

**The role of relational mentoring in
supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking
young people to resettle in Scotland**

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Author's Declaration

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Abstract

This study explores the role of relational mentoring in supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASYP) to resettle in Scotland. Despite the proliferation of mentoring and befriending programmes aimed at supporting the integration of young asylum seekers, this is still a neglected area of research. This exploratory study, conducted between 2021-2023, used a qualitative enquiry, including interviews with eight young advisors with lived experience of the asylum process, ten UASYP in Scotland, seven of their mentors/befrienders and sixteen professionals engaged in work with UASYP.

Mentoring is mostly evaluated as a stand-alone intervention, rather than being situated in a wider socio-political context. Similarly, most studies on mentoring focus on traditional dyadic models, where one adult supports the personal development of a young person, ignoring the role played by informal mentors and wider support networks. Adopting an ecological approach, this study explored the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono aspects of mentoring and befriending with UASYP in Scotland. It examined the barriers and opportunities to resettlement for UASYP in Scotland and the role of relational mentoring in supporting their resettlement. The study also situates mentoring and befriending provision in wider care structures for UASYP. It draws on a number of theoretical perspectives including liminality, social anchoring and relational embedding to understand how UASYP in Scotland negotiate belonging and resettlement by utilising formal and informal mentoring and befriending networks.

The thesis argues that UASYP occupy a number of liminal spaces: socio-spatial, temporal, ontological and imposed, which have implications for establishing belonging and resettlement in Scotland. Mentoring and befriending allow young people to ‘anchor’ to temporary ‘communities of belonging’ and ‘embed’ across different networks. Mentoring and befriending with UASYP support the psycho-social integration of UASYP by providing three core functions: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, helping young people to bridge liminalities and resettle post-migration. Re-conceptualising formal and informal mentoring and befriending with UASYP, the study proposes a more inclusive typology of relational mentoring with UASYP, based around the pillars of multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality.

Glossary of key terms

Asylum seeker: This is defined as someone seeking to make a claim for asylum in a country because of ‘a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion’ (UNHCR, 1951).

Befriending: This a one-to-one ‘friend-like’ relationship, where someone who lacks adequate social support, is paired with a volunteer, to help improve their quality of life.

Bicultural identity: This concept was coined by Berry in 1997 and relates to the idea that a person adopts two cultures simultaneously.

Differentiated embedding: Ryan (2018) proposed the concept of ‘differentiated embedding’ to explore ways in which people develop belongingness in different domains, which may be uneven.

Formal mentoring: This type of mentoring involves a programme that is structured with clear objectives. The most common type is one-to-one mentoring, where a young person is paired with an older adult, who is not in their social network. Formal mentoring can range from one-to-one, group and peer mentoring.

Group mentoring: This type of mentoring is less common than one-to-one mentoring and involves a mentor supporting several mentees at once. The rationale behind group mentoring is that it fosters connection and mutual support.

Guardian (Guardianship Scotland): Since the formation of the Scottish Guardianship Service in 2010, all unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland have a nominated guardian to help them navigate the asylum, legal, welfare and care systems.

Indefinite Leave to Remain (IRL): A legal status which means that there is no longer any time limit on a person’s ability to stay in the UK.

Informal mentoring: A supportive relationship often between a young person and an older adult, which develops organically and has a flexible approach to engagement and outcomes.

Integration: This a contested concept, which requires that asylum seekers are accepted into multiple legal, political, socio-economic, cultural and religious domains. The *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018, 2024) sees integration as a two-way process, whereby migrants and host communities must both adapt to each other.

Liminality: The concept of liminality was developed by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909 to explain the rites of passage that mark the transition to a different life stage, like moving from being a boy to man. The term refers to a state of in-betweenness, where people are no longer in one category, but not yet in another, such as no longer a child, not yet an adult.

Looked after children and young people: This refers to young people who are under the age of 18, who are under the care and supervision of social workers from the local authority where they reside. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people are considered ‘looked after children’ and local authorities in Scotland are responsible for providing accommodation, health, education, care and legal services for young people under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Local Authority (LA): An elected body that provides a range of services for a particular geographical area in the United Kingdom.

National Transfer Scheme: Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people are transferred to different local authorities around the UK under the National Transfer Scheme. Prior to 2021, local authorities could opt into accommodating young people, leading to large pockets of young people in the Scottish cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, since 2021, it is now mandatory for every local authority in Scotland to accommodate young people, if they make up less than 0.1% of their child population.

Refugee: Someone whose application for asylum has been successful and they have been granted the legal right to remain in the country they applied to.

Relational embedding: This concept was developed by Mulholland and Ryan, (2015; 2022) and refers to a process where migrants establish different degrees of attachment in different interpersonal relations and across different places.

Relational mentoring: Re-conceptualising formal and informal mentoring and befriending with UASYP, relational mentoring is a new typology of mentoring with UASYP, based around four pillars: multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality.

Resettlement: The act of moving from one country to another with the purpose of initiating a new life there.

Separated children: This refers to children or young people who have been separated from parents or caregivers during the process of migrating. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) prefer the term ‘separated children’, to UASC, as it is more inclusive and distinguishes a separated child from others seeking asylum.

Social anchoring: Coined by Grzymala-Kazłowska (2016), social anchoring is a process of finding significant reference points that allow migrants to establish stability in a new host country.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC): The term is used to describe anyone under the age of 18 who arrives in a new country without parents or guardians and who is applying for asylum in their own right.

UASC Leave: Formerly known as ‘Discretionary Leave’, this term is an immigration status granted to young people under the age of 17 ½ who have applied for asylum, but have been refused refugee status and humanitarian protection, where it has been deemed unsafe for the young person to return to their country of origin.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASYP): This term is used to describe those under the age of 18 who arrive in the UK without parents or guardians and who are applying for asylum in their own right. While the term ‘UASC’ is preferred in policy contexts, the terms ‘young people’ or unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

‘UASYP’ will be privileged throughout this thesis, recognising that all UASYP included in the study were between 16-25 year

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context and focus of the thesis

Debates around the need for asylum seekers and refugees to successfully ‘integrate’ have dominated policy agendas, and social connections are recognised as being integral to this process (Ager & Strang, 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014). While there has been a proliferation of studies looking at the role of social networks in supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, most studies have tended to focus on the role of professionals such as social workers, guardians (Chase, 2013; Crawley & Kohli, 2013; Devenney, 2020; Stott & Kohli, 2021), or foster carers (Wade, 2019) and more recently on the role of peer support (Eriksson *et al.*, 2019; Rosen *et al.*, 2021). The few studies looking at formal and informal mentoring and befriending in supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASYP) are from mainland Europe and the United States (DuBois & Karcher, 2014; Prieto-Flores & Gelis, 2018; Raithelhuber, 2018; Sánchez-Aragón *et al.*, 2020; Alarcón *et al.*, 2021). A recent systematic review, looking at mentoring and befriending studies in supporting care-experienced young people, included only four UK studies from the overall 91 (Jones *et al.*, 2025). Additionally, only four of the studies explored mentoring and befriending programmes with young migrants or refugees, and only one targeted UASYP specifically. The review concluded that current evidence about the effectiveness of programmes was limited and that more studies were needed. Very little has been written about how UASYP experience integration in Scotland (bar Kohli *et al.*, 2023; Camps *et al.*, 2023) and even less has been written about how mentoring and befriending support the resettlement of UASYP in the UK (bar Scott *et al.*, 2019).

Since the 1990s, there has been a plethora of literature exploring the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting ‘at-risk’ young people (Bowman *et al.*, 1990; Miller, 2002; Rhodes *et al.*, 2002; DuBois and Silverthorn, 2005; Allen and Eby, 2007; Rhodes and DuBois, 2008; DuBois *et al.*, 2011). However, the majority of this research has been conducted in the United States, focusses on traditional one-to-one mentoring and centres on how mentoring supports ‘hard’ outcomes, like educational attainment and employment (Preston *et al.*, 2019). Less has been written about programmes that support young asylum-seeking populations (exceptions include Prieto-Flores & Gelis, 2018; Raithelhuber, 2018; Sánchez-Aragón *et al.*, 2020; Alarcón *et al.*, 2021). This is despite an increase in mentoring and befriending programmes

aimed at supporting the ‘integration’ of young asylum seekers/refugees across Europe, since the so-called refugee ‘crisis’ in 2015 (Jaschke *et al.*, 2022).

While the previous Conservative government in the UK has deployed a ‘hostile environment’ (Grierson, 2018) in terms of its approach to immigration, Scotland is considered to have a more progressive standpoint, promoting the ‘integration’ of asylum seekers and refugees from the point of arrival (Scottish Government, 2018). This includes the provision of ‘tailored support services’ (Rotter, 2016: 84), such as funded befriending programmes for young people. Scotland’s *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018) recognises that mentoring and befriending play a role in encouraging asylum seekers and refugees to become active in their communities and to ‘build social connections and develop cultural knowledge’ (Scottish Government, 2018: 68). Guardianship Scotland (formerly the Scottish Guardianship Service) set up a befriending service in 2019 for young asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland to help ‘combat social isolation and loneliness’ and to support ‘fuller integration into Scottish society (Scott *et al.*, 2019). However, there has been little empirical work amongst scholars looking at how mentoring and befriending support the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland, as it is such a new phenomenon, making this research novel and timely. Central to this study will be to make sense of the way that UASYP engage in different social relations as they resettle in Scotland, with a focus on mentoring and befriending. In particular, the study will consider if these mentoring relations align or misalign with assumptions presented in the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2024).

UASYP (also referred to throughout the thesis as ‘young people’) are considered a particularly vulnerable group because of the intersection of age with precarious migration status (El Baba & Colucci, 2018). Like all asylum seekers, UASYP experience a host of practical, emotional, psychological, social and legal challenges (Kohli and Mather, 2003; Kohli, 2006; Hopkins and Hill, 2010; Kohli, 2011; Chase, 2013; Chase, 2017; Chase 2019a; Chase 2019b; Chase, 2020, Chase and Allsopp, 2020). However, in addition, they face ‘multiple discontinuities’ (Flum and Buzukashvili, 2018:16) in their transition to adulthood, and they need to ‘reconstruct’ their identities on arrival to their host country (Hughes, 2019). UASYP occupy a unique position of liminality (Turner, 1969) or ‘in-betweenness’: in between transitional life stages, in between acculturative identities and in between physical, relational and transnational spaces, which has implications for belonging, resettlement and integration, as it will be shown later in the thesis. UASYP have a vast web of transient, time-

bound professional support networks ranging from guardians, foster carers, social workers, lawyers, support workers to housing officers, as well as other networks they get to be part of. This study is preoccupied with the way in which these often-transitory networks help young people to establish belonging and resettle post-migration, with a particular focus on the role of ‘relational mentoring’.

This exploratory study is, to my knowledge, the first to explore the role of formal and informal mentoring in supporting UASYP across Scotland. It draws on previous findings from different academic disciplines including education, social work, psychology, anthropology and migration studies. This multidisciplinary base brings together different theoretical perspectives: liminality (Turner, 1969), social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016) and relational embedding (Ryan, 2018). These theories are utilised to understand how UASYP negotiate resettlement using formal and informal mentoring and befriending networks in Scotland. Research on the belonging of UASYP tends to come from Scandinavian countries (Wernesjö, 2015, Verdasco, 2018, Moberg Stephenson and Kallstrom, 2020). In the UK, recent studies like *Children Caring on the Move* (ccomstudy.com, n.d.) (2019-2022) have explored how UASYP give and receive care from formal and informal networks in England. However, few studies have considered the role of formal and informal mentoring and befriending networks in supporting UASYP to resettle and this study adds insights to the small body of existing research. Integration discourses tend to focus on narrow indicators of success, such as educational attainment and employment. Less attention has been paid to the ‘psycho-social adaptation’ (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016: 1126) of asylum-seeking groups and this study adds to the limited understanding of integration and adaptive processes among UASYP, with a focus on the context of Scotland.

Studying mentoring and befriending is a challenging endeavour because of the ‘complex definitional terrain’ (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021) surrounding them and the fact that they are culturally determined concepts. Traditional mentoring is defined as a supportive relationship between a younger person and an older, more experienced non-parental adult, (DuBois and Karcher, 2014). Formal mentoring varies by format, goals, structure (Rhodes *et al.*, 2002; DuBois *et al.*, 2002), which makes studying it challenging. Most academic literature focusses on traditional one-to-one mentoring and befriending, ignoring the influence of alternative models, like group mentoring and peer mentoring. Added to this complexity is the difference between formal mentoring, which is usually facilitated by a third party, and informal

mentoring, where relationships develop more organically (Austin *et al.*, 2020). Studies looking at informal mentoring are ‘somewhat elusive’ (Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez, 2017), as these mentoring activities often take place outside of formal structures. A final complication is the overlap in the concepts of mentoring and befriending, which are often used interchangeably (MacDonald & Greggans, 2010). It was central to the aim of the thesis to make sense of the heterogeneity of mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP in Scotland, given that this group of young people represent a niche group with complex support needs.

The focus of the thesis has evolved considerably throughout the research process. While initially the research was intended to focus solely on formal mentoring and befriending programmes, it evolved later to include the role of informal mentors and befrienders, as well as other non-traditional models, like group mentoring and peer mentoring. This is because all young people interviewed spoke about the significance of informal mentors in their lives. Most research on mentoring and befriending focuses on the mentor-mentee dyad (Sambunjak, 2015) and the individual outcomes for the mentee, which ignores the wider context in which mentoring and befriending are situated. As it will be argued, it is impossible to study mentoring and befriending with UASYP, without considering how programmes fit into the wider socio-political context of young people’s lives. Central to the epistemological, ontological, methodological and axiological underpinnings of the research design was a social justice agenda and a desire to critically interrogate mentoring and befriending and how they fit into wider care structures for young people.

Having worked in the field of youth and community work for a decade, including managing a peer mentoring programme for several years, it was important to me to start with a critical eye, and to challenge some taken for granted assumptions that mentoring and befriending were automatically ‘positive and well-intentioned’ (Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez, 2017). For that reason, the study adopted an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to explore the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono aspects of mentoring and befriending with UASYP. The first area of focus was the resettlement challenges faced by UASYP in Scotland and the need for mentoring and befriending in the first place. The second area of focus was the structural aspects of mentoring and befriending with UASYP, situating mentoring and befriending in the context of immigration policy, care policy and wider care structures for UASYP. The final area of focus was the relational functions of mentoring and befriending

with UASYP. The study explored the value of different formal and informal mentors and befrienders, as well as how different models of mentoring and befriending supported young people to resettle in Scotland.

1.2 Research questions

Narratives around UASYP in media and policy tend to be polarised and decontextualised (Becker Herbst *et al.*, 2018) and academic studies tend to negate the complexity of young people's lives (Bilotta & Denov, 2018). As Raithelhuber (2019a) notes, few studies have engaged in qualitative work to examine the way UASYP 'experience' the world. UASYP have a wide network of professional and community support networks and central to the theoretical concepts employed was a desire to explore the way that young people used these networks, particularly mentors and befrienders. In light of the lack of research around young people's experiences of both formal and informal mentoring and befriending in Scotland, this qualitative research sought to answer two broad initial research questions, which were subsequently refined throughout data collection and the iterative analysis process:

- *What mentoring and befriending programmes are available for UASYP in Scotland and what are the features of these programmes?*
- *How do formal and informal mentoring and befriending help young people to embed across different networks and resettle in Scotland?*

Through conducting the literature review, data collection and following an iterative process of data analysis, the following three research questions were developed, which allowed for an exploration of relational mentoring at multiple levels: individual, relational and structural.

1. What are the barriers and opportunities to resettlement for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?

(This question explores the need for relational mentoring at a microsystem level, in terms of the individual needs of young people, and at an exosystem level, exploring the context into which young people are resettled)

2. How does relational mentoring fit into wider support structures for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?

(This question explores the structural aspects of relational mentoring at a macrosystem level)

3. How does relational mentoring support the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?

(This question explores the relational aspects of mentoring at a mesosystem level)

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2: *Literature Review* provides an overview of contemporary debates around UASYP in Scotland. It starts by clarifying definitions and terminology around UASYP, before exploring issues facing UASYP and the policy context around UASYP in the UK, contextualising the need for mentoring and befriending in the first place. Part two of this chapter explores how young people are framed in media, academic and legal discourses, arguing that public discourses tend to be polarised and decontextualised. It concludes by identifying gaps in knowledge and articulates how this thesis seeks to address these.

Chapter 3: *Wider care structures for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people* explores academic perspectives and empirical work around mentoring and befriending as a targeted youth intervention, before examining specific literature around UASYP. The first part of the chapter outlines the complex support structures for UASYP including professional networks, foster carers, transnational ties and peer support, before moving on to explore the role of mentors and befrienders. The second part starts by clarifying mentoring and befriending definitions and outlines typologies of programmes, before problematising traditional models of mentoring and highlighting the need for more critical, culturally appropriate models of mentoring and befriending for UASYP. The chapter finishes by outlining gaps in knowledge around UASYP and makes explicit how this thesis seeks to address these.

Chapter 4: *Theoretical Framework* outlines the theoretical framework of the research, which brings together an ecological model of mentoring (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) with theories of liminality (Turner, 1969), social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) and relational embedding (Ryan, 2018) to understand how mentoring and befriending support the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. The chapter starts by explaining the rationale for using

an ecological systems approach for exploring mentoring and befriending with UASYP. It moves on to discuss each of the five spheres of the model (micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono) and how these interact to influence young people's experiences and engagement of mentoring and befriending in Scotland. The chapter concludes by bringing together these theories into an integrated theoretical framework that informed the study.

Chapter 5: *Methodology* outlines the philosophical underpinnings of the research, the research methodology and discusses the research process in detail. It starts by discussing the ontological and epistemological positioning of this research, before discussing the methodological design, and axiological approach of the study, including specific ethical concerns around relational ethics, informed consent and confidentiality and anonymity. It follows with a discussion of the recruitment and data collection process, followed by an explanation of the data analysis and use of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The chapter concludes with some reflections from the data collection process.

Chapter 6: *Barriers and opportunities to resettlement: Negotiating socio-spatial, temporal and ontological liminalities* is the first chapter presenting analysis of the data collected. It is concerned with the needs of UASYP at an individual level, the barriers to resettlement for UASYP and the need for social support to help navigate barriers to resettlement. The chapter begins by considering the multiple liminalities that young people interviewed occupied (socio-spatial, temporal and ontological), which influenced their resettlement in Scotland. Overarching these liminalities was the imposed liminality of the asylum system, which influenced how young people experienced space, time and relationships. The chapter concludes by discussing the role of social support in helping young people to navigate liminality and contextualises the need for mentoring and befriending.

Chapter 7: *Situating mentoring and befriending provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in a wider socio-political context* is the second data-based chapter and focusses on the structural aspects of mentoring and befriending with UASYP. The first part makes sense of the heterogeneity of mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP and outlines differences and commonalities across programmes included in the study. This subsequently informed the development of a typology of mentoring and befriending with UASYP, presented at the end of Chapter 8. The second part situates mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP in a wider socio-political context and outlines some of the key

challenges in providing mentoring and befriending for UASYP, highlighting economic, cultural and political challenges in doing so. This chapter also addresses the gap in knowledge around how mentoring and befriending fit into wider structures of care for UASYP.

Chapter 8: *The role of relational mentoring in supporting the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland* is the final data-based chapter. Part one of the chapter discusses the value of different models of mentoring and befriending, as well as the value of different mentors, both formal and informal, for young people. It argues that young people utilise different models/mentors depending on their needs, interests and place on the asylum journey and that mentoring and befriending allow young people to ‘embed’ (Ryan, 2018) across different networks. To follow, the chapter explores the relational functions of formal mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP. It identifies three core functions: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, which produce two overall ‘soft’ developmental outcomes: increased confidence and an increased sense of safety and security, needed for resettlement. The chapter concludes by developing a new and more inclusive typology of mentoring for UASYP entitled relational mentoring, based around four keys pillars: multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality.

Chapter 9: *Discussion of findings, contribution to knowledge and conclusions* summarises the key findings of this research. It starts by outlining the empirical and theoretical contributions to knowledge, before exploring these in relation to the three research questions. To conclude, the chapter reflects on the limitations and strengths of the current study and proposes recommendations for future research and changes to policy and practice around mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP. The chapter concludes with a reflective statement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter outlines the policy context around UASYP in the UK, with a focus on Scotland. It highlights empirical work, looking at the barriers faced by UASYP and the framing of young people in public discourse, media and academia. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part gives some background context to research with UASYP, clarifying definitions, outlining aspects of immigration policy and exploring the barriers faced by young people. Part two considers the legal and policy context around UASYP in the UK, with a focus on Scotland, including salient aspects of care policy, education policy and integration discourses. The final section considers how UASYP are framed in public discourses, particularly media, policy and academic discourses. This section problematises the binary, simplistic and bounded framing of UASYP and argues the need for a more nuanced view of young people. The chapter finishes by outlining gaps in knowledge around UASYP and makes explicit how this study seeks to address these.

2.1 Background context

2.1.1 Clarifying definitions

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognises the right of people to seek asylum from persecution in other countries (UNHCR, n.d). The 1951 Refugee Convention, and its 1967 Protocol, were the first international agreements to outline the basic human rights of refugees (UNHCR, n.d). An asylum seeker is defined as someone seeking to make a claim for asylum in a country because of 'a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (UNHCR, 1951). A refugee is someone whose application for asylum has been successful. The term 'unaccompanied asylum-seeking child' (UASC) is used to describe those under the age of 18 who arrive in a new country without parents or guardians and who are applying for asylum in their own right (Scottish Government, 2025). According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), anyone under the age of 18 is deemed to be a child. However, Kohli (2007) recognises that this definition is not universal and those over 16 are considered to be adults in some European countries. Hopkins and Hill (2010) point out the problem with the term 'unaccompanied', as young people may be accompanied by a trafficker, an agent, a sibling or an extended family member. In this case, young people are counted by the Home Office as being part of a 'family', regardless of

whether the adult accompanying them is an appropriate caregiver. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) prefer the term ‘separated children’, which is seen as more inclusive and distinguishes a separated child from others seeking asylum. This term is used widely by third sector organisations (Chase and Allsopp, 2020).

Other commonly used terms to describe young people migrating alone are ‘unaccompanied minor’, ‘unaccompanied young person’ or ‘unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person’. While the term ‘UASC’ is preferred in policy contexts, the majority of unaccompanied young people who claimed asylum in the UK in 2022 were aged 16 or 17 years (Home Office, 2023b), so the terms ‘young people’ and ‘UASYP’ will be privileged throughout this thesis. This choice is not just one of semantics, rather it recognises that all young people in the study were between 16-25 years old, occupying a developmental liminality between childhood and adulthood. While the term UASYP is used throughout, this is caveated by recognising the problematic nature of ascribing labels to groups of people. Rather the term UASYP is used when seeking to make a distinction between young people seeking asylum and those who are not.

2.1.2 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in the UK: Numbers and trends

It is often mentioned that half of the those who are forcibly displaced worldwide are children (UNHRC, 2022). By the end of 2022, 43.3 million children were forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide (UNICEF, 2023). There are a myriad of reasons why children and young people are forced to flee their countries: war, political circumstances, death or persecution of family members or persecution of the child themselves (Hopkins and Hill, 2010). Other factors include sexual exploitation, trafficking, unwanted marriage, forced conscription, or to join a family member who has already left (UNICEF, 2017). Some children leave to escape economic hardship or dangerous kinship networks (Kohli and Mather, 2003). A 2023 survey found that the primary reason for leaving was to escape war and conflict, followed by violence, economic reasons, limited access to services and natural disasters (UNHCR *et al.*, 2023). The decision for young people to leave is a complex one and is usually determined by external circumstances like war and family decisions (Vervliet *et al.*, 2015). Regardless of the reason, what unites all displaced children and young people is the need to seek protection from harm.

The UK Conservative government's approach to immigration was underpinned by a 'hostile environment' (Grierson, 2018) and the UK has used three strategies to deter immigration: redirecting refugee flows, funding restrictive measures and reducing the number of safe ways for asylum seekers to enter the UK (Campbell, 2020). Some suggest that the UK has a practice of 'everyday bordering' (Yuval-Davis *et al.*, 2017), which aims to make everyday existence uncomfortable for migrants arriving in the UK. Unlike adult asylum seekers, UASYP are subject to 'special protection' until the age of 18, a principle enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR, 1989). While the UK signed the UNCRC in 1991, UASYP were not included in this until 2008, when the UK lifted its reservation on Article 22. Now all children in the UK, regardless of nationality, legally have the same rights (ECPAT, 2018). The Nationality and Borders Act (NABA) was passed in 2022, which aims to deter 'illegal' entry to the UK (Home Office, 2023b). Other recent legislation include the Illegal Migration Act (2023), which criminalises those arriving to the UK by small boats (Home Office, 2023c).

In the UK, there were 4,781 applications from UASYP in the year ending June 2024, making up 6% of total asylum applications (Home Office, 2024). According to the Department for Education (2020), the majority of UASYP in the UK were male (90%) and aged 16 or above (85%). After arrival and reception, young people are transferred to different local authorities around the UK under the National Transfer Scheme (UK Government, 2023). There are four possible outcomes of an asylum application for UASYP in the UK (Children's Legal Centre, 2019). The first is 'leave to remain', where the young person can stay for up to five years, after which time they can reapply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR). The second is 'UASC leave' (formerly discretionary leave) (Children's Legal Centre, 2019), which is the most common outcome among young people (Chase, 2020). This is where a young person is refused asylum, but where it is deemed unsafe for them to return home. In this case, young people are permitted to stay until they reach the age of 17 ½, after which they can apply for an extension of their leave to remain (Home Office, 2020). The third outcome is 'humanitarian protection', where the young person has not satisfied the requirements under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but returning to their country of origin would breach International Law. The fourth outcome is where the application is refused, although this can be appealed. If the appeal is refused, the young person will have no recourse to public funds and should leave the UK upon turning 18 (Right to Remain, n.d.).

Any unaccompanied child over the age of twelve years old who arrives undocumented in the UK is subject to an age assessment, where their ‘physical appearance and demeanour’ are taken into account (Home Office, 2025). While the UK Border Agency are required to apply the ‘benefit of doubt’ when it comes to UASYP, some suggest there is a ‘culture of disbelief’ (Rigby *et al.*, 2021) around age assessments and that the practice automatically treats young people with suspicion (Ni Raghallaigh, 2014). UASYP may come from countries which do not register birthdates (Children's Legal Centre, 2017) and hegemonic views around childhood may clash with the lived experiences of young people (Malloch and Rigby, 2020). Asylum claims are often rejected if UASYP are not deemed to look ‘childlike’ (Crawley, 2010). A report by JustRight Scotland (2024) found that there has been a 450% increase in age disputes among UASYP, increasing from 853 in 2020 to 4,698 in 2023 (Sella, 2024). The report also found that there was inconsistency in age assessment practices across local authorities in Scotland and that there were often delays in safeguarding referrals (Sella, 2024). This is problematic as those who are assessed to be over 18 are sent to adult accommodation and may lack appropriate safeguarding. The Nationality and Borders Act (NABA) (2022), mentioned above, claims to ‘crack down on adults pretending to be children’ (Home Office, 2022). Under NABA (2022), social workers employed by the Home Office should complete age assessments in the event of an age dispute. It has been suggested that young people may be at higher risk of exploitation as a result (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). More recent research found that age assessments increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and, by the end of 2021, 66% of UASYP were age-disputed, compared with 31% in the previous year (Stalford *et al.*, 2022).

2.1.3 Barriers facing unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

There is consensus that UASYP are a particularly vulnerable group, because they are both asylum seekers and children. However, as will be discussed later in the chapter, there is less agreement about what causes this vulnerability. Like all asylum seekers, UASYP face a host of practical, emotional, psychological, social and legal challenges (Kohli and Mather, 2003; Kohli, 2006; Hopkins and Hill, 2010; Kohli, 2011; Chase, 2013; Chase, 2017; Chase 2019a; Chase 2019b; Chase, 2020, Chase and Allsopp, 2020). Stressors can be categorised as those encountered pre-migration (Hopkins and Hill, 2010), during displacement (Crawley, 2010) and post-migration (Wade *et al.*, 2005; Wade *et al.*, 2019; Kohli, 2006; 2011). Some research suggests that resettlement challenges can have an equally detrimental impact on the wellbeing of asylum seekers/refugees as pre-migration challenges (Pfeiffer *et al.*, 2022). Barriers to

resettlement include acculturation challenges (Keles *et al.*, 2016; Sánchez-Aragón *et al.*, 2020), as young people need to navigate complex asylum, health, education and care systems (Kohli & Mather, 2003; Kohli, 2006; Kohli, 2011), in addition to learning a new language and customs. Barriers to resettlement for UASYP include unfamiliarity with these systems (Camps *et al.*, 2023), racism and discrimination (Isaacs *et al.*, 2020) and economic obstacles, as without indefinite leave to remain, they are unable to work or claim benefits.

Socio-emotional challenges revolve around the fact that young people may experience loneliness and isolation (Mels *et al.*, 2008; Derluyn *et al.*, 2009; Herz and Lalender, 2017), which are tied to the loss of family and home. Home is more than just shelter and political sanctuary, it is tied to relationships (Kohli, 2011). However, as others have noted, home may not be a place of safety, some young people may have fled from families who were abusive or negligent (Malloch and Rigby, 2020). Young people may carry with them conflicting messages, being sent away while other family members remain at home (Kohli and Mather, 2003), feeling grateful, but also guilty about those left behind (Kohli, 2007). UASYP may also experience contradictory feelings of hope and despair, loneliness and belonging (Dursun & Sauer, 2023).

UASYP can also face a number of psychological resettlement barriers because of the interplay of trauma and separation from caregivers (Hopkins & Hill, 2008; Chase & Allsopp, 2013). Trauma is defined as the response to a highly stressful event (Joseph and Murphy, 2014) and traumatic stress manifests itself in poor physical and mental health. Studies have shown that seeking asylum has an impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing (Derluyn *et al.*, 2009; Chase & Allsopp, 2020; Pfeiffer *et al.*, 2022) and some suggest that UASYP have a higher prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety (Vervliet *et al.*, 2014; El Baba & Colucci, 2018; Oppedal *et al.*, 2018; Jensen *et al.*, 2019). A systematic review by Kien *et al.* (2019) found that a third of UASYP were affected by depression or anxiety. UASYP approaching 18 in the UK experienced higher levels of trauma, due to the uncertainties regarding their future (Hodes *et al.*, 2008; Allsopp & Chase, 2019).

Those UASYP who may have been trafficked face additional challenges around trauma and exploitation (Camps *et al.*, 2023). For many, their migration trajectories may have been dictated by smugglers without their knowledge (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2005). It is not

uncommon for UASYP to go missing, often within the first 72 hours of entering the care system (Gupta, 2019). A report by the charity Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT, 2019), suggested that trafficked children and UASYP were 30 times more likely to go missing than other children. Since the UK left the European Union in 2020, the UK has lost membership of institutions like Europol, which have access to systems that create alerts for missing children and helps identify those who have been trafficked across Europe (ECPAT, 2020). This has direct implications for the ability of systems in the UK to track missing young people.

Other resettlement challenges revolve around UASYP being housed in unsuitable accommodation like hotels. A study by Camps *et al.* (2023) found that hotels were not appropriate for UASYP, who may not have had the time to develop skills needed for independent living. Being accommodated in hotels also increased risks of sexual violence and further internal trafficking (Camps *et al.*, 2023). Some have since raised concerns about the numbers of UASYP who disappeared from Home Office hotels with reports that, of the 600 UASYP being housed in a hotel in Brighton, almost a quarter had gone missing and 79 were unaccounted for (Townsend, 2023).

UASYP also experience legal challenges as they must endure prolonged periods of waiting for their asylum claim to be processed (Chase & Allsopp, 2013; Allsopp *et al.*, 2015; Isaacs *et al.*, 2020). While young people can receive free legal support and there is more funding given to children's cases than adult asylum seekers (Campbell, 2020), demand is high for these services (Wilding, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic created further delays in asylum decisions (Chase *et al.*, 2022), which also had implications for services like counselling and mental health provision (Cowie & Myers, 2021). Young people engaged in trauma-based counselling reportedly faced additional challenges as sessions converted to an online format (Chase *et al.*, 2022).

Researchers have noted that waiting for an asylum decision can impact on how young people experience daily lives (Allsopp *et al.*, 2015; Kohli & Kaukko, 2018). Camps *et al.* (2023) found that waiting led to a disengagement from education and could impact on engagement with leisure activities. They also identified a gendered dimension to engagement in leisure activities, whereby girls tended to engage less in leisure activities because of their reluctance to travel on public transport alone in the evening. In addition to the practical, acculturative,

socio-emotional, psychological and legal barriers outlined above, UASYP face additional hurdles because they occupy a developmental liminality, in between childhood and youth, which the following section addresses.

2.1.4 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people: Negotiating identity and belonging

UASYP experience ‘multiple discontinuities’ (Flum and Buzukashvili, 2018:16) in their transition to adulthood and they need to ‘reconstruct’ (Hughes, 2019) their identities on arrival in their new host country. It is important to note that identity is a ‘slippery concept’, which is ‘fraught with unresolved conceptual difficulties’ (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 496). Erikson’s (1968) seminal theory of identity formation posits that humans go through eight stages of development from childhood to adulthood: infancy, early childhood, preschool years, school years, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. At each stage, there is conflict before moving to the next stage of ego identity. This traditional model of identity development is problematic as it is ethnocentric and assumes that people automatically move through transitional life stages, regardless of cultural context. Traditional theorising of identity is also problematic as it assumes that categories like youth and adulthood are something innate and natural, rather than socially constructed (Anthias, 2002). Childhood and youth are not considered universal concepts (Ensor and Gozdziaik, 2010), rather they are culturally determined. Indeed, the modern conceptualisation of children emerged relatively recently, after the Second World War (Meloni and Humphris, 2021). Others have criticised traditional theorising of identity for being too rigid and ignoring the fluidity of people’s identities. Identities are dynamic and, as Block and Grund (2014) note, ‘people are inherently multidimensional, have many attributes and are members of multiple groups’ (p.189). Vervliet *et al.* (2015) found that young refugees had ‘multiple, intersecting identities, beyond just being “a refugee”’ (p. 341). Scholars like Yuval-Davis (2006) posit that identity is a process, rather than a possessive characteristic and migrants can have multiple identities which shift over time and space.

For UASYP, identity development is even more complicated as they must negotiate the transition to adulthood, while also trying to navigate new acculturative identities. UASYP occupy a space in between cultural populations, they have a ‘changing sense of ethnic identity and a developing sense of host national identity’ (Verkuyte, 2012: 239). Brook and Ottemöller (2020) found that young asylum seekers experienced a tension between the need to hold on to their original cultural identity and the pressure to adopt a new one. Hutnik

(1991) suggests that immigration produces four possible identity positions: separation from an ethnic group, assimilation with the majority culture, integration with both an ethnic culture and majority culture and marginalisation from either culture. Acculturation has been described as a process of navigating between the ‘practices, values and identities’ of the country of origin and host cultures (Oppedal *et al.*, 2020). Bicultural identity (Berry, 1997) is the idea that people experience two cultures simultaneously. It has been suggested that migrant children and young people acculturate better than adults, as they acquire language faster and have greater exposure to their new culture through attending school or college (Lustig *et al.*, 2004). However, Phillimore (2021) criticised Berry’s model for placing emphasis on the need for individuals to integrate, ignoring the role played by the host community and wider societal structures.

Several scholars have explored the turning points as UASYP transition into adulthood (Chase, 2020; Gimeno-Monterde *et al.*, 2021). Some suggest that young people face a ‘double transition’ (Kohli, 2009). Firstly, young people must transition from youth into adulthood (Belloni, 2020) and secondly, they must transition out of care and into independent living (Chase 2019). Meloni (2019) noted that the young people in her study ‘experienced the transition into adulthood as a sudden and violent abandonment by institutions’ (p.426) and neoliberal discourses assumed that young people passed into adulthood seamlessly to become responsible adults. These turning point can be problematic as they may force young people back into the hands of traffickers (Save the Children, 2022) or force young people to disappear (ECPAT, 2020). Clayton *et al.* (2019) found that UASYP had a fragmented sense of self because of the precarity around their asylum application and the uncertainty around turning 18. Similarly, Chase (2013) found that turning 18, combined with precarious immigration status, exacerbated mental health challenges for many young people. There has been little research on the identity development of UASYP and how this intersects with navigating acculturative processes, bar a few notable exceptions (Chase, 2013; Allsopp and Chase, 2019; Chase, 2020). Similarly, as Allsopp and Chase (2019) note, ideas around identity and belonging are often missing from political frameworks around UASYP. Despite being an integral aspect of ‘integration processes’, identity is often ignored in integration discourses (Spencer & Charsley, 2021).

To counter the problematic aspects of identity, some argue that belonging is a more helpful analytical concept when looking at migrant adaptation (Geddes & Favell, 1999; Calhoun,

2003; Fortier, 2000). Belonging refers to group identification, rather than individual identity and can include emotional, political, personal and societal aspects (Wright, 2015). Yuval-Davis (2006) identifies three fundamental aspects of belonging, all of which are important for this study. The first is ‘social locations’, which relates to identity characteristics such as gender, race and class. These positionalities are fluid and may be defined differently by those who experience them, so an unaccompanied young person may prefer not to label themselves as such (Vervliet *et al.*, 2015). The second aspect of belonging is ‘emotional attachments’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This relates to the desire to belong, either individually or collectively. Belonging is negotiated between young people, others and how they resettle into their host society. Wernesjö (2014) highlights the idea of ‘conditional belonging’, whereby belonging is dependent on how accepted young people are by the local community. Belonging is also tied up with hopes for the future and studies have shown that UASYP often struggle to envisage a future because of the uncertainty of their present situation (Chase, 2013; Allsopp *et al.*, 2015).

A third aspect of belonging is the political aspect (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Immigration policy makes an assumption about nationality and belonging (Malkki, 1995), assuming that young people ‘belong’ in their ‘country of origin’ (Chase and Allsopp, 2013). In the absence of political belonging, it has been argued that asylum seekers create ‘belonging’ through their engagement within their social networks (Hynes, 2011). A final aspect of belonging is ontological security and feeling safe. Developing on the work of Laing (1965) and (Giddens, 1984, 1991), Chase (2013) highlighted the role of ontological security in young people’s positive mental health and wellbeing. Chase (2013) found that ontological security came from having a strong sense of self, however the impact of trauma, the lack of secure immigration status and the stigma associated with the label of asylum seeker all impacted on young people’s sense of self. Security, Chase (2013) noted, came from predictability, routine, and a sense of belonging. Sime (2018) also looked at how migrant children experienced security post migration and highlighted the centrality of social relations in helping them to feel safe.

Kohli (2011) went on to develop of model of resettlement, suggesting that there are three key processes in resettlement for UASYP: safety, belonging and success.

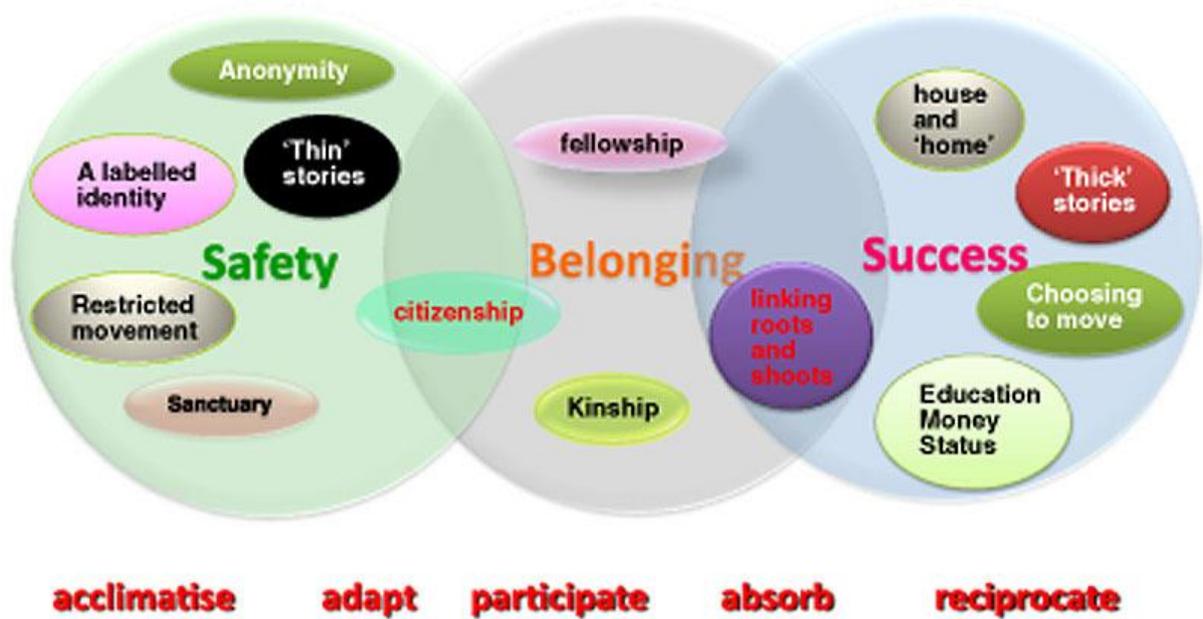


Figure 1: Kohli's (2011) Model of Safety, Belonging and Success after resettlement

In Kohli's model (2011), there are various different stages of resettlement. The first is where young people acclimatise to their new environment, getting used to the shock of different systems, cultural norms and ways of being as outlined in Section 2.1.3. In the second stage, young people learn strategies to live in their new host country, they engage in formal and informal care networks and participate as much as is possible within the bounds of their immigration status. The model posits that after a period, usually years, young people absorb into their new host culture. It is in this period, as Kohli (2011) suggests, that young people can start to consider future possibilities. In the final stage of reciprocation, young people have a desire to 'give back' to their new host country.

In the model, a search for safety is the primary objective of UASYP on arrival in their new host country. Safety relates not only to legal rights to reside in a country, but in having comfort in the everyday, going to school, understanding the systems and having a support network. Belonging relates to the way that UASYP use their own individual characteristics, and their faith or religion to establish different communities of belonging. Finally, success relates to the way that UASYP achieve certain education or material outcomes like finding employment. While the model is useful, it may be assumed from the model that belonging is static. As will be shown in later chapters, belonging is experienced by UASYP as being

dynamic. This study is interested in understanding how belonging ebbs and flows over time and space through different social relationships. As others have noted, the ability to feel safe is at odds with the policy context that keeps young people in a state of ‘uncertainty and insecurity’ (Nelson *et al.*, 2017: 608). In line with this, the following section outlines the Scottish-specific policy context around UASYP, outlining salient aspects of care, education and integration policies.

2.2 The Scottish policy and practice context

While in the UK immigration policy is controlled by Westminster, since 1999, Scotland has had devolved powers in education, health and social care. Prior to 2021, local authorities could opt in to accommodate UASYP, leading to large pockets of young people in cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, since 2021, it is now mandatory for every local authority in Scotland to accommodate young people, if they make up less than 0.1 % of their child population (Home Office, 2023). UASYP arrive in Scotland via a number of routes: via the National Transfer Scheme (Home Office, 2023a), or as ‘spontaneous arrivals’, by lorry (Gupta, 2019) or via trafficking (Scottish Government, 2023). Guardianship Scotland estimate that almost half of UASYP they support have been trafficked (Scottish Refugee Council, 2020). Changes to the National Transfer Scheme outlined above have led to young people being sent to local authorities with relatively little experience of working with migrant communities, and to areas where young people did not have access to cultural food and religious practices or appropriate support from social services (Camps *et al.*, 2023). The study also highlighted an inconsistency across local authorities in Scotland in their responses to UASYP (Camps *et al.*, 2023).

Since the formation of Guardianship Scotland (formerly Scottish Guardianship Service) in 2010, all UASYP in Scotland have a nominated guardian to help them navigate the asylum and welfare systems (Scottish Refugee Council, 2023). Since April 2023, this statutory service also provides young people who have been trafficked with an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (Scottish Government, n.d. a). The service was developed following a report by Hopkins and Hill in 2006, which recommended that UASYP required an independent adult other than their social worker to advocate for them. Guardianship Scotland currently supports 730 UASYP, the majority of which are male, and demand for the service is said to be increasing (Scottish Refugee Council, 2023). The Home Office does not publish numbers by nation, so it is difficult to establish exact numbers of UASYP in Scotland (Grant

et al., 2024). The following sections outline Scotland's policy responses to UASYP in terms of care, education and integration.

2.2.1 Care policy

UASYP are considered 'looked after children' (LAC) and local authorities (LAs) in Scotland are responsible for providing accommodation, health, education, care and legal services for young people under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Prior to 2013, LAs were only obliged to accommodate those under 18 years old (Ramsay, 2020). However, following the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, young people can now receive support until the age of 26, if required (Scottish Government, n.d. a). All LAC in Scotland should have access to the same care provision, including planning for them leaving care. The Independent Care Review was commissioned in 2016 to review the care system in Scotland, and it published 'The Promise' (Scottish Government, n.d. b) in 2020, a plan related to Scotland's commitment to care-experienced young people, including UASYP. All care leavers in Scotland can now access a bursary to access further or higher education at any point, after the age cap of 26 was lifted in 2020. However, despite positive developments like these, the unique needs of UASYP, in terms of trauma and possible experiences of trafficking, are missing from The Promise.

2.2.2 Education policy

Education is deemed to be a marker of successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). In Scotland, UASYP under 16 tend to be placed in schools, while those over 16 are often placed in college (Grant *et al.*, 2024). The education system in Scotland was 'considered to be the service operating best for refugee children' and McBride *et al.* (2018) noted that asylum seeking and refugee children were 'thriving' in school, once they were allocated a place (p.7-8). A study by Camps *et al.* (2023) found that school helped UASYP in Scotland with language acquisition and to develop friendships. However, UASYP have particular educational needs because of their interrupted educational journeys, and for some they have had no formal education prior to migration (Lucas *et al.*, 2019). LAs are legally obliged to provide additional support for LAC and The Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004, updated in 2009, mandates that schools should address the needs of bilingual learners (Education Scotland, 2017). However, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are oversubscribed in Scotland and a report by Sella and Kay (2023) noted that, at the start of 2021, there were 12,000 people on waiting lists for ESOL classes. In 2020, the Scottish Government incorporated ESOL provision into its larger Adult Learning Strategy,

which Sella and Kay (n.d.) argue will exacerbate problems in a system that is currently overstretched and under-resourced. In Scotland, there is currently only one specific college course for UASYP (16+ ESOL Routes to Learning), which is currently oversubscribed (Lucas *et al.*, 2019). Camps *et al.* (2023) found that UASYP with additional support needs faced significant waiting times for accessing support, which was complicated by language barriers and issues around trauma. Young people's geographical location impacted on their engagement in education and leisure activities, because of lack of sufficient funding across local authorities to provide universal provision across Scotland (Camps *et al.*, 2023). Other issues highlighted in the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018) include a lack understanding about the immigration statuses of young people among education practitioners and a lack of recognition of prior learning. Like with the care policies mentioned above, Rigby *et al.* (2018) highlighted that UASYP are not mentioned in the education policy 'Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People' (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2022), which has been presented as a flagship policy for education in Scotland.

2.2.3 Integration policy

It is important to note that integration is a contested concept with no universally accepted definition (Castles *et al.*, 2001). Integration requires that migrants are incorporated into multiple legal, socio-economic, religious, political, and cultural domains (Oliver & Gidley, 2015). In contrast to the harsh UK immigration policy, it is generally accepted that Scotland has a more liberal approach to immigration (Crawley & Kohli, 2013; Piacentini *et al.*, 2019). Scotland has a clear strategy of supporting the integration of asylum seekers and refugees and its first integration strategy *The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2014-17) recognised that integration must be a two-way process between host community and newcomers. A follow up *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (NSRIS) (Scottish Government, 2018-2022) set out its vision for a 'welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive'. One of its five key principles relates to creating inclusive communities in Scotland and creating 'welcoming and cohesive communities', where asylum seekers and refugees can build 'diverse relationships and connections'. The newest version of the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2024) offers a more nuanced definition of integration, suggesting that the concept is multidirectional, multilingual, an intercultural process, restorative and inclusive. Ager and Strang's seminal integration framework (2008) is the basis for the NSRIS (Scottish

Government, 2017; 2018; 2024) and it identifies ten indicators of successful integration. Markers and means of integration include employment, housing, education and health. Central to achieving these are rights and citizenship. Another two indicators that facilitate this process, include language/cultural knowledge and safety and stability. The final three indicators of successful integration relate to social connections. Social bonds include relationships with ‘in group’ peers, those the from a similar ethnic background or community. Social bridges relate to relationships outside of an immediate network, so this may include ‘outgroup’ peers. Finally, social links relate to connections to those involved in institutions. Scholars suggest that while UASYP are mentioned in the strategy, in relation to the need to access services, language classes and support for trauma, the strategy does not fully consider the complexity of young people’s lives (Rigby *et al.*, 2018).

An evaluation of the NSRIS (2018-2022) published by the Scottish Government in 2023 highlighted some of the barriers to resettlement for asylum-seekers and refugees in Scotland. However, UASYP were not mentioned specifically in this. Challenges identified were the inability to develop relationships, experiences of racism or exclusion because of lack of cultural understanding, social isolation because of time spent waiting for asylum claims to be processed, as well as difficulties accessing transport, education and employment. The strategy identified further challenges relating to the difficulty of accessing rights and entitlement, in particular the lack of accessible information, language difficulties, lack of access to interpreters and digital exclusion. Challenges to accessing employment revolved around lack of legal status to access work, qualifications or previous experience not being recognised and limited English language skills. A third area of resettlement barriers identified in the evaluation related to access to services, which were exacerbated by insufficient ESOL provision, differences in provision across local authorities, the cost of transport/lack of appropriate transport and limited funding for organisations.

Importantly, none of barriers identified in the evaluation above related specifically to UASYP, who represent a group with unique needs. Indeed, while time is mentioned as a barrier in the strategy, more exploration is needed to explore how UASYP experience time, not only in relation to time spent waiting for an asylum claim to be processed, but in relation to their developmental liminality. A report by the Scottish Government (2019) looking at the evidence of refugee integration found that, of the 174 studies included in the study that explored refugee integration, there were no studies which considered the integration of

asylum seeking and refugee children specifically (Rahbari-K & Scottish Government, 2019). Since then, there has been some work in Scotland looking at how UASYP engage with peer connections (Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023) and their engagement with education (Grant *et al.*, 2024). However, as it will be shown in the next chapter, no studies have considered the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting the resettlement of UASYP, making this study novel and timely.

2.2.4 Problematising static integration discourses

Integration is often conceived as being a ‘positive outcome of migration’ (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023), which disguises the fact that it is a tool for governance and a way to ‘other’ migrants. Some posit that integration as a concept is rooted in colonialism and that it reproduces racist discourses that criminalise migrants (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023). Hill (2024) points out that integration discourse is linked to colonial power because it assumes ‘universal rights and values’ (p.129), based around liberal democratic values from the Global North. Hill (2024) also posits that policies assume that migrantised ‘others’ are ‘value-deficient’ (p.129) and integration is conditional on being able to adopt these liberal values.

Integration discourses create narratives between majority and minority cultures (Rytter, 2018), which in turn create narratives of ‘us and them’, belonging and non-belonging (Korteweg, 2017). Integration ties into a sense of ‘national belonging’ (Sigona, 2005), however as others have noted, countries are not homogenous entities (Castles *et al.*, 2003). Some have pointed out the contradiction that asylum seekers are expected to integrate, while there is ‘ambiguity around their right to stay’ (Lems, 2020: 406) and they lack rights which enable engagement in the activities needed to ‘integrate’ in the first place (Mulvey, 2010). Some suggest that the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* is adult-centric, and that UASYP are mostly absent from the strategy (Rigby *et al.*, 2018). The policy attempts to align UASYP with all young people in Scotland, dismissing the specific needs of UASYP and the complex political and social realities of their lives.

The indicators of integration as articulated in the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) include employment, education, secure housing and health and the newest version of the strategy recognises the importance of early integration into these areas to promote better health and well-being outcomes. However, these indicators of successful integration are ‘functional’ (Ager and Strang, 2008) and they rely on ‘narrow determinants and outcomes’ (Grzymala-

Kazlowska, 2016), ignoring the ‘psycho-social adaptation’ (p.1126) of young people. Less attention has been paid to the role of social integration, which includes developing a sense of belonging (Phillimore, 2012). Social connections are integral to the process of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014). The NRSIS (Scottish Government, 2024) recognises their centrality in helping asylum seekers and refugees to access services. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, young people’s networks ebb and flow over time and space. The way that UASYP experience social relations is dictated by wider structures (Chase 2020; Vera Espinoza *et al*, 2023) including where they are accommodated, their ability to access English language provision and educational pathways.

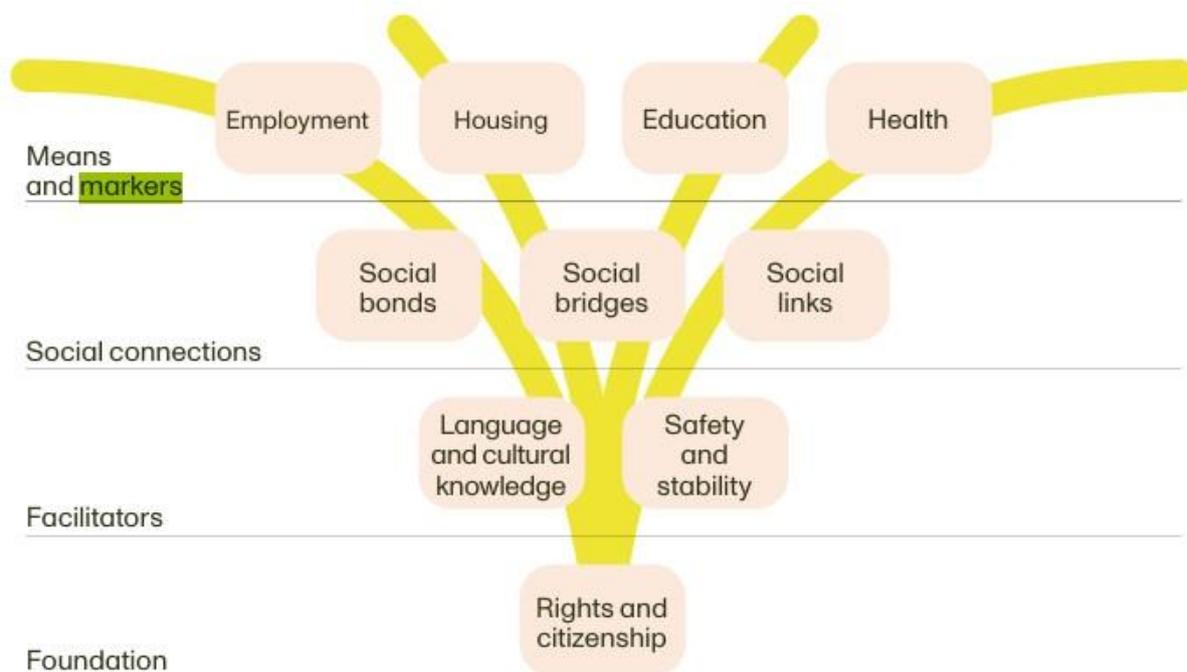


Figure 2: Indicators of integration outlined in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (Scottish Government, 2024)

For UASYP, integration is even more complex as they occupy a unique position of developmental liminality, in between childhood and adulthood (Turner, 1969). It is important to note that childhood and youth are not considered universal concepts, rather they are culturally determined (Ensor & Gozdzia, 2010). Eurocentric life course transitions that mark the transition into adulthood in a Western context, such as education or moving out from family homes may not be applicable in other cultural contexts. The positioning of UASYP as

‘children’ is grounded in Western normative ideals of childhood. Normative assumptions of academic achievement as being a successful indicator of integration disregard the fact that UASYP may have had little formal education in their country of origin, or their likely disrupted education journeys. Indeed, the focus on individualised markers of success, as conceptualised in the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024), may not be relevant for those who come from more collectivist societies (Winkens *et al.*, 2023).

Fixed notions about integration are also problematic (Ryan & Mulholland, 2015), as they assume that migrants are either ‘fully integrated or transnational’ (Barglowski & Bonfert, 2023). This binarism ignores the dynamic aspects of identity and belonging which ebb and flow over time and space as young people navigate their asylum journey (Chase and Allsopp, 2020). Equally, integration discourse makes assumptions about how migrants settle, the relations they engage in and the spaces they should occupy (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023). While the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) recognises that integration is a two-way process between host communities and newcomers, it ignores the influences of wider transnational relationships (Barglowski & Bonfert, 2023) and the fact that UASYP occupy local, global and transnational places (Moskal, 2015). Despite the assumption that integration is a two-way process, it is important to note that it is not an equal process, rather it is rigged in favour of the host culture (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023).

In light of these problematic aspects of integration discourse, in this thesis the term ‘resettlement’ will be used, to refer to the act of arriving in Scotland and having to negotiate new ways of living and learning. The term resettlement recognises that the ability to start a new life in Scotland is dictated by the wider socio-political context around young people, where they are accommodated, educated etc. Central to this study is making sense of the way that UASYP engage in different social relations as they resettle in Scotland, with a focus on mentoring and befriending. In particular, the study will consider if these social relations align or misalign with assumptions presented in the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2024). The sections above have outlined the policy context around UASYP, which as it will be argued later in the thesis, is integral when looking at any care interventions intended to support UASYP. The following section outlines how UASYP are framed in public discourses including media, policy and academia. It has been argued that the ‘politics of bounding’ (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), or put more simply, the categorisation of young people, is problematic. This categorisation influences policymaking (Ensor & Gozdzia, 2010), public

opinion, and even how young people see themselves (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Some have suggested that the framing of young people in public discourse also has an influence on how UASYP are viewed by professionals, and, in turn, on what interventions are deemed appropriate (Stretmo & Hammarén, 2022; Meetoo & Rosen, 2024).

2.3 The framing of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in public discourse

While child migration is an age-old phenomenon, it has only recently become more ‘visible’ (Heidbrink, 2014), following policy developments like the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). While UASYP are not a homogenous group, they are often ascribed labels which assume all of them to be the same (Chase *et al.*, 2019). Narratives around child migrants are wide-ranging and contradictory, ranging from ‘victim’, ‘delinquent’ or ‘illegal’ to ‘terrorist’ (Heidrink, 2014: 14). These narratives differ across law, media and institutions. The following section outlines some of the categories ascribed to UASYP and problematises the political bounding of these categories. Decontextualised and simplistic narratives lack a nuanced understanding of the reality of young people’s lives and ignore the dynamic and fluid nature of social categories, as young people move across and within them (Becker Herbst *et al.*, 2018).

2.3.1 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and media

Media stories around UASYP tend to be polarised, focussing either on the humanitarian or the political aspects of young people’s lives. On the one hand, UASYP are seen as less ‘deviant’ than adult asylum seekers and the category of ‘unaccompanied’ highlights a particular vulnerability (Rigby *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, stories about ‘bogus’ migrants posing as children intending to cheat the asylum system disrupt these humanitarian narratives (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016; Chase, 2020; Chase & Allsopp, 2020). Prior to October 2016, media narratives represented UASYP as ‘traumatised’ (Rosen and Crafter, 2018: 72). However, with the arrival of young people under the Dubs Amendment, where the UK committed to receiving 480 UASYP, media stories became more ‘accusatory’ (Rosen and Crafter, 2018). News stories questioned the authenticity of the ‘children’ who arrived with facial hair (McLaughlin, 2018) and there was indignation from the UK press that UASYP from the Calais Jungle were teenagers and not younger children (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Some have suggested that UASYP who do not conform to the notion of innocent children are seen as non-children (McLaughlin, 2018). Others posit that UASYP are seen as a threat to national security (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019). These polarised narratives of ‘good’ and ‘bad’

migrants, some suggest, help to justify hostile immigration policy (Rigby *et al.*, 2021). Others posit that these polarised media discourses can have an influence on how social workers engage with UASYP and can influence the ‘culture of disbelief’ around young people (Clayton *et al.*, 2019).

