



Family transitions, ‘special’ education and home education

“I didn’t bring me here, the
system brought me here”



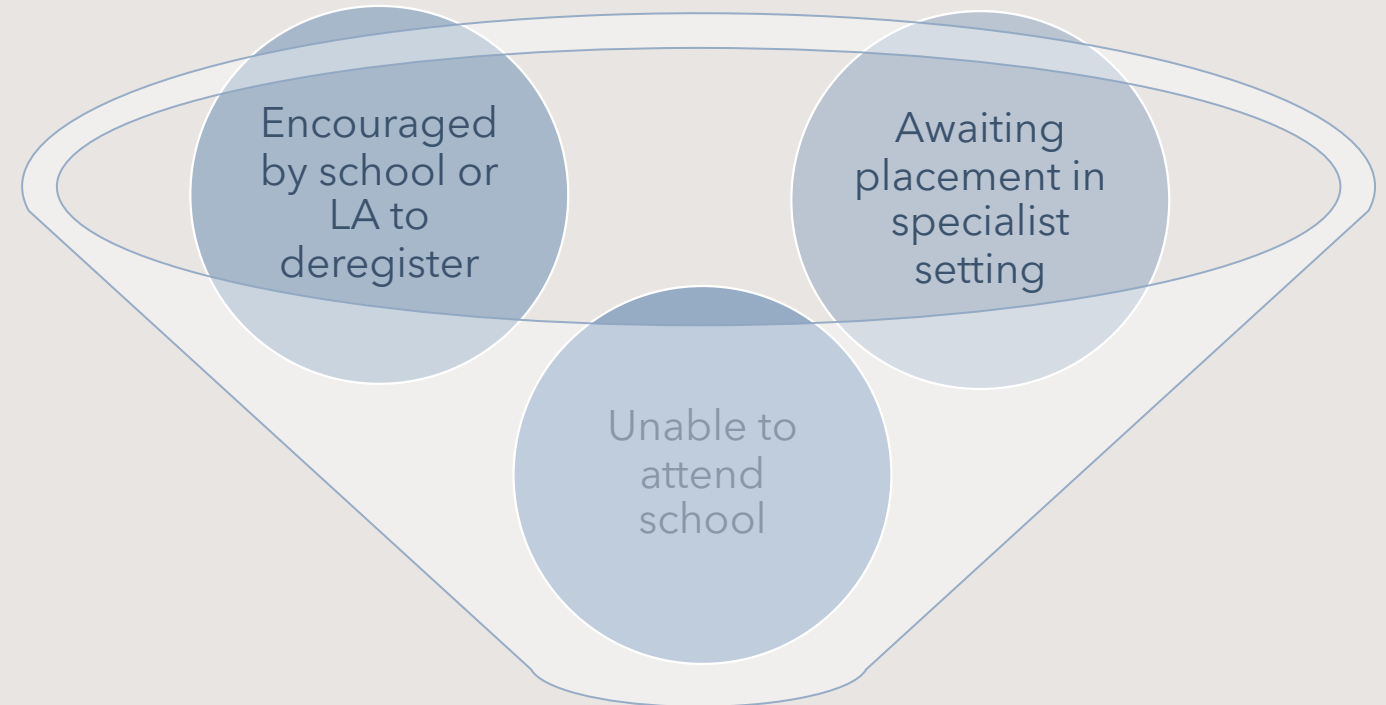
Outline

Brief overview of study

Some findings

Ways forward?

What leads families to deregister and home educate?



Contact with families through professional and voluntary work

Participants

- 99 families
 - Data related to 146 children
 - Direct participation of 7 children and young people
- 19% had secured EHCPs (England) or Statements of SEN (Wales) - 4% nationally in schools
 - 8% were applying as home educators or in the hope of securing specialist provision

Methods

Questions co-produced with home educating parents of children with identified SEND: adaptation of meta-planning (Roland et al., 2015)

Survey: 93 UK-based families - 92 parents and one GCSE student

- Survey and face-to-face invitation posted to social media and blog
- Written responses totalling 68,513 words enabling detailed analysis and creation of case examples

Interviews with individual parents (3) and families (4) with children (6)

- Parent meetings, home visits, home education go-alongs (Evans & Jones, 2011)
- Transcription of 69,371 words
- Participant checking of transcripts and chronological case histories, children's concept maps

Reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2021)

Review of recommendations by home educating parents of children with identified SEND



Families' main expectations of school/s

1. Children would remain in school, perhaps progressing to college or university (22%).

Survey participant #85 'assumed they would go down the same route as me and go to school and then maybe uni.'

