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Challenging behaviour around challenging behaviour

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Abstract

Introduction: The United Kingdom's Department for Education's advice on behaviour focuses on the power of staff and the strength of the policy in challenging behaviour, via rules, sanctions and rewards. We designed a video-feedback intervention for staff teams in a special educational setting who were working with children with intellectual disability and challenging behaviour. The intervention aimed to raise reflective capacity on relational mechanisms that offer new response possibilities in everyday practices within trans-disciplinary teams.

Method: We conducted research with three teams (between five and seven participants in each). We report findings from two teams who were working with children (aged between 10 and 14) who staff identified as having behaviour that challenged. The intervention consisted of two video-feedback intervention sessions, using clips of good interactions between themselves and the child and a review. These sessions took place over three or four months. Qualitative analysis was conducted to analyse changes to the language and depictions of the children. Changes to the participants' goals during the intervention were also analysed.

Results: The staff's focus on the child's challenging behaviour reduced. Children who were originally depicted as isolated became depicted in relationship with peers and staff. Participants became more curious about the child and his interactions in the school and home environment. The participant's personal goals emerged through their understandings of what it meant to be *good*.

Conclusions: Working with staff teams using video feedback can change the interactions around the child and the relational conceptualisation of the child and family. Further adaptations to the intervention are needed to raise critical reflection on the concepts that circulate around 'behaviour' that structure policy and shape everyday practices.

KEYWORDS

challenging behaviour, intervention, relationships, special education, staff, trans-disciplinary, video feedback

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development showed how interactions outside and around the family had an impact on child development inside the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). He drew on *tangible* events in wider society to show child development as a function of systemic interactions. Shotter (2010, 2011), another systems theorist, drew attention to the influence of *intangible* elements going on around interactions within systems. He explored spontaneous interactions between people in organisational contexts to show how *living encounters* carry with them the clues to what is possible for responsive action in a given context. In other words, the knowledge of what is conceptually possible within a given context is tacit, but it becomes partially visible during the spontaneous responses to others' expressions. For Shotter, it is the *anticipation* of what might be possible or permissible that frames responses (2011). Thus, the thought forms in the milieu, circulating in cultures of practice, shape people's expectations and their corresponding responsive actions. So, exploring the milieu, or as Shotter (2011), might have framed it, what people are going on inside of, is at least as important as understanding what is going on inside of people. Researching cultures of practice around children and adults whose behaviour is challenging is a priority area for service improvement in the United Kingdom (Department of Health, 2014). A systemic perspective places equal emphasis to what is going on around the child as to what is going on inside the child. The latter has received more attention, to date, in research around children with intellectual disability and challenging behaviour (Hutchins et al., 2017; Losinski et al., 2016; Weston et al., 2017). In this paper, we present exploratory findings of our systemically orientated intervention for teams working in a special school around children whose behaviour was challenging sometimes.

The interactional web around the child contains more than verbal and non-verbal messages. According to Shotter's conceptualisation of *living encounters*, the interactional web contains clues, often partial and intangible, to the culturally specific concepts that shape beliefs about what it means to be *good*. The individual's personal biography fuels the imaginative resources used to vision and motivates movement towards *being*—being a good teacher, therapist, parent, etc. (Brockmeier, 2015). Researchers who use biographical narrative methods suggest that clues to what is of existential importance to individuals are found in the content and structure of their narratives. How the story is being told (i.e., the structure) yields as much insight into the social and material context of a person's perspective as what is being told (i.e., the content). Narrative analysis can add rigour to thematic analysis of group data gathered through conventional qualitative research methods such as focus groups (Ahmed et al., 2017). Narratologist, Michael Bamberg, focuses on the fleeting incidental telling of stories that occur inside longer sequences of dialogue or monologue (Bamberg, 2004). Drawing on the idea that identity is constantly re-negotiated through the narration of oneself; these 'small stories' provide a window on identities as they are coming into being and reveal how the individual is managing

the interplay between personal and social identities (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

In prior longitudinal exploratory intervention research, James et al. (2016) triangulated findings from traditional thematic qualitative analysis with micro stories embedded in transcripts from workers in a health/education and social care charity for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Thematic analysis of the participants' perspectives over the course of the intervention showed that they began to include the perspective of the children and adults in their descriptions of working life (James et al., 2015). A separate analysis of their micro narratives contained vivid depictions from their practice and their pictures also changed to include the service users. Small stories provide clues, often in the form of pictures expressed through metaphors, of the way that participants see the world. Changing pictures in the minds of teaching professionals has been suggested as a way to increase inclusion and participation of children in services (Bijleveld et al., 2015). Language is not used to create a carbon copy of meaning in another's mind (Shotter, 2011); rather our interactional dialogue, which includes the pictures we draw with words and colour in with our body, face and voice, plays a fundamental role in fixing and unfixing identities. Taking a dialogic perspective, looking beyond communication as message coding and decoding system, we sought to explore the interactional web around children whose behaviour was challenging, asking, 'What language (and pictures) is the child going on inside of?'

This systemic orientation can complement research rooted in the behavioural model (Hastings & Remington, 1994) where the focus on behaviour, its contingencies and reinforcers shapes a large body of research in mainstream education (Maggin et al., 2017; Mrachko et al., 2017). The attribution theory (Weiner, 1972) continues to frame studies in special educational contexts. Surveys of staff's attributions about children's behaviour, such as Erbas et al. (2010) are retrospective in nature and often only conducted with one group (usually staff). The focus on staff is found even in research motivated to explore the role of culture in preventing challenging behaviour (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2017) staff's individual skill and behaviour were the primary outcomes measured. Studies restricted to staff have obvious limitations to apply the research to the interactional realm where cultural concepts and structural positions interact to influence practice.