2.3.2 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and policy

UASYP fall between two contradictory policy agendas: immigration and children (Lucas *et al.*, 2019; Lems *et al.*, 2019). While UK immigration policy is harsh and exclusionary (Grierson, 2018; Rosen *et al.*, 2021), the category of ‘unaccompanied’ offers special protection. However, some suggest that the category of unaccompanied is ‘ambiguous’ (Wernesjö, 2020), as it challenges hegemonic ideals around childhood and adulthood (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Heidbrink, 2014). Scholars have problematised universal definitions of children in the UNCRC (1989) (Terrio, 2008; Heidbrink, 2014; Allsopp & Chase, 2019), which may conflict with the reality of young people’s lives. These polarised discourses in policy may filter down into institutions and there is debate in social work around whether UASYP should be considered ‘children’ first and ‘asylum-seekers’ second. Kohli and Mather (2003) argue that UASYP should be treated as children above all, while McLaughlin (2018) suggests that ignoring the category of ‘asylum seeker’ negates the complex socio-political reality of young people’s lives. The way that young people are framed is important, as it informs the social interventions implemented to help support them.

Another polarised policy agenda relates to the language used around the ways that UASYP enter the UK, either ‘legally’ or ‘illegally’. Rigby *et al.* (2021) conducted a critical discourse analysis of ‘*Safeguarding strategy: Unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children*’ (Home Office, 2017) and found that the policy made a distinction between those who arrived via legal routes, compared to those who entered illegally. Rigby *et al.* (2021) also identified a risk narrative, which suggests that children either ‘chose’ to embark on risky journeys or they ‘chose’ safer routes. This silences the political context around UASYP and negates the structural factors that force young people to leave. Following the ‘so-called’ refugee crisis in 2015, UASYP who were in different parts of Europe could travel to the UK legally via the Dubs Amendment (Rigby *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, young people could come to the UK via the EU family reunification law Dublin III Regulation. Since the UK left the EU in 2020, neither of these options are available for UASYP. Some suggest that there are currently few state-

sanctioned entry routes in the UK, which force young people to embark on dangerous journeys (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). The organisation Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (2020) reports that in the year 2019 alone, over 4,550 children were identified as victims of trafficking and modern slavery. Over half of these children were trafficked for labour exploitation (54%), while others were trafficked for sexual exploitation (14%), criminal exploitation (15%), and domestic servitude (3%) (ECPAT, 2020). Some have suggested that the Nationality and Border Act (2022), outlined in Section 2.1.2, will make UASYP more susceptible to trafficking (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, formal resettlement routes such as the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme were suspended in March 2020, as part of the COVID-19 pandemic measures and both schemes closed in 2021 (UK Government, 2021). More recently, the UK Government issued guidance to immigration caseworkers warning that anyone entering the country illegally may be refused citizenship (UK Government, 2025).

2.3.3 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and academia/institutions

Academic literature around UASYP tends to be polarised, focussing either on the agency and resilience of young people (Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan, 2010; Eide and Hjern, 2013) or their vulnerability and need of protection (Weiss, 2015; Jensen *et al.*, 2019). Others suggest that these views around UASYP sway between the categories of vulnerable child, who lack agency, and a dangerous 'other' (Crawley, 2010; Ottosson *et al.*, 2017). Otto (2020) suggests that, rather than being positioned as teenagers, UASYP are framed as being on either end of the child-adult spectrum. The Western notion of childhood relates to ideas around vulnerability and innocence, and it is assumed that a child is 'overwhelmingly dependent' on the care of adults (Rosen *et al.*, 2021: 1650). UASYP are framed as vulnerable because of the intersection of age and precarious migration status (El Baba and Colucci 2018; Höhne *et al.*, 2022) and their experiences of 'loss, uprooting, separation and trauma' (Wernesjö, 2012: 495).

UASYP are often also framed as being devoid of agency and choice regarding their decisions to migrate (Crawley, 2010). However, several point out the complexity involved in decision-making. Belloni (2020) found that young people were active in decisions around their migration journeys and often choose to leave without the consent of their family. This notion of 'independent agency' threatens hegemonic ideas around childhood and innocence. Crawley (2010) posits that young people with too much agency can be seen as 'unchild-like'.

It has been suggested that young people can internalise these negative images, impacting on their sense of self (Heidbrink, 2014; Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Some have also pointed out that discourses around vulnerability may divide along gender lines (Camps *et al.*, 2023). Wells (2009) found that, post-arrival, young girls tended to need more therapeutic support, while young males required more support to mitigate social exclusion.

UASYP are often seen as ‘traumatised,’ however it is important to note that language around trauma is not universal and it is a disputed concept. This is because what constitutes a ‘normal response’ to stress is culturally determined (Tummala-Narra, 2007). Hughes (2019) notes that therapeutic approaches like cognitive behavioural therapy tend to be offered to UASYP, however this focus on the ‘individual’ negates the political context of young peoples’ lives. Therapy is useful for people who have experienced trauma and who are now in a position of safety (Hughes, 2019), however, young people may be subject to ongoing instability because of the asylum system. Furthermore, the individual approach to trauma informed therapy can undermine the protection provided by the wider community (Ungar and Liebenberg, 2011).

Vulnerability is a contested term (Daniel, 2010) and Fawcett (2009) notes that the concept is too rigid and it fails to account for individuals’ experiences (p.476). Even if young people are not vulnerable, they are made vulnerable by the asylum system (Allsopp & Chase, 2019; Chase, 2020; Malloch & Rigby, 2020). Ensor (2010) challenges the ‘universal victimhood’ ascribed to UASYP and the automatic assumption that UASYP suffer trauma because of their age, rather than ‘as a consequence of the conditions and politicized precarity of such journeys’ (Rosen and Crafter, 2018: 68). Daly and Smith (2021) posit that ethnocentric narratives around trauma are unhelpful, as they downplay the resilience of young people. An emerging body of work has focussed on the resilience and strengths of young people as they navigate their new lives. Chase (2019) found that UASYP gained a sense of security through friendships, social networks, support from civil society organisations and religion. Several scholars have also identified the centrality of religion as a coping strategy in allowing young people to develop resilience (Ni Raghallaigh, 2010; Hoare, 2022). The role of education has been highlighted as being significant in helping UASYP to ‘imagine’ futures (Chase, 2017) and give a sense of belonging (Dryden-Peterson, 2022). These aspects will be revisited later in the thesis in greater detail.

2.3.4 Problematising dichotomous categories and polarised narratives

Feminist scholars like Bacchi (2017) problematise the categorising of groups of people, arguing that categories are socially constructed, rather than naturally occurring. Bacchi (2017) recognises that these social categories become normalised and need to be critically interrogated. In ignoring the social construction of these categories, researchers can become ‘complicit’ in reproducing these polarised narratives (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Studies that focus on the trauma of UASYP run the risk of pathologising young people (Hynes 2011) and ‘constructing’ young them as passive and in need of protection (Wernesjö, 2012). By focussing only on the vulnerability of young people, researchers may ‘become active in the process of vulnerabilisation’ (Chase *et al.*, 2019: 463). Conversely, constructing young people as agentic, can deny their need for protection (Chase *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, young people may be resilient in one aspect of their life and less so in another.

Similarly, ascribing the category of ‘unaccompanied’ can homogenise and over-simplify young people’s experiences, generating narratives of those who are ‘deserving’ and those who are not, those are vulnerable and those who are not (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Meeto & Rosen, 2024). Polarised and decontextualised narratives are unhelpful as they influence public opinion about UASYP, academic and policy debates around UASYP and even the views of Home Office officials, who have the power to decide the outcome of asylum applications (Ensor, 2010; Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Some have suggested that the framing of young people in public discourse has an influence on how UASYP are viewed by professionals and in turn what interventions are deemed appropriate (Stretmo & Hammarén, 2022; Meeto & Rosen, 2024). Camps *et al.* (2023) found that discourses around childhood and migration impacted on how practitioners engaged in supporting UASYP in Scotland. Indeed Clayton *et al.* (2019) recognise that this tension between welfare and control are an impediment to providing care for UASYP. Some studies even suggest that these narratives can influence how young people perceive themselves (Verkuyten *et al.*, 2012; Clayton *et al.*, 2019; Lögdberg *et al.*, 2023). The problem with framing UASYP through a lens of vulnerability or agency is that it ignores how young people see themselves (Wernesjö, 2012). These binary categories ignore the fact that people’s experiences and motivations can shift as they travel through space and time (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Young people can be both vulnerable and agentic, the categories are not ‘mutually exclusive’ (Chase *et al.*, 2019). Central to this study was exploring the intersection between these categories, as young people navigate complex asylum journeys and their own views on labels ascribed to them.

2.4 Gaps in knowledge

The above review shows that there is a gap in academic knowledge on how UASYP experience identity, belonging and resettlement in Scotland. Apart from a recent study that looked at barriers to resettlement for UASYP in Scotland in terms of engagement in education and leisure (Camps *et al.*, 2023), few studies have explored the resettlement challenges for UASYP in Scotland. While the Scottish Government's recent report (2023) on the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* highlight the barriers to resettlement for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland, the unique needs of UASYP are missing from this. As noted in Section 2.1.4, policy rarely accounts for aspects of identity and belonging in the lives of UASYP and these are rarely factored into integration discourse (Spencer & Charsley, 2021). Static integration discourses dominate policy agendas in the UK, ignoring the way that UASYP experience time, space and relationships. Most studies on the belonging of UASYP have been conducted in Scandinavian countries and little is known about how UASYP negotiate belonging and resettlement in the UK and more specifically Scotland. Following on from scholars who have done this elsewhere, like Kaukko and Forsberg (2018), Verdasco (2018), Moberg Stephenson and Källström (2020) and Ögtem-Young (2023), this study explores how young people negotiate belonging and resettlement, but with a focus on Scotland. It adds insights into the wider barriers to resettlement which are specific to UASYP in Scotland, looking at the practical, acculturative, socio-emotional, psychological, legal and developmental challenges that UASYP encounter.

Discourses that frame UASYP in binary ways, as being either children or asylum seekers, ignore the way that young people think about themselves (Wernesjö, 2012). This study aims to shed light on how UASYP experience the categories of 'child' and 'asylum-seeker', how they experience vulnerability and agency, belonging and non-belonging and how these social locations support or hinder their resettlement in Scotland. Considering the binary framing of UASYP in media, academia and policy highlighted in this chapter, this study aims to explore the complexity and contradictions of how UASYP experience the world. A more helpful position, as will be argued later, is to consider young people's identities as contradictory and complex: as children and asylum seekers, with complex needs and as 'ordinary' teenagers, as agentic and vulnerable. UASYP occupy a unique phase of 'in-betweenness' and it will be argued later that liminality is a useful lens to explore the way that young people are both in-between social categories, but also the way they move in and out of categories across time

and space. In doing so, the study adds theoretical and empirical insights into knowledge around liminality within refugee integration literature.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the policy context around UASYP in Scotland and the salient aspects of care, education and integration policy. It also problematised static integration discourses, which negate the way that young people experience time, space and relationships. The chapter has argued that the polarised framing of UASYP in public discourse is problematic as it negates the complex reality of young people's lives. The following chapter outlines the complex support structures around UASYP and situates mentoring and befriending within these.

Chapter 3: Wider care structures for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

Overview

This chapter situates mentoring and befriending with UASYP in wider structures of care. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part outlines the support structures for UASYP including professional networks, foster carers, transnational ties and peer support and highlights empirical work looking at these support structures. Professional relations are complex and a source of contradictory feelings for UASYP, however academic discourses tend to ignore the role played by formal and informal mentors and befrienders. Part two starts by clarifying mentoring and befriending definitions and outlines typologies of different programmes, before problematising traditional models of mentoring and highlighting the need for more critical, culturally appropriate models for UASYP. The chapter finishes by outlining gaps in knowledge around the subject and makes explicit how this thesis seeks to address these.

3.1 Care structures around unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

Studies have long shown that having strong social support alleviates many of the daily stressors that UASYP experience (Ní Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010; Kohli, 2011; Jensen *et al.*, 2019; Höhne *et al.*, 2022). Social networks provide young people with emotional and practical support (Beirens *et al.*, 2007; Mels *et al.*, 2008; Thommessen *et al.*, 2015; Sirriyeh & Ní Raghallaigh, 2018). Andersson *et al.* (2021) found that being loved for and cared about was a ‘turning point’ for UASYP in Norway. Wade *et al.* (2005) concluded that young people needed three things to resettle in their new host country: a safe place to live, continuity with past relationships and opportunities to create new ones. However, caring relationships are not value-free, rather they are contradictory (Meetoo & Rosen, 2024) and loaded with power (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Since UASYP are looked after by the state, it is important to examine the formal and informal structures around young people, in order to situate the role of mentoring and befriending.

In Scotland, young people have a wide network of professional relationships, including social workers, foster carers, guardians, community and peer networks. Lee (2012) notes that professional support networks can be divided into four: social workers, other statutory or voluntary organisations, foster carers/residential care and educational and religious professionals. Others suggest that the main structural relationships for UASYP can be

represented by a triangle, linking the young person, the Home Office and social care provision (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Within this triangle, Clayton *et al.* (2019) suggest, care and control overlap. Rosen *et al.* (2021) argue that the care provided by state may be incompatible with young people's experiences of being cared for or caring for others. Scholars have explored the contradictory nature of professional support networks for UASYP, which are often time-bound and age-limited (Meloni, 2019; Belloni, 2020; Otto, 2020). It is important to note that care networks are not static, rather they are dynamic and change as young people move through the asylum system. The following sections outlines the professional relations that young people are engaged in and highlights empirical work around these relations.

3.1.1 Professional support

Young people's 'care trajectories' vary a great deal (De Graeve & Bex, 2016). As was noted in Chapter 2, UASYP are looked after by the local authority they are accommodated in. Since the formation of the Guardianship Scotland Service (formerly the Scottish Guardianship Service) in 2010, all UASYP in Scotland have a nominated guardian to help them navigate the asylum, legal, welfare and care systems (Scottish Refugee Council, n.d.). Every UASYP in Scotland is also assigned a social worker who has a legal duty of care to safeguard young people. However, the quality of care for UASYP varies across local authorities (Humphris and Sigona, 2017). Social workers are often caught between competing discourses of immigration and child welfare. Professionals are often conflicted between the need to support young people and to control them (Chase, 2010). Ward (2022) recognises that social workers are constrained by resources, time constraints and a lack of suitable training to support UASYP. However, some are critical of these polarised discourses around support for UASYP, whereby social workers are framed as either caring or controlling (Meloni & Humphris, 2021). Instead, they shed light on how social workers conceptualise their responsibility towards UASYP (Meloni & Humphris, 2021).

Empirical research has shown that young people have complex relations with their social workers. Kohli (2007) found that social workers fell into three categories: practical helpers who focussed on the present, therapeutically minded practitioners, and trusted companions. Others found that the professional boundaries imposed by professionals could be a source of tension, which could lead to a lack of trust (Hynes, 2011; Eide *et al.*, 2020; Andersson, 2021). Professional relationships could also be a source of anxiety for UASYP because of the

‘cultural insensitivity’ of practitioners (Lekkai, 2020:39). Wilding (2017) also concluded that the quality of the relationship with social workers varied across participants. For UASYP in Sweden, social workers represented both ‘a secure base and a source of rejection’ (Eriksson *et al.*, 2019: 372). Finally, Kaukko and Wernesjö (2017) found that young people’s positionalities changed in relation to professional support, at times UASYP accepted the power differential between themselves and social workers, while at other times they challenged it or were critical of the care they received.

Devenney (2020) conducted interviews with both social workers and UASYP in England and she suggests that social workers need to be re-framed as ‘co-navigators’, enabling young people to navigate through their asylum journey. While in theory, social workers are responsible for UASYP, Meloni and Humphris (2021) found that in practice this often fell to other professionals such as housing support workers or teachers. They also found that social workers often had different understandings of their responsibility towards UASYP, which led to ‘gaps of care’ (p.3255), which were exacerbated by austerity measures. Some social workers occupied ‘ambiguous positioning’ sitting somewhere between a parental figure and a social worker (Meloni & Humphris, 2021). Some scholars posit that the ‘uncomfortable reality’ that some young people will not receive a positive outcome from their asylum case, may undermine the relations that UASYP have with care professionals (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). The conceptualising of care tends to shy away from the word ‘love’ and Kauhanen *et al.* (2022) found that institutional barriers impacted on professionals building loving relations, however they also found that UASYP created ‘pockets of love’ (p.5) with different staff members and that these supported the resettlement of young people. As will be discussed later in the chapter, it is within the context of these complex and contradictory relations that the need for mentoring and befriending arises.

3.1.2 Foster carers and transnational ties

UASYP are provided with different care structures in Scotland, depending on their age. UASYP under the age of sixteen tend to be placed in foster care, while those over sixteen tend to be placed in supported living or student accommodation. Wade (2019) explored young people’s experiences of care in the UK and found that fostering was a confusing concept for UASYP, who were often placed with families at the last minute. He found that foster families developed one of three types of relationships with young people: family like, temporary home bases and lodgings. Carers who shared either the language, customs or

religion of the young people led to more successful relationships and, the more integrated young people were in the family, the greater their sense of belonging (Wade, 2019). Chase (2020) found that when UASYP experienced family-like relations with their foster carers, these relations continued into adulthood, as young people transitioned out of foster care and into independent living. While studies have shown that a stable foster home can support resilience in young people (Nardone and Correa-Velez, 2016), young people may experience conflicting and ambiguous feelings around their foster family (Wade *et al.*, 2012). These include feelings of being disloyal to family back home, the fear of being rejected by their new family and the awareness that it is not their birth family (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Daly and Smith (2021) wrote an autoethnographic account of their experiences of fostering an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person in Scotland. They reflected on the complexity of caring for a young person who came from a different cultural context and suggest that caring is ‘rendered difficult by the constraints of the system’ (p.7).

Social networks operate transnationally and studies have highlighted the importance of transnational relations in providing both emotional and practical support for UASYP (Hynes, 2011; Wells; 2011; Chase, 2020). However, Ryan *et al.* (2021) highlight that these transnational relationships should not be assumed, given that they ebb and flow through people’s migration journeys. Devenney (2020) found that UASYP engaged in ‘complex and fluid relationships both in the UK and transnationally’ (p.183). Chase (2020) found that maintaining transnational ties were important for young people’s mental health and well-being. Other scholars recognise that transnational family ties provide young refugees with social, material, and emotional support (Seidel *et al.*, 2022). Baldassar and Merla (2014) found that sending money back home was part of a ‘care circulation’ (p.8). However, others have noted that transnational ties could be complex and contradictory (Ryan, 2018; Ryan, 2023). UASYP may have fled from neglectful families ties (Malloch & Rigby, 2020) and these relations may be exclusionary (Wimark, 2019). However, as will be argued later, these transnational ties are important when looking at formal and informal mentoring with UASYP.

3.1.3 Peer support networks

Hiles *et al.* (2013) have critiqued the ‘rhetoric of social support’ as it suggests a one-directional relationship, where the young person is solely the recipient of support. McDonald (2016) suggests that using the framing of ‘social networks’ is more helpful as it recognises the role that young people can play in supporting each other. Normative views around

children assume that UASYP are vulnerable and dependent on the care of adults (Daniel, 2010). However, this ignores culturally different ideas about childhood and the influence of peer support networks from other young people (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). Granovetter (1973) describes strong ties as those which are longer term and more intimate. Scholars suggest that outside of strong family ties, 'weaker' social ties are important as they provide opportunities to exchange information and to engage in a larger community (Wells, 2011). UASYP who are alone without caregivers may not have developed strong ties and so may be more reliant on weak ties. Wells (2011) found that the young people in her study had more flexible ties and that these ties were formal, linked to institutions, rather than informal. As the input of statutory services reduces as young people approach 18, UASYP are likely to rely more on peer and community networks (Hopkins and Hill 2010; Chase and Allsopp 2013). Indeed, social work has been criticised for focussing too much on practical needs of UASYP, ignoring the need for support from other social networks (Wade *et al.*, 2005; Kohli, 2007). Scholars suggest that academic literature places too much emphasis on the professionals in young people's lives (Wade *et al.*, 2005; Chase, 2013) and Wright (2014) proposes that social work should recognise its limitations and support UASYP to build networks outside of statutory services.

Recently, studies have begun to focus more on the role of peer and community support experiences (Chase, 2020; Rosen *et al.*, 2021). Peer support helps young people to feel a sense of belonging (Allsopp & Chase, 2019; Verdasco, 2019; Chase, 2020; Lubbers *et al.*, 2020). Some suggest that social networks give young people psychological resources which support their 'integration' (De Graeve and Bex, 2017; Sirriyeh and Ní Raghallaigh, 2018). In the absence of family, friendships can take on the role of family members and help UASYP negotiate the challenges of resettlement (Hoare, 2022). Chase (2017) found that without recourse to public funds, friendships among UASYP provided both emotional and practical support. Rosen *et al.* (2021) concluded that young people pooled resources to provide emotional, practical and material assistance for each other. This collectivity is often ignored in policy and practice (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, Leon and Rosen (2023) found that young people felt more comfortable disclosing information about smuggling-related financial debts to peers, rather than professionals.

Social capital is often used to theorise the support provided within migrant networks. Bourdieu (1977) suggest that we possess four types of capital that influence social mobility:

economic, social, cultural and symbolic. While economic capital refers to material resources, social capital refers to the social networks that young people have, in particular connections to professionals. Cultural capital refers to a person's education, which can include knowledge and intellectual skills, while symbolic capital is associated with a person's reputation. The concept of bonding and bridging capital, originally conceptualised by Putnam (2000), has been utilised in UK integration policy to differentiate between ties that are like us in terms of ethnicity, experiences and values, and those which are unlike us. Migrant networks are often assumed to be sources of a certain type of capital including practical, informational, social and emotional. Ryan (2023) however, problematises what she calls the narrow concept of bonding and bridging capital, noting that it should not be assumed that ties provide certain type of support. Ryan (2023) considers what others have called 'preference and opportunity' (Block and Grund, 2014: 192) in friendships. While UASYP can exercise agency in terms of who they engage with, these choices are also subject to wider structural constraints, which dictate the spaces young people occupy. As others have noted, attention must be paid to the spatio-temporal contexts in which social ties emerge (Erel & Ryan, 2019) and how they evolve over time (Lubbers *et al*, 2020). Understanding how networks change over time and space means accounting for how temporality intersects with spatiality (Erel & Ryan, 2019). It also means accounting for how needs change over time and how structures around young people change (Ryan, 2023). Exploring how people engage with social ties, requires examining opportunities and obstacles to engage in new social relations (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019; Ryan, 2023), which will be explored further in Chapter 4.

While the importance of peer support is well documented, scholars also recognise the role of professionals in facilitating these peer networks, acting as 'bridges' in creating social networks for young refugees (Hanley *et al.*, 2018). Osman *et al.* (2020) found that UASYP in Sweden felt that 'facilitated immersion' by social workers and other professionals was a way to support resettlement. While social workers can provide practical support and peers may be a significant source of emotional support, Meloni (2020:433) found that UASYP lacked the moral guidance of 'significant adults' to help to navigate life, which is where mentoring and befriending may come in. Other scholars have explored the role of initiatives like mentoring, and befriending, which facilitate 'organised encounters' between locals and newcomers (Askins & Pain, 2011; Bygnes & Strømsø, 2022).

Sections 3.2.1-3.2.3 have shown the dynamic, complex and contradictory professional and community relations that UASYP are engaged in. However, formal and informal mentors and befrienders tend to be ignored in academic literature. Irby (2020) suggests that the inherent messiness of mentoring and befriending and the lack of a universal definition prevents research on the subject. Mentoring and befriending have long been used as tools to engage marginalised young people in education, youth justice and community youth work. However, much less has been written about the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting the resettlement of UASYP. Mentoring is multi-faceted, poorly defined and under-theorised and the following section aims to summarise the evidence around mentoring and befriending, before conceptualising the value of mentoring and befriending for UASYP more specifically.

3.2 Mentoring and befriending

Searching for literature around mentoring and befriending is challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, terminology is not universal, rather it is culturally specific. Secondly, differences between informal and formal mentoring, as well as mentoring and befriending add an additional layer of complexity. The initial literature search started quite broadly, looking at literature around formal youth mentoring and befriending from the fields of education, psychology and social work. This was then narrowed to consider mentoring and befriending with young refugees and, more specifically, unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. Initially, the literature only considered one-to-one traditional mentoring, however as the study developed, it became clear that other less traditional models, such as group programmes, peer programmes and co-habiting models were equally as important. To account for this complexity, search terms were wide ranging and included: befriending, friendship programmes, buddying, dyadic mentoring, peer mentoring, group mentoring, informal mentoring and natural mentoring. It is important to note that literature searches only included studies in English language, and came predominantly from high-income countries, which may limit insights from other cultural contexts.

Mentoring is an age-old concept, and it has been a common feature of societies since the Middle Ages (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Some suggest that the term ‘mentor’ first appeared 3000 years ago in Homer’s *Odyssey* (Colley, 2001). In the 1970s, mentoring started to be used in the business world, matching more experienced professionals with junior colleagues to help advance their careers (Darwin, 2000). Mentoring also became a common feature of nursing in the 1980s, where new graduate nurses were mentored by a more experienced

practitioner (Block *et al.*, 2005). The concept soon spread into areas like education, psychology and management (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). The first ever national youth mentoring programme, which is still the largest in the world, started in 1921 in the US. The Big Brother/Big Sister (BB/BS) programme had a great influence on the UK (Colley, 2003a, 2003b; Newburn & Shiner, 2006) and in the 1990s, youth mentoring programmes like the BB/BS UK were commonplace. The increase in youth mentoring programmes and the heightened policy interest in mentoring in the 1990s, some argue was a response to socio-economic and cultural shift (Rhodes *et al.*, 2002). In the UK, when New Labour came to power in 1997, mentoring was hailed as a magic bullet to 'tackle social exclusion' (Philip and Spratt, 2007) and mentoring was integrated into education and youth justice.

3.2.1 Definitions of mentoring

In 2000, Roberts recognised the 'definitional quagmire' surrounding mentoring and two decades later, scholars recognise that there is still no consensus on an exact definition (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021; Ziegler *et al.*, 2021). Irby (2020) argues that mentoring has 'multiple definitions that lack a common framework' (p.3) and Clutterbuck (2013) suggests that a lack of clear definition means that it is difficult to replicate studies. Others, however, warn of the dangers of 'homogenising mentoring concepts' (Irby, 2020: 5), suggesting that a single definition may be too constraining. The first approach in attempting to define mentoring recognises that mentoring can have different definitions and practitioners work within their own definition (Miller, 2002). The second approach is one that considers it to be on a continuum. De Vries (2011) identifies mentoring as being on a continuum with more instrumental aims at one end and developmental aims at the other (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Mentoring Continuum (De Vries, 2011)

Mentoring is often conflated with other helping activities like counselling or coaching (Clutterbuck, 2002). While mentors may use counselling skills, the relationship is less directive (Miller, 2002) and more ‘developmentally based’ (Garringer *et al.*, 2017). The rationale often mentioned for mentoring is that certain groups of young people may not have access to social capital and appropriate social support (Erickson *et al.*, 2009). At the core of mentoring is a ‘purposeful and ongoing relationship between a younger person, and an older, unrelated person, which involves the exchange of support, advice, encouragement, and skills development’ (Armitage *et al.*, 2020: 5). There is a consensus that youth mentoring encompasses a supportive relationship characterised by ‘trust, empathy and mutuality’ (Rhodes and DuBois, 2008: 255). Dubois and Karcher (2005) identify three core elements of traditional mentoring: the mentor is more experienced than the mentee, they offer guidance to support the development of the young person, and the relationship has an emotional bond.

A distinction can be made between the US and European models of mentoring, although it has been noted that mentoring in the UK has been influenced greatly by the US (Busse *et al.*, 2018). In the US, mentoring tends to be hierarchical, in that the mentor is older and more powerful (Clutterbuck, 1998). Traditional mentoring in the US is assumed to be ‘unidirectional’ (Chan *et al.*, 2015), in that help flows from mentor to mentee. In Europe, mentoring is more ‘relational and developmental’ (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021: 21), where the mentor has more experience than the mentee, but not necessarily more power. Preston *et al.* (2019) carried out a comparative study of mentoring programmes in the US and Europe and found that mentoring programmes in the US were concerned with increasing the social mobility of young people, while mentoring programmes in Europe coincided with an increase in immigration and programmes were more preoccupied with the need for mentees to acquire linguistic and cultural capital. Preston *et al.* (2019) concluded that programmes in Europe were more bi-directional, in that they were focussed on promoting the intercultural understanding of both mentor and mentee.

Integral to the problem of an agreed definition is the sheer quantity of mentoring programmes that exist, all with different aims and objectives, underlying structures and formats (Colley, 2003b; Philip and Spratt, 2007). Mentoring can take place in a specific context like a school or employment (DuBois & Karcher, 2014), or it can be community-based, where it is not confined to a specific context (Rhodes, 2002). Community-based mentoring is more flexible,

and programmes work across a wide variety of community settings (Keller and Dubois, 2021). Mentoring can also take place online, and e-mentoring is often used to support undergraduates in their academic life (Mullen *et al.*, 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in e-mentoring, as programmes transitioned online. Where the mentoring relationship takes place is important, as it often dictates the boundaries imposed around the relationship. Mullen and Klimaitis (2021) identify nine types of mentoring including: formal mentoring, informal mentoring, diverse mentoring, electronic, co-mentoring/collaborative mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, multi-level mentoring and cultural mentoring.

3.2.1.1 Mentoring and befriending

A distinction must be made between mentoring and befriending, as both terms are often conflated and used interchangeably (MacDonald 2010). Befriending provides friendship for those who lack adequate social support (Peterie, 2018) and has three defining features: it involves a one-to-one relationship, it is a ‘friend-like’ relationship and it ‘involves a negotiation of power between those involved’ (Balaam, 2015: 29). While friendship is defined as a mutually beneficial relationship, befriending involves the befriender being in a more powerful position (Fell and Fell, 2014). It is important to note that even within formal befriending, relationships can vary from ‘professional-like’ relationships to ones which are more of a natural friendship (Thompson *et al.*, 2016). Mentoring and befriending operate on a spectrum (Social Mentoring Research Group, n.d.). While mentoring is more ‘outcome focussed’ (DuBois & Karcher, 2014), befriending is concerned with providing a ‘trusting relationship over time’ (Balaam, 2015). While befriending underpins all aspects of mentoring (Pawson, 2004), mentoring builds on it, adding elements of goal setting to the relationship. Mentoring is more time bound (MacDonald, 2010) and may also involve an element of peer support, while befriending tends to involve longer relationships (MacDonald, 2010) and mentor and mentee are usually from diverse backgrounds (Balaam, 2015). Owing to the definitional issues, some scholars have tried to reconceptualise mentoring and befriending programmes with specific populations by using the umbrella term of ‘social mentoring’ (McGowan *et al.*, 2009; Raithelhuber, 2023). Social mentoring was coined by Gill and Jones (2005) to emphasise the importance of the social aspects of mentoring. Initially, ‘social mentoring’ was conceptualised to refer to mentoring with specific groups like young people who are diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum.

3.2.1.2 Informal and formal mentoring

An important distinction can be made between formal and informal mentors. Formal mentoring involves a programme that is structured with clear objectives (Miller, 2002) and an ‘artificial’ relationship between a young person and an individual not in their social network (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Formal mentoring can range from one-to-one, group and peer mentoring (Dolan, 2012). One-to-one (dyadic) mentoring is the most common type of formal mentoring in the UK (Gannon and Washington, 2019). Dyadic mentoring involves a match between an older or more experienced volunteer and a young person, with the objective of supporting the young person’s personal and social development (Brady *et al.*, 2017). This traditional view of mentoring is to provide encouragement and guidance (DuBois and Karcher, 2014), particularly for those mentees who lack supportive relationships (Eby *et al.*, 2007). The relationship is usually hierarchical and assumes a one-way process of learning, whereby knowledge passes from mentor to mentee. Informal mentors, also known as ‘natural’ mentors come into a young person’s life incidentally through friendship or teaching. Informal mentoring relationships develop organically (Austin *et al.*, 2020) or ‘spontaneously’ (Dolan, 2012: 11). Most academic literature assumes that informal mentors are ‘caring, nonparent adults who provide youth with support and guidance’ (Hagler and Rhodes, 2018: 175), which ignores the role played by peer mentors. Informal mentoring can happen through support groups (Allen and Eby, 2007: 130), including those which are ‘intentionally formed’ (Allen and Eby, 2007: 131) or more naturally occurring, whereby peers come together to support each other.

3.2.1.3 Alternatives to traditional mentoring

While traditional mentoring encompasses a relationship between an older adult and younger mentee, in peer mentoring or near-peer mentoring, both mentor and mentee are of a similar age or background. Some suggest that peer mentoring is less hierarchical and more equalitarian than more traditional models (Osman *et al.*, 2020). Other types of mentoring, like diversity mentoring, have also challenged the concept of traditional mentoring. Here, mentors and mentees differ in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, disability or other group memberships (Ragins, 1997). The rationale behind diversity mentoring is that contact between distinct groups can increase understanding and reduce discrimination, in line with Allport’s (1954) contact theory. However, more than just bringing people together, Bygnes and Strømsø (2022) suggest that these encounters can be a ‘vehicle for long-term inclusion’ (p.2) and can help mentors to ‘negotiate blind spots’ (Hinsdale,

2015). Some suggest that diversity mentoring challenges injustices and creates a sense of solidarity with others (Rosen *et al.*, 2021).

Other alternatives to traditional dyadic mentoring include intergenerational mentoring, where a young person mentors an older person to reduce social isolation or improve technological skills (Breck *et al.*, 2018). Gannon and Washington (2019) recognise that this kind of mentoring can foster healthier relationships between different generations. Reverse mentoring is where younger employees mentor more senior colleagues (Murphy, 2012). This practice first started in 1999, when General Electric's CEO began to implement this model so that younger employees could teach their older colleagues about the Internet (Greengard, 2002). A final alternative to traditional dyadic mentoring is group mentoring, which is less common than one-to-one mentoring and is a way to reach young people who may not enjoy this kind of individualised contact (Kuperminc & Thomason, 2014). In group mentoring, a mentor works with several mentees at once. The rationale is that group mentoring fosters connection and mutual support (Kuperminc & Thomason, 2014). Group mentoring has the potential to bring together older mentors and peer mentors. Some suggest that group mentoring may be more appropriate for culturally diverse groups, particularly ethnic minority groups who may favour more collectivist values (Lindsay-Dennis *et al.*, 2011) and scholars highlight the benefits of group mentoring with immigrant youth (DuBois *et al.*, 2002). For ethnic minority young people, group mentoring can create a sense of belonging (Cawood & Wood, 2014) and can support young people who have newly arrived to adjust to a new cultural setting (Birman and Morland, 2014).

This sheer number of mentoring programmes available, all with different formats, goals and structures, as well as the subtle differences between mentoring and befriending make studying it challenging. However, central to this thesis is making sense of the diversity of mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP in Scotland. The following section looks at the empirical evidence around the effectiveness of mentoring and befriending, while also exposing the complexities of conducting research in this area and problematising the focus on individual mentors in supporting young people.

3.2.2 The effectiveness of mentoring and befriending

It was not until the millennium that studies evaluating the 'effectiveness' of mentoring began to appear (DuBois *et al.*, 2002). While there was a surge in academic literature on mentoring

around this time, this appears to plateau around 2010, perhaps coinciding with a change of UK government and a lack political interest in the subject. Studies vary, with some looking at the individual level outcomes for the mentee, to wider community and societal benefits. Some have found that mentoring expands opportunities for young people, reduces antisocial behaviour and helps young people to integrate into the community (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Others suggest that mentoring reduces loneliness, social isolation and improves relationships (Goldner and Maysless, 2009). Mentoring can also be ‘mutually beneficial’ for both mentor and mentee (Esterhuizen and Murphy, 2007), and studies have found that mentoring gives mentors a sense of satisfaction through helping others, as well as increased emotional intelligence (Miller, 2002).

It is important to note that the plethora of mentoring programmes outlined in Section 3.1.1 is sometimes given as the reason for limited studies on its impact (Miller, 2002). Since programmes never occur in isolation, it is difficult to extrapolate the impact of mentoring from other confounding factors (Ziegler *et al.*, 2021). Most research on mentoring focusses on the role of formal one-to-one mentoring and the impact of an individual mentor on a young person. However, studies point to contradictory findings in relation to the outcomes and effectiveness of mentoring. While some studies have identified positive outcomes associated with formal mentoring, including less risk-taking behaviour and better psychosocial functioning (Dubois and Silverthorn, 2005), other studies conclude that mentoring with young people is at best ‘a ‘modest intervention’ (Cole & Blythe, 2010). Dubois *et al.* (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of 55 mentoring programmes and found a small overall effect size. Similar meta-analyses have found small effect sizes on the psychological, emotional, behavioural, and educational functioning of young people (DuBois *et al.*, 2011; Tolan *et al.*, 2014). However, some argue that the modest effect size can be attributed to the focus on the role of the individual mentor in supporting young people (Liang *et al.*, 2013; Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016), ignoring the role played by other actors in young people’s lives. Similarly, most meta-analyses include studies from a broad range of populations, few focus specifically on studies with populations like UASYP. It may be the case that UASYP have greater potential to develop, given the intersectional inequalities outlined in Chapter 2. More studies are needed which engage UASYP directly, to measure the effect sizes.

It is important to make a distinction between programmes that aim to produce hard or narrow outcomes like increased employment or crime reduction (Keller and Dubois, 2021) and those which aim to produce broader, softer outcomes like improved confidence and self-esteem (Philip *et al.*, 2007). Christensen *et al.* (2020) completed a meta-analysis of studies on one-to-one mentoring that have been conducted between 1975 and 2018 and found that the effect size doubled in targeted programmes, compared to more generic relationship-based ones in five areas: academic functioning, psychological symptoms, social functioning, health problems and cognitive functioning. However, the ambitious aims of mentoring programmes to produce hard outcomes like increased employment or increased educational attainment are problematic when young people are oppressed by structural constraints. In terms of softer outcomes, mentoring has been found to increase a sense of connectedness (Joyce *et al.*, 2010) and inter-cultural friendships (Rhodes and DuBois, 2008), to build confidence, resilience and aspirations among young people (Rhodes and DuBois, 2008; Allen and Eby, 2011) and has been linked to a reduction of hopelessness among mentees (Keating *et al.*, 2002). Eby *et al.* (2008) found that mentoring had most impact on mentees' attitudes and belief systems and, to a lesser degree, education and health outcomes. Studies have also shown that befriending programmes have been associated with improvements in health and happiness, and reductions in depression (Behnia, 2008). The importance of social networks in providing 'practical and emotional support' (Beirens *et al.*, 2007: 220) for young refugees has been well documented. Some suggest that the diverse nature of mentoring means that a 'generic friendship-based model' is the only viable option and programmes default to a 'lighter-touch' support (Christensen *et al.*, 2020).

Most studies on mentoring have been conducted in the US, where the cultural context is different (Busse *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, most studies have tended to focus primarily on school-based mentoring (Dubois *et al.*, 2002; Herrera *et al.*, 2011), which may not be applicable for UASYP. Research on the Big Brother/Big Sister (BB/BS) programme in the US, which matched a young person with an older adult, found that mentoring increased school participation, improved relationships, and decreased drug and alcohol use (Grossman and Tierney, 1998). Herrera *et al.* (2011) looked at the BB/BS programme and found that mentoring improved academic outcomes, mostly in ethnic minority students. Studies have also shown that young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and, who had the support of a non-parental adult, were more likely to enrol in university (Erickson *et al.*, 2009). A randomised control trial of the BB/BS programme in Ireland found that mentoring

supported the positive wellbeing among participants, particularly young people from single parent families (Dolan *et al.*, 2011). The presence of a mentor was found to reduce absenteeism at school and improve educational outcomes (Dolan *et al.*, 2011). Interestingly, Miller (2007) looked at the failure of the BB/BS programme in the UK and concluded that it was unsuccessful because it was not integrated with existing services. Conversely, the success of the BB/BS programme in Ireland was attributed to the fact it was delivered through a well-established organisation, suggesting that the cultural context in which programmes are delivered is important (Brady and Curtin, 2012).

There have been less qualitative studies looking at the processes underpinning mentoring relationships, bar a few notable exceptions. Brady *et al.* (2017) conducted qualitative research looking at the BB/BS programme in the UK and found that mentoring relationships had five functions: concrete or practical, companionship, emotional, esteem and advice. Some suggest that the outcome of a mentoring relationship can simply be interpersonal connections between adults and young people, which as Keller *et al.* (2019) note, can be an aim in and of itself. Scholars note that the length of the mentoring relationship impacts on the effectiveness of youth outcomes. Studies have found that the longer the mentoring relationship, the greater the impact (Rhodes *et al.*, 2017). Mantonavi *et al.* (2020) explored peer mentoring relationships of young people in care in England and found that over time mentees had improved social, emotional and cognitive functions. However, importantly studies have also shown that the positive effects of mentoring dissipate within one to two years (Herrera *et al.*, 2011), perhaps signalling the need for other types of informal mentors and befrienders in young people's lives. More recently, Jones *et al.* (2025) conducted a systematic review looking at studies into formal mentoring and befriending in supporting care-experienced young people and concluded that current evidence about the effectiveness of programmes was limited and that more studies were needed.

In terms of informal mentoring, studies have long shown that having a supportive adult who was not a parent or peer helped young people transition into adulthood (Werner and Smith, 1982). Studies looking at the differences between informal and formal mentoring show more positive results from informal mentoring in terms of the length and quality of relationships (Zimmerman *et al.*, 2002; DuBois and Silverthorn, 2005; Spencer, 2007), as well as better educational outcomes (Dubois and Silverthorn, 2005b; Erickson *et al.*, 2009; Hurd *et al.*, 2012). Research on informal mentoring is however sparse (Allen & Eby, 2007; Weiston-

Serdan & Sánchez, 2017). As Hagler and Rhodes (2018) note, informal mentors ‘cannot be experimentally assigned’ (p.151). Most studies are Western-centred and assume that the mentor and mentee come from the same cultural context. Less attention has been paid to the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting young people to resettle into a new culture or country. The following section looks at empirical studies looking at the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting young asylum seekers and refugees.

3.2.3 Mentoring and befriending with young asylum-seekers and refugees

Despite the proliferation of studies looking at youth mentoring (Bowman *et al.*, 1990; Miller, 2002; Rhodes *et al.*, 2002; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Allen & Eby, 2007; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; DuBois *et al.*, 2011), there are few empirical studies looking at the impact of mentoring programmes with young asylum seekers and refugees (Sánchez-Aragón *et al.*, 2020). The few studies that look at mentoring and befriending with young refugees come from mainland Europe (Prieto-Flores and Gelis, 2018, Raithelhuber, 2018, Alarcón and Prieto-Flores, 2021, Alarcón *et al.*, 2021a, Raithelhuber, 2021, Alarcón and Mirković, 2023, Raithelhuber, 2023) and the US (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). A recent systematic review looking at mentoring and befriending studies in supporting care-experienced young people (Jones *et al.*, 2025) included 91 studies, 64 of which were delivered in the US and only four were from the UK. In total, only four of the programmes included in the study supported young migrants or refugees and only one targeted UASYP specifically, which was in Spain.

One of the first mentoring programs to address the ‘social inclusion’ of immigrant children was the Nightingale program which was launched in Malmö, Sweden, in 1997 and has since been implemented by 27 other universities in six European countries and one in Africa (Prieto-Flores *et al.*, 2016). The programme engages university students to act as mentors to young refugees, and it recognises the reciprocal benefits for the mentor. In the wake of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015, there was a surge in the number of refugee mentoring programmes across Europe that matched refugees with local volunteers (Jaschke *et al.*, 2022). Mentoring has been shown to help young refugees adjust culturally to their new host country (DuBois & Karcher, 2014) and to navigate cultural challenges. The charity Host Nation, run a befriending scheme in London and Manchester, matching young refugees with local people. Host Nation’s befriending relationships are time-bound to three months and emphasise having a positive experience, rather than providing practical support (Host Nation, n.d.). The rationale for this kind of programme is to help reduce social isolation, increase self-

confidence, promote independence, broaden social networks and to support ‘integration’ (Peterie, 2018). A systematic review by Nakeyar *et al.* (2018) found that mentoring helped young refugees to integrate by improving relations with family members, by helping them make friends and helped them to navigate their new host community. Evidence has shown that mentoring helps immigrant young people with educational attainment (Herrera *et al.*, 2011), helps with motivation in school (Singh and Tregale, 2015), develops social and cultural capital (Singh and Tregale, 2015) and allows young people to connect to community (Pryce *et al.*, 2018; Sánchez-Aragón *et al.*, 2020). A qualitative study of the effectiveness of mentoring in supporting the integration of refugees found that mentoring offered practical help and advice, it helped develop confidence, and developed English language skills (Esterhuizen and Murphy, 2007).

However, there are fewer studies that focus specifically on UASYP. Those that have studied UASYP found that having a mentor could reduce acculturation stress (Keles *et al.*, 2018) and allowed young people to develop social capital (Eriksson *et al.*, 2019). Raithelhuber (2019) found that mentoring relationships allowed UASYP to establish a wider social network and get to know other non-immigrant people. Mentoring gave young people access to institutions and resources, enabled young people to plan for the future and provided emotional support (Raithelhuber, 2019a). Alarcón *et al.* (2021) looked at a mentoring programme in rural Spain for UASYP and found that mentoring was perceived as providing emotional support for young people and created a sense of belonging. Mentoring was also found to facilitate ‘integration’ by allowing young people to develop their language skills, to expand their social networks and to develop their socio-cultural knowledge. Alarcón *et al.* (2021) also found that the nature of the mentoring relationship changed over time. While the relationship started formally, it became less formal and more natural over time.

As well as supporting young people’s cultural adjustment, studies have shown that mentoring helped ease the transition to adulthood. Dolan (2012) undertook research with young refugees in London and found that one-to-one mentoring provided practical support, emotional support, advice support and esteem support. Clivet (2021) explored how mentoring supported UASYP to leave the care system and enter adulthood in Cyprus. She posits that the mentoring process should be gradual, requiring at least two years to allow the young person to start an independent life. Some have questioned if providing culturally similar mentors is useful for everyone, instead suggesting that it may be more appropriate for some young people and not

others (DuBois *et al.*, 2011). Randell and Osman (2020) conducted research on a peer mentoring programme with UASYP in Sweden. Peer mentors, who had lived experience of the asylum process and who were well integrated into Swedish society, supported newly arrived UASYP. The authors found that peer support was based on four principles: sharing knowledge, having a shared sense of living without family, giving hope for the future and being proud of helping others. However, central to all four themes was an overarching frustration about the limitations imposed by the immigration system.

Mentoring and befriending with UASYP has been shown to develop the critical consciousness of mentors/befrienders also. Peterie (2018) interviewed 40 volunteers who supported asylum seekers/refugees in a befriending programme and found that while they did not specifically use the language of activism, the decision to volunteer was a moral one. Askins (2008) posits that intercultural relationships have the potential for ‘transformative politics’, which can change how we see and feel about others. Alarcón *et al.* (2021) found that mentoring helped develop the intercultural understanding of mentors, by raising awareness of the inequalities between the Global North and South. This understanding was able to be transferred to other family members also, supporting the critical consciousness of both mentors and their families.

Models which have received less attention include youth-initiated mentoring (YIM), where people nominate someone already in their social network to act as their mentor (Schwartz *et al.*, 2013). YIM brings together the benefits of informal mentoring with the infrastructure of formal programmes (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). Studies suggest that most formal mentoring relationships last less than a year, however it has also been shown that longer relationships tend to lead to better outcomes (Rhodes, 2013). However, Rhodes (2013) recognised that imposing a framework on a natural relationship may disrupt the relationship dynamics. Indeed, YIM may give less access to new forms of social capital, unlike traditional mentors whose social circle may differ vastly from the mentee. Other studies have shown that YIM resulted in longer lasting relationships (Schwartz, *et al.*, 2013). Any activities which promote intercultural contact between residents and newcomers could be conceived as befriending. Bygnes and Strømsø (2022) looked at language cafes which they suggest are ‘common integration practice’ (p.7). Other models they identified were ‘intercultural triads’, defined as structured encounters between a facilitator, a volunteer and a newcomer who come together to engage in different activities.

Co-habiting mentoring and befriending models have recently started to appear, where young refugees' co-habit with local young people. The CURANT project in Antwerp, Belgium mixed traditional befriending with a co-habiting model. The project accommodated young refugees aged (17-22) with local Flemish young people aged 20-30, who lived alongside young people and acted as 'buddies'. This challenges the notion that integration is something that happens in the public sphere and can help measure the impact of the relationship on both the UASYP and peer buddy (Mahieu and Caudenberg, 2020). Brinker (2021) notes that hosting programmes have emerged in Spain as a form of alternative refugee accommodation, whereby people with a spare room host refugees in their home. The purpose is two-fold: to provide accommodation for refugees and to aid integration. This co-housing model helped young people to acquire language skills and cultural knowledge, and it was mutually beneficial for both young refugees and peer buddies (Mahieu and Caudenberg, 2020). The Startblok Riekerhaven project in Amsterdam (2016) used a similar model of collective living where young people were paired with buddies but also had collective living spaces to allow young people to socialise together in groups. A study of Startblok (Czischke & Huisman, 2018) found that because young people belonged to the same household and were of similar ages, this created inter-cultural bonding. Some suggest that peer mentoring models, like those outlined above, are more equalitarian and may be more appropriate for certain groups (Osman *et al.*, 2020). A desire to explore the heterogeneity of mentoring and befriending programmes for UASYP is a central facet of the thesis.

There are some ethical issues surrounding mentoring and befriending with young refugee and asylum-seeking populations, which must be acknowledged. Bringing together locals and newcomers presents ethical issues around how they can meet as equals. Despite the perceived reciprocity, Bygnes and Strømsø (2022) found that there were inherent inequalities in these social relations and that participants felt they could not be friends in a traditional way. Several studies looking at collective living models note that these relationships might reproduce power imbalances (Ran and Join-Lambert, 2019; Brinker, 2021). Brinker (2021) found that volunteer mentors tended to have 'the upper hand' in relationships because they had greater knowledge of cultural norms. They also found that there was a high turnover of volunteers and that volunteers disengaged with the process when they felt they were no longer needed. Stock (2019) looked at a buddy programme in Germany that matched refugees with German volunteers and found that the buddy relationship was like informal caring relationships found in families. This 'caring practice' however meant that the relationship

was unequal, as the German volunteers had ‘privileged access to relevant cultural, economic or social capital’ (Stock, 2019: 129). Stock (2019) also found that relationships between refugees and volunteers changed over time, becoming more friendship-like. Factors like gender, class and age differences all impacted on the relationship. Most refugees were single men, with low socio-economic status, while volunteers were mostly educated middle class white females, which reproduced gendered roles (Stock, 2019). The idea of white middle-class volunteers supporting UASYP fits in with ideas around individualised upward mobility (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016), which may be incompatible with the lived experiences of young people.

Studies have shown that mentoring with UASYP presents challenges for mentors also. Tynewydd *et al.* (2021) found that supporting UASYP took an emotional toll on mentors. Many felt paralysed by responsibility and powerlessness and struggled with navigating boundaries within the relationship. This echoes the work of Jones and Williamson (2014), who looked at the experiences of eight volunteers working in Glasgow with forced migrants. Participants reported finding it particularly upsetting when those they supported were refused asylum or made destitute. Another problematic assumption about mentoring is the idea that mentors and mentees will automatically match. Smith *et al.* (2020) conducted research with young Syrian refugees resettled in Ireland and found that while young people were very eager to connect with Irish peers, this was difficult to do in practice. Similarly, Tachtler *et al.* (2020) found that mentors often struggled with the emotional demands of supporting young people with complex mental health needs and concluded that longer mentoring relationships lead to better quality mentoring relationships. However, the study also highlighted the need to provide better support structures for mentors, which would in turn impact on the well-being of mentees. Factors influencing the success of mentoring relationships identified by authors included volunteers’ time, appropriate matching of volunteer and recipient (Esterhuizen and Murphy, 2007) and appropriate support and training for mentors (Raithelhuber, 2019).

This section has summarised the international literature looking at mentoring and befriending with young refugees and UASYP. Studies have shown that mentoring and befriending support UASYP to acculturate and resettle in their new country of origin. Programmes help young people with language acquisition, to develop social capital and to connect to the wider community. Studies have also highlighted some of the ethical concerns around supporting UASYP: how mentor and mentee can meet as equals and the emotional toll taken on

volunteers. However, most studies have been conducted in mainland Europe or the United States. The following section outlines a significant gap in research in this area in Scotland.

3.2.3.1 Mentoring and befriending with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland

There is a dearth of empirical studies looking at mentoring and befriending with UASYP in Scotland. The Scottish Government recognises the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting refugees and asylum-seeking populations to integrate and the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) highlights the centrality of mentoring and befriending in supporting this. Since 2010, the Guardianship Scotland service has provided every unaccompanied young person in Scotland with a legal Guardian to help them navigate the asylum, welfare and care systems. Alongside this Guardianship model, Guardianship Scotland set up a befriending service for young asylum seekers and asylum seekers in Scotland to help ‘combat social isolation and loneliness’ and to support ‘fuller integration into Scottish society (Scott *et al.*, 2019). In theory, every UASYP in Scotland should have access to a befriender, however in practice this does not happen because of the geographical spread of young people and the lack of volunteers, as it will also be discussed later in this study. A 2020 report highlighted gaps in befriending provision in Scotland. While there were 227 befriending projects across Scotland, only six of these were for ethnic minority young people, spanning only nine of the 32 local authorities across Scotland (Befriending Networks, 2020). This gap in provision across Scotland is perhaps indicative of the fact that most asylum seekers are accommodated in a few geographical areas, mostly Glasgow and Edinburgh. The report also identifies an increase in telephone and group befriending and a surge in volunteering numbers, with 21,000 new people who signed up to volunteer during COVID-19 (Befriending Network, 2020).

In 2020, Glasgow City Council received funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to implement a co-habiting model, where UASYP were accommodated in local student accommodation and paired with local ‘buddies’ who functioned as peer mentors. To date, there have been no empirical studies looking at the outcomes of this model. As noted in Chapter 1, there has been little empirical work amongst scholars looking at mentoring and befriending in supporting UASYP in Scotland because it is such a new phenomenon. Scott *et al.* (2019) in conjunction with the children’s charity Aberlour and Guardianship Scotland explored the development of a befriending scheme for UASYP in Scotland, which was

subsequently set up by the organisation. Studies have found that young people have engaged very positively with the Guardianship service (Crawley and Kohli, 2013; Stott and Kohli, 2021). While the service was praised for putting the needs of young people first, its impact was restricted because of the need to prioritise young people's short-term needs (Crawley and Kohli, 2013). According to the University of Stirling, a second stage of the study would be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the befriending programme, however, to date, this has not been published on their website (University of Stirling, n.d.). Further correspondence with the University of Stirling confirmed that this was never published.

3.3 The need for more critical, culturally appropriate models of mentoring

Mentoring is often hailed as a panacea (De Vries, 2011) to tackle complex youth issues, yet it is not value-free. Colley (2003b) recognises that there 'in-built inequality' (p.163) in mentoring relationships and some suggest that the traditional model of mentoring is outdated because it assumes a 'one-way learning' (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Traditional mentoring encompasses a 'vertical relationship' (Liou *et al.*, 2015: 107), where knowledge passes from mentor to mentee. It is also deficit-based (Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez, 2017: 9), assuming that the mentor is more resourceful and powerful, and that the mentee is needier or less experienced (Keller & Pryce, 2010). Traditional mentoring also distinguishes the giver of care as active and the receiver of care as passive (Askins, 2015). Some suggest that mentoring is a form of 'social control' (Allen and Eby, 2007: 27) and others posit that it perpetuates the dominant views of the organisation or cultural values of the society (Colley, 2003b). Organisations that coordinate formal mentoring programmes have the power to place boundaries on the relationship, which some scholars suggest is less empowering than informal mentoring relationships (Gay and Stephenson, 1998).

Traditional mentoring has also been criticised for its colour-blindness and ignoring the role of race and power in the mentoring process (Goertz *et al.*, 2024). While there have been several studies that have explored the role of race in natural mentoring relationships, (Monjaras-Gaytan & Sánchez, 2023; Sánchez *et al.*, 2018), most of these studies have been conducted in the US where the racial context is different and have focussed on mentoring in an educational setting. Sánchez *et al.* (2018) conducted a systematic review of studies looking at race in mentoring and found that none of the studies considered the implications of cross-race versus same-race mentoring relations. Rhodes *et al.* (2002) found that mentees of colour who were matched with racially similar mentors reported more positive educational outcomes in terms

of confidence and feelings of self worth. Interestingly, a qualitative study from the UK found that having shared life experiences between mentor and mentee was more important than the cultural identity of mentors (Garraway & Pistrang, 2010). Nevertheless, some suggest that the hierarchical nature of traditional mentoring that matches white male mentors with culturally diverse mentees replicates existing power inequalities (Ragins, 2007).

Another criticism of traditional mentoring is a lack of attentiveness to the role of gender and power. Prats-Brugat *et al.* (2024) conducted a systematic review of studies looking at the role of gender in mentoring processes. They found that there was an increase in studies looking at gender in mentoring after 2018, however most research has been conducted on same-sex mentoring relationships. Some suggest that mentoring can perpetuate gendered stereotypes associated with providing care (O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002). Assumptions that female mentors provide more emotional care, while male mentors provide more instrumental support can perpetuate gendered care norms and can widen existing structural inequalities between men and women.

A further criticism relates to access to mentors. Scholars like Manongsong and Collins (2022) recognise that access to mentoring support is not equal across different populations in terms of the availability and quality of mentors. Others posit that mentoring has a narrow definition which is shaped by colonialism (Omatsu, n.d.). The assumption that mentoring happens at specific times, in specific locations, with specific people, ignores the mentoring that happens in everyday encounters, what Omatsu (n.d.) coins as 'mentoring on the run'. Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez (2017) suggest that traditional mentoring was not intended to serve 'marginalised' or 'minoritised' communities, which they define as those which have been 'othered' by mainstream ideologies (p.8). Young people from marginalised backgrounds, particularly those who have experiences of trauma or discrimination, may be more reticent to engage with a mentor because of issues of trust (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018).

To counter these problematic aspects of mentoring, some scholars have proposed a social justice lens to mentoring, by situating it in wider systemic barriers that young people face (Liang *et al.*, 2013). To challenge the hierarchical, deficit-based nature of traditional mentoring, Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez (2017) introduced the concept of 'critical mentoring', which is based around intersectionality and 'culturally relevant practices'. Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez (2017) challenge the idea of mentors as being 'saviours of

youth’, they see mentors as critical actors who together with young people have the potential to challenge the status quo. The ideal model of mentoring, some posit, is a reciprocal one, where power is reproduced in the mentee and enhanced in the mentor (Colley, 2003b). Goertz *et al.* (2024) have developed a ‘Decolonial Mentoring Framework’ (DMF) which recognises the intersection of racial identity and power in the mentoring relationship. This framework has four core pillars which attempt to ‘reorient mentees to decolonial praxis’ (Goertz *et al.*, 2024: 248). The first pillar, they posit, is naming and critically evaluating race in the mentoring relationship. The second pillar relates to questioning how knowledge is produced, particularly its role in reproducing racist ideologies. The third pillar relates to recognising racial identity and power in the mentorship and the final pillar revolves around action, whereby mentors can encourage mentees to challenge injustice.

Rhodes *et al.* (2006) proposed a model of traditional mentoring which has three overlapping developmental processes that lead to positive outcomes in the mentee: social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development. The fundamental problem with this model is that it is intentionally broad and does not consider the wider structures around young people (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018). Indeed, most research on mentoring only focusses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of the mentoring relationships which ignores the fact that mentoring occurs in a wider context (Sambunjak, 2015). Similarly, most studies on formal mentoring focus mostly on the mentoring dyad and pay less attention to wider social networks and how they support young people. Most studies tend to assume that the mentor and mentee come from the same cultural context, which is often not the case in mentoring and befriending with UASYP. Following on from this, scholars recognised the importance of adding in family relations (Keller, 2005) and other broader social relations (Keller and Blakeslee, 2014) to the mentoring model, suggesting that these may influence the mentoring relationship.

Traditional models of mentoring only consider formal one-to-one mentoring at one point in time, ignoring the role played by informal mentors and other non-traditional models like peer mentoring. Young people may utilise different people at different times, however traditional mentoring focuses on one individual mentor and their role in supporting young people. Schwartz and Rhodes (2016) proposed a more inclusive mentoring framework, which highlights young people’s potential to create their own mentoring relationships. This model includes mentors which young people cultivate themselves, whether that is through school or

other social relations. Chandler *et al.* (2011) went on to develop an ecological model of mentoring in a work-based environment, arguing the value of researching mentoring at a macrosystems level. The rationale for this, they argue, is that mentoring outcomes are influenced by wider support structures, as well as the organisational and societal context in which mentoring takes place. However, to date no scholars have used an ecological model to explore mentoring and befriending with UASYP.

