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Exploring young people seeking asylum in the UK’s lived experiences of belonging in schools and colleges

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Doctorate in Educational Psychology

28th July 2023
Abstract

Developing a sense of connectedness to school has been linked to better psychological wellbeing in young people seeking asylum, however, what factors and processes support them to develop a sense of belonging (SoB) in schools remain not well understood. This thesis composes of three chapters, i) an introduction to the topic, ii) a systematic literature review (SLR) into experiences of belonging in education for young people seeking asylum (YPSA) in the UK, iii) a qualitative research project exploring factors impacting the SoB of YPSA in schools and colleges in the UK.

After a systematic search of the literature, 14 qualitative studies published between 2005 and 2020 including the views of YPSA were identified and quality assessed using the CASP Qualitative checklist. A thematic synthesis of the data identified four overarching themes across the dataset: i) Experiences of relationships, ii) Barriers to learning, iii) Community inclusion, and iv) Impact of asylum-seeking process. These are explored and relevant research and theory is discussed, with implications and future research suggestions highlighted.

In the empirical study, semi-structured focus groups were held with 10 young refugees and asylum seekers aged 16-25 to understand their lived experiences of belonging in education and the perceived impact. Separate focus groups were held with a total of 5 school staff members who have supported young asylum seekers in education to gain their perspectives on the SoB of these individuals and factors that can influence this. Four overarching themes emerged from the data; i) learning accessibility, ii) perceived inclusion, iii) coping with stresses, and iv) ability to communicate. How these fit with the wider research context is considered. Pupil voice is one of the most important ways of identifying areas where changes could be made to improve the SoB amongst YPSA. In gathering pupil experiences as well as the views of the adults supporting these young people, this research provides practical guidance for educational provisions and educational psychologists as well as highlighting links to psychological research and theory.

Keywords: Young people seeking asylum; sense of belonging; school belonging; wellbeing; asylum seekers; education; schools; colleges
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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Jessica Clapham

Title of thesis: Exploring young people seeking asylum in the UK’s lived experiences of belonging in schools and colleges

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: ................................................................. Date: 05.06.2023
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I would also like to thank my family for encouraging and believing in me, in particular my mum Nikki, sister Charlotte, and mother-in-law Catherine for proofreading my papers. Lastly, I would like to thank my husband Tom for being my biggest supporter, caretaker, and shoulder to cry on throughout this process.
Definitions and Abbreviations

CASP ................................. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

EP....................................... Educational Psychologist

PRISMA............................... Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

SLR..................................... Systematic literature review

SoB ..................................... Sense of belonging

UK....................................... United Kingdom

YPSA ................................. Young people seeking asylum
Exploring young people seeking asylum in the UK’s lived experiences of belonging in schools and colleges
Introduction to the topic

Aims and rationale

The overarching aim of this thesis was to understand the lived experiences of young people seeking asylum (YPSA) in the UK and to explore the factors that can impact their sense of belonging (SoB) in education. My interest in this thesis project was significantly influenced by being part of a family who fosters and have supported a number of unaccompanied YPSA both when they first enter the United Kingdom (UK) and further into their asylum-seeking process. This enabled me to see first-hand some of the difficulties experienced by these individuals as a result of their experiences in their country of origin and migration; including trauma (Salvo and Williams, 2017), family separation (Hampton et al, 2021) and post-traumatic stress (Said and King, 2020), as well as in starting a new life in the UK; including age assessments (Cemlyn and Nye, 2012), language barriers (Astington, 2004), and accessing education (Salvo and Williams, 2017). Living with individuals trying to manage these stresses also highlighted how many of these difficulties are exasperated by the lack of relevant support for these individuals in the UK, particularly prior to their asylum claim being approved.

What I learnt through my experiences was how little I had known about the needs and experiences of these individuals prior to fostering YPSA, and this made me realise that there will be others who also may lack awareness of the everyday lived experiences of YPSA. This may, in part, be related to the under- or misrepresentation and stigmatisation of these individuals in politics and the media, which can shape the way in which they are viewed and understood by many of the people and professionals they encounter (Khan, 2013). What is needed is open-mindedness, a deeper understanding of these individuals and their experiences and a trauma informed approach to supporting them across education and other areas of their lives.

As I began to research further into this thesis topic and the difficulties faced and support available to YPSA, I realised that these struggles were not limited to unaccompanied YPSA placed into foster care by the local authority. YPSA who migrated with their families may be equally disadvantaged and their parents are often also dealing with the trauma and uncertainty of seeking asylum and therefore not be able to give the YPSA the support that they need (Beiser et al, 2003). My research into the area quickly highlighted how psychological research into YPSA is still developing and helped me to identify scope for a research project focusing on the sense of belonging and wellbeing of this population in schools and college, which have the potential to be a source of support, safety and security for these individuals who have experienced such a high level of uncontrollable change.
I chose to undertake detailed qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of YPSA in education; an area they should legally have equitable access to (Gateshead Council, 2016), but in reality, it is not always that simple and access can be restricted by a number of factors such as poverty (Childhood Trust, 2023) as well as age (Maurice, 2020). This thesis is important because a better understanding of the experiences, views and needs of YPSA is needed to be able to implement positive changes in education to support this vulnerable group.

Within my systematic literature review I explored the research question ‘How do young people seeking asylum view their experience of belonging within the UK education system?’ by reviewing the existing research base. I conducted this research enquiry using a three-stage thematic synthesis approach, drawing on data from 14 qualitative research papers identified through a systematic literature search. From this, I drew out implications for schools and Educational Psychologists as well as identifying links to psychological theory.

My empirical research built on this, gaining the views of YPSA directly and exploring their lived experiences, as well as the views of school staff member who support YPSA in education, to explore how these align. The empirical study explores the research question ‘What factors do asylum-seeking young people and staff who work in schools to support them, consider as important to shape a SoB?’ Within this research, five semi-structured focus groups and were conducted with ten YPSA from three charitable organisations, and five school staff members from two secondary schools in South England. Reflexive thematic analysis was used, drawing out overarching themes and highlighting implications for schools and Educational Psychologists’ practice.

Epistemological and ontological position

Systematic literature review

In chapter two, my systematic literature review, I aimed to understand the views and experiences of participants and to create new meaning by synthesising data from existing research. For this paper, I understood that knowledge and truth can be generated through interactions with others and experiences of the world (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), this fit with the constructivist epistemological perspective I adopted for this paper. Throughout my systematic literature review, I therefore recognised and accepted how my own interactions and experiences influenced my interpretation of the data and enabled me to develop a unique narrative through the interaction of my own understanding and experience with the dataset.
Empirical paper

In chapter three, my empirical research, I aimed to explore the views and lived experiences of participants. Throughout this research I recognised that whilst a true reality exists, the personal experiences, perceptions and beliefs of participants will impact the way in which they interpret this reality (Sims-Schouten, Riley and Willig, 2007; Pilgrim, 2020), which aligns with the critical realist ontological stance I took for this research. For this paper, I also adopted a post-positivist epistemology, seeking objective knowledge whilst recognising this is ultimately impossible because researchers and participants will influence each other (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Bisel and Adame, 2017). In line with this, a reflexive approach to thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the data. This enabled me to create codes, categories and themes from quotes within the dataset, offering a representation of participants’ voices whilst also acknowledging and reflecting on the influence of my own values and culture on data collection and analysis.

Dissemination plan

I have written the two research papers within this thesis with the intention to publish them in relevant peer-reviewed psychological journals. Therein, each paper has been written in the style required for submission by the journals currently being considered.

Systematic literature review

I am aiming to publish my systematic literature review in the journal ‘Educational Psychology Review’. This journal offers open access and adopts a double-blind peer review process which means the author remains anonymous during the peer review process, limiting the potential for bias based on the author’s attributes or affiliations (Shoham and Pitman, 2020). The journal is open to submission applications from review articles, thematic issues, reflections or comments on previous research or new research directions, interviews, and research-based advice for practitioners related to the field of educational psychology. If accepted for publication, this article is therefore likely to reach Educational Psychologists, schools/school staff, and researchers and academics through publication in Educational Psychology Review. Searching the journal’s database, I was able to locate 163 research articles focused on SoB, 15 focused on migration, and none focused directly on individuals seeking asylum. This highlights that my research will be a valuable addition to this journal is accepted. The word limit for the journal is 12,000 words including relevant appendices but excluding references.
Empirical paper

I am aiming to publish my empirical research project in the journal ‘Social Psychology in Education’, which offers open access. Being open access allows research articles to reach a wider audience, and research published in this article will likely be able to reach Educational Psychologists, schools/school staff, and researchers and academics, all of whom the research and implications will be relevant for. Social Psychology in Education aims to publish studies exploring topics including student cultures and interactions, teacher-student relations, and concerns for gender, race, ethnicity and social class. This journal was selected as it accepts submissions from qualitative research studies and feels relevant to my paper which focuses on both educational experiences and sense of belonging, which is a social construct. The journal has no official word limit and states that they accept ‘full length articles’. A quick search of the journal highlighted that there are currently 275 research articles focused on SoB, 61 focused on migration, seven focused on individuals seeking asylum, and only two linking YPSA and SoB both of which explore teacher experiences. This highlights to me that my topic is of interest to this journal and will help to strengthen the research base around YPSA and sense of belonging in education.

I also plan to present my empirical research project at the University of Southampton Postgraduate conference which is taking place on the 22nd and 23rd of June 2023. This presentation will include an overview of the details of the study, highlighting the results found through exploring the lived experiences of belonging in schools for young people seeking asylum, and the implications and recommendations built from these.

Finally, I want to create a poster of the key results, findings, and implications to share with the schools, charities, and young people who were involved in the research, as well as any other schools that express an interest. This will allow me to disseminate the key messages in an accessible and clear way to the people they will impact the most.

Ethical approval

Prior to conducting the research, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the University of Southampton Faculty Ethics Committee. Procedures for setting, procedure and informed consent were established at research onset.
How do asylum-seeking young people view their experience of belonging within the UK education system; a systematic literature review.

In 2022, approximately 103 million individuals worldwide were forcibly displaced due to natural disasters, conflict, war, or persecution (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022). This number is ever-increasing, meaning that as the population of individuals seeking asylum grows, it is crucial to better understand their needs, to ensure the correct support can be put in place (Maurice et al, 2019). The vast majority (68%) of refugees and asylum seekers are hosted by countries in the developing world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022), with only a comparatively small number reaching European Union countries and the United Kingdom (UK). Direction of travel is often linked to colonial legacies and post-colonial migrations (Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi, 2020), including Britain’s role in some of the ‘modern’ day conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2022, some 63,089 Individuals sought asylum in the UK (Home Office, 2022), many of whom were under the age of 18. According to Pinter (2021), of all asylum claims made between 2010 and 2020, young people seeking asylum (YPSA), under the age of 18, made up almost a quarter (23%) of UK asylum applicants and dependents, with 6% of these being unaccompanied. One of the opportunities open to YPSA when they arrive in the UK, is the right to access free education (Gateshead Council, 2016), although in reality this may not always be straightforward. Research suggests there are barriers to accessing appropriate education such as uncertainty, poverty, or financial insecurity (Childhood Trust, 2023). As YPSA progress through education, barriers increase and opportunities become more scarce (Maurice, 2020).

Educational settings such as schools and colleges are often one of the first community-based institutions that young people and their families seeking asylum in the UK encounter. In what has been an unsettling, uncertain and disrupted journey, schools and colleges are often a source of stability and offer these individuals opportunities to make connections within the local

---

1 A refugee is described as an individual who has fled their country of birth or habitual residence due to war, violence, conflict or persecution, and has been granted legal refugee status in a host country (UNHCR, 2007). Asylum seekers are like refugees, but whose claims for refugee status are awaiting decision (UNHCR, 2010). These are both legal terms which give access to a different set of legal, human and social rights in different host countries, although the experiences of individuals in both categories are often similar or the same.

2 The legal category of young people seeking asylum is individuals under 18 years of age who seek refuge in a host country either with family or guardians, or unaccompanied. This is the age group referred to by the acronym ‘YPSA’ throughout this paper. This age group was selected as they have the right to access free education and training within the UK upon arrival (Gateshead Council, 2016).
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

community (Kohli, 2011). Importantly, developing a sense of connectedness to school has been linked to better psychological wellbeing in refugee students (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007).

However, the factors and processes which enable YPSA to develop a sense of belonging (SoB) in schools remain poorly understood. The focus of this systematic literature review (SLR) aims to develop a better understanding of the issues and influences facing YPSA, as they seek to find their place, whilst navigating the education system.