A recent study explored the culturally specific understanding of violence (Pihl et al. 2018). They looked at the conceptual underpinnings of challenging behaviour. Their study was rooted in the lived experience of workers in special schools and they used narrative analysis to highlight how the concept of violence infused participants' understandings of their work role, work place and work practices, including supervision and leadership. Their conceptual analysis provided a fresh orientation on the *concept* of violence and showed how it shaped everyday interactional encounters. Research in adult services on team culture and people with intellectual disability and challenging behaviour has long been theorised (Hastings & Remington, 1994) and also found (Knotter et al., 2013) to be a significant explanatory correlate of restrictive practices, (far larger than

individual staff characteristics such as experience, educational level or age). The reduction in restrictive practices remains a current relevant policy priority for adults and children's services (Department for Health, 2014). More research on how cultural concepts shape expectations and responses in collective and individual action is needed to inform systems' transformation. Whilst inductive thematic analysis with groups tell us something about themes in the practice context (as Pihl et al., above) and taking more than one perspective may expand understanding of the system, these methods cannot capture the uniqueness of the interactional encounter, which is where change is needed if systems are going to be transformed (Dougall et al., 2018). It is also where the potential for change is located (Shotter, 2010).

If we want to ask what the child is going on inside of without problematising or objectifying the people in the system, research needs to focus on the dialogue around children and their families. One way to do this whilst retaining a legitimate focus on staff's individual development is to use video recording of in-situ practice. Video review has been used in the field of intellectual disability to create space to consider resonance between micro moments of interaction and the meaning of the relationship and identities of the participants (Zijlmans, 2014). It can also provoke a dilemma between what is seen to be the case and what is believed to be the case and thus open new possibilities for the future, for the self and the other (James et al., 2013; Mezirow, 1991; Pilnick & James, 2013). Transforming perspective of the child is a key enabler or barrier to any child's development, but re-seeing the self may be a prerequisite to unfixing the picture of the other. Video review in teams provides the opportunity for individuals to explore their personal beliefs about what it means to be a good teacher. Their colleagues' responses provide clues to the micro-cultural interpretation of 'good teacher'. Rooting the review in interaction practices they recognise as evidence of being a good teacher provides opportunity for social and individual reflexivity. This has the potential to create or amplify the team's theory of practice.

The aim of the study was to explore the impact of a new video feedback intervention for staff teams from multiple disciplines who work with children with intellectual disability and behaviour that was challenging. The intervention consisted of two half-day video coaching sessions and a one-hour team review session. The intervention gave the teams the opportunity to see themselves in relation to each other and to a child they all worked with. This created the conditions for them to re-appraise their perspectives of themselves, each other, the child and family as well as their collective identity and the beliefs (or theories) shaping their practices. The exploratory nature of the research and the dialogic theoretical premise shaped the design of this study and the analytical methods. The intervention was designed to create the conditions for moments of living responsiveness that would prompt this re-appraisal. Our research goal was to capture these moments and explore the participants' responses within the intervention sessions, thus generating research findings from the teams' unfolding dialogue (not from retrospective interviews or focus groups after the intervention). We conducted a thematic analysis

to provide a rich description of the entire dataset. This theory-free approach to analysis, was especially relevant given the exploratory nature of the research and the aim to explore the participant's perspectives of this new intervention (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We also conducted an analysis of the participant's micro stories which contained the actual or imagined dialogue they used to evidence the reason for their perspectives or beliefs. This combination of analytical approaches coheres with our epistemological premise that the construction of meaning through dialogic interactions with others and with the artefacts in the milieu such as policies and practice conventions, constitute the social domain where narratives, and the concepts contained therein capable of generating renewed perspectives about the self and other, are created. The goals of this initial paper are to provide a rich description of the intervention and address the broad research question asking, how do staff's perspectives of themselves, the child and family change during the course of it.

2 | METHOD

We present data from a small-scale exploratory intervention research study drawing on datasets from two multi-disciplinary teams in a special school in the United Kingdom (UK).

2.1 | The school context

The school had a trans-disciplinary model where education and therapy staff worked together in the classrooms on shared child-centred goals. The value of the team approach was captured in the mantra *there's no 'I' in team*. The individuality of each child, however, was central to the school's mission to support children's wellbeing, functional communication and independence. Development was regularly monitored and the findings used as a basis for team-based inquiry and child-centred planning. The collective ownership of children's outcomes and the systemic focus on improvement through a culture of inquiry meant that working on challenging behaviour by challenging the team's perspective of themselves, each other, and the child was conceptually permissible at the school.

2.2 | Ethics

The study was reviewed and approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at Northumbria University in the United Kingdom.

Participant inclusion in the study was on the basis that the employees of the school worked in a team where a child was presenting a significant challenge. The senior leaders at the school determined the identification of the teams for inclusion. All staff who were eligible for inclusion received written information about the study. Consent was conducted by a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team.

A senior leader also managed informed consent of parents and carers which was necessary in order for the child to be

video-recorded by staff participants. The staff participants managed the child's assent for participation; they were able to explain the research to the child and gauge responses with validity.

2.3 | Participants

Eight staff participated in this study. They were working in two teams across Key Stage Three (children aged 11 to 14 years) and Key Stage Four (14 to 16 years). (The intervention was piloted with a team from Key Stage Two (8 and 11 years) for the purposes of intervention refinement. No research data from this team were used in the construction of the findings for this report.) The team from Key Stage Three is referred to as Team A and the team from Key Stage Four is Team B. All participants were employed by the school either in teaching roles (teachers or teaching assistant roles) or in professions allied to health (occupational, physio or speech and language therapists). Further detail on participants and the teams A and B are in Table 1. We did not set out to explore the potential impact of years of experience or professional qualification or educational level in this study, so we did not collect data on the participants' years of experience in role or in employment in the school. However, for descriptive purposes we can report that there was a wide range of years of experience in role (from newly qualified to near retirement) and in length of service in the school (newly employed to over 30 years of employment). Not all staff who were eligible for inclusion in the research chose to participate. One participant in Team B left the school's employment during the study.