Traditional mentoring is ‘outcome-focussed’ (DuBois & Karcher, 2014), however this ignores the wider context in which young people are situated. Programmes that focus on ‘outcomes’ ignore the fact that young people are subject to harsh immigration regimes. One critique of mentoring and befriending is that they ignore the underlying structural issues that young people face. Another critique is that care interventions shift from the state to the third sector (Peterie, 2018). Similarly, Wren (2007) notes that there is a large responsibility placed on the third sector to meet needs that the statutory sector cannot. Dolan and Brady (2012) argue that mentoring is a form of ‘semi formal service provision’ (p.18), which is more flexible than other social care interventions, because it works with the ‘whole child’ in their own environment. Similarly, while social care happens in the public realm, mentoring happens in both public and private realms. Most formal mentoring and befriending programmes are supported by volunteers, who are not usually required to have any formal social care qualifications. As a result of this, mentoring and befriending are often not taken into account when scholars study the role of social care provision in supporting UASYP. Central to this thesis is understanding how mentoring and befriending fit in with wider structures of care around UASYP.

3.4 Gaps in current knowledge

There are several gaps in scholarship around mentoring and befriending with UASYP, which are outlined below. Most studies looking at mentoring and befriending in supporting UASYP reviewed in this chapter are from mainland Europe and there is very little scholarship in the UK, and even less so in Scotland, a gap which this study aims to address. Existing studies have tended to consider the individual level outcomes for young people like providing emotional support (Alarcón *et al.*, 2021), developing social networks (Raithelhuber, 2019a) or building confidence (Osman *et al.*, 2020). Mentoring is mostly evaluated as a stand-alone intervention, rather than being situated in a wider socio-political context. Since in Scotland

UASYP are looked after by local authorities, it is important to situate mentoring and befriending in these wider care structures.

Most studies on mentoring also tend to be quantitative in nature, focussing on concrete development outcomes, like educational attainment or increased participation, which ignores the complex socio-political reality of young people's lives. This study addresses a need for more qualitative inquiry, exploring how mentees/befriendees 'experience' mentoring and befriending. To my knowledge this is also the first study to theorise how mentoring and befriending fit into wider care structures around UASYP in Scotland. It will be argued in Chapter 4 that mentoring and befriending must be studied at multiple levels: at the individual level (microsystem), in a relational context (mesosystem), and within broader societal influences (macrosystem). Understanding the wider context in which mentoring and befriending takes places is important to understanding the underlying mechanisms of the intervention (Busse *et al.*, 2018). While scholars like Chandler *et al.* (2011) have used an ecological model of mentoring in a work-based environment, to date no scholars have used an ecological model to explore mentoring and befriending with UASYP, making this research novel.

Most studies on mentoring focus on traditional dyadic models, where an adult supports a young person, which ignores the role played by wider community networks (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). Less attention has been paid to non-traditional models, like group mentoring or peer mentoring, particularly with UASYP. To plug this gap, this study will look at the role of one-to-one mentoring and befriending, group programmes, peer mentoring, as well as the role of informal mentors and befrienders for UASYP. The review of evidence in this chapter has also shown that there is limited research on the role of informal mentors in supporting UASYP, and those that do tend to focus on static, one-to-one mentoring, which ignores the sociocultural context of young people's lives and the fact that their networks are dynamic across time and space (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018). This research seeks to ascertain how UASYP utilise both formal and informal social networks across different domains at different times. Although befriending is more established than mentoring, it is also under-researched, and this study is the first to look at the role of formal and informal mentoring and befriending in supporting UASYP Scotland-wide.

All evidence points to the need for culturally appropriate models of mentoring, yet little is known about how programmes are adapted for young refugees and asylum-seekers more specifically, which this study addresses by exploring provision of mentoring and befriending for UASYP in Scotland. Also, most studies do not account for participants' own definition of mentoring, which may differ from an organisational perspective. This study aims to address this gap by involving young people in the study and eliciting their views around what they understand by mentoring, who they consider to be their mentor and the value they give to the mentoring process.

This study attends to all these scholarly gaps in knowledge by addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the barriers and opportunities to resettlement for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?
2. How does relational mentoring provision fit into wider support structures for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?
3. How does relational mentoring support the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the complex care structures around UASYP, highlighting the empirical work looking at support structures for UASYP including professional networks, foster carers, transnational ties and peer support. It also articulated different models of mentoring and befriending, both formal and informal for UASYP, and problematised traditional models, arguing that more critical, culturally appropriate models are needed. The chapter concluded by outlining gaps in knowledge around mentoring and befriending with UASYP and how this thesis intends to address these, guided by the research questions identified based on these gaps. The following chapter articulates the theoretical model which will be used to address these pertinent gaps in knowledge.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

Overview

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the research, which brings together an ecological model of mentoring (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with theories of liminality, social anchoring and relational embedding to understand how mentoring and befriending support the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. The chapter starts by explaining the rationale for using an ecological systems approach for exploring mentoring and befriending with UASYP. It moves on to discuss each of the five spheres of the model (micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono) and how these interact to influence young people's experiences and engagement of mentoring and befriending in Scotland. To follow, it discusses the theories of liminality (Turner, 1969), social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016) and relational embedding (Ryan, 2018). The chapter concludes by bringing these together into an integrated framework.

4.1 An ecological model of mentoring

As noted in Chapter 3, most research on mentoring only looks at formal dyadic mentoring (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018; Sambunjak, 2015), ignoring the wider context within which the programme occurs. Scholars like Keller (2005) and DuBois and Karcher (2014) have highlighted the need to include wider social relations in mentoring models, rather than just focussing on one individual mentor. Chandler *et al.* (2011) were the first to use an ecological model of mentoring, although this was in the context of workplace-based mentoring in the US. They argued the need to study mentoring at multiple levels, not just intrapersonal, but at wider community and societal levels.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed the ecological systems approach to understand human development, suggesting that it was influenced by interconnected systems including the wider surroundings and societal context in which people live. These interconnected systems include the microsystem (individual), mesosystem (group), exosystem (organizational), macrosystem (cultural and societal) and chronosystem (impact of time and life transitions). The microsystem lies at the core of the model and is the immediate environment around an individual, including family, siblings, peers etc. The second level is the mesosystem, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) described as 'a system of microsystems'. The mesosystem involves interactions between different microsystems in a person's life. The third sphere is the

exosystem, which includes formal and informal social structures such as local authorities and mass media. The macrosystem focuses on the cultural norms, ideologies and attitudes of the wider society. The final sphere is the chronosystem, which relates to temporality and transitions over the course of the lifetime.

It is important to note that following the first iteration of the ecological model of human development in 1979, Bronfenbrenner subsequently critiqued his original model (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). One of the main critiques he identified was the centrality of context and a lack of attention paid to agency, put simply, the role that the person plays in their own development (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). In a later version of the model, Bronfenbrenner (1993; 1995; 1999) emphasised the role of ‘proximal processes’ in human development, understood to be the continuous interactions a person has with their wider environment. This later iteration of the ecological model of human development, coined the ‘Process-Person-Context-Time’ (PPCT) model, is useful as it includes distinct elements which will be used to inform this study. The ecological model of mentoring proposed (Figure 4) is a framework for understanding the relationship between UASYP and their mentors and befrienders and the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting the resettlement of young people. In line with Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model, the model considers the processes of interaction between UASYP and their wider environment, the role that young people play in influencing the relations they engage with, the resettlement context into which UASYP start their new lives in Scotland and the role time plays in influencing their wider interactions.

The rationale for an ecological model of mentoring is threefold. Firstly, it recognises that UASYP have a large web of professional and community support, and this wider ecology influences young people’s ability to engage in wider social relations including formal mentoring and befriending. Secondly, an ecological systems approach recognises the different types of support that are available for UASYP at different points throughout their asylum journey. Young people may be involved in dyadic programmes, group programmes or peer programmes at different times. It also accounts for the fact that UASYP may have informal mentors, in addition to more formalised relationships. Finally, since UASYP are looked after and accommodated by local authorities, it is important to situate mentoring within a wider socio-political context. UASYP are both ‘children’ and ‘asylum-seekers’ and, as such, it is important to consider the wider socio-political context in which relations occur.

To my knowledge, no studies have used an ecological model to explore how mentoring and befriending support the resettlement of UASYP. In line with Chandler *et al.* (2011), I shift from thinking about mentoring as an interaction between mentor and mentee, to considering mentoring as a function of a wider social ecology. The ecological systems approach that will be used is adapted from Wachter *et al.* (2022), who argued that it was important to consider multi-level systems of support across the social ecology when looking at refugee integration. Wachter *et al.* (2022) conducted a scoping review looking at literature around refugee integration and they found that very few studies considered the role of social support as a central theme. They also found that studies tended to look at individual support like peers, groups like co-ethnic community members or organisations like NGOs. None of the studies included considered the role of mentoring and befriending in supporting the resettlement of refugees. As noted in Section 3.2.3, few studies consider the role of mentoring and befriending as a source of social support for UASYP, perhaps because it falls somewhere in between statutory provision and informal peer networks. The following section outlines the proposed ecological model, explaining the five different interconnected spheres and the theoretical aspects within it.

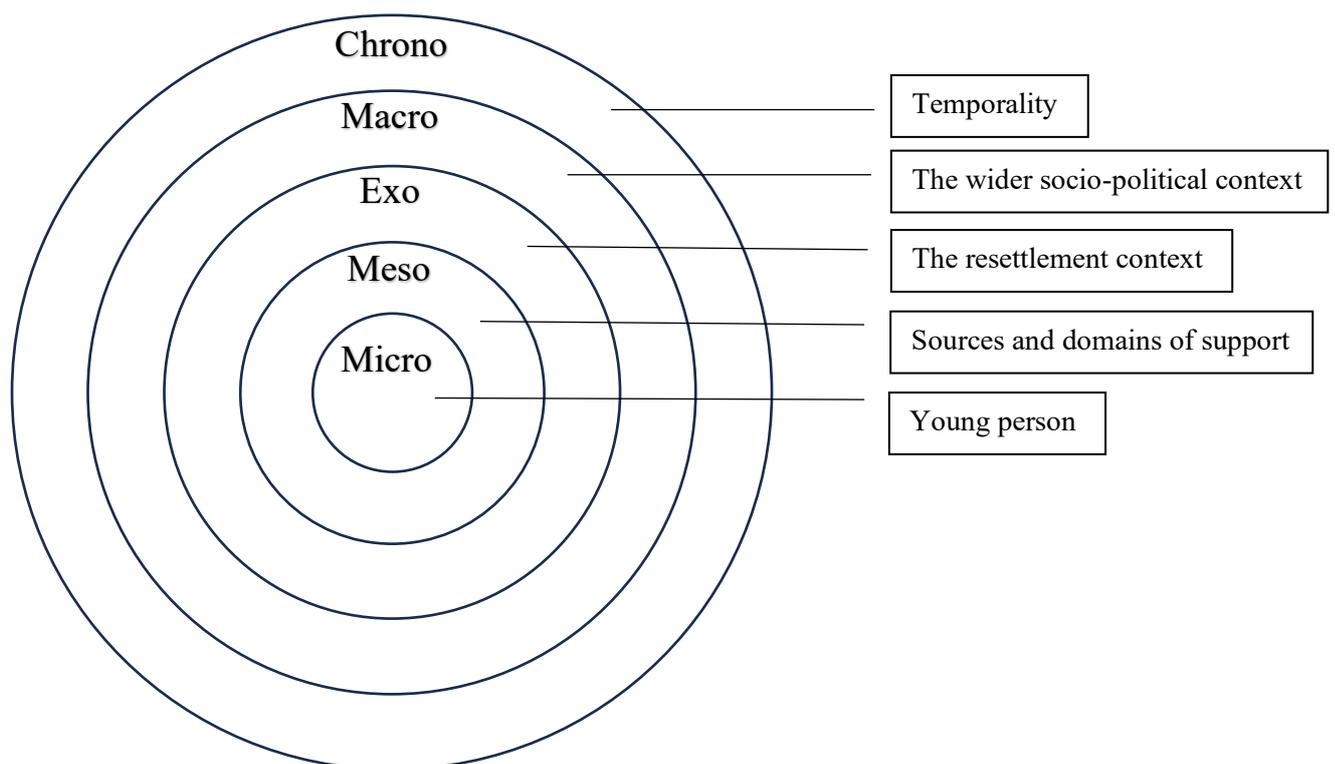


Figure 4: An ecological model of mentoring and befriending to support the resettlement of UASYP adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Wachter *et al.* (2022)

4.1.1 The young person (Micro)

At the centre of the theoretical model is the young person. The microsystem encompasses the demographic characteristics, individual preferences, resources and needs of UASYP and how these influence young people's experiences and engagement with mentoring and befriending. As noted in Chapter 3, demographic characteristics like age, gender and ethnicity may influence engagement with mentoring or befriending programmes. Since the majority of UASYP in Scotland are male (Scottish Refugee Council, 2023), this may influence engagement with formal programmes. As noted in Section 2.3.3, studies have shown that while young girls tend to need more therapeutic support, young males required more support to mitigate social exclusion (Wells, 2009). Young people who come from societies that are heavily divided across gender lines may prefer not to engage in cross-gender mentoring or befriending. Individual preferences relate to personal preferences for different types of formal/informal mentoring, group or peer mentoring or befriending. Some young people may prefer the comfort of groups which allow engagement with co-ethnic ties, while other young people may prefer to engage with Scottish mentors, so they can gain cultural and linguistic knowledge. Indeed, some young people may prefer both options, but at different times. Resources relate to young people's personal strengths and resilience, which may influence their engagement with mentoring and befriending. As was noted in Chapter 2, UASYP are often framed in polarised ways, however this study is interested in looking at the intersection of categories like vulnerability and agency and how these influence engagement in wider relations. Finally, the micro sphere includes the needs of young people. As noted in Section 2.1.3, UASYP face a host of practical, emotional, psychological, social and legal challenges on arrival in their new host country. However, they also face additional challenges because of their developmental liminality, in between childhood and adulthood. As such, the study will consider the practical, socio-emotional, psychological, acculturative, developmental and legal needs of UASYP as they resettle in Scotland. These include the need to acquire language skills, acculturative knowledge, life skills like living alone, educational needs, navigating new systems and geographical areas etc. Analysis of the resettlement needs of UASYP in the microsystem, combined with the resettlement context into which young people are resettled in the exosystem (outlined in Section 4.2.3) will allow me to answer Research Question 1: **What are the barriers and opportunities to resettlement for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?**

4.1.2. Sources and domains of support (Meso)

Interactions between an UASYP and wider systems of support make up the mesosystem. This includes interaction between young people and formal and informal mentors and befrienders. As noted in Chapter 3, models of traditional mentoring like those proposed by Rhodes *et al.* (2006) only focus on the role of one mentor at one point in time in supporting young people, which negate the wider structures around young people (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018). Scholars like Keller and Blakeslee (2014) suggest the need to include wider social relations to mentoring models. This study will include the role of different mentoring and befriending models including formal dyadic mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring and informal mentoring. Sources of support refer to the kinds of mentors and befrienders that young people utilise which are outlined below:

- Formal dyadic mentoring and befriending: This is the engagement that young people have with formal one-to-one mentors and befrienders which are mediated through an organisation.
- Informal mentors: These are adults that young people identify as being mentors. These relationships are naturally occurring in the young person's life and are not facilitated by an organisation. Informal mentors could be social workers, guardians, support workers, teachers etc., who have been particularly influential or helpful. Similarly, informal mentors could be non-professional adults, including adults young people encounter through other social relations. Schwartz and Rhodes (2016) proposed a more inclusive mentoring framework which highlights young people's potential to create their own mentoring relationships. The ecological model of mentoring proposed in this study includes mentors which young people cultivate themselves, whether that is through school or other social relations.
- Peer mentors: This relates to peers of a similar age who young people identify as being a significant form of support. These can be co-ethnic or intercultural ties.
- Group mentoring: This relates to groups that UASYP are part of, which fulfil a function of peer mentoring.

Also included in the mesosystem are the wider networks that young people are engaged with including professional support, foster carers, educational professionals, NGOs and how these may influence experiences or engagement with mentoring or befriending. To analyse the way that young people utilise different types of mentors and befrienders, the concept of social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) will be used. This framework has been chosen because it counters static ideas about integration, as outlined in Chapter 2, and accounts for the dynamism of young people's relationships. While integration discourses tend to focus on more 'functional' indicators of success like education or employment, social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) is a process of finding significant reference points that allow migrants to 'restore their socio-psychological stability' (2016: 1131) in a new host country. Anderson (2021) notes that social anchoring is preoccupied with 'relational integration'. Anchors are conceptualised as reference points or connections, which provide stability in the face of uncertainty. As Bargłowski and Bonfert (2023) note, social anchoring is useful to explore the 'belongingness' of migrants. Verdasco (2018) goes further, arguing that refugees attach to different anchoring points which become 'shifting communities of belonging'. Anchoring is a useful concept as it recognises that anchors are temporary, they can be dropped and pulled up at any time in different locations. Anchoring recognises the fact that young people can exercise agency in choosing when to drop and pull up anchors, while also being situated within in the structural bounds of the migration system.

The related concept of 'embedding' was developed by Ryan and Mulholland (2015). It draws on Granovetter's (1985) notion of embeddedness, which stems from the idea that all economic actions are embedded in social networks. Ryan and Mulholland (2015) argued that embeddedness was too rigid a concept, but that 'embedding' captured the dynamic nature of social relations. Embeddedness is the idea that 'social relationships foster a sense of rootedness and integration in the local environment' (Korinek *et al.*, 2005: 780). While anchors give people stability, these in turn allow the process of embedding, where migrants establish different degrees of attachment in different interpersonal relations. Rather than a simple, static binary of embedded or not embedded, Ryan (2018) proposes the concept of 'differentiated embedding' to explore ways in which people develop belongingness in different domains, which may be uneven. Differentiated embedding ignores an 'all or nothing' view of integration and recognises that people have different degrees of attachment with different people across different contexts (Ryan, 2018, 2020, 2023).

Embedding is a useful concept to consider how UASYP form attachments to different formal and informal mentors and befrienders. Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019) posit that it is the depth of embeddedness that allows migrants to develop a sense of belonging. UASYP not only negotiate embedding at the local level, but they are engaged in national and transnational relations (Ryan, 2018) and this study seeks to explore how UASYP negotiate belonging across time and space. Hess (2004) suggests that migrants have three dimensions of embeddedness (p.178), they are embedded in wider society, in formal and informal networks and in particular places. People may be embedded in certain networks and dis-embedded from wider society. While ‘integration’ is often seen as linear and one directional (Phillimore, 2012), embedding recognises the complexity of interpersonal relationships over time and space (Ryan and Mulholland, 2015).

While social anchoring and embedding are useful for understanding the way that UASYP attach to different mentors and befrienders across time and space, the mesosystem is also interested in exploring the kinds of support that these relations give. As highlighted in Chapter 3, traditional models of mentoring tend to only consider hard outcomes of mentoring like employment or educational achievement, which may not be applicable for UASYP, who do not have the legal right to work and who may face educational barriers. Rather than focussing on the hard outcomes of mentoring, the study will consider the resettlement functions of mentoring and befriending with UASYP, looking specifically at the kind of support that mentors and befrienders provide. Analysis of the mesosystem is interested in exploring the way in which mentors and befrienders help young people to resettle.

The *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) recognises the role of social networks in creating bonding and bridging capital. However, Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019) suggests that there is a need to look at how migrants develop relations with other community members, including co-ethnic ties. Ryan (2023) recognises that there is a ‘thorny association’ (p.154) between networks and social capital. She is critical of the ‘static and simplistic binaries of bonding and bridging capital’ (p.154) and problematises static ideas about ‘like’ and ‘unlike’ ethnic ties and strong and weak ties. This narrow thinking, she posits, limits what is happening within networks. We need to challenge the assumption that co-ethnic ties produce bonding capital and that non-co-ethnic ties produce bridging capital. Equally, we need to problematise assumptions that social ties to relatives are strong and that social ties to local peers are weak. Assumptions that migrants’ own networks

automatically provide practical, informational, social and emotional support should not be assumed. In line with Ryan (2023), I challenge static assumptions about the types of resources that migrant networks bring to relations. Rather, I consider what may be the barriers to generating capital from different social connections, which are explored in the exosystem (Section 4.2.3).

In a scoping review of studies looking at refugee integration, Wachter *et al.* (2022) identified ten domains of support across all the studies: practical, emotional, attachment support, informational, affirmational, companionship, sense of belonging, affection, adjustment support, feeling safe. Similarly, as noted in Chapter 3, Brady *et al.* (2017) found that mentoring relationships had four functions: concrete or practical, companionship, emotional, esteem and advice. These categories will be used to explore the types of help that mentors provide. Analysing the types of mentors and befrienders that UASYP utilise and the way in which they help young people, will help to answer Research Question 3: **How does relational mentoring support the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland? (Relational/Meso)**

4.1.3 The resettlement context (Exo) and the theoretical lens of liminality

When explored in relation to UASYP, the exosystem relates to the resettlement context, put simply the environment into which UASYP are accommodated and looked after. The term resettlement is used in recognition of the highly politicised and problematised concept of ‘integration’, outlined in Chapter 2. Integration makes problematic assumptions about majority and minority cultures, as well as belonging and non-belonging (Rytter, 2018). While integration discourse places the burden of responsibility of migrants to integrate, Phillimore (2021) argues for a shift in focus on how receiving societies influence integration. Similarly, Spencer and Charsley (2021) argue that there is a need to alter outdated notions of society as being a homogeneous whole, to the idea that society is fluid and constantly evolving. Resettlement refers to the act of moving to another country and starting a new life. The resettlement context in this study specifically relates to the environment into which UASYP start their new lives in Scotland: the places that they are accommodated, the relations in which they are engaged, their educational pathways and the resources they can avail of. Analysis of the exosystem will explore the barriers to young people’s resettlement, including the practical, socio-emotional, acculturative, developmental, temporal and legal barriers, as well as who or what helps young people to resettle.

To do so, a theoretical lens of liminality will be employed. Liminality has long been used in migration studies to theorise the in-between spaces, where asylum seekers are ‘neither here nor there’ (Turner 1969: 60). The word *liminal* comes from the Latin meaning ‘threshold’ and the concept of *liminality* was developed by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909 to explain the rites of passage that mark the transition to a different life stage, like moving from being a boy to man (Beech, 2011). Liminality consists of three phases, firstly an individual detaches from one identity, before moving through a liminal stage, where they are no longer attached to the old identity, nor attached to a new one. In the final reaggregation stage, the person has reached a new identity position with enhanced social status. The concept was later adopted by Victor Turner (1969), whose seminal work *Liminality and Comunitas* develops the notion of being ‘betwix and between’ (1969:68). Turner (1969) describes liminality as a prolonged state of in-betweenness, where people no longer occupy one social category and are not yet members of another. In the liminal stage, the person or ‘liminar’ is invisible, ambiguous and outside of societal structures (not-boy-not-man) (Beech, 2011). Liminality is not only concerned with a person’s inner self, but their social identity and Turner (1977) suggests that shared experiences of liminality with others, what he coins as ‘communitas’, can ease the transition to a new identity status.

While originally used to theorise identity development, since the 1990s, migration scholars have used liminality as a theoretical lens to explore the in-between states where migrants exist ‘outside the natural order of things’ (Malkki, 1995). Clayton *et al.* (2019) recognise that asylum seekers are stuck in between legal, psychological, social and economic states. Liminality has been used by migration scholars to talk about the ‘protracted waiting’ for an asylum decision, (Malkki, 1995; Brun and Fabos 2015) and the liminal spaces that asylum seekers and refugees reside in like offshore detention centres and refugee camps (Mountz, 2011; Ramadan, 2013). Mountz (2011) suggests that in these liminal spaces, refugees occupy an ‘ambiguous belonging’. More recently, migration scholars have started to explore the spatio-temporal liminalities of UASYP (Kaukko and Wernesjo, 2017; O’Reilly; 2018; Chase and Allsopp, 2020), generating important research which this study develops upon.

Some have suggested that liminality is a useful concept to explain migrants’ changing sense of belonging. Hynes (2011) has used liminality to explore the way that migrants move along a continuum between liminality and belonging against the background of ‘policy-imposed liminality’ (p.23), put simply the harshness of the asylum system. She argues that asylum

seekers create belonging in ways that are counter to official integration discourses and that they resist liminality through creating pockets of belonging. Similarly, Kaukko and Wernesjö (2017) used liminality to explore young people's liminal belonging, where they had left their country of origin, but they had not yet fully been accepted into their new host country. O'Reilly (2020) went on to use liminality to explore the in-between spaces of 'inclusion and exclusion, between hospitality and hostility, between citizenship and non-citizenship, place and non-place' (p.137-138). The author argued that liminality was useful for not only exploring the in-between spaces, but the wider structures around asylum-seeking populations. Conceptualising liminality as spatial, temporal and ontological, O'Reilly (2020) also described the way that asylum seekers resisted liminalities. Other scholars have challenged the idea that people are passively stuck in liminal spaces. Salem (2023) showed how, despite living in ontological liminality, young refugees maintained hope through skill development and attaching to place. O'Reilly (2020) noted that attachments are overlooked in attempts to understand liminality and she highlights how displaced people can resist liminality through attaching to local towns and community. This study will add insights to this idea of attaching to place and community through formal and informal mentors and befrienders as explored directly with UASYP in Scotland, which to my knowledge, is the first attempt to do so.

Framing young people and their resettlement journey through a lens of liminality (Turner, 1969) recognises their 'in-betweenness', the inherent contradictions that come with this and the way in which young people move across and within categories. It also recognises the wider context into which young people are resettled, challenging traditional ideas around integration. Liminality challenges the binary and simplistic framing of young people in policy and public discourse outlined in Chapter 2. Liminality also accounts for the complexity of young people's identities and belonging, they can be both vulnerable and capable, connected and not connected, integrated in some areas and not in others etc. Some suggest that in these liminal spaces, the boundary between life transitions becomes 'porous' (Terrio, 2008) and UASYP occupy ambiguous categories like 'child-adult' (Terrio, 2008: 885), whereby they are both a child and an adult. Malkki (1995) found that identity was 'situational' and that migrants changed their identities to fit different situations. Following on from this, a new wave of research has started to explore the ambiguous positioning of UASYP, who at times frame themselves as individuals needing support, and other times as agentic young adults capable of taking care of themselves (Allsopp & Chase, 2019). This current study develops upon this idea of ambiguous positioning, by exploring how young people's positionalities ebb

and flow over time and space. UASYP occupy several liminal spaces, in between developmental stages, in between cultures, in between local, national, transnational and relational spaces, which may impact on their resettlement. Liminality recognises that UASYP reside in ambiguous spaces which can be both destructive and a place for creativity (Turner, 1982) or as Meloni (2019: 423) notes, ‘a space of freedom and loneliness’.

This study is interested to understand how young people negotiate belonging through their social interactions. Most studies on the belonging of UASYP have been conducted in Scandinavian countries and little is known about how UASYP negotiate belonging and resettlement in the UK (notable exceptions are Chase and Allsopp, 2020; Ögtem-Young, 2023) and more specifically Scotland. Following on from scholars like Kaukko and Forsberg (2018), Verdasco (2019), Moberg Stephenson and Källström (2020) and Ögtem-Young (2023), this study will look at how young people negotiate belonging within these liminal spaces through formal and informal mentors and befrienders. As well as using liminality to examine young people’s ‘in-betweenness’, liminality will be used to explore the way that young people move across and within categories through their engagement with formal and informal mentors and befrienders. This study develops upon these ideas and posits that liminality is useful for understanding the barriers to young people’s resettlement. This is firstly because liminality accounts for the complexity of young people’s identities and belonging, which ebb and flow over time and space. Secondly, liminality is useful for understanding the structural aspects of the asylum system, which impact on young people’s resettlement. Finally, by exploring the way that young people resist liminalities through social relations, the study looks at how young people create belonging through attachments and their social relations.

4.1.4 The wider socio-political context (Macro)

Mentoring takes place in a wider societal context, which as Sambunjak (2015) notes, is shaped by cultural, economic and political factors. When studying mentoring relationships, it is important to explore the context surrounding these relationships (Chan *et al.*, 2015). This study will explore the cultural aspects which may influence young people’s engagement with formal and informal mentors. Mentoring and befriending are not universal concepts and so may be understood differently by young people from different cultural backgrounds. Other cultural aspects may include the power dynamics involved in traditional dyadic mentoring, which assumes that the mentor has knowledge and power, and the mentee is lacking in this

(Weiston-Serdan & Sánchez, 2017). The cultural context of young people's country of origin, whether it is more individualist or collectivist, may influence how they engage with mentoring and befriending (Sambunjak, 2015; Sawatsky *et al.*, 2016). Other societal factors include racism and discrimination (Sawatsky *et al.*, 2016), which may influence experiences or engagement in mentorship. Some studies have shown that ethnic minority mentees prefer mentors from the same ethnic background (Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2011) and other studies have shown that mixed race mentoring dyads were less effective in terms of overall satisfaction (Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, 2005). Importantly, most studies looking at race and ethnicity in mentorship tend to be based in the US and tend to focus on mentoring in an educational setting. The extent to which boundaries are placed around formal mentoring programmes, may influence how young people engage with programmes. UASYP who have experiences of trauma may be distrustful of mentors (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018), which again may influence engagement. This study will explore how these cultural factors influence young people's engagement or lack thereof with formal or informal mentors and befrienders.

The second aspect of the macrosystem is the economic context in which mentoring and befriending take place. Since this is the first study to look at mentoring and befriending for UASYP Scotland-wide, it is important to explore provision of programmes and how they fit in with existing social care provision for UASYP in Scotland. As noted in Chapter 3, studies have shown that UASYP have complex and contradictory relationships with social workers, guardians, foster carers and other support networks and this study aims to situate mentoring and befriending within these wider support structures. Central to the economic context is the resources available to fund formal programmes.

The final aspect of the macrosystem is the political aspect in which mentoring and befriending take place. As noted in Chapter 2, UASYP have what Drammeh (2019) describes as a 'close structural relationship with social care' (p.151), so it is important to situate mentoring within wider care structures. Analysis will look at how mentoring and befriending fit into existing policies around UASYP including integration and care policies. Analysis will also identify how mentoring and befriending complement or indeed add to existing social care provision. As noted in Chapter 2, Scotland has an integration strategy entitled *The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024), which recognises the centrality of mentoring and befriending in supporting asylum seekers and refugees to integrate. The strategy recognises the importance of social connections in supporting the

integration of migrants. It identifies three types of connections. Social bonds include relationships with ‘in group’ peers: those from a similar ethnic background or community. Social bridges relate to relationships outside of an immediate network, so this may include ‘outgroup’ peers. Social links relate to relations with wider organisations. The study will explore how mentoring and befriending supports UASYP to develop social bonds, social bridges and social links. Analysis of the macrosystem will allow me to answer Research Question 2: **How does relational mentoring provision fit into wider support structures for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?**

4.1.5 Temporality (Chrono)

The final sphere of the model is the chronosystem. This relates to temporality and the way that young people experience time. Temporality and time in migration scholarship have received increasing attention over the past few decades. Cwerner (2001) was the first to consider how the migration system forces migrants to wait and, following this, other scholars have explored the role of time as an instrument of control (Menjivar, 2006; Griffiths, 2014, 2017). As noted in Chapter 2, UASYP often must endure prolonged periods of waiting for their asylum claim to be processed (Chase & Allsopp, 2013; Allsopp *et al.*, 2015; Isaacs *et al.*, 2020). However, UASYP also experience multiple temporal disruptions (Hale *et al.*, 2010) because of their complex migration journeys. They may have missed out on years of education or may lack any formal education (Lucas *et al.*, 2019). The chronosystem is interested in exploring how time intersects with relationships to influence young people’s resettlement in Scotland. As others have noted, young people’s networks are dynamic and change over time and space, and these are often dictated by the structures they face (Chase, 2020; Vera Espinoza *et al.*, 2023). Analysis will consider how temporality intersects with the liminal spaces that young people occupy and how time impacts on formal and informal mentoring and befriending relationships. Scholars have noted that the way that asylum seekers experience ‘bureaucratic time’ (Hughes, 2021) is different from how they experience other types of time, like social time (Kuhlemann, 2024). However, scholars also call for the need to explore how UASYP exercise agency over time, through engaging in caring relations (Rosen, 2025). At the core of the chronosystem is understanding the way in which UASYP experience time, developmental liminality and how young people fill their time. Equally important to the study is to consider how time impacts on the mentoring and befriending relationship, particularly formal relationships, which tend to be ‘time-bound’, with a

definitive end point. **Analysis of time and temporality will be prevalent throughout all three of the research questions.**

4.2 An integrated theoretical framework

This is the first study to adopt an ecological model of mentoring to study how mentoring and befriending with UASYP support their resettlement in Scotland, adding theoretical and empirical insights to a small body of existing research. Adopting an ecological model helps to situate mentoring and befriending in wider networks and a wider socio-political context. This is also the first study to bring together an ecological model of mentoring, with the concepts of liminality, social anchoring and relational embedding into one integrated framework. As Figure 5 shows, the resettlement context (exosystem) is divided into two spheres, on the bottom half of the resettlement sphere are the barriers to resettlement, including the multiple liminalities that young people occupy. Using the theoretical lens of liminality (Turner, 1969) will help to explain the in-between spaces that young people occupy, which impact on their ability to resettle. On the top half of the sphere are the ways in which mentoring and befriending help young people to navigate liminalities, to embed across different relations and to resettle. The double-sided arrows relate to the way that young people drop anchors in multiple communities and the way that they embed and dis-embed from different networks depending on needs, preference and place on the asylum journey.

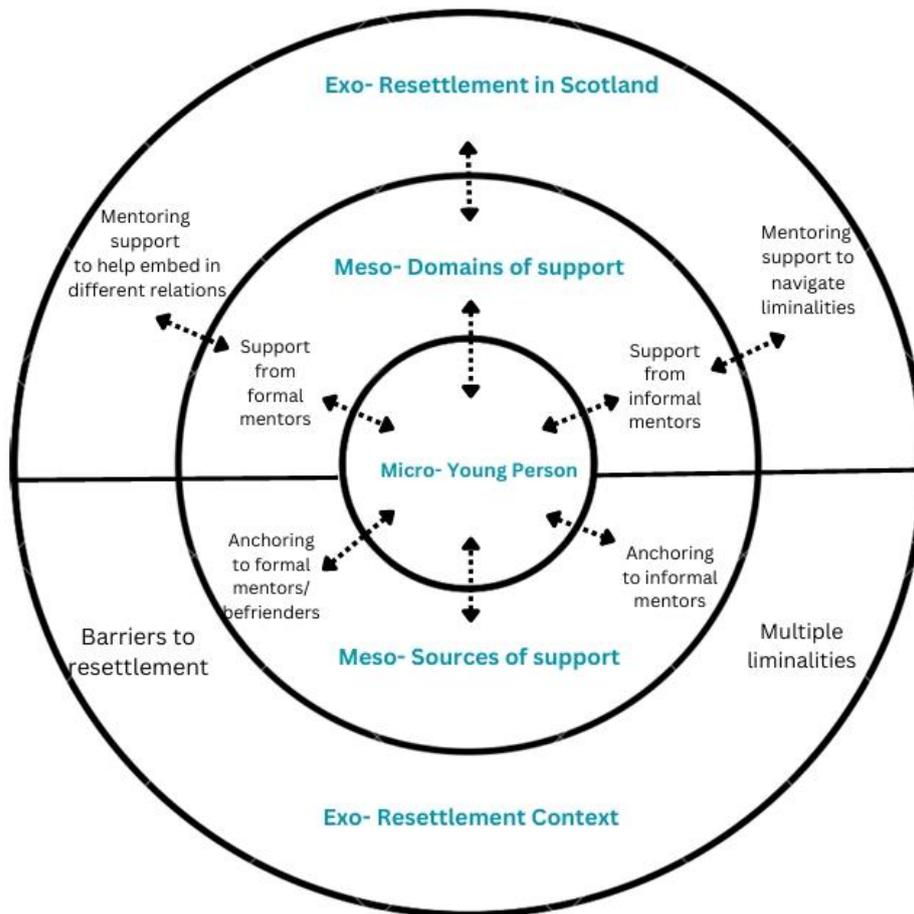


Figure 5: An integrated theoretical framework to explain how mentoring and befriending support the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

In the mesosystem, at the bottom half of the sphere are the sources of support which include both formal and informal mentors. The arrows represent the way that young people drop anchors in different ‘communities of belonging’ in line with Verdasco (2019). The top half of the mesosystem includes the domains of support, the way in which mentoring and befriending helps young people to embed in a wider resettlement context. Social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016) will be used to explain the way that young people drop anchors in different communities and relational embedding (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Ryan, 2022; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015) helps account for the strength of attachment young people have to different mentors and befrienders. This framework allows a more nuanced view of UASYP, contrasting with the simplistic and binary ways in which UASYP have been traditionally viewed in policy and practice, as outlined in Chapter 2. A starting assumption is that UASYP

are both vulnerable and agentic (Chase *et al.*, 2019), they can be privileged in some areas and disadvantaged in others, they can occupy local, national and international spaces (Moskal, 2015) and they can be confined by the structural bounds of the asylum system, yet able to exercise agency through their social relations (Hynes, 2011; O'Reilly, 2020).

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined an ecological model of mentoring to support the resettlement of UASYP that will be used in this study. This chapter has argued that mentoring and befriending need to be studied at multiple levels: micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono. Within the model, liminality (Turner, 1969) will explore the in-between spaces that UASYP occupy and how these impact on the resettlement of UASYP. Social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) and relational embedding (Ryan, 2018) will allow deeper exploration of how UASYP attach to different formal and informal mentors and befrienders. By bringing together these theoretical perspectives into one integrated framework, the study not only adds to limited empirical knowledge about how mentoring and befriending supports UASYP in Scotland, but it adds theoretical insights by situating mentoring and befriending in the context of wider systems young people are part of before and after migration. In the next chapter, I discuss how this theoretical underpinning has impacted on the research design, methods used, ethics and processes of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Overview

This chapter outlines the philosophical underpinnings of the research, the methodological approach and the research process in detail. Integral to this qualitative study was exploring the complexities, nuances and contradictions of young people's lives. As well as exploring young people's experiences of mentoring and befriending, equally important was situating knowledge in a specific socio-political context. The following sections include a discussion around the research design, articulating the epistemological, ontological, methodological and axiological underpinnings of the research, including ethical issues arising. This follows with a discussion on the recruitment and sampling employed, before moving on to outline stages of data collection and approach to data analysis. In line with the transformative paradigm and the analytical lens of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), researcher reflexivity was a central facet of the study and this chapter is punctuated by reflections on the research process at different stages. The chapter finishes with some overall reflections on conducting complex research of this nature.

5.1 Research paradigms and design

There is general agreement on four main research paradigms, which relate to different philosophical schools of thought: positivist, constructivist, critical/transformative and pragmatic (Kuhn, 1962). While positivism assumes that the objects of study have a universal truth that can be tested using empirical methods, a constructivist perspective recognises the 'complexity and heterogeneity' (Ericksson *et al.*, 2019: 377) of people's lives and the messiness of the social world. A constructionist perspective posits that people's views are not 'out there' to be found, rather they are socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Central to the constructivist paradigm is the voices and experiences of marginalised groups (Bridwell, 2013). However, one problematic aspect is a 'lack of recognition of social structures' (Blaikie and Priest, 2017: 111). In response to the shortcomings of positivism and constructivism, the critical paradigm includes discussions around power relations and social inequality (Mertens, 2012) in relation to the research. Also known as the transformative paradigm, this approach is preoccupied with social justice and achieving social change (Mertens, 2007). It acknowledges multiple realities, seeks to give a voice to marginalised populations and has researcher reflexivity at its core (Mertens, 2007). There are four aspects which make up a paradigm: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology (Lincoln & Guba, 1989), which are

discussed below. The following section outlines the transformative research paradigm that underpinned the thesis, which provided a framework for the assumptions, beliefs and values (Omodan, 2024) integral to carrying out the research.

5.1.2 Methodological approach

Over the past three decades, there has been a shift from research ‘on’ children and young people, to research ‘with’ them (Tisdall, 2018), reflecting a reconceptualization of children and young people as competent social agents (James and Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1996). Through qualitative inquiry, I wanted to ascertain how young people ‘experienced’ resettlement in Scotland, including how they engaged in social relations with formal and informal mentors and befrienders. In choosing a methodological approach for this study, several factors were considered: the need to be grounded in the subjective experiences of the young people and the need for age, language and interest appropriate methods. Integral to the choice of method was also a commitment to social justice (Mertens, 2007) and the potential for making the research meaningful for young people and, in an ideal world, a group of benefactors in the future (Kaukko, 2016). Good qualitative research with young people challenges an adult-centric perspective and amplifies marginalised voices (Ungar, 2005). As noted in Chapter 2, the voices of UASYP tend to be either missing, silenced or over-simplified in public discourses. Similarly, much research with UASYP relies on ‘adult explanations and rationalisations’ (Crawley, 2010: 163) and so I wanted to allow young people to tell their stories from their own perspectives.

Central to the transformative paradigm is consulting with participants to choose the most appropriate method (Mertens, 2007). I recruited eight young advisors with lived experience of the asylum process to help plan the research and help decide on the best method to engage with participants. Participatory research generates knowledge from the ‘perspective of those being researched, rather than the perspective of the researcher’ (Ensor and Gozdzia, 2010: 23). Involving young people as co-researchers creates a more balanced power dynamics between researcher and researched, leading to ‘collaborative knowledge-making’ (Korjonen-Kuusipuro *et al.*, 2018: 553). This stage was crucial to set the scene, to understand the resettlement challenges that young asylum seekers faced, as well as exploring their existing support structures, helping to corroborate stakeholder interviews and triangulate results.

It is important to note that participatory research can be viewed as being on a spectrum: at one end young people are consulted as part of the research process and at the opposite extreme young people are equal partners in research design, implementation and dissemination (Rogers *et al.*, 2018). While my original plan was to aim towards more participatory methods, in practice, my research only involved young people in the initial consultation with youth advisors. Some have suggested that it may be unrealistic to represent the ‘unmediated, authentic voice’ (Kaukko, 2016: 55) of UASYP, given the time-bound nature of most research projects. The original plan was to use creative participatory methods with young people, as this can give a voice to young people who may have been ‘stifled by more orthodox interview techniques’ (Chase *et al.*, 2019: 466). Practically speaking, gathering a group of UASYP together from different parts of the country, with varying levels of English, with the potential need for multiple interpreters, was deemed too challenging. Creative sessions tend to require numerous sessions which can cause issues with attrition, particularly in light of the often-chaotic nature of young people’s experiences while waiting for an asylum decision. Indeed, findings from the initial sessions with young advisors indicated that informal chats on a one-to-one basis in a place of their choosing would be a potentially useful method.

Interviews with marginalised groups are useful as they allow researchers to capture a diversity of viewpoints (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011) and can help triangulate results, which is another marker of rigour in qualitative inquiry (Tracy, 2010). However, interviews are not value-free and can be potentially triggering for UASYP. I was particularly mindful that UASYP are subjected to multiple interviews as part of the asylum process and another ‘interview’ by researchers may add to their emotional burden. Young people were given agency in terms of when and where we met, and chats could take place virtually or in person. It was important that the research took place where young people felt comfortable and not judged. Sime (2017) draws attention to the importance of space and place, as power dynamics play out differently in school, home or community environments. Chats happened in local libraries, colleges or the university. If young people were recruited through stakeholders, I travelled to local authority spaces where young people were familiar and felt safe. Interviews with young people were unstructured and, although guided by an interview schedule, had space to meander where young people wanted. Recruiting young people via young advisors and stakeholders helped to build trust also. My ultimate decision to use interviews with young people was not taken lightly, it was the result of several practical and ethical concerns.

The study period was 2020-2024 and data collection took place mid-way through the COVID-19 pandemic (2021-2023), which had implications for the methodology adopted and likely the study findings. There are practical and methodological implications of involving young people in all stages of the research: it can be time-consuming and may also take an emotional toll on young people. Therefore, interviews were thought to be the best option, as they could be carried out online.

Criteria for academic rigor in constructivist and critical research differ from positivist research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) reject the criteria of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’, noting that the social world has multiple realities, not just one objective truth. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that two markers of quality are trustworthiness and authenticity. Authenticity is preoccupied with ‘the broader political impact of research’ (Bryman, 2016: 386), which lay at the core of the PhD. In adopting an ecological model mentoring (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I situated mentoring and befriending within a wider socio-political context, including wider care structures for UASYP. Lincoln and Guba suggest (1985; 1989) that internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, should be replaced by credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. Credibility, defined as achieving the ‘correct’ interpretation of participant views, was achieved by methodological triangulation, gathering data from young advisors, stakeholders engaged in work with UASYP, young people and their mentors and befrienders. Dependability relates to whether findings are in line with accepted standards for the method chosen, so I engaged in good practice in interviews with potentially vulnerable populations.

In line with Pearlman (2024), I paid particular attention to the ‘physical, social and emotional safety and well-being’ (p.213) of young people, and was mindful of the *when*, *where* and *how* interviews took place. Giving young people agency over the interview process was an important aspect of this good practice. Confirmability ensures that the interpretation of the data has come from participants and not the interpretation of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Central to the transformative paradigm is the role of researcher subjectivity and I kept a diary throughout the research to reflect on the process. Finally, transferability is defined as the degree to which results can be transferred to another setting. However, it is important to note that this research is grounded in a particular cultural context and may not be transferable to other contexts.

5.1.3 Axiological approach

Axiology refers to the ethical issues that need to be considered when planning research. Tracy (2010) posits that research that has ethics at its core is one of the markers of excellent qualitative inquiry. Scholars are increasingly noting the importance of ethics in research with refugee populations (Jacobsen and Landau 2003; MacKenzie *et al.*, 2007; De Haene *et al.*, 2018; Zady-Çepoğlu, 2024). However, ethics in research with UASYP has received less attention, bar a few notable exceptions (Hopkins 2008; Verliet *et al.*, 2015; Chase *et al.*, 2019). Research with UASYP presents a ‘unique set of conundrums and contradictions’ (Chase *et al.*, 2019: 458), not only because of the ‘perceived’ vulnerability of this population, but because of the complex reasons that underlie that vulnerability (MacKenzie *et al.*, 2007). Ethical issues in research with UASYP are multilayered (Vervliet *et al.*, 2015). In addition to the usual issues of informed consent, confidentiality and harm, there are intersecting issues of power, cultural difference and social justice that come into play (Mertens, 2007). Indeed, Jacobson and Landau (2003) recognise that there is a dual imperative in research with refugees and asylum seekers i.e. the need to ensure academic rigour, while also protecting participants. I obtained ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde (Appendix A: Ethical approval), as well as from a local authority to be able to speak to a social worker. Additionally, I also kept a diary throughout the research process, reflecting regularly on the research process and any ethical dilemmas that surfaced. The following section outlines specific ethical considerations which came to the fore during the research including, do no harm, relational ethics, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

5.1.3.1 Do no harm

Pearlman (2024) notes that researchers should recognise that certain groups are over-researched. While refugee populations tend to be over researched in Scotland, UASYP are under researched, particularly because of the difficulty of engaging with this population. The need to avoid and minimise harm were paramount. Having a trauma-informed approach means being mindful that young people may be re-triggered while recounting personal experiences of trauma. The focus of the research was on young people’s resettlement journeys in Scotland. I did not ask about their lives before arriving in Scotland or their asylum journeys and I made it clear from the outset that young people did not need to disclose any personal information or talk about anything they did not feel comfortable

discussing. I asked young people about the challenges young asylum seekers faced generally and emphasised that they did not have to disclose any personal issues.

Participant information forms for young people, peer mentors and young advisors signposted young people to relevant organisations (Appendix B: Participant information sheets) specialised in supporting the mental health of young people. Appropriate safeguarding measures were put in place also in the event of a disclosure, following the procedures of University of Strathclyde's safeguarding strategy. However, this issue was more complex if young people were recruited through stakeholders or external organisations, as I would also have to follow the organisations' own safeguarding procedures in the event of a disclosure. Additional challenges came in ensuring that interpreters understood the terminology around safeguarding to be able to communicate it to young people. No disclosures were made during the interviews, so this issue did not arise. I gave participants the opportunity to debrief after every session also, to check in, although most did not.

The transformative paradigm, as Mertens (2007) notes, has a social justice agenda. Integral to my research was an awareness of the socially constructed nature of social categories, but also the way in which researchers can become complicit in reproducing harmful narratives. There are ethical dilemmas in interpreting young people's experiences, which may differ widely from adult perspectives on the same experiences (Hill, 2005). UASYP are not one homogenised group with a shared experience of the asylum process, however there is a danger of 'othering' young people. By focussing solely on the vulnerability of UASYP, researchers may 'become active in the process of vulnerabilisation' (Chase *et al.*, 2019: 463). Conversely, constructing young people as agentic, may reduce the support they receive. I committed to exploring the nuanced complexities of young people's lives: how young people perceived the world alongside how they were positioned within it. Central to my research was a commitment to exploring the intersection of structure and agency, the ways in which young people exercised agency within the confines of the asylum system.

At the heart of the transformative paradigm is reflexivity, which involves critical self-reflection (Berger, 2013) about how our own biases and positionalities impact on the research relationships. Being able to reflect on research also goes some way towards producing 'more ethical, less harmful social science' (Chase *et al.*, 2019: 470). Nevertheless, Bryman (2016:394) recognises that reflexivity is a 'slippery concept' as there is no consensus about

what it is. Reflexivity requires that we consider how our identities, values and emotional responses all impact on research (Kara, 2015: 72). Reflexivity is also preoccupied with how participants are impacted by taking part in research. I came to this research with a background in community youth work and a decade spent working with children, young people and their families. Undoubtedly, this experience impacted on how I approached interviews, how I engaged with young people and how I interpreted data. During the research, I volunteered with an organisation that supports asylum seekers and refugees, which I now subsequently work for, so I am personally aware of the issues that asylum seekers are confronted with. I also completed a three-month internship with the Red Cross Refugee services prior to starting my doctorate, which involved doing some research with asylum-seekers. These experiences informed my starting assumption that young people are capable subjects rather than objects of study (Ensor, 2010). I adopted a strength-based perspective, assuming that young people had inherent strengths, both individual and collective. These experiences also made me aware of the structural constraints that many asylum seekers face, which undoubtedly impacted on my research design and analysis. My decision to adopt an ecological model of mentoring (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was grounded in an existing understanding of the wider socio-political context around UASYP. As Mertens (2007) notes, researchers should feel allegiance with those who are dealing with ‘issues of discrimination and oppression’ (p.216).

A commitment to fairness meant that I included in the study young people who did not have high levels of spoken English. While it would have been easier to only recruit participants with a good level of spoken English, I felt it was important to include young people who may historically have been excluded in research of this nature. However, working with multi-lingual participants presents numerous challenges. In addition to the time and budgetary constraints of using interpreters, there are practical concerns around the need to translate informed consent documents and other relevant documentation in multiple languages. Poor translation can undermine the validity of the research. If interpreters are needed, they too are ‘active in producing research accounts’ (Temple *et al.*, 2002: 1) and their presence may influence findings. Speaking for others is a political issue (Alcoff, 1991) as language carries cultural, social and political meaning, which can get lost in translation. I chose to use community interpreters, people with lived experience of the asylum process, to help young people feel more relaxed. Before each session, I had a briefing with interpreters to talk about the need for confidentiality and to clarify expectations in terms of using the first person and

translating word for word. However, through my limited Arabic, I became aware that one of my interpreters was asking some leading questions, which I had to challenge at the time.

Reciprocity is a strategy for addressing some of the inherent power imbalances involved in research. Following on from suggestions from young advisors, I offered young people an incentive to take part in research. Participants were able to choose between vouchers which suited them best: Amazon, Love2shop or Tesco. In terms of other reciprocal processes, one of my young advisors included me as a referee on a job application, another asked for help applying for an access course to university and another asked for support to apply for college. While these requests were within my remit, there were other requests which I was not able to support, which I had to reflect on a great deal. One young person requested help with family reunification, so I had to signpost them to relevant organisations specialised in this area of expertise. The situation became more complicated when the organisation did not respond to the young person, and they articulated to me how much stress it was causing them. I had to signpost the young person to other support workers who were better placed to advocate on their behalf. These ethical dilemmas were peppered through the research and highlight the complexity of working with groups of this nature.

5.1.3.2 Relational ethics

Relational ethics (Ellis *et al.*, 2007) is particularly salient in research with UASYP. Phipps (2013) highlights the contradiction that the ethical procedures that have come to be accepted in social science like completing ethics forms, getting informed consent etc., can get in the way of relationship building and can mask the power relations between researcher and researched. Time is needed to build relationships, and it is important that researchers do not rush in and rush out (Kohli, 2006). Prior to data collection, I completed a 20-week Arabic course to be able to engage in small pockets of conversation with young people. This not only helped to break the ice, but it also helped diffuse perceived power relations. When applying for ethical approval, extra time was factored into the research design as I was aware of the difficulty of gaining access to UASYP. The two-stage research design meant that interviews with young advisors took place first, as well as stakeholder interviews. This was intentional to build relations with both young advisors and stakeholder, to help facilitate access to young people. There is a danger that when relationships have formed and the research finishes, young people will feel a sense of abandonment (Chase *et al.*, 2019), so I gave young people

the opportunity to take part in a follow-up debrief after the interviews, although most did not avail of this.

Through my professional work with asylum-seeking populations, I understand that it is common for people to have quite chaotic day-to-day lives. This can be pronounced with young people who are in a liminal space between youth and adulthood. On several occasions, I had planned a meeting with a young person and they did not show up. Others rescheduled interviews on multiple occasions and several young people agreed to take part in interviews and then did not respond to follow-up messages to arrange. It was difficult not to get frustrated by this. Ethical reflexivity allowed me to process these experiences and be mindful of the reality of young people's lives: lack of regular timetables, culturally different ideas around timekeeping and communication, and the precarious nature of the asylum system. In retrospect, I should have factored in more time into the research design to account for this. I regularly reflected on my frustrations and the limitations of the research, some of which were in my control, and some of which were not. I reflected that that research of this nature requires flexibility, adaptability and patience.

5.1.3.4 Informed consent

The premise of informed consent is the idea that 'even when people know they are being asked to participate in research, they should be fully informed about the research process' (Bryman, 2016: 129). This starts with the assumption that participants are autonomous and that they understand the implications of giving consent. If participants are not fully proficient in English, ensuring they understand the research is more challenging, particularly since consent is 'culturally bound' and tied to 'western values of individual autonomy, self-determination, and freedom' (Ellis *et al.*, 2007: 467). To add to the complexity, UASYP in Scotland are looked after by local authorities, which understandably may be protective over young people. I employed 'culturally appropriate consent procedures' (Mackenzie *et al.*, 2007: 303), and an iterative model of consent, meaning that consent was constantly negotiated throughout the research process to develop a shared understanding of the project. While voluntary participation is a central ethical principle of the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC), Hopkins (2008) notes that UASYP often do not refuse to take part in research, as they worry it may reflect badly on their asylum claim. Expectations were managed in the initial stages of the project to ensure participants fully understood the intention of the research and to clarify that participation in the research would have no

influence on young people's asylum application. At the start of each session, in line with my consent forms (Appendix C: Consent forms). I reiterated (via interpreters if necessary) that confidentiality may need to be breached if young people disclosed harm or abuse. This is a difficult subject to broach with young people, particularly with those who may be mistrustful of perceived authority figures. However, it was important to make this explicit at the start of any interviews.

5.1.3.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

Respecting confidentiality and anonymising participants are paramount, particularly because of the political sensitivity around UASYP. I took care when anonymising participants to ensure that details about young people's pre-flight experiences, their current location or political affiliations did not reveal their identity and compromise their safety (Hopkins, 2008). I also omitted young people's country of origin, instead including the generic region to ensure that the participants were not identifiable. Issues around confidentiality become more significant when interpreters are needed, as they can breach confidentiality (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). I spoke to interpreters about the need to maintain confidentiality, which is particularly important in smaller communities where the interpreter pool is tight knit and people tend to move in similar circles. Equally, when working with children and young people, it is not always possible to offer complete confidentiality, as this may need to be breached if a young person reveals that they are being abused or are involved in illegal activities. Safeguarding procedures were put in place, in case young people disclosed harm or abuse, and this was also explained to young people at the start of each interview. These included having a clear line of reporting to organisations/individual support workers, in the event of a disclosure.

5.2 Recruitment and data collection

The complexities of conducting research with UASYP have been highlighted by scholars (Hopkins, 2008; Vervliet *et al.*, 2015; Chase *et al.*, 2019). One of the most problematic aspects is negotiating access, as researchers must go through multiple 'gatekeepers' (Hill, 2005: 70). This process can be lengthy and time-consuming, so I built in extra time to the research design to allow for this. Added to this complexity is the small number of UASYP in Scotland, as well as the geographical spread. Data collection took place between October 2021 and July 2023, and I adopted a two-stage approach, which was intentional, to allow time to develop relationships with young advisors and stakeholders.

Stage 1: Young advisory sessions/stakeholder interviews

Stage 2: Interviews with UASYP/ mentors/peer mentors and befrienders

Following the first stage of ethical approval, I engaged eight young advisors and collected data from 16 practitioners who supported UASYP in their role at the time. Following the second round of ethical approval, I collected data from ten UASYP, two peer mentors and one group mentor. Seven mentors and befrienders were included in the study including one group mentor, two peer mentors and four informal mentors. In total 36 individual interviews took place, totalling over 40 hours of recorded data. The following section outlines recruitment and data collection with each of the four cohorts (young advisors, stakeholders, young people, mentors/befrienders).

5.2.1 The sessions with the young advisors

The two-stage data collection started with the recruitment of eight young advisors with lived experience of the asylum process, to help ground the research, plan the methods, and advise on the best ways to recruit and support participants. This participatory approach is a central facet of the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2007), which underpinned this qualitative study. Young advisors were recruited (Appendix D: Recruitment adverts), via snowball sampling: contacting NGOs and organisations engaged in work with asylum seekers and refugees and contacting people I know via working in the refugee sector. I advertised the opportunity widely: on WhatsApp groups, ESOL forums and church forums used by asylum seekers and refugees. Two of the young advisors were recruited through existing links to charities and organisations. To include the voices of those who may be digitally excluded, I put up signs in English, Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish Sorani in various organisations that I have links with, and I was able to recruit one young person this way. One young advisor was recruited through an organisation following several in person meetings and after joining a networking event they were running. Attempts were made to recruit young people from a variety of different backgrounds, with different ages, experiences, migration status, time spent in Scotland and an equal spread of genders. In terms of the demographics, young advisors were aged 16-25, there were six females and two males from eight countries throughout Central America, the Middle East, Europe and African countries. All young advisors had lived experience of the asylum process, they had a mixture of ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ statuses and half were unaccompanied, while half had come to Scotland with

siblings or a family member. All young advisors spoke English, and sessions were carried out in English.

Recruitment for young advisors was long and protracted. Ideally, I would have liked to recruit several groups of young people from different organisations, bringing them together in one young advisory panel. In practice, this was a challenge for a number of reasons. Recruitment took place during the COVID-19 pandemic when many organisations had ceased face to face engagement or had ceased altogether, and numbers of UASYP arriving to UK shores had halted. Secondly, I experienced a bit of reticence from organisations which made me critically reflect on my own views and attitudes. I had expected reticence from gatekeepers in recruiting those under 18. However, I assumed that recruiting young advisors over 18 years old would have been less problematic. While some organisations helped me advertise the role on their newsletter and were very active in promoting it, many ignored requests or cited general research fatigue in the sector. One response negated the request for help recruiting young advisors noting: *'we would require evidence of a much more robust approach to working with this vulnerable group before encouraging participation'* (Email, 27/10/2021). The expectation from the organisation was that I provide mental health support for young advisors, rather than just signposting to other organisations engaged in this work. I really struggled with this response for several reasons. Practically speaking, it was beyond my remit to provide mental health support for young advisors or indeed to employ professionals with this experience. However, more than anything, this comment clashed with my value system around working with groups with perceived vulnerability. While I recognise that asylum-seeking populations are potentially vulnerable, I do not presume that this is innate or inevitable. Through my own experience of working with asylum-seeking populations, I regularly saw the resilience of people to persevere in the face of adversity. The deficit-based standpoint of this organisation, clashed with my strengths-based standpoint. My belief is that the system makes people vulnerable and it was through this lens that I subsequently interviewed and recruited participants.

