becoming more autonomous as learners. (M, SENCO)

Gradually, as the students get older, one of two things happen. As they get greater agency, their behaviour settles a bit especially as they go into Senior Cycle. (J, SENCO)

Some students themselves asserted that maturity played a role in helping them engage with school. One student described his developing maturity by saying that he did not need the same support, comparing this to not needing the stabilisers on a bicycle any longer. His parent also commented on the role of maturity in developing independence and happiness in her son.

There's a maturity aspect that comes into it – I've just matured. It's also the fact that it seems that staff and teachers have laid off my case, if that makes sense... I have calmed down myself so I'm not always trying to make a big deal over everything. (G, S1)

I thought it over myself, then I grew my own methods. It's like cycling a bicycle and you have stabilisers. You slowly start to take the stabilisers off. That was kind of what was there. (J, S2)

Yes, he's doing excellent now and has matured and is well able to look after himself now really. He comes into school happy in the morning and comes home happy. (J, P1)

Another contributing factor for the perceived benefits was the role of outside agencies, especially HSE related bodies. This information was proffered mainly by parents, as most school personnel were not fully familiar with the details of the support outside of school time. Most parents referred to the work of social workers, support workers, play therapists, psychologists working in CAMHS, autism related services and other HSE bodies. In a few instances, parents had more positive experiences dealing with agencies outside of school in terms of dealing with and addressing behaviour.

Initially, there was an ASD unit that was helping with X [name of student] through the health board... he has a support worker and he's been doing one-on-one with X [name of psychologist]. She understands what she's doing for a start and she seems to be able to get through to X [name of student]... she seems to get through to him quite well. Other people don't seem to be able to get through that block. (G, P1)

Yes, he was going for group sessions that would teach him about patience and waiting your turn and things like that. He was doing things like occupational therapy... CAMHS were very good now, especially with a lot of his behaviour. He gets so frustrated and wound up... the school wouldn't have him, they said he was too disruptive and he has to go home whereas even with attending CAMHS and CAMHS telling them, you need to take him out and walk him twice a day. He had a SNA. It wasn't happening. It was very frustrating and if I said anything, I was seen as a difficult parent and I know I wasn't. (E, P2)

No, X [name of student] would have the social worker and the child psychologist and he would have gone to play therapy. (E, P1)

Many of the students who were supported by APP had a co-morbid diagnosis. In some instances, other supports were in place, for example, one student who was also diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was on medication to treat the ADHD symptoms.

He's been diagnosed with ADHD and I know, sometimes you feel is that a bit of a cop out but you can see he is completely over the top, hyperactive and finds it extremely hard to settle. He started, about three weeks ago, on a medication for the first time ever – X [name of medication]. I'm noticing a marginal improvement there that he is a bit more settled. (I, P)

### 3.3.5.3 Academic

It was reported by many participating schools that APP resulted in better academic results for the students who received support. Many principals, teachers and parents testified that students performed well in the Junior Certificate examination as a result of APP support. In one instance, APP enabled a student whose EBD manifested as anxiety to reach his academic potential.

We had a student, I wasn't involved with him last year, but he is one of the most disruptive students and you couldn't imagine – even from first year you would hardly think that he would make it to second year, let alone and he's now in fifth year here and he actually did a very reasonable Junior Cert. Only for he was involved in APP, and saw the previous APP teacher numerous times, with different strategies that he actually made it and did his Junior Cert. (I, APP2)

They wouldn't have passed subjects at Junior Certificate without APP. (G, Pr)

One of our students would have been in the top five for Junior Cert results and he would have been a student who would have internalised quite a lot and for whom when he started in the school, there would have been pretty grave concerns about his ability to cope in school. We saw him very vulnerable in first year but to see him now, he's like a different child. (J, SENCO)

Some school personnel stated that one of the perceived benefits of APP related to the improved expectations that teachers had for students. Many schools reported that students moved from lower examination levels to higher ones, for example, foundation to ordinary level.

If you look at the results there, if you said in first or second year that half of that group would be doing ordinary level exams, no way, that ain't going to happen. Now you're looking at half of them doing ordinary level. That's massive. (H, ST)

Another positive academic benefit for students with EBD, was the progression to senior cycle. Some students were encouraged to transfer into senior cycle following their success in the Junior Certificate examination. It was asserted that this progression occurred as a result of APP.

The other student that was on it [APP] since the start, we got him to Junior Cert and he's here in fifth year. It was a major achievement that he lasted to Junior Cert at all but he did and a lot of credit is given to the fact that he was on the APP programme. (I, Pr)

I think now that he is this side of his Junior Cert that he is seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and he is thinking, well if I got through my Junior Cert maybe Leaving Cert is not too far beyond my grasp. (L, ST)

As a result of APP, it was reported that a few students were no longer on restricted timetables in school and therefore, were experiencing a wider curriculum.

The students in question – one student was periodically put down to a restricted timetable but once the APP fully kicked in, it never had to happen again. During my tenure, the students had access to a full curriculum. (I, APP1)

One student, he was on a restricted timetable until little break but now he has been slowly just to see, on the full timetable. This student would be severe EBD. (M, APP)

Another benefit of APP that schools highlighted was its impact, in most instances, on other students who had more positive classroom experiences as a result of the supports put in place to meet the needs of individual students with EBD.

We have certainly found that it has a very positive impact on the class... there was less interruption of learning. The class atmosphere was better because of it. (D, Pr)

It [team teaching implemented as a result of APP] did support him and definitely the other students benefited. (L, ST1)

The main ones would be, it's not just one student is gaining the advantage. A whole class has access to a teacher and that's a win-win situation for everyone. For his peers, they are going to be less likely to be cheesed off by this individual who loves causing a scene. (I, APP1)

### 3.4 Summary Review

The findings were presented under three distinct themes: APP Operationalisation at School Level; the SNA Scheme in the Context of APP; and Planning, Teaching, and Perceived Benefits for Students with EBD. A summary of the findings is detailed here.

- All schools endeavoured to organise and structure the additional resource allocation so that the targeted student(s) could gain maximum benefit in terms of engagement with the education system. However, there were significant variances between the 13 pilot schools regarding the operationalisation of the project, largely due to the autonomy given to schools by the DES and in part due to the varying cultures that existed within the schools.
- There was a perceived lack of clarity around the project itself with all schools commenting on the need for guidelines to assist them in the operationalisation of APP.
- The roles and responsibilities of the APP teacher varied from school to school with most having a very specific teaching role depending on the model of support used; a few having more of a mentoring role with regard to behaviour; while most had a combination of both teaching and mentoring. Most participants regarded team teaching as a highly effective approach for teachers and students alike and, where schools had a culture of team teaching, this aspect of APP occurred organically.
- All schools indicated that both APP and the SNA Scheme had a place in the continuum of support as students' needs change over time.
- The findings indicated that there were varying levels of planning design in the 13 schools ranging from advanced planning in a few cases to little or no formal planning in others. It appears that APP had little direct influence on planning.
- Findings indicated that individual schools did not generally implement any specific behavioural type intervention programmes during the pilot. Instead their interventions encompassed general academic programmes with a strong examination focus and general behaviour management strategies focusing on positive behaviour and reward systems.
- The findings indicated that much of the monitoring and evaluation of APP was informal and that there was no methodical process for examining outcomes.
- The perceived benefits of APP included the positive engagement of most students with EBD in the pilot schools, which resulted in the development of positive behaviour and academic success and attainment. Other factors may have contributed to improved behaviour, including for example, increased student maturity, the role of outside agencies and the use of medication.

## 4. Discussion of Findings

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the review of the APP project under the heading, Policy and Provision Context Promoting Inclusion.

### 4.1 Policy and Provision Context Promoting Inclusion

The findings of the APP review are discussed in terms of the policy and provision context promoting inclusion in the Irish educational system at present. Sub-headings presented are:

- Policy Context
- Supporting Students with EBD in Post-Primary Schools
- Whole School Approach
- SNA Support for Students with EBD
- Assessment, Planning, Interventions and Monitoring

#### 4.1.1 Policy Context

In the Irish Educational system, inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities (Winter & O’Raw, 2010). Central to inclusive policy and practice is the removal of barriers through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements to enable each student to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her education. Participation of all members of the school community in the full life of the school is sought so that everyone can benefit. The EPSEN Act (GOI, 2004) outlines the entitlements for children with SEN as the provision of an appropriate education in an inclusive setting, including the provision of skills necessary to participate in society on leaving school, with opportunities to progress to third-level, training and employment, and preparation for independent living as well. In line with EPSEN (GOI, 2004), the rationale behind APP to resource post-primary schools to assist students with EBD to access the curriculum and to develop the skills required for participation in the school community is consistent with inclusive policy and practice.

Autonomy at school level underpinned APP. A deliberate policy decision by the DES at the outset of this project was an attempt to allow schools to ‘fit’ APP to their own context (DES, 2013a). APP developed organically at school level, with significant differences apparent in terms of inclusive practices in relation to students with EBD. While the DES acknowledged the challenge that this autonomy presented to schools, it believed that schools would be enabled to develop their skills in relation to supporting students with EBD (DES, 2013a). The autonomy resulted in a flexibility of provision and organisation at school level which many schools involved in APP valued. Schools felt that this autonomy recognised the distinctiveness of each school context, and that this enabled them to employ the teaching hours to meet the individual needs of students with EBD as necessary in their specific context. However, some schools relayed difficulties in relation to the autonomy offered by APP. It was reported to be at times a negative feature of the project,

and resulted in confusion, frustration and anxiety in relation to APP. This negativity stemmed mainly from the lack of clarity around the project, leading many schools to comment on the need for guidelines to assist them in the operationalisation of APP at the outset. It was acknowledged that the cluster meetings facilitated some clarity regarding the operationalisation of APP over the course of the pilot. Autonomy at school level is in line with DES policy (DES, 2014a; 2007; 2005) and is also promoted in the new model of allocation of teaching resources (DES, 2017; NCSE, 2014) where schools will have responsibility for deciding how the additional resources should be deployed in line with the needs of students.

Findings from this review highlighted the importance of supporting schools in developing their ability to deal with the autonomous nature of current DES policy. Supporting schools in this regard should take different forms as individual schools have varying requirements at management and teaching levels. Fullan's (1993) assertion that change involves learning new skills and, even more fundamentally, that it requires a process of orientation to a different set of values and beliefs, is very applicable to APP. As Hargreaves (1999) states, professional knowledge is 'sticky knowledge', that is, it cannot simply be passed on but has to be reconstructed in the light of the particularities of the school culture and established practices.