Psychological research describes SoB as feeling included in, connected with, and accepted by, members of a group (Hagerty et al, 1992). For an individual to feel a SoB, they must feel socially supported, valued, and respected by those around them (Strayhorn, 2012). Psychological theory proposes that seeking to belong through building attachments and relationships is an innate aspect of human nature that is adaptive and essential for survival (Ainsworth, 1989; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Lamb et al (2013) propose that having a strong SoB can predict, and impact, an individual’s perception of the level of meaning in their lives. It is also important to consider the impact of moving to a different social and cultural environment and the way in which individuals might be viewed or the assumptions made about them in their new environment (Narkowics, 2023). For example, research by Phoenix (2009) gathered the narrative accounts of Caribbean individuals who arrived in the UK as children, and identifies the racialisation of Black children, seeing many of them as having low cognitive ability or as troublemakers, and therefore not encouraging them to pursue higher education and academic results. Parker (2020) reports that asylum seekers interviewed in their study identified that often accompanied with their migration, was a loss of their sense of purpose, which could leave them feeling disoriented and seeking something to be a part of and belong to. In the context of the UK, this can be related to the long waiting periods involved with seeking asylum. The limited control over asylum processes, can lead to asylum seekers feeling anticipation and anxiety, as though their lives have been put on hold (Rotter, 2016) providing limited opportunity to build meaningful relationships and community connections.

An individual’s social capital – the quality of their relationships within the community and the proximity of their family and friends (Carpiano and Hystad, 2011), is reported to be associated with an increased SoB. Social capital is proposed to be partially accountable for the relationship between belonging and a person’s physical and mental health (Carpiano and Hystad, 2011). The social identity perspective suggests that a SoB can arise from group homogeneity – when an individual perceives themselves as having similarities to other group members (Easterbrook and Vignoles, 2013). However, Rainey et al. (2018) completed a mixed methods study with college students in America, highlighting that underrepresented groups, who may feel less similar to majority group members, are less likely to report feeling a high SoB.
The SoB a young person experiences in schools and colleges can impact them in a multitude of ways. A secure SoB helps to build self-efficacy and can have positive behavioural outcomes in school (Korpershoek et al, 2020). In school, a SoB is pivotal to emotional wellbeing, motivation, attendance, and academic attainment (Cartmell and Bond, 2015). A relationship has been proposed between SoB and mental health in college students (Corbière & Amundson, 2007). Developing this idea, a large-scale study (n=58,017) found a SoB to be related to positive mental health and reduced levels of depression and stress in university students by helping them integrate and contribute to the school community, and to feel needed and valued (Stebleton, Soria, and Huesman, 2014). Beyond school, the impact of a poor SoB has been found to impact student’s interest in different careers or further education opportunities (O’Meara et al, 2017).

Previous psychological research has investigated the SoB of children and young people in schools and what can impact this. Factors that have been found to support the development of belonging in young people at school include, a school culture that is inclusive, drawing from the strengths of parents, families, and the wider community (Riley, 2019), perceived academic achievement and skill mastery (Korpershoek et al, 2020), the presence of caring and supportive relationships (Cemalcilar, 2010; Dukynaitė and Dudaitė, 2017; Allen et al, 2018), and low exposure to bullying (Allen, Gallo Cordoba, Parks, and Arslan, 2022).

A meta-analysis of individual and social factors across America, Australia, and New Zealand identified the following key factors that influence belonging in education: academic motivation, emotional stability, parent support, peer support, teacher support, gender, race and ethnicity, extracurricular activities, and safety (Allen et al, 2018). The study highlighted that teachers play an integral role in building belonging in their students (Allen et al, 2018). Indeed, Anderman (2003) collected survey data that found teachers can help forge a SoB for young people by building meaningful relationships and promoting interpersonal classroom environments, and that they are well placed to do so because of the time they spend with the young person. Other ways teachers can encourage belonging is by providing individualised support (Allen, 2020), establishing a perception of fairness (Lenzi et al, 2014), encouraging positive relationships amongst peers (Kemple and Hartle, 1997; Flanagan, 2007) and creating community-building and inclusive activities (Osterman, 2000; Gillies, 2017). Additionally, the strength of the teacher’s SoB in school was found to be a key indicator of the SoB of their students (Allen, 2020). Positive teacher-student relationships have also been found to help build self-confidence and create a sense of security for the student in school (Dukynaitė and Dudaitė, 2017). Further research proposes that social relationships in school are the biggest predictor of SoB in education, followed by the school environment (perceived quality, safety, and availability of resources) (Cemalcilar, 2010).
In addition to teacher relationships, a sense of school belonging can be influenced by several further components: assistance of teachers, provision of opportunities for self-realisation, extra-curricular activities available, opportunity for students to contribute to school activity, school attendance, and feeling positively evaluated by teachers and peers (Dukynaitè and Dudaitè, 2017). The school climate and environment can also impact young people’s SoB in school (Pendergast et al, 2018). Environmental factors identified as impacting belonging include, school age range (Dukynaitè and Dudaitè, 2017), socio-economic status (SES) (Cemalcilar, 2010; Allen et al, 2022), and perceived level of stimulation and safety (Cemalcilar, 2010). Both social contextual factors and environmental factors play an important role in determining the SoB of young people in school, and can enhance their educational experience (Cemalcilar, 2010). It is important to consider how the relationship between different factors and SoB can be mitigated by other factors for example; the impact of both social relationships and environmental factors on SoB varied across students attending schools in different SES areas (Cemalcilar, 2010).

In understanding what fosters a SoB for young people in schools, it is important to gain their views and lived experiences (Lewis and Porter, 2007). Research exploring student views has highlighted that young people in schools experience an increased SoB when they experience reciprocal caring relationships with teachers, have positive peer relationships, and are involved in extracurricular and school-based activities (Bouchard and Berg, 2017). The views of young people with additional learning needs highlighted how they feel included and accepted as part of the class when their teacher recognises their needs and provides individualised support (Rose and Shevlin, 2017). In their qualitative meta-syntheses of adolescents’ views and experiences of school belonging across a number of countries, including the UK, Sweden, America, and Australia, Craggs and Kelly (2018) found that positive interactions and forming attachments with peers was fundamental to the construction of a SoB. Similarly, through individual interviews with 24 American highschool students, Hamm and Faircloth (2005) suggested friends and peer groups are a central and important community for adolescents in schools. In a thematic analysis investigating the views of secondary school pupils, Shaw (2019) proposed that familiarity with the environment and identification with others help foster a SoB.

An integral part of healthy adaptation to new social contexts is to be able to make connections and to feel part of the community (Dattilo et al, 2017). YPSA are often exposed to a variety of stressful experiences during forced migration and resettlement, and these can impact their mental health and ability to feel connected to their host countries (Turrini et al, 2017). Feelings of discrimination have been highlighted as negatively impacting an individual’s feelings of social satisfaction and inclusion (Slonim-Nevo, Regev, and Millo, 2015). Similarly, lacking a strong social network, and having limited opportunities for social integration have been highlighted as negative predictors of social wellbeing (Teodorescu, et al, 2012).
Belonging can be seen to represent the ways in which individuals and groups perceive their place in the world through the interaction of resources and relationships (Gilmartin, 2008). This is particularly prevalent when considering the SoB experienced by displaced individuals. Cartmell and Bond (2015) found, in the context of the UK, that YPSA and other newcomer’s SoB was impacted by both, within and between, child factors including positive emotions, personal development, feeling understood, fitting in with new context, respect, and support from others. Additionally, an Australian study found that interactions, group membership, stability, and routine helped refugees feel a sense of happiness and togetherness (Chen and Schweitzer, 2019). In contrast, Guo, Maitra, and Guo (2019), identified from the views of young refugees and their parents in Canada, that experiences of bullying and racism were detrimental to building a SoB and could lead to feelings of rejection and seclusion. A case study investigating the perspective of a young asylum seeker has highlighted the idea that school belonging is more than just learning English and that consistency was important, as well as neighbourhood and community connection (Picton and Banfield, 2020). Similarly, feeling a part of something bigger and having a space to practice religion amongst others with similar beliefs, was highlighted as an important aspect of building a sense of belonging both in schools and the wider community (Chen and Schweitzer, 2019).

How asylum-seekers and refugees are often presented in mainstream media can lead to an underrepresentation of their views (Khan, 2013). Additionally, the experiences of YPSA can differ depending on their country of origin, and political discourse can influence public animosity and undervaluing of asylum seekers (Taylor and Sidhu, 2009). For example, the war in Ukraine was publicised in a way that sympathised with Ukrainians, impacting the way in which they are viewed, and leading to widespread support that other YPSA may not receive (Machin, 2023), and it is likely this will be reflected in school settings too, impacting on school belonging.

Understanding the views of refugees and asylum-seekers can help move away from a negative view of migration and can impact many aspects of refugee life, for example, education, employment, and social integration (Esses et al. 2017). Considering existing evidence which has demonstrated that a secure SoB is associated with increased academic outcomes and strengthened social and emotional development at school (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012), helping YPSA to develop a SoB in school could be a tool to help develop a sense of purpose, develop skills, and improve pathways to professions where ethnic minorities are marginalised (O’Meara et al, 2017).

Research into the SoB asylum-seeking young people experience in education is relatively minimal with much yet to be explored, in particular the voices of asylum-seeking young people. While some research has been completed looking at the struggles faced by YPSA in host countries, sometimes including elements of SoB such as mental wellbeing (Tribe, 2002) and
racism (Schuster 2010), what is missing is a review of the findings across these studies to develop a systematic understanding of the information available, find overarching themes across the studies, and identify areas were further research is required.

The research question for this SLR is, ‘How do asylum-seeking young people view their experience of belonging within the UK education system?’ To help answer this question most effectively, it has been broken down into three more specific research questions which are, ‘what does belonging in education mean for asylum seeking young people?’, ‘What factors do young asylum seekers report as impacting belonging in education?’, and ‘What does the literature tell us about SoB as an indicator for wellbeing?’.

Methodology

Systematic review search strategy

All tasks undertaken in the identification and selection of papers were completed by the researcher. Search terms (see Table 2.1) were identified using the Population, Interest, Context (PiCo) framework (Higgins and Green, 2011), which has been recommended as appropriate for SLRs of qualitative data (Stern et al, 2014). The systematic search was conducted in September 2022 across two databases: PsycINFO and Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), following the steps outline by Boland, Cherry and Dickson (2017). This search identified a total of 84 studies. Searches were then completed a second time by the researcher to check the reliability and replicability of the search terms. Further studies of relevance identified included; 29 studies identified through Google Scholar’, three studies identified through experts in the field, and two studies identified through citation searching. 11 duplicate studies were removed prior to screening. In total, 107 studies were screened for relevance.

Table 2.1

Initial search terms – systematic literature search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>asylum seek* or refugee* or immigrant* or asylum-seek* or migrant*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>UK or United Kingdom or Britain or Great Britain or England or Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

Outcome

| sense of belonging or belonging or belongingness or feeling belonged or social connectedness or social-connectedness or social belonging or resilience or wellbeing or well-being |

Setting

| education or school or learning or classroom or education system or college or apprenticeship or sixth form or university or high school or highschool or high-school or secondary school or pupil* or student* |

Screening and selection

The researcher screened all titles and abstracts. Full-text papers of any titles and abstracts that were considered relevant were obtained, two studies were excluded at this stage because the full texts were not available, and a further two studies were excluded as the full texts were not available in English. After title and abstract screening of the studies identified, 30 were highlighted as ‘relevant’, six were marked as ‘unsure’, and 82 were excluded at this stage (see figure 2.1). After full text screening of the ‘relevant’ and ‘unsure’ studies, 14 studies remained to be included in this SLR (see Appendix B).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The relevance of each study was assessed according to the inclusion criteria stated in table 2.2. Studies that did not meet the criteria were excluded from the SLR and their reason for their exclusion was recorded (see figure 2.1). Studies where the researcher was initially unsure were sent to supervisors for review. There were no discrepancies.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study item</th>
<th>Inclusion criteria</th>
<th>Exclusion criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>UK based YPSA aged 18 years and under</td>
<td>Participants from countries other than the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Educational experiences and SoB of YPSA</td>
<td>Educational experiences of other groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Views of other key stakeholders such as parents or teachers</td>
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<tr>
<th>Study design</th>
<th>Qualitative studies</th>
<th>Literature reviews, book reviews, book chapters, secondary data, or quantitative studies with no qualitative element.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Including the views of the YPSA (mixed methods studies were also included, but only the qualitative elements were reviewed).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Educational provisions within the UK; mainstream or specialist infant schools, primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges.</th>
<th>Educational provisions outside of the UK (studies were included looking at multiple countries, but only data relating to the UK was reviewed)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Full text available in English</th>
<th>Full text not available or not available in English (to ensure the researcher was able to fully understand the context and produce new data)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Studies published after the Education Act in 2002</td>
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<td>Studies published before the Education Act in 2002</td>
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Data extraction and quality assessment

The following data were extracted from the 14 studies identified for this SLR: author, article title, research question(s) and aim(s), publishing context, methods (design, data collection, and data analysis), and a summary of results (see Appendix B). Data was extracted from all studies by the researcher.