It was not necessary nor beneficial to collect personal details about the child or the family at the outset of the study (see further justification of this position in the intervention description). The researchers had the child's first name, sex and age in years at the start of the study, and a minimal description of the behaviour that was challenging.

2.4 | Procedure

The research was conducted in the school during 2015 and 2016. The findings presented in this paper are from the video-review

sessions (Session 1 and Session 2) and the final review session (Session 3). The video-review sessions were around 2.5 hours, the review session was an hour and the participating staff members attended all sessions together. All sessions took place in the afternoon and straddled the end of the school day. These elements constitute *the intervention*. The intervention took place over three months and sometimes spanned two school terms. The first author, who was an accredited practitioner, supervisor and trainer in Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) (Kennedy, 2011) led all intervention sessions. A separate review with parents/carers and the child was offered with the first author, but it was not recorded for research purposes.

The intervention sessions were audio recorded and orthographically transcribed to provide a verbatim transcript of all the verbal utterances. Field notes were taken by the third named author of this paper who attended all intervention sessions for Team A and the Review Session for Team B. Reflective notes were made by the first author after all the sessions. These notes were part of the research record and provided additional context for the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The findings presented in this paper are from the intervention, that is the two video-review sessions and the final review, referred to as Session 1, Session 2 and Session 3 below.

2.5 | The intervention

The intervention was based on the principles of an established family intervention, Video Interaction Guidance (Kennedy et al., 2011) and its sister intervention, Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP), which focuses on workforce development (Kennedy et al., 2015). Like VIG, the adapted intervention works through a strengths-based relational lens. The main organising structure in VIG and VERP is the establishment of a *desired* goal for a relationship or set of relationships. In VIG, the interventionist, or guider, establishes that goal with a single person or couple. The guider then takes video footage of the relationship within the situated practice (i.e., the family home) and edits the footage to find moments where the desired goal is achieved, partly achieved, or has elements that indicate development towards the goal. In summary, there were two main departures from the VIG/VERP model.

Number of participants	Participants' roles	Key stage	Child gender
Team A			
Four	Class teacher (N = 1) PT (N = 2) OT (N = 1)	Three (11–14 years)	Male
Team B			
Four (reducing to three)	Class teachers (N = 2) TA (N = 1) SLT (N = 1)	Four (14–16 years)	Male

TABLE 1 Description of teams

Abbreviations: OT, Occupational Therapist; PT, Physiotherapist; SLT, Speech/language Therapist; TA, Teaching Assistant.

1. The new intervention focused on developing *teams'* reflective practices, not developing reflexivity in groups of people as in Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP). The new approach focused on one child, who all team members worked with. Unlike VERP, where practitioners reflect on their individual and often unrelated work. This approach was designed for teams who worked closely with each other on a daily basis. In the adapted intervention, we worked with the *team's goal* for the child's development and focused on individual participant's goals.
2. VIG has a set of attunement principles that are used to guide the editing of video recordings from situated practice. These attunement principles were not used in this intervention. Instead, the team's understanding of the child and his ways of communicating and/or expressing happiness, learning or wellbeing was the basis for video editing. This led to much greater use of the team's expertise by the facilitator who had to rely on their understanding of the child to edit video footage.

2.5.1 | Session 1

The main aim for Session 1 was to provide a positive and developmental experience of the intervention. We used video recording, video editing and team-based video review. This was achieved in the following activities led by the facilitator (the first author).

1. Identification of a personal goal for each team member and the team goal for the child.
2. Setup and recorded a team conversation about the child's assent and video recording.
3. Edited the recording of the team conversation to find a successful interaction linked to each participant's personal goal.
4. Reviewed a video edit of each participant's interactional strength.
5. Explored the team's perspective on how the child would likely show he was experiencing a successful interaction with teachers, peers, parents etc.
6. Created an action plan on practicalities of ethical assent and video recording in school.

The video editing was conducted by the facilitator in a separate room. During this time, the team discussed their perspective on the child's communicative responses to successful interactions and had refreshments. After a break, each participant saw a clip from the videoed conversation of an interactional strength linked to their personal goal. For example, one participant wanted to be better at communicating concisely so the facilitator edited a clip of him talking concisely. This video clip was reviewed by the team. This led to a wider conversation about the participant's impact on team interactions and their intra-team and extra-team relationships. The final action plan (activity 6 above) drew on activity 5 to guide the teams in taking video recordings in school. This meant they used their understanding of the children to create and record

successful interactions. The team communicated with the facilitator about the child's assent and the completion of recordings after Session 1.

Due to scheduling constraints, we split Session 1 into two shorter sessions for Team A. As well as this structural difference, one substantive change was made for Team B in Session 1. Over the course of the research, the first author was conducting similar work under an honorary clinical contract in the National Health Service. During clinical supervision, the question of whether the participants were viewed as a collective or as a collection of individual learners arose. To highlight interdependencies in the team, a single clip from the group conversation was used to show each participant's strength in Team B. In Team A, the participants' strengths were edited from different parts of the group's recorded conversation.

2.5.2 | Session 2

The main aim for Session 2 was to explore and develop the team's perspectives through consideration of their interactions with the child using video review. The session consisted of the following activities.

1. Reviewed the child's assent and checked the completion of video recordings.
2. Reviewed each participant's goals, exploring evidence for changed perspectives of themselves and others.
3. The team discussed action learning objectives for their team goal for the child.
4. Edited the participants' video recordings of themselves interacting with the child.
5. Reviewed the video edits.
6. Explored the team's perspective on how the child signalled his response to successful interactions with teachers, peers, parents etc.