I experienced the dozens of rejections from practitioners in a multitude of contradictory ways. General frustration at the rejections also intersected with an empathy for practitioners in the third sector who are overstretched and under resourced. Having worked in the third sector for over a decade and having myself received numerous requests from researchers over the years, I was aware of the reticence of stakeholders to engage with an outsider, as well as the over-

worked nature of the third sector. It was because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the protracted nature of recruitment that I had to adapt my plan for data collection with young advisors. The initial plan was to have one young advisory group and to complete three group sessions with young advisors on Zoom which followed a pre-designed plan for the conversations (Appendix E: Young advisory group project plan). However, I felt it was best to engage young people straight away after they had opted in, rather than lose momentum by waiting for other young people to join the group. Therefore I carried out eight individual one-to-one sessions, rather than groups sessions, as originally planned.

Table 1: Participants in young advisor sessions

Young Advisor	Age	Gender	Accompanied	Region of origin	Time spent in UK (years)
Khadija	21	F	Y	East Africa	14
Amira	22	F	Y	Middle East	5
Sara	20	F	Y	Central America	1
Ayesha	21	F	N	Middle East	4
Hassan	25	M	N	Middle East	1
Dalia	16	F	Y	Central Africa	5
Sofia	20	F	N	Eastern Europe	0.5
Reza	24	M	N	Middle East	2

To break the ice with young advisors, I carried out a creative ice-breaker activity where I asked young people to choose from a selection of 12 pictures which picture best described them (Appendix E: Young advisory group project plan). Examples are included below.



I did this activity also to allow young people to get to know me. To follow, I asked young people about what surprised them most about arriving in Scotland. This question was a segue to talking about what young people liked and did not like about Scotland, allowing young people to talk about challenges for young asylum-seekers more generally. Most spoke about their own personal experiences. Young advisor sessions were divided into two parts: the first focussed on young people's experiences of coming to Scotland, the challenges young people faced, who or what helped young people to resettle in Scotland and what would help in the future. In the second half of the session, I asked young people for their advice about the design for the main study, the best way to recruit young people in stage two, how to make the project young person friendly and how to ensure cultural sensitivity. The themes I covered revolved around:

- Young people's understanding of mentoring/different cultural understandings of the term/how frequently it is used/how well it is understood
- How and where to recruit young people for the study
- How to best explain the research to young people
- How to make the research meaningful for young people/generate buy in from young people
- The most appropriate methods to use with young people
- The most appropriate spaces to conduct research with young people

These individual sessions produced very rich data, which helped to corroborate findings from young people and stakeholder interviews. In terms of methods, some felt that informal chats with young people on a one-to-one basis would be best, while others felt that group participatory methods including drama, film, photography would be preferable. There was a consensus that young people should be able to choose when and where to engage in sessions, including neutral spaces like coffee shops, libraries or walks. There are practical issues around conducting walking interviews in terms of recording, ethics and sound quality for recording purposes and each decision was carefully weighed up in terms of the impact on the young person and the practicalities of carrying it out. Young people also suggested that I should learn a few words of the young people's native language to make young people feel comfortable, which I did with every interview.

Other suggestions involved having an incentive to participate and making explicit how the research would benefit young people, which I adhered to. Young advisors spoke about the need to stay clear of talking about issues including politics, young people's football teams and asylum journeys which I took heed of, although some young people choose to bring these issues up themselves. There were other suggestions I was unable to instigate because of time and budgetary constraints. Several young advisors spoke about bringing a group of young people away on an outdoor activity or playing board games at the start of the session to engage in relationship building. However, all sessions with the advisors were all online, because of the COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions, and I was unable to engage in these activities. One of the sessions was particularly challenging as the young person shared very personal aspects of their asylum journey, which had an emotional impact on me. I had to debrief with colleagues after and engage in reflexive writing to help process these complicated emotions. Overall, these sessions were incredibly valuable, in helping to ground the research and plan the next stages. Practically speaking, some of the young advisors were also instrumental in recruiting young people for the following stage of data collection, and they also helped narrow the focus of the research and helped me to understand some important cultural aspects of mentoring and befriending.

5.2.2 Stakeholder interviews

Initially, the plan was to speak to practitioners who worked exclusively with UASYP. However, there were only two mentoring/befriending programmes in Scotland that engaged exclusively with this population. The search criteria were therefore extended to include other

support professionals, like social workers and support workers who support UASYP, as well as mentoring/befriending programmes that engaged young asylum seekers and refugees more generally. A range of practitioners were approached to take part in data collection and participants, including:

- university mentoring programme coordinators for asylum seekers and care-experienced young people;
- ESOL practitioners;
- volunteer coordinators of befriending projects for young refugees;
- social workers;
- support workers;
- volunteering programmes for young refugees and asylum seekers;
- work coaches who support UASYP;
- guardians;
- church-based befriending programme coordinators.

This initial decision to include support practitioners, other than mentoring and befriending coordinators, was a practical one. However, in retrospect, this decision also helped to move my thinking on from fixed ideas about mentoring and befriending, as being a static one-to-one relationship, to considering how different models of mentoring and befriending support young people. Included in these interviews were stakeholders engaged in participation programmes for UASYP, ESOL conversation clubs for asylum seekers and refugees and volunteer programmes for young asylum seekers. Conducting these interviews in the first stage was strategic, to help negotiate access to young people and mentors in the second stage.

This stage of recruitment was protracted, but it also illuminated some interesting findings, which have implications for further research in this area. These included resource pressures in local authorities and third sector organisations, fixed ideas around mentoring and befriending as well as a general reticence to engage, as one practitioner put it, because of the ‘political’ nature of the subject matter. Rigby *et al.* (2018) have noted the reticence of statutory organisations in Scotland to take part in academic research. Many local authorities (LAs) cited resourcing issues as a reason for declining an interview. Recruitment took place at a time when LAs were receiving political pressure from Westminster to accommodate UASYP.

Until 2021, LAs could opt in to receiving UASYP, leading to large pockets of young people in only a few geographical areas. However, this changed in 2022 when it became mandatory for all LAs across Scotland to receive UASYP. Interestingly, there were vastly different responses across LAs. While some were open to being interviewed and accepted with just one email, others required ethical approval to be sought through the Health and Social Care Partnership in their area. Another challenge was identifying the correct person who had responsibility towards UASYP, as provision varies across local authorities. While some LAs had dedicated UASYP professionals who work exclusively with young people, for those LAs who only accommodate one or two young people, this role may be a small part of a social worker's job description. While many people expressed an interest in the research, often practitioners declined an interview, citing that the topic was 'too politically sensitive' to participate. Indeed, others expressed reticence to engage in the process following requests from the refugee community themselves around interview and research burn out.

Another challenge was that mentoring/befriending programmes that support UASYP do not fall into neatly bounded categories. Indeed, it was challenging for me to define the boundaries around what constituted a mentoring/befriending programme. If it did not have the label of a mentoring/befriending, but it provided peer support, did that suffice? Did ESOL programmes count or peer education programmes? Did it matter if organisations did not consider their programmes to be traditional mentoring or befriending? Indeed, many practitioners that I contacted had fixed notions of mentoring/befriending as representing a formal one-to-one support. One response from an organisation that runs group programmes with young refugees noted that *'our work to support young people and adults who are refugees is not carried out using mentoring programmes, rather is via group work, which is led by social workers and student social workers. I am not sure our work would fit the remit of your research if it is mentoring support you are looking at'* (Email, 03/12/21). It was a challenge to identify the boundaries around informal and formal mentoring and befriending.

A final challenge was one around the framing of UASYP as being separate from other care-experienced young people. One organisation that I contacted that ran a mentoring programme for care-experienced young people, responded by saying that the programme only supported 'care-experienced young people', the implied assumption being that UASYP are not care-experienced. UASYP are looked after by the LA and therefore, have the same rights as other care-experienced young people in Scotland. However, there appears to be a difference in the

perception of young people as being different to their Scottish counterparts. While these challenges meant that recruitment took much longer than anticipated, these findings have repercussions for further research with this group and time needs to be factored into future research.

Table 2: Stakeholders interviewed

Stakeholder	Gender	Local Authority/Third Sector
Stakeholder 1	F	University mentoring programme, Public Sector
Stakeholder 2	F	ESOL practitioner, Public Sector
Stakeholder 3	F	Support worker, Local Authority
Stakeholder 4	M	Social worker, Local Authority
Stakeholder 5	M	Befriending coordinator, Third Sector
Stakeholder 6	F	Volunteering coordinator, Third Sector
Stakeholder 7	F	Befriending coordinator, Third Sector
Stakeholder 8	F	Peer mentoring coordinator, Local Authority
Stakeholder 9	M	Befriending coordinator, Third Sector
Stakeholder 10	F	Mentoring coordinator, Third Sector
Stakeholder 12	M	Job coach, Local Authority
Stakeholder 13	M	Social worker, Local Authority
Stakeholder 14	F	Befriending coordinator, Church Organisation
Stakeholder 15	M	Group participation worker, Third Sector
Stakeholder 16	F	Group participation worker, Third Sector

Over the course of a year and a half, between October 21 and July 23, sixteen semi-structured interviews were carried out with practitioners engaged in work with UASYP. Interviews lasted around one hour and were conducted online via Zoom or Teams. Stakeholder interviews focussed on the challenges facing the young people they supported and the role of different types of social support including formal and informal mentors (Appendix F: Interview schedules). Interview questions were adapted according to the context: if practitioners were not involved in formal and befriending programmes, questions focussed on the role of these programmes in supporting young people, the challenges around these kinds of programmes (Appendix F: Interview schedules). Unlike structured interviews which are more prescribed and produce a more explicit type of knowledge, semi-structured interviews

allowed me to be more flexible, and prompt for further details. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible, more open-ended and they give participants more leeway to discuss issues that are more salient (Bryman, 2016), which I felt was important when engaging with stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews also allow questions to be added as the research evolves. Interviews with stakeholders were valuable in terms of setting the scene, understanding the needs of UASYP, the resettlement challenges for UASYP and who or what helped young people. This was important to be able to situate the need for mentoring and befriending with UASYP in the first place.

5.2.3 Young people interviews

There are a small number of UASYP in Scotland. At the time of the study, the Guardianship Scotland was supporting 730 young people, although numbers were expected to increase (Scottish Refugee Council, 2023). The transitory nature of UASYP and the precarious nature of their immigration status mean that negotiating access to carry out research can prove challenging. Having to go through gatekeepers can add an additional layer of complexity in terms of recruitment. I recruited ten UASYP and carried out an interview with each. Initially, the plan was to do a one-to-one session with each young person and then bring young people together in a group session, with the intention of getting them to design their ideal mentoring or befriending programme. However, in practice, this was challenging for both practical and ethical reasons. There are practical issues associated with carrying out multiple sessions with young people and attrition is a real possibility (Kaukko, 2016). Given the chaotic nature of young people's lives and the multiple practical barriers they faced, particularly during a global pandemic, including accessing IT and reliable Wi-Fi networks, it seemed impractical to ask young people to attend multiple sessions. In terms of ethical issues, one stakeholder who helped me to recruit several young people noted that it would not be ethically sound to gather young people together to plan their ideal mentoring or befriending programmes, if there was no funding available to implement it in the future. This comment made me critically reflect on the nature of social justice-based research and I changed my initial plan of getting young people to design their ideal mentoring/befriending project.

Young people were recruited via two routes (Appendix D: Recruitment adverts). Firstly, via stakeholders and young advisors previously interviewed, and secondly via snowball sampling, often used when it is difficult to put together a sample of participants. Seven young people were recruited via stakeholders, and the remaining three young people were recruited

via snowball sampling. Gaining access to participants via gatekeepers may be problematic as it can ‘undermine the voluntariness of interviewees consent’ (Pearlman, 2024: 212).

Snowball sampling brings with it several methodological and ethical dilemmas. Some suggest that studies rarely explain exactly how snowball sampling is carried out in practice (Jacobsen *et al.*, 2003). In the young advisor sessions, young people suggested recruiting via several routes, including ESOL networks, Facebook and WhatsApp groups, churches, football teams, schools and via informal networks, all of which I utilised. I recruited via existing contacts at NGOs, who advertised the opportunity on their newsletters, WhatsApp groups and forums. I put signs in Arabic and Farsi on noticeboards of organisations engaged in work with asylum-seeking populations. I also recruited a young person via existing contacts with asylum seekers that I worked with, asking people if they knew of any people who may be interested to take part.

One of the biggest concerns about snowball sampling is that it can produce a biased sample of participants from similar countries and backgrounds. Despite the small population size of UASYP in Scotland, attempts were made to ensure a sample of participants from different national, cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds. In terms of the demographic of young people, there was 1 female and 9 males, aged 16-22, reflecting the 90% majority male population of UASYP in the UK (Department for Education, 2020). Recruiting female unaccompanied young people can be more challenging because young women may be less engaged with organisations. Young people came from ten countries across the Middle East, West and East Africa. In terms of migration statuses, two young people had refugee status. Most had newly arrived in Scotland, which may have skewed findings towards challenges faced by newly arrived young people. Young people were recruited from different local authorities also, to account for differences in rural and urban settings: four lived in rural locations and six were living in cities in Scotland. Many of the young people included in the study had arrived during the COVID-19 pandemic, when much of the mentoring and befriending provision had ceased and many were not even aware of the concept of having a formal one-to-one mentor or befriender. My initial plan was to focus just on formal mentoring and befriending, but over time this perspective shifted, and I became interested to understand how young people thought of and experienced both formal and informal mentors and befrienders. Consequently, I ended up with a sample of ten young people, eight of the which were involved in group programmes supporting UASYP.

Table 3: Unaccompanied young people participating in the study

Pseudonym	Gender	Age at time of interview	Region of origin	Time spent in the UK (years)	The mentor named by the YP, if any
Huma	F	20	Middle East	2	Friend
Saleh	M	18	Middle East	1	Support Worker
Ayman	M	18	North Africa	1	Father
Yusef	M	16	East Africa	0.5	Friend
Ashraf	M	16	Middle East	0.5	School Teacher
Moussa	M	17	East Africa	1	Brother (abroad)/ No mentor in Scotland
Mostafa	M	22	Middle East	1	No mentor
Omar	M	21	West Africa	4	No mentor
Ola	M	18	West Africa	2	Multiple mentors
Sayid	M	18	Middle East	2	No mentor

Ten unstructured interviews were carried out with UASYP (Appendix F: Interview schedules). Interviews lasted about one hour and were conducted mostly in person, although five were online via Zoom because of the geographical location of young people. Interpreters were used in four of the ten interviews. When recruiting young people, I framed interviews as an ‘informal chat’ that would be recorded. Interviews with young people were unstructured, although all started with an ice-breaker activity to get to know the young people and help them to settle into the process (Appendix F: Interview schedules). This involved young people choosing a picture which best described them from a selection of 12 pictures. It is important to note that while creative activities are a useful tool, not all participants may engage with this process, indeed one participant struggled to comprehend the ice-breaker activity. Kaukko (2016) notes that in the initial stages of her research, young people struggled to come up with creative ideas, as it was something they were not used to. This reflects cultural differences around creativity.

In line with interviews with young advisors and stakeholders, young people were asked about the challenges they faced on arriving in Scotland and, for those who had been in Scotland for

a few years, if these challenges had changed at all. I also asked young people about the support they availed of, if they had formal or informal mentors and how they utilised different support networks. Although guided by an interview schedule, the semi-structured nature of this meant that the conversation could follow what was deemed interesting and important to participants. An in-depth approach to interviewing has been argued to be beneficial, not only to elicit rich data, but also to make the participants feel safe and at ease to discuss sensitive topics. However, this may be more problematic for UASYP who are subject to multiple interviews as part of the asylum process. As noted in Section 5.1.3, I aimed to make these ‘informal chats’ as relaxed and conversational as possible.

Interviews require that researchers reflect on the researcher/participant power imbalances (Creswell, 2017). Power imbalances are more significant when interpreters are involved. I had to use interpreters for four of the ten interviews, which added an additional layer of complexity. For example, my Arabic interpreter was from Syria, and it became clear that one of the young people, not from the Middle East, was struggling to understand some of the questions. In one interview, the young person did not engage particularly well with the interpreter, whether that was the result of their tone or manner of questioning or indeed personality. I had to reflect on the role that interpreters can play in influencing the interview dynamic. Three interviews took place at a council office, to ensure young people felt comfortable. However, at one point, there was a social worker, a young person, an interpreter and me in the same room, which no doubt impacted on the young person’s responses to questions about who supported them most. On another occasion, I had to cut an interview short, as I was aware that one of the young people seemed distracted and was struggling to engage. Afterwards, through the interpreter, the young person apologised for his lack of engagement, noting that he had not slept well the previous night. This interview was a reminder of the challenges faced by young asylum seekers, whose lives may be quite chaotic and lack structure. Ultimately, the young person’s well-being was more important than the outcome of the interview. These experiences taught me about the need for flexibility, patience and empathy.

5.2.4 Mentor/befriender interviews

Recruiting formal mentors and befrienders was particularly challenging, as I needed to access these through gatekeepers. There were a small number of formal mentoring and befriending programmes for young asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland at the time and only one

responded to my request. Consequently, I was able to recruit one formal peer befriender in this manner. The two peer mentors included in the study were recruited via stakeholder interviews and were nominated by young people I had interviewed. The four stakeholders included below were nominated by young people as representing informal mentors for them.

Table 4: List of mentors participating in the study

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nature of mentoring	Region of origin
Abdullah	M	25	Formal group befriending	Middle East
Saleh	M	18	Informal peer mentoring	Middle East
Samir	M	21	Informal peer mentoring	Middle East
Stakeholder 3	F	18+	Informal mentoring	Scotland
Stakeholder 12	M	18+	Informal mentoring	Scotland
Stakeholder 15	M	18+	Informal mentoring	Scotland
Stakeholder 16	F	18+	Informal mentoring	Scotland

Interviews with mentors were semi-structured, which allowed some flexibility to wander, within the interview schedule (Appendix F: Interview schedules). Topic areas revolved around the challenges that mentors/befrienders faced and the benefits they gained from supporting others. I analysed peer mentor and befriender interviews along with young people interviews, and I included the four adult informal adult mentors with the stakeholder interviews. The lack of access to formal mentors had implications for the data collection and analysis, which was skewed towards informal mentoring and befriending. I had wanted to explore how Scottish volunteers engaged in supporting UASYP benefitted from their experiences, but this is a missing piece of the puzzle in this study, which future research would benefit from. Since starting my research, a new national mentoring scheme for young refugees has been launched, which could give good insights in future work. However, multiple attempts to request an interview with stakeholders went unanswered. This is perhaps symptomatic of the chronically over-worked nature of the third sector, whereby requests from researchers are often pushed to the bottom of an ever-growing list of tasks to do.

5.3 Analysis

Data analysis for this study was cyclical and reflexive and took place over the course of two years. Interviews were coded firstly in word, using the highlighter function and then by using

an excel spreadsheet to identify common themes (Appendix G: Codebook). Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was chosen to analyse data for a number of reasons: it is compatible with a justice agenda, it is 'flexible and organic' (Braun & Clarke, 2019), and it involves a mixture of 'semantic and latent, inductive and deductive analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2019). RTA allowed space to explore the complexities of young people's lives. Coding in RTA involved being immersed in the data and then having some distance from it and this iterative process meant that I became very familiar with the data (Reyes *et al.*, 2024). RTA recognises that there not a single or 'correct' answer (Braun & Clarke, 2013), but that analysis is more preoccupied with depth of engagement. In RTA, the researcher is 'active in the process' (Braun *et al.*, 2022) and the knowledge and experiences that they bring to the study are part of that process. At the core of RTA is researcher reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 2). My coding was shaped by the assumptions I hold about UASYP, my social position and cultural beliefs, which I reflect on sporadically throughout the section below. Analysis was both deductive and inductive analysis and I moved between these, sometimes testing theory, and sometimes giving space to whatever came up in the data. As will be discussed below, the decision to code inductively or deductively was informed by existing literature around the subject, lack thereof and prior assumptions that I held about the subject matter. There were six stages of my RTA-based approach to interpreting the data, which are outlined below.

Stage 1: Familiarisation with the data

I transcribed interviews verbatim, which helped to immerse myself in the data. Additionally, after transcribing them, I re-listened to interviews with the aid of the transcript to become even more familiar with the data. As interviews took place over a prolonged period, I transcribed interviews after they happened, which meant that I read transcripts sequentially, reading the first transcript, then the first and second, then first second and third together etc. Through this process, I moved on from reading to engaging critically with the data, making initial observations by adding notes, initial observations and assumptions about each transcript and then making notes in relations to the larger dataset.

Stage 2: Coding

The two-stage nature of the research meant that I started analysing the data from the sessions with the young advisors first, which in turn helped inform interviews with stakeholders and UASYP about the challenges that young people faced. My initial coding was exploratory and descriptive, and it moved on to become more nuanced through repeated rounds of visiting the

data, which was interspersed with more data collection, reviewing of the literature and possible analytical frameworks which could be used to analyse the data. Braun and Clarke (2019: 5) note that a ‘domain summary’ is a shared topic, not necessarily a shared meaning and they recognise that semantic analysis is surface level, identifying explicit themes in the data. Each theme, they posit, should have a ‘central organising concept’ which should be bounded.

In line with my ecological model of mentoring and befriending (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), it was important to explore mentoring and befriending with UASYP at multiple levels: ontogenic, meso, exo, macro and chrono (Appendix G: Codebook). Initial coding was developed around three organising concepts. The first organising concept was the barriers/opportunities to resettlement for young people in Scotland, combining both the resettlement needs of young people (microsystem), with the resettlement context (exosystem). The second organising concept was the sources of support for UASYP and the how they supported the resettlement of UASYP in the mesosystem. These included the role of formal and informal mentors and befrienders, as well as wider support networks including professional networks, transnational ties and peer and community support and how they supported the resettlement of UASYP. The third organising concept focussed on the macrosystem, put simply the wider socio-political context of mentoring and befriending and how programmes fitted into wider care structures around UASYP. Within each of the three organising concepts, I looked at how time and relationships intersected with the concepts (chronosystem).

Stage 3: Generating Initial Themes

This phase involved capturing the ‘patterns of meaning across the dataset’ (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 76). Under the organising concept of ‘barriers and opportunities to resettlement’, codes were developed around the needs of UASYP at a microsystem level, as well as the resettlement context (exosystem) into which young people were accommodated and looked after. Codes were developed around acculturative, developmental, psychological, social, practical and structural barriers. Also in the microsystem were the factors which supported young people’s resettlement including personal qualities, placemaking, religion, digital spaces and activities, which were coded inductively.

Under the second organising concept of sources and domains of support in the mesosystem, themes were literature driven and coded deductively. Codes were developed around the sources of support (professional support, informal support, mentoring and befriending, transnational ties, digital spaces) and the domains of support, in terms of how these support structures supported young people. I coded differently for formal (dyadic, group and peer programmes) and informal mentoring and befriending. Initially I looked at mentoring and befriending programmes separately, but it became apparent that the formal mentoring and befriending programmes for UASYP included in the study had similar purposes: to tackle social isolation and to promote integration. Subsequently, I combined mentoring and befriending programmes together for the purposes of analysis. In terms of formal mentoring, codes were developed around the functions of programmes (developmental, acculturative, socio-emotional), developing on the work of Dolan *et al.* (2012), and the ways in which these supported young people's resettlement. Coding for informal mentoring was inductive, given the lack of literature around the subject.

For the third organising concept of the socio-political context around mentoring and befriending (macrosystem), I started by looking at differences and commonalities across mentoring and befriending programmes included in the study, to help make sense of the heterogeneity of programmes. This was coded deductively, using Karcher *et al.* (2006) to consider the context, goals and structure of respective programmes. Differences were coded using the themes of aims, format, type of mentor/befriender, boundaries, support for mentors and befrienders. I then looked at commonalities across the programmes. This was coded inductively, because of the lack of literature around the subject more generally and the following commonalities were identified in the data: relationships focussed, lighter-touch support, more needs led, less outcome focussed.

Stage 4: Developing and reviewing themes

This phase of the data collection involved re-visiting the data with different theoretical lenses. While the initial themes identified above were descriptive, the 'analytic outputs' (Braun & Clarke, 2022), were patterns within the data which are tied to the three central organising concepts. To look at the barriers and opportunities to resettlement for UASYP, I used the theoretical lens of liminality. From the literature review, particularly discussions around polarised narratives around UASYP outlined in Chapter 2, I was interested in exploring the nuances of young people's experiences and the contradictions in the data. Coding around

liminality was deductive and I developed six codes: acculturative, developmental, psychological, socio-spatial, temporal and imposed liminalities, which were informed by the literature review and existing codes. These themes were triangulated with the analysis of the stakeholder interviews to look for commonalities and differences across interviews with young people and stakeholders.

In terms of the mesosystem, this stage involved exploring how different types of mentors and befrienders supported young people to navigate liminalities. However, it also involved looking at how young people resisted liminalities. Using the lens of social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016), I looked at incidences where young people dropped ‘anchors’ in different communities of belonging (school, church, digital communities, transnational communities, peer networks, formal and informal mentors etc). Central to this was understanding the way that young people exercised agency within wider structural constraints. To explore the attachment to different mentors and befrienders, I used the theoretical lens of relational embedding (Ryan, 2018). At this stage, it was important to explore how young people exercised agency through their social relations, the way they resisted liminalities and the role of mentors and befrienders in helping navigate these liminal spaces.

In terms of the macrosystem, I looked at how mentoring and befriending sat in wider care support structures, immigration policy, as well as some of the larger structural issues that impacted on mentoring and befriending. This stage involved looking for more latent themes in the data, including any discrepancies between the official and unofficial rationale for programmes. Codes were developed under the themes of political, economic and cultural barriers to providing mentoring, in line with Sambunjak (2015).

Stage 5: Refining, defining and naming themes

This phase involves determining the ‘story’ of study (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and renaming themes. I re-grouped my six liminal categories into three categories. This is because there appeared to be a strong link between physical spaces and relationships. The developmental, acculturative and relational liminalities were regrouped as ‘socio-spatial liminality’. An overarching theme which emerged across all the dataset, was the harshness of the immigration systems in the macrosystem, which impacted on young people being able to

establish relationships and engage in activities, so I categorised this as ‘imposed liminality’ and added it as a fourth category.

Stage 6: Writing up

This final phase involved weaving together the analytic themes into one narrative and contextualising my analysis in relation to existing literature. While the themes of liminality, social anchoring, relational embedding started out as being disparate theories, this stage involved weaving the theoretical perspectives together into one integrated theoretical framework using an ecological model of mentoring and befriending to consider the resettlement challenges faced by UASYP (Chapter 6), the way that mentoring and befriending supports the resettlement of UASYP (see Chapter 8) and the way that mentoring and befriending fit into wider care structures for UASYP (see Chapter 7).

5.4 Reflections

Central to RTA is an acknowledgement of the researcher as being integral to knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Reflexivity involves considering how our identities influence the research process. I was an obvious outsider in that I do not have lived experience of the asylum process. However, having worked and volunteered in the refugee sector, I was privy to understanding the complexity of young people’s lived experiences. In terms of my positionality as an older white female British researcher conducting research with younger racialised, mostly males, this likely impacted on how much young people felt comfortable to disclose. The time bound nature of research, the lack of time to establish rapport and trust with young people and the cultural divide between myself and participants undoubtedly all impacted on data collection and analysis. UASYP have to carefully manage their stories as a matter of survival (Kohli, 2006) and silence is used as a coping strategy to deal with emotional distress. I noted the silences and omissions, recognising that what young people chose to leave out was an important aspect of storytelling (see Kara, 2015). At times, I suspect, young people may have given answers that they thought I wanted to hear. When prompting one young person to reflect on who or what helped, I asked a follow up question ‘are you religious?’ His response was ‘yes’, however when I asked if he went to Mosque, he coyly said that he did not.

These contradictions form part of the picture of the messiness of social relations which ebb and flow over time and space. In another example, I met a young person for a coffee before

conducting the interview. They noted how difficult life was in Scotland and how waiting for an asylum decision was debilitating. However, in the interview, the same young person spoke about how grateful they were to the British and Scottish governments and what a 'good job' they were doing. It appeared that this comment may have been for effect. Another young person started with several details of their traumatic asylum journey, as if it were a badge of honour. It was obvious from the young person's demeanour that this was not the first time they had told this story. With each interview, while I took what young people said at face value, I was also aware of the complexities around the research process, the limitations of interviews and how my positionality added to this complexity.

I had a vested interest in ensuring a social justice agenda, which could not be extrapolated from my researcher identity. Central to interpreting meaning was an understanding of the socio-political context of young people's lives. However, it is important to note that my thinking around mentoring and befriending, belonging and integration discourse evolved through the research process. I started my research with many unchecked assumptions about mentoring and befriending as being automatically positive and something valuable, assumptions which were formed from working in the third sector for over a decade. The process of critically interrogating mentoring and befriending has been useful, not only from a professional standpoint, but has added weight to my analysis. On reflection, I realise that my line of questioning around young people's sense of belonging or non-belonging was informed by my own ethnocentric views about dominant and non-dominant cultures. While my research problematises integration discourse, noting that it is too static, I realise that my line of questioning made some problematic assumptions about 'methodological nationalism' which, as Anderson (2021), notes privileges ideas around 'citizenship and nationality'. Despite the desire to amplify the voices of young people, I reflect abashedly that I adopted 'nativist ideals of belonging to right places' (Anderson, 2021: 308), making the distinction between Scottish people who belong and UASYP who do not.

From the outset, I was mindful around language and terminology in the study, particularly around the terms 'mentoring' and 'befriending'. These are not universal terms, rather they are culturally specific and refer, in a Scottish context, to specific services that are run by state and third sector organisations. When designing participant information sheets, I was mindful of not using the terms directly, in case they may be misunderstood, instead I opted for language around 'who or what helps' unaccompanied young people. While participant information

sheets and consent forms were translated into Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish Sorani, it is important to recognise that there is no direct translation of the word ‘mentoring’ and ‘befriending’ into these languages and young people may have different understandings of these concepts. Young advisors helped to navigate these language and cultural issues before conducting interviews with young people, noting that the term ‘guide’ is often used, and the cultural role of family and religion influenced how young people understood the concept. Young advisor Amira (22, F, Middle East) noted that in the Middle East, a mentor would ‘usually be the grandpa or the grandfather so, he plays the role model’. She went on to add that religion was central to young people’s understanding of a mentor, which may differ from a Western context:

The Imman, you know what Imman means? The Muslim man who teaches you the Islamic things. So, this is a mentor we go back to him to understand so many things.
(Amira, 22, F, Middle East)

It is important to acknowledge that institutional definitions of mentoring and befriending may differ from how young people understand these concepts, so these different cultural understandings of the word ‘mentor’ and ‘befriender’ are likely to have influenced young people’s responses and my subsequent analysis of data.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design, approaches to participant recruitment, data collection methods, analysis and ethical concerns. The chapter reflects on the evolution of the research process, but also the evolution of my own thinking around mentoring and befriending more widely. Research of this nature is inherently fraught with ethical and methodological challenges, and the need to engage in reflexivity was paramount. I reflected on some of the contradictions in research of this nature: the desire for emancipatory research versus the practical realities of engaging with gatekeepers, the rich data that interviews can generate versus their potentially triggering impact for young people, the fact that the refugee sector is over-researched, yet research on UASYP is sparse. The following three chapters discuss the findings from this study, in line with the individual, relational and structural aspects of mentoring outlined in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6: Barriers and opportunities to resettlement: Negotiating socio-spatial, temporal and ontological liminalities

Overview

The following three chapters present findings from the analysis of the data collected with the young advisors, stakeholders engaged in work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, young people themselves and their mentors and befrienders. This chapter is concerned with the needs of UASYP at an individual level (microsystem), the opportunities and barriers to resettlement for UASYP (exosystem) and the need for social support to help navigate barriers to resettlement (mesosystem). The chapter begins by considering the multiple liminalities that young people interviewed occupied (socio-spatial, temporal and ontological), which influenced their resettlement in Scotland. Overarching these liminalities was the imposed liminality of the asylum system (macrosystem), which influenced how young people experienced space, time and relationships. The chapter concludes by discussing the role of social support in helping young people navigate liminality and contextualises the need for mentoring and befriending.

6.1 Multiple liminalities: a barrier to settlement

A theoretical lens of liminality (Turner, 1969) was used to analyse the in-between spaces that UASYP occupied, which impacted on their ability to resettle in Scotland. Framing young people through a lens of liminality (Turner, 1969) recognises their ‘in-betweenness’, and the inherent contradictions that come with this. There were inherent contradictions in the data, young people presented as very resilient and capable on the one hand, and on the other they were still child-like and craving nurture. Similarly, young people felt ‘welcomed’ in Scotland, but were somehow still on the margins, because of language and cultural norms. The data showed that young people occupied multiple liminalities, socio-spatial, temporal and ontological, which impacted on their sense of belonging in Scotland and their ability to resettle. Overarching all three of these liminal spaces was the imposed liminality of the asylum system.

6.1.1 Socio-spatial liminality

Young people occupied a number of socio-spatial liminal spaces, in between physical, cultural, relational and transnational spaces. They were often accommodated in transitional spaces, in hotels, foster families, flats or student accommodation, which impacted on the

relations they could form and the way that they experienced resettlement. Professional support networks were also transient and time-limited, and the level of engagement varied across young people interviewed. UASYP ‘straddle places of belonging’ (Olwig & Gulløv, 2003: 217), between local, national and transnational spaces. These liminal spaces intersected with structural issues and the imposed liminality of the asylum system to create a sense of liminal belonging among young people interviewed, which impacted on their resettlement.

6.1.1.1 In-between physical and cultural spaces

Interviews with young people and stakeholders found that young people were accommodated in temporary, transient spaces, which impacted on their ability to resettle in Scotland. These transient spaces could change at very short notice:

You know, a taxi just turns up for them kind of thing. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

Young people experienced different levels of care and nurture depending on where they were accommodated. Foster families provided essential nurture for young people as noted here:

I think what a lot of young people are looking for is family. So, if they're not in like a nurturing host family or foster placement, they're missing out on that. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

However, practitioners referred to the lack of foster provision in Scotland, as well as a reticence of some host families to provide placements for young asylum seekers:

Well one of them [a foster carer] actually said that they wouldn't want to do it because we want to support ‘our’ young people first. And another person said sorry that they wouldn't cook halal meat. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

When Omar (21, M, West Africa) first arrived, he was hosted in a supportive host family from a similar cultural background which was a positive experience for him:

The first six months, I was living in a host family. The woman is from [West African country], so I was living with her and her kids, so it was like not very boring, not very

lonely, I had someone from the same country, and we speak the same language. So, it was easy.

However, when Omar was moved to a flat and had to live alone for the first time ever, he noted that ‘*things got quite tough*’. As highlighted in Chapter 2, UASYP in Scotland over the age of 16 tend to live in supported accommodation, student accommodation or in flats with other young people. Living alone was cited as a significant barrier for young people. Samir (21, M, Middle East) told the story of when he arrived alone at 16 in a small town:

I came on Friday, they [social workers] put me home, and they left for weekend. And I don't know what to do Saturday or Sunday, I have no idea, I don't speak the language. You know, the house is empty. What to do, honestly.

The problem of accommodating young people in hotels was a repeated theme throughout interviews:

We know people who have been in the hotel for like eight months and stuff and no cooking facilities, no laundry facilities. A wee bit extra money. But they end up taking takeaways because they can't cook. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

This practitioner told the case of a young person who moved from a hotel with no cooking facilities, to a foster placement, where the family cooked for them:

So suddenly they've got more money, more support, they feel safe, they feel nurtured. (Stakeholder 15, Third Sector)

Analysis revealed a link between the physical spaces young people were accommodated and their ability to form relationships. Young people who were accommodated in hotels often had less opportunities to engage with peers because of the lack of communal spaces, which impacted on how they experienced time as articulated here:

They don't have any communal space to hang out with friends. They're not allowed to go other people's room, so they just kind of spend a lot of time like walking around and, in Glasgow that can be pretty unpleasant in the winter. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

This was echoed by a young advisor, Reza (24, M, Middle East), who was accommodated in a hotel and noted that he would have liked a communal space for gaming or socialising.

Young people who attended school, who lived in student accommodation or who were placed in foster placements had more interaction with Scottish peers, as noted by these young people:

Yeah, in school you know everybody make friends. I don't really have problem with friends, stuff like this, I'm ok with it. (Ashraf, 16, M, Middle East)

I was living in a student accommodation. I have lots of friends here, with Scottish and England, English people teach me different words, different slang words, everything. And I speak in my daily life with people. (Sayid, 18, M, Middle East)

Yeah, I've made quite a handful of friends, we met in the playing ground area like because I play table tennis at night as well so, I made friends there. (Ola, 18, M, West Africa)

Young people living outside of these contexts tended to only engage with co-ethnic ties:

They [young people] stick to their own cultural and national communities quite a lot. Until they maybe go on to further education, or you know, they finish their ESOL, they're studying something else. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

This section has shown how the exosystem, the environment in which young people are resettled, influenced their ability to resettle in Scotland. Being accommodated in transient spaces like hotels had implications for being able to establish relationships with others. Wernesjö (2015) suggests that where UASYP are accommodated has implications for how they make sense of home and belonging. My data also revealed a link between physical spaces and how young people experienced time and social relations. Accommodation is identified by the Scottish Government (2023) as being a 'fundamental pillar of successful refugee integration' (p.9). However, as this section has shown, young people were accommodated in spaces that were not always conducive to relationship building and resettlement. As Crafter *et al.* (2021) also reported, young people can be accommodated in 'temporary, unstable and precarious' (Crafter *et al.*, 2021: 5) spaces until they obtained refugee status. These transitional spaces created 'a liminal phase of insecurity and precarity' (Wolter *et al.*, 2023: 815) and influenced their ability to form relationships.

Chase (2020) found that living in liminal spaces provided 'temporary safety, freedom and choice' (p.444). Similarly, O'Reilly (2020) highlighted the paradox of living in hotels, which offered 'permanent temporary spaces' (p.143). On the one hand these temporary spaces gave

young people a sense of safety, but on the other, they lacked common spaces to be able to relax and socialise with others, which impacted on their ability to establish belonging. Young people who were accommodated in supportive foster families with shared customs or religion, had a greater sense of belonging, echoing the findings of others (Wade, 2019). However, this section has also shown that this the transience of these liminal spaces influenced how young people experienced time, something which is often not factored into integration discourses.

UASYP living in Scotland are transferred to local authorities via the National Transfer Scheme, so they often have little agency over where they are accommodated. While historically most UASYP in Scotland were accommodated in Glasgow and Edinburgh, it is now mandatory for all local authorities in Scotland to accommodate young people, meaning that some are housed in very rural locations, which could cause significant challenges:

If you're the only Afghan in Fraserburgh, like there's not very many other people of colour or, you know, black ethnic minority backgrounds in the sticks of Scotland.
(Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Where historically, most young people were in the Central Belt, we're seeing more and more young people in more rural areas or more spread out across Scotland. We've got young people in places like Stornoway and Orkney. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency)

In interviews, young people said they had conflicting feelings about being accommodated in rural areas:

I would say I am lucky and I am unlucky. I am lucky because nobody speaks Arabic and that's good for me because I always speak English. I am unlucky, because I am far away from the places I want. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

One practitioner mentioned how the young people he supported were far from the Mosque and halal food shops, a sentiment which was also echoed by Samir (21, M, Middle East), who was accommodated in a rural area:

In the beginning, the most thing I struggled [with] was the halal food. There is no shops, no halal shops at all.

Several young people spoke about the challenges of being accommodated far from co-ethnic communities, which influenced how they experienced time as noted here:

I live here 24 hours, at home. Everything is far. If I want to go to mosque, I have to walk one hour, or if I want to meet friends, I have to walk three hours like, I feel like the life is lost. (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa)

Moussa, (17, M, East Africa), who had arrived recently in Scotland, was accommodated in a rural local authority and he alluded to the temporariness of his situation: ‘*It's fine here, but when I learn the language, I will go to different city, like Glasgow.*’ Interestingly, Samir (21, M, Middle East) thought he would want to leave his village after getting his refugee status, however after several years he now felt at home in his village:

Because when I first came, I was struggling so I wanted to move somewhere else, somewhere bigger. Bigger city like Glasgow and Edinburgh. At least, [name of city]. I wanted to move there. They didn't let me. They said you are not allowed. So now when I am allowed. I'm not moving. This is the secret, the secret is I feel this is my home now.

Chase (2020) notes that language, food, social and religious practices are central to performing identity. Analysis of interviews found that the resettlement context (exosystem), particularly living in rural locations was a double-edged sword for UASYP. While it meant that young people were forced to practice English, they were not able to engage in cultural and religious practices, which are central to belonging (Kohli, 2011). Drammeh (2019: 166) recognises that food represents more than just a basic need, rather being able to exercise food choices ties into a feeling of belonging. In this case, the lack of agency to exercise food choices and to engage in religious practice was a barrier to resettlement.

As well as being in between physical spaces, young people occupied acculturative liminality, in between cultural spaces, which influenced their ability to resettle in Scotland. Interviews with young people found that they negotiated transcultural belonging by bringing traditions from their old life into their new one: celebrating Eid, Nowruz, cooking food from their

country of origin, practicing their mother tongue etc. However, there was sometimes a cultural disconnect and a general lack of awareness around cultural norms around relationships and sexuality, which were particularly challenging for young Muslim men to comprehend. This practitioner quoted a young person she was working with:

Why are there men holding hands in the street, why are there women holding hands in the street? That's not OK, I'm not happy about that, I would like to go in approach this person and say something. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

The lack of parental figures or cultural elders meant that navigating these cultural issues was more challenging: '[young people] *had no one to kind of sound that off against*' (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority).

Continuing to engage in cultural practices from a host country is said to reduce the impact of cultural bereavement (Eisenbruch, 1991). Denov and Akesson (2013) found that by maintaining cultural practice and language, UASYP felt connected to their homeland. By practicing cultural traditions from their home country, young people carried 'place' with them (Denov and Akesson, 2013). However, there was sometimes a 'disconnect between cultural norms' (Chase, 2020: 447), which impacted on young people's ability to resettle. This was exacerbated by the lack of awareness of rights, combined with precarious immigration status, which left young people feeling a sense of liminal belonging. Omar (21, M, West Africa) assumed he would be able to work upon arriving in Scotland and was surprised to find that he needed the appropriate legal status to be able to do so. Several young people had no awareness about the asylum system at all:

It was really difficult for me how the law is work, what's the refugee and immigration, what's legal, illegal, what to do, what to not do. It was very confusing. (Sayid, 18, M, Middle East)

Lack of awareness of rights was exacerbated by young people's precarious migration status, impacting on young people's sense of belonging, as Saleh (18, M, Middle East) noted:

I thought I am asylum seeker, I don't have the right to access to anything, I thought I can't even, if someone like do anything to me, I cannot go to the police because I don't have status.

Once again, the resettlement context in the exosystem intersected with harshness of the immigration system in the macrosystem, creating barriers to resettlement for UASYP. However, UASYP also exercised agency in the microsystem, carrying cultural traditions from their past lives into their present lives.

6.1.1.2 In between relational and transnational spaces

Analysis of interviews found that young people occupied liminal relational spaces, between local, national and transnational relationships. In terms of local relations, professional relationships were both a source of support and frustration for young people. The complex web of professional support networks could also be a source of confusion for young people:

Some young people maybe don't understand fully the differences between all the professionals in their life. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Some young people like Yusef (16, M, East Africa) felt very supported: '*Anything I need, she [name of support worker] is always there*'. This practitioner noted that young people often saw their social workers '*as an extended member of the family*' (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority). However, others had minimal contact with their social workers:

You never hear from them, they tell me I never hear from my social worker I don't know who they are, I don't know, do they exist, they don't seem to help me a lot. (Stakeholder 11, Statutory Agency)

Relationships with professionals were transient, with only a few constant points of contact for young people, their guardian and social worker, which could lead to attachment issues:

They do become quite attached to their guardian or other trusted and safe professionals. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

The other professionals, she added, '*are probably kind of dipping in and out*'. One practitioner noted that since she was a '*constant*' in young people's lives, she provided more '*emotional support*' (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority) than other practitioners whose contact with young people was more sporadic. Professional relationships were also time bound and '*young people are adept at having professionals come and go from their lives*' (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). These transient relationships could induce a sense of loss when practitioners ebbed and flowed in young people's lives. Even young people who had received positive news about their asylum outcome, could sometimes express sadness about the loss of relationships:

You know, one of my young people was really upset the other day this week that they weren't going to see their lawyer again. I was quite surprised because I was like, why would he be upset? And I phoned him, and he was just 'I'm just really sad that I'm not going to see her again' and I was like, Oh, God! Wait till I tell him he's not gonna have me anymore, I was like. Oh, no! (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

These transient relationships and lack of consistency meant that young people often worried about where to avail of help or support:

I've got another boy who is like, but who do I go to for if I need help because social work don't help me. I'm like, well, sorry mate, it is social work that you should go to. Like that's who is responsible for you. But they've maybe not had the most positive experience of engagement with social work. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Practitioners alluded to the time it took to build relationships and young people often struggled to know '*who to trust*' (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Young people were not always open to accepting help because of lack of trust, as this quote demonstrates:

I mean one of my young people said to me, maybe six months after he'd been here, he said you know, for the first month I didn't eat. I just ate crisps or biscuits because I couldn't cook anything and I know you asked me, but I don't need your help and I wasn't sure that you would stay in my life, so I don't know if I could let you in to help me. So, I just kind of got on with it and I figured it out by myself. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

This quote alludes to the need for a more consistent type of support, which contrasts with the transience in relationships referenced earlier. Without a supportive social worker or guardian to help navigate complex systems in Scotland, young people sought advice from the Internet to help problem solve also:

I usually just google it up, like if there is like a local library, I just google it. It was so hard to actually find out what happens in Scotland in the beginning, so I usually just google everything. I just... I just have to wing it you know, I was like I never knew this happened. The system here is so much different that I had to find out by myself. It was horrible. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Similarly, while all young people cited that they had professionals who they could ask for practical help, if young people were feeling sad or emotional, many said they passed the time scrolling online, also to distract themselves from their feelings:

When I feel sad, I use my phone always, just I have phone to use, to help me with my situation. I try to open my phone and open some account, Snap, Tik Tok, Facebook. (Mostafa, 22, M, Middle East)

This section has shown that the support structures around young people and their resettlement context in the exosystem influenced their ability to start a new life in Scotland. The conflicting nature of professional relations could be both a barrier to resettlement, as well as an opportunity. While some young people felt very supported and nurtured by the care structures around them, others did not, which influenced their sense of belonging. Having a professional who supports and champions young people is ‘part of the belonging picture’ (Drammeh, 2019:178). Indeed, others have highlighted the need for consistent and predictable care in allowing young people to develop a secure sense of self (Chase, 2013). However, this section has shown that professional relationships tended to be transient, time bound, dynamic and changed over time and space. Care relations were complex and created both ‘connection and disconnection’ (Crafter *et al.*, 2021). Responses to professional support were mixed, reflecting the findings of other scholars (Kohli, 2007, Eriksson *et al.*, 2019). The importance of digital spaces emerged as a salient topic, particularly their role in helping young people to learn English, to navigate cultural issues, to feel connected with family and friends back home and to find emotional support, echoing the findings of others (Camps *et*

al., 2023). This relates to the work of Crafter *et al.* (2021), who found that technology offered young people the possibility of ‘care connections’. Digital spaces offered an opportunity to resettlement, offering young people an alternative when caring professionals were felt to be missing.

While there was a consensus that Scotland was overall a welcoming place, almost all young people talked about the difficulty of engaging with Scottish or non-migrant peers. Particularly for newly arrived asylum seekers, socialising could feel unsafe, as this peer befriender noted:

Maybe they feel intimidated by socialising, they don't want to be out all the time. They don't feel very safe. (Abdullah, 25, M, Middle East)

For some newly arrived young people, who were only engaged in ESOL classes with other migrant populations, there was a lack of opportunity to meet Scottish people: ‘*we don't have a chance to talk with the Scottish people*’ (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa). There was a sense among young people interviewed that some Scottish young people were not interested in getting to know them. Practical difficulties sometimes impacted on opportunities to engage:

Like I have Scottish friends, but the timing they go out and the time I go out is different, because I normally go to the Mosque to pray, so sometimes they are out early in the morning like 11 or 12, so I stay home... and like I don't smoke, I don't drink so they say like, you are boring, your life is boring. (Omar, M, 21, West Africa)

Interestingly, several young people noted that they did not like to engage with Scottish young people because of cultural differences:

Like sometimes they are rude, they are always swearing, and they are always smoking cigarettes or weed, all sort of bad things I try to avoid it. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

Having Scottish friends could sometimes be a challenge for young people, as they did not have the same freedom and resources as their peers:

I have limited choices than most of my friends. So, it's kind of hard ... like traveling, it's harder for me to do that. So they all have like the Young Scots [travel card], and I can't get one, and that's actually really sad. When they invite me out to things, and I can't even afford it. And I feel like, oh, sorry, guys, I can't really go. And I feel like I'm missing out on like a lot of things. (Dalia, 16, F, East Africa)

Once again, the resettlement context (exosystem), in terms of young people's ability to engage with local peers, as well as the openness of the host community in accepting young people, influenced their ability to resettle in Scotland. Ryan (2023) recognises that migrant groups may be exposed to 'network closure', which prevents engagement with accessing local networks. This section has shown that befriending the so-called local Scottish people was not always an easy endeavour. Differences in cultural norms, values and timetables all impeded engagement with local peers. When it came to talking about emotional issues, young people interviewed preferred to speak to co-ethnic ties. However, staying within the same cultural community groups was also a double-edged sword. While it provided comfort and safety, this was often at the expense of language acquisition:

Sometimes good, sometimes not, because I speak always Kurdish, I can't speak another language...it's not a good way to learn another language. (Mostafa, 22, M, Middle East)

Half of the young people interviewed noted that they got their emotional support through transnational support from friends or family members back home:

I don't feel comfortable talking to friends about such issues. When I feel sad, depressed, or down I will speak to my mum. (Ayman, 18, M, North Africa)

For others, maintaining contact with family members abroad with lived experience of seeking asylum elsewhere was a source of comfort and hope:

When I talk to him [brother living in Australia], he told me, he advises me, and he tells me his experience because he got through almost same journey. (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa)

However, Ola (18, M, West Africa) rarely spoke to his friends back home, 'because I don't know when I'm going to see them next'. When I asked Huma (21, F, Middle East) if it was helpful to be around those from a similar cultural background, she responded: 'Of course not, that's why I am here [In Scotland away from family] In such a situation'. For some young people, it could be dangerous to stay within the same community groups, if young people had

been trafficked, as noted by Stakeholder 14 (Third Sector): '[young people] *might still be in an exploitative situation*'.

Moskal (2015) suggests that migrant children are embedded in local, global and transnational places, however this section has shown that young people engaged in liminal relationships within these spaces. Transnational relations provided both 'opportunities and constraints' (Chase and Allsopp, 2020: 207) for young people. While transnational ties provided 'social, material, and emotional support' (Seidel *et al.*, 2022), these relations were complex and contradictory (see also Ryan, 2023) and not always helpful. Similarly, engaging with co-ethnic ties was not automatically positive, this was often at the expense of the acquisition of language and cultural knowledge. Young people's ability to engage with local peers depended on the spaces they occupied: where they were accommodated, whether they went to school or college etc. Engaging with peers requires spaces to foster intercultural relations (Askins and Pain, 2011; Askins 2015). However, UASYP interviewed were limited by the structural constraints of the asylum system in the macrosystem, which influenced the relations young people could engage with in the mesosystem.

6.1.2 Temporal liminality

The themes of waiting and temporality were prevalent throughout all interviews, which impacted on young people's resettlement in Scotland. All young people interviewed spoke about living in perpetual liminality, waiting for their immigration status, waiting until they could access education or work. The theme of temporality also emerged strongly: the need to master the English language, compared to the length of time needed to do so, the time it took to learn about Scottish norms, systems and values, compared to the time it took to build trust and develop relationships needed to do so.

6.1.2.1 In-between waiting

All young people interviewed spoke about prolonged periods of waiting for their asylum decision, and how this impacted on their mental health:

I have been one year eight months waiting for the Home Office, it's too long, and now I am 18, I told them my problems, sometimes I can't sleep, I want to study, I want to

travel, I want to see my family, I have many difficulties, many barriers. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

When I asked participants what they would like to see happen most, all young people echoed the words of Ayman (18, M, North Africa): *'to speed up their case'*. In addition to the waiting time, which induced boredom amongst young people, there were the anxiety and uncertainty around when a decision would arrive:

The challenge is the patience now, they are waiting, they are keep asking me [Samir] what do you think, when am I going to get this refugee status, they feel very strong mentally, they keep thinking, they don't sleep. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

One practitioner noted the case of a young man who said that going to prison would be less anxiety inducing as: *'At least if I went to prison, I would know the date that I'm leaving'* (Stakeholder 15, Third Sector). Ayman (18, M, North Africa) described the wait in terms of being discriminated against:

I have been here for two years, whereas people who have been here for five months and they already have their leave to remain. I want to see more fair treatment and less discrimination.

Living in Scotland without refugee status, was likened to *'a body without frame'* by Saleh (18, M, Middle East). Waiting could lead to a lack of participation in social life and some young people felt paralysed and unable to engage in activities:

For other young people, it really stops their engagement, they feel like it's a barrier to them moving on and integrating in their life, and they don't feel like they can engage with college, because all they're thinking about and worrying about is their mental health, and they don't think they can engage in social activities, because all they're thinking about and worrying about is their asylum case. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Recently, a young person, he started a project with me, and then kind of just dropped off because he was in a very low place. And actually [he] was very angry at me and

was lashing out at people who were supporting him as well. And then he got status recently, he just looks like a completely new person. Just a weight is lifted, he looked healthier straight away. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

Service providers also noted that young people often were unable to articulate their hobbies or interests because they might not have had the time or space to explore these:

Maybe they just haven't really had that luxury of having hobbies maybe they haven't really seen themselves as an individual for some time. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

While most young people interviewed felt stuck by this waiting time, several stakeholders noted that young people also engaged with education, football, other sport, church/mosque to facilitate the passing of time. Yusef (16, M, North Africa) noted that English for Speakers of Another Language (ESOL) classes were a social outlet and a way to fill time while waiting for an asylum decision:

I go to ESOL classes. It helps me a lot actually when I feel sad or a bit depressed because I see people and socialise.

For Ola (18, M, West Africa), engaging in regular football practice gave him hope:

If Arsenal win, I think my week goes great and if I play football, because I play in a Sunday league, I'm part of a team, [name of team], if we win through the week and we win the game in the week, I'll be happy the rest of the week. That's my best week basically.

This section has shown that living in temporal liminality was a barrier to resettlement for UASYP. However, it also showed the way that young people exercised agency over time, by engaging in regular activities. Scholars have highlighted the importance of hobbies and leisure in helping UASYP to engage in meaningful activities while they wait (Kohli & Kaukko, 2018). Indeed, others suggest that hobbies support the resettlement of UASYP (Camps *et al.*, 2023). To counter the temporal liminality imposed by the asylum system, young people engaged in meaningful activities to facilitate the passing of time, helping to create stability. Agency-in-waiting (Brun, 2015; Ramachandran & Vathi, 2022) refers to

hopeful waiting to quell the boredom and uncertainty of waiting. Through education, young people cultivated a sense of belonging and education helped them to gain a sense of control (see also Kohli, 2011; Chase 2013; Chase and Allsopp, 2020) and provided a ‘grounded space within liminality’ (Salem, 2023: 804). For young people like Ashraf (16, M, Middle East), education created continuity between past and future: his favourite activity was reading, he spent most of his time at the library and education gave him hope for the future. Engaging in regular activities like football allowed young people to develop community, albeit temporary, echoing the findings of others (Verdasco, 2019). This reflects the work of Rosen (2025), who notes that UASYP exercise agency over time, through engaging in caring relations.

For other young people, however, they experienced this waiting as trauma which was exacerbated by the extension of waiting time during the COVID-19 pandemic:

I've got young people who've waited a year for their substantive interview after submitting their paperwork. Whereas it used to be like three or four months until their interview. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

While many young people started off being very positive and motivated to get on with their lives, the wait could dampen down this motivation:

It just gets too long, and they kind of seem to lose motivation and get very down and low. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

One interesting dynamic was that young people who received their status often did not want to tell others, as they were mindful of peers being left behind in temporal and social immobility:

They feel a bit like there's some people who still don't have it. That's, I don't know, it's a really kind thing, but it's sad also, they don't feel like they can celebrate it. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

The same practitioner noted how the passing of another academic year could be quite ‘triggering’ for some young people, as it is a reminder of another lost year. Even when young

people got their refugee status, the ‘*euphoria*’ soon wore off, as young people realised that they could not return to their home country: ‘*They still don't have contact with their family, or they're still struggling with their sleep and nightmares.*’ (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency).

Scholars suggest that waiting for an asylum status impacts on migrants’ sense of self, security and belonging (Ryan, 2023). Young people’s experiences of ‘bureaucratic time’ (Hughes, 2021) were different that how they experienced other types of time such as social time (Kuhlemann, 2024). Studies point out that positive well-being comes from having a secure legal status (Chase, 2013). However, perpetual waiting for an asylum decision led to lack of participation in social life for most young people interviewed, as others have found (Wolter *et al.*, 2023). The way that young people experienced time was ‘relational’ (Bissell, 2007), they saw peers moving on with their lives which sped up time, while for some UASYP time slowed.

Prolonged periods of waiting intersected with the developmental liminality of young people: ‘*They feel things much more keenly and are much more desperate to get on*’ (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector). Eurocentric assumptions about life course transitions dominated stakeholder interviews and stakeholders noted that delays in asylum decisions meant that young people were delayed in other life transitions like going to university:

They might not get to university till they are 19 or 20. And so then it's like a big delay, which is, it's not fair that they're being treated like differently from other Scottish people. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

The asylum process made life-course transitions messy and complex, and many young people felt ‘stuck’, unable to move on as articulated by this practitioner:

I'm stuck in this ESOL class. It's all I'm allowed to study. I'm only allowed to study part time. You know, I want to get on with my life. I want to get a job. That's what we see all the time that feeling of being held back. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

This sentiment was echoed by Ola (18, M, West Africa), who described being ‘*pulled back*’ by the Home Office. He added:

Because I have to do lots of things when I have my decision. But I'm getting older, every day I'm getting older and the Home Office, I'm just waiting still, it's been over a year now and I'm just waiting.

Practitioners often needed to manage young people's expectations in terms of their desire to move on, which conflicted with the reality of their situation. Because of culturally different ideas around childhood, many of the young people had to grow up a lot faster than their Scottish peers:

Because they've started quite young, doing lots of different things, working as mechanics when they're 14 or in agriculture, that kind of thing. So [they] have a lot more experience than maybe a typical Scottish young person that same age would have. (Stakeholder 15, Third Sector)

I've been in very difficult life honestly because I started taking the responsibility since I was 15 or something, even less. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Interviews with practitioners showed that turning 18 did not have the same cultural significance for UASYP, as noted here:

Some young people say, yeah, like, back home I was working, I was providing for my family, you know, so I don't know if turning 18 for our young people is as big as transition, or an important kind of moment for them, maybe than for Scottish young people or British young people. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

However, despite their accelerated transitions out of childhood, some UASYP still lacked the confidence to know how to engage in everyday situations as noted by one practitioner:

'Where should it go? Who do I talk to? Is this OK? Have I said or done the right thing it's a constant kind of questioning' (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority). On gaining refugee status and being allowed to work, young people encountered different challenges, such as applying for employment:

To apply for a job is another difficulty because like it is very hard to apply because they ask you about your CV. (Omar, M, 21, West Africa)

I've never done a job application, never been interviewed for a job, never, you know, don't know what a CV is, that kind of thing. (Stakeholder 15, Third Sector)

While UASYP were legally entitled to receive help from social work until the age of 26 in Scotland, some young people could slip through the net: *'as sometimes people [service providers] think that well, that's maybe not my responsibility'* (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority).

O'Reilly (2018) notes that living in temporal liminality creates uncertainty and a sense of powerlessness. This temporal liminality impacted on the mental health of young people interviewed, their engagement in social activities and their ability to engage in relations with other professionals. The developmental liminality of UASYP could be a double-edged sword: on the one hand young people had access to support and resources that adult asylum seekers did not, however young people also experienced an 'accelerated childhood' (Sirriyeh & Ní Raghallaigh, 2018). They were forced to adopt adult roles without having the capital needed to do so (Lee, 2014; Andersson *et al.*, 2021).