The quality of each study was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) qualitative studies checklist to help recognise their relative methodological rigour (see Appendix C). Only one study scored below 50% on the quality assessment checklist, and after investigation this study was deemed to still be relevant to the SLR. Therefore, no studies were removed at the quality assessment check stage. The quality assurance scores of each article did not affect the weight given to them throughout the synthesis. The weight given to each article was instead moulded by the thematic synthesis process in which data that helped to answer the research question guided the development of themes.
Methods of data synthesis and extraction

The 14 studies were analysed using thematic synthesis, chosen for its suitability for both inductive and interpretative analysis methods (Boland, Cherry and Dickson, 2017). This SLR adopted an inductive approach which enabled ideas and concepts to be developed from the data, however, the researcher’s experiences and prior knowledge of the research area likely framed the interpretation of the quotes available in the literature. The research aims and designs of the studies being reviewed differed, allowing the researcher to apply an interpretative approach to identify and develop overarching concepts linked to the research question. Thematic synthesis allows for individual interpretation which fits with the researcher’s constructivist epistemological perspective, which understands that an individual’s truth is constructed through their experiences and interactions with the world (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The researcher was responsible for interpreting data and completing the thematic synthesis, constructing concepts through interaction with the data.

Guided by the work of Thomas and Harden, 2008, participant quotations and author interpretations within the results sections of each included study were analysed, and information was stored and coded using NVivo12 software. As the researcher read through the relevant information in each study, they recorded each sentence under one or more codes to capture the meaning. The initial coding process resulted in 196 initial codes which were scanned for duplication of meaning and reduced to 87. Next, these codes were explored and grouped into categories (descriptive themes) based on similarities. This was an iterative process that involved revisiting the initial codes and regrouping until the researcher felt confident that they had identified the overarching concepts across studies. This process resulted in 15 categories being identified. Finally, these categories were further examined and grouped into four overarching analytical themes which aim to answer the research question; ‘How do Asylum Seeking young people view their experience of belonging within the UK education system?’.

Synthesis overview

The studies included in this SLR were published between 2005 and 2022. Across all studies, 330 participants were included in the research between the ages of three and twenty-four. Where identifiable, only data from participants under 18 was included in the review, with individual study participant numbers ranging from six (Hastings, 2012; Fuller and Hayes, 2019) to fifty (Valentine, Sporton, and Neilsen, 2009). These participants were all YPSA who attended primary schools, secondary schools, or colleges in the UK. Twelve studies gathered data via semi-structured interviews, four through focus groups, and three through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Two studies collected additional data through surveys or
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questionnaires. See appendix 2.1; data extraction table, for a full list of the studies and key information.

Four overarching analytical themes were developed (see figure 2.2) to answer the research question: ‘How do young people seeking asylum view their experience of belonging within the UK education system?’. These were: i) experiences of relationships, ii) community inclusion, iii) barriers to learning, and iv) impact of asylum-seeking process.

Results

Figure 2.2

Thematic map

Experiences of relationships

Across all studies, the impact of the relationships asylum-seeking young people experienced was identified. Many individuals reported feelings of isolation upon arrival in their UK educational provision, "When you first come to England and you don’t speak English you don’t have anyone to talk to, no friends or anything and you’re like really, really lonely and by yourself" (15-year-old Kurdish young woman, Hek, 2005). This was furthered by experiences of bullying and discrimination from their peers, “some of them are like really racist, we don’t know why they don’t like us, swearing at us, like they say to us ‘go back to your own country’" (Secondary school
belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK pupil in rural Northern Ireland – no age, ethnicity or gender information presented, McMullen et al, 2020, highlighting experiences of being ‘othered’ and socially rejected, which research suggests can lead individuals to feel inferior and as though they must hide their true self in order to fit in (Jackson, 2010). Whilst some young people felt that they could confidently discuss instances of bullying with their teachers (Hastings, 2012), many felt that their experiences were not taken seriously or dealt with appropriately, which led to feelings of worry, loneliness, and anxiety (Newbigging and Thomas, 2011; Sobitan, 2022). It is possible that difference is related to the length of time the YPSA have spent in the school and in the UK, because as an individual becomes progressively more settled and able to express themselves in English, they may feel more able to disclose experiences of bullying, particularly when there is low pressure to do so (Mishna, Weiner, and Pepler, 2008). Racism can vary in severity and is often widespread across schools, with individuals such as YPSA being most vulnerable, as the majority come from non-white countries (Trent et al, 2019). Children’s beliefs and understandings are influenced by exposure and experiences, meaning a young person who is racially abused may begin to believe they do not matter or that they will never feel accepted (Berry et al, 2021). The impact of these experiences, as well as previous life experiences, led some young people to experience difficult and overwhelming emotions; including feeling suicidal “Too many times I was thinking that I want to, you know, end myself, but I didn’t” (Secondary school pupil in urban Northern Ireland – no age, ethnicity or gender information presented, McMullen et al, 2020). Further to this, some young people felt that to avoid racism they needed to change school, adding further levels of disruption to their already chaotic lives (Robb et al, 2007; Hastings, 2012).

As some asylum-seeking young people became more settled in school, they began to form relationships through identifying similarities or shared experiences with peers, which helped them to view their time at school more positively “I’ve got quite a lot of friends there, yeah I think that makes such a difference as well, they shape how you feel about college and school” (Female Eritrean unaccompanied YPSA, 18-years-old, Fuller and Hayes, 2019). Once these friendships were established, many individuals reported that these helped them begin to feel happy, loved, and comfortable (Robb et al, 2007; Ritchie and Gaulter, 2020). In cases where friendships were made with peers who do not share the same home language, interactions also supported English language development (Hastings, 2012; Fuller and Hayes, 2019). This aligns Chapdelaine and Alexitch’s (2004) research into international university students, suggesting building relationships with different-language peers supports the development of English language and cultural understanding, both of which are needed to communicate effectively.

The perceived relationships with adults in school was identified as impacting the SoB and acceptance YPSA experience in school. Most young people described an overall positive experience of adult relationships and the support they received, highlighting how they felt school
staff were kind and went above and beyond what was expected, “When I asked for help they never ignored me. After school, during the lunch time, before morning time …. And they still proud of me” (Male secondary school pupil in the UK, no information on age or ethnicity presented, Hastings, 2012). There were, however, accounts which reported distrust in adults with young people feeling their difficulties were dismissed or overlooked by adults. One young person reporting that when they try to share their concerns with the teacher “I am always told to put on make-up and be happy, so I don’t feel I am being taken seriously.” (Female secondary school pupil, no age or ethnicity information presented, Newbigging and Thomas, 2011). Although outcomes differed, all accounts of adult relationships in school highlighted potential impacts of these relationships, including the effect on their language development, academic development, and feelings of inclusion within school (Sobitan, 2022). This aligns with research highlighting the importance of schools building positive and constructive relationships with YPSA to support their integration and development of SoB (Eliyahu-Levi, 2022).

A key factor identified as impacting the educational experiences of YPSA was the school’s efforts to facilitate the language needs of their families (Hek, 2005). Some students found themselves pressed into acting as the translator for their parents within school as well as in the community (McMullen et al, 2020), whereas others described a more positive experience where school provided translation services, making the parents feel welcome and building feelings of inclusion for both the parent and young person in school (Hek, 2005). This builds on research by Zengin and Akdemir (2020) that highlights the importance of schools meeting the needs of the family, such as language support, as well as the young person in order to increase feelings of value and important for YPSA.

Individuals across several studies discussed how their home and family relationships impact their wellbeing, including how one member of the family would support them by taking on the roles of other individuals who were not available. “My mum had to be a mother, father and friend, plus teacher, because everything I know, it will start from my mum.” (062 male, Robb et al, 2007). Parents going to this extent to create a supportive environment for their children highlights the impact of family separation not only on the YPSA, but on their caregivers as well. Young people felt that the level of support they received from their family impacted their engagement with, and enjoyment of, school.

Young people who experienced family separation tended to find it harder to settle in school and reported higher levels of distress or worry, and feelings of overwhelming loss, adding an additional barrier to the development of their SoB, “Where family bonds are significantly disrupted, a child’s readiness to adjust to an unfamiliar school culture may be delayed” (Hamilton, 2013). This may be a result of the trauma responses and anxiety often linked to forced family separation (Hampton et al, 2021). These responses are reported to in turn reduce educational and
social engagement (Alisic, 2012). For some YPSA, however, the experience of loss or separation fuelled a desire to do well and create a life for themselves that their families would be proud of (Hek, 2005).

**Barriers to learning**

Motivation tended to be a barrier for young people across a number of the studies identified. Young people found themselves feeling unmotivated, lost, and distressed at the difficulty of their workload when not given adequate support (Hastings, 2012; Bradby et al, 2019). Both temporal and geographical factors can impact the support available to YPSA in schools, for example inner city schools are often not as well equipped to offer support as schools in wealthier parts of the country (OECD, 2012). In terms of time, cuts to educational funds have a great toll cumulatively over the years, which will have been felt more strongly in recent years (Social Mobility Commission, 2020). Moreover, these needs are often most pressing for YPSA in the first weeks and months after arrival. A small number of young people felt that their learning in school was difficult, and support was inadequate, some feeling as though they would make more progress trying to learn independently, at their own pace (Fuller and Hayes, 2019). Other individuals felt that school provided opportunities, but that they needed more resources such as extra lessons, personal tutors, or textbooks to support their learning (Fuller and Hayes 2019; Oddy et al, 2022). Wider research exploring the motivation of secondary school students in the UK suggests that motivation is impacted by praise and a growth mindset (Lambert, 2014). This builds on research by Reakes (2007) who, through semi-structured interviews with school staff, highlighted that motivation is a key factor in determining the academic and employment outcomes for YPSA.

For individuals in the studies being reviewed, motivation was focused around improving their English language ability to help build friendships, do well in school, and lead to better future opportunities within the UK (Hastings, 2012; Fuller and Hayes, 2019). This echoes wider research identifying that improved language abilities can lead to more academic success (Oliver et al, 2012) and create increased employment opportunities (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). Similarly, individuals across the studies identified the impact of language on their learning and feelings of confidence in their academic ability, “On the first day I spoke to the teacher in Polish, but she couldn’t understand. I couldn’t understand what people were saying or what I was supposed to do” (female Polish YPSA, 7-years-old, Hamilton 2013a). While this is focused on language, the quote also suggests a sense of helplessness and feeling lost, worried and confused. Research suggests that YPSA often experience a great deal of stress, confusion, and worry and therefore need school to provide safety and stability (Kohli, 2011).
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Across the studies reviewed, limited language skills also acted as a barrier to both learning and relationships within school. “Basically, it was frustrating, very hard .... Because you don't know how to speak you know, you don't know how to communicate.” (Male 18-year-old unaccompanied YPSA, no ethnicity information presented, Fuller and Hayes, 2019). Language difficulties were described as a source of isolation and discrimination in school and the community for many young people involved (Hamilton, 2013; Sobitan, 2022). Individuals discussed how English ability was closely linked to building relationships and poor language skills acted as a barrier to socialisation with peers and could lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

Further to this, as English language abilities increased, so did opportunities to socialise and build friendships. In their paper discussing the views of YPSA, Fuller and Hayes (2019) stated that “her increased independence and proficiency in English, and the fact that other students started at the same time, allowed her to make friends” (discussing a female Eritrean unaccompanied YPSA, 18-years-old, Fuller and Hayes, 2019). This quote also suggests that, a sense of not feeling singled out as the only newcomer and having something in common with others (for example, starting at a new setting), can create a sense of inclusion or affiliation with these individuals, that impacts positively on building friendships.

Many of the young people whose views were discussed reported that despite their traumatic background and the difficulties in school, they were driven by a desire to get an education and secure a good future for themselves.

“I’ve come from a poor background, so it’s kind of, my life has been ups and downs. And when I moved to this country, I was just looking for a better future and I think, if I was to study medical, then it would be a good choice.” (Male Eastern-European YPSA attending an inner London secondary school, 16-years-old, Robb et al, 2007).