2. Children would be included and supported, should needs be identified (22%).

Survey participant #64 believed 'they would be supported as an individual throughout the mainstream education that we thought he was entitled to. That we could work with the school as a team to iron out any difficulties together.'

3. School would foster a 'love of learning' in children (25%).

Survey participant #22 hoped 'education would put wings on her back. She would fly. She was so capable and curious about life; it would open the door wider and teach her how to be in this world with the tools she needed.'



Families' perceived promises of school/s

Teachers' Standards
(DFE, 2011)

A teacher must [...] have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils [...] and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

SEND Code of Practice
(DFE & DoH, 2015)

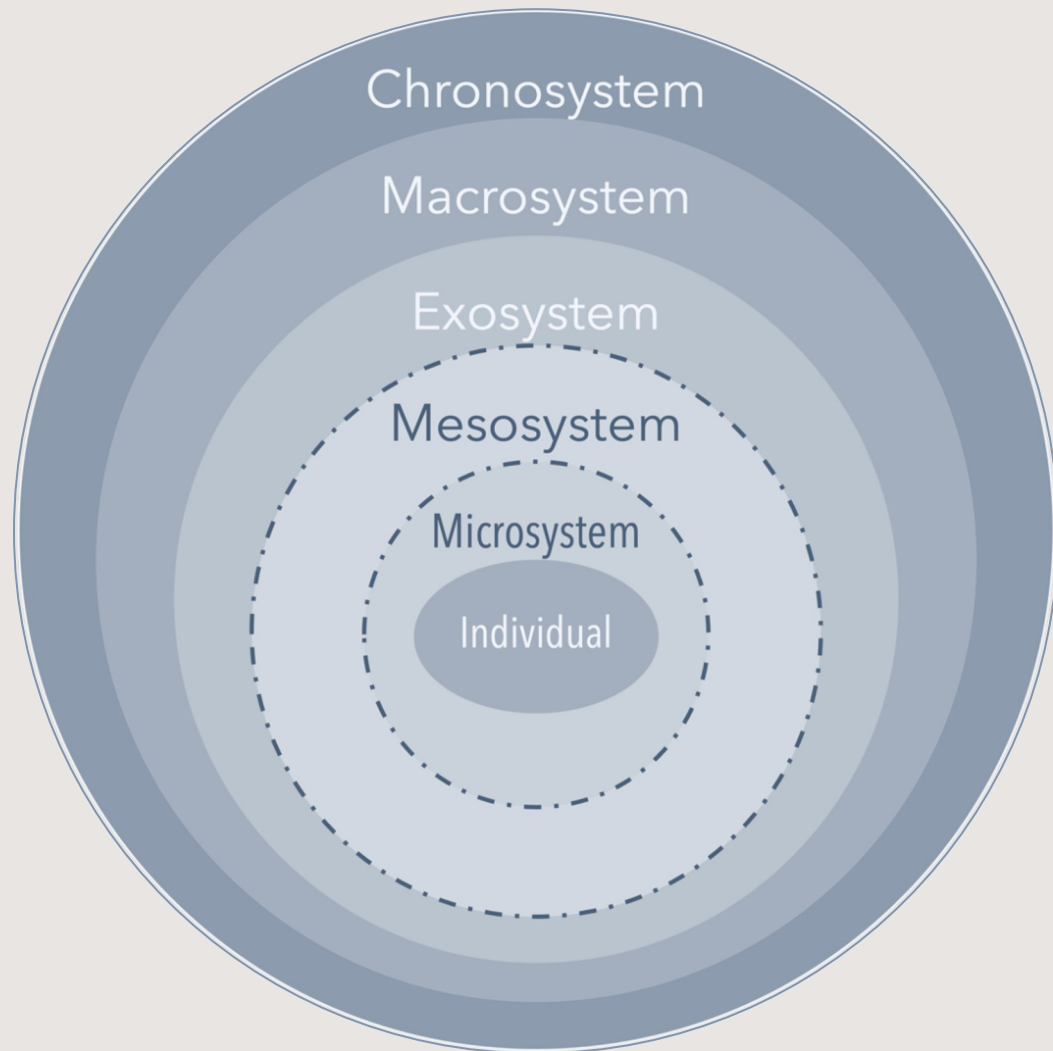
All providers **must** make reasonable adjustments to procedures, criteria and practices and by the provision of auxiliary aids and services.