Western-oriented views around developmental life transitions dominated stakeholder interviews. Interviews with practitioners found that while young people presented as being resilient, with many adult-like qualities, their disrupted educational journeys, lack of parental guidance and limited cultural knowledge meant that they were perceived as having the needs of children, who lacked the skills needed to engage in basic social interactions. It is important to note that childhood and youth are not considered universal concepts (Ensor & Gozdziaik, 2010), rather they are culturally determined. Scholars suggest that westernised assumptions about chronological age can lead to 'infantilising and to a denial of agency and autonomy' of UASYP (Clayton *et al.*, 2019: 159). The transition to 'adulthood' did not have the same cultural significance for many UASYP. However, turning 18 could be a stressful time and some young people worried about how it might impact on their entitlements and support, a finding echoed by Clayton *et al.* (2019). The Scottish policy context around UASYP may be more favourable than the UK policy context, as young people are offered through care until the age of 26, as outlined in Section 2.2.2. However, as this section has shown, residing in temporal liminality (chronosystem) intersected with developmental liminality (microsystem) and wider structural issues (macrosystem) to create a sense of liminal belonging among

UASYP. The following section alludes to the need for time to support resettlement processes, time to learn the language, time to learn cultural norms and time to process trauma.

6.1.2.2 In-between temporalities

Throughout all interviews with young people, the need to master the English language emerged as a salient theme, compared to the length of time needed to do so. Without language abilities, young people are *'disadvantaged in terms of being able to access services without intense support'* (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority). The inability to communicate made young people feel unsafe at times and some young people avoided dealing with people so as not to be *'disrespectful and say inappropriate things'* (Yusef, 16, M, North Africa). Lack of English language impacted on young people's ability to participate in activities, to make friends and it was generally seen as being *'the key to integrate, to have new chances, new experiences in general'* (Amira, 22, F, Middle East). Ashraf (16, M, Middle East) noted that the length of time it took to learn the language should be factored into school assessments. When asked what would help young people learn the language, this view was shared by many young people: *'I need time'* (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa). Educational differences were cited as a huge barrier to resettlement for UASYP, particularly negotiating new ways of learning, a new way of teaching, having to use computers and continuous assessment. All practitioners spoke about young people's disrupted education journeys and, in some cases, lack of any formal education. Young people lacked certain knowledge and skills expected of Scottish young people because of their disrupted educational journeys:

They might have left [their country of origin] at 13 or 14 or and it's taken them this amount of time, so they've really missed very crucial time where, if you think of Scottish kids what they're doing in school, you know what they're exploring, they haven't done any of that. (Stakeholder 2, Local Authority)

Another contradiction that arose was the need for cultural adaptation compared to the time that it took. The culture shock that young people experienced could sometimes be delayed:

I think once they become a bit more grounded and settled, they can sort of allow themselves to maybe switch off and relax somewhat. That's when the culture shock, you know, maybe finds a way in, sort of seeps in. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Resettlement in the beginning stages took a toll of young people's mental health, as Sayid (18, M, Middle East) noted:

A lot of people when they come to another country, they will get the mental health problem because they miss their country, their family, or the new area, the new countries and system. And when you, after you adapt it, you will understand the government and the people and everything. But at the beginning it's really hard for mental health.

Time was also needed to allow young people to process their trauma as this peer mentor noted:

How he will get out of depression? He needs time, no one can get him now, you know he is depressed, even if you bring him you know, whatever he wish, he needs time.
(Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Several young people spoke about the first few months and years as being the most difficult: 'The first two years was the hardest time in my life, honestly' (Samir, 21, M, Middle East). Omar (21, M, West Africa) spent the first two months reflecting on the loss of his mum: 'To be honest, I only want to sit in my room, I'd be thinking about my mum'. This was echoed by a peer mentor, who stayed at home for months because he wasn't aware of community organisations that provided support and opportunities to meet people, however after six months this changed: 'I made a lot of connections, friends, I volunteered more' (Abdullah, 25, M, Middle East). For some young people, a sense of belonging came with time and familiarity with Scottish norms and cultural knowledge:

I feel I am part of the Scottish community. I don't speak with the accent I know, I don't drink alcohol, I don't drink beer, but still I know how they think. I know how, the way they live. You know them. Once, you know the person, let's say, I see that part of the community. I feel welcome. (Samir, M, 21, Middle East)

The temporal liminality that young people occupied in the chronosystem impacted on how they experienced social relations in the mesosystem, in turn impacting on their sense of belonging. This section has shown that learning the English language and cultural norms

were seen as being integral to resettlement. Learning the language gave young people control and agency over their lives, echoing the findings of others (Chase, 2013). However, lack of opportunities to practice and anxiety about being culturally inappropriate were barriers to engaging in interethnic relations, reflecting the work of Askins and Pain (2011). Developing cultural knowledge only came with time and opportunities to engage with others. Education was seen as being central to resettlement, however time was needed to allow young to engage in new ways of learning and new learning environments. Residing in these temporal liminalities had implications for belonging, however, as will be noted in the next section, the relationship between past, present and future also impacted young people's settlement in Scotland.

6.1.3 Ontological liminality

Giddens (1984) coined the phrase ontological security to refer to the idea of feeling safe in everyday situations, which in turn enables people to have a sense of future possibilities. Ontological liminality relates to the idea of 'having no sense of security or control over the future' (O'Reilly, 2018: 835), which was a salient theme that emerged across all stakeholder and young people interviews. The lack of control young people felt over their present lives meant that all apart from two young people were unable to imagine their future selves. Similarly, young people were caught in competing discourses of vulnerability and resilience, while trauma and complex mental health issues were a prevalent theme across all interviews, so too were the resilience and determination of young people.

6.1.3.1 In-between present and future

Stakeholders noted how young people had a lack of control over the day-to-day decisions affecting their lives, from education through to financial decisions:

Young people say to us, my social worker has said to me, "Well, that's it, that's all you can get", so they don't have any control over really any aspect of their lives.

(Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

Young people often had no choice about where they were accommodated or whether they went to school or college, as Omar (21, M, West Africa) articulated:

I wasn't asked whether do you want to go to college or do you want to continue like high school, I was just told like because of my height and my age tested, you are going straight to college.

This lack of control in the present, impacted on how young people thought about their future. Most young people interviewed felt trapped in the present, unable to contemplate the future until they had refugee status:

I don't think a lot about the future, I just live day to day, that's what I do. Because I already know like this is the course I am studying, this course is taking maybe 2 years and 3 years so after that course then we move. That's how I scale my dreams, but there is always, everyone wants to say I want this bla bla bla, but you have to complete the first steps before moving to the next. That's how I live. (Omar, M, 21, West Africa)

What happened to me in my home. I am always thinking about what has happened to me, it's made me feel like worried about my future. (22, M, Middle East)

Samir (21, M, Middle East) spoke about forgetting his childhood dream of being an actor:

When I arrived here, I forget about my dream. You know this. I swear I ignored it because I said to myself, okay, come on [Samir] this is the truth, you have nothing. you know, you have to just ignore and do something else.

Since getting his refugee status, Samir started to hope again and his dream has since returned, indicating the importance of time and security in young people's sense of self. Two of the young people interviewed, who had been in Scotland for several years and had their refugee status, were able to imagine their future, indicating the importance of time and rights in helping young people to resettle. For young advisor Reza (24, M, Middle East), thinking about the future was a way to 'reset' himself and restore hope:

Compared [to] when I came here, now I barely think of my past. I'm thinking of new things that I can do, that I'm doing and I'm involved to. Before then I was dreaming

about the same things back home, you know. [My dreams] they are mixed now, but I think they are going to change.

Similarly, when I asked Ashraf (16, M, Middle East), what helped him to be strong and persevere through tough times, he noted '*I think maybe the future. Think about the future*'.

Chase (2013) made the link between positive well-being and the ability to imagine future possibilities. However, this section has shown that young people interviewed often struggled to visualise their future selves. Sime (2018) suggests that ontological security relates to 'a sense of stability, rootedness, continuity and control over everyday lives and futures' (p.36). Young people conversely had a lack of control over many aspects of their lives. As Brun (2015) affirms, when people are trapped in the present, it can seem futile to be future focussed. This lack of control in the present, impacted on how young people thought about their future and all but two felt trapped in the present, unable to contemplate the future until they had refugee status. However, for the young people who were able to focus on the now and engage in activities, this helped facilitate the passing on time, as also noted in Section 6.1.2.1.

Scholars like Camps *et al.* (2023) have concluded that UASYP in Scotland need to be able to exercise more control over their lives. They suggest that lack of choice in education presents barriers to becoming independent and is a key barrier to resettlement in Scotland. This study found that UASYP lacked control over many aspects of their lives, where they were accommodated, whether they went to school or college etc. For other young people interviewed, their lack of agency over the resettlement context in the exosystem intersected with structural barriers in the macrosystem to impede resettlement. However, being future focussed was an opportunity to resettlement for UASYP. In this case, young people's personal characteristics in the microsystem influenced their ability to engage in wider social relations in the mesosystem.

6.1.3.2 In-between vulnerability and resilience

Young people interviewed occupied an ontological liminality; while they displayed great resilience in the face of uncertainty and trauma, they were made vulnerable by the asylum system, which impacted on their resettlement. Practitioners noted that young people often

presented as being very resourceful and resilient when they first arrived, and it was common for young people to decline help:

[They will say] I don't need you to do anything for me. I'll figure it out by myself, I'm fine, I'll kind of plod along. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

However, young people were also adept at masking their feelings, as noted by another stakeholder:

They're so skilful, but it's very much a shield for how they are struggling through life to this point. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

Trauma was a recurring theme across all interviews, the trauma of their pre-flight journey, displacement from home country and resettlement in Scotland:

I think the commonality is, regardless of what has happened in their home country to flee, they have all experienced very traumatic journeys. So, they have either seen or experienced violence, they've experienced street homelessness, they've experienced not having access to food. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Most of the young people interviewed spoke about having trouble sleeping, having nightmares, suffering from depression and staying at home for long periods. One young person spoke about losing his hair due to stress. Samir (21, M, Middle East) noted that the first two years in Scotland were the hardest in his life:

I swear I tried to kill myself in the first two years, like in the first 24 months every day, can't sleep very well, can't eat very well. My situation, my mental health was very, very bad.

Several practitioners spoke about the relationship between trauma, lack of parental support and time:

Now they are here on their own without the support of family, it comes out more... in drips and drabs I must say. There's not been that outpouring yet. But you start to see

where they are struggling and they'll make comments about how they are feeling low, or how they haven't seen family in a while and how life is different here. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

Samir (21, M, Middle East) is a peer mentor for other UASYP and told the story of a young person he has been supporting:

All the time he's at home. He's sitting alone. We knock his door, he is sleeping, we knock his door, he doesn't want to go out. Tell him let's go out, we need to go, he says no, I don't want to go. So, depression, depression, you know, is the enemy for the human. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Interviews found that young people's mental health and wellbeing shifted over time and space. Trauma often presented itself when young people felt safe and were in a position to process their loss:

Once they've settled three or four months into being here, a lot of the trauma comes out. There's a lot of emotions that haven't been dealt with, a lot of grief and loss that they haven't processed until they felt safe, and they've got their selves settled in their new homes and there is staff around them that they're familiar with. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

Practitioners noted that young people might not engage with mental health services until they had received their decision from the Home Office:

Another two months down the line, I feel sad. I'm not sleeping. I'm like, well, that's why you shouldn't have been discharged from your counsellor or your psychologist. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Omar (21, M, West Africa) explained how he went to see a psychologist, but he disengaged after he was asked if he had ever considered committing suicide: *'I was like no, this is not for me. So, from that day I say nah, I just stop stressing about myself'*. However, all practitioners interviewed referred to the 'trauma of the asylum process' as being significant:

They don't have any stability in their life, or they can't, they don't know when their interview is even going to come. They don't know when their decision is going to come. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

Interestingly, there was a divide in how practitioners interviewed understood the needs of UASYP, which had implications for the interventions put in place to support them. Some practitioners felt that, apart from those young people who needed support to deal with trauma, most UASYP had similar needs to other looked after young people:

Sometimes unaccompanied minors are just like wee Jonny from Glasgow or wee Susie from Inverclyde. There's actually no difference, the only major difference, I know it's a major difference, is trauma. (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority)

Others felt that young people had unique needs which needed to be accounted for:

They've got some unique needs, there was a lot learning I had to do. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

As was noted by an interviewee, some practitioners assumed that UASYP were well supported by the council and therefore 'don't need support' (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). The way that young people are framed is important as it is likely to impact on the interventions put in place to support them.

This section has shown that young people interviewed had a range of different mental health challenges, which shifted over time and space and impacted on their ability to resettle. Chase (2013, 2020) also showed that having negative mental health impacts on young people's sense of self and belonging. As others have noted, trauma in past lives can impact on young people's present lives, appearing at different times (Terzioglu, 2023). Therapeutic responses were not always culturally appropriate for young people or did not always come at the right time. This echoes the findings of Camps *et al.* (2023), who found that practitioners in Scotland struggled to support the mental health needs of UASYP and to provide young people with appropriate psychological help. Hughes (2019) recognises that western therapeutic responses to young refugees can be problematic for several reasons: they assume that trauma is in the past rather than ongoing, they do not account for the political context of

the trauma and the individualised therapeutic response negates the fact that many UASYP come from collective cultures. Lack of culturally appropriate mental health services in the exosystem, combined with time needed to process trauma in the chronosystem and the harshness of the immigration system in the macrosystem were barriers to resettlement for UASYP.

Nevertheless, some scholars suggest that it is wrong to assume that young people will automatically suffer trauma (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). Others reflect that we must challenge the ‘universal victimhood’ ascribed to UASYP (Ensor & Gozdzia, 2010). Daly and Smith (2021) posit that ethnocentric narratives around trauma are unhelpful as they downplay the resilience of young people. Equally prevalent in interviews with young people and stakeholders was the strength and resilience of young people, which helped support resettlement. What helped young people stay strong was knowing what they had been through and survived: *‘I remember the way, how I get here’* (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa). Practitioners all cited the strengths and determination of young people to engage in new opportunities, as well as the desire of most to move on and to be successful:

I find very few don't want to do anything, they want to get into education, get into employment, they are keen to move on. (Stakeholder 11, Statutory Agency)

When I asked young people to choose a picture that best described themselves from 12 pictures provided, the majority chose photographs reflecting the themes of resilience, determination and strength. The image of a fierce lion was chosen by Samir, Yusef and Ola, who all alluded to having gone through tough times and coming out the other side.



I walked six days from Turkey to Greece. We had to take the lifeboat, and the lifeboat in the middle of the river stopped working, the lifeboat start turning around, not going anywhere, not forward, not backward, just standing about. And we had children in the lifeboat. So, what I did, me and some two other guys, we jumped to the sea, and we start pushing the lifeboat forward, you know, to the other side so we managed to do this. We managed to do more harder than these situations, you know, even in my very young age. So, it's for me, it's lion. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Because I ventured from a very far country and the lion is an adventurer. (Yusef, 16, M, East Africa)

I think my journey so far and just me being here, I think, with the lion, the resistance and able to fight, I think, yeah, I kind of have been through that. Yeah, I think I'm a fighter, I never knew that I can resilient and stuff. So that's why I chose the lion, be resilient and be a fighter. (Ola, 18, M, West Africa)

Figure 6: Quotes from young people who chose the picture of a lion

Similarly, Huma and Ayesha both alluded to the adversity that they faced, which they managed to overcome alone. They chose the image of a mountain climber, which reflected their perseverance and determination.



I can be a line, or a person who is climbing up to get a better view of my life. Yeah, because right now I am struggling, you know, I am just trying to climb up to get my desired view of my life, so I can get a best view, so I am just trying hard. And obviously the difficulties will come in my way, but I will do, I will try my best to do. I will try to be a line. You know sometimes I feel that I am a line, you know, because I am in a strong to deal with my own things with my, you know, everything. (Huma, 21, F, Middle East)

Come here to the UK- it's one of my biggest ones, challenges. Overcoming it as well, so yeah, I love challenges, I love to work to prove myself that I can do, I can be out of my box, I can go out of my comfort zone and prove myself that I can do whatever I pursue to do it, but I want to. (Ayesha, 21, F, Middle East)

Figure 7: Quotes from young people who chose the picture of a climber

This section has shown that young people were caught in ontological liminality, fluctuating between resilience and vulnerability. Young people's positionalities were fluid in that they sometimes presented themselves as capable and resilient, while at other times they presented as needing help, echoing the findings of others (Kaukko & Wernesjö, 2016). These fluid positionalities in the microsystem, conflict with experiences of trauma and having to navigate the 'system trauma' (Rigby *et al.*, 2020) of the macrosystem. While maintaining hope and positivity were opportunities to resettlement for UASYP, ultimately the harshness of the immigration system created a sense of liminal belonging, which the following section addresses.

6.1.3.3 In-between belonging

Young people interviewed were caught between competing discourses of acceptance and rejection. All young people interviewed talked about Scotland being a friendly and welcoming place. What made young people feel welcome was having access to resources and feeling safe and secure: '*I feel very safe, so safety makes me feel welcome*' (Yusef, 16, M,

East Africa). For young advisor Ayesha, (21, F, Middle East), feeling welcome was tied to being accepted:

People understand my religion, people understand my culture, people understand that if I mispronounce something they wouldn't shame me.

Their developmental liminality meant that young people had access to support and resources that adult asylum seekers did not. Moussa (17, M, East Africa) noted: *'Like at home, also at the school when I would ask for something, I feel they are ready to give it to me'*. Young people all expressed their gratitude at having freedom of movement, freedom to be able to express themselves, freedom to dress as they pleased and basic human rights. However, this feeling of safety was also tinged with sadness, as young people reflected on the impossibility of living in their countries of origin:

Sometimes it comes to my mind when I struggle to do something, or I be alone, I think why my country is not like Scotland, why I am here, why my country has a war, why my country is not clean, why my country is not safe like this country, I also wonder why, but at the end I always thank god that I am safe, I am ok. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

All young people interviewed alluded to an otherness that they felt, and half of the young people spoke about feeling a sense of liminal belonging:

I wouldn't say I'm an outsider and at the same time I wouldn't say I'm blending in with everyone. (Ayesha, 21, F, Middle East)

I do feel like I'm an outsider sometimes, because if I'm not like an asylum seeker, I feel I'm not Scottish either. (Ola, 21, M, West Africa)

There was a sense from young people that there are others who belonged 'more':

Even if feel like I belong here, when you see local people, they really belong here, there is always a big difference, I think. And you know it and people know it, that you

are not, it's not like not welcoming you, but it's not your home. (Reza, 24, M, Middle East)

When it came to discussing racism and discrimination, conflicting feelings emerged. Every practitioner, bar one, noted that young people said they felt welcome in Scotland and that they had not reported any incidents of racism or discrimination:

I haven't yet thankfully had to support young people after they've been directly racially abused or anything like that, perhaps then they just haven't, haven't shared it with me. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

All bar one of the young people reported that they could live peacefully without any racism or discrimination: *'No one is racist against you. And you don't feel that you are abroad, you live normally and the life here is safe'* (Ayman, 18, M, North Africa). Only one young person reported experiencing a racist incident, which he downplayed as being *'just a drunk'* (Omar, 21, M, West Africa). Despite not experiencing any overt racism or discrimination directly, several noted stories of friends they knew who had some discriminatory experiences. Half of the young people interviewed had lived elsewhere and compared their negative experiences of living abroad to more positive ones of living in Scotland. Young people's experiences were often dictated by where they were accommodated. Saleh (18, M, Middle East) lived in a rural local authority where he noted:

People look at you as a strange man, even if they have something bad or racism feeling and they will not speak to me.

Despite feeling welcomed in Scotland, many were aware of the stigma associated with the label of 'asylum seeker' and often rejected it:

I am asylum seeker, and I don't want to tell them I am asylum seeker as, they see in the news people cross the channel, they are bad people. Like yesterday there was a hashtag in twitter, 'asylum seekers are invaders to this country', so when someone see this hashtag and see all the comments, racism people feel like when I have new friends what am I going to say to them if I am asylum seeker, maybe the reputation of asylum seekers are bad. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

This was echoed by several practitioners who noted that young people often struggled with the label of UASYP and distanced themselves from it:

Because it makes them different from other people, they can't get a part time job, they can't work like their friends. There are maybe some college courses that they can't do, so I think, for some young people that is a struggle for them, that kind of name or label. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

I think they certainly felt that that kind of identified them in a way that perhaps people's perception was that they were vulnerable and that they were then maybe perceived as not as capable as they could be. (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority).

Omar (21, M, West Africa) spoke about the hostile elements of the media, which impacted on his sense of self prior to getting his refugee status:

I was going through a lot like, I was feeling very stressful, even to sleep was very hard for me because of like what I saw in the news, I always read the news that's the problem, so like the islamophobia, the immigration bill.

Young people's sense of belonging was tied up with rights and responsibilities. Most practitioners cited that young people felt a sense of wanting to give back and contribute to Scottish society:

The young people say, I want to contribute to my new country. I want to say thank you to Scotland. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

This sentiment was echoed by several young people who said they wanted to contribute to Scottish society to express their gratitude. However, one young person alluded to a 'duty' to obey Scottish rules:

I want to try to respect the law, the rules, everything to be helpful, to be useful in this environment. (Sayid, 18, M, Middle East)

For several young people interviewed, the lack of status and subsequent rights, contributed to feeling more of an outsider: *'It feels like home at the moment, but not yet fully home, because like I'm struggling to get a job, so when I get a good job, I will say yeah'* (Omar, 21, M, Middle East). Others like Ola (18, M, West Africa) felt they were outsiders because they were *'not Scottish or British person yet'*. This practitioner spoke about a young man she worked with: *'to him it was like, I'm not allowed to work, I'm not allowed to do this, so I don't feel welcome'* (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector).

This section has shown that UASYP occupied a liminal belonging, which was tied to both place and relationships. The resettlement context (exosystem), including both the places young people were accommodated and the relations they could engage with, influenced young people's sense of belonging and their ability to resettle in Scotland. Young people's ideas about belonging were tied into hegemonic ideas about nationalism which, as Anderson (2021) notes, privileges ideas around 'citizenship and nationality'. The idea of belonging ties into particular 'spaces, places, locales and identities' (Anthias, 2008), where people feel belonging or non-belonging. However, as Anthias (2008) notes, these are often assumed to be fixed or 'naturalised', rather than socially constructed and so they become 'exclusionary borders of otherness' (p.8). Conversely, young Scottish people were assumed to automatically belong, what Schinkel refers to as the 'dispensation of integration' (Schinkel, 2017, 2018).

Phillimore (2021) highlights that the UK has two contradictory discourses around receiving refugees. On the one hand, the hostile immigration environment is exclusionary, while at a local level, often asylum seekers and refugees are welcomed. However, this study found that young people had contradictory feelings about living in Scotland, even when thinking about their local communities. On the one hand, young people felt safe by having access to resources (see also Chase, 2013; Söderqvist, 2017), and by being accepted, which created a feeling of emotional safety. However, this feeling of safety was bittersweet, as young people reflected on the impossibility of living in their countries of origin, a finding echoed by Chase and Allsopp (2020). Being able to develop a sense of belonging was also 'conditional' on legal status (Wernesjö, 2014) and UASYP needed to justify their right to belong, as others have found (Clayton *et al.*, 2019). Young people's sense of belonging was tied up with rights and responsibilities and some felt that lack of rights meant they did not feel welcome in Scotland. UASYP interviewed were aware of the polarised discourses around migration and

often rejected the label of UASYP, creating a sense of liminal belonging, echoing the work of others (Chase, 2013; Chase and Allsopp, 2020; O'Reilly, 2020). Griffiths *et al.* (2006) suggested that the dispersal policies which place asylum seekers in rural communities make them more susceptible to racism and discrimination and this section has shown that several young people felt othered in these communities. However, in the face of ontological liminality, UASYP adopted 'flexible identity positions' and 'ambivalent positioning' (Rosen *et al.*, 2021), choosing when to adopt the label of 'asylum seeker' and when to discard it, moving in and out of categories as needed. Belonging for young people was not a static, possessive quality, rather it was a process (Anthias, 2008). Chen and Schweitzer (2019) suggest that belonging is a continual process of becoming. This study adds evidence to previous research showing that UASYP had multiple senses of belonging (see Chase, 2020) and that these positionalities changed over time and space. Importantly this idea of flexible identity and liminal belonging contrasts to static ideas around integration presented in the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024).

UASYP also engaged in liminal homemaking to navigate ontological liminality. Conflicting feelings arose around the idea of 'home', which was conceptualised differently by young people interviewed. Some young people felt that Scotland was home because it was a safe haven:

I feel this is my home. Because I realize I can't have a life like here in my country, I don't have the possibilities. My country is not exactly really poor, it's poor, it's corrupt, the guns is a big problem in my country, so it's not nice to have a life there. I have in my heart this is my home. (Sara, 20, F, Central America)

Other young people felt that Scotland was home because they had spent a significant period there, they had made friends, and they understood how things worked:

Now when I go, when I go away from Scotland, I can't wait to come back. Honestly, this is what happens. It took me two years, two years and a half. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

However, for other young people like Ola (18, M, West Africa), 'what makes home is family,' and therefore Scotland could not be considered home, a point also echoed by young advisor

Dalia (16, F, Central Africa): *'It is home, but not like home home...I think where I feel home it's around the people that I'm with'*.

Academics have long theorised how those living in protracted displacement engage in homemaking practices. Scholars like Sirriyeh (2010; 2013) have challenged the notion of home as being a single fixed place, suggesting that it includes spatial, social, psychological and temporal elements as has been demonstrated above. Brun and Fabos (2015) suggest that home can refer to an 'ideal' that migrants long for and can also relate to daily routines and the social connections made within those. For some young people interviewed, home was tied to familial relationships, echoing the findings of Kohli (2011). However, the idea of 'home' was not always linked with sanctuary (Malloch & Rigby, 2020) and for some UASYP, their new 'home' can be 'exclusionary' (Wimark, 2019).

Some scholars suggest that the concept of home 'ebbs and flows' (Kohli, 2014) and changes over time (Wernesjö, 2015), as Samir above also said. This section has shown that young people engaged in 'liminal homemaking' (Brun, 2015; Wimark, 2019) while they waited for their asylum status. Safety and having access to resources in the exosystem helped support the resettlement of UASYP. As noted in Section 2.1.4, safety must be established first before a sense of belonging can form. However, as this section has highlighted, even UASYP who felt safe in Scotland, still had a sense of liminal belonging because the larger socio-political context which kept them in a state of 'uncertainty and insecurity' (Nelson *et al.*, 2017: 608). Once again, the harshness of the immigration system in the macrosystem was a barrier to resettlement for young people, which will be addressed further in the next section.

6.1.4 Imposed liminality

Imposed liminality refers to the hostile socio-legal environment that keeps young people in a state of legal limbo and influences their sense of belonging (Grierson, 2018). Overarching all these three liminal spaces was the 'imposed liminality' (O'Reilly, 2018) of the asylum system, which impacted on young people's resettlement in Scotland. Navigating the bureaucratic system of immigration was a barrier to resettlement for UASYP:

If you don't have ID, you can't open a bank account. If you don't have ID, you can't register with a certain service. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

There also appeared to be lack of uniformity across local authorities in their responses to young people, as noted by these practitioners:

You get really good local authorities, and who are really engaged and have specific workers for the unaccompanied young people, and then other ones where you know they don't seem to get that level of support. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

You know we're not Glasgow, we're not Edinburgh. We don't have access to the same level of services and the range of services. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Another inconsistency across local authorities related to young people's finances, where young people were paid different amounts in different local authorities:

So young people in different local authorities get different amounts of money. So [they ask] why does my friend get this much money and I only get this much money. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

The amount of money that young people received allowed them to survive, but not thrive:

I can get to college, I can buy some food, but you know, if I want to do anything that is a treat, entertainment, cinema, all that kind of stuff, then I can't do it. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

While young people were looked after and accommodated by the local authority they were placed in, UASYP did not have the same rights and entitlements as other care-experience young people in Scotland:

There are wee things I suppose like school clothing grants that young people aren't technically entitled to and EMA [Educational Maintenance Allowance], they aren't technically entitled to until they are granted status here. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Linking young people into education was seen as key, however, educational structural barriers kept them in a limbo state:

In the last year, there's been like longer waiting lists for a place, or college has maybe been a bit stricter about attendance. So young people have maybe lost places more quickly than they would have in the past, and that has a knock-on effect, for things like education, their accommodation if they're in a student accommodation.

(Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Added to this complexity was the difference in approaches to education provision across different local authorities:

So, if they are 16, 17, they should be able to go to school, but that isn't always the case. Certainly, locally here, we've had a great response. I couldn't ask for more from the local schools, I know from speaking to other authorities that that isn't always the case. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Lack of funding for asylum seekers to access higher education came out strongly in all interviews:

I was going to study at the University this year, and I've got acceptance letter last year, but I didn't get in because they say to me you don't have status, I have to pay £24,000. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

Since August 2023, these funding restrictions for UASYP have been lifted and young people can access financial support from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) for tuition fees for higher education (JustRight Scotland, 2023).

Education and the desire to learn were highly motivating factors for young people. However, many felt stuck in limbo, forced to complete ESOL classes at college, rather than studying further or higher education. Discrepancies across educational provision meant that some young people were able to access full time ESOL college courses, while for others, access was more limited: *'It's like a couple of hours a week in a community centre'* (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector). While the need to dominate the language was seen by both practitioners and young people as being the key to resettlement, ESOL provision was oversubscribed and young people arrived at different points throughout the academic year, which caused issues in terms of language provision in Scotland:

The under 18s couldn't get into that [ESOL class] if school doesn't work out or you know the college isn't quite right, if it's October and the courses are full and there's no more courses till January or even the next August, the ESOL classes are all seriously oversubscribed. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

This section has shown that the imposed liminality of the asylum system in the macrosystem impacted on the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. UASYP experienced 'system trauma' (Rigby *et al.*, 2020) in having to navigate complex asylum, welfare and support systems, which intersected with the temporal disruption in the chronosystem, caused by waiting for an asylum decision and not knowing when it would arrive. While education was seen as being key to resettlement, ESOL provision in Scotland was oversubscribed, which impacted on young people's ability to move on. The structural barriers around accessing education could often clash with young people's expectations and their desire to move on (microsystem), a finding echoed also by Poole and Riggan (2023). In Scotland, there is currently only one specific college course (16+ ESOL Programme) for UASYP (Lucas *et al.*, 2019), which is heavily oversubscribed. This imposed liminality of the asylum system overarched all other liminal spaces identified (socio-spatial, temporal and ontological) and impacted on young people's belonging and resettlement in Scotland. However, as it will be noted in the following section, the importance of social support in the mesosystem emerged as a salient topic, helping young people to navigate and bridge these multiple liminalities.

6.2 Social connections to bridge liminalities and support resettlement

Throughout all the interviews, young people highlighted the importance of relationships and having strong social connections, as well as the complexity of these social relations. In the initial stages of arriving in Scotland, young people needed support to navigate the transition to living alone, including both the practical as well as the emotional aspects of this:

In the beginning time, they need help, you know, they need somebody to teach them what to do, after that, you can leave them in the middle of the sea and can manage to get back. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

How to do the washing, change your beds, do your recycling bins. All really fun things that they don't want to do. (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

Through [name of worker] we had the online cooking sessions, so I learned how to cook. (Omar, 21, M, West Africa)

While young people waited for their asylum decision, they needed support to keep busy, to explore hobbies and to be able to seek out opportunities. Professionals had a role in facilitating this as mentioned by two young people:

Keep them busy, you know try to make them meet other people if they have no one, make them go outside [to] meet people (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

You need your social worker to be checking in on you, your guardian...just see how your wellbeing is, keep checking on you and with activities you might find, things you like, arts or football. (Ola, 18, M, West Africa)

To help navigate socio-spatial liminality, young people needed help to make new friends and connect with peers:

They are shy, you know because they don't speak the language. They find it hard to make connection [s], to communicate with others, they feel embarrassed. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

One practitioner, whose role involved connecting young people with peers, noted the challenges of doing so:

I'm always trying to make friends for them in a really basic way that sometimes doesn't work out because I'm thinking, you're from Syria and you're from Syria, so you are going to be friends, but it doesn't always happen that way. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Omar (21, M, West Africa) spoke fondly of an organisation that helped him make friends, volunteer and discover his hobbies. This, he suggested, was ‘*more important for our health than say give me a house and money without nothing, how can I get friends, I cannot get friends. I cannot be open, I am always indoors*’. Young people sometimes lacked discipline and motivation to go to school or college and it often fell on social workers to motivate

young people. Some young people also needed motivation to develop English language skills. Sayid (18, M, Middle East) recognised how instrumental his social worker was in keeping him motivated:

My social worker took my hand and say [to] me, this is college, this is Internet. Learn. This is your lawyer. She teach me, and I become motivated. Without that, I will lose my motivation.

Equally, support was needed to help young people understand the rationale for basic service provision:

Even things like getting registered at a dentist and getting a check-up, you know, they were like my teeth are fine, I don't have a problem with my teeth, likewise with things like opticians and things like that. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Strong social support networks were required to help navigate acculturative liminality. As this befriender noted: *'the culture, the system, laws are completely different, so they need to be oriented with all these things'* (Abdullah, 25, M, Middle East). Practitioners regularly engaged in conversations with young people to help them navigate cultural differences around gender norms and romantic relationships:

We've kind of had debates at length, you know, why are there women that walk alone in the street. Why are there other young people supported by social work that are in relationships? (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

Young people also needed support to manage expectations around future planning and to navigate ontological liminality:

They've never been in our education system so they've got no idea and they're very often wildly unrealistic, I want to be a doctor next year, or a pilot or whatever, so a lot of the work when you get to the level that I teach at-there's currently three levels-is kind of saying let's look at what you're really good at, what might be possible, how long it's going to take back, that kind of thing. (Stakeholder 2, Local Authority)

As temporal liminality was prolonged, feelings intensified, and young people needed reassurance to help weather the uncertainty:

Give me hope, you know, even if only some words that will help a lot, you will get the refugee status, don't worry, and you will get your family, we will try to bring them, even speaking. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Despite young people's resilience and strength, they also needed help to deal with complex mental health challenges and the trauma of the asylum process. Young men often did not express when they were suffering, 'they just kind of bottle it up' (Stakeholder 3, Local Authority). The stigma and culturally different ideas around mental health could get in the way of young people receiving support. With help from social workers, Sayid (18, M, Middle East) had learned that it was culturally acceptable in the UK to discuss mental health. Support was needed to explain mental health services to young people, as well as time scales and waiting lists:

If you're saying to a young person, this will really help you, and then it takes them 12 months to get assessed by that point they're like, well, what's the point in engaging. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

UASYP also needed support to continue engaging with services if obstacles arose like lack of appropriate interpreters:

I remember one young person I worked with, he did want to engage with services, but when he kept turning up for appointments, there was the wrong type of interpreter and he was just like, well this is not working for me. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

The asylum process was not 'child-friendly' and relied on service providers working with young people to help them navigate bureaucracy and legal challenges:

I get the paperwork sometimes that they receive when they arrive here, and I can't finish reading it. I put it down. 20 pages, 25 pages, all in English. All in technical language as well. Not at all child friendly. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

I don't know what's the asylum, even the asylum word means. I don't know about it, about the law, about the rules. After that, my guardian and social worker explained to me. (Sayid, 18, M, Middle East)

Young people needed strong social support networks to help navigate these multiple liminalities. Professionals helped young people to engage in everyday practices or what Brun (2015) called 'routine practices and strategies' (p.19) and to promote living in the present, which allowed young people to weather uncertainty and restore hope. Samir alluded to the need for professionals to support young people to be hopeful and to join in being hopeful themselves. This relates to the work of Hughes (2019), who recognised that professionals had a role in 'doing hope together' (p143), helping young people to 'resist isolation and despair' (p 143). Indeed, professionals were instrumental in helping UASYP to meet new people and widen networks. As Drammeh (2019) notes, social workers can influence young people's ability to create 'spaces of belonging' (p.163) simply by facilitating their interactions with other young people. However, gaining trust, as (Ni Raghallaigh, 2014) notes, requires 'time and concerted effort' (p.96) and 'facilitation', as well as spaces that fostered intercultural relations (Askins, 2015).

Despite the importance of social support, the limitations of social care provision in the exosystem surfaced across practitioner interviews. High caseloads and time pressures impacted on the ability of professionals to engage in caring practices as this stakeholder articulated:

Sometimes I think some young people present as maybe doing okay and coping okay. And then I as a [name of job role] I think like, okay, I don't need to give them as much of my time, or focus. I need to focus on these [other] young people. And then it transpires, actually they're not doing great at all. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Professionals like Guardians and social workers tended to 'have a set remit in their role' (Stakeholder 9, Third Sector), which meant they did not always have the time to check in informally with a young person. While professionals provided the 'nuts and bolts of support' (Stakeholder 9, Third Sector), i.e. providing housing and material resources, young people alluded to need for a lighter touch support 'to ask them how they are...help you do the things you like, find your hobbies' (Omar, 21, M, West Africa). Indeed, the boundaries around

professional relations were sometimes a source of frustration for young people. Omar (21, M, West Africa) sought employment advice from a practitioner, but was refused help as he was deemed too capable. The practitioner's response was '*the only thing that is stopping you is just your papers*', to which Omar responded: '*I said no, sometimes it's okay to talk to people, because I'm always alone*'.

Scholars tend to focus on the positive aspects of professional relationships, negating the 'negative ties' associated with them (Ryan, 2023). Practitioners and young people both alluded to the need for a different type of support that is often beyond the confines of many professional roles. Scholars have criticised social work for focussing too much on the practical needs of young people (Wade *et al.*, 2005; Kohli, 2007), with others suggesting that more attention should be paid to non-professional support networks like peers or mentors (Chase and Allsopp, 2013, Wright 2014). As was demonstrated above, social care provision and other professional relationships could be both a source of support and a source of frustration for UASYP. However, there was also the need for a lighter touch support, which was on occasions beyond the confines of current provision. It is within these complex professional relations and limitations of social care that the need for mentoring and befriending emerges, which the following chapter addresses.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings related to Research Question 1, which sought to ascertain what the opportunities and barriers to resettlement for UASYP were. Findings demonstrated that young people occupied multiple liminalities in the exosystem, including socio-spatial, temporal and ontological liminalities, which had implications for resettlement in Scotland, for their ability to form and maintain social relations and for belonging. Overarching the multiple liminalities was the imposed liminality and structural oppressions inherent through the asylum system in the macrosystem. UASYP did not have the same rights to services and support as other young people in Scotland and there were structural barriers like the oversubscription of ESOL provision and the inconsistency across local authorities in Scotland in their responses to young people, which impacted on young people's resettlement in Scotland. Regardless of how young people experienced these liminalities, they required strong social support networks in the mesosystem to help navigate these in-between spaces. However, statutory provision did not always meet the needs of young people and they required a more informal type of support that many professionals did not have the time to

give. This shows a clear gap in the need for a more informal type of support, which is where mentoring and befriending come into play. The next chapter explores the role of formal and informal mentoring and befriending at a macrosystem level and how these fit in with wider care structures for UASYP.

Chapter 7: Situating mentoring and befriending provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in a wider socio-political context

Overview

While the previous chapter looked at the need for mentoring and befriending in the microsystem and the resettlement challenges for UASYP in the exosystem, this chapter explores the need for mentoring and befriending in the macrosystem. It aims to ascertain how mentoring and befriending with UASYP fit into wider support structures for young people. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part makes sense of the heterogeneity of mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP in Scotland and outlines differences and commonalities across programmes included in the study. This will help to develop a typology of mentoring and befriending with UASYP at the end of Chapter 8. The second part of the chapter situates mentoring and befriending provision in a wider socio-political context and outlines some of the key challenges in providing this support for UASYP, highlighting economic, cultural and political challenges.

7.1 The heterogeneity of mentoring/befriending programmes in the study

As noted in Chapter 3, formal mentoring programmes vary by context, format, goals, duration of relationship, level of involvement of third-party agency (Rhodes *et al.*, 2002, DuBois *et al.*, 2002). This complexity makes researching mentoring and befriending more challenging. The following two sections attempt to examine commonalities and differences across the programmes included in the study, with the aim of developing a typology of mentoring and befriending with UASYP at the end of the three findings chapters (see Section 8.5). There were a range of mentoring and befriending programmes referred to in the interviews with both service providers and young people, which is representative of the wide range of programmes available across Scotland. These included one-to-one models, group models and peer befriending models run by the state, third sector and church organisations. I spoke to practitioners from seven formal mentoring and befriending programmes including: one mentoring programme, one peer mentoring programme, four befriending programmes and one group befriending programme. The reason for such a wide selection of programmes is the relatively small size of formalised programmes in Scotland. Within the programmes referred to in the study, three worked specifically with young refugees/unaccompanied young people, while four were generic mentoring and befriending programmes for refugees and asylum-seeking populations, which involved young people. Dominguez and Kochan (2020)

recognise that because of the definitional quagmire that exists around mentoring and befriending, it is important to identify the common elements of programmes. The following section considers the differences and commonalities across programmes, which will help to make sense of the heterogeneity of provision. To look at differences and commonalities across programmes, I draw on the work of Karcher *et al.* (2006) considering the context, goals and structure of respective programmes.

7.1.1 Differences across programmes

In terms of the context of programmes included in the study, one of the seven programmes took place in an academic setting, the rest were in community settings with no fixed location. In terms of programme goals, two of the seven programmes had quite specific aims (academic support/advocacy for threatened housing evictions), however five of the seven programmes cited broad developmental aims, based around the needs of young people. Programmes differed in their degree of formalisation. While some practitioners preferred programmes to be more structured: *'I want things to be a bit more formal'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector), for others, programmes were more *'informal and breezy'* and less *'tick boxy'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector).

In terms of the programme format, five programmes out of the seven referred to utilised a dyadic format, matching mentor and mentee one-to-one, while two programmes (one mentoring and one befriending) utilised a group model. Other differences included the age difference between mentor and mentee. One programme was specifically intended for peer mentoring, where young people with lived experience of the asylum process supported newly arrived young people, the remaining six programmes matched an older volunteer with a young person. There was variation in terms of the types of mentors/befrienders, some involved academic staff or older volunteers, while others utilised young people with lived experience of the asylum process to support newly arrived young people. Similarly, there was variation in terms of the length of mentoring relationship, although all were time-bound to some extent. Some relationships were an academic calendar year, others were six or nine months. Most mentoring relationships involved weekly meetings, however this varied depending on the relationship.

While programmes run by statutory agencies had strict boundaries around mentor and mentee interactions, third sector programmes were more relaxed and recognised that *'there's a lot of grey areas'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). This was particularly the case during the COVID-19 pandemic, when some befrienders ended up taking on more of a case work role to make up for the shortfall in social care provision. Boundaries varied across programmes in terms of sharing personal contact details, sharing personal histories, introducing the befriender to friends or family members etc. In terms of support for mentors/befrienders, programmes varied from having *'weekly zoom meetings'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector), *'monthly phone calls'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector), *'bimonthly peer support sessions for our befrienders'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector), to *'6-weekly formal supervision'* (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). One programme was less involved with their mentors and had annual training and mentor feedback sessions (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency). Having considered the differences across programmes, the following section identifies commonalities across mentoring and befriending with UASYP in Scotland, with the aim of eventually developing a typology of mentoring and befriending with UASYP.

7.1.2 Commonalities across programmes

7.1.2.1 Relationship focussed

The need for social connection and the importance of relationships were at the core of all mentoring and befriending programmes referred to by the interviewees in the study:

Our young people come over here with broken connections and sometimes with no connections or limited connections. The loneliness element is enormous. (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority)

I think the key to any aspect of the mentoring, and certainly for our group, is that relationship-based practice is at the heart of it. (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority)

While relationships were key, all of the seven formal programmes referred to by stakeholders were time-bound and had some degree of boundaries attached to the relationship e.g. the exchange of personal information, where relations could take place etc. However, boundaries were less stringent than with other professional relationships, as noted by this practitioner:

It is different from that of a professional, it is more relaxed, if the young person wants to discuss things that are going on that is stressing them, then they can. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency).

Mentoring and befriending were explained to young people as sitting somewhere between a formal statutory provision with strict boundaries and an informal relationship. This stakeholder told how he explained the role of a volunteer mentor to young people:

Volunteer might sort of sit somewhere between their professionals, like their social workers and their guardians and their friends. [I tell them] that it's going to be a bit more relaxed but there are still going to be rules, you won't go into each other's homes, you won't share personal contact details. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

Unlike traditional mentoring, which is more structured, mentoring and befriending provision with UASYP recognised the sometimes-chaotic nature of young people's lives, which could impact on how relationships played out, as noted here:

You know sometimes you have to be alright with the fact that you are going to sit quite awkwardly in silence as you're building up a relationship, you know. You need to be alright that you might be standing there at George Square, and they just don't turn up that week at the beginning when you're building up a relationship or that they run late, or they change the plan. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

In terms of the matching process, programme coordinators cited similar processes around matching mentor and young person by interest, shared availability, age and geographical location. This relationship-focussed aspect applied to mentors and befrienders also and all seven programmes had some degree of training, supervision and on-going support for volunteers. A common feature across all programmes was the role of ad hoc informal support from programme coordinators, as and when it was needed: *'As much as they want to support them informally'* (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). As well as having good support structures for mentors and befrienders, programme coordinators needed to establish good relationships with volunteers:

Knowing them really well and what they're comfortable with and when it might be getting too much for them. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

This relationship-centric focus was a defining feature of all programmes included in the study and marks a key distinction between traditional mentoring, which is primarily focussed on

specific outcomes like educational attainment or employment. At the core of programmes was the development of a trusting and supportive relationship, which surfaced as being more important than the developmental outcomes of young people. This echoes the findings of Jones *et al.* (2015), who found that mentoring and befriending helped care-experienced young people to develop positive relationships with adults.

7.1.2.2 A lighter touch support

Analysis of stakeholder interviews found that there was also a blurring of the boundaries in the purposes of mentoring and befriending. Throughout interviews, practitioners and young people alluded to gaps in service provision and the need for a '*lighter touch support*' (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency). This was often beyond the remit of social workers:

A lot of those professionals don't really have the same time to just sort of take someone for coffee, to go and check out some places to visit new parks, to try new activities. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

While the nuts and bolts of social care provision was providing housing, money etc., mentoring was about having fun and exploring new places:

Just having a wonder about, getting to ask questions about the language getting to visit new places, learning where to get the bus to different places, finding out what activities exists, finding out where they can do things that they already know they enjoy hobbies but also how can they explore what the differences are here and I suppose in a bit of a nutshell, that's kind of why our project exists. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

Even for programmes that were more prescribed, and those which took place in an educational setting, the primary goal was not educational attainment, but mainly pastoral:

It's not academic support, so it is more pastoral and general, so it is about their whole university life in general. (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency)

Programmes that brought some goal-orientated focus to the matching process did so in an informal way. Indeed, all programmes referred to had softer targets, rather than hard outcomes, like educational attainment:

I can use more soft targets, I can say this person has connected with 'Musicians in Exile' to gain access to an instrument from their home country, or this person has signed up at the library or this person has enrolled in college. I'm not being given really strict targets for each person, it's just that, whatever comes up and it allows it to be more person-centred around each individual as well. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

This lighter touch support was a key feature across all programmes referred to and reflects the need for provision that is more informal and relationship-based, as also identified in Chapter 6.

7.1.2.3 More needs-led and less target driven

One commonality across all seven of the formal mentoring and befriending programmes included in the study was the fact that the primary goal was the personal development of young people. While there was scope for the development of the mentor, the starting point of every programme was the needs of young people:

It's more just supporting that student and their needs and any struggles that they have. (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency)

We try our best to kind of like start with what the young person wants and what their interests are and go from there. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

Exploring the interest of young people also, what would you like to do, what do you think you would enjoy, what are you looking to improve. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

While traditional mentoring tends to be outcome-focussed, this model may not be appropriate for UASYP, who face structural barriers to pursuing employment and further education. Conversely, all programmes were less goal oriented and more needs-led:

Because everyone has different levels of need and different stages that there are in their journey. I would really struggle if I had that kind of target driven approach, because it's much nicer to let people set their own targets for themselves and be like proud of themselves, for whatever they've managed to achieve. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

We don't have targets to reach. (Stakeholder 13, Church Organisation).

I'm not being given really strict targets for each person, it's just that, whatever comes up and it allows it to be more person-centred around each individual as well. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector).

The needs-led nature of programmes meant that success of the relationship was dependent on the individual relationship, as one interviewee noted: *'Success looks really different to each person'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). All but one of the programmes had outcomes that were required to be met by funders, however programmes also allowed space for young people to decide on their own personal goals of the mentoring or befriending relationship, supporting the idea of needs-led relationships:

In terms of our formal outcomes for our funders those are generic for every relationship and their focus on English, confidence, independence, friendship networks. But then we also identify a couple of individual goals at the beginning, as well and measure those throughout the relationship. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

All stakeholders noted that every mentoring and befriending relationship was different and there was not a one size fits all approach, echoing the findings of Allen and Eby (2007). While traditional mentoring tends to focus on 'hard outcomes' (DuBois & Karcher, 2014), which so often dominate funding agendas, interviews found that mentoring with UASYP was a 'soft intervention' (Colley, 2003b: 164), favouring a more person-centred approach that underpins much of youth work. Traditional mentoring ignores the importance of softer skills like confidence and knowledge building, which as will be shown in Chapter 8, are integral to resettlement. Having identified the differences and commonalities across programmes, the following section situates mentoring and befriending in wider care structures and highlights how provision can complement traditional social care provision for UASYP.

7.2 Situating mentoring/befriending in a wider socio-political context

Most academic literature considers mentoring to be an ‘individual level intervention’ (Busse *et al.*, 2018: 401) and studies tend to look at the programme outcomes for the mentee.

However, Colley (2003b) suggests that there is a need to consider the meso and macro context in which mentoring takes place. Since UASYP are looked-after children *and* asylum seekers/refugees, it is important to examine how mentoring and befriending fit into wider care and integration policies. The following Section 7.2.1 outlines the need for mentoring and befriending at a macrosystem level, while Section 7.2.2 identifies some of the key challenges for programme delivery, including economic, cultural and political barriers.

7.2.1 Situating the need for mentoring and befriending in wider care structures

Interviews with practitioners found that there was a discrepancy between the official and unofficial, less explicit rationale for mentoring and befriending programmes. In terms of the ‘official’ rationale for mentoring and befriending, the perceived lack of integration of young people into Scottish communities surfaced across several practitioner interviews:

The biggest challenge that we have in [name of local authority], but I think nationally it's the same, is integration. (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority)

All mentoring and befriending programmes referred to in the study started as a response to the increase in asylum-seeking populations in Scotland and the subsequent need for them to ‘integrate’ as noted by these practitioners:

It's about helping people who are either new arrivals to Glasgow or some people who've been here a long time and just haven't been able to integrate or are just having a bit of a rough time at the moment. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

For whatever reason, [some young people] have just faced various challenges in terms of their integration and settling in. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

These integration challenges referred to were not always rooted in language, and young people who had good level of spoken English still struggled to integrate:

I would actually say that's probably still our main struggle, it's the integration with the wider community. English is obviously a huge barrier. But the English skills of all the young people have massively improved, and you can hold a conversation.

(Stakeholder 3, Local Authority)

Central to all programmes was the need for providing a 'go-to' person for young people: 'Someone to advocate on their behalf and help them access useful services and information' (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). As noted in Section 7.1.2.2, mentoring and befriending were seen as being a lighter-touch support, with a focus on the 'social context and fun context' (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency). However, as well as the 'official' reasons for implementing mentoring and befriending programmes, analysis of interviews identified less explicit reasons around gaps in service provision. One programme started as an informal learning project in response to the fact that 'college courses were oversubscribed' (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). Another started from a need to advocate for asylum seekers who were facing housing evictions. Most practitioners noted that the 'incredibly large caseload' of social workers brought about the need for mentoring/befriending with young refugees. The high caseload meant that social workers 'struggled to really work beyond that remit' (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency). This sentiment was echoed by young people, who alluded to the high case load for social workers which impacted on their ability to engage. Omar (21, M, West Africa) spoke about the need for more face-to-face time with social workers, adding that there was a need to reduce their caseloads:

Many people are complaining of the time they spend with their social worker.

The high caseload and pressure of constant new referrals for practitioners had implications for supporting young people:

I think that support needs to continue, but quite often we're then maybe getting another new referral that we need to start sort of thinking about. So, I suppose the nature of services, unfortunately, may mean that you have to move on. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

As noted in Chapter 6, the lack of uniformity across local authorities in their responses to UASYP impacted on the ability to support young people:

Each local authority has a different approach. So, a young person from [name of area] has a great social worker, so great support, a young person in [name of another area] gets completely different experience you know, and that's repeated all over the place. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

Capacity changes from place to place. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

The lack of consistency between local authorities had a knock-on effect on other services, which would end up engaging in extra advocacy work:

In an ideal world, we wouldn't need to be doing advocacy around their child and care rights. So sometimes we end up doing quite a bit of that, depending on the support they're getting from their local authority. (Stakeholder 15, Local Authority)

Similarly, the demands of social work and the need for practitioners to focus on the practical aspects of the asylum process meant that there was a gap in providing nurture for young people:

I totally get a sense of that's what they want, and they want more of is that feeling of being looked after like. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency)

This sentiment was echoed by Omar (21, M, West Africa), who spoke about the need for more emotional support:

Ask the person how is he feeling and what are the things he is facing, but not only on the phone you know, what are you going to say on the phone? I'm ok, that's the only thing I am going to say.

While there was acknowledgement from practitioners that mentoring and befriending were intended to support the integration of young people, there was lack of consensus about what this meant in practical terms. As noted in Chapter 2, integration is a contested concept and there is no consensus on its definition or scope (Ager & Strang, 2008; Castles & Oxford, 2003). Interestingly, several practitioners highlighted that the needs of UASYP are not factored into the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024).

They alluded to the fact that, while children and adults feature heavily in the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2018), UASYP are mentioned only briefly in the strategy:

I think, in my opinion, what happens in the New Scots Strategy is that adults are taken care of and that children who are at school are taken care of, there's an identification that this is a need. However, young people who are sixteen upwards, who are not at school, they might be young adults who are involved in our programme, or they go to other colleges, they're not catered for. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

This section has shown that the need for mentoring and befriending was often grounded in wider structural and social inequalities (Askins, 2016). Analysis of interviews found that there was a disconnect between the official and unofficial rationale for mentoring and befriending programmes for UASYP, reflecting the findings of others (Alarcón & Prieto-Flores, 2021). This discrepancy is important, as it points out some of the structural barriers faced by UASYP. The need for mentoring and befriending emerged from a social care deficit: the demands of social work, the lack of uniformity across local authorities and the need for more nurture. Section 7.1.2 has highlighted that mentoring and befriending could plug the gap and provide much-needed nurture, fun and a lighter touch support for UASYP, without the strict boundaries that traditional social care provision requires. However, it is important to recognise the structural and cultural barriers that exist around providing mentoring and befriending for UASYP, which the next section addresses.

7.2.2 Barriers to providing mentoring provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

Across practitioner interviews, a number of structural and cultural challenges emerged, which impacted on the ability to deliver mentoring and befriending for UASYP. Structural barriers in the macrosystem included lack of funding and resources to adequately deliver dyadic mentoring programmes, but also the need for need for time-limited programmes, where young people did not become too dependent on volunteers. Other structural barriers revolved around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of many statutory services and the subsequent knock-on effect on mentoring and service provision. The final sub-section outlines some of the cultural barriers around mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP including the lack of culturally appropriate mentors and befrienders, the need for culturally

appropriate language and the fact that mentoring and befriending were not always appropriate interventions for young people.

7.2.2.1 Economic and political barriers

Funding constraints and lack of resources to adequately resource formal dyadic programmes emerged as a key theme across practitioner interviews. Access to mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP was not universal across all young people interviewed. While every unaccompanied young person in Scotland should be offered a befriender through Guardianship Scotland, the lack of available volunteers meant that this was not possible in practice:

I would love all of our young people to have a befriender, I think that would be great, unfortunately, that's not possible, we just don't have the volunteers to do that for the number of young people that we work with. (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Dyadic mentoring programmes were staff and resource heavy to coordinate, as volunteers required regular supervision, and all volunteers required police checks:

If we had four more coordinators and we've cracked how we recruit you know the kind of the matches would be sort of pretty endless until we don't have any young people left. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

Matching young people in a dyadic match without relevant safeguarding could put them in 'potentially challenging situations' (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Lack of funding and resources meant that group programmes or ad hoc dyadic programmes were created as an alternative:

The first big obstacle was [that] we didn't have any money, and we couldn't do what we thought was absolutely ethically vital, which was to provide support to the young person who was going to be the mentor. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

Ad hoc mentoring was utilised by professionals across different settings as a support mechanism for UASYP. This could be social workers 'spending a bit of time with a young person on their own' (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority) or schools buddying people up. Other

ad hoc mentoring programmes were ‘*ESOL and walking groups, coffee mornings things like that*’ (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority). It was common for local authority practitioners to informally match young people with other peers:

You know, say a young person, would like to meet them? Maybe take them for a coffee because they are from the same area, they've got the same experiences, we'll link people up. They can become friends, some have, some haven't. (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority)

This practitioner noted that there was an element of informal mentoring in her ESOL class:

I would invite young people who had moved on from my class to come back into my class and talk about what you're doing. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

Retired English teachers who provided English classes became a default ‘*kind of a cultural mentor*’ (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority). Similarly, some social workers relied on young refugees who had been in Scotland for longer to act as informal peer mentors to newly arrived young people:

There's another young person from the Middle East who has also been here for a number of years and he I guess fulfils an informal mentoring role with all of the other young people who have subsequently arrived, because he's been through all the same things that they've been through. I think local authorities are going to have to develop things [ad hoc mentoring] for themselves and those around us. (Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Intercultural peer mentoring was facilitated informally by social workers, who brought together care-experienced Scottish young people together with UASYP, however these forced interactions were not always successful:

The social worker every Wednesday, they call it like [name of programme], where the children, all the boys, even Scottish boys, they come to eat together, so they meet each other. But there is no connection. I don't see any connection between each other, you

know everyone different you know, they are not matching. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

The evidence in this study shows that a lot of mentoring and befriending provision across Scotland is patchy, ad hoc and lacks sufficient funding and resources. Not all UASYP in Scotland had access to mentors/befrienders because of lack of volunteers or lack of resources and funding needed to adequately safeguard young people. While the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018) recognises that mentoring and befriending are central to supporting the ‘integration’ of asylum seekers and refugees into Scottish communities, there was a lack of funding and resources to adequately staff one-to-one programmes. Fiscal austerity in programmes supporting UASYP has been highlighted by other scholars (Camps *et al.*, 2023). This section has shown that mentoring and befriending were a response to budget cuts and ‘deficits in the welfare structure’ (Raithelhuber, 2023: 967), taking the place of statutory provision. Scholars like Colley (2003b) suggest that this overlap between social care and mentoring, where volunteers end up taking on the responsibility of paid professionals is problematic. Since mentoring and befriending occupy a space in between statutory provision and informal support networks, they are not embedded in the welfare structure and often lack sufficient funding and resources. Lack of funding for dyadic mentoring programmes meant that group programmes were often created as an alternative. In the face of austerity and economic restraints, ad hoc provision made up for the lack of formalised programmes, whereby social workers matched young people informally or peer mentors supported others in ESOL classes.

While most of the face-to-face mentoring and befriending provision had ‘*quietened down*’ during the COVID-19 pandemic (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency), due to the pandemic-related regulations, the closure of many statutory services also meant that there was a greater need for mentoring and befriending. The pandemic created delays in young people receiving their asylum decisions:

People's cases were paused over Coronavirus and now we're having a lot of rejections coming through. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

This had a knock-on effect in terms of other service provision. Most of the ESOL provision stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted on the need for mentoring and

befriending. Indeed, mentoring and befriending programmes that started pre-pandemic took on a different form during the pandemic. One befriending programme started with the aim of supporting young people in a more informal way, with the purpose of giving asylum seekers and refugees *'that bit of social support'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). However, during the pandemic the programme took on more of a casework role, which was beyond the remit of traditional befriending:

Inevitably, that person is going to ask the befriender at some point, to help them make a GP appointment, or you know, one of those things that really the support workers should be doing. It's definitely having an impact on how the friendship programs being run. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

In the face of austerity and with the closure of statutory services, mentors ended up taking on additional responsibilities, as noted here:

There's such little resource out there. There's such little support that befrienders can often end up as the only contact for that individual and I think that that makes the friendship program really tricky because it puts pressure on us, it puts pressure on the volunteers. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Mullen and Klimaitis (2021) recognise that in recessionary times, mentors may be expected to take on additional responsibilities, which was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, practitioners were able to exercise more flexibility with young people in terms of keeping their cases open for longer, while under normal circumstances, cases would be closed once young people had received their refugee status. Some interviewees noted that the change of Guardianship Scotland (formerly Scottish Guardianship Service) to a statutory service in 2023, will likely impact on the support needs of UASYP in the future: *'it's going to be a lot stricter'* (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency), meaning that practitioners would have to stop supporting young people soon after getting their status. These changes may have an impact on the need for mentoring and befriending provision in the future.