Centrality of school leadership was evident in the APP pilot. While school leaders generally have a strong influence on the teachers and the learning environment in their schools (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008; Stoll *et al.*, 2006), the process of change requires a great deal of skill at school management level. It would appear that greater support is necessary around embedding policies and practices within an autonomous framework, so as to promote a school culture that embraces inclusion and allows for flexible structures by which to assist teachers as they teach students with EBD. Furthermore, it is suggested that developing schools' ability to be autonomous in implementing policy needs to be given greater consideration, for example through the development of further guidance from the DES.

#### **4.1.2 Supporting Students with EBD in Post-Primary Schools**

It is evident from the findings that the APP pilot is in line with present policies and provision in relation to promoting inclusion and supporting students with EBD in mainstream post-primary schools. Much of the current thinking regarding SEN and post-primary education (NCSE, 2014; DES, 2007; Meijer *et al.*, 2006) advises co-operative and collaborative teaching as a central factor at post-primary level in reducing undesirable behaviour. The allocation of teaching hours to the schools provided them with resources to allocate the necessary teaching supports to individual students as appropriate, whether this was in the form of team teaching, in class support, small group or one-to-one withdrawal support, and is in line with current DES policy (2014a; 2007).

As outlined by the DES (2014a), additional support could be offered 'within the context of a mainstream subject lesson through team teaching, through withdrawal either individually or in a group or, through a combination of these modes of intervention' (p.4). However, recent findings from Rose *et al.* (2015) have indicated that withdrawal of students from class, individually or in small groups is commonplace in Irish post-primary schools and may in fact be counter-productive. Schools in this review attempted to organise the additional APP support

so that targeted students could benefit in terms of re-engagement with the education system. Findings demonstrated a mix of models in place, with some schools utilising a variety of teaching models with the same student. Decisions around the support model were dependent on the number of students with a diagnosis of EBD, ASD or co-morbidity and the specific needs of the students concerned. The issue of strict categorisation is reflected here and, while the criteria for participation in APP was having a diagnosis of EBD, many students involved had a co-morbid diagnosis, with complex SEN, which dictated the model of support offered, and how teaching and learning would be informed. Concerns about the limited value of categorisation for informing teaching and learning or resource allocation have been raised among many researchers in the field (Desforges & Lindsay, 2010) and by NCSE (2014) in their policy advice *Delivery for Students with Special Educational Needs: A Better and More Equitable Way*.

Team teaching as a co-teaching approach was advocated as a preferred model of support for students with EBD in the project (DES, 2013a). The use of team teaching to ensure the continued presence of students with EBD in the mainstream subject classes with their peers aligns with policy guidelines developed by the DES (2007). Team teaching also aligns with the current re-conceptualisation of support teaching which directs practice towards supporting the whole class (DES 2014a; Forlin, 2001). Dyson and Millward (2000) assert that schools who have leaders who are committed to inclusive principles have moved towards an increased emphasis on in-class support as a way of catering for and including students within mainstream classrooms. Being present in mainstream classes is positive for students with EBD, as research has demonstrated the importance of peer relationships, highlighting the benefits that positive friendships can have academically, emotionally, and behaviourally (Lynn *et al.*, 2013; Véronneau *et al.*, 2010). Farrell *et al.* (2007) refer to the improved outcomes in the area of social skills and relationships when students with SEN are included in mainstream classrooms. Positive social experiences are important, as the quality of students' school-based social relationships is a strong predictor of overall satisfaction with life (Casas *et al.*, 2012).

Where team teaching was the dominant approach, the school's culture appeared to have been a contributory factor in the success of its implementation. Eight schools had a tradition of team teaching and this resulted in it organically complementing the existing model in place. The importance of strategically planning for team teaching in terms of matching skillsets was emphasised. Teachers had already established working relationships with colleagues, and students were familiar with the model. Most of these teachers felt that team teaching resulted in the following: better student focus; engagement; behaviour; social skills; organisation, and learning. Students in most instances also commented positively on this model of support. Students who were taught through team teaching methods did not necessarily recognise that they were being supported and no longer perceived themselves identified as being different.

While the APP Steering Committee had placed emphasis on a team teaching model and all schools had engaged in the approach to varying degrees, it was evident from this current review that this model was not always feasible or appropriate. Some schools had abandoned it and used a variety of approaches including withdrawal in small groups, one-to-one tuition or time out. A few schools felt it necessary to use the majority of the APP hours for one-to-one tuition due to perceptions of extreme behaviours and their impact on other students in the mainstream

classroom. While many parents were in favour of a team teaching approach in supporting their child, some also felt that individual tuition was important.

Current DES policy allows for flexibility, reflecting the continuum of need, in the support provided for specific students requiring targeted interventions through withdrawal in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, but that these latter support models would not be used exclusively so as to promote inclusion. Macbeath *et al.* (2006) in their study of 20 post-primary schools in England have determined that not all students are emotionally or socially comfortable in mainstream settings and may have difficulty in accessing the curriculum, and in addition have difficulty with meeting multiple teachers and the structures of a typical school day. Therefore, the findings from this review would also support the continuum of teaching approaches and models to meet the varying needs of students with EBD.

In line with legislation advocating an appropriate education and the development of skills required for participation in society, the findings attested that there was a strong focus on providing academic support for the students in the schools involved in APP. Many participants reported that students with EBD who were supported through APP achieved better examination results than expected initially. Many parents wanted academic support, due to the academic nature of the examination driven system at post-primary. Supporting students with EBD academically is valid, as academic impairment and relatively low levels of achievement are reported for these students (Joffe & Black, 2012; Bowman-Perott, 2009; Shoenfeld & Janney, 2008; Lane *et al.*, 2008; Wagner *et al.*, 2005; Bradley *et al.*, 2004; Gunter *et al.*, 2002) and there is research evidence that academic problems promote, or may exacerbate behavioural problems (Byrne & Smyth, 2010). The review findings indicated that some additional support was provided in the form of reading interventions. Trzeniewski *et al.* (2006) in demonstrating that there is an association between reading achievement and behaviour, state, that this relationship is 'primarily environmentally mediated and probably explained by a reciprocal process that unfolds over time' (p.85).

However, there is more to supporting students with EBD than solely providing academic support. The DES policy advocates that additional supports provided should be tailored to meet the unique needs of students, addressing social, emotional and vocational/life skills, as well as literacy and numeracy needs (DES, 2014a). Students with EBD can be more emotionally impulsive and less able to regulate their behavioural responses to emotionally provoking events than students without EBD (Cross, 2011). For example, it is recognised that students with EBD can present with difficulties in the area of emotional regulation, often showing high levels of emotional regulation intensity in the classroom context (Carroll *et al.*, 2006). Emotional outbursts can impact heavily on a student's ability to initiate and maintain friendships (Hessler & Katz, 2007; Zeman *et al.*, 2006; Eisenberg *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, Hester *et al.* (2003) report that difficulties with emotional regulation can impact on functioning both at home and at school. The development of self-management, self-regulation and self-direction skills are recommended for students with EBD (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Fitzpatrick & Knowlton, 2009).

The NCSE (2012) recommends 'educational supports to include social and personal skills programmes to include self-regulation of behaviour [and] life skills' (p.93). Focusing on 'social and emotional education' (Clouder, 2008) is important; a position supported by Cooper (2010), who states that 'interventions must focus on the promotion of social and emotional competence' (p.9). It is reported that the Irish educational system is at an early stage in addressing the need to focus on social and emotional education (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). As evidenced in the findings, the schools involved in APP reflect Cooper and Jacobs' above assertion, displaying varying levels of focus in their utilisation of resources to support students with EBD in the formal development of their social and emotional education.

A cohesive response to supporting students with EBD is promoted by DES policy (DES, 2014b). While it is clear that APP assists schools in meeting the needs of students with EBD within the schools' educational remit, the findings indicate that there is need to consider how schools can be supported by external and state agencies to a greater extent. Most schools reported very little collaboration or even contact with Health Service Executive (HSE) agencies such as CAMHS, TUSLA within the context of APP. There were no direct interagency partnerships reported at school level within the schools involved in APP. The importance of interagency and interdepartmental collaboration in the support of students with EBD is widely acknowledged. Cooper (2010) states that 'there is strong evidence to suggest that targeted multi-agency programmes... have been found to be highly effective in supporting... positive engagement in education' (p.6). Cooper and Jacobs (2011) further report that education, health and social services need to 'reflect on how they can combine their efforts and go beyond multi-professional approaches to embrace trans-professionalism' (p.162). Furthermore, the review suggests that there is room for greater alignment of supports developed for schools by educational state agencies. A few schools were more directly involved with NBSS as they were being supported through the Positive Behaviour Liaison Programme and had an allocation of a Positive Behaviour Liaison Teacher, yet findings indicate that there was no direct involvement of the Positive Behaviour Liaison Teacher in the APP pilot. Greater collaboration between these initiatives would enhance and maximise the support the student with EBD receives at school level. It would be beneficial if the state agencies, who are most involved in assisting schools in supporting students with EBD, namely, NCSE and NBSS, had greater levels of joined-up thinking. The principle of joined-up thinking underpins the development of the NCSE Support Service which was established in March 2017. Organisations integrated under this Support Service include SESS, NBSS and the Visiting Teacher Service. While NEPS is not integrated into the NCSE Support Service, its function is to support schools.

### 4.1.3 Whole School Approach

The findings indicated that the pilot schools were engaged in the process of a whole-school approach to varying degrees in supporting students with EBD. In relation to school policy, all schools had policies and procedures on admission/enrolment, child protection, behaviour and anti-bullying which were underpinned by the centrality of the inclusion of students and their wellbeing, and some schools also had specific SEN/Inclusion policies. However, many of the policies were in draft format and the level of detail varied from school to school. The Education Act (GOI, 1998) outlines the obligations of schools in Section 9 in regard to providing an appropriate education to all students including those with SEN. Hence, once the NCSE allocates resources to a school to support the inclusion of students with SEN, school management is responsible for the appropriate and most efficient deployment of those resources, which may then be made explicit through their policies.