The Equality Act 2010

This duty is anticipatory - it requires thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage.

Family experiences through a bioecological lens incorporating process-person-context-time

adapted by Gillie (2022) from Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2007)



Chronosystem at individual and organisational levels



Macrosystem: cultural values and societal norms related to inclusion and/or home education



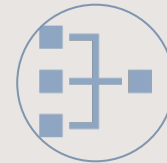
Microsystem: *negative proximal processes producing dysfunction*



The individual PPCT

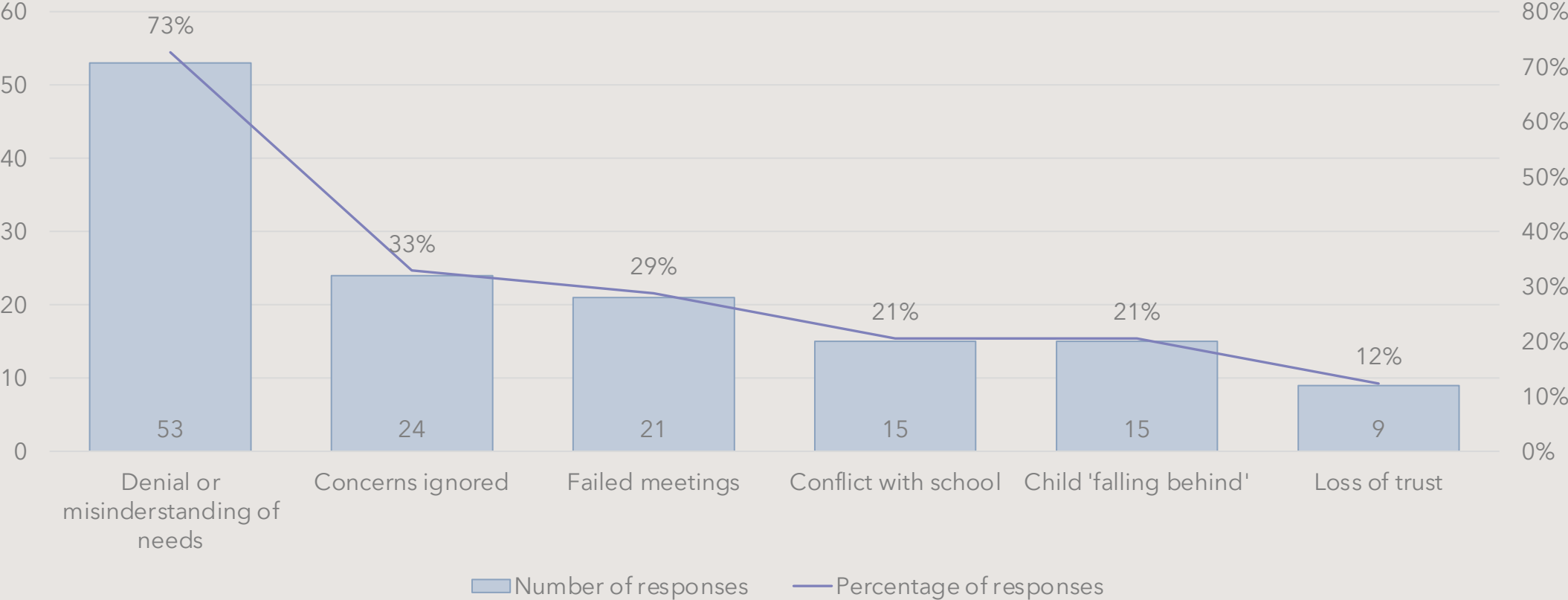


Missing/dysfunctional mesosystem: absence of supportive interactions (communitas) between systems on children's behalf