Linked with the challenge of lack of funding was also the challenge of programme sustainability. Central to programmes was ensuring that young people did not become too reliant on the mentor/befriender, and the need to create independence in young people surfaced across interviews:

The ideal is where this person [mentor] is not needed. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

We want to make it sustainable, we don't want the volunteer driving the young person around like a taxi service, because then, when the match ends, how are they going to get back to Loch Lomond. (Stakeholder 5, Third Sector)

It was considered problematic when volunteers would pay for young people to take part in activities, it was seen as *'setting them up for something that is not sustainable'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). Interviewees noted the importance of managing young people's expectations and reiterating at several different points throughout the relationship that it was time bound and that it would come to an end. Practitioners noted that the ideal situation was that mentoring programmes became obsolete: *'the aim is to be like finishing up'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector), where *'the befriender sort of just becomes redundant'* (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency). The time-bound nature of mentoring and befriending with UASYP could be a *'thorny issue, it's about loss again'*, as noted by Stakeholder 5 (Third Sector). Organisations needed to manage these endings carefully, ensuring that young people were prepared for the relationship to end. For some young people, the mentoring/befriending relationship was viewed as another appointment that they needed to keep track of, and it would be the first to be dropped if they were too busy with other appointments:

If there's one thing in my week that could go, I've got college, I've got meetings with my guardian, I've got meetings with my social worker, I've got problems with housing and the guy who lives next door who doesn't tidy the kitchen. And now I'm getting calls about meeting, where do I want to meet, what do I want to do, I don't know. Sometimes they just don't get started. (Stakeholder 5, Third Sector)

Studies point to the potential harm caused by short-lived mentoring, which could cause abandonment issues for young people (Grossman and Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes 2002). Rhodes *et al.* (2017) have found that the longer the mentoring relationship, the greater the impact. Relationship endings could be problematic and, as has been shown above, practitioners needed to manage these endings carefully, to ensure young people did not feel any abandonment issues, echoing the findings of other scholars (Dolan & Frost, 2017). However, this study found that the temporariness of the mentoring/befriending relationship with

UASYP was intentional. The ideal situation was one where the mentor or befriender eventually became obsolete. In this case, the intervention provided a stepping stone to allow young people to move on to other social relations, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter. Formal mentoring and befriending were not a panacea and needed to work in conjunction with a larger system of support for young people as this practitioner noted, *'there's limits to the role'* (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). He added that:

I think the befriending relationship, in the best-case scenario, is just going to be another appreciated bit of support, but I think probably it's going to be the package that is going to help them integrate. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

Mentoring and befriending needed to work in conjunction with other interventions, so that when short-term relations ended, young people had alternative sources of social support.

7.2.2.2 Cultural barriers

As well as the economic and political barriers identified above, analysis of interviews found that there were several cultural barriers to implementing mentoring and befriending with UASYP. These related to the lack of culturally appropriate mentors and befrienders for UASYP, difficulties around explaining mentoring and befriending to young people and the fact that mentoring and befriending were not always appropriate interventions.

Lack of appropriate mentors/befrienders

Analysis of the interviews with stakeholders and young people found that there was sometimes a clash between the reality of mentoring and the desires of young people. It was easy to recruit volunteers in major cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, but more challenging to do so in rural areas:

If we put an application in Glasgow, you know, we can get 30, 40 notes of interest in three weeks, if we do that and Fife, we may get one, you know, we may get three. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

We tried to extend [volunteer recruitment] to Aberdeen, Inverness, Perth, Dundee, Fife and that's been quite hard to get that going and actually. We're a bit disappointed that we've had not as much take up. (Stakeholder 5, Third Sector)

While some programmes were lucky in terms of the diversity of their volunteers: *'completely different professions, completely different walks of life'* (Statutory Agency 9, Local Authority), other programmes struggled to recruit appropriate volunteers. One practitioner noted that the lack of volunteers meant that they ended up matching people who did not speak the same language (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). Another practitioner noted that the lack of diversity among volunteers was a significant issue.

There were also gender disparities in the data. While the majority of mentees were male, most volunteers were female as noted below:

The majority [of mentees] are males 78% I think versus 22% female. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

Most of the volunteers are female. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

I think it's mainly been female [volunteers] from my memory. (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency).

I think that this type of volunteering can be quite female dominated at times. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector).

The lack of male volunteers meant that some practitioners often had to match female befrienders with male befriendees. Similarly, there was a lack of ethnic diversity among volunteers, and it was *'mostly British, white women'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). Students and retirees tended to dominate the role, as well as educated professionals, as they tended to have more spare time:

They are the ones who have a couple of hours to spare on a Thursday afternoon, come sit and talk, they have a cup of tea or coffee. (Stakeholder 13, Church organisation)

This older demographic conflicted with the desire of young people as noted by this practitioner:

The young people will often say, can they have someone younger. They want it to be someone closer to their own age, so it doesn't feel so obvious that they're kind of maybe being supported or something. (Stakeholder 5, Third Sector)

There was a need for volunteers who spoke more community languages like Farsi and Kurdish Sorani and younger people who could provide peer support. Several practitioners identified the need for more male peer mentors with lived experience of the asylum process. However, recruitment was challenging, because young people needed to have been in Scotland long enough to understand the culture and systems and they needed to be emotionally robust enough to take on the role. Volunteering in a helping role could attract people who were perhaps ‘*not ready*’ (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency) to volunteer themselves. For peer mentors, there was an even greater need to provide safeguarding and access to mental health support, to ensure that young people were not re-traumatised or experience ‘*retriggering*’ (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority).

I don't think young people who are newly arrived can mentor because they've got too much to do, everything is completely new completely new, that's just not going to happen. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

It was a bit of a struggle to try and recruit people who were either in the system but had been here long enough to know enough services and know Glasgow enough and be in a good enough place themselves to befriend. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Volunteers needed to have a ‘thick skin’, as this peer befriender noted:

Not to take things to heart immediately, because I mean these people sometimes like they act maybe like in a very shocking or rude way. They don't mean to, though, but then due to their language limitation, and then lack of awareness, lack of information, so they don't know actually how to communicate. (Hassan, 25, Peer Mentor, M, Middle East)

This section has shown that UASYP did not always have access to formal mentors and befrienders, or in cases where they did, volunteers may not have been the right kind of mentors and befrienders to meet the needs of young people. The desire for younger, culturally

similar mentors was highlighted by practitioners. Interviews with young people found that having peer mentors with lived experience of the asylum process were more important for young people than having ethnically similar mentors (see also Garraway & Pistrang, 2010). While the question of racial preference of mentors did not surface during the interviews with young people, it is nevertheless important to attend to the issue of race and how this intersects with power in the mentorship. As noted in Section 4.2.4, studies have shown that ethnic minority mentees prefer mentors from the same ethnic background (Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2011) and that mixed race mentoring dyads were less effective in terms of overall satisfaction (Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, 2005). Importantly, most studies looking at race and ethnicity in mentorship tend to be based in the US and tend to focus on mentoring in an educational setting (see DuBois *et al.*, 2002; Rhodes *et al.*, 2002). Raposa *et al.* (2017) highlight the fact that most traditional mentoring programmes involve white mentors, in contrast to the number of mentees from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. This, they suggest, has the potential to perpetuate racial biases. Fewer studies have looked at the role of race and its impact on the mentor. A study by Simpson *et al.* (2023) found that white mentors developed critical consciousness over the course of the mentorship, developing a greater understanding of the discrimination faced by mentees of colour. This highlights the potentially transformative nature of mentoring in helping to tackle existing inequalities.

This section has also highlighted the gendered nature of mentoring. While the majority of mentees were males, the majority of mentors were females. Gendered assumptions that female mentors provide more psycho-social support and that male mentors provide more instrumental support may perpetuate gender stereotypes associated with providing care (O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002). Importantly, gender plays out in how male and female mentees receive different types of support (O'Brien *et al.*, 2010). Again these narratives can perpetuate gendered stereotypes and widen existing structural inequalities between men and women. This criticality and attentiveness to how gender and race intersect with mentoring processes is an aspect of mentoring and should be factored into future mentoring provision. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

Language around mentoring and befriending

One of the biggest challenges that practitioners alluded to was explaining the concepts of mentoring and befriending to young people, as they did not automatically translate across cultures:

I think it is important, actually to spend a bit of time in understanding that those concepts are not necessarily universal, and they need to be they need to be teased out and explained to young people. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

Indeed, the concept of a ‘volunteer’ was often a ‘*new term*’ (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency) for young people and practitioners alluded to the need to explain mentoring in a simplified manner:

[I tell them] would you like to meet someone, would you like to spend time with someone you can go out with, and you can do fun things with. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

Here's a young person who's achieved this and he's coming back to talk to you about their success. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

However, this could be particularly difficult if explaining through an interpreter. Added to this complexity was the culturally different definition of the word, which could lead to misunderstandings:

Because sometimes the idea of a mentor is somebody who has made it and they are so far away from where you want to be. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

Like mentoring, the concept of befriending could be conceptually tricky to explain to young people:

I find it difficult to explain befriending to a young person. I'm like, there's this adult that's a volunteer to do like fun things with, like once a month or every three weeks for like six months. Would you like to do that? (Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

Explaining befriending could also be a challenge if people were referred through an external organisation who may not have fully explained the concept to young people:

I have the problem where people will be referred to me, but the referrer, I don't even think has always gained their consent for the referral, I don't think that they've explained it, I think that they've just said, I want to put it on my case notes that I've referred them to this thing. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

The term 'befriending' was a confusing concept as it contained the word 'friend', which could lead to young people having unrealistic expectations of the relationship as noted here:

What does a friend do and not do. If you were living in another country and you had a friend from that country, you would probably ask them to help you out with certain things, so it one of the hardest things [to explain]. (Stakeholder 6, Third Sector)

Several practitioners alluded to the difficulty in explaining the relationship boundaries to young people:

During the nine months, that person is a representative of [organisation] and after nine months, that person is just a member of the public who you may or may not want to engage with as a friend. That is not easy to get across to people. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

A further complication came with the stigma associated with needing social support and in particular needing 'a friend':

It might be a bit sensitive or a bit uncomfortable to say I need a friend. But if you're saying I need an English class, then that's kind of a bit easier. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

Several practitioners noted that they had started to veer away from the language of a befriender as they had received feedback from young people that it could be misleading, particularly when having to work through interpreters. Importantly, there were discrepancies between institutional definitions of mentoring and befriending and how young people

understood the concept. Consistent with traditional definitions of mentoring, many young people spoke about having a mentor who was ‘*older and experienced in life*’ (Ayman, 18, M, North Africa) or who provided guidance ‘*help you how to get most things out of life*’ (Omar, 21, M, West Africa). There was a general feeling that with age came wisdom and knowledge: ‘*The person has to be older than me. Because I feel there is more knowledge*’ (Sara, 20, F, Central America). A mentor was seen as playing a distinct role than a friend: ‘*It’s not your friend*’ (Reza, 24, M, Middle East). Ayman (18, M, North Africa) also recognised that ‘*A friend is just more to hang out with, have fun, go places and stuff, but a mentor is more like a guide, who gives you advice and shows you how to go about things*’. Mentors were seen as being instrumental during a transitional period in the young person’s life, helping young people navigate through challenges. A mentor was also cited as someone who possesses a certain type of knowledge that was desirable for the young person to gain. This is consistent with scholars who conceptualise mentoring as being a ‘learning partnership’ (Allen and Eby, 2007). There was a sense among young people that a mentor was a guide, someone to metaphorically accompany young people on their asylum journey. Some young people understood a mentor as being ‘*someone like a teacher*’ (Ashraf, 16, M, Middle East), while others considered mentors be a ‘*like a psychologist*’ (Reza, 24, M, Middle East). For some young people interviewed, there was a sense of mentors having life changing potential:

I mean that people [mentor] changed my life, and I know the young people can find a mentor and change their life. (Sara, 20, F, Central America).

The way that young people understand the concepts of mentoring and befriending is important, as it informs their expectations from the relationship. If young people understand a mentor to be a ‘teacher’ or ‘psychologist’ as outlined above, they may have unrealistic expectations of the purpose of the relationship. These concepts and associated roles and boundaries need to be carefully unpacked and explained to young people and terminology around mentoring and befriending may need to be adapted to account for cultural differences.

When mentoring and befriending are not appropriate for all UASYP

Analysis of interviews found that mentoring and befriending were not an appropriate intervention for all young people, particularly those with complex mental health needs. For some young people who had suffered trauma because of their asylum journey, mentoring and befriending were not always deemed appropriate:

Sometimes people are referred to me who are not in a fit state to be getting out and about, sometimes people are in such a deep depression that they actually, there's no way that they can just now get out and go on a bus, that feels like the most difficult thing in the world. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Complex mental health needs of young people could take an emotional toll on volunteers:

I think that the client group of the programme can often have poor mental health and struggle, so I think that for the mentor there is that element of having an emotional effect on the mentor, there has to be, I suppose. (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency)

Mentoring and befriending were also not always culturally appropriate for young people. Sayid (18, Middle East) did not like the idea of having a mentor as he justified it: ‘*Because I want to learn different things from different people and have different experiences*’. Ayman (18, Middle East) did not want a stranger giving him advice. Omar (21, West Africa) was offered a one-to-one befriender, but he declined the offer because he was already involved in a group programme which gave him substantial support. Several young people noted that they did not have a mentor, though they caveated this by saying that their social worker was always there if they needed support:

I don't have. But [name of social worker] is always there when I need, but I don't have like a special Murshed [Arabic word for guide]. (Samir, 21, M, Middle East)

Some young people struggled with the boundaries of the relationship, as it meant that they were unable to engage in ‘normal’ friendship-like activities, such as visiting each other’s houses and meeting each other’s family members:

But sometimes it's kind of like, well I've got social workers and what I want is a friend. And they can then become quite frustrated by the limits of the relationship because we are quite clear with the volunteers about the boundaries. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

Indeed, some young people rejected the boundaries of relationships entirely, preferring to opt for a natural friendship instead, as one of the practitioners interviewed explained:

One of my pairs, he [mentee] was completely fed up with all the rules. He didn't like it, and she [mentor] was, although she was very aware of boundaries, she was like, we get on really well, we'll be keeping in touch after because we just really hit it off. So, he was like, I don't want the befriending match anymore, because I want her to be my friend. And that's what we've done, but I think it's incumbent on us to say well, look, if you're going to be friends, this is what you have to be prepared for and we explain it to both parties that you are not covered now by any of our supports. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

Unlike natural friendships, befriending is not private, it is not mutual, and it is not a relationship of equal power (Colley, 2003b), which could cause frustrations for young people. Similar feelings arose from some of the volunteers who could be frustrated by the limits of the relationship:

Old Scots, usually white, usually middle class, they sometimes find it frustrating and they're like, well, why can't I visit my befriender at home, why can't I buy them this, why can't I take them on a trip with my family on holiday. And I have to kind of explain to people about how to avoid that white saviour kind of trap, which is easy to fall into and like they honestly only have the best intentions. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

This comment about mentors possessing a white saviour mentality relates to wider discussions about mentoring as perpetuating coloniality advanced by Goertz *et al.* (2024) and also discussed by Hill (2024). Some scholars suggest that for young people who come from more collectivist cultures, which value family and community over individual goals, mentoring may not be an appropriate intervention because of the emphasis on just one individual mentor (Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Geber & Nyanjom, 2009). As noted above, and as will be addressed in Chapter 8, some young people opted for group models rather than dyadic relationships. This section has shown that there are multiple challenges involved in delivering mentoring and befriending provision for UASYP. Factors like culturally different ideas around mentoring in the macrosystem, impacted on the ability of young people to engage with mentoring and befriending in the mesosystem. Provision was not universal across Scotland, so for young people accommodated outside of the major cities, it could be problematic to source volunteers. Equally, there could be a clash between the expectations of

young people in terms of their volunteer preferences in the microsystem and the ability for organisations to deliver this in the mesosystem. Mentors tended to be older, white, mainly women and there was often a need for younger, male volunteers with lived experience of the asylum process.

Language around mentoring and befriending was problematic, as the terms were not universally applicable across different cultural contexts. There was sometimes a disconnect between institutional definitions of mentoring and how young people understood it. Some suggest that young people do not pay attention to scholarly definitions of mentoring in the first place (Fletcher and Mullen, 2012). Mullen and Klimaitis (2021) recognise that studies rarely account for how participants define mentoring themselves, and this section highlighted how young people understood the term ‘mentor’ in different ways, depending on their cultural backgrounds and experiences before and after migration. Young people defined a mentor as someone who possessed a certain type of knowledge that was desirable for the young person to gain. This is consistent with scholars who conceptualise mentoring as being a ‘learning partnership’ (Allen and Eby, 2007). However, some young people felt that a mentor was like a teacher or a psychologist, so this disconnect may have implications for setting up future programmes. Importantly however, mentoring and befriending was not always the most appropriate intervention for young people, echoing the findings of Colley (2003b). A dyadic relationship was not always what young people preferred, reflecting differences in cultural values around collectivity. Equally, mentoring and befriending were not an appropriate intervention for young people with complex trauma. As others have noted, young people who have experiences of trauma or discrimination, may be more reticent to engage with a mentor because of issues of trust (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018).

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter has situated mentoring/befriending with UASYP in the context of a wider socio-political context. It started by making sense of the heterogeneity of programmes for UASYP, concluding that there was a blurring of the boundaries between mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP. Interviewees shared that programmes with UASYP were more relationship focussed, need-led and less target driven than traditional mentoring. Indeed, programmes provided a lighter-touch support, which was able to make up for the social care deficit. This chapter also showed that, while mentoring and befriending were intended to support the ‘integration’ of young people into Scottish communities, they were also the

response to an over-stretched, under resourced social care system. It concluded by highlighting some of the structural and cultural barriers around mentoring and befriending provision. Having looked at the wider structural issues around mentoring and befriending in the macrosystem, the following chapter looks at the role of mentoring and befriending at a relational level in the mesosystem, considering how formal and informal mentoring and befriending relationships support the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland.

Chapter 8: The role of relational mentoring in supporting the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland

Overview

While Chapter 6 tackled the need for mentoring in the microsystem and Chapter 7 outlined how mentoring and befriending fitted into existing care provision in the macrosystem, this chapter is concerned with the relational aspects of mentoring and befriending provision in the mesosystem. The chapter addresses Research Question 3, which sought to understand how relational mentoring supported the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland, if in any way. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the way that young people utilise different types of mentors and befrienders, as well as different models of mentoring and befriending, depending on their needs, interests and place on the asylum journey. The second part looks at the role played by informal mentors, outlining three types of informal mentors: professionals who tip into informal mentors, family or ‘family-like’ informal mentors and peer mentors. Using a theoretical lens of ‘anchoring’ (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016), this section also looks at how young people created temporary ‘communities of belonging’ (Verdasco, 2018), which they anchored to and away from, depending on their circumstances. The final part of the chapter looks at the functions of formal one-to-one and group mentoring, identifying three core functions: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, which lead to two overall ‘soft’ developmental outcomes: increased confidence and an increased sense of safety and security, needed for resettlement. The chapter concludes by proposing a new typology of mentoring/befriending for UASYP.

8.1 Formal mentoring and befriending: anchoring to different mentors and befrienders

Analysis of interviews with young people and stakeholders found that young people utilised different types of mentors for different purposes:

I do think young people are kind of mentored by different people in different ways, like maybe not just through befriending. (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency)

There was a consensus that mentors were used for different aspects of life, depending on what young people needed:

It depends about study, about life, about you know. Yeh, I have mentor for study, for life no [I don't have a mentor]. (Ashraf, 16, M, Middle East)

So I have different mentors, maybe let's say about [name of town] and the things around me, [name of support worker], maybe about education, football or something, the guardian, someone called [name of support worker], and also yeah if I need any help about associations, research of universities, information about research about asylum seekers systems, a woman called [name], she is with [name of organisation] as well, I have many people, [name of worker] brought them to me. (Saleh, 18, M, Middle East)

Some young people preferred to have peer mentors with lived experience of the asylum process, while others preferred to have Scottish mentors, so they could develop language skills and cultural knowledge. When it came to formal mentoring, Omar (21, M, West Africa) preferred to be matched with someone who had cultural knowledge of Scotland:

Someone who has been here for quite a long time because that person knows the country more than you.

Others like Saleh (18, M, Middle East) wanted to be matched with an Arabic-speaking mentor. Some young people preferred an older mother figure, '*someone that they feel safer around*' (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency), while others wanted to be matched with young people their own age to socialise with. Within formal mentoring and befriending provision, the level of support provided by volunteers varied:

We've had people who have taken asylum seekers and coached them directly in English, we've had people who just walked with them intensively through all kinds of difficulties, Home Office difficulties, lawyer difficulties, health difficulties, family difficulties, you name it. (Stakeholder 13, Church Organisation)

Similarly, the level of engagement of young people with their mentor/befriender varied and was dictated by individual characteristics:

That varies with the individuals' own experiences and their own personality. Some people are very reticent and wary because they have had bad experiences, other people are a bit more open or willing to take a chance, you know, let's see how this goes, this feels all right, maybe I'll tell them. (Stakeholder 13, Church Organisation)

Analysis found that there was 'no one size fits all' (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority) model of mentoring/befriending for UASYP, rather dyadic, group and peer mentoring models were appropriate for different types of young people, depending on their personality, preferences, needs and place on their asylum journey. One practitioner noted that '*there's space for lots of different types*' (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Mentoring and befriending relationships were time-bound and needed to happen at the right time for young people. What led to breakdown in most cases was '*people just saying I don't need it now*' (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority), if young people were feeling overwhelmed or had '*too much on*' (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). Omar (21, M, West Africa) was offered a one-to-one befriender, but he turned it down, as he was already involved in group activities, noting:

Nah, I'm ok, because we formed a group called [name of group], so we met with a lot of organisations and we are talking about the difficulties of asylum seekers, like not being able to study what they want to study.

This sentiment was echoed by a stakeholder who alluded to the importance of timing:

They might find themselves in a space where they can't engage. Or they might find themselves quite quickly in a space where they are like, all the other stuff I'm doing now is kind of more interesting than this, you know. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

Dyadic programmes were particularly useful for young people who were geographically or socially isolated:

I tend to get the most isolated people who live in more far out parts of the city and it's usually single men who don't speak English, who perhaps speak Sorani or Farsi as a first language. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Likewise, a one-to-one model was more appropriate for newly arrived young people, again highlighting the time-sensitive nature of the intervention:

I think it's probably more helpful for someone who's a bit newer to Scotland, and I think they're more likely to engage with it. I think maybe when they've made their own networks and community they might be like, I don't need that, or I've got friends.

(Stakeholder 14, Third Sector)

However, seven out of the ten young people interviewed spoke about their preference for group programmes, particularly groups that brought together young people with lived experienced of the asylum process:

I prefer a group, it's much better because there are more people to hear from and listen to and get more advice on things. (Ayman, 18, M, Middle East)

Group models tended to attract younger people and those with better English language skills. However, groups were also appropriate for young people who had lower levels of English, where they could feel the comfort of being around co-ethnic ties:

I definitely think there is a thing of people maybe seeking out the comfort and support of their culture and their language. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency)

Similarly, group sessions were seen as a stepping stone, which allowed young people the confidence to then go on and have a one-to-one befriender:

If they're not feeling comfortable or confident to access it independently and also people on our waiting list or people who've asked for befrienders, we say, why don't you come to the group first, because we might not be able to give you a befriender for now and then usually we try and we figure out if they're really not able to come to the groups for whatever reason, then, then they might be better off with a one-to-one befriender. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

Participation groups allowed young people to have fun, engage in enjoyable activities and make friends with young people from different nationalities. They could also replace the need for a one-to-one befriending relationship, as young people were more able to form relationships themselves:

In the way that you feel, okay well, you don't actually require a befriender yourself at the moment. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Indeed, group mentoring could offset the ‘loss’ of a dyadic mentoring relationship also, when befriending partnerships formally ended:

We had a young boy, when he started with us, he was going to football sessions and our participation group and various things and now he's got loads of pals, he doesn't care that his befriending is ending. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

Group mentoring allowed greater flexibility and young people could dip in and out of sessions as they wanted or needed:

They get kind of bogged down with their asylum claim, or the things, and they kind of can't participate for a wee while, and then maybe they'll come back when things are a little bit more settled. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

Group mentoring provided support in a safer way, without the need for the stringent safeguarding policies and procedures that are needed in a dyadic model. Similarly, programmes were a useful alternative in the absence of enough befrienders to meet demand:

I guess it was probably a big reason for not going forward in terms of one-to-one [mentoring model] because we didn't have the infrastructure to support that necessarily. Whereas the group is a safer space. (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority)

Different models of mentoring allowed young people to anchor to different ‘communities of belonging’ (Verdasco, 2018). This section has shown how young people ‘anchored’ to different mentors and befrienders depending on their personal preferences, needs, and place on the asylum journey. Young people who were geographically isolated or newly arrived anchored to one-to-one mentors as a way to ‘restore their socio-psychological stability’ (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016: 1131). However, some preferred to anchor to group mentoring programmes, which provided comfort and safety as young people were able to engage with co-ethnic ties and other UASYP. In line with the ecological model of mentoring for UASYP, outlined in Chapter 4, young peoples’ personal preferences for individual or group

programmes in the microsystem impacted on engagement with mentors and befrienders in the mesosystem. Young people anchored to different mentors for different purposes, such as seeking education pathways, leisure opportunities or emotional support. Anchoring to multiple mentors gave young people access to different types of cultural, material and informational resources. However young people's level of attachment was dependent on their ability to trust others, as well as how open mentors were to supporting young people through different challenges. These different degrees of attachment and depth of trust, as Ryan (2018) notes, ignores static ideas about belonging and integration.

Timing was a salient theme across interviews and mentoring and befriending needed to take place at the right time for young people, echoing the findings of others (Colley, 2003b). Young people anchored to mentors and befrienders when they were needed but pulled away if there were other more interesting activities to engage with. Again, we see the intersection of the chronosystem with the microsystem and mesosystem. Within the structural bounds of the immigration system, or the macrosystem, young people were able to exercise agency in deciding when to drop and when to lift these anchors. Hynes (2011) posits that in a system where young asylum seekers cannot work or access benefits, engagement with social networks become a 'coping strategy'. This study has highlighted the way that young people exercised agency in the mesosystem through the social relations available to them or created via mentoring opportunities.

8.2 Resettlement functions of informal mentoring with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

As well as looking at formal mentoring support for UASYP, central to this study was considering the informal mentors that young people availed of. Studies looking at informal mentoring are 'somewhat elusive' (Weiston-Serdan & Sánchez, 2017) as informal mentoring takes place outside of formal mentoring structures. This section answers Research Question 3, which sought to understand how relational mentoring supported the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. When young people were asked about who they considered to be their mentor, analysis found that informal mentors fell into one of three categories: professionals with a vested interest in the personal development of young people, family or 'family-like' relationships and peers who were particularly supportive of young people.

8.2.1 Professionals tipping into becoming a mentor

Professionals with a vested interest in the personal development of young people, like guardians or support workers, were identified as mentors by young people, as they offered guidance, support and someone to look up to. For Ola (18, West Africa), his support worker was a mentor, and for Omar (21, West Africa), his accommodation officer was his mentor: *‘So if I need any advice, that’s the one I go, she’s the one who guides me’*. Despite their formal roles through service structures, these individuals were perceived by young people as their informal mentors, helping young people with practical tasks like *‘apply[ing] for courses’* (Ola, 18, West Africa) or *‘apply to university’* (Saleh, 18, Middle East), navigating the city or help buying shopping (Yusef, 16, East Africa). Educational professionals, who went over and above their job role by providing informal support, were also cited as mentors by young people:

Yeh even my teacher from migrant class, he took time out or he was assigned to me during lunchtimes, to catch up with me, talk with me about how I am, and that was really an impact on me. (Khadija, 21, F, East Africa)

Practitioners with either lived experience of the asylum process, or who were familiar with young people’s cultural traditions were cited as mentors because of having a shared language and understandings of cultural values, expectations, customs and using this to provide support:

And he [mentor] knows our traditional weddings or traditional Eid. He is Muslim, it’s not because oh, he is Muslim and I like him, no but because I, like him, he came from the same background, when we laugh about like very stupid tradition, we make in Middle East, he laughs with us. (Amira, 22, F, Middle East)

My English teacher who is Palestinian here in my school [is my mentor]. He made a big change in my life, because I was so stressed out that period of my life, and he is Palestinian, he knows refugees, he teaches refugees, he knows the struggle of learning English. (Heba, 22, F, Middle East)

Allen and Eby (2007) posit that professionals may be perceived to be a mentor without even realising it. As others have noted, for care-experienced young people, professional relationships can develop into informal mentoring relationships (Zinn, 2017). Informal mentors like social workers or teachers had a functional role (Allen and Eby, 2007), helping young people with language development or applying for courses. However, they also provided, what Armitage *et al.* (2020) summarised as ‘support, advice, encouragement, and skills development’ (p.5), in line with traditional theorising of mentoring. Central to informal mentoring was their regular engagement with professionals and the continuity of informal support. Young people spoke about practitioners ‘going the extra mile’ (Dolan, 2012), which was seen as a symbol of a person stepping out of the formal into the informal relationship sphere. It is important, however, to recognise the role of space and how it intersects with wider social relations. Scholars like Manongsong and Collins (2022) recognise that access to mentoring support is not equal across different populations in terms of the availability and quality of mentors. As was noted in Chapter 6, the ability to engage with social networks is dictated by large structural constraints: where young people are accommodated, where they go to school and their wider support network. Indeed, the lack of consistency across local authorities in Scotland in their response to UASYP, highlighted in Chapter 7, has implications for the ability of young people to engage in informal mentoring.

8.2.2 Family members or family-like mentors

For most young people interviewed, their mentors were direct family members or family-like members, perhaps indicating the differences in cultural values around family:

Maybe my mum, only my mum. (Omar, 21, M, West Africa)

My father is my mentor. My father supports me financially, emotionally, morally, gives me advice, tells me how to go about things. (Ayman, 18, M, North Africa)

My brother. When I talk to him, he advises me, and he tells me his experience because he got through almost same journey. (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa)

My uncle. I mean whatever I do, or I’m about to do, or I have been doing, or I’ve done today or anything I tell him. And I feel like he always gives me reflection of what

exactly I have done and what consequences or anything. I think he gives me information that I'm not thinking of in the moment when I am doing something. (Reza, 24, M, Middle East)

Peer mentor Hassan (25, M, Middle East) noted how young people he worked with referred to him as 'amu' or 'jalo', which means Uncle in Arabic, as a way to show respect. For others like Huma (21, F, Middle East), whose family were the reason she left her country of origin, her Scottish mentor was like a parental figure, who offered love as well as practical support:

So she treats me like a baby, like her own, to be honest, she really loves me and I can see it, because sometimes we both say we love you.....so she shows her love and she cooks food for me, she bought stuff for me, you know, so like she shows her love.

Interestingly, love is missing from traditional theorising of mentoring, however it surfaced across a number of interviews with young people and practitioners: '*We do provide care and overtime we do provide love*' (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority). For Amira (22, F, Middle East), whose mentor was an older Scottish woman, she spoke about the safety that the relationship gave her: '*you feel safe with her because she's Scottish, she knows the rules here*' (Amira, 22, F, Middle East). A third of young people interviewed likened the professionals in their lives as being 'family-like'. Saleh (18, M, Middle East) noted that his support worker was like a sister. Similarly, Khadija (21, F, East Africa) spoke about her teacher as representing an '*older brother or cousin*'. This practitioner spoke about the 'family-like' professional relations that the young people he supports have developed:

The workers become their mums, the dads, the brothers and sisters, they become their everything. (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority)

Professionals who tipped into family or family like relations offered love in addition to other kinds of support like practical, emotional and financial support. This echoes the work of Kauhanen *et al.* (2022) who found UASYP created 'pockets of love' (p.5) with different staff members and that these supported the resettlement of young people. Professionals like social workers and other support workers became 'family-like' for UASYP referred to in the study, echoing the findings of others (Tiilikainen *et al.*, 2023). While traditional definitions of mentoring assume a caring relationship between a young person and an older non-parental

figure (DuBois and Karcher 2014), thematic analysis revealed the importance of family members or ‘like-family’ figures as being mentors for young people. This emphasis on the relational aspects of mentoring and preference for family-like relationships reflects the findings of others (Raithelhuber, 2018; Alarcón *et al.*, 2021). Sanchez and Colon (2008) also recognise that ethnic minority young people are more likely to have an extended family member as a mentor because of cultural values of collectivism. These ‘family-like’ mentors offered young people emotional support and love, in addition to practical support. Some scholars suggest that as the relationship becomes more of a naturally occurring relationship, the nature of the support changes and mentors move to offer more advice or emotional support (Brady *et al.*, 2017).

This section has highlighted the importance of ‘family like’ mentors in Scotland, as well as the role of transnational family ties in providing emotional support for UASYP. Chase and Allsopp (2020) also highlight the role of transnational ties in supporting the wellbeing of young people seeking asylum. However, this study points to the role transnational family ties in providing mentoring at a distance for UASYP: parents providing moral guidance for their children, siblings who have sought asylum elsewhere acting as role models etc. This ‘virtual co-presence’ (Alarcón & Prieto-Flores, 2021) is an important aspect of mentoring that is often neglected in traditional mentoring theory. Chase and Allsopp (2020) posit that UASYP engage in four different types of transnational relations: transnational family ties, transnational friendships, virtual connections and transnational futures and aspirations. This study has shown that UASYP also engage in transnational mentoring. These transnational relations are an important aspect of mentoring that need to be considered in future programme development, as will be discussed later in the chapter. As noted in section 2.2.3, the salience of transnational ties has been recognised in the latest iteration of the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2024), which reconceptualises integration as being ‘multidirectional, multilingual, an intercultural process, restorative and inclusive’. This new reconceptualization of integration offers a more nuanced way of understanding how new Scots negotiate resettlement processes, in contrast to previous versions of the strategy, which assumed a two-way process between new and old Scots. The findings of this study complement the newest version of the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2024) in highlighting the complexity of these transnational social relations, which impact on resettlement processes.

This section has also highlighted some important gendered aspects of mentoring and befriending with UASYP. As was noted in Chapter 6, female mentors were seen as providing much needed nurture for young people. However, some have suggested that mentoring has the potential to perpetuate gendered stereotypes associated with providing care (O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002). Gendered assumptions that female mentors provide more psycho-social support and that male mentors provide more practical support are potentially harmful and can perpetuate existing gendered inequalities (O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002). The way that power intersects with gender is an important aspect of mentoring which needs to be considered in future programming.

8.2.3 Peer mentors

A third category of informal mentors identified across the data were peers, who acted as mentors to other young people. There was a consensus that young people of a similar age could be a mentor if they had '*more experience*' (Moussa, 17, M, East Africa). A recurring theme across interviews was the tendency for UASYP with lived experience of the asylum process to support newly arrived young people to navigate life in Scotland. As noted in the previous chapter, this happened regularly in ESOL classes:

The more able students sometimes helping the weaker ones, that kind of mentoring. Or the young people have been here a bit longer, so you know, [saying] don't worry I've got my [immigration] status, it's going to be okay. We had lot of conversations about how we support each other, how do we build a team in this classroom, so that was already happening. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

Intercultural peer mentoring happened where UASYP were accommodated in student accommodation, whereby Scottish young people supported newly arrived young people to help them to understand the systems in Scotland:

My friends here in student accommodation, they are Scottish, they are really kind people, they teach me about Scotland, and everybody have more experience, they are older than me, I ask them a lot [about] the system. (Sayid, 18, M, Middle East)

Young people who were accommodated together with other UASYP engaged in small acts of mutual support like cooking for each other, which was particularly useful in the initial stages of arriving in Scotland. This stakeholder spoke about ‘community’ that the young people he supported have created:

They cook for each other, they help each other with English, they share clothes, they play football together. They've come together to support each other really, really well.
(Stakeholder 12, Local Authority)

Ola (18, M, West Africa) was accommodated along with other UASYP, which helped him connect with peers he ‘resonates’ with. This, he noted, would not be possible if he had been accommodated elsewhere:

We fled from countries like some of war, some not really war, but not [having] their right as humans. And I think because with the home that I was put in, it kind of helped me... Because had I been with older people, or you know, or with people whose ages are vastly away from mine or something in a hotel, which some young people have been put in, I think it would have been a bad experience [otherwise]. I think that one [accommodation] kind of helped me.

Samir (21, M, Middle East) arrived in Scotland at the age of 16 and felt he had received very little support from social work. Since getting his status, he decided to help newly arrived people in his local authority:

Because I needed that help, that's why I'm helping. After that, they help others, they pass this help [on].

Informal peers frequently shared information with each other, passing on useful information about support organisations. Young people were also instrumental in ‘vetting’ professionals and supporting other young people to ascertain which professionals they could trust, as this quote from Omar (21, M, West Africa) illustrated:

The only thing we help each other is like being open and saying that we trust [name of worker] and [name of worker] because they are working at this, so we tell them, look

I have been working with [name of worker] for almost like 7 or 5 months, like they are very helpful. Any problem you have. Just tell them, they will help you. So that's how we help each other. Just being honest and open up.

Reza (24, M, Middle East) recognised that the care he received from peers gave him hope and Sara (20, F, Central America) noted that she could express herself more openly with peers. Similarly, peer mentors/befrienders were able to gain trust more easily: *'They feel more secure, I think, or much safer'* (Hassan, 25, Peer Mentor, M, Middle East). Informal mentors provided more consistent support, while professionals could only do so during the working week, as noted here:

I actually think they are a massive support network for each other and are really good at looking out for each other and they are there like 24/7, you know, like, we only kind of work office hours, and we can't be there all the time at weekends and stuff. So, I think young people are really good at helping each other out. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency)

Immigration policy assumes that young people are the recipients of care and that social care practitioners are those that give it (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). However, this ignores the care provided by young people to other young people as they navigate their asylum journey. This section has shown the importance of informal peer mentors as a form of 'alternative social protection' (Leon and Rosen, 2023), which could offer more consistent support than professionals which were often time-bound. Peer mentors with lived experience of the asylum process supported each other by providing emotional, practical and material support, reflecting the findings of others (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). Engaging in everyday rituals like cooking together, young people allowed kinships to develop (Verdasco, 2019). Scholars suggests that peers from the host country can act as 'gatekeepers' in assisting young people with language acquisition and connecting to a broader network (Eriksson *et al.*, 2019), which was found to be the case for UASYP housed in student accommodation. Scottish young people who were accommodated alongside UASYP helped provide cultural knowledge and support young people to navigate complex systems in Scotland, helping UASYP to generate 'navigational capital' (Yosso, 2005).

It is important to note that the care young people received from peers changed over time and space and young anchored to these networks when they were needed and pulled away when they were not helpful. Reza (24, M, Middle East) spoke about trying to ‘reinvent’ himself on arriving in Scotland and how being around co-ethnic ties pushed him back:

I came from a very different country into a very different country, I really wanted to try to reset myself to just be a new person and sometimes, this is personal, but sometimes when I see many people from my country it pushes me back, it gets my mind busy, I don't want that. (Reza, 24, M, Middle East)

Interestingly, in the same interview, Reza spoke about the usefulness of these co-ethnic connections, who provided emotional, financial and informational support in the initial stages of arriving in Scotland. Reza’s contradictory comments highlight the conflicting feelings about staying within co-ethnic community groups and the way that Reza dropped anchors and pulled away from his community as and when he needed. Similarly, Samir (21, M, Middle East) did not have any connections when he first arrived in his small village, and he felt very isolated. However, after four years of living there, he is now very established and anchors to different communities depending on what he need:

I know everything in [name of area] now, I know the streets, I know the old, eh, everyone, when I walk, all the people bump their car you know beep beep [Samir], so I don't want to go and start a new life again. I am already here settled. I know everything, when I need help you know financial help, I have friends who own takeaways, they can lend some money and everything almost.

Young people engaged in ‘differentiated embedding’ (Ryan, 2018) with their informal mentors and these networks ebbed and flowed over time and space. While some saw social workers and guardians as ‘family-like,’ other young people dis-embedded from these support networks if they were deemed helpful, as noted in Chapter 6. Similarly, while some UASYP interviewed embedded at a local level with peers, and at a national and transnational level with family and friends in their country of origin (Ryan, 2018), others dis-embedded with ties that were unhelpful, and which did not serve them.

To resist liminalities, young people created ‘temporary communities of belonging’ (Verdasco, 2018), dropping and pulling up anchors in different communities as when they were needed, as was the case for Reza and Samir. The belonging that young people established with peers was uneven and their anchoring points shifted as they moved through the asylum system. Embedding is a dynamic process where people ‘develop, maintain or withdraw relations and attachments both in and across time and space’ (Mulholland & Ryan, 2023:605). Differentiated embedding (Ryan, 2018) ignores an ‘all or nothing’ view of integration and recognises that people have different degrees of attachment and depth of trust and reciprocity. Integration discourses tend to focus on the need for migrants to build bonding and bridging capital, however some recognise the ‘thorny association’ (p.154) between networks and social capital (Ryan, 2023). Ryan (2023) is critical of the ‘static and simplistic binaries of bonding and bridging capital’ (p.154). She argues the need to look at what may be a barrier to creating these and the way in which migrants negotiate these barriers. While informal mentors supported UASYP in several ways, this support was not always a given and young people exercised agency in when to drop anchors to accept it and when to reject it.

Having considered the resettlement functions of informal mentoring and befriending, the following section looks at resettlement functions of formal mentoring and befriending for UASYP. Rather than looking at the outcomes of programmes, this study considers the underlying mechanisms of mentoring and identifies three functions of programmes: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, which as will be argued, provide a stepping stone to the social integration of young people into Scottish communities.

8.3 Resettlement functions of formal mentoring and befriending with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

As noted in Chapter 6, mentoring and befriending programmes included in the study were needs-led, making it difficult to generalise about programme outcomes. Success could be something seemingly small, yet significant *‘like being able to use the bus on their own’* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). Rather than focussing on the outcomes of mentoring and befriending, which may be different for every young people, the following sections look at the common functions of formal dyadic and group mentoring and befriending programmes identified in the data. This section answers Research Question 3, which sought to understand how relational mentoring supported the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. Most theories of

mentoring start with the assumption that mentoring has a developmental function, with relational and instrumental outcomes (Dominguez and Kochan, 2020). However, analysis of interviews found that mentoring and befriending with UASYP had three overall functions: developmental, acculturative and social-emotional.

8.3.1. Developmental function

Against the backdrop of a harsh immigration system and the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholders reported that UASYP did not experience much warmth and connection in their human interactions, which created a desire for genuine connection among young people:

There aren't many opportunities for people to just spend time with another person and really get to know them and feel that kind of human connection. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

Mentoring and befriending relationships allowed young people to have a '*positive relationship with a volunteer*' (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency), to connect with others and feel valued:

I think it's that just intangible feeling of like somebody is interested in you, having this friendship having this connection was just so invaluable for people. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

Young people reported that mentors helped them '*to grow up*' (Sara, 20, Central America) and to navigate through life: '*I was just happy to know that there was a grown up there who could help me navigate me*' (Khadija, 21, West Africa). Sara, (20, Central America) noted how her mentor saw her as a person, rather than an asylum seeker and Huma (21, Middle East) noted that her mentor helped her develop a sense of self:

He is the person who made a mark in my life because, he was like, you are [Sara], your situation doesn't change you are [Sara].'

She helps me a lot from like everything, so I guess I am really confident, and I am not afraid of everybody because of her.

One of purposes of mentoring and befriending identified across interviews was allowing time and space for young people to explore their hobbies and interests: *'to be like what am I interested in, like what are my interests'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). Indeed, one of the goals of befriending was for the volunteer and young person to *'kind of discover together what things they might enjoy doing'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). If volunteers and young people had similar interests that they could explore together, as one coordinator noted, *'that's the dream'* (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). One mentoring dyad, for example, had been exploring art together, visiting the free art galleries around the city. This practitioner noted that mentoring was about trying new and fun things

Having someone that you can just go to the cinema with, try new things, find out where there's a football club, going for coffee and just being able to sort of say, people keep saying this, why is that or what does it this word means, I keep hearing it, this kind of thing. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

The kind of people who were seen as good mentors by stakeholders were *'retired teachers'* and people who could *'take charge and get things off the ground'* (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). This was particularly useful in the initial stages of the mentoring relationship, as young people were reticent to articulate what they wanted from the relationship:

They wouldn't necessarily say I want to do this, I want to meet at that time, they'll sort of let the other person take the lead. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

Mentors helped young people in the initial stages of arriving in Scotland, which allowed them to make their own decisions further down the line, as this peer mentor noted:

I went to my mentor, and I asked him how I can solve that problem, second time I will not go to him again, because I know how I solve my problem like study or anything. I will learn how to study so I will not go to him again to ask. (Hassan, 25, M, Peer Mentor, Middle East)

All dyadic mentoring programmes referred to were young person-led and focussed on developing the agency of young people: *'We want it to be the young person's choice, where to go, what to do'* (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). Stakeholders noted how group

programmes helped young people to not only develop a sense of self, but also a sense of collective identity, by being part of a group. Groups allowed young people to support each other through difficult times and allowed for collective problem solving ‘*not necessarily with an answer but to help find a way to get the answer.*’ (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Ayman (18, M, North Africa) attended a weekly mental health group with other young asylum seekers, which helped him not only to socialise, but to talk through problems ‘*some people may suggest some solutions or recommendations and how to go about these*’. Abdullah, (25, M, Middle East) was a peer befriender who organised walks for groups of asylum seekers, and he spoke about how the group supported each other with big and small issues. The supportive nature of group sessions meant that young people often advocated for each other as noted here:

I’ve had young people phoning me and saying my friend, he doesn’t speak a lot of English, but he’s been trying to get hold of his social worker, and he’s not responding, or he’s having an issue with his guardian. He was wondering if it’s possible to change like, is there someone he could speak to, I get things like that, and I can feel there’s a sense of young people will look out for each other and try to kind of support each other. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

When I go to the group and I say like ok I haven’t heard from my social worker for almost two months or three months, then I have someone complaining and saying the same thing, so I say like ok then this is not only me facing this problem, it’s like most of us are facing this problem. (Omar, 21, M, West Africa)

As noted in Chapter 6, young people in this study occupied a developmental liminality and needed support to navigate this in-betweenness. Having a positive relationship with a caring adult helped young people develop positive well-being and in their transition to adulthood (see also Rhodes, 2002; Meloni *et al.*, 2017). This ‘relational perspective’ (Allen and Eby, 2007: 35) was young person-centred, rather than focussed on ‘fixing’ the young person. Mentoring and befriending relationships helped young people to develop a positive sense of self, a finding echoed by others (Winkens *et al.*, 2023), but also led to young people developing a sense of collective identity. Group programmes built young people’s confidence in a safe space, before they started to engage with Scottish peers, again providing a stepping stone to resettlement. Mentoring and befriending also helped young people to develop

‘aspirational capital’ (Yosso, 2005), where they were able to maintain hope despite challenging circumstances. Models like group or peer mentoring were found to be more egalitarian than traditional models. Peers supported each other to navigate developmental liminality, challenging traditional hierarchical models (see also Osman *et al.*, 2020). As well as a developmental function, mentoring and befriending with UASYP had an acculturative function, helping young people to navigate acculturative liminality, which the following section addresses.

8.3.2 Acculturative function

The need for social connection, as well as the difficulty of this, because of the language barrier, were two of the biggest challenges faced by young people. As noted in Chapter 6, language was seen by young people as being key to resettlement. One of the main acculturative functions of mentoring and befriending identified in the data was allowing the development of language skills, and all interviewees cited that English language development was one of the ‘*biggest feedback items*’ (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority). Group programmes helped young people to develop language skills as they did not use interpreters, forcing young people to engage in language practice. However, in addition to the language development, the value of groups was in allowing young people to ‘*feel sort of empowered to communicate*’ (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). Mentors would encourage young people to put their skills into practice during encounters, encouraging them to order a coffee or buy their own tickets on transport or at the cinema. Mentoring and befriending allowed young people to practice their language skills in a safe space:

A lot of times we have some people just saying, I'm really nervous, but I just don't feel the need to be shy and nervous with my befriender, or I could just speak to them, I can get things wrong. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

As well as language development, a second acculturative function of mentoring was allowing young people to orient themselves around new areas. Central to this was learning about how transport systems worked, which was cited as one of the biggest challenges for young people when they first arrived. Mentoring relationships supported young people to feel more ‘*comfortable in their city*’ (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). As this practitioner noted:

A lot of our young people have come from incredibly rural communities and are now chucked into Glasgow. I've worked with young people that didn't know how to crossroads or whatever, you know, so it's a very different, quite terrifying environment. (Stakeholder 9, Third Sector)

Central to programmes was getting to know the cultural life of their respective areas, engaging in activities that were free:

Such as a walk, a museum, park, gallery or community meal or some type of different wellbeing activity that is being put on in the city. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Mentoring and befriending helped UASYP develop knowledge about cultural norms or systems in the UK. Through group sessions, young people could share informational capital including *'their knowledge and experience of what worked, what was helpful, what was useful'* (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Programmes that took place in a particular context like at a university or college helped young people to navigate the systems in these environments. Group programmes were particularly useful to help young people to understand the laws in Scotland. Similarly, group sessions allowed people to share cultural knowledge: *'ranging from the things about supporting people to find familiar foods or where might be good places to go shopping, or how the transport works or those types of things'* (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority).

Traditional theories of mentoring assume that both mentor and mentee come from the same cultural context and therefore do not include an acculturative function. As noted in Chapter 6, young people in this study occupied an acculturative liminality, in between the laws, systems and cultures of their country of origin and their new country. As was shown above, mentoring and befriending involved the acquisition of 'informational capital' (Griffiths *et al.*, 2005), as well as 'navigational capital' (Yosso, 2005): getting to know the city, finding where to buy familiar foods, understanding the transport system and supporting young people to understanding cultural norms. As Camps *et al.* (2023) have shown, lack of knowledge about how to access transport was cited as a significant barrier for UASYP in Scotland.

A final acculturative function was reciprocal cultural exchange between mentor and mentee:

It's not just about what the young people get from the befriender, it's what the befriender gets from the young people and that's why folk come back for a second match, third matches. You know it's why [befriending] is such an easy sale.

(Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

I think the biggest thing is that sort of cultural exchange. Because we live in a society that isn't very well integrated and we're all kind of in our bubbles. I think that is the biggest thing and so people mention food language, just like general cultural awareness. (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector)

Most practitioners noted that volunteers choose to mentor or befriend a young refugee specifically, rather than volunteering with a generic mentoring or befriending programme:

[Our volunteers] aren't just looking for befriending, they are specifically looking for an opportunity to support a refugee. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

Most volunteers had a particular interest in issues around immigration and were '*despairing of the situation of immigration in this country*' (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). As one coordinator noted, it is '*a feeling that they are doing something to contribute*' (Stakeholder 9, Third Sector). There was a particular empathy with young peoples' experiences of having to flee their country or origin, and the issue of deservingness arose on several occasions:

I think people view the young [refugees], as it not being their fault, whereas I think people view care experienced children as to blame. (Stakeholder 5, Third Sector)

Many volunteers had lived abroad and understood what it meant to start over in a new country. Mentors benefitted from their volunteering by gaining an understanding of the refugee experience. This practitioner noted that the concept of mentoring challenged the idea that young people needed to simply adapt to their new host country, rather it gave the space to explore cultural differences and opportunities for mutual learning:

I think befriending works really well, it's not about well how do I fit in here, it's having a space where you can actually share culture, share experiences and start to

expand how interesting those things are together, and how they live side by side.
(Stakeholder 9, Third Sector)

Conceptualising mentoring and befriending as a shared cultural experience for both volunteer and young person links with theories of critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan & Sánchez, 2017), which challenges the notion that mentoring is a one-way learning process. Indeed, it challenges static ideas about ‘integration’ as being a one-directional process, and as Askins (2008) posits, has the potential for ‘transformative politics’ (p.473). Allen and Eby (2007) recognise that a motivating factor for volunteers is the ‘intended aims’ of the mentoring programme. Since mentoring with UASYP was focussed on ‘fostering integration’ (Allen and Eby, 2007), this influenced the kinds of volunteers who opted into programmes. Most volunteers had previous experience of living in other countries. Askins (2016) also reported that volunteers who supported asylum seekers had a ‘shared frustration and anger with state and institutional exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers’ (p.523).

8.3.3 Socio-emotional function

The socio-emotional function of mentoring and befriending was salient throughout all interviews. Socio-emotional support can be subdivided into three categories: instrumental, emotional support and companionship (Allen and Eby, 2007: 105). As well as these three socio-emotional functions, mentoring allowed young people to develop social capital and to widen their networks.

Socio emotional function: instrumental/practical

Central to all formal dyadic mentoring was the need for asylum seekers to have a ‘go-to’ person that they could approach with any particular question:

Just one person that they can go to that they don't have to wonder where do I go to find this out or if they have a problem, they've got that one person that will support them. (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency)

This instrumental function of mentoring was echoed by Saleh (18, M, Middle East), who defined a mentor as someone who: ‘*has specific information that I want. Let’s say I’m searching for universities*’. Instrumental support included helping young people to apply for

college, helping them to write a CV, get a gym membership or open a bank account. Interestingly, some young people had clear instrumental goals about what they wanted from the relationship, highlighting the way in which young people utilised different networks for different social functions:

I just want help with my English, and I'd like to get to know Glasgow better. Or I'd like to get to know Edinburgh better or I want someone to go and play football with.
(Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

Socio-emotional function: emotional

As noted in Chapter 6, the need for nurture was a salient theme across all interviews. Mentors could provide the nurture that many young people craved, as noted here:

I had one recently that was like, really wanted a female volunteer, because he's felt very kind of nurtured and supported by the professionals in his network who have all been female. (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority)

Across all interviews with stakeholders, social isolation and loneliness were key challenges that young people faced, and reducing this was central to all programmes:

I would say overwhelmingly [the biggest challenge] is social connection. I think that almost everyone who gets referred to me is dealing with extreme isolation.
(Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

As well as helping to tackle social isolation, mentors and befrienders provided a 'sounding board' (Dolan, 2012) for young people to talk about challenging issues. As Huma (21, F, Middle East) noted:

The asylum seeker life is so stressful, because there are so many challenges right, and at some point, you are just going to fall, you just say, I'm done man, I can't do more. But she [the mentor] was the one who were like keep forcing me, you have to do it, you can do it, so she was the reason that I made decisions you know.

Mentoring pushed young people out of their comfort zone and provided ‘gentle reassurance’, as Amira (22, F, Middle East) noted while talking about her mentor. Dyadic mentoring helped young people who were going through a particularly challenging time, as Ola (18, M, West Africa) highlighted: ‘*I know some people who have befrienders, some asylum-seeking people, but mostly those that are going through hard times need it the most*’. Mentoring was also helpful for young people who had been through particularly tough times to start to assimilate back into normal life, providing a stepping stone to resettlement:

It tends to be people who have recently been through a really tough time mentally and they are just starting to kind of dip their toe in the realm of you know, going out and about. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

Group programmes provided young people with emotional support, both from practitioners and from other peers.

It's very helpful and I feel less worried, and people going through the same thing as I am going through, so it calms me down and I feel much better around them [peers in group]. (Ayman, 18, M, Middle East)

I feel more secure, much better when I am around people my age and going through the same. (Yusef, 16, M, East Africa)

Although young people may have come from very different backgrounds, the act of seeking asylum and having arrived in Scotland alone was a shared experience that could help bond young people:

They know what it feels like to arrive in a country where you don't speak the language you don't know who anyone is. You don't know how the money works, who to trust, what your rights are. (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority)

Group mentoring allowed role modelling for newly arrived young people. This practitioner noted that it was helpful to see others who had gone through the asylum system and come out the other side:

I think that's quite a healthy thing having other young people that young people can see who have been in the same situation, come through it, and are now doing well and are comfortable. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency).

The ability of the group to inspire others and provide encouragement was key in giving young people hope. One practitioner spoke about a young Vietnamese refugee who came to speak to a group of newly arrived young people about his experiences, as an example of how he had dealt with adversity. Peer mentoring allowed for young people to develop a sense of collective identity and allowed for collective problem solving, which is often ignored in integration discourses. Countering ideas about bonding and bridging capital as being static and strong and weak ties, this study found that dyadic and group mentoring and befriending allowed young people to develop different types of capital, including linguistic, familial capital and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). Importantly however, what bonded young people during groups sessions was sharing experiences with others who were also seeking asylum. While traditional integration discourses focus on the role of bonding capital that is generated between 'co-ethnic ties', this section has shown that being of a similar or same ethnicity was less important to young people than the fact of having the shared experience of claiming asylum.

Socio-emotional function: companionship

A third type of social support identified across interviews was companionship. Mentoring and befriending allowed young people to engage in '*doing fun things, being exposed to new opportunities*' (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency). One practitioner noted that befriending allowed companionship without any expectation:

I'm seeing it as get some companionship, a little bit of company that they are not 'behauden to' [obliged], if you know that Scottish word, they are not constrained. (Stakeholder 13, Church Organisation)

This was particularly apt for young people who may have experienced traumatic journeys to reach the UK, or who experienced resettlement trauma during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mentors and befrienders were different than other professionals and their role was also to be a person to have fun activities with:

There is no expectation on you to kind of reveal your journey or anything like that, this is about having fun and it's different to all the other things that you that you do.
(Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

While relationships with professionals like guardians and other professionals could be *'quite intense'* (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency), group mentoring provided a light touch support:

The participation group is ideal for new people because they just come along. There's an activity happening and there's no pressure to take part. It's just fun. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector).

Indeed, group sessions allowed young people to have some respite from the asylum process and appointments with lawyers, allowing young people to be *'like any teenager'* (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency) and *'do like fun things with other young people'* (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency). The act of bringing a young person out of their home to engage in *'mutually enjoyable activities'* (Rhodes *et al.*, 2006), could provide *'respite from difficult life circumstances'* (Allen and Eby, 2007: 106). Having fun is integral to meaningful relationships and Allsopp *et al.* (2015) emphasise the importance of leisure and recreation in supporting UASYP to move forward, helping to bridge ontological liminality.

Socio-emotional function: social networks

Central to all mentoring and befriending programmes was providing friendship for young people:

I mean we get quite a lot of feedback in terms of establishing friendships like how big someone's social network compared to when they started...I feel quite lonely, I don't have friends. And then, six months down the line it's sort of, now I've got lots of friends. (Stakeholder 9, Third Sector)

However, formal programmes had a time span, and many relationships came to a *'natural end'* (Stakeholder 1, Statutory Agency) after the formalised period as articulated here:

I had a good time, it's really useful, I've made a lot of friends, I'm in loads of clubs. So I'm really cool with it ending, do I get to meet them one more time, cool, we'll say

a thank you and goodbye, and the question of keeping in touch never comes up. They're not fussed about it [ending]. (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency)

This was often because young people wanted to ‘*move on to spending more time with friends and peers and groups*’ (Stakeholder 9, Statutory Agency). Similarly, group programmes had a natural life span, and young people tended to stop attending when they had ‘*other things going on*’ (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector). This natural progression happened when young people achieved refugee status and were able to find a job, pursue higher education etc. However, some formal mentoring and befriending relationships merged into ‘*actual friends*’ (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector) after the formal institutionalised relationship had ended:

A couple of mine have kept in touch. (Stakeholder 5, Statutory Agency)

I think some start to view [their befrienders] as friends. You know. They want to share numbers with them, once the match is finished, and you know certainly the young people that I've had have really praised their befriender, you know, they did great things with me, they did fun things with me. (Stakeholder 14, Statutory Agency)

We have had pals, we've had people who have become great buddies and can identify with the other person and then is happy to be there for them as a friend, so yes, we've had that a lot. (Stakeholder 13, Church Organisation)

In addition to the development of friendship, mentoring and befriending helped young people to develop wider social capital. Young people who participated in dyadic and group mentoring were frequently signposted to support organisations:

Connecting with community groups that can be based around the asylum experience, based around a particular hobby or interest, based around education or employment like whatever. (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector)

In the absence of caregivers, groups sessions allowed family-like bonding also: ‘*They do talk about feeling they've created another family for themselves and that the group has been really important to them*’ (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Several programmes brought

together groups of non-asylum-seeking young people with UASYP, helping young people to meet Scottish peers, again providing a stepping to resettlement.