At Session 2, each participant came with a recording of themselves with the child. As in Session 1, the editing was conducted during a break in the middle of session. The facilitator worked in a separate room and during this time, participants discussed their action learning objectives for the child (activity 3 above). Recordings varied in length from 2 to 30 min, but most were between 5 and 8 min long (see James, et al., 2012). Video editing was necessarily rapid. After the break, each participant saw a clip of themselves having a positive impact on the child (using the team's framework for successful interactions). Where possible, this strength was linked to participant's personal goals.

2.5.3 | Review session

Session 3 reviewed the team's perspective of the intervention. We explored participant's development towards personal goals, their team goal and the effects of their changes on the child. Video was not used.

TABLE 2 Key themes

Theme	Team A Session 1	Team A Session 2	Team A Session 3	Team B Session 1	Team B Session 2	Team B Session 3
Perceptions of the child						
Child's presentation						
Peers						
Working with child						
Team working						
Time constraints						
Reflexivity						
Rules and rewards						
Physical environment						
Home environment						
Prior school experiences						

Note: Shaded boxes show where the theme was present in the transcripts.

The mother of the child in Team B attended a parent review with the first author prior to Session 3. Several video clips of the staff working with her son were shared and we discussed her view of the intervention and its effects on her child. She said which parts of our discussion could be shared with the team. Session 3 differed, therefore, with respect to the inclusion of the mother's perspective in Team B.

2.6 | Analysis

All three authors of this manuscript were involved in the analysis of the data. The positions of the authors varied on the insider–outsider continuum (Corbin et al., 2009). The first author of this paper was a governor at the school with special responsibility for leadership and behaviour. The second author was the commissioner of the research and was Head of Education and Head Teacher of the school. The third author had no links with the school other than through the research. They brought different research and practice expertise to the analysis of the dataset. The first author had over a decade of practice using video review interventions for public sector workforce development. The second author had detailed knowledge of the culture, policies and practices in the school and the region. The third author had longstanding research experience using case study methods in education and social care contexts.

A primary analytical objective was to explore the effects of the intervention through the participant's attributions of change and, where possible, to use their micro narratives to present the findings, focusing particularly on changed perspectives of themselves, their work as a team and their view of the child and family. We conducted a thematic analysis in line with the procedure set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). It was exploratory, in that we applied an inductive analysis, constructing codes according to the content of the participants' talk. However, the theoretical proposition for the intervention regarding change and our epistemological stance prioritising the dialogic

construction of meaning perspectives meant the thematic analysis was also theoretical and analyst driven (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Our underpinning proposition that changing narratives (including pictures) around the child and family would lead to positive changes in behaviour meant that we looked for links between the intervention and the changes in participant's view of the child and family. The inductive themes are classified here as basic themes, the perspective change as our global theme and the links between changed perspectives and the intervention process are our organising themes.

Familiarisation with the data was the first step. Verbatim transcripts from Team A and Team B, which consisted of seven transcripts (four from Team A and three from Team B), were read in a two-day data workshop. Initial impressions on the codes and themes related to change were noted by all the authors and two research associates. The first and third authors then worked more closely with the data over several months and developed the structure for the analysis. Codes were generated using an inductive, semantic approach to the data (largely conducted by the third author), and then, data extracts were collated for those codes. Our intent to explore perspective change structured the thematic framework. This structure did not preclude the coding of other prevalent or salient content in the data. In addition, the first author conducted a separate analysis of all micro stories to ensure that the participant's interactional evidencing of their beliefs (contained in the micro stories) was used to figure and interpret the themes. The micro-story analysis used all instances where participants relived or enacted scenes from their daily work, recounting the speech of themselves or others. In prior research, we showed that themes derived from these micro stories validated thematic findings from inductive coding of an entire longitudinal dataset (James et al., 2016). To identify *perspective change*, the themes were tabulated by intervention session. Data that demonstrated the essence of the sub-theme were selected for inclusion in these tables and selection of exemplifying data extracts led to further refinements. Where possible, these data extracts contained participant's quoted speech/micro stories.

2.7 | Findings

The themes from inductive coding of the participant's verbal utterances during the intervention sessions are in Table 2.

2.7.1 | Basic themes

Thematic differences between the teams and over time were explored. With respect to the theme, *Physical Environment*, Team A had two physiotherapists and a teacher who was also an amateur sports coach. They often used sports metaphors (e.g., *getting across the line*) or physical metaphors (e.g., *baby steps*). The participant's personal interests in physical development could explain why *Physical Environment* was a theme in Team A and not in Team B.

Time Constraints was a prevalent theme in Team B, but it never occurred in Team A. The issue of time was a key part of the most senior participant's personal goal. She wanted to use the intervention to help re-establish her identity as a teacher, which she felt had been eroded by the time she had devoted to becoming a manager. The other teacher and the teaching assistant also referred to time as a constraint in Session 1 when the goals were set. Based on closer examination of the reflective session notes as well as further analysis of the transcripts, our interpretation is that the teacher/manager's seniority meant the attribution of time as a barrier in the performance of her educator identity permitted the uptake of it by the other educators in the team. This finding and interpretation arose through analysis after the intervention was complete. So, it was not possible to make the most of the heterogeneity of hierarchy and perspective within the intervention sessions themselves (see Clavering & McLaughlin, 2007).

The child's *Prior School Experiences* was a theme in Session 3 for Team B. This was related to the child's relatively recent admission to the school; however, the fact that this theme only emerged in Session 3 was noteworthy given the active exploration of the team's understanding of the child as part of the intervention in Session 1 and Session 2. A closer examination of this surprising finding is below.

Changes to team's perspectives

Themes that arose from the analysis of the micro stories were triangulated with findings from the whole dataset and this guided the selection of data extracts to exemplify the thematic findings of change in Team A (Table 3) and Team B (Table 4). An interpretation of these basic themes is provided in the final column of each table.

