R: Super right that is all working. So, thank you ever so much for your participation and obviously for Clive's participation as well. He was absolutely fabulous. His creativity and some of his images and what was really nice is that he actually used auto draw in quite a different way from quite a lot of the other young people have used it so far, so he, he wasn't relying on the kind of magic pencil function he was. He was doing his own drawing. Which was great.

P: He likes drawing, but more commonly with, with pens and paper, but he's got a style

R: Excellent, right. We will talk more about that in just a minute. I just need to do a couple of kind of formal bits 1st and I'm looking away because I've got another screen up here that's got my little blurb that I need to read here before we start. So, I will go for that if that's alright,

(Blurb from interview schedule)

R: So, first of all, could you let me know what Clive's date of birth is?

P: \*\*\*.

R: And, um, he attends a mainstream secondary school. That's right, isn't it?

P: Yes, it's \*\*\*

R: Lovely and year \*?

P: Year \*.

R: Year \*. Crikey.

P: Because he's an \*month birthday is at the at the very young end of the year group.

R: Yeah, my son's \*month and he's getting there but not quite. Super and does your child have an identified special educational need, and if so, what is it?

P: Oh, you mean in terms of having a recognized plan and things like that?

R: Yeah, does he have? I mean, does he have a formal diagnosis of autism? Does he have an EHCP?

P: He has a diagnosis of high functioning autism, which was made when he was probably about 6.

Maybe 5. Actually, he was probably 5, he was in year one at primary school when that diagnosis was made, but he doesn't have any extra plans or anything on top. The school had informal arrangements, but he hasn't got any formal plan.

R: Fine. OK, so as I said it's, this is kind of thinking really about the body mapping activity and my research at this stage is looking at whether that's a viable technique to use, whether it's a useful technique to use in order to support young people in talking about their experiences in school, so just a very general question to begin with: What did you think of what you saw of the task? Do you think it was useful? What was your impression?

P: I think he certainly enjoyed it and engaged with it. What I didn't hear was much of the conversation around it, or what you then do with it. Yeah, there's a lot of tools out there that purport to measure something, but then you wonder - well you have measured this, you've given it a number, or you've given a category or description or you ordered it somehow. So what? And I don't know enough about it to know what the so what is?

R: Yeah, I mean it. It's not a technique for measuring anything. It's a technique for encouraging young people to talk about their experiences. So, the idea is that we will hopefully be able to understand more about what young people feel about transitions. My next part of the project will be looking at more to do with the primary to secondary transition, which obviously Clive went through a few years ago, so it wasn't really relevant to talk to him about in so much detail, but it'll be about finding out their experience of those transitions and thinking about what their experiences can do in order to support other young people in those transitions. So, it's more of an alternative interview technique, then a technique to actually measure anything.

P: So as a technique to facilitate interview I think it worked quite well. You got him to just sit here and talk to you for 40 minutes. Um, I presume what he said was sensible.

R: Oh absolutely, yeah.

P: But he was engaging with you well for 40 minutes.

R: Do you think if it had been a straightforward interview if I've just been kind of talking to him through the screen and asking questions that that would have been….?

P: I think that would have been, would have been more challenging for him? He’d have done it but I suspect it would have been more challenging, but having the drawing, you gave him something else to focus on that wasn't a person.

R: Yeah. Absolutely.

P: While he does like interacting with people. I mean on top of being autistic, he's also introverted, so that becomes quite the effort after a while. And so, I think that the drawing probably gave him a bit of an outlet for the introversion as well.

R: In terms of the use of materials, my initial plan with this project before Covid happened was to do this body mapping task as a live task. So, I would be in a room with young people and instead of doing it using a computer it would be a life size task on a piece of paper. So we’d actually draw around their whole body and use craft materials to create the images rather than the computer version. Do you think that would be a technique that would have suited Clive? Do you think - I asked him the same question, I'm just interested to get perspectives.