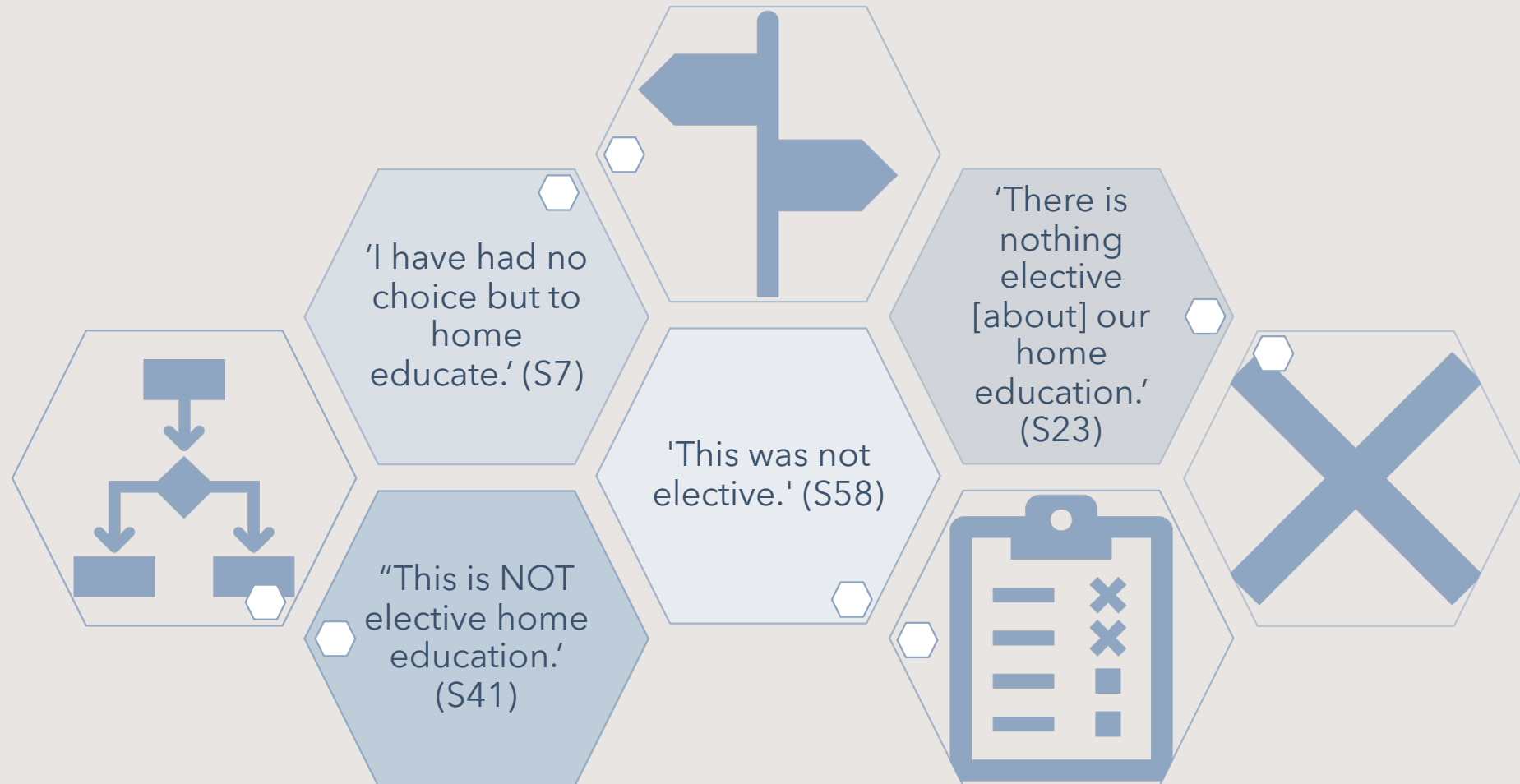
Exosystem: implementation of policy practice (funding and training)

Parental experiences prior to deregistration



Involuntary deregistration

'I refused to de-register her as I was not going to be forced into 'elective' home education.'
(Survey participant 21)



Erosion of trust between families and educators (e.g., Bormann & John, 2014) and the system (e.g., Morgner, 2018)

'They say [...] "you have to trust us" but with so many failed placements and my success I feel that it is they who need to trust me and listen [...] to make the placement successful.' (Survey participant #11)