Their more short-term motivation was also driven by development of confidence in their own abilities through positive praise from trusted adults (Sobitan, 2022).

Research reveals that a key factor of belonging is the feeling of being valued and included (Ayala et al, 2021). Several individuals across the studies reported experiences in school where they felt underestimated and labelled as low ability, without being given support to show their true potential. These experiences led them to feel unvalued as a member of the class and could result in subsequent underachievement (Robb et al, 2007). In Oddy et al (2022)’s interpretation of their results, they explained how one young person, “likened progress in the educational system to ‘a game of snakes and ladders’, thus diminishing their confidence and engendering feelings of being hated by the society they sought refuge in” (no young person
information presented). This quote suggests an element of luck and a lack of confidence in the education system and feelings of unfairness or discrimination that could overshadow any positive experiences. It appears these experiences became less common when individuals had positive relationships and felt supported by adults in school. Some studies in this SLR suggested resources young people found helpful, included additional lessons or tutoring to help them catch up with their peers (Fuller and Hayes, 2019; Oddy et al, 2022), provision of interpreters to support learning and language development (Hamilton 2013a), and an adaptive learning environment that moves from high levels of support to opportunities for more autonomy in learning, in line with the young person’s development (Fuller and Hayes, 2019).

Students highlighted that when they felt safe and nurtured in school with appropriate adaptations to support them, school helped build resilience through stable routines (Robb et al, 2007; Ritchie and Gaulter, 2020). Adaptations that young people highlighted as finding useful included, higher one-to-one support and increased use of non-verbal communication techniques, such as pulling staff or peers by the arm (Hamilton, 2013a), as well as clear explanations of tasks and employing staff who speak the young person’s home language (Hek, 2005).

An area of frustration for many individuals was the impact of transitions. For young people in college, much of the concern stemmed from the reduction in support experienced in college compared to secondary school, “Nobody said to me or talked to me if there's anything I need help with.” (Male Afghani YPSA, 18, Fuller and Hayes, 2019). This quote also seems to highlight a level of loneliness or isolation that may be prevalent amongst young people who transition to a new provision. In one instance, the young person felt so unsupported and dissatisfied at college that he dropped out of a number of courses, with another student dropping out altogether and enrolling as an independent candidate for his A-levels (Fuller and Hayes, 2019), which is likely limiting their social engagement and wellbeing as well as impacting on their academic outcomes. The political context in which schools and colleges operate, and the funding available, will be contributing to the limitations in what support they are able to offer students (Brooks, 2012).

While all young people take on a new level of independence in college, it is particularly important to ensure support is in place for the more vulnerable individuals who may have an additional level of need. YPSA who have experienced trauma or may have significant periods of missed learning, may need additional support to enable them to reach their full potential and access positive educational experiences (Salvo and Williams, 2017). This aligns with migration research emphasising how YPSA are often underinformed about educational systems, meaning they are unaware of how to access support and are therefore unprepared for transitions (Koehler and Schneider, 2019).
Transitions such as moving between schools (Hamilton, 2013a) or a change in teaching staff (Fuller and Hayes, 2019) have been shown to cause students to experience periods of fear, loss, and sadness. These findings build on research which suggested that ethnic minority children often found periods of transition more difficult and took longer to settle into a new educational setting (Topping, 2011). A further element of transition to consider for YPSA, is the current system by which they can be moved from one local authority, or place, to another without much notice (Home Office, 2022), resulting in any relationships or support networks that have been built being severed.

**Community inclusion**

Many young people feared they might be viewed negatively because of their asylum-seeking status or appearance, which often led them to feel apprehensive about sharing their story. Hek (2005) recognised in their interpretation that YPSA “did not feel comfortable identifying as refugees and felt that they could not easily discuss the circumstances of their flight and backgrounds in school”. This suggests an embarrassment or sense of inadequacy around their status as an asylum-seeker in the UK, leading them to try to conceal elements of their identity to minimise the fear and possibility of judgement (Le Forestier et al, 2022). This likely stems from the prejudice and scapegoating of asylum seekers and refugees in the public discourse; the way in which politicians and mainstream media refer to these individuals (Cooper, Blumell and Bunce, 2021), as these views can seep down into the everyday relations across communities such as in schools.

Contrastingly, some young people identified feeling accepted and valued as a member of the community;

I think that the people in here are like really nice to each other and they don’t really like pick on each other. Like when you go on the street they are smiling to you. They are like helping you even if you are not from here and I really like that (YPSA attending a rural primary school in Northern Ireland, gender, age and ethnicity information not presented, McMullen et al, 2020).

The individual went on to describe feeling as though they were treated fairly, their voice was heard, and their interests were explored. This appears to highlight that YPSA who experience acceptance and feeling valued, are more likely to adapt to life in the UK, which is known to increase feelings of self-efficacy and social acceptance (Grant and Gino, 2010).
Making a contribution through taking on a responsibility and getting involved in extracurricular activities was reported to help YPSA develop their SoB. In Hastings’ (2012) paper, while talking about the experiences of YPSA, the author stated that;

There was a sense that as their knowledge of school increased, so too did their ability to make a contribution to this setting, for example by helping other new arrivals, and that this functioned to support their adaptation and SoB in secondary school and beyond (Hastings, 2012).

This builds on research which suggests that responsibility can increase positive attitudes towards school (Beck and Malley, 1998) and commitment to school (Abdollahi and Noltemeyer, 2018). It is likely that these responsibilities will have also helped YPSA to feel valued and as though they are an integral part of the school. This idea fits with research suggesting that finding your place helps build feelings of value and builds SOB (Lambert, 2013). Building on this, Sobitan, 2022, interpreted from their data that YPSA “expressed that contributing in some way to the school was important to his school belonging”.

Some studies highlighted how YPSA did not feel valued or understood; “Work experience, my teacher picked it for me, so he put me through to it. Hairdresser in Mayfair. And I didn’t go for two days because it is not my type of thing’ (16-year-old female Eastern European YPSA attending a secondary school in inner London, Robb et al, 2007). This quote is an example of young people feeling as though they are not valued or understood by those around them. It also seems to reflect underlying preconceived gendered and racialised notions by adults about what certain groups, such as YPSA, are able to do and their future prospects, which could be damaging for the young person’s beliefs and self-efficacy (Dinther et al, 2011).

Similarly, experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment can impact mental health and the way in which a young person views themselves (Williams, 2018). This was not limited to individual peers but was sometimes on a much larger scale;

One young woman described the difficulties arising from not having received a decision as to whether she could stay and therefore not being allowed to apply for university, at a time when her peers were planning their futures. For asylum seekers, this had an impact on their confidence and self-image, contributing to a strong sense of being treated less fairly than those with refugee status or their British peers (Author interpretation, Newbigging and Thomas, 2011).
While this has been construed as impacting on self-image, looking at this issue in the wider context of data, it appears to also reflect the idea that uncertainty can play a prominent role in YPSA’s lives, which could limit their SoB by leading them to feel different from their peers and to perceive themselves as having limited control over their situation (Cemalcilar, 2010). This quote also illustrates how, although YPSA have a right to access education, once they become 18 it becomes unclear as to what they can actually access, as university education is often inaccessible because of their lack of status (Maurice, 2020).

In addition to the actions of individual staff members and peers, the whole school attitude towards YPSA was found to be an important indicator of how they are treated in schools and can therefore impact their SoB. “Even though they don’t like my religion, they still respect my opinion, and they asked me about the God of Muslims and stuff” (female 14-year-old YPSA attending secondary school in the UK, has been in the UK for four years, no ethnicity data provided, Sobit, 2022). This quote is interpreted to highlight that YPSA experience safety when their cultural identity is accepted and respected, even if it was not shared, drawing back to the importance of feeling that your beliefs have value, further supporting the positive impact of this on SoB (Cook et al, 2012). The community exposure of schools to diversity or international peers could further impact the SoB of YPSA, as the more culturally diverse an area the more likely YPSA are to feel included and as though they fit in amongst a diverse group of peers (McIntyre and Hall, 2020).

One idea that was prevalent across a number of the studies reviewed was the idea that belonging is a two-way process and that building a SOB relies on both the impact of the world on the YPSA and the impact of the YPSA on the world (Hastings, 2012). This could suggest that predictors of SOB include the encouragement and acceptance of YPSA in school and their motivation to learn English, school rules, and about life in the UK.

Confidence and self-esteem were highlighted as predictors of belonging; “Well, anything is achievable, you just have to work for it. So it’s up to me really. I think I can achieve it. That’s my target so I have to work for it” (male 16-year-old Caribbean YPSA attending an inner London secondary school, Robb et al, 2007). Factors highlighted as impacting confidence varied across studies and included academic competence, knowledge of school, language ability, and adult praise. Adult praise was identified in multiple studies as a key contributor in school enjoyment “I like my teacher and I have lots of friends. It makes me happy when my teacher says I have done good work” (female Polish YPSA, 7-years-old, Hamilton 2013a). Pro-social acts being praised within school encouraged acceptance and enabled the individuals giving and receiving the compliments to feel good (Hastings, 2012). This highlights the impact of relevant praise and good, supportive teachers on the SoB of YPSA.
The authors of one study involving dance classes interpreted that “Without experiencing enjoyment the migrant pupils in our study might not have connected with others, felt safe or engaged in the process” (Ritchie and Gaulter, 2020), highlighting the impact of these factors on the SOB experienced by participants.

**Impact of asylum-seeking process**

YPSA in some studies spoke about their sense of loss and missing family and friends from their home country. Hamilton (2013) recognises that when arriving in a host country, young people are often put into schools very quickly and are not given the time or support to grieve their loss appropriately.

> We don’t even know what has happened to my dad and the rest of them. Well, I think we know they were killed, we know they were killed, and people try to say that they were not, but they were. We’re just waiting now (female 15-year-old Albanian YPSA, Hek, 2005).

The emotional impact of this situation can be construed through the young person’s words, leading the reader to empathise and recognise the difficulty of the experiences she is going through. This quote also seems to highlight a level of uncertainty that comes alongside leaving family members and the presence of hope making it harder to grieve the loss. Uncertainty and loss can be all-consuming (Hobfoll, 2001) and can impact the individual’s own sense of safety (Fazel et al, 2012) and vulnerability (Davis et al, 2010). These feelings can prevent them from feeling understood (Limberg and Lambie, 2011) and can restrict their ability to be fully present and engage in learning or relationship building (Bethell et al, 2014), all of which can impact their SoB in school.

Young people discussed the differences between their home countries and school in the UK; “When I first came there were lots of new things to get used to—a home, friends, shops, school and language” (10-year-old Polish YPSA, no gender information presented, Hamilton, 2013). This quote also identifies feeling unsettled or lost while trying to navigate a new environment. Research has shown that belonging develops with familiarisation with the people and places in an area (Inalham and Finch, 2004), which it may take YPSA time to build (Groark et al, 2010).

The impact of external factors on school belonging was discussed in a number of studies, including healthcare (Bradby et al, 2019), and accommodation, family disruption, and the asylum-seeking process (Fuller and Hayes, 2019). The Asylum-seeker process seems to be particularly
disruptive in developing a SoB in school as it was both a source of stress and uncertainty and appeared to negatively impact on the young person’s motivation to work hard or build relationships at school. “Sometimes when I’m doing education, studying some lessons, I don’t know if my asylum case, am I getting sent back to my country? Why I have to learn?” (Male 18-year-old Afghani unaccompanied YPSA, Fuller and Hayes, 2019). This appears to highlight how the context and importance of learning can be lost for these individuals who have many additional overwhelming stresses and uncertainties in their lives. This aligns with research suggesting the reactions to distress and adjustment can impact mental health and engagement (Groark, 2010).

Contrastingly, some young people found that education actually provided a focus for them and was something stable amongst the uncertainty they were experiencing (Hek, 2005; Fuller and Hayes, 2019). While this was not linked to SoB by the author, in keeping with wider research, stability is identified as a key indicator of school belonging (Allen et al, 2018), and can impact young people’s experiences at school (McMahon et al, 2008). Across some research, a sense of journey and progression arose, where young people felt through their experiences in school in the UK, they had developed their resilience (McMullen et al, 2020), adapted to UK customs (Hastings, 2012), and developed their English abilities quickly which had aided their social and academic inclusion (Robb et al, 2007).

A further area that was highlighted through research as important was the YPSA’s understanding of their own identity and cultural background. Young people discussed how they were unaware of the full extent of why they fled their home country and a desire to learn more about their culture and background.