P: Mm so. Probably. He obviously wouldn't have been able to draw around himself to start with. I suspect he would have quite enjoyed filling in different things actually round his body. But yeah, but he did enjoy picking the shirt and the head and things off from the computer. So that's you know, that's something he wouldn't have done then. Yes no, no I would've thought he would've got on with that fine. I guess that the scale of it will be quite different at that point. So I'm guessing he might be at the older, older range of the children you're looking at, so he's quite big compared to many and so yeah.

R: So, we have had a few even older than him so. I've had a 6-footer. It was a very long piece of paper.

P: Yeah yeah. I think he probably would be fine with it, but he does have his drawing style which is quite big and chunky. Um so whether what he was drawing would have fit in the figure in the same way. Because with the platform you were using there was an infinite zoom on there wasn't there? So, he could fit… he could zoom in until he had enough space to put, to draw what he wanted where we wanted it to go, which you couldn't do on paper. And certainly, he’s got a big chunky drawing style. Partly because that's what he likes and partly because he's got a little bit of dyspraxia, I think. Yeah, you should see his handwriting. It's way worse than mine. Yeah, that that that though

legible, so he tends to, things tend to be quite big. So, I think he would have enjoyed it, but yeah, there would have been different issues in getting bits done.

R: Do you think? I mean the packs that I was going to send out, that I was going to use with the young people involve lots of different craft materials. Pots of paints and felt tips and cutting and sticking things. Do you think that might have been a distraction for him? Or would that have appealed?

P: Possibly that would have been too much choice. Um? And the other issue, if a pack

like that turned up I am not sure where he would have done that in our house. To lay out 6 feet of paper somewhere and then just knowing what he can be like with paint, we would have had to put down drop cloths and everything all over the place. If there’s things that could be knocked over and stain and stuff like that so... Yeah, that would be a concern. If you, in future, if you were doing this in the clinic setting that might work fine, but I'm not sure about doing that in people's houses. I don't think that would have worked here.

R: Absolutely, no I can see that. Sorry, I'm just reading my questions. It's always very difficult because you write out a list of questions and then obviously go round in circles.

P: Joys of the semi structured interview.

R: Absolutely. Um is there anything that you think might have been Beneficial - part of the idea with body mapping, is that it's considering the embodied experience. So, one of the things that I asked him to do was not only think about what he was going to draw, but where on the image he was going to actually place those drawings. Which obviously, if you've got a life size person, becomes a little bit more kind of immediate because he can relate that body shape that's on the piece of paper with himself much more easily. But he was very, very clear on what he wanted to include inside the figure and what he wanted to include outside the figure. Have you got any thoughts about that part of the process?

P: I don’t know if this is particularly Clive specific but across the range of the autistic spectrum you've got differing levels of concreteness. I would say he's quite good at being abstract. As you notice he's got quite the wild imagination at times, and so the idea of conceptualizing a thing as something outside the figure. And a figure that isn’t exactly his size, I'm unsurprised that was something he was fine doing. But I could well imagine there are plenty of other people who you might want to use this

technique on who will find that much more challenging. Understanding the boundary between self and other and things like that. I think I can see that being an issue. If you're looking for something that's generic across the entire spectrum. Um? How? There are some children it will work with this and there are some I suspect it wouldn't, but how you identify the ones who are going to be able to do it well or not? I guess that's part of the art of the assessor. Whether there's hints or tips or something you can come up with having done a load of these. I'm rambling a bit there.

R: No that’s very helpful. It's a difficult concept and it's difficult to know how children will respond to it and they do respond to it very differently. And actually, that's very interesting because that tells you a lot about kind of how they feel about the task.

P: I think there's plenty of neurotypical adults who would struggle with it as well.

R: Yes absolutely.

P: So, it might not be just an autistic issue, it might just be a; some people can do it, and some people just live a very concrete life and don't consider that sort of thing.

R: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that the power of it is that you get the conversation around it as well, so it's not just that you're looking at the final product, you're not just looking at the image because you're having that conversation. You can kind of gauge …

P: Yes, and from the point of view of the assessor, that's going to help you understand what works or the ability of their abstract thought is which I guess could be quite useful.

R: One of the other possibilities with the task when lockdown first happened and I realized I wasn't going to be able to - I was hoping to do this in schools, so obviously that went out the window fairly quickly - one of the possibilities was to actually send the instructions and all of the materials, whether it's online or on paper to parents and ask parents to run through the tasks with the child as opposed to doing it with a relative stranger.