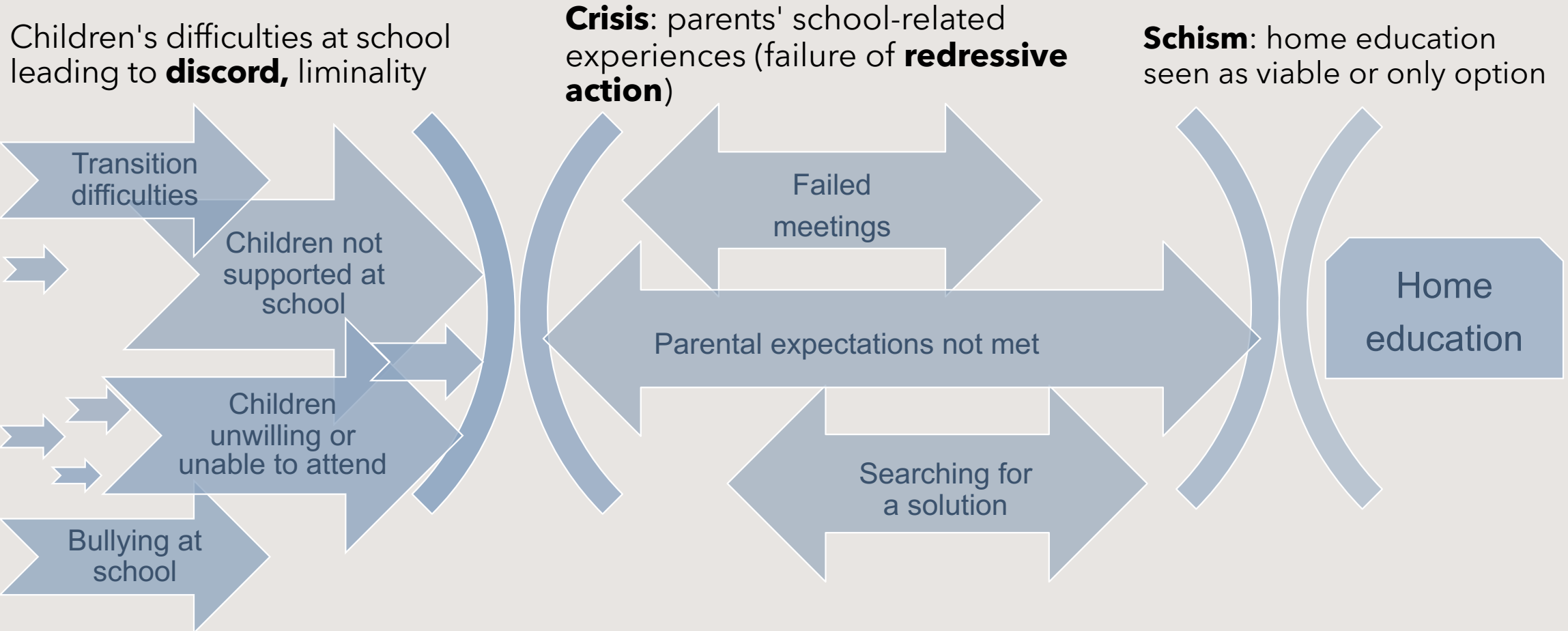
'I've been let down by professionals so many times - I didn't trust them any more - I just learned not to trust people.' (Matilda)

'I think most home educators feel that the LA is against home education and don't actually trust them at all.' (Survey participant #20)

'I have no faith that schools can help me.' (Survey participant #9)

Deregistration: staged liminal processes

(Gillie, 2022, developed from Turner, 1974;1969)



Reactions to deregistration

'People on buses and in shops frequently ask our daughter why she isn't in school and I feel apologetic and frequently mumble something non-committal.' (Survey Participant #71)

'We were investigated by S[ocial] S[ervices] at the hands of of the head as instructed by the L[ocal] A[uthority] D[esignated] O[fficer]'. (Survey participant #72)

'His head teacher [...] tried to persuade me not to and [...] used threats of OFSTED inspections' (Survey Participant #73)

Themes from the data

Circumstances: children's experiences at school

- Contrast with parental expectations of school based on an interpretation of policy