2.7.2 | Organising themes

We now turn to consider how *change*, our global theme, was entwined with the intervention process.

Individual goal setting and monitoring was a key component of the intervention. The main mechanism for developing goals was through

the use of video editing and review of interactional strengths. So first, it is important to note that at the beginning participants found it challenging to see and hear themselves on video. However, they quickly became comfortable enough to see beyond their appearance or behaviours, to see and think about the connections between themselves and the child. The participants distinguished the intervention from other ways of working. One participant described the process as *'surreal'*. It was like being *'naked almost'* and *'egoless'*, and he concluded that *'leaving your ego at the door is hard'*. The individual goals were a way of making the idealised future concrete and possible. They were used to guide the selection of video edits for review, but they were also a starting point for participants to articulate their understanding of themselves and the enactment of their idealised self. The proposition was that the processes of self-renewal would open the possibility for renewed perspective of the other.

2.7.3 | Individual goals—Team A

One participant's goal at the outset had been to be less of a people pleaser. After watching video footage in Session 1, she concluded lack of confidence might be a problem, not that she was a people pleaser. The video review drew her attention to the interaction between context, self-narratives and her own beliefs. A similar reframing occurred for another participant whose initial goal was to be a better communicator. After video review of himself and with reflection between sessions, he concluded that he was not as bad a communicator as he had previously thought. He recognised that he often paused to give himself time to think of what to say, and that he was more thoughtful in how to communicate and explain things. A third team member changed her communication, saying that she no longer talked over people as much in meetings, and for this participant, the video review sessions also brought about a new way of framing herself and the child; she realised that she and the child were in the same team. This individual's shift is indicative of what appeared to be a core underlying perspective transformation across the team as indicated in Table 3. The participants were beginning to see themselves and the child as inhabitants of the same world. One participant commented on a video of her colleague interacting with the child, saying that it was *'nice'* because it almost made him an equal with the child *'tending with him rather than shadowing over him'*. In this quote, the sports metaphor (a facet of Team A's way of seeing the world) was replaced by a horticultural one. The extension of this ecological perspective into understanding of their role is resonant with the changes seen in Table 3. Not only do they develop much greater awareness of the environment and how it impinges on the child (see *Physical Environment*), but also they see the child through those conditions (e.g., *Perspective on Child*) and enact changes to their practices, accordingly (e.g., *Rewards and Sanctions*).

The quotes in column one of Table 3 exemplify a team, who at the outset made definitive statements about the child's character traits, parental inadequacies and the need for consistency in their

TABLE 3 Change over time: Team A

Theme	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Notes on Change
Perceptions of child	<i>He is a very challenging boy</i>	<i>He likes to be in control</i>	<i>He is mainstream</i>	Child becomes seen as a 'regular' teenager or as an insider
Child's presentation	<i>When he's in a bit of a negative spiral ... his body language changes ... you see much more of a slumped posture. The hood is up</i>	<i>... you don't see any lack of touching when you've got music on</i>	<i>He likes heavy-beating music. It's acting as something which is going to help him internally, as well as externally block stuff out</i>	An assets-based approach is used—practice observations are used to find strategies to support the child in his environment
Working with child	<i>There's so much of a pull against us, from his inconsistency and how much sleep he's had ... and what exposure he's had ... whatever we put in place doesn't always work</i>	<i>We were proud of him, and I think he knew that</i>	<i>Making it something that he's motivated to engage in is a really good way of, like, starting a conversation with him</i>	Move from being restricted by external conditions which were barriers to work to becoming more active insiders who have worked out how to be in interaction with the child
Team working	<i>I think the one thing we do need is consistency between the four of us. Because that is something he does pick up on. If there isn't that, it makes him more anxious and craving control</i>	<i>We all bring to [child's name] a kind of philosophy, if you like</i>	<i>It's increased the volume of communication between us ... I think we're all more aware that we've got this common understanding and consistent approach between where he is and ... the whole... need for him to be successful</i>	Move away from the need for consistency in behaviour to an understanding that consistency of approach is underpinned by a philosophy of practice
Reflexivity	<i>I think it's just made me more mindful of how I communicate ... And I think ... when you're more attuned to it, it actually gives you a little bit of a shock</i>	<i>I think whatever you're doing, or whatever, you know, you're trying to teach, it's about the implicit stuff... not the outcome or necessarily the... you know, it's the page that you're offering, sort of, in totality, really</i>	<i>... it is more about us than ... it is about [child's name]. Obviously he's in the centre of it. But it's made us think about more how we together, affect [child's name]. Rather than managing [child's name]'s behaviour</i>	Focus shifts from thinking about the child's behaviour to thinking about the network of relationships that are provided around the child and how much that affects him
Rules and rewards	<i>I maintained the control through the sticker thing—which he buys into</i>	<i>He used to have a CD that was designed for him by a support assistants as a reward</i>	<i>Are you talking about using music as a reward?</i>	Use of rewards and sanctions does not change, but there is a move towards finding rewards that are intrinsically motivating to the child
Peers	<i>I don't see him socialising with other children</i>	<i>And [child's Name], for someone who doesn't like working with people, responds really well to being in a pair</i>	<i>He now takes part in a full session. That's working with a partner, which he's motivated by</i>	Child becomes seen as sociable—interacting with peers
Physical environment	<i>That's him trying to control the environment ... and where he is... in that environment. It's the same with the hood, the coat</i>	<i>But, when he's having a good spell ... you know, he can block out things in the environment which he's unsettled by</i>	<i>Well, if he can have an MP3 from the taxi in ... and we'll monitor whether that reduces his anxiety</i>	Learning through responsive action and generating new ways of structuring the child's physical environment to support his well-being

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Theme	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Notes on Change
Home environment	<i>I think the gains that he has made in school, and the structure that's offered to him, is not there at home ... I wouldn't say he de-learns at home, but ... I'm not sure how much influence we could have for home time</i>	<i>Though we try and educate her about certain things, they're ingrained because of past experience that she's had and the way she's been brought up. And she's very defensive</i>	<i>She has our full support—without a doubt. Because she does have a... difficult life ... The behaviours that he has displayed in the past in school, and still does to this day, she has all of this at home. A mirror image of all those behaviours ... Because it's never been communicated to us, ever, before</i>	Initial certainty about the home environment replaced by increased curiosity about how things are at home and increased compassion for the child's mum

management of him. Perspectives softened on themselves and on the child and family. The team began to create a theory of practice, drawn from an increased understanding of the environmental conditions for development, which replaced their previous handling or management practices that focused on problem behaviours (at school and at home).