P: I think this goes down to what I've just said. I would, I would be unsurprised if a large proportion of parents were incapable of doing it. Again, because you've got the concreteness and you've got the subtlety of what's going on and you as the comparative stranger but who knows what's going on, you can interpret much better as you see the dynamic process, whereas if you do it with parents, you'll get the picture at the end, I guess you won't get to see the process. But you won't really, unless you've got a video of him doing it, you won't know what the instructions were and how it was done. I suspect - this will be further down the road as you develop this, but I suspect this is going to be a very operator dependent technique. And you're going to have to provide a lot of training or a manual or something to the people who are delivering the assessment. Because yeah, it's not like taking blood pressure or yeah, or counting a pulse. I think I think that yeah, it's subtle and how you do things is possibly as important as what you do.

R: Do you? Taking away the body mapping element and thinking about the personal element, do you think if it was just a matter of asking the questions, so just a matter of a straightforward interview, do you think that Clive would have answered your questions in the same way that he answered my questions? Do you think there were pros and cons to that? If I gave you a list of the things that we talked about?

P: I think you would get a very different response. If you got me or his mother to do it, than if you were doing it, yeah. But I guess this is also going to vary between children, but there's you know, as always there are some things people are happier talking to strangers about. And some things they are happier talking to their relatives about, and that's going to vary with people. But you know, he's a teenage boy. There's some things he'd rather not talk to us about.

R: Yeah,

P: But he's far less he's far less concerned about talking to you. Yeah, there's not a lot he won't talk to us about. But much of the time he'll find it easier talking to a stranger. I don't know how generic that is across the group you're interested in, but you'll get something different if me or his mother was to have done the thing. I couldn't tell you what you would get, but I'm pretty sure it would not be the same as what you've got.

R: Yeah. And I suspect if I were to do the same thing with him next week, I'd probably get something different to what I got with him last week to an extent.

P: Absolutely. But yeah, but there's a cloud of outcomes I get and there’s a cloud of outcomes you get, and they probably overlap somewhere, but their centre will be different,

R: Yeah. Super. Any other thoughts, any negatives to it. Anything that you thought that's not going to work well, that's not going to be very good or….

P: I did wonder for a moment whether he’d be able to draw with the mouse. Yeah, he has a definite style with a pen, but as far as I'm aware he's never drawn anything on the computer with a mouse before. Uh, but that actually worked fairly well, so he adapted to that. It was the physical challenge that was my main thought as to whether he would be able to do it. Yeah, but that seems to work OK. My understanding is quite a lot of people with autism have dyspraxia and similar, so you know whether that's going to be reproduced. Some of them, of course, will be really into computers and so have loads of mouse skills.

R: Absolutely. Or those fancy pencils that you can use to draw on ipads with.

P: yeah, I've not tried it. Yeah, we’ve got - we could have used one of these and an iPad potentially. I don't know if that works with the software you are using, but yeah.

R: It does work on an iPad. It's got a couple of little kinks that are different. Which is tricky because I don't have an iPad, so trying to work through those was a challenge with one person.

P: But most people don't have these, even if they have an ipad most people don't have the pencils.

R: Yeah. And there's one more thing that I thought, and I just completely forgot. Oh yes, did he talk to you much about it afterwards? Did he show you what he done and talk through it at all?

P: Yeah. He said he was quite proud of his picture, so he showed me the picture and he pointed out a few of the things as to why he drew them, or what he thought so that was quite good. He definitely enjoyed doing it.

R: That’s good.

P: He was quite proud of what he produced and wanted to show me. I kept a copy of it somewhere just in case, yeah, there it is. So just in case he wants to go back and have a look at it later. He didn't talk about all of it, but he was quite chuffed. So, he enjoyed the process. And you know, if there was an ongoing clinical reason to do it again, I'm sure he'd be very happy to give it another go,

R: Yeah? Super, that's nice to know. In terms of the next stages. As I said it's about using this in in a bit more detail, probably over a slightly longer period of time with a group of young people in order to kind of tease out some of the issues around the primary to secondary transition and think about how we can support that transition. And one of the things - it's going to be very much a participatory research projects and the young people will have a kind of an instrumental part in deciding what it is that's created as a result. And one of the things is thinking about who they feel needs to know more about their autism and how it affects them with transitions. And obviously that could be teachers that could be other young people, that could be other professionals they work with, that could be families. Have you got any thoughts, having gone through that experience with Clive, obviously a few years ago now.