Consequently, the principal has responsibility for the instigation, establishment, promotion and review of whole school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning and inclusion of students with SEN by communicating this information to all the key participants including, teachers, support personnel, parents and, where appropriate, students. The findings indicated in relation to school policies relevant to APP, that there were varying levels of communication and collaboration with participants and, hence, this resulted in varying levels of understanding of APP. It was evident that, in many schools, only those teachers, for example, principal, APP teachers, SENCOs, or those teachers involved in team teaching with the APP teacher, were aware of its purpose and workings. For instance, the principal and the APP teacher were very familiar with the workings of APP due to attendance at cluster meetings. This resulted in issues, in terms of fostering a whole-school approach to supplementary support for students with EBD. Central to a whole-school approach is the involvement of parents. In relation to the involvement of parents in APP, it was apparent that the level of information provided by schools to parents varied between the different contexts. However, this could also be seen as a positive feature, as parents observed the support as part of whole school provision in the support of their child.

Many schools became overly reliant on the APP teacher to support students with EBD and their related behaviour issues. The APP teacher was perceived at times to be the behaviour teacher, with the expertise, particularly if they had availed of CPD in the area of behaviour. This finding concurs with those of Rose *et al.* (2015) who found that mainstream teachers may be over-dependent on support teachers to address students' more complex needs. Consideration must be given to the notion that EBD is not only the concern of specialists (in this instance APP teachers). Otherwise, it may result in the abdication of responsibility at times by other teachers and hence is counter-productive to a whole-school approach.

Guidance from the DES (2007) has unequivocally advocated that successful inclusion of students with SEN, including those with EBD, requires collaboration between mainstream subject teachers and specialist staff (such as Resource teacher, APP teacher etc.). The findings indicated that, in instances where team teaching occurred with subject teachers and the APP teacher, this led to an increase in constructive collaborative approaches between teachers and resulted in a sharing of responsibility for behaviour management and the advancement of learning of students with EBD. However, the review found that in some schools there was a high turnover of staff in the APP post, thus resulting in the loss of continuity and stability for many students with EBD. A high turn-over of staff does not foster good collaborative practices.

#### **4.1.4 SNA Support for Students with EBD**

Findings from this review suggested that, in the main, the role of the SNA in relation to students with EBD was in line with DES policy, as outlined in Circular 30/2014 (DES, 2014b). Responses provided by most principals showed that the role of teacher and the role of SNA were considered very different in terms of responsibilities and purpose. Despite this distinction, a few schools reported that the APP teacher was utilised in a similar way to the SNA. In addition, some participants acknowledged that, depending on the specific needs of the students and the number of students in a class with EBD, both an additional teacher and a SNA were sometimes required to ensure learning for all. This is in line with advice from the DES outlining the need for alternative methods of support (DES, 2007; 2005; 2003).

The importance of SNA support during transition times was emphasised in this study. Findings reported that the SNA's 32 hour (per week) involvement with students meant that they were aware of the student's moods and needs over the course of the day. This knowledge was considered paramount and was regarded as an important part of their care role. Because of the limited number of hours allocated to the APP teacher, she/he was generally not available to students during unstructured times.

However, the care role of the SNA can lead to students becoming alienated and isolated from their peers and over-reliant on the SNA at post-primary (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). The stigma of being viewed differently was highlighted in the responses of some of the participants. While acknowledging the value of the SNA, most students reported that they valued their independence and preferred additional teaching support. Despite the fact that SNA support is meant to enable inclusion, this would suggest that SNA support for students with EBD may, in fact, serve to exclude rather than include (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011).

As APP involved replacing SNA allocation with teaching hours, there was strong evidence of sensitivities around the project. It was clear from the findings that there was apprehension regarding the loss of SNA support for students with EBD in post-primary schools as a result of APP. Dependent on the needs of the students, many participants asserted that there was requirement for both SNA and additional teaching allocation support. It is recognised that students may, at different stages in their education require higher levels of supports. In light of the new model (DES, 2017), there is need for flexibility in the allocation of teaching resources to schools in relation to supporting students with EBD with these resources reviewed regularly in line with the continuum of need. This is required to ensure that additional support for students with EBD would be seen as a central part of the school's approach to inclusion.

#### **4.1.5 Assessment, Planning Interventions and Monitoring**

Formal assessment of students' ability was commonplace in most of the APP schools. This occurred especially for first years entering post-primary school, where ability assessments were administered, and in addition reading and mathematics screening tests were used by some of the schools. However, it was acknowledged that many schools were less familiar with informal assessment especially for behaviour related difficulties. Current policy advice from NCSE (2014) indicates that assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process as it provides details of students' learning strengths and difficulties, and should lead to the identification of specific learning targets. Maddison (2002), and Kontu and Pirttimaa (2008) state that assessment should measure meaningful outcomes using a variety of assessment instruments. Douglas *et al.* (2012) also argue for a system of inclusive assessment emphasising a broad range of areas including academic attainment, engagement, happiness and independence-related outcomes. In relation to supporting students with EBD, it is necessary to access more inclusive assessment.

IEPs have been acclaimed internationally, and research has consistently lauded them as pertinent for precise and accountable educational planning for students with SEN (Winters & O'Raw, 2010; NCSE, 2006). IEP design and implementation is still at an early and emergent stage in the Irish context, and most schools involved in the review acknowledged the difficulties regarding same. This finding is replicated in other studies (Rose *et al.*, 2015; Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014) where IEPs vary in format and content, with few consistent approaches. This has implications on how they are subsequently utilised. Rose *et al.* (2015) also found that the lack of clarity on the status of IEPs is confusing for schools. The findings from that study are reflected in this review regarding the lack of statutory status of IEPs. However, Winters and O'Raw (2010) and Douglas *et al.* (2012) state that, while IEPs are not yet mandatory, many schools are using individual planning processes as they recognise it as good practice.

The findings in this review indicated that there were variable levels of planning in all schools, ranging from advanced planning in a minority of cases to little or no formal planning in others, and also varying degrees of collaboration with the various stakeholders in relation to same. Some schools in the review had designed and implemented IEPs with a few of these designed to a relatively high standard. Furthermore, a few schools had designed and implemented behaviour plans at varying levels and, in a minority of cases, other schools had both IEPs and behaviour plans. Many schools in this review referred to the lack of teacher confidence and expertise in drawing up IEPs, especially where many subject teachers were involved in supplementary provision.

Douglas *et al.* (2012) assert that IEPs are crucial to planning a broad curriculum for students with SEN and are particularly beneficial in post-primary schools where students have many subject teachers. However, the review found that there were varying levels of communication or knowledge of IEP and/or behaviour plan content among some subject teachers. Subject teachers referred to the resource teacher's IEPs, in relation to how they would plan for their own subject and appropriate methodologies, but in the main, subject teachers were generally left to their own devices regarding the design of strategies for students with EBD. Overall, it appeared that APP did not have a significant impact on school practice in relation to IEPs. The *Guidelines on the Individual Educational Plan Process* (NCSE, 2006) recommend that effective IEPs should be individualised, child-centred, inclusive, holistic and collaborative. Rose *et al.* (2015) and Goepel (2009) reiterate the latter point where collaboration is necessary in developing and implementing IEPs. Ni Bhroin *et al.* (2016) also report that class teacher practices in relation to both collaboration and co-ordination of the IEP process, and the minimal incorporation of targets into class teachers' plans require further consideration.

Time for shared planning is cited repeatedly in the literature as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of co-teaching (Murawski, 2010; Hang & Rabren, 2009). This issue was highlighted in the review where many participants acknowledged that additional planning time was required to ensure that APP worked efficiently and effectively. Formal planning time for the creation of focused and structured lessons particularly in relation to team teaching classes was raised as an ongoing issue. Most teachers agreed that in the main, planning was informal and that team teaching plans did not exist, but acknowledged the need to formalise planning so it would be more effective. All SENCOs and APP teachers elaborated further on the minimal time that was currently spent on planning and the lack of time to plan with colleagues. Strogilos *et al.* (2016) found in their study which investigated 400 teachers' attitudes towards co-teaching practices for students with disabilities in Greek schools, that the time they spend to plan and evaluate together is insufficient. More frequent scheduled co-planning time could develop co-teachers' shared commitment to support all students with SEN in their class, as well as further opportunities to discuss their roles and responsibilities.

In relation to interventions for students with EBD, the findings concluded that individual schools did not generally implement any specific named behavioural intervention programmes during this pilot. Instead, their interventions encompassed general academic programmes with a strong examination focus, general behaviour management strategies focusing on positive behaviour and reward systems, which were inherent in the behaviour and code of discipline policies in the various schools, and many had been in place prior to the commencement of APP. These findings are comparable with some of the key characteristics as identified by Cooper (2011; 1993) such as a positive approach to student behaviour, emphasising the use of rewards for good behaviour, approaches to classroom management which emphasise the anticipation and prevention of behaviour problems which are related to students' performance in behaviour, attendance and attainment. Few schools used behaviour contracts as a form of intervention.

Most schools highlighted some of the behavioural issues manifested during the more unstructured times of the school day, for example, break-times, transition between classes and felt the APP hours should facilitate more flexible use. According to Kapalka (2008) students with behavioural difficulties are particularly known to have problems exercising self-control during these less structured times. Therefore, the importance of managing students with EBD in out-of-class settings should be further considered. Cognitive behavioural approaches and the importance of behaviours for learning were discussed by many participants. According to Cooper and Jacobs (2011), cognitive behavioural approaches foster the development of functional ways of thinking by challenging and changing dysfunctional ways of thinking. This review found that cognitive behavioural approaches were at a preliminary, underdeveloped stage in many schools. In some instances, students had begun to engage in self-monitoring to regulate their behaviour and were more aware of both negative and positive consequences resulting from their actions. Previous research has demonstrated the efficacy of such approaches in children with behavioural difficulties in areas such as self-monitoring (Davies & Witte, 2000; Shapiro & Cole, 1999) and self-control (Kazdin, 2002). Most teachers emphasised other factors, such as being ready to learn, as being critically important. These included organisational skills, for example, interpreting timetables correctly, coming to class prepared, physical environment and also to more unstructured times of the day.