2.7.4 | Individual goals—Team B

In Team B, the goals were largely associated with role identities and were all 'other' as well as self-focused. One teacher's goal concerned the reclaiming of her teacher's identity, which she said, she would recognise through having informal interactions with children. In the Review Session, she gave evidence of having reclaimed her teacher identity by talking about how she took time to engage with the child, chatting in the corridor and she gave interactional evidence for this, acting out the conversation that she had or imagined she might have with the child. (Further examples are provided in the next section). The speech and language therapist's goal centred on being more child directed in her work. In the review, she relived a scene from practice, depicting herself successfully letting go of her own agenda and following the child's objectives. Another teacher's goal was to seek information from others. He said, '*We try to always do it as part of our job, but I guess it could be something I could do more often*'. He went on to say that he found communicating verbally less labourousome than reading reports and this self-knowledge emerged in the discussion of his goal as if it were new knowledge. Between Sessions 1 and 2, he 'quizzed' the Teaching Assistant about the child. Based on his findings, he prepared a new English scheme around the child's interests, which led to a significant change in the quantity and quality of the child's academic work and a concomitant change in his relationship with the child.¹ In the review, the participant said the intervention had taught him to go to his colleagues a bit more to find out about children's likes and dislikes. The simplicity of this

statement belies the development he made and the impact it had on the child and his practice. This teacher's goal was already other focused, but his working out *how* to be more other focused led to rapid changes to his practice meeting, as it turned out, his core frustration of not being able to teach the child in a way that meant the child fulfilled the teacher's high expectations of him.

Team B shared a professional vision from the outset. They enjoyed being able to look back at things in the first video session, '*Unpicking it*', valuing the opportunity to use the video to evaluate the restrictions created through the lens of expectation, '*You build a picture rather than looking at what actually happened, you make excuses for why a behaviour happened*'. Despite this level of reflexivity in the team, their initial framing of the child was restricted to his negative traits, which centred on his inconsistency and fear of failure. He was a child who needed micro-management. As can be seen in Table 4, their view of the child changed and they began to enjoy working with him and working him out.

Summary

The articulation of individual goals with video review of situated practice was critical in provoking changed perspectives in both teams' individual and team identities. Both teams developed a theory for change rooted in practice, a priority for inclusive education (see Nilholm, 2020). Seeing themselves and the child as inhabitants of the same world and seeing their development entwined with the child emerged as fundamental themes. In the next section, we demonstrate the most prominent outcomes in their changed perspectives, explore *how* these changes were narrated by participants and consider the intervention elements that fostered them.

2.7.5 | Narratives of the children's behaviour

The teams were not explicitly asked for descriptions of the child's challenging behaviour rather the explicit request was for descriptions of how the child expressed feelings of happiness, engagement etc. Nevertheless, both teams described the child's inconsistency as a challenge in Session 1. The child's underlying anxiety, fear and

¹In a later Ofsted inspection, this specific example of teaching practice was highlighted as nationally outstanding.

TABLE 4 Change over time: Team B

Theme	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Notes on Change
Perceptions of child	He's very inconsistent	He has such a huge fear of failure	He was a totally different child on a one-to-one ... without the bravado	More positive picture of the child emerged as the team theorised the reasons for his way of being
Working with child	We micromanage every second of his day	The silence—he couldn't cope with it. And he would struggle even more	I think when we've slowed things down and changed how we are with him, I think he's then opened up a little bit	Greater insight on how to improve interactions emerged through trialling different strategies and observing their impact
Team working	We do work pretty well as a team, a lot of the time... it's been quite nice to reflect on that a little bit		We had a new male member of staff come into the department ... And I think it's been useful, doing the work, to be able to show him... Or to kind of direct him in how best to work with [Name].	Although they started out with a strong sense of team, collective knowledge became translatable to colleagues outside their own team
Reflexivity	In our jobs we're fairly used to looking at, 'right, that either went really well or really not so well. What on earth happened?' And, like, looking back. But not necessarily at that level of detail. And, ... It's only ever from our perspective	It gives you a different perspective of them and helps you understand that maybe there's different inroads to trying to get your main objective done	And, actually, probably reflecting on that, I got a bit cross with him this morning. He probably just couldn't do it	Development of a meta-discourse on the role of reflexivity in developing working practices with the child so that reflexivity becomes part of the relational dynamic—not just an individual mechanism for retrieval of practice highlights
Rules and rewards	I kind of have to be the one to keep him in when he hasn't done stuff. And, so I ... deliver, like, the punishment	And there were, kind of, very few consequences, because he just wouldn't do those anyway. 'Well, I'm not staying in at break'.	I've just had him in over lunchtime ... [it was] a success, despite the fact it was a punishment	Rules and rewards concept does not change, but management of boundaries with the child is more effective
Peers	He has a very small bank of peers which he would perceive as being on his wavelength	It's unfortunate that his close peers are right at the top. They're the top dogs.	I think it's made it easier for him to make friends, generally. And especially with people that he used to clash with	An extended friendship group emerged as a result of relational work with the child
Home environment	We know that there's difficulties at home	I would never have thought that he was desperate to spend time with his mum, because he doesn't come across like that		Certainty about the home environment is replaced by appreciation of what is not known
Previous school experiences		I know that he had a horrid experience in school, and I know that he refused to go. But I don't know what those experiences were	But he doesn't want to go as far as he did in the past. I think he would be devastated with himself if anything happened here (talking about challenging behaviour)	Greater appreciation of the impact of previous experiences as able to theorise on behalf of the child about his challenging behaviour and the responses to it
Time constraints	... the management stuff can't take over. Because then you lose the... personal bit of teaching—the knowing them, the understanding, the knowing when they walk through the door that something is wrong. And I think I've lost that a bit recently	That, kind of, moment of, 'no, no—I don't have time to do this... And then afterwards I thought, 'I probably could've dealt with that differently'	I think it's... probably more, I feel, than anything... It's... Well, it's time. It's taking your time	Perception of time changes from a constraint in the environment and something that was associated with negative feelings of work role and performance, to time being something of a solution for how to work well with the child — practice became about giving time