I couldn’t remember ... why we moved [from Somalia], what is the reason we moved here [to UK] ... ‘cos usually your family, they don’t tell you, they don’t want to upset you and they ... just make everything, [they say:] ‘everything’s alright, don’t worry (Male 18-year-old Somalian YPSA living in Sheffield, Valentine, Sporton and Neilson, 2009).

More widely, this seems to suggest that when seeking asylum in a family group, families can withhold information in attempt to protect YPSA, however this does not appear to eradicate feelings of worry and can lead to confusion and a limited understanding of why they have had to uproot their lives. Although these worries cannot be eradicated, schools can support children to manage them by building a sense of belonging, which creates feelings of safety and connectedness (Sargent et al, 2002).

For some individuals, it was difficult to talk about their background and experiences because they include difficult memories that can be painful (Hek, 2005; McMullen et al, 2020) and
they felt they were asked to repeat and relive their experiences each time they met new professionals (Bradby et al, 2019).

In my last year [teacher] asked me to go to their classroom and talk more about Syria and the refugees and things. I found it kind of hard to talk at the back, old, harmful memories. And like I actually don’t want to talk about it (YPSA attending an urban secondary school in Northern Ireland, no gender, age, or ethnicity data presented, McMullen et al, 2020).

While this quote focuses on the emotions of the young person, it also highlights a lack of understanding from professionals supporting the YPSA about how these experiences may impact them, and how positive intentions to help the school learn about YPSA may not be implemented in a way that takes the emotions of the YPSA into consideration. Young people went on to describe feelings of fear and worry across several studies. The source of worry varied and included starting school or a new life in the UK (Hastings, 2012; Hamilton, 2013), loneliness (Hastings, 2012), home country situation (Hek, 2005), academic achievement or falling behind (McMullen et al, 2020), and deportation and safety (Sobitan, 2022).

**Discussion**

School belonging is a significant contributor to students’ attainment and psychosocial functioning (Allen et al, 2018), yet little is known about the factors influencing the SoB for asylum-seeking young people in schools. Through a thematic synthesis of the literature four overarching themes were identified within the data: experiences of relationships, barriers to learning, community inclusion, and impact of asylum-seeking process. It is important to remember that while some studies mentioned SoB, none were solely investigating belonging and they each had a different primary focus such as behaviour, settlement, or social and emotional needs. For this reason, some studies carry a heavier weight in particular themes that were more relevant or similar to their primary focus (see appendix B).

Stemming from Bronfenbrenner (1994)’s framework and work by Baumeister and Leary (1995), previously identified factors impacting school belonging in psychological literature included individual factors such as motivation, emotional stability, gender and ethnicity, and additional factors such as parent support, peer support, teacher support, extracurricular activities and environment. This SLR highlights how these factors also appear to impact the SoB of YPSA, though research does not consider elements of YPSA’ lives that may differ from the general population and potentially make it harder for them, such as disrupted relations, language barriers
and cultural barriers (Warfa et al, 2006). More recent research has identified the immigration-related diversity of their settlement area, previous experiences of diversity, and social location (race, gender, religion, and language) as also impacting the SoB of migrants within the UK (Wessedorf, 2019).

School belonging can moderate the impact of negative social experiences (such as discrimination) on motivation, academic outcomes, and wellbeing (Kumar et al, 2018). However, connections between school belonging research and migrant belonging research are sparse in educational research. The results of this SLR identify this overlap and begin to explore the gap in the understanding of school belonging for YPSA.

The impact of reduced SoB for YPSA who have often experienced stressful or traumatic life events can be a sense of learned helplessness; a prolonged exposure to stressful situations over which an individual has no control leading to a belief that they are unable to make changes even when opportunities arise (Maier and Seligman, 1976). YPSA’s level of control over their lives is restricted by both their asylum seeker status and being legally considered a child (McCarthy and Marks, 2010). The prejudice towards individuals seeking asylum stems from a foundational level, involving limited social, legal, and educational or employment rights, preventing them from wholly participating in social and cultural life (United Nations, 2016). Additionally, an individual who feels they do not fit in, cannot build relationships, and struggles to access or attend to their work in school, may feel as though changing this is out of their control, further reducing their sense of autonomy, and leading them to feel as though there is no point in trying to change the situation (Williams, 2009). Feeling well supported by adults in school is important as it can act as a mediator between young people and learned helplessness (Raufelder, Regner, and wood, 2017) and key adult relationships should, therefore, be developed in schools as a priority.

Similarly, being underestimated or labelled as ‘low ability’ can lead young people to believe this is all they will ever achieve, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the young person feels less motivated to try to work beyond this (Merton, 1948). For YPSA, it is therefore imperative that they are in an environment allowing them to show their academic abilities outside of the constraints of, and not held back by, English language. It is also important for teaching staff to recognise the difference between academic ability and language ability.

Deci and Ryan (2000)’s self-determination theory suggests that competence, autonomy, and relatedness are the key factors required for motivation. While relatedness is closely linked to SoB and forming connections with those around you (Kanat-Maymon et al, 2015), the results of this SLR also indicate that a level of autonomy or control and feelings of academic competence help to build a SoB in school (Hek, 2005; Sobitan, 2022). This echoes research identifying a reciprocal relationship between SoB and motivation; an increase in one construct can lead to an increase in the other (Allen et al, 2022).
While motivation was not its own theme, elements were identified within the themes ‘experiences of relationships’ and ‘barriers to learning’ across the majority of studies. Across the studies included in this SLR, the data suggests a relationship between motivation and SoB and that as a YPSA’s social and academic motivation increases, so too does their SoB.

This SLR emphasises how in addition to possible traumatic experiences in their country of origin, throughout displacement, and during their migration, many YPSA continued to experience trauma in the form of bullying (Hastings, 2012; McMullen et al, 2020), racism (Hek 2005; Hastings 2012; Sobitan 2022), and prejudice from peers, teachers, and government restrictions (Taylor and Sidhu, 2009). Schools are faced with the challenge of balancing the need to provide worthwhile learning and the reality that many students need help in dealing with traumatic stress to enable them to attend and engage in education (Ko et al, 2008). Vaghri, Tessier, and Whalen (2019) suggests that school staff can have limited understanding of the experiences of YPSA and often underestimate the impact of trauma. Trauma informed practice is the understanding that anybody could have experienced trauma and so everybody must be treated sensitively (Thomas, Crosby and Vanderhaar, 2019), and should be employed to support these individuals effectively in education. For this to happen, school staff need to be fully trained to understand what trauma is, how trauma can present, and the physiological, social, emotional, and academic impacts of trauma and adversity on children (Walkley and Cox, 2013).

**Strengths and limitations**

A strength of current SLR is that it adopted a systematic search strategy identifying all relevant data across a number of different settings which decreases opportunities for bias. This approach allows the researcher to explore a wide breadth of data and a number of participant voices, triangulating information across sources by drawing links across different contexts, timescales, and environments and considering interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental factors. As the researcher, I completed all steps of the systematic literature search and data extraction processes independently. If repeating this research, I would like to have a second person checking my search process to reduce the possibility of bias and increase reliability.

The body of research reviewed was varied across different locations within the UK, covering North England, South England, and Northern Ireland. 13 out of 14 studies reviews held individual interviews to gather data, although some of these studies used other methods in conjunction. Although the age range for young people was wide (three to 24 years), a high percentage of the participants were between the ages of 16 and 18 meaning that the views of younger students are not as well documented in the results and the implications may therefore be more tailored to the needs of older YPSA.
The use of secondary data presents a number of limitations. These include that as the secondary researcher, I was inevitably only able to work with the written statements of individuals and did not have the opportunity to engage with the additional elements of discussion such as body language or non-verbal communication. In attempt to overcome this, I analysed the full results sections of each paper, including author interpretations and situational information. A second limitation to the use of secondary data is that the data sets were not collected with the aim to answer my specific research question (Hammersley, 2010) relating to belonging, and although I have drawn links evidenced with data, it is possible that my searching for meaning related to belonging has identified factors and links that the participants were not intentionally describing and did not realise their data would be used to consider this topic. This impacts the extent of this research as although the views shared begin to give an insight into the SoB of YPSA, it likely does not give a comprehensive overview, and further primary research focusing on SoB is needed to better understand the factors influencing SoB for YPSA in schools.

An additional difficulty with this research, as with all qualitative literature reviews, is the complication around using quotes from individuals who were involved in the studies I reviewed in a way different to that which they gave informed consent for. Quotes are all anonymised by the original authors and found in published research articles meaning that permission for further use is implied (Tripathy, 2013). However, I find it uncomfortable that the information gathered was not intended to discuss sense of belonging, and these individuals may not know their voices have been used to explore this topic.

Implications and future research

Relationships are identified as a key factor likely impacting the SoB of YPSA. It is therefore important for the adults supporting these individuals to build deep and meaningful relationships that offer them support and a sense of safety. Educational psychologists (EPs) will be well placed to facilitate and provide knowledge and tools to support these relationships to flourish and remain effective.

EPs and school staff should work together to identify the barriers to learning impacting the belongingness experienced by each individual YPSA and work together to combat these with the relevant language support or differentiation. It will be important for schools and EPs to include YPSA in discussions and decisions made about how best to support them. EPs may also be able to support schools to foster a whole-school ethos that promotes acceptance, celebrating inclusion and diversity, and creating a welcoming environment for all.
EPs should work with schools to promote wider community engagement with YPSA and their specific needs, including multiagency work with school nurses, speech and language therapists, social care services, and other professionals. This will be particularly important when a YPSA has experienced trauma, reduced emotional wellbeing or has safeguarding needs.

The impact of asylum-seeking process appears to impact YPSA’s ability to engage with education, making it more difficult for them to build relationship or develop their academic skills; two factors closely linked with SoB. This problem is twofold and while educational psychologists are well placed to inform policy and guidelines for schools supporting YPSA and government at both a local and national level, schools should also work to understand the processes and experiences the young person is going through, and to provide motivating and engaging opportunities for social and learning development at the young person’s pace.

This systematic literature has identified an under-researched area in the sense of school belonging experienced by YPSA, and a need for further research into this to develop an understanding of the factors that influence belonging in education for this population. This could perhaps consider if, and how, some of the challenges they face that may differ from their peers can impact their SoB.

**Table 2.3**

**Implications for schools and Educational Psychologists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implications for Schools</th>
<th>Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build deep and meaningful relationships with YPSA that create a sense of safety and support.</td>
<td>Provide knowledge and tools to support the relationships between school staff and YPSA to flourish and remain effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with EPs to identify the barriers to learning impacting the belongingness experienced by YPSA and combat these with the relevant language support or differentiation. It will be important to include YPSA in the discussions and decisions made.</td>
<td>Work with school staff to identify the barriers to learning impacting the belongingness experienced by YPSA and combat these with the relevant language support or differentiation. It will be important to include YPSA in the discussions and decisions made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work to understand the processes and experiences the YPSA is going through, and to provide individualised opportunities for social and learning development.</td>
<td>Support schools to foster a whole-school ethos that promotes acceptance, celebrating inclusion and diversity, and creating a welcoming environment for all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promoting wider community engagement with YPSA, including multiagency work with relevant professionals to meet the needs of YPSA, particularly those who have experiences trauma, poor emotional wellbeing or have safeguarding needs.

Inform policy and guidelines for schools supporting YPSA and government at both a local and national level.
‘College is like a home’; An exploration into the sense of belonging of asylum-seeking young people in education in the UK.

To belong is a fundamental human need and forms interpersonal behaviour (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Belonging is defined as the need to connect with others and feel supported and accepted as part of a group (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). Building a sense of belonging (SoB) has been linked to improved resilience and mental wellbeing across students in the UK (Roffey, 2013, Morris, 2021), whereas a lack of belonging can lead to loss of identity, reduced social engagement, and psychological wellbeing (Shochet et al, 2011).

The extent to which a person feels they belong is impacted by several factors. Firstly, their perceived experiences of social inclusion (Jaremka et al, 2022) and discrimination or social rejection (Greenberg and Kosloff, 2008). Secondly, factors in organisational settings have been identified which foster or prevent the development of a SoB among members in their community. Promotive factors include open communication, encouragement, common values, shared objectives, and the structure of leadership while limiting factors include adverse atmosphere, lack of common time, organisational structure, competence, and leadership problems (Lampinen et al, 2018). Thirdly, Jaremka et al (2022) propose that changes in social circumstances, for example loss of job, socioeconomic status, or health difficulties can further impact an individual’s SoB.