Some schools offered alternative programmes, for example, emotional resilience training, meditation and mindfulness, mentoring and pastoral care systems, counselling, extra-curricular activities as a result of APP. These complemented the more academic and behavioural type interventions in schools in building students' self-esteem and emotional resilience. These programmes were perceived as helping students to self-regulate, if students needed to distance themselves from an emotionally charged situation, diverting energy, aggression, venting anger and 'blowing off steam'. While research has indicated that many schools address misbehaviour by removing students from the classroom, Fabelo *et al.* (2011) show that these exclusionary discipline practices have enduring negative effects on students, including school drop-out, and coming into contact with the juvenile justice system. Mergler *et al.* (2014) state that schools must cultivate ways or implement alternative approaches to address misbehaviour and improve all students' chances for success. Few schools had implemented specific named programmes, such as, FRIENDS for Life (Henefer & Rodger, 2013). The review findings highlighted that this was partly due to difficulties encountered in accessing CPD in regard to these programmes. CPD for all teachers on the use of evidence-based interventions for students with EBD is paramount to

enable inclusive practice. Supports, such as restorative justice, positive behavioural interventions and supports (PBIS), and social and emotional learning have demonstrated how schools can reduce the need for exclusionary discipline by preventing student misbehaviour initially (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). By doing this, improved school climates and academic achievement have been observed. Gutman and Vorhaus' (2012) longitudinal study noted that social wellbeing was positively associated with students' current performance and predictive of subsequent performance across grade levels. These findings are also replicated in Sheard *et al.*'s (2013) study which investigated the effects of an in-school intervention designed to increase social-emotional wellbeing of at-risk students in Northern Ireland. The results revealed that the intervention was effective in teaching students to recognise and manage emotions, and develop appropriate coping strategies, as well as improving academic outcomes.

The findings indicated that much of the monitoring and evaluation of APP interventions were informal and that there was no methodical process for examining outcomes. Rix *et al.* (2013) assert that less attention has been given to assessing the outcomes of interventions in Ireland due to the assessment process focusing on identification of needs. While NCSE (2006) encourages a more interactive approach where interventions adapt and change in response to what works for the student and where monitoring is a central tenet, the review findings reveal that much of the monitoring was conducted through verbal feedback, using observation, between teachers. A few teachers discussed the challenges of measuring IEP targets especially if they were general in design, with most participants in the review acknowledging that targets should be broader than just academic. In instances where the APP hours were shared among a number of subject teachers, they acknowledged that, while collaboration regarding progress occurred all the time, no formal evaluation had taken place. Again, these findings are echoed by Kinsella *et al.* (2014) who also reported little evidence of systematic recording of the progress of students with SEN. The NCSE (2013) outlines in their policy paper that there should be an increased focus on monitoring outcomes, especially those linked with IEP targets and that measurement should be broader than just academic.

As structured outcomes and how these might be measured were not primarily focused on in the implementation of APP, schools discussed perceived benefits in terms of how APP facilitated the positive engagement of most students with EBD in the pilot schools, which resulted in academic success and attainment, the development of positive behaviour, and holistic gains. There were fewer instances of student removal from class, while the rate of detentions, suspensions decreased and school attendance and retention increased. This retention and continued engagement of students with EBD in school is positive, as students with EBD are at risk of early school leaving (Schoenfeld & Janney, 2008; Sutherland *et al.*, 2002). In terms of academic success, most schools reported better academic results for the students with EBD who received support through APP. Most schools testified to the increased independence, confidence and development of social skills of students with EBD. Responsibility taking and engagement in extracurricular activities were perceived as positive holistic gains for many students involved in APP. This enhanced the students' relationships with their peers and teachers.

## 5. Conclusions

The remit of the APP review was to identify the strengths and benefits, and the areas for development and drawbacks of the project. Chapter 5 provides the outlines of the conclusions of this review in relation to the influence of APP at student, school and system level.

### Limitations

There were a number of limitations acknowledged at the outset of this review, which have had an impact on the conclusions and were outside the researchers' control. These included the lack of baseline data including both quantitative and qualitative data such as student outcomes or perceptions before the project commenced for comparison purposes. A lack of objective quantitative data collected throughout, and the small sample size, were considered other limitations. This impacted on the researchers' ability to move beyond viewing perspectives as opposed to objective measurable data/evidence. Therefore, perceived benefits have been reported as opposed to outcomes.

### Student level

It can be concluded that APP impacted positively on most students supported during the course of the pilot.

- Positive perceived benefits included better student focus; engagement; behaviour; social skills; organisation, and learning. In addition, benefits as regards the development of positive relationships with teachers, increased expectations for students by teachers, reduced detentions and suspensions, improved attendance, and school retention were reported.
- Students reacted positively to APP, reporting that, while they valued SNA support at certain times in post-primary school, they generally disliked being singled out by the presence of a SNA and valued their independence.
- APP does not work in isolation and other variables may impact, such as increased student maturity, the role of outside agencies, and use of medication.

### School level

At school level, it can be concluded that APP was a positive initiative. However, areas of strength and areas for development were highlighted.

- The allocation of APP hours enabled schools to organise teaching supports whether this was in the form of team teaching, in class support, small group or one-to-one withdrawal support as deemed necessary. All of these models of support delivery had value depending on the individual needs of the student.

- Constructive, collaborative approaches between teachers through team teaching practices led to a sharing of responsibility for behaviour management and the advancement of learning of students with EBD<sup>14</sup> in the pilot schools.
- There were variable levels of planning evident in schools. Appropriate formal planning time is necessary to enhance the learning of students with EBD. In addition, planning for students with EBD should be broader than just academic. More rigorous monitoring and evaluation of planning, programmes and IEP targets are necessary.
- Interventions should be tailored to meet the unique needs of students with EBD, addressing, in particular, the social, emotional and vocational/life skills, in tandem with the academic needs.
- Supporting the behavioural needs of students with EBD must be considered to be the responsibility of all teaching staff in order to prevent over-reliance on the APP teacher.
- The importance of managing students with EBD in less structured settings should be further considered. The role of SNA support during transition times is recognised. Flexibility in relation to the APP teacher's role during less structured times would be beneficial.
- CPD should be tailored to facilitate whole staff development in relation to EBD. Areas of focus could include assessment; evidence-based interventions for EBD; IEP planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and team teaching.

## System level

APP is consistent with inclusive policy and practice, in particular, APP is in line with present policies and provision in relation to promoting inclusion and supporting students with EBD in mainstream post-primary schools. It was to be concluded that:

- Autonomy at school level underpinned APP. However, it is important to support schools and their leaders in developing their ability to deal with the autonomous nature of current DES policy.
- Despite the ample guidance already available to schools, specific guidelines are required to support schools in implementing APP.
- Monitoring and evaluation of APP support were informal, and there was no methodical process for examining outcomes. This is a consideration going forward.
- Greater flexibility in the allocation of resources to schools in relation to supporting students with EBD is necessary. Depending on the specific needs of students with EBD, both an additional teacher and/or a SNA may be required at different stages in their education.

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<sup>14</sup> While the intended group of students to be supported by APP were those with an EBD diagnosis, schools reported that many students involved in APP had either a diagnosis of EBD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and/or co-morbidity, or were presenting with extreme behaviours or complex needs.

- Greater partnerships between schools and external agencies, for example HSE agencies, is required when supporting students with EBD.
- In order to better support students with EBD in mainstream post-primary schools, the establishment of the NCSE Support Service is welcomed, in that greater levels of collaboration, joined-up thinking and enhanced alignment of behavioural type supports/interventions will be facilitated.

In line with the remit of the project and based on the conclusions presented above, Table 6 details the strengths and benefits, drawbacks and areas for development of APP.

**Table 6: Strengths and Benefits, Drawbacks and Areas for Development**

Strengths and Benefits	Drawbacks and Areas for Development
Consistent with inclusive policy and practice in relation to supporting students with EBD in mainstream post-primary schools.	
Positive perceived benefits for students with EBD reported.	Monitoring and evaluation of APP interventions were informal. No methodical process for examining outcomes in relation to APP.
Autonomy at school level empowered schools to meet the needs of students with EBD. Centrality of school leadership. Cluster meetings facilitated the development of APP in schools.	Greater support for schools in developing their ability to deal with the autonomous nature of current DES policy. Guidelines in relation to the operationalisation of APP necessary.
Cluster meetings developed a level of expertise among school leaders and designated APP teachers with regard to EBD.	The learning from APP was not spread across the whole school, beyond those involved in APP, therefore whole school CPD in relation to EBD necessary.
	Varying levels of whole-school approach to EBD. Whole-school approach to EBD necessary to avoid over-reliance on APP teacher.
Additional teaching hours enabled schools to execute the continuum of support models. Focus on team teaching model to include students with EBD in the classroom.	Greater flexibility in the allocation of resources to schools in relation to supporting students with EBD. Depending on the needs of the student with EBD both an additional teacher and/or a SNA may be required at different stages in their education. CPD in relation to team teaching necessary.

Strengths and Benefits	Drawbacks and Areas for Development
	Greater expertise in relation to planning necessary. Appropriate planning time essential. IEP design and implementation at an early and emergent stage due to the lack of statutory status of IEPs. Lack of teacher confidence and expertise in drawing up IEPs. Varying levels of communication and knowledge of IEP content among some subject teachers. CPD is necessary.
Emphasis on academic engagement among schools involved in APP.	Support for students with EBD should be broader than just academic. The additional allocation of 11 hours should be tailored to meet the unique needs of students with EBD, addressing social, emotional and vocational/ life skills.
	Specific intervention programmes not generally implemented. Cognitive behavioural approaches at a preliminary, underdeveloped stage in many schools. If specific intervention programmes required for individual students, then CPD should be available.
Greater presence, engagement and retention of students with EBD in structured settings.	Importance of managing students with EBD in less structured settings. Flexibility in relation to the APP teacher's role during less structured times.
	Greater levels of collaboration to facilitate joined-up thinking and to create greater alignment of behavioural type supports/ interventions necessary as is envisaged by the establishment of NCSE Support Service.

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## **Appendix 1: Steering Committee Personnel**

Jim Mulkerrins, Principal Officer, DES

Finn O'Murchu, Senior Inspector, DES (to 2015)

Johnny Murphy, Senior Inspector, DES (from Sept 2015)

Terry Reynolds, Assistant Principal Officer, DES

Sé Goulding, Head of Operational and Support Services, NCSE

Joan Russell, Education Officer, ETB (Cork)

Ann O'Dwyer, Education Officer, ETB (Kerry)

## Appendix 2: Documentation Sent to Schools

- Information Letters
  - Principal
  - App Teacher
  - Home Liaison Officer (HLO)
  - Parent/Guardian
  - Pastoral Co-ordinator
  - SEN Co-ordinator
  - SNA
  - Student
  - Subject Teacher
- Consent Forms
  - Parent/Guardian
  - Principal and Teachers
  - SNA
  - Student
- Interview Schedules
  - APP Teacher
  - HLO
  - Principal
  - SNA
  - Student
  - Pastoral Care
  - SEN Co-ordinator
  - Subject Teacher
- Document Checklist for Schools
- Profile Template of Students Involved in APP

October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Principal,**

The letter of 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 2015, issued by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), informed you that St. Angela's College, has been successful in tendering for the evaluation of the Altered Provision Project (APP).