Processes: family interactions with schools and consideration of home education

- Opportunities for professionals to facilitate school reintegration

Transitions from school and into home education

- Support, particularly from established home educators

Establishment of home education **practices**

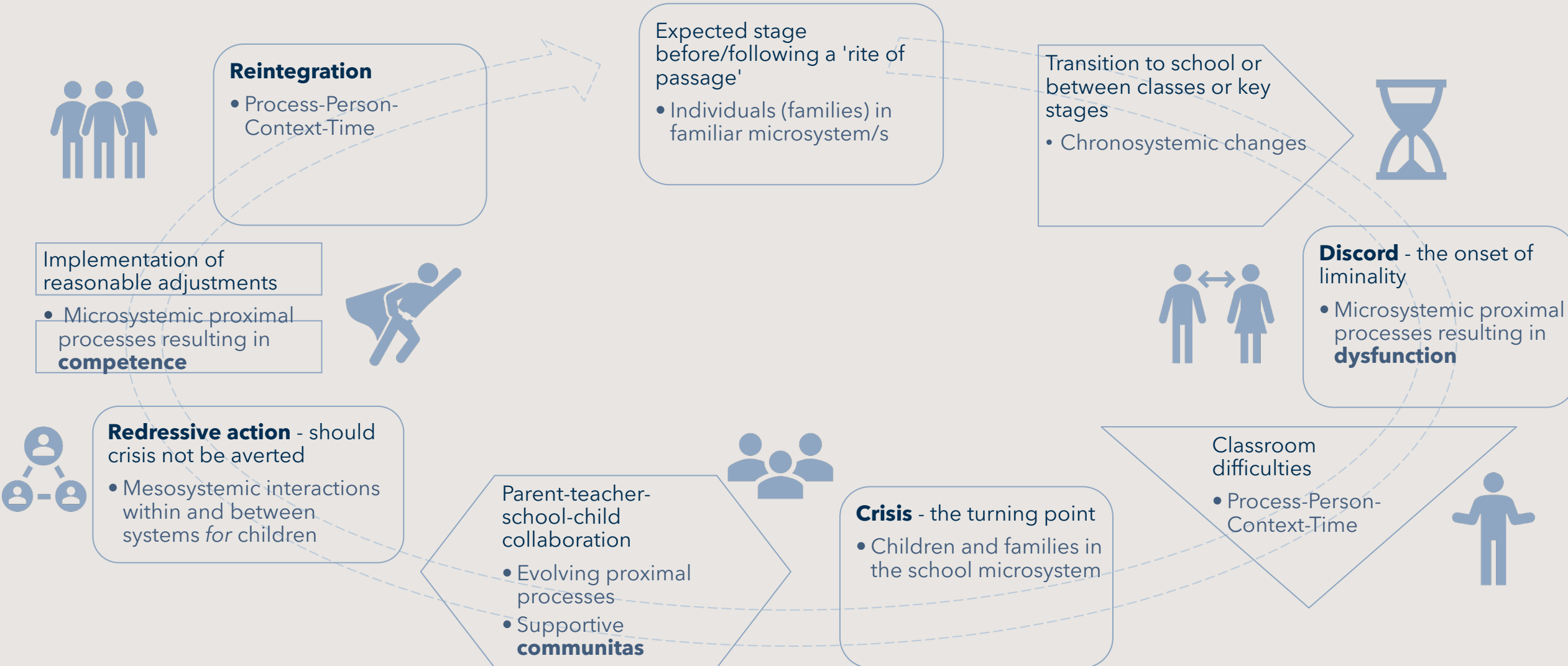
- Unique to each family, including their developing networks

Recommendations arising

- Specific, ongoing training for teachers in special educational needs, inclusive practice, and working in partnership with families throughout children's schooling.
- Flexi-schooling should be permitted without impacting schools' attendance figures or funding formulae.
- To help schools and education departments better understand families' needs, a local authority role might be developed to bring consistency to approaches currently in place. This advisor role could be undertaken by an inclusion specialist with experience of alternative, informal and/or community education.
- Home educated children should have access to local authority education resources, including assessment and support services, access arrangements, external examination centres, and associated costs should be covered.

A framework to support understanding and practice

(Gillie, 2022, developed from Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Turner, 1974;1969)



Questions

- Is it possible for educators, professionals and organisations to meet the promises of inclusion-related policy in the current UK landscape?
 - How / why not?
- What might be the implications for schools and/or learners of adopting the study's recommendations?
 - Mandatory training in inclusion;
 - Enabling flexi-schooling;
 - LA inclusion liaison and
 - Access to LA education resources and exam support for home educators.

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