A SoB in schools, or school belonging, refers to the extent to which students feel they fit in and are valued in their educational setting (Slaten et al, 2016) and is a key predictor of educational engagement and success (Drezner and Pizmony-Levy, 2020). Many secondary school students, however, report that they do not feel they belong or are accepted in their school (Allen, 2022). Factors identified to impact students’ sense of school belonging include their background, engagement with learning, integration with peers, and the level of diversity within the school (Maestas et al, 2007). In addition, research suggests that students' sense of school belonging develops through academic motivation, emotional stability, personal characteristics, support from adults and peers, gender, ethnicity, extracurricular activities, and environment (Allen at al, 2018; Cena et al, 2021). Developing a SoB in school is particularly important for young people seeking asylum (YPSA) because these individuals who are in a new and unfamiliar environment, have experienced adversity, and have often lost relationships and sources of belonging from their previous lives (Douglas, 2010).

Over 103 million individuals have been forcibly displaced worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022), with 63,089 seeking asylum in the UK in 2022 (Home Office, 2022) of whom 5,152 were unaccompanied YPSA (Refugee Council, 2023). People seeking asylum
are individuals seeking refuge in a foreign country to escape persecution or because of war in their home country and who are awaiting a decision from the host country’s government as to whether their refugee claim will be accepted (Chin and Cortes, 2015). Asylum seekers whose applications are refused lose their right to remain in the host country and may be deported to their country of origin (Chin and Cortes, 2015). When individuals under the legal age of 18 fleeing war or persecution arrive in a host country without a parent or guardian, they are classed as unaccompanied YPSA (Wernesjö, 2011). These individuals have a right to access free educational settings such as schools and colleges, with a legal obligation for the local authority to arrange a placement within 20 days (Gateshead Council, 2016). Many YPSA arrive in the UK in situations of uncertainty, poverty, or financial insecurity (Childhood Trust, 2023) which can restrict or their access to education (Salvo and Williams, 2017).

With respect to accessing education, YPSA likely face several challenges; including language difficulties making it harder to access learning or communicate with those around them (Astington, 2004). Whilst schools may work hard to meet the needs of the individuals they support, the UK educational system tends to expect students who struggle to access learning to adapt, rather than adapting the environment to meet their needs (Roffey, 2013). The adaptations required of schools through Education Health Care Plans often include environmental changes, however these plans are not in place for all young people and knowledge about them is not always widespread (Ahad et al, 2022). Through their research with adolescents in the USA, McClure et al, (2010) found that when an individual struggles to communicate effectively it can result in their peers and teachers not responding or responding negatively to their needs, impacting their self-esteem and educational outcomes.

Changes or threats to belonging can produce emotional responses that can impact overall wellbeing (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). For example, an individual may feel anxious when a social connection is in danger or lonely when their social connections are not available (Allen at al, 2022). There is likely to be a change in belonging and lost social connections for people seeking asylum who arrive in the host country having fled their home nation (Van Liempt, 2011). The legal processes around seeking asylum means that until an individual has their asylum application approved, there is a level of insecurity around their future in the host country which can impact their emotional wellbeing (Griffiths, 2014). These worries can also make it difficult for YPSA to focus on issues like education or social integration as they are often preoccupied by their ongoing safety needs (Henry, 2020), and can lead to increased feelings of loneliness, isolation, and mental health difficulties within this population (Chase, Knight, and Statham, 2008).

When YPSA arrive in their host country, educational settings are a central community in their daily lives (Kohli, 2011; Horswood et al, 2019), meaning that developing a SoB in schools is an important way to support these young people manage stress, experience increased happiness,
and to discover and develop their social identity in the UK (Baldwin and Keefer, 2020). YPSA are often a minority in the classroom which can reduce their SoB as having peers with shared experiences and language can support development of safety and belonging (Brodsky and Marx, 2001). School belonging can, therefore, be enhanced when individuals feel they are understood and accepted (Allen and Kern, 2017), for YPSA this likely means experiencing an acceptance of their individual identity and finding their place within the educational environment (Picton and Banfield, 2018).

Research proposes that SoB for YPSA in schools can also be developed through opportunities to make positive contributions to the setting (Hastings, 2012), and developing feelings of competence and success (Crawford, 2017). Bartlett et al (2017) explored YPSA’s experiences of education in New York and found that feelings of safety and success helped reduce worry and increase optimism. However, YPSA are often dealing with high levels of external stress which can reduce their working memory capacity, making it difficult for them to engage or learn in school (Tine, 2013). However, the factors and processes that support YPSA to develop a SoB in schools are not well understood, and western psychological frameworks of belonging often do not cogitate fundamental aspects of YPSA (Nwoye, 2018).

Further factors that have been identified as having the potential to limit the development of SoB for YPSA in schools include perceptions of visible differences such as skin colour or dress code (Pinson and Arnot, 2010), experiences of bullying (Besic et al, 2020), lack of staff training in supporting YPSA (Allen and Kern, 2017), and negative teacher relationships (Bešić et al, 2020, Sobitan, 2022). To gain a better understanding of the barriers and facilitators to YPSA’s developing a sense of school belonging, their experiences, views and perceptions need to be captured.

Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) conducted interviews with adolescent Somali refugees in the USA to discuss their educational experiences and found increased school belonging was associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy, irrespective of previous traumatic experiences. In their study, Horswood et al (2019) discuss the importance of understanding the factors of the school environment that impact refugee wellbeing to enable governments and schools to channel their resources to appropriately support these individuals.

Temple and Moran (2006) suggest that research with refugees should explore the views and experiences of participants to support them to have greater influence over the research outcomes. The current study investigates YPSA’ views on the factors that influence their SoB in education, as well as the views of school staff who work with YPSA. The research aims to contribute to a better understanding of barriers and facilitators to building a SoB in schools amongst this population, and by doing so, to help inform the development of suitable interventions to support YPSA in educational settings.
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

Methods

Researcher perspective

The ontological perspective taken for this research aligns with critical realism and the recognition that one true reality exists independently of individual understanding, but that personal experiences, interactions, and perceptions will impact how this reality is interpreted and understood (Sims-Schouten, Riley and Willig, 2007; Pilgrim, 2020).

Research questions

This research aimed to gain insight into the factors that impact SoB of YPSA in schools and colleges, from the perspectives of both the YPSA themselves and staff who work in educational settings. The main research question was ‘What factors do asylum-seeking young people and staff who work in schools to support them, consider as important to shape a SoB?’ In the discussion with young people and school staff, the impact of culture and identity, relationships and learning experiences were explored and their role in developing a SoB in educational settings.

Participants

Fifteen participants took part in this research study, of whom ten were YPSA living in England and five were school staff who support YPSA in an educational provision. This included nine males and one female YPSA aged 17 to 23 (n=10), of which 9 arrived in the UK unaccompanied, and five female who were school staff, aged 29 to 54 (n=5). Pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper to protect the participants’ anonymity; participants were given the option to choose to select their own pseudonym so that they could identify themselves in the data, or to be allocated random pseudonyms. Further participant information can be found in table 3.1 and 3.2.

Participants were recruited through non-probability, purposive snowball sampling in which schools and asylum-seeking charities within the South of England were sent a recruitment email. Snowball sampling was used because it is cost-effective approach appropriate for qualitative social research (Parker and Scott, 2019) and is reported to help recruit within populations that can be difficult to access (Naderifar at al, 2017). When a school or charity expressed interest in the research, a school staff member or charity worker was asked to act as a gatekeeper and agreed to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria and invite them to take part. This is because it was felt that YPSA might feel more comfortable discussing participation with the gatekeeper who they know and trust. Working in collaboration, the
researcher and gatekeepers arranged focus groups at venues within the gatekeeper’s organisation. The inclusion criteria for YPSA were that individuals must be a refugee or YPSA living in the UK, 16-25 years old, enrolled in an educational setting within the UK or have attended one within the last 12 months, have conversational level English language ability, live in South England, and have the mental capacity to give informed consent. The inclusion criteria for school staff were that they must be over 16 years old, live in South England, support YPSA within an educational setting in the UK or have done so within the last 12 months, and have the mental capacity to give informed consent to participate.

A disadvantage of using snowball sampling and gatekeepers is that the researcher was not able to monitor the full recruitment process as participant selection was made by gatekeepers. Their selection may have been influenced by their preconceptions about which individuals best fit the inclusion criteria, had relevant experiences to share, or were most likely to agree to participate. This could have influenced who was approached and who was ultimately included in the research and contributed towards the findings, potentially limiting the representativeness of the sample (Parker and Scott, 2019).

Response rates were low (2 responses out of 5 charities emailed, and 2 responses out of 65 schools and colleges emailed), and it is likely that those who chose to become involved may have done so because of a predetermined interest; for example, both schools who responded had specialist EAL departments and may have felt like they had something to offer the study; meaning that the sample is likely not representative of provisions and school staff across South England.

Table 3.1

**Young people seeking asylum demographic data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Months in UK</th>
<th>Asylum-seeking status</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Area of UK</th>
<th>Educational provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>Waiting for decision</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Pashtu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Poole</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>Waiting for decision</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Pashtu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>12-24</td>
<td>Waiting for decision</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Chechen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chichester</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>12-24</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Tama</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chichester</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12-24</td>
<td>Waiting for decision</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Pashtu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2

School staff demographic data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Area within South England</th>
<th>Months working with YPSA</th>
<th>Job role</th>
<th>Educational provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>EAL Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Chichester</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Poole</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>EAL Officer</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Poole</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>Head of year</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Poole</td>
<td>&gt;24</td>
<td>EAL Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Design and procedure

Qualitative research data was gained through semi-structured in-person focus group discussions (FGDs) which took place between February and April 2023. Focus groups were chosen because participants do not need to be randomised for this method, allowing gatekeepers to organise a group of individuals within their organisations (Brown, 2015). Focus groups also enabled the participants to build on each other’s ideas in a way that might not have been possible through individual interviews and to reflect the social realities for YPSA (McLafferty, 2004). Furthermore, the qualitative nature focus groups allowed the researcher to move beyond the facts and figures gained through surveys and to explore the lived experiences of YPSA, taking into account non-verbal communication such as body language (Fok-Han Leung, et al, 2009). A practical challenge when using focus groups in research is the difficulty of recognising each speaker when transcribing, this was managed by transcribing each FGD as soon as possible after completion (within one week), transcribing only one FGD at a time. Another challenge sometimes faced when using focus groups is how the group dynamic and environment can impact what
information is shared. The researcher worked to help participants feel comfortable sharing information by building rapport and reminding them that the FGD is confidential, meaning information discussed should not be shared outside of the group.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Southampton Faculty Ethics Committee. Gatekeepers were provided with information and consent forms to share with participants prior to focus groups, and these were read through by the researcher in the introduction period of each focus group to ensure understanding and gain informed consent. Participants were made aware that FGD would be audio recorded, but that any names or identifiable data would be removed from the transcription. Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage up until one month following the focus group. A planned break was included halfway through each FGD, and participants were made aware that they could access the ‘coffee corner’ provided in each FGD to use as a break space at any time or to subtly remove themselves from any discussion they found uncomfortable or that triggered traumatic or stressful memories. Participants were given debriefing information including who to contact if they felt negatively impacted by the FGD and were given the choice between a £20 Amazon or Love to Shop voucher for their participation.

A total of five FGDs were conducted, organised by the gatekeepers at their location and facilitated by the researcher (3 FGDs with YPSA and 2 with school staff). All focus groups were conducted in English and participants were required to speak a level of English that would enable them to participate in the research, it is possible that this may have impacted who chose to be involved and limited the range of experiences explored. FGDs were intended for three to six participants. However, two groups contained only two participants due to participants not arriving or deciding last minute that they would prefer not to take part, these two groups could be considered semi-structured discussions as they do not meet the minimum participant numbers required for a focus group. A separate topic guide was prepared for FGDs with YPSA (see appendix E.1) and focus groups with school staff members (see appendix E.2), each with prompts to explore factors relating to the SoB experienced by YPSA, with opportunities for participants to express their thoughts and ideas. In addition to this, participants were provided with Post-It notes to share ideas in a written or drawing format, or to make notes to remind themselves of something they would like to share verbally. These were then collected in at the end of each FGD and analysed alongside transcriptions. FGDs lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, with an additional a ten-minute introductory period, fifteen-minute break, and a five-minute debrief. Audio from FGD was recorded both using a dictaphone and Microsoft Teams, and the researcher took notes within focus groups that were triangulated with the recording to improve accuracy. Following the focus groups, transcriptions of discussions were written up and checked over by the researcher.
Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (TA) (Braun and Clarke, 2020) was selected for this research as it allows themes to be identified inductively throughout the dataset, capturing both latent and semantic meanings and a mixture of descriptive and interpretive accounts of the data. The flexibility of TA allowed it to be informed by existing theory while remaining focused on voicing the lived experiences of YPSA. TA allowed me to consider how my social positions and privileges shape my experience and interpretation of the data (Wilkinson 1988). TA also allowed me to reflect on the decisions I made throughout this research, considering why I made them and any underlying assumptions or expectations I held.