Following on from our recent telephone conversation, we need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level. This will involve conducting interviews and gathering relevant school documentation.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we would appreciate if you could get approval from the Chairperson of your Board of Management regarding the gathering of data in your school. We will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be stored securely for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

To ensure that all key stakeholders are fully informed about the evaluation of the APP, please find enclosed letters for each stakeholder, including students, parents, teachers and SNAs. We would appreciate if you could distribute these letters to the relevant parties. Consent forms are attached to each letter. We would appreciate if you could collect all the consent forms and have them available to us before we commence interviews. We will be unable to conduct interviews without signed consent forms.

Within your school, the interviewing process will involve students, parents and staff. 10 participants will take part in these interviews in your school. It will include:

- 2 students involved in the APP and their respective parents/guardians,
- 1-2 teachers who were allocated APP hours,
- 1 SEN coordinator **or** home school community liaison coordinator, **or** pastoral care tutor,
- 1 mainstream subject teacher (e.g. language, maths, practical),
- 1 SNA who has experience of working with students with EBD,
- Yourself as principal.

The interview questions for the interviewees will be sent to your school one week before the interviews take place.

We anticipate being in your school for up to 2 days. It is envisaged that the interviews will take approximately 30 minutes each. We would appreciate if you could make arrangements to have a room available to us for the interviews. In the interests of child protection, we require another adult to be present in the room when the student is being interviewed.

We would appreciate if you, or somebody of your choosing, would complete the attached rota for the day to include all 10 interviewees. The completed rota should be available in the school on the day of the interview.

In addition, we require documents relating to the project at school and student level.

These include:

- School type, enrolment numbers, numbers of students with SEN, and numbers of students with EBD as their identified SEN, staffing numbers, general allocation hours, low incidence hours and other supports within the school (e.g. pastoral care support)
- Relevant school policies (child protection, inclusion/SEN, enrolment, code of discipline, behaviour)
- Documentation pertaining to the students supported by the APP hours: Diagnosis and assessment details, level and type of support before and after project commenced, provision of support, IEPs and related planning documentation for selected students, transition documents (e.g. student passports for 1<sup>st</sup> years students), attendance records since commencement in your school
- Guidelines from DES on the APP project
- Monitoring and outcome data (student behaviour plans, interim reports – as part of APP to date)
- Any other relevant documentation that you deem pertinent to this review

These documents can be either scanned and emailed to [name of researcher]@stangelas.nuigalway.ie or sent in hard copy by post to [name of researcher], St. Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo by October 21<sup>st</sup> 2015.

Please find attached a checklist of documentation to be returned to us for your convenience.

Based on our telephone conversation, the evaluation of the project in your school will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we thank you in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the Department of Education and Skills and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear APP Teacher,**

Your school [name of school] in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been involved in the Altered Provision Project (APP). We, at St. Angela's College, Sligo have been given the responsibility to evaluate the APP.

In order to do this, we will need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level, and we will interview key stakeholders, including yourself, involved in the project within your school. It is very important to get your views of the project.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be securely stored for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you agree to be part of this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form and return the completed form to the principal.

The interviews will take place in the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. Please liaise with the principal to organise a suitable time for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions will be sent to your school one week before the interviews take place.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we are grateful, in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the DES and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Home Liaison Officer,**

Your school, [name of school] in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been involved in the Altered Provision Project (APP). We, at St. Angela's College, Sligo have been given the responsibility to evaluate the APP.

In order to do this, we will need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level, and we will interview key stakeholders, including yourself, involved in the project within your school. It is very important to get your views of the project.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be securely stored for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you agree to be part of this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form and return the completed form to the principal.

The interviews will take place in the school on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. Please liaise with the principal to organise a suitable time for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions will be sent to your school one week before the interviews take place.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we are grateful, in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the DES and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Parent,**

Your child's school [name of school], has been part of the Altered Provision Project (APP) whereby additional resource hours were allocated in order to support children's learning and social/emotional needs.

We, at St. Angela's College, have been given the responsibility of evaluating the project by the Department of Education and Skills. We hope to do this by interviewing students and their parents who have been involved. It is very important to get your views and your child's views of the project.

Please find attached an information note for yourself and your child. We would like you and your child to have a conversation about this. If you agree for you and your child to be interviewed, please sign the attached consent forms for yourself and for your child. Your child also needs to sign the form. Please return these completed forms to the school.

The interviews will take place in the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Please inform the principal of a suitable time for you to attend the interview. The interview questions will be sent to you one week before the interviews take place.

In relation to your child's involvement in the project, we hope to interview him/her during school time with yourself or another adult present.

We hope that you and your child will take part in the interviews as your opinions are very important.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Pastoral Care Co-ordinator,**

Your school [name of school], in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been involved in the Altered Provision Project (APP). We, at St. Angela's College, Sligo have been given the responsibility to evaluate the APP.

In order to do this, we will need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level, and we will interview key stakeholders, including yourself, involved in the project within your school. It is very important to get your views of the project.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be securely stored for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you agree to be part of this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form and return the completed form to the principal.

The interviews will take place in the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. Please liaise with the principal to organise a suitable time for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions will be sent to your school one week before the interviews take place.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we are grateful, in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the DES and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator,**

Your school [name of school], in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been involved in the Altered Provision Project (APP). We, at St. Angela's College, Sligo have been given the responsibility to evaluate the APP.

In order to do this, we will need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level, and we will interview key stakeholders, including yourself, involved in the project within your school. It is very important to get your views of the project.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be securely stored for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you agree to be part of this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form and return the completed form to the principal.

The interviews will take place in the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Please liaise with the principal to organise a suitable time for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions will be sent to your school one week before the interviews take place.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we are grateful, in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the DES and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Special Needs Assistant,**

Your school [name of school] in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been involved in the Altered Provision Project (APP). We, at St. Angela's College, Sligo have been given the responsibility to evaluate the Altered Provision Project (APP).

In order to do this, we will need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level, and we will interview key stakeholders involved in the project within your school. It is very important to get your views of the project, therefore, we would appreciate if you would participate in an interview.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that your details will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all interview information will be securely stored for the duration of the research. You may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you agree to be part of this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form and return the completed form to the principal.

The interviews will take place in the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. Please liaise with the principal to organise a suitable time for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. You will have the interview questions one week before the interviews take place.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we thank you in advance for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the DES and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Student Letter,**

My name is [name of researcher]. I will be working with your school, Davis College, to see how support is given to students to help them to learn better. I am interested in finding out how this has worked for you. I would like to have a conversation with you about this.

I will be in your school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November and can meet you for a chat about this, if you agree.

Attached to this note is a consent form for both you and your parents to sign, if you are willing to meet me.

Yours sincerely,

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October 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Dear Subject Teacher,**

Your school [name of researcher], in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has been involved in the Altered Provision Project (APP). We, at St. Angela's College, Sligo have been given the responsibility to evaluate the APP.

In order to do this, we will need to collect data relating to the project at school and pupil level, and we will interview key stakeholders, including yourself, involved in the project within your school. It is very important to get your views of the project.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be securely stored for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

If you agree to be part of this evaluation, please sign the attached consent form and return the completed form to the principal.

The interviews will take place in the school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Please liaise with the principal to organise a suitable time for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions will be sent to your school one week before the interviews take place.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we are grateful, in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the DES and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

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### **Consent Form (Parent/Guardian)**

*I consent to be part of an evaluation of the Altered Provision Project by researchers from St. Angela's College, Sligo. I consent to be interviewed as part of an evaluation. I consent that the interview will be audio recorded. I consent to the information from the interviews being used anonymously in published research. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time from the interview.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*I consent that the researchers have access to assessment details and Individual Education Plans about my child.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent Form (Principal and Teachers)**

*I consent to be part of an evaluation of the Altered Provision Project by researchers from St. Angela's College, Sligo. I consent to be interviewed as part of an evaluation. I consent that the interview will be audio recorded. I consent to the information from the interviews being used anonymously in published research. I consent that relevant professional documents are examined as part of the evaluation. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time from the interview.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent Form (SNAs)**

*I consent to be part of an evaluation of the Altered Provision Project by researchers from St. Angela's College, Sligo. I consent to be interviewed as part of an evaluation. I consent that the interview will be audio recorded. I consent to the information from the interviews being used anonymously in published research. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time from the interview.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent Form (Student)**

I agree to answer questions about my experiences in this school. These questions will be asked by somebody outside my school as part of a research project which I have been told about. I agree that my answers can be recorded. I can leave the interview at any time.

My parents/guardians agree that I can answer these questions.

Signature of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree that my child can be interviewed

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APP Teacher Interview Schedule

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

### Understanding of Scheme

1. Was there clarity around the purpose of the APP?
2. In your opinion do your mainstream colleagues understand the purpose of the APP?
3. In your opinion do students understand the purpose of the APP?
4. In your opinion do parents understand the purpose of the APP?

### School Operationalisation

1. What does the operationalisation of APP look like in your school?
2. How were these hours utilised?
3. Does each student involved in the APP receive the full complement of additional hours?
4. For students involved in APP, what additional supports do these students receive within your school?
5. Had students been on a restricted timetable? As a result of APP, do students have access to a full curriculum now?
6. Do students in the APP receive additional supports from external agencies? Please specify exactly what their role is in relation to APP?
7. Exactly what does this support involve?
8. Are parents involved in the APP? If so please describe nature of parental involvement.
9. Have there been any positive reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher

10. Have there been any negative reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
11. Have there been any changes to the cohort of students supported by APP since the commencement of the project in your school? If so please explain?

### **Comparing APP and SNA Support**

1. How do you think the alternative provision compares to previous support arrangements?
2. What was the role of the SNA in the school prior to APP with regard to supporting students with EBD?