This section has shown how mentoring and befriending allowed young people to develop friendships, a finding echoed by others (Jones *et al.*, 2025). Mentors and befrienders were also an ‘access point to overlapping and wider social networks’ (Dominguez and Kochan, 2020:8) and they helped young people broaden their social networks (Rhodes, 2002; Allen and Eby, 2007) and develop social capital (Keller, 2007). Some of the formal mentoring relationships merged into actual friendships, echoing the findings of others (Askins, 2015; Alarcon *et al.*, 2021b). These relations provided a first step to embedding in relational networks, providing a stepping stone to resettlement in Scotland. The developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional functions of mentoring and befriending led to the development of two soft outcomes, confidence and a sense of stability, which are outlined below.

8.4 Confidence and security/stability: a stepping stone to resettlement

Across all three functions outlined above (developmental, acculturative, socio-emotional), two overall outcomes could be identified across the data: the development of confidence and a feeling of comfort/security. While traditionally mentoring focusses on hard outcomes like educational outcomes or employment, mentoring and befriending with UASYP was in the main social and relational in its nature. It produced two softer outcomes, including confidence and security, which were integral to developing ontological security in young people, providing a stepping stone for young people’s resettlement in Scotland.

8.4.1 Confidence

The importance of confidence was a key feature across all interviews, particularly its role in supporting the resettlement of young people. While confidence was not measured as a formal outcome of programmes, all practitioners spoke about the role that mentoring and befriending played in developing the confidence of young people: ‘*The main thing is just seeing people’s confidence grow and I would say I’ve seen that in everyone so far*’ (Stakeholder 10, Third Sector). One interviewee noted that, she had seen an increase in confidence in every one of her befriendees, while another practitioner said:

One of the biggest things I see, but it isn't necessarily explicitly said by the young people is confidence, and I think it's a complex one, I think a lot of it is just about knowing the place better, that adds confidence, understanding what things mean, that is confidence, having a better grasp of the language kind of adds confidence. Just having built a relationship up with someone new after difficult things have happened can add quite a large part to just feeling like, okay, I can speak to people, I can actually communicate with someone that doesn't speak my language and actually we've built up a real good rapport and it feels quite close. (Stakeholder 9, Third Sector)

This confidence, in turn, allowed young people to go into new environments, take part in new activities and meet new people. Engaging in dyadic or group mentoring allowed young people the opportunity to practice social interactions in a safe space, before they embarked on wider social relations as noted here: '*somebody who then might feel more confident to approach a neighbour*' (Stakeholder 7, Third Sector). Similarly, it helped young people to develop the skills to feel '*more capable and more confident in whatever new environment they face*' (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Developing cultural knowledge about laws and systems gave young people confidence also:

You do hear people say I feel more confident. I know I've learned to speak up for my rights. (Stakeholder 16, Third Sector)

This was echoed by another practitioner who recognised the role of confidence in allowing young people to navigate new environments:

I think what is also enabled young people to do is kind of feel as if they have had the ability to step into new situations with new people, new environments and have a degree of confidence that they have the ability to not just navigate those new processes, but actually to contribute because their voice has been valued. So therefore they recognize that their contribution is as important as anyone else's in those environments. (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority)

Stakeholders noted the process of integrating UASYP with local or Scottish peers took time and young people needed the confidence to be able to do so:

I think it's very unrealistic to expect young people of any background actually to just integrate with each other. They've got to have a reason for doing that and they've got to feel confident enough that they can. And that just takes time. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

[Young people need] confidence, both in terms of linguistic ability, as well as confidence in terms of their own personal sense of I can cope with this, before we start to move into doing other things with Scottish young people. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

The same practitioner noted that the challenging nature of this interaction was often ignored by local populations:

It's not just about providing activities, it's about building the relationships and you cannot rush that. (Stakeholder 2, Statutory Agency)

Group programmes allowed young people to develop their confidence over a period of time as noted here:

At the start you're kind of maybe sitting with them, keeping them company, and they're just really shy. And then the second half of the group, then maybe they're starting to integrate more with all the young people, and making friends, and there's like loads of people who you now see hanging out together, and you always walk past them in the street, and they're out with their friends and stuff that they've met through the group. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency)

As this section has noted, time was needed to help young people build up confidence and safe spaces were also required to help them to navigate through this waiting period until they felt more confident to tackle these challenges alone. This confidence was a building block and provided a stepping stone to engagement with non UASYP. This reflects the work of Aytar and Brunnberg (2016), who found that mentors in Sweden helped UASYP to develop confidence, which in turn helped them to develop wider friendships with local or Swedish peers.

8.4.2 Comfort and safety

The developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional functions of mentoring gave young people emotional comfort and safety, something which does not feature in conventional theorising of mentoring. This emphasises the key relational aspect of mentoring with UASYP. The social nature of mentoring and befriending helped young people to ‘*dip a toe in*’ and ‘*get out and about*’, which was particularly significant for those who had suffered trauma because of the asylum process. This practitioner noted the role of safety in allowing young people to thrive:

When any young person feels safe, they are able to thrive, if you are thriving, they've got hope, they don't have hope before you know, how do you have hope if a bomb falls on your family and they all die. (Stakeholder 4, Local Authority)

Central to their mentoring was ‘*providing just a bit of comfort and safety*’ (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority), and helping young people to tame ‘*the nerves and anxieties*’ (Stakeholder 9, Local Authority) around being in unfamiliar surroundings. Forming bonds with a mentor was a way for young people to establish emotional safety as one practitioner noted ‘*it's like a survival thing and a way of being safe*’ (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency). This was echoed by stakeholder 8 (Local Authority), who noted that mentoring allowed young people to feel: ‘*someone will have their back if something comes up and it's really difficult, [they know] that they're not on their own*’ (Stakeholder 8, Local Authority). Mentoring and befriending helped young people to deal with the prolonged waiting for an asylum decision and the temporal liminality outlined in Chapter 7, by keeping them busy with activities:

A really big part of it is about just making the wait and the uncertainty a little bit less bad for young people, try and help young people fill their time. (Stakeholder 15, Statutory Agency)

The acquisition of knowledge around Scottish culture and systems meant that young people felt more comfortable and relaxed, allowing young people to bridge acculturative liminality:

If people feel a little more comfortable, relaxed, they have a little bit more knowledge of how the system operates, how people respond. So if somebody responds in a bad

way to them at least they've got somebody they can go and say, jeez, do you know what happened to me today, should that have happened, what can I do if it happens again, how do I handle that. So you've got somebody to confide in who knows the system. (Stakeholder 13, Church Organisation)

Mentoring complemented other social care provision and despite the seemingly 'soft' developmental outcomes, compared to the hard outcomes associated with traditional mentoring, the impact of these were significant for young people:

English is a huge thing, confidence is a huge thing and just navigating and feeling more comfortable you know are all really big things that I think that we do.
(Stakeholder 9, Local Authority).

Most mentoring and befriending programmes measured more tangible outcomes like English acquisition, access to services, friendships and support networks. While the development of confidence was not measured as a tangible outcome, its importance was integral to young people being able to start the process of engaging with local peers and wider community.

This section has shown that formal mentoring and befriending for UASYP had three functions: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional functions, which helped young people to develop confidence and a feeling of safety. Mentoring and befriending helped young people to bridge socio-spatial, temporal and ontological liminalities outlined in Chapter 7, allowing young people to restore ontological insecurity (Chase, 2013; Giddens, 1984) needed for settlement. As noted in Chapter 3, the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) recognises that there are ten elements to successful integration: employment, housing, education and health, language/cultural knowledge, safety and stability and social bonds to in-group peers, social bridges to outgroup peers and social links to wider institutions. Integration requires contact between the host community and newcomers, however for UASYP, this process was more complex and required time and confidence to be able to take the first step.

Mentoring and befriending alone were not enough to support young people's resettlement, they needed to work in conjunction with wider support structures. However, they nevertheless provided a stepping stone to resettlement, by giving young people the

confidence and security to step into new situations and establish new relationships outside of their comfort zone. As noted in Chapter 2, Kohli (2011) posits that there are three processes in resettlement: safety, belonging and success. Safety is required first before young people can achieve belonging and success. Safety, according to Kohli (2011) relates not only to legal rights to reside in a country, but in having comfort in the everyday, going to school, understanding the systems, having a support network etc. Formal mentoring helped provide a sense of safety for UASYP, by arming young with people cultural knowledge, linguistic and navigational capital. In Kohli's model of resettlement, safety is needed before belonging can be established. However, as will be discussed in the final concluding chapter, even when safety was established, young people still occupied liminal belonging. This chapter has also shown how UASYP resisted liminalities by dropping and pulling up anchors in temporary 'communities of belonging' (Verdasco, 2018). The final section of the chapter concludes by developing a typology of mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP

8.5: Reconceptualising formal and informal mentoring with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people: towards a new typology

While Chapter 7 outlined the commonalities and differences across formal mentoring provision included in the study, and this chapter highlighted the functions of both formal and informal mentoring for UASYP, the following section brings together these elements into one typology of mentoring for UASYP. According to Mandara (2003), a typology is 'a hierarchical system of categories used to organize objects according to their similarities and dissimilarities' (p.132). Most attempts to develop typologies of mentoring programmes have taken place in the US (Busse *et al.*, 2018), where the focus of mentoring programmes tends to be more on addressing antisocial youth behaviour. The rationale for developing a typology of mentoring with UASYP is threefold. Firstly, it helps to make sense of the heterogeneity of programmes/relationships available for mentees at different times (Stapley *et al.*, 2022). Secondly, as Stapley *et al.* (2022) suggest, developing a typology highlights the role of non-traditional types of mentoring in the lives of mentees, which this chapter has also demonstrated. Finally, developing a typology of mentoring is useful to bridge the gap between research and practice (Stapley *et al.* 2022), supporting future practitioners in the development of more holistic mentoring programmes for young people. To my knowledge,

no scholars have developed a typology of mentoring with UASYP, making this a novel contribution.

Busse *et al.* (2018) suggest that developing a typology of mentoring requires identifying key dimensions and ordering these into independent categories. Table 5 below brings together the features of formal and informal mentoring included in the study, highlighting the commonalities across both which form the basis of a new typology of mentoring with UASYP. The features of mentoring include the format of mentoring (dyadic or group), the types of mentors (formal adult mentors, formal peer mentors, informal professionals tipping into mentors, informal peer mentors, family-like mentors, transnational mentors and co-ethnic ties), the features of mentorship, the role of boundaries and power in the mentorship, the functions and outcomes of the mentorship and the barriers to providing mentorship. The commonalities outlined in section 8.5.1 form the basis for a more inclusive typology of mentoring with UASYP which I have called 'Relational Mentoring'. As it will be argued in section 8.5.1, these commonalities are based around four key pillars: multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality. These pillars have implications for the development of future mentoring provision, which are also discussed in section 8.5.3.

Table 5: Towards a typology of relational mentoring with unaccompanied-asylum seeking young people

	Formal mentoring				Informal mentoring			
Format	Dyadic		Group		Dyadic			Group
Type of mentor	Adults	Peers	Adults	Peers	Professionals	Peers	Family-like/ Transnational ties	Co ethnic ties
	Multimodality: Utilising multiple formats across time and space							
Features of mentorship	Relationship-centric							
	Some targets	No targets	Some targets	No targets	No targets	No targets	No targets	No targets
	Light touch support/Needs-led							
Relationality: Relationship focussed/a lighter touch support/need-led/ less target driven than traditional mentoring								
Direction of care/learning	Reciprocal learning	Reciprocal care and learning	Reciprocal learning	Reciprocal care and learning	One-way care	Reciprocal care and learning	Reciprocal care and learning	
	Multi-directionality: Care and learning is multi-directional							
Role of time in mentorship	Time bound relations Less flexible Support limited to a specific time				Time bound relations	Relations not time bound	Flexibility to dip in and out More consistent support Pockets of 'mentoring on the run'	
	Multimodality: Exercising agency in when to anchor/un-anchor to mentors							
Boundaries/Safeguarding around mentorship	Some boundaries Safeguarding policies and procedures required		Some boundaries, less strict than social care provision Less restrictive safeguarding		Some boundaries	No boundaries/no safeguarding needed		
	Criticality: Attentive to power and privilege							

	Formal mentoring				Informal mentoring			
Format	Dyadic		Group		Dyadic			Group
Type of mentor	Adults	Peers	Adults	Peers	Professionals	Peers	Family-like/ Transnational ties	Co ethnic ties
	Multimodality: Utilising multiple formats across time and space							
Power dynamics in mentorship	Some degree of hierarchy/inherent power that shape mentoring processes				Some degree of hierarchy	More egalitarian		
	Criticality: More egalitarian than traditional social care relations/ disrupting power and privilege							
Functions of mentorship: Developmental Acculturative Socio-emotional	Positive sense of self Language acquisition Social connection Mutual cultural exchange Practical support Emotional support Companionship Social networks: friends/wider social capital	Collective identity/ collective problem solving/ advocacy Language acquisition Social connection Mutual cultural exchange Practical support Emotional support Companionship Social networks: friends/wider social capital		Positive sense of self Language acquisition Social connection Mutual cultural exchange/sharing similar cultural experiences Wider social capital		Positive sense of self/ Practical and emotional support/ love	Collective identity/ collective problem solving/ advocacy/ Practical support/ Emotional support/ Companionship	
	Resettlement functions: Helping to bridge temporal and socio-spatial liminality							
Outcomes of mentorship	Confidence/security- Helping to bridge ontological security/develop critical consciousness							
	Criticality: Transformative potential to challenge structural issues							

	Formal mentoring				Informal mentoring			
Format	Dyadic		Group		Dyadic			Group
Type of mentor	Adults	Peers	Adults	Peers	Professionals	Peers	Family-like/ Transnational ties	Co ethnic ties
Multimodality: Utilising multiple formats across time and space								
Barriers to mentorship	Geographic- lack of access to formal mentors Economic barriers to setting up programmes Lack of appropriate mentors				Geographic- lack of access to informal mentors Lack of appropriate mentors			Geographic- lack of access to groups/ Lack of appropriate mentors
Criticality: Need for more culturally appropriate mentors/Attentive to power and privilege								

8.5.1 Relational mentoring with unaccompanied-asylum seeking young people

As can be seen in table 5, there are commonalities across formal and informal mentoring with UASYP, which are also outlined below:

- **Features of mentorship:** more relationship focussed, a lighter touch support, needs-led and less target driven than traditional mentoring
- **Power in mentorship:** more egalitarian than traditional social care relations/traditional mentoring/more attentive to power dynamics
- **Functions of mentorship:** helping to bridge temporal and socio-spatial liminalities
- **Outcomes of mentorship:** transformative potential to challenge structural issues/ helping to develop ontological security
- **Barriers to mentorship:** need for more culturally appropriate mentors

In light of these commonalities, I propose a new and more inclusive typology of mentoring with UASYP. The typology of relational mentoring proposed in the thesis differs from more traditional bounded typologies. It is more holistic, fluid and attentive to the role of power in mentorship. The reconceptualised typology is intentionally broad to account for the way in which young people experience mentoring, as has been shown in the thesis. The term relational mentoring has been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it recognises that relationships and the needs within those relationships lie at the core of mentoring with UASYP. While traditional mentoring is more prescriptive and preoccupied with developing specific outcomes in mentees (McGowan *et al.*, 2009), this study found that relational mentoring was mainly social in its nature and that relationships lay at the epicentre. Similarly, analysis found that programmes included in the study were more needs-led and less focussed on achieving specific targets than traditional mentoring (see Chapter 7). Secondly, the term recognises that mentoring with UASYP cannot be studied as an isolated intervention. Rather, it needs to be situated in the context of wider social relations. As this chapter has shown, engagement with mentoring is influenced by the wider social ecology around young people. Since UASYP are care-experienced, relational mentoring cannot be studied as a standalone intervention, rather it must be contextualised within wider care structures. While traditional mentoring is distinct from traditional social care provision, relational mentoring recognises that these boundaries

between formal statutory provision and informal support networks can be blurred and professional relations can tip into informal mentorship.

8.5.2 The four pillars of relational mentoring

Within the reconceptualised typology of mentoring for UASYP, I have identified four organisational pillars which explain what differentiates relational mentoring from more traditional models: multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality. These pillars have implications for practice, discussed in section 8.5.3, and aim to support stakeholders in the development of future mentoring provision.

Multimodality: The pillar of multimodality recognises that relational mentoring is more holistic and less prescriptive than traditional mentoring models. While traditional mentoring has a narrow definition, relational mentoring is broad and includes a multitude of mentoring relations, which utilise different formats (dyadic, group and peer) for different purposes, across time and space. While the traditional definition of mentoring is narrow and assumes a static formal dyadic relationship between a young person and an older, more-experienced mentor, this study found that there was not a ‘one-size fits all’ model of mentoring for UASYP. Rather, young people in the study engaged with a variety of formal and informal mentoring relationships depending on their preferences, interests and place on the asylum journey. The study also found that mentoring relations spanned local, national and transnational spaces. They took place in ESOL classes, in student accommodation, within professional relations, with peers and co-ethnic ties, with siblings and family members abroad etc. While traditional mentoring assumes that the mentorship takes places in certain time-bound frameworks, this study found that mentoring with UASYP took place in their everyday interactions: teachers dedicating extra time to young people, support workers going above and beyond their role, co-ethnic peers advocating for each other, UASYP supporting newcomers, young people acting as interpreters for peers, etc. This ‘mentoring on the run’ (Omatsu, n.d.) challenges assumptions about traditional mentoring models. The pillar of multimodality recognises that the small acts of mentoring which happen within everyday interactions are equally as important as more structured encounters. Importantly, this pillar recognises the importance of agency, allowing young people the choice of where and when to anchor and un-anchor to different mentors. As noted earlier in this chapter, formal dyadic mentoring may not be an appropriate model for young people who come from more

collectivist cultures and there may be stigma around asking for help from a ‘stranger’. Relational mentoring offers a broader definition of mentoring, which helps account for the different preferences among young people.

Relationality: The pillar of relationality recognises that mentoring relations are inherently interlinked with wider social relations. While traditional mentoring focusses on the mentoring dyad, relational mentoring recognises that the wider social ecology around UASYP influences their engagement with formal and informal mentors. As was shown in Chapter 6, the structures around young people in the macrosystem, including where they are accommodated, where they are educated etc., all influence their ability to engage with mentorship in the mesosystem. While professional relations predominantly take place in the public sphere and naturally occurring relationships take place mostly in the private sphere, relational mentoring can span both spheres. The pillar of relationality recognises that the range of mentoring relationships available to young people overlap with other helping professionals and the boundaries between these are fluid. It also recognises that having a trusting relationship lies at the core of relational mentoring. While traditional mentoring is preoccupied with developing specific skills in mentees (McGowan *et al.*, 2009), this study found that central to mentoring and befriending with UASYP were relationships and that mentoring was mainly social in its nature, as was noted in Chapter 7.

Multi-directionality: The pillar of multi-directionality recognises that learning and care in the mentorship with UASYP happens in multiple directions. While traditional mentoring assumes a one-way knowledge exchange from mentor to mentee, relational mentoring recognises the reciprocal exchange between mentor and mentee. Traditional mentoring theory makes assumptions about mentors as being the givers of care and mentees as receiving it. However, relational mentoring recognises the role of reciprocal care in the lives of UASYP, peers supporting each other in both dyadic and group settings. The pillar of multi-directionality also helps to challenge the static integration discourses outlined in section 2.2.4. It also disrupts assumptions about how migrants resettle, the relations they engage in and the spaces they occupy. The pillar of multi-directionality is more attentive to the dynamism of belonging and identity which shifts over time and space, challenging assumptions that young people are either fully integrated or fully transnational. The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (Scottish Government 2018; 2024) recognises that integration is a two-way process between host community and newcomers and it highlights

the centrality of mentoring is supporting this process. However, this assumes a two-way process between new and old Scots, ignoring the role that new Scots have in supporting other newcomers to resettle. Relational mentoring recognises that co-ethnic ties and peers with shared experiences of seeking asylum are instrumental in helping other new Scots to resettle. This aligns with the newest version of the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2024), which recognises that integration is ‘multidirectional, multilingual, an intercultural process, restorative and inclusive’. While traditionally the indicators of successful integration are functional and include tangible outcomes like employment or education, relational mentoring recognises that indicators of success may be relatively small yet significant like being able to use the bus or ask a neighbour for help. These seemingly small acts nevertheless provide confidence and ontological security in young people, supporting their resettlement.

Criticality: The pillar of criticality recognises the power inherent in the mentoring processes. Manongsong and Collins (2022) suggest that traditional mentoring does not attend to issues around gender, race and class and that a ‘tailored mentoring approach’ (p.198) is needed when it comes to culturally diverse mentees. As noted earlier in the thesis, mentoring relations have the potential to perpetuate gendered and racial stereotypes. The involvement of white mentors supporting mentees from ethnic minority backgrounds have the potential to perpetuate racial biases. Similarly, the matching of female mentors with male mentees have the potential to perpetuate stereotypes about gendered care norms. Relational mentoring acknowledges the inherent power in cross-race, mixed-gender mentoring relations. While traditional mentoring is hierarchical, relational mentoring is potentially more egalitarian as it uses peer and informal models of mentoring. Nevertheless, relational mentoring recognises that particular attention needs to be paid to both the racialised and gendered aspects of mentoring. Goertz *et al.* (2024) recognise the importance of critically evaluating race in mentorship and questioning how knowledge is produced. In traditional mentoring, organisations measure success of mentoring according to specific outcomes which it deems to be valuable. Relational mentoring centres on the needs of young people, which disrupt traditional power balances. It has the potential to be transformative, in developing the critical consciousness of both mentors and mentees (see also Simpson *et al.*, 2023). The focus on action, whereby mentors and mentees challenge injustice is the fourth pillar of decolonial mentoring (Goertz *et al.*, 2024). Only by attending to issues of race and power in the relationship can mentoring be decolonial (Goertz *et al.*, 2024).

8.5.3 Implications for practice

Bringing together formal and informal mentoring and befriending with UASYP into one typology of relational mentoring offers a more flexible, holistic and nuanced view of what is happening within mentoring processes. It helps situate mentoring relations in the context of a wider social ecology around UASYP and recognises the entanglement of formal and informal networks. It also accounts for the way in which young people engage in a multitude of mentoring relationships across time and local, national and transnational spaces. Finally, the development of a more holistic typology is more attentive to the reality of young people's lives and the structural issues which impact on how they engage in different social relations. The four pillars of relational mentoring discussed above have implications for practice, in particular for implementing and funding mentoring provision for UASYP going forward.

The need for a more inclusive definition of mentoring: The narrow definition of mentoring that is currently used in policy and practice does not reflect the reality of how UASYP experience mentoring relations. Relational mentoring is a broader term which includes the different types of mentorships that young people engage with: peer mentoring, transnational mentoring, professionals tipping into mentoring etc. This broader definition has implications for the fundings of future mentoring programmes. Many non-traditional mentoring programmes like ESOL classes, conversation cafes, walking groups, participation programmes, sports groups for new Scots were all mentioned by young people in the study as providing a form of informal mentoring that supported resettlement processes. Future funding for mentoring could be broadened to include wider models of engagement and the way that young people experience mentoring relationships.

The need to be attentive to wider social relations and structural barriers: The development of mentoring provision needs to be attentive to the role of wider social relations and how they shape the mentoring processes. As was shown in Chapter 7, the need for mentoring provision often emerges from a social care deficit, the demands of social work and the lack of uniformity across local authorities in their responses to young people. Mentoring provision should consider how formal mentorship interacts with informal mentoring processes to influence young people's resettlement. As Chapter 6 has highlighted, the ability to engage in mentoring is influenced by wider social structures, where young people are accommodated, where they are educated, the spaces they occupy, etc. The role of space

intersects with relationships to influence the ability of young people to engage with informal mentorship. Equally, in formal mentorship, organisations have the power to control the context around the relationship by imposing boundaries and safeguarding procedures. Being attentive to the role of wider social relations around UASYP and the fluidity of their local, national and transnational care relationships is a central facet of relational mentoring. In setting up mentoring programmes, practitioners should be attentive to this wider social ecology around young people and the way that these relations are influenced by wider structures.

Attentiveness to the direction of care: The development of mentoring provision needs to be attentive to the direction of care, recognising that mentoring happens in multiple directions, not just between old and new Scots. By recognising that mentoring happens between peers and those with lived experience of the asylum process, this challenges static integration discourse. As noted above, this ties into the newest version of New Scots Refugee Strategy (Scottish Government, 2024), which recognises that integration is ‘multidirectional, multilingual, an intercultural process, restorative and inclusive’. Future funding for mentoring could be broadened to include models of engagement like peer mentoring and group participation programmes, which provide multi-directional care and learning.

Attentiveness to power dynamics: Cross-race and cross-gender mentoring presents an additional layer of complexity. The development of mentoring programmes should be attentive to the dynamics of power in understanding privilege and power, in particular how race and gender play out in mentoring relationships. Relational mentoring as a framework recognises that mentoring is potentially transformative in that it can develop the critical consciousness of mentor and mentee, challenging injustices and structural inequalities. However, to do so, practitioners and funders must adopt an intersectional perspective to recognise how race and gender intersect with the mentoring processes.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has answered Research Question 3, who sought to ascertain how relational mentoring supported the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. It has shown how young people interviewed utilised formal and informal mentors and befrienders differently depending on their needs, interests and place on the asylum journey. Young people anchored to multiple ‘communities of belonging’ (Verdasco, 2018) via formal and informal mentors and

befrienders and embedded across different communities to develop a sense of belonging, albeit temporarily. It identified three core functions of mentoring and befriending with UASYP: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, which produced two overall 'soft' outcomes: increased confidence and an increased sense of safety and security. Confidence and safety are seen as being key to bridging ontological liminality and providing a stepping stone to integration. The chapter finished by developing a typology of mentoring and befriending with UASYP, re-conceptualising formal and informal mentoring and befriending as relational mentoring, based around the pillars of multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality. The next and final chapter discusses the significance of the findings, looking at the role of relational mentoring at multiple levels: structural, community and individual, to support UASYP. Through this analysis, it articulates implications for future research, policy and practice.

Chapter 9: Discussion of findings, contribution to knowledge and conclusions

Overview

This concluding chapter summarises the key findings and discusses empirical and theoretical contributions to knowledge. It also proposes recommendations for future research, policy and practice in designing and implementing mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP in Scotland. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part outlines my original contribution to knowledge, before looking at the contribution to knowledge in relation to the three research questions. Here, I pull together findings into an integrated theoretical framework, which outlines the needs of UASYP and the barriers to resettlement (Research Question 1) and the way in which relational mentoring supports young people to overcome these challenges and resettle in Scotland (Research Question 3). To follow, I situate relational mentoring in a wider socio-political context (Research Question 2). The second part of the chapter outlines the limitations and strengths of the study and, to conclude, I make recommendations for potential future research, policy and practice.

9.1 Original contribution to knowledge

The study contributes to knowledge in three ways. Firstly, this exploratory study is the first to look at how relational mentoring supports the resettlement of UASYP Scotland-wide. It does so by bringing together the perspectives of young people, their mentors and befrienders and practitioners engaged in work supporting UASYP. There have been very few studies looking at relational mentoring in supporting UASYP in Scotland, and those that exist have looked at formal dyadic mentoring (Scott *et al.*, 2019), ignoring the influence of alternative models like group mentoring, peer or informal mentoring. Integral to this study was gaining a better understanding of the heterogeneity of programmes available for UASYP, who represent a niche group with complex needs.

Secondly, the study has developed a new typology of relational mentoring with UASYP, to account for the way in which young people experience mentoring relations. The study found that the traditional boundaries between mentoring and befriending were blurred when it came to programmes with UASYP. It also found that the boundaries between formal and informal care with UASYP were fluid and professional relations often tipped into informal mentorship. The current definition of mentoring as is used in policy and practice is narrow

and tends to consider only formal, often dyadic mentoring relationships. It is conceptually narrow, as it is shaped by colonialism (Omatsu, n.d.). The assumption that mentoring happens at specific times, in specific locations, with specific people, ignores the small moments of mentoring that happen in everyday encounters with young people. I have proposed a more inclusive typology of mentoring for UASYP entitled ‘relational mentoring’ which offers a more flexible, holistic and nuanced view of what is happening within mentoring processes. Relational mentoring is based around four key pillars: multimodality, relationality, multi-directionality and criticality, which help differentiate it from other typologies. The first is multimodality, which recognises that UASYP are not a homogeneous group and that a diversity of programmes and mentorships are required at different points in time, across different spaces and for different purposes. The pillar of relationality recognises that relationships lie at the epicentre of relational mentoring and that wider social relations impact on the ability of young people to engage in mentorship. It also recognises the entanglement of formal and informal networks, which traditional mentoring models ignore. The pillar of multi-directionality recognises that learning and care in the mentorship is two-way and reciprocal. As well as mutual cultural exchange, this pillar recognises the role of co-ethnic ties and peers with shared experiences of seeking asylum in providing mentorship for each other, which challenges not only traditional mentoring theory, but static integration discourse. The final pillar of criticality recognises that relational mentoring is more egalitarian and attentive to power structures than traditional mentoring. It recognises that relational power between mentor and mentee, racial dynamics, gender dynamics can not only impact on the mentoring relationship but have the potential to perpetuate wider structural inequalities. In the same vein, relational mentoring has the potential to be transformative, challenging racialised and gender norms and to develop the critical consciousness of both mentor and mentee.

Finally, the study adds new theoretical and empirical insights to migration scholarship, creating an integrated theoretical framework to explore the role of relational mentoring in supporting UASYP to resettle in Scotland. The integrated theoretical framework brings together an ecological model of mentoring (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with theories of liminality (Turner, 1969), social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) and relational embedding (Ryan, 2018). To my knowledge, this is the first study to adopt an ecological model of mentoring in relation to UASYP, helping to explore relational mentoring at multiple

levels: structural, relational and individual. Rather than just focussing on the intrapersonal elements of relational mentoring, the study considered the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono aspects of relational mentoring with UASYP. In doing so, the study explored the resettlement needs of UASYP in the microsystem and the barriers to resettlement in the exosystem (see Research Question 1 below), as well as the ways that relational mentoring in the mesosystem helped young people to navigate these resettlement challenges (see Research Question 3 below). The study also situated relational mentoring in wider support structures around UASYP in the macrosystem, considering the socio-political, economic and cultural aspects of relational mentoring, which is, to my knowledge, an innovative contribution (see Research Question 2 below). The following sections 9.3.1-9.3.3 bring together Research Questions 1 and 3, to outline the opportunities and barriers to resettlement for UASYP in Scotland and the role of relational mentoring in supporting these resettlement challenges. Section 9.3.4 addresses Research Question 2, which outlines how relational mentoring fits into wider care structures around UASYP.

9.3.1 Research Questions 1 and 3

Research Question 1: What are the barriers and opportunities to resettlement for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?

At the core of Research Question 1 was adding insights to limited scholarship around the barriers to resettlement for UASYP specifically. While recent studies have looked at the barriers to resettlement for UASYP in Scotland in terms of leisure and education (Camps *et al.*, 2023), no recent studies have looked at the barriers to resettlement in terms of wider structures around UASYP. At the core of this research question was understanding the needs of young people at an individual level and the resettlement context in which UASYP were situated at an exosystem level, including their accommodation, access to welfare and education, health and wellbeing and social connections, and the way in which these supported or hindered resettlement. Using the concept of ‘liminality’ (Turner, 1979), this study explored the in-between spaces that young occupied, which impacted on their ability to resettle in Scotland. While liminality has long been used to explore the in-between spaces that asylum seekers reside in (Chase & Allsopp, 2020; Kaukko & Wernesjö, 2016; Malkki, 1996; Mountz,

2011; O'Reilly, 2018), this study went further to develop a new framework to consider the socio-spatial, temporal, ontological and imposed liminal spaces, which impacted on resettlement processes. This study adds insights into liminality within refugee studies by looking at how multiple liminalities in the exosystem intersected with temporality in the chronosystem to influence young people's resettlement.

Research Question 3: How does relational mentoring help unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to resettle in Scotland?

At the core of Research Question 3 was understanding the role of relational mentoring in supporting the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland. Very little has been written about this area of research, despite the increase in relational mentoring programmes across Europe since the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015. The qualitative findings from this study add to this gap in knowledge, by highlighting the key relational mechanisms and the benefits of relational mentoring for UASYP, looking at the role played by informal mentors, peers and group mentors. While research has tended to focus on the functional aspects of integration, this study adds to the limited knowledge on the social integration of UASYP. Previous studies on mentoring tend to focus on the role of hard outcomes, like education and employment. Fewer studies have examined the mechanisms underlying mentoring and its functions in supporting young people. Brady *et al.* (2017) argue that formal mentoring allows young people the time and space to access support which 'can help them to pursue their own interests, needs and objectives' (p.273). This they argue, is more important than focussing on 'hard outcomes' like educational attainment. Similarly, I have argued that there is a need to focus on the functions of mentoring, rather than the hard outcomes. Brady *et al.* (2017) state that mentoring has several functions, including building positive relations, emotional support, positive esteem, helping young people make choices, access to different life perspectives, providing a constant person and enhancing support with other networks. Based on findings, I have argued for an acculturative function of mentoring and befriending with UASYP, which is missing from traditional theorising of mentoring. Formal relational mentoring in this study was found to have three overall functions: developmental, socio-emotional and acculturative, which led to two soft outcomes in young people: confidence and comfort/safety. These helped young people to bridge multiples liminalities and resettle in Scotland, as outlined below.

The role of relational mentoring to support resettlement: bridging socio-spatial liminality

Integration is said to be bi-directional (Ager and Strang, 2008). However, this study found that UASYP did not have equal opportunities to engage with non-immigrant peers and socio-spatial liminality was a barrier to young people's resettlement. On arrival in Scotland, young people were accommodated by local authorities, who had the power to shape the spaces they occupied, the relationships they engaged in and the choices they made. Young people were accommodated in transitional spaces: in hotels or student accommodation or with foster families, which impacted on the relationships they could form. While foster families provided essential nurture and safety for UASYP, as others have found (Golm, 2024), there were not enough foster placements, so young people ended up living in 'temporary, unstable and precarious' spaces (Crafter *et al.*, 2021: 5). These transient spaces had implications for how young people could develop a sense of belonging (Wernesjö, 2015) and analysis revealed a link between physical spaces and how young people experienced time and social relations. For UASYP accommodated in rural communities, far from Halal food, Mosque and co-ethnic communities, they were less able to engage in cultural practices, which are central to belonging (Kohli, 2011). This had implications for the ability to form relations due lack of appropriate spaces for fostering intercultural relations, echoing the findings of Askins (2015). UASYP included in the study also occupied an acculturative liminality, which was a barrier to resettlement, reflecting the findings of others (Camps *et al.*, 2023). Young people often struggled to understand some of the cultural norms particularly around personal relationships and sexuality, and there was often a cultural disconnect between their culture of origin and their new culture. Changes to the National Transfer Scheme meant that some young people could be accommodated in rural locations, which could be both a positive and negative for them. Wernesjö (2015) has also shown that rurality has an impact on young people's opportunities for social networks. While some young people wanted to move to urban locations, where there was more access to co-ethnic ties, for others, living in rural locations meant having more opportunities to improve their English language skills. However, opportunities to engage in English language acquisition were dictated by the wider macrosystem and structural constraints, where young people were accommodated and their educational pathways.

UASYP also occupied a relational liminality, in that they straddled belonging between local, global and transnational places (Moskal, 2015), which could be a barrier to resettlement. While the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (NSRIS) (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) recognises that integration is a two-way process between host communities and newcomers, UASYP were engaged in transnational relationships, which were complex and contradictory. In terms of welfare support, while UASYP had a vast web of professional support, many of these relations were transient and there were only a few constant points of contact, which impacted on young people's resettlement. Those service providers who were more constant in their lives were also likely to be seen as mentors in time. The study found that young people had complex relations with their professional support networks, while some felt very supported and nurtured by these, others felt less supported and distanced themselves from these relations. These liminal relationships had implications for being able to resettle in Scotland. Social connections are integral to the process of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014) and the NRSIS (Scottish Government, 2024) recognises their centrality in helping asylum seekers and refugees access services. However, this study has shown that the way that UASYP interviewed experienced social relations was dictated by wider structures in the macrosystem (Chase, 2020; Vera Espinoza *et al.*, 2023), including where they were accommodated, their ability to access English language provision and educational pathways. Young people accommodated in foster families, student accommodation or those who attended school, had more opportunities to engage with their non-migrant peers, while those living with other UASYP or who only attended ESOL classes, or college, had fewer opportunities for engagement with Scottish peers, which impacted on resettlement.

Having a strong social network of professional and community support networks in the mesosystem helped young people navigate their initial socio-spatial liminality. This included supporting them with the transition to living alone, helping them to explore their interests and hobbies and to acquire language skills. Professionals helped young people navigate their initial acculturative liminality, supporting them to adapt to a new set of cultural norms and to engage with new education, health and legal systems. However, as noted above, professional relations were transient and time-bound and young people had only a few constant points of contact. Professionals were often caught between competing discourse of immigration and child welfare (see also Crafter *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, the boundaries around professional relations and the lack of time to engage in a lighter touch support was a source of frustration

for young people. It is within these complex professional relations and limitations of social care that the need for a lighter touch support like mentoring or befriending comes into play.

In the absence of family, friendships and community networks acquired greater significance for young people. Young people identified a number of different informal mentors, which fell into three categories: professionals who were seen as informal mentors, family or ‘family-like’ informal mentors and peer mentors. Traditional definitions of mentoring assume a caring relationship between a young person and an older non-parental figure (DuBois and Karcher 2014; Rhodes *et al.*, 2002). However, this study found the importance of family members or ‘like-family’ figures as being mentors for young people, reflecting the findings of others (Raithelhuber, 2018; Alarcón *et al.*, 2021). Relationships with professionals like social workers, guardians or housing support workers could tip into becoming mentoring relationships. These professional informal mentors had a functional role (Allen and Eby, 2007; Zinn, 2017), in addition to other kinds of support, like practical, emotional and financial support. However, this study found that professionals who tipped into family or family like relations also offered love, echoing the findings of others (Kauhanen *et al.*, 2022). Love is missing from traditional theorising of mentoring, however this study found that relational mentoring offered young people what others have called ‘pockets of love’ (Kauhanen *et al.*, 2022). Young people spoke about practitioners going above and beyond their role, which was seen as a symbol of a person stepping out of the formal into the informal relationship sphere.

Hegemonic ideas about young people as being vulnerable and as being only the recipients of care ignore the care provided by some of the young people towards their peers (see also Rosen *et al.*, 2022). Peer mentors provided UASYP with a form of ‘alternative social protection’ (Leon and Rosen, 2023), which could offer more consistent support than professionals, as these latter relationships were often time-bound. Peer mentors with lived experience of the asylum process supported each other by providing emotional, practical and material support. Engaging in everyday rituals like cooking together, young people developed group bonding (see also Verdasco, 2019). Scholars suggest that peers from the host country can also act as ‘gatekeepers’ in assisting young people with language acquisition and connecting to a broader network (Soderqvist, 2017; Eriksson *et al.*, 2019), which was found to be the case for UASYP housed in student accommodation. Scottish young people who were accommodated alongside UASYP helped provide cultural knowledge and supported

young people to navigate complex systems in Scotland, helping UASYP to generate ‘navigational capital’ (Yosso, 2005), bridging socio-spatial liminality.

Formal relational mentoring with UASYP (both dyadic and group models), had three core functions, developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, which helped young people bridge socio-spatial liminal. Formal dyadic mentoring and befriending had a developmental function, helping young people to develop a positive sense of self, a finding echoed by others (Winkens *et al.*, 2023). Mentoring relationships allowed UASYP to have a positive relationship with an adult and to feel valued, helping ease the transition to adulthood, as others have found (Rhodes, 2002). However, relational mentoring also allowed young people the time and space to explore hobbies and interests, as forced displacement often did not allow time to explore these. Group programmes allowed young people to develop a sense of collective identity, helping them discuss problems and work through issues, often advocating for each other. While traditional integration discourses focus on the role of bonding capital that is generated between co-ethnic ties, this study found that the ability to share experiences with other UASYP was equally as important. Group sessions allowed bonding among UASYP and opportunities to share experiences. Relational mentoring supported young people to navigate socio-spatial liminality by providing practical support, depending on need, such as applying for college, writing a CV, getting a gym membership or opening a bank account. However, these relations also helped tackle social isolation and loneliness, which was cited as being a large barrier to resettlement.

Traditional theories of mentoring assume that both mentor and mentee come from the same cultural contexts and therefore do not include an acculturative function of mentoring. This study found that relational mentoring helped young people bridge their acculturative liminality, not only by developing their English language skills, but by empowering young people to practice these in a safe space, providing a stepping stone to integration. Mentors supported young people not only in getting to know different parts of the city, but also to navigate public transport, which was found to be barrier to resettlement in this study and by other scholars (Camps *et al.*, 2023). Through relational mentoring, UASYP developed knowledge about cultural norms or systems in the UK. Group programmes were particularly useful in helping young people understand laws in Scotland, as well as sharing informational capital, such as where to buy culturally familiar foods or go to church. A final acculturative function was the reciprocal cultural exchange between mentor and mentee, allowing for

mutual learning and sharing cultural experiences. Conceptualising relational mentoring as a shared cultural experience for both volunteer and young person links with theories of critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez, 2017), which challenge the notion that mentoring is a one-way learning process. This challenges static ideas about ‘integration’ as being a one-directional process, and as Askins (2008) posits, has the potential for ‘transformative politics’ (p.473).

Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019) have invited researchers to counter static ideas about bonding and bridging capital and strong and weak ties. This study found that dyadic and group relational mentoring allowed young people to develop different types of capital, including linguistic, familial capital and navigational capital. However, relational mentoring also helped young people develop wider social capital, providing an ‘access point to overlapping and wider social networks’ (Dominguez and Kochan, 2020:8). In the absence of caregivers, relational mentoring allowed for family-like bonding and some formal relationships merged into actual friendships, echoing the findings of others (Askins, 2015; Alarcon., 2021b). These relations provided a first step to embedding in relational networks, providing a stepping stone to resettlement in Scotland.

The role of relational mentoring to support resettlement: bridging temporal liminality

The way that UASYP experienced time and temporality was a barrier to resettlement. Young people occupied a temporal liminality as they waited for their refugee status, which intersected with their developmental liminality, impacting on how they experienced social relations and belonging (Verdasco, 2018). Waiting for their immigration status could impact on young people’s engagement in social activities and some felt paralysed by the waiting. This waiting intersected with the developmental liminality of UASYP, many of whom were keen to move on with their lives but felt trapped by the asylum system. This reflects what Moberg Stephenson and Herz (2024) calls ‘the paradox of waiting’ (p.54), whereby young people are expected to move forward and engage in education and leisure pursuits, while they are also kept waiting for their asylum case. The temporal liminality that young people occupied also impacted on how they experienced social relations and belonging (see also Verdasco, 2018). Learning English and cultural norms were seen as being integral to resettlement. However, lack of opportunities to practice and anxiety about being culturally

inappropriate were barriers to engaging in interethnic relations, reflecting the work of Askins and Pain (2011). Developing cultural knowledge only came with time and opportunities to engage with others. Education was seen as being central to resettlement, however time was needed to allow young to engage in new ways of learning and new learning environments. While the newest version of the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) recognises the role of time in the lives of asylum seekers, the unique developmental liminality of UASYP is not taken into consideration.

To counter the temporal liminality imposed by the asylum system, some young people engaged in meaningful activities like ESOL classes, education, sport and hobbies to facilitate the passing of time. Engaging in regular activities allowed young people to develop community, even if only temporarily (see also Verdasco, 2019). However, professional support networks also helped young people navigate temporal liminality by keeping them active and encouraging a mindset of living in the present, which allowed young people to weather uncertainty and restore hope. This study showed how many professionals did not have the time or capacity to engage in informal support, taking young people for a coffee, showing them how to use public transport or engaging in fun leisure activities. Relational mentoring could make up for this shortfall. While young people's relationships with practitioners could be quite intense and driven by paperwork or asylum-related activities, relationships with mentors and befrienders were more relaxed and fun. Relational mentoring helped UASYP to fill their time with enjoyable activities, to be exposed to new opportunities and fun activities. The act of bringing a young person out of their home to engage can provide 'respite from difficult life circumstances' (Allen and Ebby, 2007: 106). Group mentoring provided a light touch support, whereby people could engage as they pleased, at a time that was right for them.

However, relational mentoring intersected with temporality in the microsystem. Interventions were time-bound and had a life span. Studies point to the potential harm caused by short-lived mentoring, which could cause abandonment issues for young people (Grossman and Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes 2002). Relationship endings could be problematic, and practitioners needed to manage these endings carefully, to ensure young people did not feel any abandonment issues, echoing the findings of other scholars (McGregor *et al.*, 2017). However, this study found that the temporariness of the mentoring relationship with UASYP was often intentional. The ideal situation was one where the mentor or befriender were not required eventually, as young people became independent. In this case, the intervention

provided a stepping stone to allow young people to move on to other social relations. Timing was salient in terms of when relational mentoring was appropriate. Formal mentoring could be dropped by young people, if they were too preoccupied with navigating asylum processes or became secure in their other relationships. Group programmes could also be dropped if young people had developed their own friendship ties and no longer needed the support of the group. Thus, mentoring becomes a bridge to young people's settlement and independent living. This intersection of time and relationships is important when planning future relational mentoring programmes. The time-limited nature of relational mentoring means that young people should not become too dependent on mentors. However, it also removes the need for programme sustainability, the ideal situation is one where a mentor eventually becomes obsolete and is no longer required by the young person.

The role of relational mentoring to support resettlement: bridging ontological liminality

Young people also occupied an ontological liminality, as the lack of control over decisions in the present impacted their ability to think about the future. Similarly, they were in a liminal space between vulnerability and resilience. While many young people displayed great resilience in the face of uncertainty and trauma, they were made vulnerable by the asylum system. UASYP also occupied a liminal place in between acceptance and rejection (see also Yuval-Davis, 2006). While all young people interviewed mentioned that they felt welcomed in Scotland, they were engaged in transient, time-bound relationships with professionals, and had limited engagement with non-asylum-seeking peers because of language, cultural differences and lack of resources, leading to liminal belonging. Similarly, many young people were aware of the exclusionary discourses around asylum seekers, which impacted on their sense of belonging (Askins, 2016). Overarching all of these liminal spaces was the imposed liminality of the asylum system (O'Reilly, 2018) in the macrosystem, which dictated the spaces that young people occupied, the relations they engaged in and the choices they made. The inconsistencies across local authorities in their responses to UASYP had implications for the ability for young people to resettle, as not all young people interviewed had the same level of support. While some felt very supported and nurtured by professional networks, others did not, reflecting the findings of others (Eriksson *et al.*, 2019; Camps *et al.*, 2023). Nevertheless, professionals had a key role in supporting young people to navigate ontological liminality, helping them to meet others, to engage in trust building, to deal with complex

trauma and to develop resilience. However, as it has been noted above, professional relations were transient and time-bound and they also ebbed and flowed over time. This is where mentoring came into play, providing a 'go-to' person, so young people had a constant point of contact.

This study found that the three functions of formal and informal mentoring and befriending identified in the data (developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional) led to two soft developmental outcomes: increased confidence and an increased sense of safety and security, which helped bridge the ontological liminalities and support the psycho-social integration of UASYP. Relational mentoring helped young people bridge ontological liminalities, by giving them the confidence and security to step into new situations and establish new relationships outside of their comfort zone. Allsopp *et al.* (2015) emphasise the importance of engaging in leisure activities in supporting UASYP to move forward, helping to bridge ontological liminality. As noted in Chapter 2, Kohli (2011) posits that there are three processes in resettlement: safety, belonging and success. Safety is required first before young people can achieve belonging and success. Safety, according to Kohli (2011) relates not only to legal rights to reside in a country, but in having comfort in the everyday, going to school, understanding the systems, having a support network etc. Formal mentoring helped provide a sense of safety for UASYP, by arming young people with cultural knowledge, linguistic and navigational capital.

Despite feeling safe, young people still occupied a liminal belonging. However, to counter this, UASYP resisted liminalities by dropping and pulling up anchors in temporary 'communities of belonging' (Verdasco, 2019). Moberg Stephenson and Källström (2020) note that for UASYP, belonging is in constant flux and Lubbers *et al.* (2020) also recognise that networks evolve over time and space. UASYP included in the study straddled local, national and global spaces (Denov & Akesson, 2013). Unlike other studies on mentoring, this research found that young people were involved in a multitude of local, national and transnational mentoring relationships, which changed over time and space. Young people had multiple mentors who were used for different aspects of life, such as studying, emotional support, navigating cultural challenges etc. This multiplicity of mentoring relations gave young people access to different cultural, material and informational resources and different

types of capital, including informational, social, linguistic, cultural, resistant, aspirational and navigational.

Despite the confines of the asylum system, young people created and accessed temporary communities of belonging through their social relations. They ‘anchored’ (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2016) to multiple temporary communities via education, church, football and their accommodation, which they left and entered as was needed. Over time, these anchoring points changed, as young people developed new social relations. By ‘anchoring’ to multiple communities of belonging, young people were able to ‘embed’ themselves (Ryan, 2018) across different groups, including co-ethnic ties, non-asylum-seeking populations, religious communities, digital spaces and transnational communities. While this belonging was at times temporary, it nevertheless allowed young people to restore hope and establish continuity between past and present, which is needed to establish ontological security (Chase, 2013; Giddens, 1984).

Embedding is a dynamic process (Mulholland & Ryan, 2023) and this study found that different types of mentoring and befriending allowed young people to ‘embed’ across different networks. If any of their relations with social workers, peers or transnational ties were not helpful, young people dis-embedded from these networks. However, UASYP also embedded across different networks with different degrees of attachment. Dyadic models of mentoring were useful if people had newly arrived in Scotland, were socially isolated and had lower levels of English. They also supported young people who had struggled with mental health recently, to ‘dip a toe back in’. Group mentoring was more appropriate for young people with better levels of English, who were more sociable and who were keen to engage with others. However, group sessions also helped young people who had lower levels of English language, as they could socialise with co-ethnic ties. Group programmes allowed young people to develop a sense of collective identity and allowed for collective problem solving. Indeed, groups allowed young people to advocate for each other and to role-model for each other.

As was shown in Chapter 8, young people’s engagement with different types of relational mentoring, was dependent on their personal preferences, resources and needs in the microsystem, as well as timing in the chronosystem. Some young people did not have access to formal dyadic programmes because they were accommodated in rural areas, where there

were less volunteers. Equally, some young people had a preference for group sessions, where they could be around other UASYP. Group programmes allowed for flexible engagement, as they could be ‘dropped’ by young people, if they no longer needed the support. This embedding and dis-embedding across different networks counters static ideas around integration which dominate policy. Fixed notions about integration are problematic, as they assume that migrants are either ‘fully integrated or transnational’ (Barglowski & Bonfert, 2023). This study has shown the dynamic aspects of young people’s identity and belonging which ebbed and flow over time and space, with a focus on the important role of relational mentoring in supporting them overcome the challenges of resettlement.

9.3.2 Research Question 2

How does relational mentoring provision fit into wider support structures for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland?

At the core of this Research Question was situating relational mentoring in the wider policy context around UASYP, adding to the limited academic knowledge about the macro aspects of relational mentoring. This question highlights some of the political, economic and cultural factors impacting on the ability to deliver relational mentoring programmes with UASYP. Most research into mentoring and befriending only considers the outcomes of the relationship for the mentee (Busse *et al.*, 2018). However, this ignores the wider context in which mentoring takes place and the complex socio-political realities of young people’s lives. Adopting an ecological approach to mentoring and befriending helps situate relational mentoring in wider care structures for UASYP.

The study found a disconnect between the official reasons for mentoring and the unofficial rationale for programmes. While the official rationale of all programmes was to help asylum seekers and refugees ‘integrate’, most programmes started as a response to wider structural issues like the oversubscription of ESOL or overworked social care. Some have suggested that cuts to local authority budgets and austerity measures are an impediment to providing appropriate care for UASYP (Clayton *et al.*, 2019; Meloni & Humphris, 2021) and this study found that social workers did not have the time to engage in informal support. Camps *et al.* (2023) found that these budget constraints were particularly impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic. In this study, interviewees reported on the closure of many statutory services during the pandemic, with mentors and befrienders having to take on a casework type support role, which is usually beyond the remit of traditional mentoring. The study found that relational mentoring complemented traditional social care by providing a lighter touch support, which statutory provision did not always have time to engage in. Relational mentoring was less formal and strict than traditional social care provision, offered more flexibility and allowed young people to have fun and engage in activities with no expectation. As Brady and Dolan (2017) recognise, mentoring can support traditional social care provision as it is available outside a 9-to-5 schedule. However, formal relational mentoring was not a panacea and it needed to work in conjunction with other interventions, so that when short-term relations ended, young people had alternative sources of social support.

There were wider structural issues which impacted on the ability to deliver relational mentoring for UASYP in Scotland. While every UASYP in Scotland should have access to a befriender, in practice this was not the case because of a lack of volunteers across different local authorities, as well as a lack of staff and resources to adequately recruit and support volunteers. Dyadic mentoring also required more financial resources in terms of staffing to ensure young people and volunteers were adequately safeguarded, however lack of funding was an impediment to setting up one-to-one mentoring. The availability of volunteers sometimes clashed with the desires of young people, who tended to want younger, culturally diverse mentors or befrienders. The study identified the need for more younger male mentors and young people with lived experience of the asylum process (see also Brady *et al.*, 2017). Provision of formalised programmes was patchy, under-financed and under-resourced. Much of the provision of mentoring was ad hoc and informal, whereby social workers, ESOL practitioners or teachers buddied people up to provide peer support. Group programmes could replace the need for dyadic mentoring and make up for the shortfall of adequate volunteers. However, relational mentoring was not an appropriate intervention for all young people, given the different backgrounds, trajectories and needs of young people. Since mentoring and befriending are culturally determined concepts, it was important to spend time explaining the concepts to young people. As others have noted, mentoring may not be appropriate for young people with complex mental health issues like trauma, as it puts too much stress on the volunteer (Brady *et al.*, 2017).

While traditionally one-to-one, group and peer mentoring models are all conceptualised differently, as noted in Section 3.3.1, the term relational mentoring recognises that different models may all be appropriate models, depending on needs, interests and young people's place on their asylum journey, particularly since UASYP are not a homogenous group. Karcher *et al.* (2006) recognise that different models may be useful for migrant youth, including dyadic, group, cross-age or peer mentoring. While traditionally, the boundaries between mentoring and befriending are distinct, this study found that there was a blurring of boundaries between mentoring and befriending programmes with UASYP. Unlike traditional mentoring which tended to be outcome-focussed, relational mentoring with UASYP was less prescriptive, less-outcome focussed, more needs-led and more relationship-focussed. Relational mentoring with UASYP was more egalitarian, as it involved the exchange of information and mutual cultural exchange, which challenged traditional ideas about mentoring as perpetuating dominant views. It challenged static ideas about 'integration' as being a one-directional process, and as Askins (2008) posits, had the potential for 'transformative politics' (p.473). This focus on the needs and strengths of young people makes mentoring a more 'flexible intervention' as it works in a more holistic way (McGregor *et al.*, 2017). Creating a typology of mentoring and befriending with UASYP accounts for wider structural issues, which are often ignored in traditional mentoring theories. It also accounts for the wide variety of programmes available for young people, recognising the heterogeneity of their backgrounds, needs and aspirations.

9.4 Limitations and strengths of the study

9.4.1 Limitations

There are several limitations of the study which must be acknowledged. Some of these relate to the timing of the study, which took place midway through the COVID-19 pandemic, while others relate to the sample size, recruitment methods and methodological choices. Data was captured during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had implications not only for the methodology, in terms of having to conduct interviews with stakeholders and some young people online, but also for the findings. Many mentoring programmes had ceased during the COVID-19 pandemic and most young people included in the study had arrived in Scotland during the pandemic and so were not offered a one-to-one befriender or mentor. Data was also captured at one point in time, which did not account for how mentoring relationships

changed over time, particularly after gaining refugee status and, in turn, rights to employment, education and social protection.

It is important to acknowledge the limited potential for the generalisability of findings. While there is a need to engage in qualitative inquiry to explore how UASYP experience the world, the findings presented here cannot be assumed as applicable to other social and geographical contexts. While I attempted to recruit a variety of participants in terms of age, country of origin, gender, immigration status, and I also included UASYP who were accommodated in both rural and urban areas, the sample size was small, and findings are limited to this particular group of young people and their circumstances. This research was conducted and situated within a Scottish policy context and so findings may not be applicable in other parts of the UK. It was carried out in the context of the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024), which recognises that mentoring and befriending can support the integration of young people, however Scotland has no legal control over immigration policy, which may limit findings.

It is important to recognise that the sample included in the study may be oriented towards participants who were more engaged within third sector organisations and community groups, or those who may be more confident to engage in research of this kind. While I tried to include a wide variety of young people's voices, accessing young people via gatekeepers may privilege certain voices over others. Snowball sampling was used, owing to the difficulty in engaging with this niche group of young people. However, this method presents some ethical challenges because it could be that the more confident young people may opt into the study. In line with Hill (2005), I recognised the importance of gaining the trust of gatekeepers and I interviewed stakeholders first, to help gain access to young people in the second stage of research. However, my research was transitory in that I only spoke to young people once, which did not allow enough time for building rapport and relationships, which could have impacted on findings.

Another limitation of the sample is that findings may be skewed towards certain types of mentoring over others. While interviews with stakeholders focussed on the role of formal mentoring, most young people interviewed were not engaged in formal dyadic mentoring and so these interviews focussed on the role of informal or group mentoring. The reason for this

lack of engagement with dyadic mentoring was personal preference among UASYP to engage with group programmes and the fact that many programmes ceased during the COVID-19 pandemic or went online, which did not appeal to young people. Some young people were not offered a mentor or befriender because of the lack of volunteers in their respective areas. Therefore, data may be centred towards group mentoring programmes and informal mentoring. The lack of inclusion of formal mentors in the study was not intentional, rather the result of access issues and the limitations of having to go through gatekeepers to gain access to these participants.

One of the main reasons for limited studies on mentoring and befriending more generally is that there is no consensus on definitions (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021; Ziegler *et al.*, 2021). Problematic definitions are even more salient in cross-cultural research, where participants may conceptualise mentoring differently than it is understood by the researcher. While at the core of the research was recognising the heterogeneity of mentoring and befriending programmes, it is important to note that definitional issues make it more difficult to identify commonalities and differences across programmes. Indeed, since this research included experiences of dyadic mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, befriending and informal mentoring, results are even more difficult to generalise.

Another limitation of the study is the use of interviews as a method to engage with UASYP. While the initial plan was to use creative participatory methods with young people, in practice this was not possible because of the difficulty of gaining access. The decision to use interviews to engage with young people was the result of several factors. Young advisors helped me plan the research and they suggested that speaking to young people in an informal way would be preferable to using formal interviewing methods. Indeed, I was mindful that creative methods or interviews may not always be culturally appropriate. However, it is important to recognise the problematic nature of conducting interviews with UASYP. Hopkins (2008) notes that children and young people may have been interviewed many times throughout their asylum journey and so may feel interrogated and mistrustful of interviewers. Interviews may make young people reluctant to tell their true opinions, or they may wish to promote a particular version of their experience. While young people were able to exercise agency in terms of where the interviews happened and attempts were made to make the

process as relaxed and informal as possible, the imposition of a voice recorder and set questions could have influenced young people's responses.

Another limitation of the research is the reliance on interpreters for half of the interviews with young people. Inherent power imbalances between researcher and participants are even more complex when interpreters are added into the mix. There were practical concerns around translating informed consent forms and participant information sheets into Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish Sorani, ensuring that concepts such as mentoring and befriending were adequately explained. Negotiating informed consent can be tricky when it was done via translated forms and through using interpreters, so I had to spend time to ensure young people understood this. In one of the interviews, I used an Arabic speaking interpreter from a Middle Eastern country who was interpreting for a young person from an African country, and it became clear that there was miscommunication at some points. Poor translation can undermine the validity of the research (Inghilleri, 2004). If interpreters are needed, they too are 'active in producing research accounts' (Temple *et al.*, 2002: 1) and their presence may influence the findings. For example, it was obvious during one interview that the interpreter was asking a leading question, which I had to challenge at the time. Speaking for others is a political issue (Alcoff, 1991) as language carries cultural, social and political meaning, which can get lost in translation.