Following the steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2020), I began by familiarising myself with the data by listening to and transcribing the recordings. Once transcription was complete, I further familiarised myself with the data by reading each transcript twice, thinking and making notes about key discussion points. During this process, I felt I was able to pay attention to the discussion more deeply than I had in each FGD as I was able to focus on the content without making sure the discussion did not stray from relevance or preparing the next discussion point.

Once I had developed a good understanding of the data, I worked through each transcript on NVivo software, coding any ideas relating to the SoB of YPSA that were discussed by either YPSA or school staff in FGDs. This process led me to identify 285 codes, some of which upon further investigation identified micro-differences that were then clustered, leaving me with 181 codes found across the dataset. I then sorted these codes into 21 initial categories under five initial themes. A few days later, I revisited and regrouped these themes to help to capture the narrative of the data more accurately. Once groupings were finalised, 17 categories and four themes were identified and labelled to represent the data within; ‘Learning accessibility’, ‘Perceived level of inclusion’, ‘Coping with stresses’, and ‘Ability to communicate’. As I began writing up my data, I noticed additional relationships between categories which is illustrated in figure 1 (thematic map).

In this paper I followed the steps of thematic analysis as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2020), which recommends that the results and discussion be combined to better describe the flow of the data. However, as the journal that I am aiming to publish in requires a more traditional layout, I decided to include a mixture of quotes, interpretation, and further research in my results sections, and to separate these from the theoretical underpinnings, strengths and limitations, and implications, which are recorded in the discussion section. The codes, categories, and themes were created from the primary data, and additional research was brought in where relevant to support them. Having the quotes, interpretation and further research combined can lead to a
level of blending between these sections. To try to minimise this, I have attempted to provide first a quote or description of the data, followed by my interpretation of its meaning and then highlighting where it aligns with research in the field. I have also worked hard to make it clear when another researcher or author’s work is being referenced and have used citations throughout.

Results

Figure 3.1

Thematic map

This thematic map provides a visual representation of the themes and categories identified through the data and highlights directional links between these. The categories within each theme are represented in the same colour, and these colours are continued in figure 2 below to show how the categories, and therefore themes, contribute to the research question.
Figure 3.2

*Theme and category contributions to research questions*
Learning accessibility

School staff described a relationship between YPSA’s perceived ability to remain in the UK and engagement in education. They highlighted that when young people lack security or stability in their lives, they can find it difficult to engage with their surroundings.

You’ve got a confused child who’s between their heart and their head. Not knowing whether they are coming or going and not knowing what they really want. And then, so, I think the easiest thing [for the child] to do is push everyone away and give up (Gina, 29, British teacher in a secondary school in Chichester).

YPSA built on this, reporting that as their time in the UK progressed, they began to feel increasingly settled and able to express their desire to engage in education and improve their English ability. “And now we live in the UK, so, our first focus, umm, to learn English because there is the first language was the UK is English, so, I would like to learn” (Sam, 17, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth). The contrast between the above sentiments highlights the impact of stability on the young person’s attitude towards learning and builds on the notion that individuals’ ontological security, sense of self regardless of time or place, stems from stability, routine, and predictability (Giddens, 1991). A sense of security is linked to building bases and relationships (Mitzen, 2006), therefore, support from school staff can be crucial for supporting YPSA to develop a SoB in college. Across YPSA focus groups, teachers were reported to recognise where additional support was needed and provided this in an appropriate way, such as simplifying explanations.

Rahim: They were helpful, and yeah, they were great,

Abdul: Yeah, the teachers okay. It was very helpful. Especially that they know who needs the help, especially the language at school was difficult for us, so they were more trying to help us to understand, yeah, I noticed this thing there.

The view of support expressed by Rahim (22, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Poole) and Abdul (21, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth) was positive overall, however, the views of school staff were mixed. They noted that teachers can at times underestimate students’ academic abilities because of their language skills and can therefore find it difficult to know what support should be prioritised. This adds to prior research suggesting that staff may lack understanding and inaccurately judge a young person as needing language support if they are non-white, even when their first language is English, or they were born in the UK (Welply, 2023). The following extract is from one of the conversations with two members of staff,
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

Sonia (42, Polish EAL co-ordinator in a secondary school Poole) and Zara (48, Polish EAL officer in a secondary school in Poole):

Sonia: Because obviously if we're with them, then they cannot be sat with another student.

Zara: Yes. Sometimes we probably hinder them.

Sonia: So because that’s how somehow friendships develop. But then we there to help them and to give them more confidence and more English.

This view builds on the understanding that a SoB can develop from both social acceptance and academic performance (Davis, Hanzsek-Brill, et al, 2019), and indicates a struggle for school staff to strike a balance between offering language support to develop YPSA’s academic confidence and restricting opportunities for friendship development. Despite these difficulties, school staff highlighted a number of positive supportive methods currently in place in their schools, such as the opportunity for YPSA to gain additional GCSEs in the home language, with options including Arabic and Russian. Though this opportunity was not mentioned by the YPSA participants.

If your child speaks another language at home and they would like to do a GCSE in their language and that option exists in that language, we will endeavour to do.

We can’t teach really a language. We don't have resources, but we will work with EMTAS to find specialist speakers (Monica, 54, British EAL Co-ordinator in a secondary school in West Sussex).

The pathways available to YPSA within their settings can be limited, though were seen by some YPSA as helpful for developing English language and a gateway to more opportunities in the UK. “So we need to get 100% comfortable in English. So, you said I understand English, I can speak, I can write, I can read. So, after that, we need to focus on our future” (Sam, 17, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth). These pathways were also seen as enabling learning in an environment with relatable peers and discussions that create opportunities for both socialisation and learning simultaneously. “I'm not a social person, but still, I enjoy talking big, well, deep discussions. So, that was really fun because we did have a lot of things to talk about. And I enjoyed that because I could be open” (Ivan, 21, unaccompanied Iranian asylum-seeker in West Sussex).
Other YPSA had differing views, sharing how they felt the pathways underestimated their ability, limited future opportunities, and were unmotivating, slow and frustrating. Similarly, school staff discussed the experiences of young people who were restricted in learning because their language skills limited their ability to demonstrate their understanding. This supports research suggesting YPSA cannot have equal opportunities until their prior experiences are examined, understood, and accepted (Bunar, 2019). Adding to this, because of their life trajectory, YPSA enter the education system often already somewhat more mature than their non-refugee peers (Chase, Knight, and Statham, 2008). It is, therefore, important that education values their experiences and designs stages whereby people can move through a range of pathways with more tailored approaches to learning (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). The impact of the current system is that many YPSA consider leaving education in search of alternative paths. This echoes broader literature that recognises YPSA face both individual and systemic challenges accessing, advancing, and remaining in education (Ott and O’Higgins, 2019), and that YPSA are entitled to an equal and meaningful education (Bunar, 2019).

I knew many of people from different countries, Sudanese and different nation, they are less, less motivated to move to the high level, not because they’re not want to study, but because of the years [it takes]. For example, if you are new, probably start with entry level one, entry one, and then you need entry 2, 3, and then level 1 and level 2. This is about five years. Five years and then you, you still haven’t got your GCSEs. So they say “Ohh, come on, I’m not gonna spend like, five years at college to, to move to level 2” (Julius, 20, unaccompanied Sudanese asylum-seeker in Chichester).

Teaching staff also highlighted the importance of tailored approaches, discussing how YPSA succeed in subjects requiring less language and with visuals to support their understanding. “I don’t know what they were, Avocado. So, teachers they can give pictures, so they work hard with these things” (Sam, 17, unaccompanied Afghani asylum-seeker in Bournemouth). This resonates with the idea that visuals and technology can promote linguistic development by creating a shared understanding (Vulchanova et al, 2019).

School staff also discussed how some teachers within schools are reluctant to differentiate work, possibly stemming from a limited understanding of the impact of language barriers, trauma, and previous experiences on learning accessibility. Further highlighting the need for improved teacher understanding, a discussion from one focus group focused on the context and relevance of the learning. “The topics in college for me, yeah, it’s difficult for because we
didn’t know nothing about vegetarian, we, we all eat meat, and so the topic was not relevant to the culture” (Ada, 23, accompanied Chechnyan asylum-seeker in Chichester). If an individual’s emotions and experiences are not understood, relationships can be superficial (Lazarus, 2006), and without emotional connection, motivation to differentiate learning to accommodate individual needs is reduced (McDiarmid et al, 2021).

**Perceived level of inclusion**

The importance of building friendships shone through in the data with participants discussing friendships that developed both in and out of school through shared interests and opportunities for group membership. Similarly, research highlights that friendships in all contexts can support adolescents’ social inclusion (Witkow and Guligni, 2010).

We play sometime together in the garden and we was doing some stuff and watching TV. Uh, yeah. If you had a friend, friend, a good friend with you. So, it’s, it’s helpful, yeah. Especially when you come to home and you had the friend (Abdul, 21, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth).

Some participants discussed a preference for socialising with other YPSA as they felt more relatable, and interactions required less language or cultural understanding. The experience of feeling different and unable to relate to many of their peers is likely difficult and isolating, and it is hard to imagine the impact this could have for these young individuals who have already been subjected to high levels of disruption, uncertainty, and discrimination. This also aligns with research by Thelamour, et al (2019) who conducted a mixed method study that found ethnic minority students often build deeper relationships with individuals of the same ethnicity, and that such friendships can affirm racial identities. Participants who have become more confident in language and cultural understanding felt more comfortable integrating with English-speaking peers. Research suggests that integration with individuals from the host country supports social and cultural development (Rivas, et al, 2019), suggesting that while it may feel intimidating for YPSA to mix with English-speaking students initially or raise fears over feeling othered, integrating may help their development and SoB overall if they are met with compassion and respect.

This raises an ethical dilemma around making YPSA who are likely to have experienced stress and trauma feel initially uncomfortable because of the knowledge that it will benefit their SoB in the long run, as opposed to helping them feel secure in friendships with other asylum-seekers, even if this isolates them from the wider school community. However, this need not be a
dichotomy, as both relationships with same-language and wider peer groups can coincide to support engagement, if carefully managed and facilitated by staff.

Social connectedness plays a supportive role for young people, especially those more frequently victimised (McLoughlin, et al, 2019). Extracurricular activities such as sports clubs can provide opportunities for building connections (Buckley and Lee, 2021) and YPSA participants voiced a desire for increased social opportunities; “It’s been two year in *** college, and I didn’t see any enough activity. So yeah, I really like this kind of activity, yeah, would be nice if they had that” (Abdul, Afghani). School staff in one focus group considered a group of secondary school children from Afghanistan who were unable to partake in extracurricular friendship-building activities, making it difficult for them to build connections with their peers.

Being at secondary school socially is to do with things like sleepovers and meeting each other in town and things like that. And I think that probably impacts on their friendships because I don’t think they can do any of those things (Zara, 48, British EAL officer at a secondary school in Poole).

This extract hints at cultural differences playing a part for these YPSA, however there are other reasons why parents may be cautious in allowing children to attend sleepovers or social events, such as safety concerns or medical concerns (Knibb et al, 2019), as well as worries around separation or behaviour concerns (McDonald, et al, 2019).

While experiences of bullying were not discussed amongst most the participants in the present study, it is possible that they may have felt uncomfortable discussing such a personal topic in a group setting with an unknown adult present. Research suggests that YPSA are often subject to bullying and prejudice (Fazel, 2015), sometimes with severe consequences for their physical and mental wellbeing (Trent et al, 2019). School staff mentioned how they recently discovered an Afghani YPSA was upsetting newly arrived Ukrainian students within the school, as illustrated by the extract from the discussion with Zara (48, EAL officer at a secondary school in Poole) and Sonia (42, Polish EAL co-ordinator in a secondary school Poole) below:

Zara: Although he knows because he’s come from that. He would laugh and say ‘ohh you know, there's a war in your country’ and things so he even though he’s come from it, I think he's the only one I have heard trying to kind of wind them up a bit.

Sonia: ‘Ohh Ukraine’s not a country’
Zara: Yeah and ‘no it’s not, it belongs to Russia’.

This quote acts as a reminder that the term ‘asylum-seeker’ covers a wide range of individuals with an even wider range of experiences (Aspinall and Watters, 2010). There are likely differences in this YPSA’s experience of being born into a war-torn country and the experiences of young people for whom war was a new and very sudden occurrence, and this could have led to a limited compassion and understanding of the newcomers’ situation.