### **Planning and Teaching**

1. What planning was in place for these students prior to APP? Were you involved in the planning?
2. What planning is in place for these students during the APP? Are you involved in the planning?
3. Are assessments administered prior to or on entry to APP? What are these?
4. If targets are set for these students, how are these evaluated?
5. What positive behaviour programmes (if any) were put in place for these students because of APP?
6. Could you provide a breakdown of how you use the APP hours to support the students?
7. Identify any teaching strategies and/or methods that you found to be successful in the APP to date.
8. Describe any aspects of your work, or specific examples of work you have done, that you have found especially rewarding?
9. Have there been any occasions when collaboration with subject teachers has proved particularly effective this year? Please explain your answer.
10. What does team teaching look like in your school? How does team teaching meet the needs of the individual students with EBD in the subject classroom?
11. Describe a typical team teaching lesson that you are involved in with a subject teacher.

### **Impact of APP**

1. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in teaching and supporting students' positive learning behaviours? [Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in supporting the academic learning needs of students?
2. What difference has been made to the learning experience for students with EBD because of APP?
3. What difference has been made to the learning outcomes for students with EBD because of APP?
4. Do you notice any difference in the behaviour of students with EBD during transition periods?
5. What is the impact of APP?
6. How do you monitor the impact of APP?
7. Did APP result in further development of schools' positive behaviour structures?

### **CPD**

1. What training if any did you receive as a result of being involved in APP?  
If no, what training would you suggest?

### **In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
2. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
3. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## HLO Interview Schedule

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

### Understanding of Scheme

1. What is your knowledge of the APP in your school?

### School Operationalisation

1. How are you involved in the APP in your school?
2. What positive behaviour programmes (if any) were put in place for these students as a result of APP?
3. Have there been any positive reactions to the APP
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
4. Have there been any negative reactions to the APP
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher

### **Impact of APP**

1. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in teaching and supporting students' positive learning behaviours?
2. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in supporting the academic learning needs of students?
3. What difference has been made to the learning experience for students with EBD because of APP?
4. What difference has been made to the learning outcomes for students with EBD because of APP?
5. Do you notice any difference in the behaviour of students with EBD during transition periods?
6. What was the impact of the alternative provision at class level/school level/student level/community?
7. In your role as HSLO role, what was the impact of the APP in terms of parent involvement in supporting their child?
8. In your HSLO role, what was the impact of the APP in terms of student development?
9. Did APP result in further development of your schools' positive behaviour structures?

### **In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
2. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
3. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## Interview Schedule Parent

Good afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a researcher from St. Angela's College, Sligo carrying out a review of a Department of Education and Skills pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). As you know your child receives support through the provision of additional teaching hours rather than a SNA. I am here today to identify parents' views of this support. Thank you for participating in this short interview.

1. How are you involved in your child's education?
2. What type of contact do you have with the school?
3. Tell me about your child's experiences of school life.
4. What does your child find hardest about their school day?
5. Is there anything causing you concern in relation to your child's experiences of school?
6. Tell me about the support your child receives in this school.
7. Are you satisfied that your child is supported sufficiently?
8. What is your child's view of the support s/he receives?

## Knowledge of APP

1. Did anyone explain to you the project that your child is involved in?
2. What is your understanding of the project?
3. What is your opinion of this project?
4. Is your child aware that s/he is involved in this project?
5. Has this project changed the way that your child is supported?
6. Has the project resulted in more positive experiences for your child in school? Explain.

## SNA Support

1. Did your child have the support of a SNA in the past? What were your child's experiences of this form of support?
2. Does your child have support of a SNA at the moment? How does the SNA support your child? If so, is this effective?

## External Agencies

1. Have you received any support from outside the school?

**In summary:**

1. In your view what are the advantages of the APP?
2. What are the disadvantages of the project?
3. Which would you prefer for your child, having the support of a SNA or the allocation of additional teaching hours/extra help from a teacher?

## Interview Schedule Principals

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

### Background Information

1. Indicate what type of school-ETB, DEIS, etc?
2. What number of students with EBD are enrolled in the school?
3. What number of students with EBD are involved in APP in your school?
4. How many students in the school are involved in the project?
5. Did all the students with EBD receive this altered provision from first year or were they at different stages in the school cycle?

### Management of Scheme

1. How was your school selected for participation in the APP?
2. When did your school commence the APP?
3. Why did you want to participate in the study?
4. What did you perceive the benefits to be at the time for the school and the students?
5. Was there clarity re the purpose of the APP? Outside of the school setting what other personnel are involved and what are their different roles within the APP?

### Understanding of Scheme at School Level

1. Do you consider that mainstream staff understand the purpose of the APP? Please explain your answer.
2. Do students understand the purpose of the APP? Please explain your answer.
3. Do parents understand the purpose of the APP? Please explain your answer.

### School Operationalisation

1. What did the operationalisation of APP look like in your school?
2. How many hours did your school receive under APP?
3. How were these hours utilised? (Prompt: Team teaching, behaviour support, curriculum support, collaboration, focus of support, etc.

4. How were the teachers involved in the APP selected (APP and subject teachers)?
5. What were the different roles and responsibilities of the various personnel in the school?
6. How did teachers plan for support given during the APP hours?
7. What were the criteria for selection of students to participate in APP?
8. Did all students supported by the project actually qualify for an SNA?  
Please explain your answer.
9. Does each student involved in the APP receive the full complement of additional hours?
10. Was a teacher appointed or were the hours divided among existing staff?
11. What plans were in place prior to APP?
12. What plans are in place during APP?
13. How is progress monitored in relation to students with EBD who were involved in APP? Did APP result in further development of schools' positive behaviour structures?  
Please explain your answer.
14. Had students been on a restricted timetable? As a result of APP, do students have access to a full curriculum now?
15. Do students in the APP receive additional supports from external agencies?
16. Exactly what does this support involve?
17. How were the care needs of students supported during the APP?
18. Have there been any positive reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
19. Have there been any negative reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
20. Have there been any changes to the cohort of students supported by APP since the commencement of the project in your school? If so please explain?

### **Comparing APP and SNA Support**

1. In your opinion how does APP compare to previous support arrangements?
2. What was the role of the SNA in the school prior to APP with regard to supporting students with EBD?
3. What happened to the allocation of SNA hours after APP was introduced?
4. Did SNA support change as a result of APP?

### **Impact of APP**

1. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in teaching and supporting students' positive learning behaviours?
2. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in supporting the academic learning needs of students?
3. What difference has been made to the learning experience for students with EBD because of APP?
4. What difference has been made to the learning outcomes for students with EBD because of APP?
5. Do you notice any difference in the behaviour of students with EBD during transition periods?
6. What was the impact of the alternative provision for the other students at school level?

### **CPD**

1. What training if any did teachers involved in APP hours receive?
2. Is there any training you think would be required if this scheme were to roll out?

### **In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
2. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
3. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## Interview Schedule SNAs

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

1. Are you aware of the APP? What is your understanding of it?
2. Have you noticed any difference in the school as a result of giving students with EBD additional teacher support?
3. What was your role as SNA in the school previously with regard to supporting students with EBD?
4. Has your role changed in any way since?
5. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
6. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
7. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## Interview Schedule Student

Good morning, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. As your principal has already explained to you, I am here to have a conversation with you about school. I believe ... .. works with you in your classes.

### General Information

1. Tell me about yourself.

### School

1. Tell me about a school day.
2. What do you like about school?
3. What do you not like about school?
4. What subjects do you like?
5. What subjects do you find difficult?
6. Tell me about your friends in school.
7. How do get on with teachers and other staff in your school?
8. Is there anything you find difficult during your school day?

### Support in School

1. Do you receive extra help?
2. What extra help do you get in school? Tell me about it. Do you know why you receive extra help?
3. What do you find most useful about the extra help?
4. How does this extra help support you?
5. Have you experience of two teachers in the classroom? How did you find this?

### SNA Support

1. Has a SNA helped you in school in the past?
2. How did the SNA help you?
3. Did you feel this helped you? How so?
4. Did you like having a SNA?

**In summary**

1. Which would you prefer having a SNA or getting extra help from a teacher?
2. Is there anything you would like to change about how you are helped?
3. Would you have any advice for principals or teachers so as to help you?

## **Interview Schedule Pastoral Care**

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

### **Understanding of Scheme**

1. What is your knowledge of the APP in your school?

### **School Operationalisation**

1. How are you involved in the APP in your school?
2. What positive behaviour programmes (if any) were put in place for these students as a result of APP?
3. Have there been any positive reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
4. Have there been any negative reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher

### **Impact of APP**

1. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in teaching and supporting students' positive learning behaviours?
2. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in supporting the academic learning needs of students?
3. What difference has been made to the learning experience for students with EBD because of APP?
4. What difference has been made to the learning outcomes for students with EBD because of APP?
5. Do you notice any difference in the behaviour of students with EBD during transition periods?
6. In your pastoral care role, what was the impact of the APP in terms of parent involvement in supporting their child?
7. In your pastoral care role, what was the impact of the APP in terms of student development?
8. Did APP result in further development of your schools' positive behaviour structures?

### **In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
2. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
3. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## Interview Schedule SEN Co-ordinator

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

### Understanding of Scheme

1. What is your knowledge of the APP in your school?
2. In your opinion do mainstream staff understand the purpose of the APP?
3. In your opinion do students understand the purpose of the APP?
4. In your opinion do parents understand the purpose of the APP?

### School Operationalisation

1. What does the operationalisation of APP look like in your school?
2. How many hours did your school receive under APP?
3. How were these hours utilised?
4. How were the teachers involved in the APP selected (APP and subject teachers)?
5. What were the different roles and responsibilities of the various personnel in the school?
6. How did teachers plan for support given during the APP hours?
7. Do you co-ordinate the APP hours?
8. Are they seen as an addition to resource allocation in the school or are they seen as totally separate provision?
9. What role does the resource teacher play in APP hours?
10. Does the resource teacher automatically receive the APP hours?
11. If not who does?
12. If so, do the resource teacher and the APP teacher work together?  
What does this look like?
13. Does each student involved in the APP receive the full complement of additional teaching hours?
14. Had students been on a restricted timetable?
15. As a result of APP, do students have access to a full curriculum now?

16. How has APP affected the type of support that these students receive in the school?
17. How has APP affected the co-ordination of support in the school?
18. What additional supports do the students in the APP receive within your school?
19. Did APP result in further development of your schools' positive behaviour structures?
20. Do students in the APP receive additional supports from external agencies?
21. Exactly what does this support involve?
22. Are parents involved in the APP? If so please describe nature of parental involvement.
23. Have there been any positive reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
24. Have there been any negative reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher

### **Comparing APP and SNA Support**

1. How do you think the alternative provision compares to previous support arrangements?
2. What was the role of the SNA in the school prior to APP with regard to supporting students with EBD?