P: So actually, around the transition. So, when he was at primary school most of the class knew he was a bit odd or a bit different and I'm not sure if autism ever came up, but they were very accepting of the whole thing. It was quite a friendly touchy, feely primary school that he was in. It wasn't too big, but yeah, but that they all looked out for him a bit. So, we were concerned when he went to secondary school. What would then happen? But where he has gone for primary school, he went to a place three or four miles south of us. There is a primary school in our village which we went to look at and did not like at all. It was exceedingly impersonal. They had an intake of 125 students a year, so it's big. The year he would have gone, they actually took another class worth so 150 students essentially in one big open plan space. It was awful. So, he ended up going to place that had a 45-student intake, was much smaller, much, much friendlier. And yeah, they were able to adapt very well. So, when we went to secondary we were a bit concerned about how well that transition would go because he just seems to be an obvious bully magnet. And yeah, and he likes school and he's keen and enthusiastic. But by complete fluke the secondary school 500 yards from us, which is next to the primary school he didn't go to has a particularly big special needs unit. And so he was flagged up going in as needing help. And they laid it on thick with transition support. As part of the process they laid on extra days for people identified with special needs so they could go in and experience the building before it filled up with the other thousand students who go there. They've got designated space they can go to. He’s got like a hall pass sort of thing so if he gets too stressed in lessons he can just go to the safe space. He's got identified adults to go to if there's issues which I think which cropped up after a bullying issue in year - in his first or second year. But the school stamped on it hard and that seems to have been sorted out. Now. So, this school has been really good both on the transition process and post transition support to optimize his experience in the school. So, his experience, I suspect, is not being typical. I think, given the particular interest this school has - it tends to attract autistic people to the school because they've got a reputation for looking after autistics and people with similar issues or not. So, so yeah, so probably slightly overrepresented in their autistic population, but they've got dedicated staff to make sure everything works and so. But Clive is by far at the moderate end of the spectrum as far as requiring support goes. So, my view of what extra could be done or what support children need is probably not a not a very generalizable one, because my one experience was with somewhere that as far as I can see, is bloody brilliant. And it's difficult to think what they could have done extra but. I can't think. I’m finding it difficult to think of anything I would have wanted them to do extra. So, you know, if they had got any further there would have been some sort of dedicated one to one teaching or something which would have been going too far. I think it is important he gets exposed to the mainstream because he's capable of dealing with it. And if you put him in a completely special environment now, he's not going to cope when he has to go to 6th form or University or work or ever later. But at least now he’s used to dealing with neurotypical people and how odd they can be.

R: That's really helpful, and certainly I shall be looking at their website and see if I can

find out a little bit more about what it is that they do, because it's really useful to identify what good practice looks like and to kind of find ways of maybe adapting that for other schools that aren't doing it so well, and there are unfortunately quite a few that aren't.

P: As a parent I think it's good practice. I mean, I've got no complaints whenever there's been an issue, you know, everywhere has issues, but their response is always been superb. And the various staff who are charged with sorting things out, sort them out so.

R: Well, certainly his love of learning and his enthusiasm for what he does really shone through. It was lovely. Apart from PE teachers who didn't come off quite so well.

P: Yeah, so he is not a fan of PE. I wasn't a fan of PE when I was at school, but his mother went to University on a sports scholarship. She’s from the other way. So he gets his PE aptitude from me.

R: That's fine, that's all good. Lovely, well I think that's everything that I've got on my list of questions, and unless there's anything else that you can think of that's been really, really helpful. Thank you ever so much. It's really nice to have kind of parental insight as well as the young people’s views because obviously you see things from a slightly more holistic perspective so really helpful and thank you so much.