Note: Department for Health (2014).

phobias were the most prominent areas of discussion in Team A (we refer to this child as Adam). In Team B, the child's fear of failure, defiance and opposition were recurring themes (we refer to this child as Carl). In the review session, both teams elaborated on the child's behaviour and both teams gave more vivid depictions of the challenge through the telling of micro stories.

In the following quote, one participant from Team A told a micro story, which showed how Adam's anxieties impacted on life at home.

He was getting ready for school one morning a couple of weeks ago, and his shoe happened to be touching the cuff of his coat sleeve. And there was... he wouldn't put his coat on, would he? He wouldn't put his coat on. It was a bitterly cold day, and there was this huge episode of heightened anxiety which became stressful for Adam obviously first and foremost, and obviously his mum. And the taxi was waiting for him, and it was school time and...

The participant's use of adjectives (bitterly cold and hugely stressful) and the repetition of, 'he wouldn't put his coat on', co-ordinated by the colloquialism 'would he', amplify the stress of the event and created a sense of empathy for Adam's mum in particular. This micro story, ending with a cascade of similarly difficult episodes that trail off into infinity (see Frank, 2013) conveys the participant's familiarity with family life and expresses the ongoing and likely enduring nature of the difficulties. His colleague Anna also recounted an episode that took place in a medical appointment between Adam and his mum. Anna, who was not present in the appointment, played the part of Adam and mum.

His mum had said, 'tell the doctor about the fact that I had to wash your coat because somebody had touched it'. 'You didn't wash my coat'. 'Adam, I put it in the washer just last night'. 'I didn't ask you to do that. Nobody touched my coat'.

Anna's enactment conveys empathy for the mother's perspective. It also reveals the intimacy of her knowledge of the mother/child relationship. Through re-living and re-imagining the exchange, she provided interactional evidence of the deeper understanding of family life that Team A said was one of the main outcomes of the intervention. This exemplifies how we examined the structure of participant's speech, that is by an analysis of quoted speech, and the content of the participant's speech in the construction and exemplification of themes.

Participants from Team B also enacted the voice of the child in micro stories at the Review Session. Gail, the teacher/manager recounted an event that happened earlier that day.

He said to me at lunchtime, 'I wouldn't have come and sat and done this homework with you. I would've just kicked off and then they would've put me in the

calming room and I would never have had to do it ...'
But I couldn't imagine him kicking off.

Putting herself into Carl's voice, Gail puts herself into his history and this interaction provides evidence for her belief—that he is actually incapable of 'kicking off'. It also depicts an informal exchange between them, which despite its fleetingness, contains information about the scale of the change. She went on to elaborate with further comparative descriptions of the past and the present.

He'll talk about it. He'll be like, 'Oh, I used to get frustrated and so they would put, like, three guys... And there would be, like, one person with their knee... their knee in my back and...'. And I know that he has a tendency to slightly elaborate, but some of the things that he's said have been also written down.

This micro story vividly highlights the changes in Carl's behaviour, which Gail attributes to the changes in his school placement. However, in these quotes Gail also combined her way of knowing as a teacher (through these informal interactions) and her way of knowing as a manager (through written records). She went on, tentatively to, wonder what had gone on in Carl's past.

And the experiences that he had... I know that he had a horrid experience in school, and I know that he refused to go. But I don't know what those experiences were. And I don't know how he would've been in maths. What his English teacher was like. All those things, isn't it? That, actually, is there a reason that he's more standoffish with you? Is it because of past experiences, you know? Is there...? Is there something else?

In this quote, Gail expressed the priority she places on the knowledge gained through child/teacher interactions compared with knowledge gained by what she has been told or read about his history. She developed a deeper interest in understanding Carl's way of being through interactions with him. She finds new ways of imagining his past and its relationship with the present, and her curiosity opened this topic for group discussion. As shown in Table 2, it was a prevalent theme, but only in the Review Session. Gail's curiosity was in marked contrast to her depiction of Carl in Session 1 where he was described as, 'a minimum' in the following exchange with the facilitator.

Gail: You would have to scaffold it. Because he's a minimum, isn't he?

Facilitator: He's a minimum?

Gail: He's a minimum. 'I'm going to put the minimum amount down'

Gail's perspective on Carl changed from fixed to unfixed, from categorisation according to a behavioural trait to a child whose behaviour

could be shaped through relational interactions. Her response to the video with Carl in Session 2 appears to have opened the possibility of seeing him differently. That video clip was a 30 s interaction of her successfully engaging him in a challenging mathematical problem. Gail's response to the clip is below.

It was a nice... it was a nice moment with Carl actually, because I so rarely get those moments with just Carl, because generally, he shuts down. If he got it wrong, he would've gone... in a class situation he would've gone... in a class situation, he would've gone, 'I can do that. I don't need to do it'. But there, he took it on board, because it was just me and him. There was no bravado.