### **Planning and Teaching**

1. What planning was in place for these students prior to APP?
2. What planning is in place for these students during the APP?
3. During this support what areas of need are emphasised?
4. How does team teaching meet the needs of the individual students with EBD in the subject classroom?
5. Are students' needs regarding self-regulation, behaviour, independence and social skills prioritised during APP hours?
6. Are assessments administered prior to or on entry to APP? What are these? How are these used to determine targets for students?

7. If targets are set for these students, how are these evaluated?
8. What positive behaviour programmes (if any) were put in place for these students?
9. To your knowledge, have there been any occasions when collaboration between teachers (subject, support teachers, APP teacher) have proved particularly effective this year? Please explain your answer.

### **Impact of APP**

1. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in teaching and supporting students' positive learning behaviours?
2. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in supporting the academic learning needs of students?
3. What difference has been made to the learning experience for students with EBD because of APP?
4. What difference has been made to the learning outcomes for students with EBD because of APP?
5. Do you notice any difference in the behaviour of students with EBD during transition periods?
6. Did APP result in further development of schools' positive behaviour structures?

### **CPD**

1. What training if any did you (or staff members) receive as a result of being involved in APP? If no what training would you suggest?

### **In Summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
2. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
3. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## Interview Schedule Subject Teacher

The aim of this research is to review a DES pilot project, titled Altered Provision Project (APP). This project involved the allocation of additional teaching hours, rather than that of new SNA hours, to engage with students with EBD entering post-primary schools. The rationale for this project was that students with EBD require additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour from qualified teachers, rather than the care support provided by an SNA. The purpose of this interview is to identify the strengths, benefits, areas for development and drawbacks of the APP pilot from your perspective.

### Understanding of Scheme

1. What is your knowledge of the APP in your school?
2. In your opinion do mainstream staff understand the purpose of the APP?

### School Operationalisation

1. How are you involved in the APP in your school?
2. What positive behaviour programmes (if any) were put in place for these students because of APP?
3. Have there been any positive reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher
4. Have there been any negative reactions to the APP by
  - Parent
  - Student
  - Teacher

### Comparing APP and SNA Support

1. How do you think the alternative provision compares to previous support arrangements?
2. What was the role of the SNA in the school prior to APP with regard to supporting students with EBD?

### **Planning and Teaching**

1. What planning was in place for these students prior to APP? Were you involved in the planning?
2. What planning is in place for these students during APP? Are you involved in this planning?
3. How has APP affected how you support these students?
4. Identify any teaching strategies and/or methods that you found to be successful in supporting these students.
5. Are you aware of the targets set for these students? Are you involved in evaluating progress?
6. Have there been any occasions when collaboration with support teachers has proved particularly effective this year? Please explain your answer.
7. Have you been involved in team teaching with regard to APP?
8. What does team teaching look like in your classroom?
9. How does team teaching meet the needs of the individual students with EBD in the subject classroom?

### **Impact of APP**

1. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in teaching and supporting students' positive learning behaviours?
2. Thinking specifically about the students with EBD, how effective is the APP in supporting the academic learning needs of students?
3. What difference has been made to the learning experience for students with EBD because of APP?
4. What difference has been made to the learning outcomes for students with EBD because of APP?
5. Do you notice any difference in the behaviour of students with EBD during transition periods?
6. What is the impact of APP? (if not answered through the above questions)
7. How do you monitor the impact of APP?
8. Did APP result in further development of schools' positive behaviour structures?

**CPD**

1. What training if any did you receive as a result of being involved in APP?  
If no what training would you suggest?

**External Agencies**

1. What support have you received from external agencies?

**In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths and benefits of the APP?
2. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
3. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

### Checklist for Documents to Return to St. Angela's College

Documents	Tick
Profiles/pen notes for students on the APP on the templates provided	
Assessment details and scores	
IEPs and planning documentation for selected students	
Student behaviour plans	
Attendance records of selected students since commencement in your school	
Guidelines from DES on the APP project	
Child protection policy	
Inclusion/SEN policy	
Enrolment policy	
Code of discipline/behaviour policy	
Interim reports – as part of APP evaluation	

Completed consent forms and rotas to be available for collection on the day of interviews for the following: Principal, teachers, SNA, parents and students.



## **Appendix 3: Non-School/External Personnel Documentation**

- Example of Information Letter
- Example of Consent Form
- Tele-Interview Schedules
  - DES Personnel 1
  - DES Personnel 2
  - DES Personnel 3
  - NCSE Personnel 1
  - NCSE Personnel 2
  - NBSS personnel 1
  - ETB Personnel 1

## Example of Information Letter

October 13<sup>th</sup> 2015

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As you are aware, St. Angela's College, has been successful in tendering for the evaluation of the Altered Provision Project (APP). Following on from our recent correspondence, we need to collect data relating to the project at management level. This will involve a brief telephone interview with you which we have scheduled for the X [date of  $\beta$ ]. The interview schedule is attached in the email. It is envisaged that this will take no longer than 45 minutes.

We also attach a consent form. We would appreciate if you would sign this form and return to us, prior to the interview. In the interest of expediency, it may be more convenient for you to scan and return by email. Alternatively, you may send a hard copy by post to [name of researcher], St. Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo.

In line with ethical procedures within St. Angela's College, we will ensure that the data and details of participants within the project will be anonymised and that no personalised information will be contained within the report or shared with any third party during the course of the research. In addition, we will ensure that all data will be stored securely for the duration of the research. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time.

Your involvement in the evaluation of the project is essential to the research and we thank you in advance, for your contribution. We are hopeful that, with your cooperation, we can formalise the learning from the project, highlight good practices, and identify any areas for improvement. The outcome of this evaluation will be made known to the Department of Education and Skills and the National Council for Special Education, and may be used in published research.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

### Example of Consent Form

*I consent to be part of an evaluation of the Altered Provision Project by researchers from St. Angela's College, Sligo. I consent to be interviewed as part of an evaluation. I consent that the interview will be audio recorded. I consent to the information from the interviews being used anonymously in published research. I consent that relevant professional documents are examined as part of the evaluation. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time from the interview.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tele-Interview Schedule: DES Personnel 1

### General Information:

What was the rationale for setting up the APP?

Does it differ from current DES policy? If so, how?

Was the APP modelled on provision in any other jurisdiction?

What organisations were involved from the outset? What were their roles?

What was the constitution of the steering committee?

Was there a cost in setting up the project and if so, met by whom?

How was the operation of the APP envisioned originally? Has this followed through in practice?

What outcomes did you envisage for the APP?

From the perspective of the Steering Committee, how has the project been monitored?

Is there anything the Steering Committee would do differently in terms of managing the project?

In your absence, who is managing the APP from an educational perspective?

What was the purpose of the cluster meetings?

### Schools:

#### *Selection of Schools and Commencement:*

How many schools commenced in 2013?

How were the schools selected?

There are 13 schools involved in the project at present. When did each school commence in the APP?

What was the rationale for inclusion of additional schools and expansion of scheme?

#### *Implementation of the Project:*

How were the schools supported initially?

What ongoing support did individual schools receive during the APP?

Why was a 3 year period chosen to run the project?

Were there different phases in the APP?

Four schools were involved in an evaluation of the APP. How were these selected?

Were guidelines/templates provided to schools for the evaluation process?

What criteria were used by schools to identify the students that would be involved in APP?

Had all students an EBD diagnosis? Had the students other learning difficulties?

Were guidelines issued to schools regarding the focus of the APP hours? From your knowledge of schools involved, how are the APP hours being utilised?

Did students hold on to SNA support for primary care needs if required?

Did 1<sup>st</sup> year students involved in the APP have the support of a SNA in primary school? If yes, were any sensitivities experienced if they lost SNA support?

Did students in other years involved in the APP who had the support of a SNA in the school, were any sensitivities experienced if they lost SNA support? If so, what were they and how were they addressed?

Do you know how the teachers were selected? What teachers were involved in devising the IEPs for selected students?

Did all schools engage in team teaching/in class support? Was CPD provided in these areas before engagement in the project? How were the teams selected for team teaching and were all teachers in the schools involved?

If individual schools did not engage in team teaching, do you know why? How were the APP hours utilised?

In summary:

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

In your opinion, which is more beneficial for the student with EBD, other students, school community, support in the form of SNA hours or APP hours?

## Tele-Interview Schedule: DES Personnel 2

### General Information:

What was your involvement in the APP?

What was the rationale for setting up the APP?

Does it differ from current DES policy? If so, how?

What outcomes did you envisage for the APP from a DES perspective?

From the perspective of the Steering Committee, how has the project been monitored?

Was there a cost in setting up the project and if so, met by whom?

Is there anything the Steering Committee would do differently in terms of managing the project?

We are aware that you visited schools on 28/03/2014. What was the purpose of the visit and what was your learning?

Have you been involved in any of the cluster meetings? What was/is the purpose of these meetings?

In summary:

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

In your opinion, which is more beneficial for the student with EBD, other students, school community, support in the form of SNA hours or APP hours?

## **Tele-Interview Schedule: DES Personnel 3**

### **General Information:**

When did you commence working on Altered Provision Project (APP)?

What is your role?

What is your understanding of APP?

From the DES perspective, what is the thinking behind the development of APP?

What organisations are involved? What is their role? What is the constitution of the present steering committee?

From the perspective of the Steering Committee, how is the project being monitored?

Since you have become involved, has the management of the project changed?

### **Schools**

How are the schools supported? From your knowledge of schools involved, how are the APP hours being utilised?

Are all schools engaged in team teaching/in class support? What CPD is provided in these areas?

If individual schools did not engage in team teaching, how are the APP hours utilised?

What guidelines have been given to schools in terms of monitoring student outcomes?

What guidelines have been given to schools in terms of planning for APP hours?

In your view, how do schools perceive the purpose of APP?

### **Outcomes**

What outcomes do you envisage for APP?

Do you consider that the time the school is involved in the project has an impact on the outcomes of APP?

### **Cluster meetings**

What is the role of the cluster meetings?

Do you attend cluster meetings and what is your role at the cluster meetings?

From your involvement at the cluster meetings can you give us some examples of the learning that takes place?

**In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

In your opinion, which is more beneficial for the student with EBD, other students, school community, support in the form of SNA hours or APP hours?

## Tele-Interview Schedule: NCSE Personnel 1

### General Information:

What was your involvement in the APP?

What was the rationale for setting up the APP?