Research can also perpetuate existing power inequalities between researcher and researched. Having young advisors involved was a way to democratise the research and went some way in redressing the power imbalances between myself and the young people. However, the positionality of European researchers 'doing' research on young people from the Global South, as well as white female researchers conducting research with all male populations can be problematic (Chase *et al.*, 2019). It is important to recognise that my position as an 'outsider' may have had implications for the recruitment of participants, interviews, analysis and findings. As an older white woman with UK citizenship, without lived experience of the asylum process, engaging with racialised groups of young men no doubt impacted my engagement with the participants. Similarly, having worked with asylum-seeking populations in a professional capacity, this knowledge and experience no doubt influenced the lens through which I interviewed young people, and subsequently interpreted data. Although

attempts were made to listen and interpret the views through a young person lens, interpretation reflects my own socio-cultural lens.

9.4.2 Strengths

As well as the limitations outlined above, it is important to recognise the strengths of the study. Given the limited number of studies that have explored the role of relational mentoring in supporting UASYP more generally, and the lack of studies Scotland-wide, this study adds empirical insights to this narrow field of research. The study is timely, particularly considering the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees are welcomed into Scottish communities from the point of arrival. Since it is now mandatory for all local authorities in Scotland to accommodate UASYP, the need for UASYP to successfully 'integrate' will become increasingly important, as numbers continue to rise in Scotland (Scottish Refugee Council, 2023). One strength of the study is the exploration of relational mentoring from multiple perspectives, including those engaged in supporting UASYP, young people themselves and their mentors and befrienders. A further strength is a commitment to fairness and the inclusion of young people who did not have high levels of spoken English. Research of this nature is notoriously difficult, given the challenges of gaining access to participants, the inevitable cultural and linguistic barriers, the ethical complexity of research with this group and the need to go through gatekeepers. Despite this, I involved young people in the study, whose voice may otherwise be unrepresented due to language barriers. A final strength is overcoming the unique challenges associated with conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study took place at a time when much of the mentoring/befriending provision had either ceased or converted to an online format. Similarly, numbers of UASYP arriving to Scotland had slowed during this period. This period was a challenging time for many organisations engaged in supporting UASYP, when organisational priorities had to change as a result of the pandemic, as did their ways of working. However, in spite of these challenges, I still managed to recruit eight young advisors, 16 practitioners, ten UASYP, two peer mentors and one group mentor. Additionally, I gathered rich data, despite having to conduct some of the interviews online.

9.5 Recommendations and concluding remarks

9.5.1 Recommendations for future research

The findings in this thesis point to a number of areas for future research into relational mentoring with UASYP. While this research had intended to include the voices of formal dyadic mentors, in practice only informal mentors were included in the study because of access issues. Having identified key stakeholders in the initial stages of applying for research funding would be a way to get around this common access issue. More research is needed into how mentors and befrienders ‘experience’ their mentoring/befriending relationships. As well as exploring the benefits of volunteering for mentors/befrienders, future research could explore the role of mentoring/befriending in developing critical consciousness among volunteers, aligning with critical mentoring theory, a relatively under-explored area of research (Weiston-Serdan and Sánchez, 2017). While traditional models of mentoring can perpetuate racial and gendered norms and therefore reproduce inequalities, some posit that alternative models that use indigenous or peer mentors have the possibility to democratise mentoring and produce more egalitarian dynamics. However, this area of research is relatively untapped and further exploration is needed.

Future research could also generate insights into the role of different models of mentoring and befriending including youth-initiated mentoring (Schwartz *et al.*, 2013) whereby young people choose who they would like to mentor them. Other atypical models like co-habiting models, where young refugees co-habitat with British young people, could add insights into how peer mentoring supports integration processes. Further research could highlight how the mentoring relationship is mutually beneficial to both parties, challenging traditional ideas around vertical mentoring, where knowledge is passed from the mentor to the mentee. Future scholarship could also explore the way in which UASYP are framed by professionals and how this influences the interventions put in place to support them. This study found that UASYP were perceived differently by different practitioners: while some felt that UASYP were the same as all young people in Scotland, others felt that they had unique needs because of the impact of trauma and complex socio-political realities. It may be the case that the way young people are conceptualised has implications for service provision and the interventions put in place for them.

Little is known about the long-term benefits of having informal mentors. Further research could point to the mechanisms and processes underlying the long-term benefits of informal mentors and how these differ from more formal mentors. Indeed, future research could explore the way in which capital is distributed among young people (Rhodes *et al.*, 2002) and how structures intersect to perpetuate or disadvantage these social relations. An interesting area for possible insights is the intersection of place with social relations. Since informal mentors are not distributed equally among young people, it would be interesting to look at the spaces where intercultural relations take place and how these influence the engagement of informal mentors. Scholars like Mee and Wright (2009) and Yuval-Davies *et al.* (2006) have considered the racialisation of migrant groups who are often excluded from certain public spaces. Mentoring requires spaces where relationships can grow and be fostered (Askins, 2015). For young people to be able to develop natural mentoring relationships, they need spaces for those relations to form in the first place and more attention needs to be paid to the ways in which time, as well as space, affect caring relationships. Future research could adopt an intersectional approach to explore how issues such as gender, class, culture and race intersect in relation to mentoring.

Finally, more longitudinal research is needed, looking at the changing nature of mentoring and befriending relationships over time. It would be useful to explore how mentoring and befriending relationships evolve and move on to become more informal and less structured. Equally useful would be to explore how relational mentoring supports young people at different points on their asylum journey. This research involved young people who had arrived relatively recently in Scotland, and all but two of the participants had asylum seeker status. It would be useful to explore the need for mentoring and befriending for young people who have refugee status and who are further along their asylum journey. It may also be the case that mentoring with young refugees supports more long-term integration outcomes like employment or education, rather than the psycho-social integration found in this study. While interviews were used here, other more creative, participatory methods could bring new insights and allow for longitudinal research to this area. Indeed, creative methods can allow for more balanced power dynamics and time to build rapport and relationships. Engaging with stakeholders from the outset would help mitigate these access issues.

9.5.2 Recommendations for practice and policy

This study has demonstrated that relational mentoring supports the resettlement of UASYP in Scotland, helping them to overcome socio-spatial, temporal and ontological liminalities, which were barriers to resettlement. The findings suggest that relational mentoring was a stepping stone to resettlement. It provided three functions: developmental, acculturative and socio-emotional, which helped young people to develop the confidence and security needed to establish ontological security in Scotland. However, the study also challenged static integration discourse, debunking assumptions about the direction of care from old to new Scots in supporting resettlement processes. Rather the study recognises the role of peers, co-ethnic ties, fellow new Scots and transnational ties in supporting the resettlement processes of UASYP. While this study is novel and timely, my hope is that it is not just a standalone piece of research. Rather, my desire is that it generates a new wave of interest in the potential of relational mentoring to support the resettlement of UASYP, to promote intercultural learning between new and old Scots and the development of critical consciousness. The following four recommendations have emerged from findings of the study and are intended to improve policy and practice in relation to UASYP. They are a call to action to policymakers, practitioners and future researchers.

Recommendation 1: Policies should consider the unique needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

Policies which include children and young people like GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2022), The Promise (Scottish Government, n.d-b) and *The New Scots Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018: 2024) need to factor in the unique way that UASYP experience time and relationships. The unique needs of UASYP, including their experiences of trauma and their developmental liminality, are mostly missing from Scottish policies. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is a Scottish policy framework for ‘promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people’ (Scottish Government, n.d-a), however the unique needs of UASYP are absent from this. Similarly in The Promise (Scottish Government n.d-b), which sets out Scotland’s commitment to care-experienced young people, the unique needs of UASYP are also missing. Policies relating to the integration of asylum seekers in the UK tend to be adult-centric and, while UASYP are included in the *New*

Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024), this is mostly in relation to normative ideas around academic achievement. The policy context around UASYP relies on static ideas about integration, identity and belonging (Chase & Allsopp, 2020), which ignores the liminal spaces that young people occupy and the complex socio-political context of their lives. The *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) assumes Eurocentric life course transitions including employment and education as being successful markers of ‘integration’, negating young people’s disrupted educational journey and the structural barriers which impact on young people’s learning. It also assumes Eurocentric ideals around childhood, assuming that UASYP are ‘overwhelmingly dependent’ (Rosen *et al.*, 2021: 1650) on the care of adults, ignoring the role of kinship and peer support networks. Policies need to recognise the unique needs of UASYP, the liminal spaces they occupy and the caring relations they engage in, which may impact on their ability to resettle into Scottish communities.

Recommendation 2: More funding and resources should be provided to deliver a variety of different dyadic, group and peer mentoring and befriending programme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

The heterogeneity of mentoring relationships that UASYP avail of, outlined throughout the thesis, indicate that different types of mentoring relationships are required at different times, depending on needs, interest and place on the asylum journey. As per the reconceptualised typology of relational mentoring advanced in the study, the definition of mentoring should be broadened to account for the way in which young people experience these varying mentoring relations. More funding is needed to provide different types of relational mentoring provision for UASYP, including cross-cultural dyadic mentoring, group programmes and peer mentoring. Funding for mentoring could be broadened to include models of engagement like peer mentoring and group participation programmes, which provide multi-directional care and learning. Stakeholders in the study reported that provision of relational mentoring for UASYP across Scotland was patchy and ad hoc. There was a lack of adequate funding and resources needed to provide more structured dyadic programmes with UASYP. More funding is needed to be able to adequately resource programmes, which would be in turn provide sufficient safeguarding for young people and peer mentors. Relational mentoring should be developed in conjunction with existing service provision for UASYP, ensuring that

young people have access to more structured dyadic models, as well as other group and peer mentoring models. In setting up mentoring programmes, practitioners should be attentive to this wider social ecology around young people and the way that these relations are influenced by wider structures.

Recommendation 3: Relational mentoring provision should be universal across Scotland, providing programmes that are culturally sensitive to ensure better individualised support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

Relational mentoring provision for UASYP needs to be universal across Scotland, ensuring that young people have access to programmes regardless of where they live. While the NSRIS (Scottish Government, 2018; 2024) recognises that mentoring and befriending are key strategies in supporting the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, there is a distinct lack of consistent and uniform provision for UASYP. With the rise of austerity measures and with the increasing pressures on social care practitioners, the role of relational mentoring will likely play a crucial part in bolstering the gaps in social care provision. As this study has shown, relational mentoring provided much needed nurture, care and a lighter touch support for UASYP, helping young people to develop confidence and security, providing a stepping stone to resettlement.

However, relational mentoring programmes for UASYP need to be culturally appropriate. This means providing a range of different options for young people including dyadic models, group models and peer models to account for young people's preferences, their needs and their place on the asylum journey. UASYP should have access to a culturally diverse pool of mentors, with the option of accessing different kinds of mentors/befrienders including peers with lived experience of the asylum process, Scottish peers and older adults. In setting up mentoring programmes, practitioners should be attentive to this wider social ecology around young people and the way that mentoring relations are influenced by wider structures. As per the reconceptualised typology of relational mentoring advanced in the study, the development of mentoring programmes should be attentive to the dynamics of power, in particular how race and gender play out in mentoring relationships. Practitioners and funders should adopt an intersectional perspective to recognise how race and gender intersect with the mentoring processes. The

study found that language around mentoring and befriending could be problematic. Future programmes should be mindful of this and care needs to be taken around how to explain the concepts to young people. There was sometimes a discrepancy between institutional definitions of mentoring and befriending and how young people understand the concept. The study proposes that relational mentoring is a more inclusive term to describe mentoring processes with UASYP.

Recommendation 4: There should be more long-term evaluation of the benefits of relational mentoring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

More studies are needed to evaluate the long-term benefits of relational mentoring for UASYP. To date there have been few empirical studies looking at the benefits of relational mentoring for UASYP in the UK and more specifically in Scotland. More applied research studies are needed, bringing together researchers with practitioners, to evidence how relational mentoring supports the short and long-term resettlement of UASYP. Indicators of successful integration in the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2017; 2018; 2024) include health, education and employment. Further longitudinal quantitative research is needed to explore how relational mentoring supports these long-term integration outcomes, as well as more qualitative enquiry to understand the way that young people experience relational mentoring.

9.6 Reflective statement

Research of this nature is both challenging and rewarding. Given that the study has occupied so much of my time, energy and thoughts over the past four years, I wanted to conclude with some general reflections. If I were to do the research again, I would no doubt do some things differently. I started with some unchecked assumptions about mentoring and befriending as being automatically positive. Throughout the process, I developed a criticality, which will no doubt be helpful in future endeavours. The changes in my thinking developed slowly, organically and over time. In retrospect, I wish that I had documented these more fully, to evidence more precisely how my thinking evolved over time. The process of analysing data for this study was messy and non-linear. Analysis took place over the course of a few years, it was iterative, and it incorporated a mixture of both inductive and deductive analysis. In the process of writing up the study, I often struggled to pinpoint exactly when my thinking

around mentoring and befriending changed and how this impacted on decisions in the research process. This has made me reflect on the need to exercise a more systematic approach to data analysis, keeping a more detailed audit trail, not only of my analysis process, but of how my thinking changed throughout the process.

Knowing the difficulties of gaining access to this niche group, I would ensure that partnerships with vested stakeholders were in place from the outset, perhaps even before applying for funding. Having the input of key stakeholders from the start would, not only mitigate access issues, but would give opportunities to engage in using creative research methods, which tend to be more time consuming and involved. Even with these partnerships in place, I would factor in additional time for recruitment, partnership building and relationship building with young people to facilitate trust-building, which is integral in research of this nature. Given the emotionally challenging nature of research of this kind, I would also factor in time and opportunities to engage in reflexivity and debriefing with colleagues. I reflect that duty of care to myself as a researcher is equally as important as ensuring a duty of care to research participants.

Overall, the process of conducting this study has been incredibly fulfilling and worthwhile, both professionally and personally. I have enjoyed the opportunity to hone my research skills, to learn new ways of working and to become a more critical, reflexive researcher. My PhD journey has given me some wonderful opportunities to engage with other scholars in this narrow field of research. I took part in an Overseas Institutional Visit with the University of Girona, where I was able to share the findings of my research and learn from others. At times the journey has been uncomfortable and pushed me out of my comfort zone. However, negotiating the practical and ethical challenges associated with research of this kind has also made me a more adaptable, patient and resilient researcher.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical approval

Approval: UEC21/73 Sime/Walker/Fawcett: The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors

Thu 30/09/2021

ETHICAL AND SPONSORSHIP APPROVAL

UEC21/73 Sime/Walker/Fawcett: The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors

I can confirm that the University Ethics Committee (UEC) has approved this protocol and appropriate insurance cover and sponsorship have now also been confirmed.

I remind you that the UEC must be informed of any changes you plan to make to the research project, so that it has the opportunity to consider them. Any change of staffing within the research team should be reported to UEC.

The UEC also expects you to report back on the progress and outcome of your project, with an account of anything which may prompt ethical questions for any similar future project and with anything else that you feel the Committee should know.

Any adverse event that occurs during an investigation must be reported as quickly as possible to UEC and, within the required time frame, to any appropriate external agency.

The University agrees to act as sponsor of the above mentioned project subject to the following conditions:

1. That the project obtains/has and continues to have University/Departmental Ethics Committee approval.
2. That the project is carried out according to the project protocol.
3. That the project continues to be covered by the University's insurance cover.
4. That the project complies with Scottish Government restrictions and University guidance in relation to Covid-19 procedures and permissions.
5. That the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services is immediately notified of any change to the project protocol or circumstances which may affect the University's risk assessment of the project.
6. That the project starts within 12 months of the date of this letter.

As sponsor of the project the University has responsibilities under the Scottish Executive's Research Governance Framework for Health and Community Care. You should ensure you are aware of those responsibilities and that the project is carried out according to the Research Governance Framework.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you success with this project.

Ethical Approval Part 2

Approval: UEC22/52 Sime/Walker/Fawcett: The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors

Fri 24/06/2022

ETHICAL AND SPONSORSHIP APPROVAL

UEC22/52 Sime/Walker/Fawcett: The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors

I can confirm that the University Ethics Committee (UEC) has approved this protocol and appropriate insurance cover and sponsorship have now also been confirmed.

I remind you that the UEC must be informed of any changes you plan to make to the research project, so that it has the opportunity to consider them. Any change of staffing within the research team should be reported to UEC.

The UEC also expects you to report back on the progress and outcome of your project, with an account of anything which may prompt ethical questions for any similar future project and with anything else that you feel the Committee should know.

Any adverse event that occurs during an investigation must be reported as quickly as possible to UEC and, within the required time frame, to any appropriate external agency.

The University agrees to act as sponsor of the above mentioned project subject to the following conditions:

1. That the project obtains/has and continues to have University/Departmental Ethics Committee approval.
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5. That the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services is immediately notified of any change to the project protocol or circumstances which may affect the University's risk assessment of the project.
6. That the project starts within 12 months of the date of this letter.

As sponsor of the project the University has responsibilities under the Scottish Executive's Research Governance Framework for Health and Community Care. You should ensure you are aware of those responsibilities and that the project is carried out according to the Research Governance Framework.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you success with this project.

Appendix B: Participant information sheets

Participant Information Sheets- Young People

Title of the study: How does mentoring help young unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in Scotland?

Introduction

This is a project with young asylum seekers who live in Scotland. It is run by me, Laureen Walker- I am a postgraduate research student at the Strathclyde University in Glasgow.

What is the aim of this investigation?

The project aims to understand how mentoring can help young people.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you are a young seeking-asylum minor in Scotland, and you have experience of being in a mentoring relationship.

Why would you take part?

By taking part in the study, you will share your ideas on what helps young people when they arrive alone in Scotland.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you if you want to take part or not. You do not have to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to change your mind about participating in the project at any time.

What will you do in the project?

- You will have a meeting with me that will take in a place of your choice: a coffee shop, a local community centre etc
- After our meeting, you will also be invited to take part in a group project that will use creative methods (such a film, photography, art etc) to design an ideal mentoring/befriending programme.

What happens to the information in the project?

I would like to audio record our meetings, with your permission, so I don't have to write down everything you say, but I will not use your real name in my research report. Information you give will be stored safely in the university system called OneDrive and deleted after 3 years once the project has finished. The information you give may also be stored in the UK Data Archive, for other researchers to access. You can decide if you would like this information to be stored in the UK Data archive or not.

Any personal details like name, age, gender, country of origin etc. will be changed, so you will remain anonymous.

What you say will be confidential, however if you mention that you or anyone else is being harmed or at risk of harm, I will have to pass this information onto a relevant service, but I will speak to you first about this.

The information you provide will be used create a guide for organisations who want to set up mentoring projects with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in the future. I will also be writing a document for services and people making policies about the benefits of mentoring for young people.

The information you give will be kept safe under the Data Protection Act (2018). For more information about this, please read our [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#).

What happens next?

If you want to be involved, I will ask you to sign the form named consent Form attached here and together we can find then a time that suits you best to speak.

If you decide not to be involved in the project, thanks for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you have questions, you can email me at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk or by phone on 07425 464 270.

If you have concerns about the research and want to contact someone other than me, you can contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
University of Strathclyde
Graham Hills Building
50 George Street
Glasgow
G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707

Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

If you need any extra support while taking part in the project, who can you contact?

If you are feeling down at any time and need to speak to someone, there are many places you can get help.



www.breathingspace.scot

Phone: 0800 83 85 87 (Monday to Thursday, 6pm – 2am;
Friday 6pm to Monday 6am)

Breathing Space is for people over 16 who are experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression. They offer a free, confidential telephone helpline if you need to speak to someone. It is possible to request an interpreter also.

www.samaritans.org

Phone: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

SAMARITANS

Samaritans offer a free, confidential telephone service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for anyone who is feeling low and needs to speak to someone.



www.samh.org.uk

Phone: 0141 530 1000

Email: enquire@samh.org.uk

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health. They offer information advice and resources to help people who are suffering from a mental health problem.

Participant Information Sheet- Peer Mentor

Title of the study: How does mentoring help young unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors?

Introduction

This is a project with young asylum seekers and refugees aged 18-25 who now live in Scotland. It is run by me, Laureen Walker- I am a PhD student at the Strathclyde University in Glasgow.

What is the aim of this investigation?

The project aims to understand how mentoring can help young people.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the study because you are a mentor/befriender supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in Scotland.

Why would you take part?

By taking part in the research, you will help with a new project about young asylum seekers living in Scotland. The research will help to understand how mentoring/befriending helps young people.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you if you want to take part or not. You do not have to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to change your mind about participating in the project at any time.

What will you do in the project?

- You will attend 1 online Zoom meeting that will be 1 hour
- Over Zoom, you will talk about what is like to be a mentor/befriender and how your volunteering helps other young people.

What happens to the information in the project?

Discussions will be audio recorded and may be video recorded, but only if you agree. Your name and identity will not be published in the final report. If direct quotations are used, your name will not be published. Information you give will be stored safely in the University of Strathclyde's approved storage space called OneDrive. This will be deleted after 3 years once the project has finished. The information you give may be stored in an archive called [UK Data Archive](#) for other researchers to access, however any personal details like name, country etc will be changed so you will remain anonymous. You can decide if you would like your information to be stored in the UK Data archive or not.

What you say will be confidential, however if you mention that you or anyone else is being harmed or at risk of harm, I will have to pass this information onto a relevant authority.

The information you provide will help to create a guide for organisations who want to set up mentoring projects with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in the future. It will also help in writing a document for policy makers about the benefits of mentoring for young people.

The information you give will be kept safe under the Data Protection Act (2018). more information about this, please read our [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#).

What happens next?

If you want to be involved, I will ask you to sign a consent form and together we can agree a time that suits you best to speak.

If you decide not to be involved in the project, thanks for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you have questions, you can contact me at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk.

Laureen's contact details:

Laureen Walker
University of Strathclyde
laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk

If you have concerns about the research and want to contact someone other than me, you can contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
University of Strathclyde
Graham Hills Building
50 George Street
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www.samh.org.uk

Phone: 0141 530 1000

Email: enquire@samh.org.uk

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health. They offer information advice and resources to help people who are suffering from a mental health problem.

Participant Information Sheet- Young Advisor

Title of the study: How does mentoring help young unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors?

Introduction

This is a project with young asylum seekers and refugees aged 18-25 who now live in Scotland. It is run by me, Laureen Walker- I am a PhD student at the Strathclyde University in Glasgow.

What is the aim of this investigation?

The project aims to understand how mentoring can help young people. It is important to understand the impact of mentoring so that projects will continue to receive funding.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to become a project advisor because you are aged 18-25, with asylum seeker/refugee status and you live in Scotland. I need your help to plan the research and to get the right messages across to young people.

Why would you take part?

By taking part in the research, you will help with a new project about young asylum seekers living in Scotland. You will meet new people, learn about research and gain volunteering experience. You will also get a £25 Amazon voucher if you attend all 3 sessions, a certificate of participation and a reference at the end.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you if you want to take part or not. You do not have to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to change your mind about participating in the project at any time.

What will you do in the project?

- You will attend 3 Zoom meetings between August and December 2021.
- You will talk about your experiences of being an asylum seeker/refugee in Scotland. You will also give your opinion on the project materials & activities.
- You will keep in touch via email to give advice between meetings.
- You will be an ambassador- tell other young people about the project and encourage them to get involved.

What happens to the information in the project?

Everything you say will be confidential, your name and identity will not be published in the final report.

What happens next?

If you want to be involved, I will ask you to sign a consent form. The first meeting will take place online in August or September 2021 and I will be in contact soon with details on the first Zoom meeting.

If you decide not to be involved in the project, thanks for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Laureen's contact details:

Laureen Walker
University of Strathclyde
laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk

If you have questions, you can contact me at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk. If you have concerns about the research, you can contact Dr Dan Heap, Chair of Ethics Committee, at dan.heap@strath.ac.uk

If you need any extra support while taking part in the project, who can you contact?

If you are feeling down at any time and need to speak to someone, there are many places you can get help.



www.breathingspace.scot

Phone: 0800 83 85 87 (Monday to Thursday, 6pm – 2am; Friday 6pm to Monday 6am)

Breathing Space is for people over 16 who are experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression. They offer a free, confidential telephone helpline if you need to speak to someone. It is possible to request an interpreter also.

www.samaritans.org

Phone: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

SAMARITANS

Samaritans offer a free, confidential telephone service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for anyone who is feeling low and needs to speak to someone.



www.samh.org.uk

Phone: 0141 530 1000

Email: enquire@samh.org.uk

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health. They offer information advice and resources to help people who are suffering from a mental health problem.

Participant Information Sheet- Practitioners and Service Managers

Title of the study: The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors.

Introduction

This is a research project about how unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors experience mentoring programmes in Scotland. It is being conducted by a researcher at the University of Strathclyde.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The purpose of the investigation is to explore how mentoring helps unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to build resilience. In particular, this research is concerned with how young people see themselves, what challenges young people face and if and how mentoring allows young people to overcome these challenges. It is also interested in exploring the experiences of mentors themselves.

Why have you been invited to take part?

I want to talk to people who are close to and/or who work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors. You have been invited to take part because you are a professional or community leader working with unaccompanied minors. I am aiming to interview around 15 practitioners with direct knowledge of working with unaccompanied minors.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you are free to change your mind about taking part at any point.

What will you do in the project?

The research consists of several different stages:

- Scoping interviews with professionals and community practitioners.
- Interviews with mentors to understand their experience of being a mentor and supporting unaccompanied minors.
- Participatory research with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors, to explore how young people experience mentoring relationships and how mentoring enables young people to overcome challenges.

In the interview, I will ask you questions about the programme you work on and how it supports unaccompanied minors, how mentors and mentees are recruited and supported, barriers to participation, organisational challenges and how mentoring outcomes are measured. I anticipate that interviews will take around 1 hour.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

I do not anticipate any risks to you in taking part in this research. Most of the questions that I want to ask you are generic and will revolve around how your programme/organisation supports young unaccompanied minors. You are free at any time to choose not to answer a particular question or to take time out from the interview if needed.

What happens to the information in the project?

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential, unless anything you say makes me concerned about your welfare or the welfare of a child or young person. All data will be anonymised and stored in password protected files and/or a locked filing cabinet. Once transcribed, anonymised data will be used for analysis in the project and also deposited online through UK Data Archive with open access, for other researchers to access. I will ensure the data is fully anonymised for this purpose.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

What happens next?

If you are happy to be involved in the project, you will be asked to confirm that you give your consent to take part. This involves signing a consent form for interviews.

If you decide not to get involved in the project, I am grateful for your time in reading this Information Sheet. Please let other colleagues know, if you think they could participate instead.

Researcher contact details:

Laureen Walker
University of Strathclyde
laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk

If you have questions about the research you can contact me at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk. This investigation was granted ethical approval by the Ethics Committees at the University of Strathclyde. If you have concerns about the conduct of the research, you can contact Dr Dan Heap, Chair of Ethics Committee, at dan.heap@strath.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet- Mentor

Title of the study: The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors.

Introduction

This is a research project about how unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors experience mentoring programmes in Scotland. It is being conducted by the myself, Laureen Walker, a doctoral researcher at the University of Strathclyde.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The purpose of the investigation is to explore how mentoring helps unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to build resilience. In particular this research is concerned with how young people see themselves, what challenges young people face and if and how mentoring allows young people to overcome these challenges. It is also interested in exploring the experiences of mentors and what they get out volunteering.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you are a mentor or befriender supporting unaccompanied minors in Scotland. I am aiming to interview around 15 mentors/befrienders with direct experience of working with unaccompanied minors.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you are free to change your mind about taking part at any point.

What will you do in the project?

This is the second phase of the research which will involve:

- Interviewing mentors/befrienders who support unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in Scotland

The interview will take place online via Zoom. In the interview, I will ask you questions about the mentoring/befriending programme you volunteer on, your role as a mentor/befriender and how it supports unaccompanied minors and what you get out of volunteering. I anticipate that interviews will take around 1 hour.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

I do not anticipate any risks to you in taking part in this research. Most of the questions that I want to ask you are generic and will revolve around your volunteering role and how it supports young unaccompanied minors. You are free at any time to choose not to answer a particular question or to take time out from the interview if needed.

What happens to the information in the project?

Your responses to my questions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality will only be breached if you disclose a risk of serious or imminent harm to a young person or yourself.

Interviews will be recorded and stored safely and securely in the University of Strathclyde's online storage OneDrive. Data will be destroyed three years after the project has finished.

If direct quotations are used from your interview, all potentially identifiable information will be removed from transcripts and the final dissertation and additional reports or publications. Since this research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, data collected may be stored in the [UK Data Archive](#) so that other researchers can request access to it. All identifying information will be

removed from transcripts and all transcripts will be fully anonymised. You can decide if you want the transcript from your interview to be stored in the UK Data Archive or not.

The information you provide will help inform a mentoring Toolkit for organisations who wish to set up mentoring projects with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in the future. The information will also help inform a briefing document for policy makers on best practice in setting up mentoring projects with unaccompanied minors.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act (2018). All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. For more information about this, please read our [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#)

What happens next?

If you are happy to be involved in the project, you will be asked to confirm that you give your consent to take part. This involves signing a consent form for interviews.

If you decide not to get involved in the project, I am grateful for your time in reading this Information Sheet. Please let other colleagues know if you think they could participate instead. If you have questions about the research, you can contact me at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk.

Researcher contact details:

Laureen Walker
University of Strathclyde
laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk

This research was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the research, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
University of Strathclyde
Graham Hills Building
50 George Street
Glasgow
G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707
Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

Appendix C: Consent forms

Consent Forms-Young Advisors

How does mentoring help young unaccompanied minors in Scotland?

I understand that:

- My participation is totally my choice. I don't have to take part, and I can stop taking part at any time, for any reason.
- I don't need to answer any questions I don't want to, or share anything I don't want to share.
- Data will be stored securely for two years, after which time it will be disposed of safely.

Choose the answers you are comfortable with. I am happy...

	Yes	No
to take part and speak to the researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
for notes to be taken	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
for it to be voice recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
for photos to be taken of what we do (not of me)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
for photos to be taken of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you agree to take part, please:

Print your name clearly in **BLOCK CAPITALS** on the line below:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Extra options:

If you want to receive a report on the research, write your email here:

-
1. If you are happy for me to share your words with other people, without using your real name, please tick the box(es) below.

I'm happy for my words from the sessions with Lauren to also be shared in:

	Yes	No
Project publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Media articles and blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training materials for services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent Form- Young People

The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors.

Name of organisation: School of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Strathclyde

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Yes No

Taking Part

I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above project.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and audio recorded.

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.

Use of the information I provide for this project only

I understand my personal details will not be revealed to people outside the project.

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.

*Please choose **one** of the following two options:*

I would like my real name used in the above

I would **not** like my real name to be used in the above.

Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive in transcript format.

I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

So I can use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to [name of researcher].

Name of participant [printed] Signature _____
Date

Researcher [printed] Signature _____
Date

Appendix H: Consent Form- Peer Mentors

Consent form for Peer Mentors: How does mentoring help young unaccompanied minors in Scotland?

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being audio recorded. I can decide if I want to be video recorded or not.

I understand that my participation is my choice. I don't have to take part, and I can stop taking part at any time, for any reason.

I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and no information that identifies me (name, country etc) will be made publicly available.

I understand that the words I share may be used in publications, reports, web pages.

I understand that anonymised data (i.e., data that do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn after six months from the date of the interview.

I understand that the information I give will be stored securely for three years in the University of Strathclyde's online storage system called OneDrive. It will be deleted after 3 years.

I understand that other researchers may have access to the information I give, but only if I agree to it.

If you agree to take part, please:

Print your name clearly in BLOCK CAPITALS on the line below:

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Extra options:

I agree to be video recorded (Tick either Yes or No)

Yes

No

I agree for the information I provide to be stored at the UK Data Archive, so that other researchers can access it. My identity will be anonymised, and all identifiable information removed.

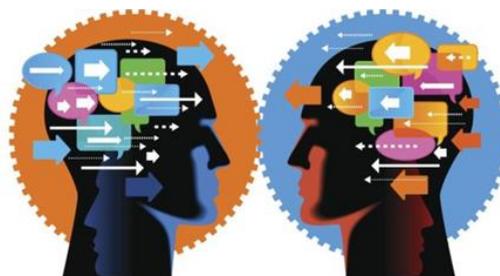
Yes

No

Appendix D: Recruitment adverts

Young Advisor Recruitment Advert

Could you be a Project Advisor?



How does mentoring help young unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors? This is a project with young asylum seekers and refugees aged 18-25 who now live in Scotland. It aims to understand if mentoring can help young people to deal with challenges and to reach their goals. It is important to understand the impact of mentoring so that mentoring projects will continue to receive funding. It is run by me, Laureen Walker- I am a PhD student at the Strathclyde University in Glasgow. I am looking for 6 to 8 advisors who can help me plan a project on mentoring. I need your help to get the right messages across to young people.

What will you do as Project Advisor:

- Attend 3 Zoom meetings between August and December 2021.
- At the meetings, talk about your experiences of being an asylum seeker/refugee in Scotland. You will also give your opinion on the project materials & activities.
- Keep in touch via email to give advice between meetings.
- Be an ambassador- tell other young people about the project and encourage them to get involved.

Why would you do it:

- To help with a new project about young asylum seekers living in Scotland.
- To meet new people and learn about research.
- You'll get a £25 voucher if you attend all 3 sessions, a certificate of participation and a reference at the end.
- To gain volunteering experience.

To qualify, you must be aged 18-25, with either asylum seeker/refugee status and now living in Scotland. I am particularly interested to involve young people who have experience of being either a mentor or mentee. You'll also need to be able to attend Zoom meetings. The first meeting will take place online on in August or September 2021.

If you are interested, email Laureen at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk

Recruitment Advert- Young People



How does mentoring help unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in Scotland? is a project with young asylum seekers who live alone in Scotland. It is run by a researcher at Strathclyde University in Glasgow.

What will you do as a project participant?

- Attend a 1-hour meeting with Laureen at a place you would like to meet: a café in your local area or a community centre (travel expenses will be paid, but you must be able to travel their independently)
- At the meeting, talk about your mentoring relationship and what you like about it/how it helps
- You will also be given the opportunity to take part in group work sessions with other young people like yourself
- In the group work sessions, you will learn filmmaking skills and produce a short film about your ideal mentoring programme

Why would you do it:

- To help with a unique project about young asylum seekers living alone in Scotland
- To meet new people
- You'll get a £25 voucher for taking part
- You will get to learn how to make a film

To qualify, you must be aged around 15-20 years old, with asylum seeker status living alone in Scotland. The first meeting will take place in August 2022.

Interested? Email Laureen at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk or text 07425 464 270

Closing date: 31st July 2022

Facebook Advert



Are you a young asylum-seeking aged around 15-20 years old?

Do you live alone in Scotland?

Do you have a mentor?

Do you have an hour to speak to a student from Strathclyde University about your experience of being a mentee?

You will get a £25 voucher for taking part

Interested? Email Laureen at laureen.walker@strath.ac.uk or text 07425 464 270

Appendix E: Young advisory group project plan

How does mentoring help young unaccompanied minors in Scotland?

The three 1.5 hour-long sessions outlined below will involve young advisors between September and December 2021. Each session is made up of two parts: firstly it will focus on young people and their experiences of being young asylum seeker/refugees in Scotland. With that in mind, the second half of the session will shift focus to how this research can best recruit, engage and involve young people in the research.

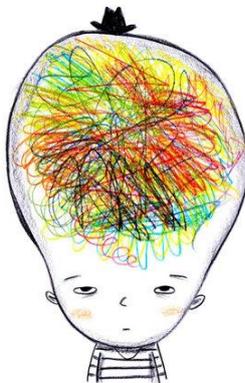
The themes to be explored over 3 sessions include:

Session 1: Introductions, getting to know each other, understanding the project, ground rules and working agreement, introduction to mentoring/ recruitment of young people.

Session 2: Who are you? Challenges that asylum seekers face, community connections and who supports young people/Engagement of young people in research.

Session 3: Where do you want to go? Exploring hopes and aspirations for the future. Barriers to participation and how mentoring can help/Dissemination activities

Which picture best represents you?



Introductions

Which picture best represents you and why.

Laureen to explain project.

Challenges young people face and strengths of young people

-What are some of challenges that asylum seekers face/UMs face

-What surprised you most?

-What are the biggest barriers to integration?

Introduction to mentoring

-who has had a big influence on your life, in what way did they help you? Feedback

-How do you define a mentor? Peer/colleague/older adult? Different types of mentors in different contexts

-In what way do mentors help?

Relationships and Connections: Who helps you

-The second part of the activity involves exploring the different kinds of connections young people have:

-Who do you go to if you have a problem with your phone? (Practical help)

-Who do you go to when you are feeling lonely or need to talk? (Emotional help)

-Who do you go to if you have a problem with your housing? (Advocacy help)

Who do y.p engage with? School, community, institutions and how do these support y.p.

Explore the different aspects of mentoring- formal/informal/ is it culturally dependent?

Different kinds of support both formal and informal?

Young people's aspirations for the future

What does a good future look like for young people? Are there common themes running through y.p's aspirations for the future?

Barriers to participation: what prevents y.p from being able to participate/reach their goals. How can these barriers be reduced?

How can mentors help young people?

What does the perfect mentoring programme look like? Length? Variety of mentors?

The research:

Recruitment of y.p

Following on from the previous activity, this activity will consider how best to target and recruit young people in the research.

-Where to target, how to target and youth proofing leaflets/posters

Research Design

Following on from the previous activity, this activity will consider the best research design to encourage the participation and ensure the project is young person friendly.

Where should it take place?

What format should it take? How to make it participatory?

What needs to be in place to ensure belonging?

Dissemination activities

Following on from the previous activity, this activity will consider the best way to disseminate project activities.

How can this research best inform policy? How to youth proof dissemination activities?

Appendix F: Interview schedules

Interview schedule- Stakeholder

The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors.

- Introduce the project, check participants have read Information sheet and if they have any questions.
- Explain focus on young unaccompanied minors and how they experience mentoring relationships alongside the experiences of mentors and what they gain from being a mentor.
- Clarify confidentiality of recording and use of data- including depository online of all anonymised transcripts (informant to sign Consent Form in advance).

Background of interviewee

Tell me a bit about your organisation/role in the organisation?

Prompt: how does it involve unaccompanied minors/what services does it provide?

Needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors

Tell me a bit about the young people you work with/ who uses your service?

Prompts for geographic spread: where do people live, nationalities, socio-economic background, levels of education etc.

What do you see as the main issues facing young unaccompanied minors in Scotland?

Prompts: Personal, relational, structural? Destitution, stigma, language barriers, lack of community, specific knowledge, poverty, trafficking, gangs, home cultural practices, social isolation.

Do you know about the New Scots Integration Strategy (2018-2022)? How does your programme fit into the wider New Scots Integration Strategy?

Prompts: What is your understanding of integration and how does mentoring support this? Language acquisition, cultural competence, out-group friendships etc.

Mentoring: About the Mentee

Can you tell me about the mentoring programme that you work on? How do young people access the service, how are mentor/mentee matched and how long do mentorships last?

Prompts: Formal/informal, format, goals of programmes, practicalities.

Is there a referral process or do they self-refer? Is it over/under subscribed?

Interests, needs, availability?

Time-bound, ongoing/ Weekly, biweekly, monthly etc

-What do young people expect from a mentor and what are the barriers for young people accessing mentoring services in Scotland?

Prompts: Are there different cultural expectations of mentoring? How do you explain it to young people?

Transport, costs, information, language barriers

-How do you measure the success of mentoring/the mentoring relationship?

Prompts: Hard or soft outcomes? Theory of change? Baseline surveys, skills audits, length of relationship etc.

Mentoring: About the mentor

How are mentors recruited and what is the recruitment process?

Prompts: targeted recruitment/generic volunteer centres/word of mouth

Process- formal/informal interviews, training, safeguarding, supervision, exit interview

What is the main demographic of volunteers recruited/main motivation for mentors wanting to volunteer and what are the challenges?

Prompts: age, ethnicity, education, background etc.

Experience, altruistic reasons, sense of duty

Time, availability, emotional burn out

What factors make for a successful mentor?

Prompts: Volunteer age, experience, motivation, time etc.

What are the biggest challenges in retaining volunteers/ What are the most common causes of relationship breakdown/attrition from the programme? What are some elements of good practice when it comes to volunteers?

Prompts: Continual recruitment, high turnover, support needs

Expectations, volunteer burn out, relationship breakdown,

incentives, recognition, nomination for awards, celebration events

Mentoring Outcomes

How is success measured?

Prompts: Positive relationship, positive outcomes of mentee, time of relationship? Measurement: baseline surveys, skills audits, feedback etc.

To what extent do mentoring programmes help young people overcome the challenges they face/acculturate/adapt psychologically or developmentally?

Prompts: Personal and social development, civic participation, interpersonal relationships

acquiring cultural competence/language acquisition/sense of belonging/inter-ethnic friendships

Wellbeing, self-esteem, positive mental health

Social relationships, education, civic participation

Organisational Challenges

Organisationally, what are some of the challenges you face in running a mentoring programme?

Prompts: Lack of consistent funding, training for staff, complex nature of client group.

What do you see the wider community benefits being as a result of the mentoring/befriending programme?

Prompts: Increased community cohesion, less racism, hate crime.

Future Priorities

What are your future priorities of your programme/organisation?

Prompts: Is your programme subject to funding restrictions? Plans for expansion etc.

Is there anything else you would like to add? Thank you.

Interview Schedule- Social Workers

The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors.

Background of interviewee

Tell me a bit about your organisation/role in the organisation?

Needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors

Tell me a bit about the programme you work on and how it supports UMs.

What are the demographic characteristics of the young people you work with?

What do you see as the main issues facing young unaccompanied minors in Scotland?

Are there challenges unique to young unaccompanied minors/opposed to adult asylum seekers?

Do you know about the New Scots Integration Strategy (2018-2022)? How does your programme fit into the wider New Scots Integration Strategy?

About the mentoring programme

Can you tell me about the mentoring programme that you work on? How you identified a need for it?

How do you explain mentoring to young people? Is it culturally specific?

What do young people expect from a mentor and what are the barriers for young people accessing mentoring services in Scotland?

How do you measure the success of mentoring/the mentoring relationship?

How are mentors recruited and what is the recruitment process?

What is the main demographic of volunteers recruited/main motivation for mentors wanting to volunteer and what are the challenges?

How are mentors supported in the programme?

What factors make for a successful mentor?

What are the biggest challenges in retaining volunteers/ What are the most common causes of relationship breakdown/attrition from the programme?

What are some elements of good practice when it comes to volunteers?

Mentoring Outcomes

How do you measure the success of mentoring?

To what extent do mentoring programmes help young people overcome the challenges they face/acclurate/adapt psychologically or developmentally?

To what extent does mentoring help young people to integrate?
What changes have you seen in young people since starting the programme?

What do you see as some best practice in mentoring?

What do you see the wider community benefits being as a result of the mentoring/befriending programme?

Organisational Challenges

Organisationally, what are some of the challenges you face in running a mentoring programme?

Future Priorities

What are your future priorities of your programme/organisation?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you.

Interview Schedule- Young people

Sessions with Befriendeds/Mentees

There will be two stages to data collection with young people: the first stage will be individual sessions with young people and the second stage will be three group-work sessions. Young people from the first part will be invited to take part in the second part, however it is expected that some young people may drop out after the first sessions.

Part 1: Individual interviews

The purpose of these sessions is two-fold. First is relationship building since feedback from the first Stage of the project, completed between Oct 2021- March 2021 with both young advisors and service managers indicate that relationship building with young people is key. The second purpose is to explore what challenges young people face in Scotland and who or what supports them. In particular, this will focus on the role of mentoring in supporting young people.

Feedback from young advisors from Stage 1 of the research has been analysed and the main findings were:

- Not to do sessions online because they are too formal and uncomfortable for young people
- Sessions should take place in a public space, in a place of young people's choice: a café, a community centre etc. This allows young people to feel more comfortable.
- Methods could include: walking interviews, non-structured interviews while sitting in a café etc
- Flashcards may be used as prompts with English on one side and young people's native language on the other.
- Young people should be given the choice to take part in group work sessions

Themes to be discussed in the first session include:

Introductions

Can you tell me your name, age, country of origin etc?

Why did you pick this place? What do you like about it?

Icebreaker: Tell me something you like, something you dislike and something you would like to learn. Researcher to start.

Young people's experiences of being in Scotland

How long they have been in Scotland?

What do you like about Scotland?

What surprised you most about Scotland?

What are the biggest differences between Scotland and your home country?

What are some of the challenges of living here?

Support Networks

Who are your biggest support networks?

Who are the top 3 people who help you most?

Who do you go to if you have a practical problem (phone breaks etc)

Who do you go to if you are feeling sad/want to talk to someone?

Who do you go to if you have a want information about how things work in Scotland?

Resilience

What helps you be strong when bad things happen?

Prompts: Religion, friends, social workers etc

Can you think of someone who has had a big influence on your life and why?

Mentoring

How long have you been engaging with your mentor?

What sort of activities do you do with your mentor?

How does your mentor help you?

What words would you use to describe your mentor? (A friend, an older brother/sister etc)

What is the difference between your mentor/other friends/peers? What unique role does your mentor play?

Acculturation

Do you have local Scottish friends? If not why?

What would help you to get to know Scotland more?

What would help you to get to know young people from Scotland?

Does your mentor help you to meet new people?

Do you feel at home in Scotland/Glasgow/Edinburgh Why or why not? What makes you feel home?

Belonging

Do you feel welcome in Scotland?

Has there ever been a time when you didn't feel welcome?

What would make you feel more welcome?

Hopes for the future

What are your hopes for the future?

What things get in the way of this?

What would help you to get there?

Interview Schedule- Mentor

The role of mentoring in building resilience in young unaccompanied minors.

Interview Schedule – Mentors

- Introduce the project, check participants have read Information sheet and if they have any questions.
- Explain focus on young unaccompanied minors and how they experience mentoring relationships alongside the experiences of mentors and what they gain from being a mentor.
- Clarify confidentiality of recording and use of data- including depository online of all anonymised transcripts (informant to sign Consent Form in advance).

Background of interviewee

Tell me a bit about yourself.

Prompts: Age, country of origin, occupation etc

About the mentoring programme

Can you tell me about the mentoring programme that you volunteer on?

Prompts: How long have you been volunteering for? How many young people have you mentored? Length of relationship etc/ Previous experience of mentoring

What was your motivation to apply for this particular role?

What do you enjoy most about mentoring?

Prompts: Relationship building, sense of purpose, helping others, learning about others

Who initiates contact and how do you plan what to do with your mentee? How would you describe your approach to supporting your mentee?

Prompts: Is the agenda led by young person or by mentor?

How would you describe your mentoring role? The top three things? Do young people have the same view? Is there ever a clash in terms of young peoples' expectations etc

What do you see as the main issues facing the young people you support?

Prompts: Personal, relational, structural? Destitution, stigma, language barriers, lack of community, specific knowledge, poverty, trafficking, gangs, home cultural practices, social isolation.

What are some of the biggest challenges from your volunteering?

Prompts: Expectations, volunteer burn out, relationship breakdown,

Have there been difficult times in the mentoring relationship? If yes, can you describe how you two worked through them? What did you learn from this?

What are the barriers for young people accessing mentoring services in Scotland?

Prompts: Are there different cultural expectations of mentoring? How do you explain it to young people? Transport, costs, information, language barriers

What is your experience of informal mentoring? Have you had a mentor yourself and has this experience impacted on how you mentor?

Mentoring: About the supporting organisation

How are you supported by the organisation? What training did you receive? What things would help you to do your role?

Are there any things missing that you would like to see?

What factors make for a successful mentor?

Prompts: Volunteer age, experience, motivation, time etc.

How important was the matching process? What criteria do you think was important when matching yourself and the young person?

Prompts: personality, interests, training, future goals, relationship building.

What characteristics are important for a good mentoring match?

Mentoring: About the mentee

Tell me a bit about the young person you work with?

Prompts for geographic spread: where do people live, nationalities, socio-economic background, etc.

Can you describe the relationship you have with (mentee)? How did you build a mentoring relationship with (young person)? What was key?

How do you navigate the language differences with your mentee?

What does a mentoring relationship mean to you?

Can you tell me about how you supported your mentee during the pandemic? Has your approach changed since the start of COVID-19? Were there any tools or strategies that you used differently from pre-COVID-19?

Mentoring Outcomes

What things have you taken from your volunteering experiences? How has it benefitted you personally?
Prompts: Awareness raising/critical consciousness/ understanding the refugee crisis/push/pull migration factors

What benefits/changes have you seen in the young person you are supporting

Prompts: Language acquisition, change in attitude, engagement with others, emotional support

Has there been changes to their view about reliability and trustworthiness of others? (you / other professionals)?

What do you see the wider community benefits being as a result of the mentoring/befriending programme?

Prompts: Increased community cohesion, less racism, hate crime.

What is your understanding of integration and how does mentoring support this?

How do you see your role as helping you people to integrate into wide Scottish society?

Prompts: Language acquisition, cultural competence, out-group friendships etc.

What do you see the wider community benefits being as a result of the mentoring/befriending programme?

Prompts: Increased community cohesion, less racism, hate crime.

What is your hope for the future of the mentoring programme?

Prompts: expansion of volunteer pool, more support for volunteers, expansion into other areas etc

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you.

Interview schedule- Peer Mentor

How does mentoring help young unaccompanied minors in Scotland?

Interview Schedule – Peer Mentors

- Introduce the project, check participants have read Information sheet and if they have any questions.
- Explain focus on young unaccompanied minors and how they experience mentoring relationships alongside the experiences of mentors and what they gain from being a mentor.
- Clarify confidentiality of recording and use of data- including depository online of all anonymised transcripts (informant to sign Consent Form in advance).

Background of interviewee

Tell me a bit about yourself, your name, age, country of origin, how long you've been in Glasgow etc.

About the mentoring programmes

Can you tell me about your role as a mentor/befriender?

- How long have you been volunteering for?
- How many young people have you mentored?
- Length of relationship etc.

Why did you want to become a mentor/befriender?
Prompts: Helping others, passing on skills/knowledge to newcomers?

What do you like about being a mentor?
Prompts: Helping others, to gain skills, to put on CV etc

What does your role as a mentor/befriender involve?
Prompt: Getting to know the city, emotional support for young people

How does the mentoring relationship work?
How often do you meet your mentor?
Where do you meet and what do you do?

Prompts: Support with getting to know the city/practical issues/emotional support

From your experience, what are some of the biggest challenges facing unaccompanied minors in Scotland?
Prompts: Personal, relational, structural? Destitution, stigma, language barriers, lack of community, specific knowledge, poverty, trafficking, gangs, home cultural practices, social isolation.

What are some of the biggest challenges from your volunteering?
Professional boundaries, emotional challenges, time

What things make it difficult for young people to take part in a mentoring programme?
Prompts: Are there different cultural expectations of mentoring? How do you explain it to young people? Transport, Time etc.

Have any young people ever dropped out of the programme and what were the reasons?

Mentoring: About the mentor

How does the organisation help you?

What training did you get?

What ongoing support do you get?

What things would help you to do your role?

Are there any things missing that you would like to see?

What factors make for a successful mentor?

Prompts: Common interests, age, experience etc, time etc.

Mentoring Outcomes

How has being a mentor helped you personally?

Prompts: Sense of purpose, rewarding, knowing what others have gone through and wanting to help

How do you think mentoring helps the mentees you work with?

Prompts: Empathy, understanding what someone has gone through, practical support, emotional support.

How does mentoring help young people to settle/adapt to Scottish life?

How would you define integration?

What are some of the barriers to integrating?

-Prompts: Language, cultural barriers,

What helped you to integrate when you came to Scotland?

-Prompts: Scottish friends, ESOL classes, social workers, mentors etc

Future Priorities

Do you think there is a need for programmes like this to continue? If so why?

What does the ideal mentoring programme look like?

Prompts: Length of relationship/Peer mentoring etc.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you.

Appendix G: Codebook

Overarching theme	Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Intersection with time	Intersection with relationships	Theoretical framework
Ontogenic/ Micro: Barriers to resettlement	Practical barriers	Living alone	Household chores/navigating new areas/navigating relationships	Time needed to learn new skills	Lack of cultural elders/need for appropriate support	Socio-spatial liminality
	Acculturative barriers	Language challenges	Language barrier/understanding norms and culture/understanding systems	Time needed to learn language	Lack of opportunities to practice language	Acculturative liminality
		Understanding norms and culture	Sexuality and relationships	Time needed to learn norms	Lack of cultural elders	Acculturative liminality
		Understanding systems	Education, health, asylum, welfare	Time needed to navigate systems	Need for appropriate support	Acculturative liminality
	Emotional barriers	Loneliness	Ties with transnational families/co-ethnic ties/local peers	Time needed to meet new people/process trauma	Need for appropriate support	Developmental liminality
		Stuck in the present	Present focussed/future focussed	Unable to visualise future	Need for appropriate support	Ontological liminality
	Psychological barriers	Trauma	Lack of appropriate provision/culturally inappropriate responses	Time needed to process trauma	Need for appropriate support	Ontological liminality
		Mental health challenges	Depression/Anxiety	Time needed to process trauma	Need for therapeutic support/signposting to services	Ontological liminality

	Developmental barriers	Personal	lack of confidence/lack of security/lack of self-awareness/lack of understanding of hobbies	Inability to move on	Inability to socialise/need for support to facilitate meeting others	Ontological liminality
		Education	New ways of learning/new ways of assessment/exams/language	Time needed to learn	ESOL classes, lack of opportunities to meet others	Ontological liminality
		Education	Lack of knowledge of job market/CVs			
Ontogenic: Opportunities to resettlement	Personal qualities	Resilience/Agency	Having gone through tough times/Being future focussed			Agency in waiting
	Acculturative	Placemaking/Home making	Practising traditions/language from home/placemaking		Carry place from country to origin to host country	Agency in waiting
	Religion	Belonging	Family-like relations/community		Opportunities to meet new people	Agency in waiting
	Digital spaces	Belonging	Learning language/cultural norms/navigating systems		Keep in touch with family back home	Agency in waiting
	Activities	Hobbies/volunteering	Football/Church/Mosque/Volunteering	Helps time pass	Opportunities to meet new people	Agency in waiting
Exo: Resettlement context	Practical	Urban/rural divide	lack of access to food/cultural practices/opportunity to practice English	Distance/time needed to access these	Opportunities to meet new people/lack thereof	Socio-spatial liminality
	Practical	Accommodation-Hotels	lack of opportunity to socialise/lack of communal spaces/inappropriate food/last minute changes	Changing accommodation at last minute	Lack of opportunity to meet peers	Socio-spatial liminality
	Practical	Accommodation-Foster families	lack of foster provision/nurture	Transient and time bound	Culturally similar foster families positive	Socio-spatial/Relational liminality

	Practical	Accommodation-Student accommodation	English language acquisition/cultural norms		Opportunity to meet local peers	Anchoring/Relational liminality
	Practical	Accommodation-Flat with co-ethnic peers	Community/cooking	Help time pass	community building/family like relations	Anchoring/Relational liminality
	Practical	Education	Lack of agency	Waiting to access education	Can't meet peers if only in ESOL	Acculturative liminality
	Social	Scottish peers	Cultural differences/lack of opportunity to meet others/timetable differences/language barrier	Time needed to develop relationships	Opportunities to meet new people	Relational liminality
	Social	Co-ethnic/migrant peers	Community/language acquisition			Relational liminality
	Social	Professional networks	Positive/Negative/Conflicting	Transient and time bound relationships/ Time needed for trust building		Relational liminality
	Social	Belonging	Transcultural belonging/Celebrating festivals/practicing mother tongue			Liminal belonging
	Social	Acceptance and rejection	Feeling welcomed/access to resources/stigma around asylum seekers/not belonging			Liminal belonging
	Structural	Legal barriers	Navigating bureaucracy/navigating asylum/lack of rights/waiting	Time waiting for asylum claim		Imposed liminality/ Temporal liminality

	Structural	Education	Lack of universal provision/Lack of ESOL provision			Imposed liminality/ Temporal liminality
	Structural	Legal	Lack of rights /lack of awareness of rights	Feeling liminal belonging		Imposed liminality
	Structural	Professional support	High caseloads/lack of time to support y.p/need for a light touch support			Imposed liminality
Meso: Sources of support for UASYP	Professional support	Social workers/guardians	Support to live alone/make friends/keep busy/discover hobbies/learn about systems and laws/give hope/mental health	Time needed for relationship/trust-building	Support to navigate liminalities	Relational liminality
	Formal mentoring	Preferences	Older mentors/Peers/Group programmes			Anchoring
		Group mentoring	Flexibility/Less need for safeguarding/Agency/Language acquisition/confidence building		Support to navigate multiple liminalities	Anchoring
		Dyadic mentoring	Better for newly arrived y.p/		Support to navigate multiple liminalities	Anchoring
		Peer mentoring	English language support/cooking for each other/understanding cultural norms/shared experience of seeking asylum/vetting professionals		Support to navigate multiple liminalities	Anchoring
	Informal mentoring	Professionals	Going over and above/cultural similarity		Support to navigate multiple liminalities	Differentiated embedding
		Family/family-like	Cultural values around family/providing love/			Differentiated embedding

		Peers	English language support/cooking for each other/understanding cultural norms/shared experience of seeking asylum/vetting professionals			Differentiated embedding
	Ad hoc mentoring	Unstructured mentoring	Schools buddying people/social work pairing people up			Differentiated embedding
	Transnational ties	Maintaining contact with family abroad	Emotional support/financial support/			Anchoring/differentiated embedding
	Digital spaces	Contact in digital spaces	Learning language/emotional support/connection with home/navigate culture		Support to navigate socio-spatial liminality	
Meso: Domains of support	Formal mentoring	Developmental function	Social connections/advocating for others/develop collective identity//confidence building	Time needed for relationship/trust-building	Support to navigate socio-spatial liminality	Dolan <i>et al.</i> , (2012)
	Formal mentoring	Acculturative function	Language acquisition/confidence building/cultural awareness/knowledge of laws/cultural exchange	Time needed for relationship/trust-building	Support to navigate acculturative liminality	Dolan <i>et al.</i> , (2012)
	Formal mentoring	Socio-emotional-instrumental	Help with CVs/Gym membership/Opening bank account/English	Time needed for relationship/trust-building	Support to navigate socio-spatial liminality	Dolan <i>et al.</i> , (2012)
	Formal mentoring	Socio-emotional-emotional	Tackle isolation/reassurance/bonding with others	Time needed for relationship/trust-building		Allen and Eby (2007)

	Formal mentoring	Socio-emotional-companionship	Fun/New opportunities/	Time needed for relationship/trust-building		Allen and Eby (2007)
	Formal mentoring	Socio-emotional-social capital	Making friends/connecting to organisations	Time needed for relationship/trust-building		Allen and Eby (2007)
	Formal mentoring	Resettlement	Confidence/Security	Time needed for relationship/trust-building	Support to navigate ontological liminality	Ontological security
Macro: heterogeneity of mentoring/befriending programmes with UASYP	Differences across programmes	Context of programme	Academic/Community	Time-bound relationships		Karcher <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Differences across programmes	Format	One-to-one/Group/Peer	Time-bound relationships		Karcher <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Differences across programmes	Aims of programme	Specific aims/Developmental	Time-bound relationships		Karcher <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Differences across programmes	Types of mentors	Older/peer	Time-bound relationships		Karcher <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Differences across programmes	Boundaries	Strict/Relaxed	Time-bound relationships		Karcher <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Differences across programmes	Support for mentor	Frequency of supervision	Time-bound relationships		Karcher <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Commonalities across programmes	Aims of programme	Relationship focussed/lighter touch support/needs-led/less target driven			
Macro: socio-political context of mentoring and befriending	Rationale for programmes	Official rationale	Integration/Social Relations/Fun			

	Rationale for programmes	Unofficial rationale	Oversubscription of ESOL/Pressure on social work			
	Cultural aspects of mentoring	Lack of appropriate mentors	Need for more peer mentors/need for more male mentors		Need for different types of mentors	Sambunjak (2015)
	Cultural aspects of mentoring	Language around mentoring	Explaining concepts/using interpreters/referral mechanisms			Sambunjak (2015)
	Cultural aspects of mentoring	Not appropriate for all young people	Problematic boundaries/culturally inappropriate/clash between reality vs expectations			Sambunjak (2015)
	Economic aspects of mentoring	Funding	Lack of universal provision/lack of funding/ad hoc provision/impact of pandemic/programme sustainability	Time bound relationships		Sambunjak (2015)
	Political aspects of mentoring	Funding	Austerity/Pressure on social care			Sambunjak (2015)