The hesitation and dysfluency of her speech indicate the newness of her thinking as she responds to the clip. She is searching for reasons for the success, which are clearly resonant with her depiction of the idealised teacher whose success is rooted in informal interactions with children. We think that seeing herself being a 'good teacher' enabled her to see Carl as teachable. The strengths-based editing and review of the video recording enabled her to see how she could bypass his fear of failure.

Summary

Our analytical approach was informed by the proposition that quoting the speech of others, whether those words were real or imagined, provides interactional evidence for the speaker's beliefs (Clift, 2006). We used that analytical method to highlight the most prominent changes in the teams' perspectives. These were increased empathic perspective on the child and family in Team A and greater self-belief in their ability to overcome the child's history and fear of failure in Team B. These new perspectives were accompanied by new theories of practice. By design, our approach prioritised working with the teams' knowledge to create equality in the mobilisation of expert knowledge between facilitator and team (Heritage, 2012). This active engagement with the team's knowledge, coupled with the strengths-based video editing of situated practice created team reflexivity on practice and with it the potential for sustained and generalised change.

3 | DISCUSSION

In this study, both teams changed their perspectives on children they were finding challenging. At the start of the intervention, the child and family were objects (predominantly negatively depicted). The depictions of the children and their families became more positive over time, making these findings comparable to prior research from a similar service context (James et al., 2015). As in prior research, increasing staff's positive feelings towards the beneficiaries of the service went hand in hand with increased intent to understand them, listen to their 'voice' and make reasonable adjustments for their

inclusion in and benefit from services. These elements are so important in quality service provision that they are specifically monitored in the UK by the Care Quality Commission in reviews of health and care services that have a propensity to create closed cultures and associated abuses of power (Quality Care Commission, 2019).

As the intervention progressed, the child was no longer seen as the problem, but neither had the 'problem' disappeared. In fact, the micro-story analysis showed that the problem had become more visible as it was taken out of the child, positioned in a space like the medical room or the family hallway, and placed where it could also be shared. In both teams, the pictures painted of the child at the outset were of isolated figures, but at the review, the children were depicted interacting with others. As well as evidencing enhanced social communication for the children, these depictions may simply signify an enhanced sensitivity to the interactional practice afforded by the intervention. As noted, the school placed a high priority on children's communication. It was one of only three elements of the school's overarching philosophy and this paved the way for the pilot study. Yet, by giving participants a personal experience of development through dialogic inquiry this intervention appears to have narrowed the gap between the school's philosophy and its practice. It influenced informal interactions and formal educational practices, thus creating a link between internal practices and outcomes that the school's external bodies use in commissioning specifications and inspection protocols. Creating coherence between informal practice and external expectations is an area of emerging research in leadership and culture change in the field of intellectual disability (Deveau et al., 2019). When we choose to see through a systemic lens, addressing challenging behaviour legitimises the consideration of interactions across the whole system, the rationale for which has been clearly demonstrated in the enduring legacy of Bronfenbrenner's seminal work (1979).

Did the language around the child change? Whilst we did not directly investigate this outside the intervention, the pictures and perspectives of the children did change and interaction practices that have the potentiality to sustain more nuanced, multi-perspectival understanding of the children were clearly operating in both teams by the end of the intervention.

3.1 | Did the intervention challenge behaviour around challenging behaviour?

Although both teams placed greater emphasis on finding inherently motivating rewards, the school's policy using rewards and sanctions remained unchallenged. The lack of critique was surprising. At the time of the project, the school's behaviour policy was being re-written to reflect a relationally based preventative premise for practice. One of the participants was implementing the new behaviour policy, which focused on the child's perspective of behaviour management. So, questioning the dominance of the behavioural reward/sanction policy was possible at this school. Despite this, neither teams questioned the restrictions that the narrowly defined

policy created in structuring their practices. In future, further adjustments in facilitation to support collective critical awareness will be explored (Mejia et al., 2019) because school cultures that afford distributed intra-organisational inquiry into operational structures are likely to create better conditions for development and inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2013).

The intervention challenged the school's senior leadership mantra that there is 'no "I" in team'. Individuals clearly influenced the topics for consideration. Individual participants' knowledge and practices also shaped the teams' narratives around the children. As outlined in the introduction, individuals have unique interpretations of what it means to be a good teacher, therapist, parent etc. (Brockmeier, 2015). The intervention created an opportunity for front line staff to experience the mutuality of their development with that of children and families. This orientation reduces the probability of problematising individuals whether they be staff or services users and is aligned to contemporary systemic approaches to improving support around children with developmental disabilities and behaviour that challenges (British Psychological Society, 2018).

4 | CONCLUSION

The relational context of practice was highlighted using video footage of participants' interactions with each other and the child. The concept of interconnectedness was highlighted by linking participants' individual desires to their actual relational worlds. The relationship with the child became part of their individual and team narratives. Thus, the intervention re-orientated away from a theory of *individuality* towards a concept of *mutuality* without dishonouring, displacing or disregarding each individual. The intervention design differs from its sister interventions as it sees participants as a collective, (or even as a single body). There is no evidence that these departures from the VIG protocol limited the change that might be expected using a traditional VIG model. In future, the impact of the intervention on the lived experience of the child and family, their interactions with the system and incidents of challenge should be recorded.

This small-scale research was conducted in a special school that was open to challenge and inquiry. Even in this context, we found traits indicative of closed cultures. Our intervention was designed to draw on the realities of practice, not to refine skills and techniques or impart specialist knowledge, but to stir up tacit knowledge and parallel processes that underpin, and sometimes fix narratives that reduce opportunities to see and act differently. This approach aims to address challenging behaviour through a systemic lens, and we will continue to explore the potentiality of it to support the safety, inclusion and development of children and families within their communities.

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