Does it differ from current NCSE policy? If so, how?

What was the role of NCSE in the APP?

What outcomes did you envisage for the APP from a NCSE perspective?

From the perspective of the Steering Committee, how has the project been monitored?

Is there anything the Steering Committee would do differently in terms of managing the project?

What was the purpose of the cluster meetings?

We are aware that you visited 2 schools with X on 28/01/2014. What was the purpose of the visit and what was your learning?

In summary:

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

In your opinion, which is more beneficial for the student with EBD, other students, school community, support in the form of SNA hours or APP hours?

## **Tele-Interview Schedule: NCSE Personnel 2**

### **General Information:**

What is your knowledge of Altered Provision Project (APP)?

What is your involvement in APP?

How were/are SENOs involved in APP?

Is there SENO representation on the Steering Committee?

What was/is your role?

### **Schools**

Why were certain schools selected for recruitment to APP?

Why did SENOs recommend APP to schools instead of SNA support?

How are the schools supported by SENOs in terms of APP?

From your knowledge of schools involved, how are the APP hours being utilised?

What guidelines have been given to schools in terms of planning for APP hours?

What guidelines have been given to schools in terms of monitoring student outcomes?

From the SENO perspective, what determines the retention of APP hours in any particular school?

In your view, how do schools perceive the purpose of APP?

Did APP result in any sensitivities around SNAs? Please explain your answer.

Did the involvement of SENOs in schools change because of APP?

### **Outcomes**

What outcomes do you envisage for APP?

### **Cluster meetings**

Do you attend cluster meetings and what is your role at the cluster meetings?

**In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

In your opinion, which is more beneficial for the student with EBD, other students, school community, support in the form of SNA hours or APP hours?

## **Tele-Interview Schedule: NBSS Personnel 1**

### **General Information:**

What is your knowledge of Altered Provision Project (APP)?

What is your involvement in APP?

How were/are NBSS involved in APP?

Is there NBSS representation on the Steering Committee?

### **Schools**

Did schools involved in APP seek support from NBSS?

In terms of the schools who sought support, what was the nature of this support?

How are the schools generally supported by NBSS in terms of APP?

Did the involvement of NBSS in schools change because of APP?

In your view, how do schools perceive the purpose of APP?

### **Outcomes**

What outcomes do you envisage for APP?

### **Cluster meetings**

Do you attend cluster meetings and what is your role at the cluster meetings?

### **In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

## Tele-Interview Schedule: ETB Personnel 1

### General Information:

When did you commence working on Altered Provision Project (APP)?

What is your role? (*Prompt: recruit, support, soft guidelines*)

What is your understanding of APP?

How did the ETB become involved?

Are you on the Steering Committee? If so, what is your role in the Steering Committee?

From the perspective of the Steering Committee, how is the project being monitored?

In your opinion, is there anything the Steering Committee could do differently in terms of managing the project?

### Schools

How are the schools supported? (*Prompt: NEPS, NBSS, CAMHS*)

From your knowledge of schools involved, how are the APP hours being utilised?  
(*Prompt: Behaviour management strategies...*)

Are all schools engaged in team teaching/in class support? Please explain your answer.

If individual schools did not engage in team teaching, how were the APP hours utilised?

What CPD is provided?

What guidelines have been given to schools in terms of monitoring student outcomes?

What guidelines have been given to schools in terms of planning for APP hours?  
(*Prompt: at school level, at class teacher level, at student level*)

In your view, how do schools perceive the purpose of APP?

Did APP result in any sensitivities around SNAs? Please explain your answer.

### Outcomes

What outcomes do you envisage for APP?

Do you consider that the time the school is involved in the project has an impact on the outcomes of APP? (*Prompt: at school level, at class teacher level, at student level*)

### **Cluster meetings**

What is the role of the cluster meetings?

Do you attend cluster meetings and what is your role at the cluster meetings?

From your involvement at the cluster meetings can you give us some examples of the learning that takes place?

### **In summary:**

1. In your view what are the strengths of the APP?
2. What are the benefits of the project?
3. What are the drawbacks of the APP?
4. In your opinion, what are the areas for development with the APP?

In your opinion, which is more beneficial for the student with EBD, other students, school community, support in the form of SNA hours or APP hours?

## Appendix 4: Coding

Schools	Principal	Students	Parents/ Guardians	APP Teacher	Other supporting staff (SEN Co-ordinator/ Pastoral Care Tutor/ Home Liasion Officer)	Other teachers – One of these subject areas randomly selected per school (Language, Maths, Practical)	SNA
A	Pr	S1 S2	P1 P2	APP1 APP2	SENCO	ST	SNA
B	Pr	S1 S2	P1 P2	APP	SENCO	ST	SNA
C	Pr	S		APP	SENCO	ST	SNA
D	Pr	S		APP	SENCO	ST	SNA
E	Pr	S1 S2	P1 P2	APP	SENCO	ST	
F	Pr	S	P	APP1 APP2 APP3	SENCO	ST	
G	Pr	S1 S2	P1 P2	APP	SENCO	ST	SNA
H	Pr	S1 S2	P1 P2	APP	SENCO	ST	SNA
I	Pr	S1	P1	APP1 APP2	SENCO HLO PC	ST1 ST2	SNA
J	Pr	S1 S2	P1 P2	APP	HLO	ST	SNA
K	Pr	S	P1 P2	APP	SENCO	ST	SNA
L	Pr		P	APP	SENCO	ST1 ST2 ST3	
M	Pr	S1 S2 S3	P1 P2	APP1 APP2	SENCO	ST	

For Example: (A, APP1) = School A, APP Teacher 1 M1

## Appendix 5: Summary of School Documentation Received

Project Documentation	School Documentation	Student Documentation	School Based Data collected as part of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of students in APP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interim report (dated March 2014) showing:</li> <li>• School profile</li> <li>• Timetable and contact hours</li> <li>• Methodologies and Resources</li> <li>• Case studies on 3 students</li> <li>• Staff comments re advantages and disadvantages of APP</li> <li>• Student comments</li> <li>• Parent comments</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of students in APP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team teaching questionnaire completed by 15 students (2<sup>nd</sup> class maths group)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions Policy</li> <li>• Special Educational Needs Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour contract</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEPS consultation record outlining actions agreed</li> <li>• Teacher notes on this meeting</li> <li>• Subject teacher and year head notes on incidents, observations and meetings with student</li> <li>• Blank samples of Record sheets</li> <li>• Timetables</li> </ul>

Project Documentation	School Documentation	Student Documentation	School Based Data collected as part of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Educational Needs Policy (Draft)</li> <li>• List of students in APP</li> <li>• Rationale for selection of students</li> <li>• APP plan for school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies and behavioural support plans for 6 students in APP</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• Admissions Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>• SEN policy</li> <li>• Inclusion Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEPs for 3 students</li> <li>• Assessment details on students</li> <li>• Details on CAMHS intervention</li> <li>• Attendance record for 1 student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document on another school's experiences in APP</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission Policy</li> <li>• Suspension and Expulsion Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Pastoral Care policy</li> <li>• Homework policy</li> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• SEN Policy</li> <li>• Anti-Bullying Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 IEP</li> <li>• 1 Behaviour Management Plan</li> <li>• Attendance record for 1 student</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEN Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Admissions Policy</li> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEPs for 5 students</li> <li>• Behaviour Plans for 5 students</li> <li>• Attendance records for 3 students</li> </ul>	

Project Documentation	School Documentation	Student Documentation	School Based Data collected as part of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Type, Enrolment, SEN Allocation</li> <li>• APP and related support including Positive Behaviour Liaison teacher</li> <li>• List of students in APP</li> <li>• Admissions Policy</li> <li>• Special Education Needs Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Child Protection Procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEPs for 2 students</li> <li>• Attendance Records for 2 students</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Type, Enrolment, SEN Allocation, other school supports</li> <li>• School Profile</li> <li>• List of students in APP</li> <li>• Enrolment Policy</li> <li>• Special Education Needs Policy</li> <li>• Behaviour Policy</li> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer Documents from Primary School</li> <li>• SEN Observations on 3 students</li> <li>• Individual Behaviour Plan for 1 student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PowerPoint given to school staff on APP (September 2015)</li> <li>• Interim report</li> <li>• APP Project Student Needs/Concern Identification Checklist</li> <li>• Examples of email updates to staff on students involved in APP</li> <li>• APP teacher feedback for staff</li> <li>• Notes from meeting with parent 1</li> </ul>

Project Documentation	School Documentation	Student Documentation	School Based Data collected as part of the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting learning for students with EBD: A post-primary initiative. Outline of parameters for a pilot project involving Co. Cork VEC, KES (Kerry VEC) and City of Cork VEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Type, Enrolment, SEN Allocation</li> <li>APP and related support</li> <li>List of students in APP</li> <li>Admissions Policy</li> <li>Special Educational Needs Policy</li> <li>Code of Behaviour</li> <li>Child Protection Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Profiles/ IEPs for 2 students</li> <li>Individual Behaviour Plan for 1 student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team Teaching Plan</li> <li>In class support Plan for class group and individual student</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Protection Policy and Procedures</li> <li>Code of Behaviour</li> <li>Admissions Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment details on four students involved in APP at the outset</li> </ul>	

Project Documentation	School Documentation	Student Documentation	School Based Data collected as part of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• Anti-bullying Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Enrolment/Admissions Policy (Draft)</li> <li>• Document on Challenging Behaviour: A Post-Primary, Whole School Approach</li> <li>• Document on the integration of Literacy and Numeracy across all subjects</li> <li>• Document on Bloom's Taxonomy</li> <li>• Document on Sen/ Resource Support</li> <li>• Document on Relevant DES Circulars</li> <li>• Subject Inspection Criteria</li> <li>• Statements of Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAT assessment</li> <li>• Profile (of sorts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Support/ Resource – Numeracy and Literacy Scheme of work</li> <li>• Effective Teaching Strategies Checklist (adopted from SESS Resource Materials)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting learning for students with EBD: A post-primary initiative. Outline of parameters for a pilot project involving Co. Cork VEC, KES (Kerry VEC) and City of Cork VEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of Students in APP</li> <li>• Ethos Statement</li> <li>• Admissions Policy (Draft)</li> <li>• SEN Policy</li> <li>• Anti-bullying Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour Policy</li> <li>• List of students with SEN</li> <li>• P-POD October Returns – Enrolment Summary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance Records</li> <li>• TOAD Checklist for APP students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Support File (Template)</li> </ul>