Further experiences of racism can come from individuals outside of the educational environment, as highlighted in the one-on-one encounter between Julius and an elderly woman he met through a college community outreach program.

She start asking me straight away questions like ‘where you from?’ like it a normal question, then I say I am from Sudan. And then, ‘why you’re here?’, I said, ‘to study’, now she say, ‘I mean like why did you come to the UK?’. I said to her, ‘I have war in my country’, and then she didn't stop for this one, she asked me, ‘how did he come to UK?’ I said ‘ohh, I came by for Libya. Chad, Libya, Italy, France and here’. And she said to me, ‘why didn’t you stop and stay in France instead of coming here to, to the UK?’ I was fed up and I said, ‘now is enough’ (Julius, 20, Sudanese unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Chichester).

It is clear that this encounter had a lasting emotional impact for Julius; after giving a statement to the college, he did not receive a response and does not feel his experience has been taken seriously. The impact of racial discrimination on wellbeing can be adverse and long-lasting (Trent et al, 2019; Njoroge at al, 2021), and while a strong social support network can act as a buffer (Lu and Wang, 2022), it is not enough to combat the silencing of YPSA by overlooking racist behaviours (Wong et al, 2021). Building on this, social networks in the form of family or friends may already be exhausted because they too are dealing with trauma, insecurity of legal status in the UK, and discrimination in everyday life (Beiser et al, 2003).

One participant shared that he was asked personal questions by strangers in college that he did not feel comfortable answering; “Sometime when they are asking like that and they wanna know, they want to know what do you wanna live here? And why you’re here for?” (Ekon, 18, Sudanese unaccompanied asylum-seeker in West Sussex). Ekon discussed his worries that these questions might be an attempt by college to gain information about him. Individuals who have experienced mistreatment may find it harder to build trust, because negative experiences can impact future adjustment and understanding of social situations (Coie, 2004). Many refugees
come from places where there is a deep distrust of authority, which shapes their ability to trust others, feeling that even innocent questions have negative intentions (Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007; Raghallaigh 2014). Moreover, they can be equally distrustful of immigration systems and the Home Office (Griffiths, 2012) and so questions such as those asked of Ekon may be perceived as intended to impact their asylum-seeking application. Therefore, the entire environment can be one of doubt and isolation that must be tormenting for a young person, hindering them being able to make lasting friendships. Building on research that has found level of trust to be an indicator for relationship development (Apostolou and Keramari, 2020), school staff discussed the importance of consistency of adults and approaches in support for creating trusting relationships between staff and YPSA.

School staff appeared aware of the distress invasive questions could cause, and therefore avoided difficult topics. This emphasises the importance of understanding an individual’s situation, and recognising the potential trauma, loss, and distress YPSA face (Groark, et al, 2010). A disadvantage of not broaching distressing topics is that staff may miss opportunities to support YPSA and help them feel listened to and accepted (Fejes and Dahlstedt, 2020).

It’s a tricky issue asking them about the families because I occasionally ask them, but I don’t wanna be too invasive, because I don’t want to put pressure on them. Because what if the answer is no, they’re not safe or the building has collapsed or there’s no electricity and my grandmother can’t get to the hospital. So, it almost like afraid to ask (Sonia, 42, Polish EAL co-ordinator in a secondary school Poole).

Supporting young people around delicate issues is important and requires close and continuous engagement (Anttila, Siljamäki and Rowe, 2018). It may take time, but with constant interaction and a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings, supporting these issues is possible (Björnburg, 2011). This highlights the importance of having staff who are empathetic or can relate to experiences of trauma, for example staff with a refugee background (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012; Block et al, 2014). “Having people that are like, understanding of, of me and some of the differences” (Rahim, 22, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Poole).

Further adult support includes getting to know the young person or offering support beyond the classroom, for example supporting the family as well as the individual. “We got Ukrainian translator in, and we had appointments for parents to come in and sit and chat about anything it could be school, it could be home. And then we bought the students over at the same time” (Zara, 48, EAL officer at a secondary school in Poole). It is important to consider, however, that the level of support received can differ for individuals from different countries, perhaps shaped by government policy towards
different groups. For example, many Ukrainian refugees received higher and qualitatively better support in the UK than arrivals from other nations, meaning schools gained additional resources they might not have received to support other arrivals (Machin, 2023).

Below, Ada highlights the necessity of practical support, particularly when initially starting education to increase access to education and remove additional stress and worry. This includes support to get to and navigate the school environment, find the correct rooms and learn where the facilities are. The need for practical support likely extends more broadly to understanding and navigating life in the UK (Devenney, 2020), and can be as important to individuals seeking asylum as educational support (Hopkins and Hill, 2010).

I think it would be better if the, if the college, uh, provides information, uh, important information such as travelling, finding there, and because many people didn't know how, I don't know how, were not able to find some information and, uh, they don't, cannot ask, not able ask the teachers, 'cause they have barrier language (Ada, Chechnya).

School staff discussed opportunities provided for individuals to practice and share their culture with others. “Two Syrian girls in this little breakfast club are going to do a whole school assembly with the head and the sixth formers and present what Ramadan is” (Monica, 54, EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in West Sussex). Feeling as though other people are interested and respectful of your culture increases feelings of acceptance and positivity (Jasin, et al, 2018). Participants built on this, sharing how they feel culture and religion are respected and celebrated where possible.

It's like you're in there is a respect for everyone. Respect for religion. Respect for yourself. Respect for your skin. Not like they say, ‘you black, I white’, nothing like this. ‘You're Muslim, I'm Christian’, not like this. ‘I no Like your friend’, No. No. Like everyone have respect for everyone (Omar, 17, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth).

As illustrated in the above quote from Omar, some young people spoke about feeling accepted and respected in college, echoing school staff’s description of treating all young people as individuals, rather than one of many. This aligns with previous research suggesting fairness is
achieved through equity (each individual getting the support needed to create meaningful equal opportunities) rather than equality (everybody being offered the same support) (Gorard, 2012).

Another factor highlighted by YPSA as impacting SoB was for their preferences to be taken into consideration across the whole school, beyond the classroom. Julius explained that he cannot bring a lunch from home, so because of the lack of culturally appropriate, halal, or vegetarian food being served in the canteen in college, and is only able to eat chips each day. “Umm, I think college should make survey like every year. They should ask student what they want to, to eat it in college and what, what food they like to see in the in the canteen” (Julius, Sudanese). We can see in this extract that Julius wanted a way in which all students could make their food preferences known to the college so that they could be accounted for.

**Coping with stresses**

Emotional responses to previous experiences, uncertainty around asylum applications, and adapting to life in a new country are all factors that contribute to the immense level of stress experienced by asylum-seeking individuals (Kirmayer et al, 2011). Increased levels of stress can reduce an individual’s working memory capacity and increase their cognitive load (Plass and Kalyuga, 2019), this is compounded for young people (Tine, 2013) leading them to become overwhelmed more easily (Fraser et al, 2015).

In line with previous research, school staff demonstrated an understanding of the challenges and stresses faced by YPSA and their families when discussing their uptake of the activities and extracurricular opportunities offered to them. “It’s also very overwhelming being offered something extra. And it’s keeping everything in your mind and remembering it all as well. It’s just there’s a lot, a lot to process for them at the moment” (Monica, 54, British EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in West Sussex). School staff understood that offering these opportunities was important, even if attendance is poor, because activities can evoke meaningful change and provide choice for YPSA who have had limited control over their lives both in the UK and their country of origin (Tripe and Jalonen, 2021).

We’re already working with people who’ve lost so much control and power and autonomy and place in society and identity, and you come to a new culture and then people make assumptions; often very caring assumptions, about what people want or how they feel or who they want to be, or what they like doing (Monica, 54, EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in West Sussex).
A lack of control can be detrimental to wellbeing and contribute to loss of identity (Burchett and Matheson, 2010). Finding ways to express themselves through opportunities to interact with people with common interests, have fun, forget about stresses, and relax was highlighted as important by YPSA. This echoes previous research suggesting that asylum-seeking individuals’ health and wellbeing is impacted by previous experiences, stress and underlying trauma (Burnett and Peel, 2001), and builds on research by Drigas and Mitsea (2021) emphasising the relationship between uncontrollable stress and mental wellbeing, and the need for relaxation as a form of stress management. “After lessons and after college just been out and, umm, meet with friends. Been to like a park or these things, yes. Take dinner together and also take some fun, that is very good of our time” (Sam, 17, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth).

Discussions with school staff identified a loss of self and YPSA having to rediscover themselves; learning how to live in a new country, discovering where they fit into society, and how others view them. In addition, the young people discussed are undergoing tremendous physical, mental and emotional changes as part of transitioning into adulthood at a biological and socio-cultural level (Osgood, Foster and Courtney, 2010; McDonald, 2016), in an unfamiliar and unsettled context. In their framework, Shore et al (2011) propose that a distinctive sense of self and uniqueness supports the development of a SoB. Further research builds on this, explaining how identity crises experienced by YPSA can lead to decreased mental wellbeing and behaviours such as self-harming (Gargiulo et al, 2021).

Memories of home countries were explored as part of the research, and while these were mostly positive memories, these serve as a reminder of what the YPSA has lost. These memories came with a sense of worry about the people and places left behind and an inability to detach themselves from the situation. “You hear them whispering in the lesson and it's not related to the topic, but they're discussing what's like my city's just been bombed or something” (Sonia, 42, Polish EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in Poole). This quote is a reminder of how these young people’s memories, communities and places are destroyed, and the experience lived everyday trauma of feeling not just the loss, but also the guilt of surviving and the inability to change the situation (Clayton, 2019).

Emotional trauma is prevalent amongst asylum-seeking individuals often resulting from physical violence, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, family separation, or other experiences (Silverstein et al, 2021). A variety of additional stressful and traumatic events can occur in transit to the host country (Vukčević Marković et al, 2023), further impacting their wellbeing and likelihood of development of post-traumatic stress disorder (Blackmore et al, 2020). In the current study, Julius shared parts of his experience and highlighted the emotional impact that it continues to exude.
Took me 3 years from Sudan to come here and even now I don't know where is my family. So, when someone come and sit with you and ask you about family and ask you about that. So, it's kind of bring emotion back to you (Julius, 20, Sudanese unaccompanied asylum seeker in Chichester).

How other people perceived the previous experiences of YPSA impacted how understood the young people felt and their sense of inclusion in college. The discussions suggest that often people make judgements based on their own predisposed ideas or prejudices rather than learning about an individual. Not taking the time to understand the individual and their circumstances can be damaging for their wellbeing and SoB, leading them to feel misunderstood or excluded (Leary, 2015). “There are lots of interesting dynamics in that particular little group. A lot of power games and people echoing their parents” (Monica, 54, British EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in West Sussex).

School staff discussed the additional stress and difficulty relaxing experienced by YPSA who assume adult responsibilities at home. YPSA taking on additional responsibilities is linked to their increased exposure to English language and social networks through education, and can include acting as translators, and engaging with medical professionals, lawyers, and social services (Ottosson et al, 2016). This can create an additional layer of trauma by engaging with parents’ traumatic events and emotional responses that parents would generally shield their children from but have to reveal in these cases, such as abuse or the stability of their asylum application (Wood et al, 2020).

Eltokhy (2020) explored factors influencing YPSA’s sense of stability and identified instability of legal status in the UK as preventing the development of relationships and planning a future, both of which can impact SoB. Another important factor was accommodation; some YPSA were placed in foster care or host families upon arrival, and these relationships were described at pivotal to feelings of security and stability. Reading this, it is easy to see the struggles these young people face when trying to build security and feel safe, how these can impact their emotional wellbeing, and how elements that they do not have any control over can have such an influence their lives and ability to settle. Previous research suggests that a stable living situation reduces stress levels and increases social and educational engagement (Lewis, 2006). “I think that the relationship with the host family again will impact everything else. Because if it’s going well and you think, OK, this is my home, I’m gonna be staying here. That’s something that’s stable” (Gina, 29, British Teacher at a secondary school in Chichester).

Education is crucial to helping YPSA settle because it creates a sense of normality and predictability and can support their emotional and social wellbeing (Guo et al, 2019). The current
study recognises that consistency and structure in schools enables feelings of safety and stability to develop. “I think all we can do as a school is just be this constant, constant, reliable, repetitive, open minded for them” (Monica, 54, British EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in West Sussex).

**Ability to communicate**

English language ability was described by participants as important to both their learning and friendship development, agreeing with research identifying language as needed in almost all parts of UK life, including accessing and achieving in education (Lamb, 2001). These views emphasise the importance of effective communication and highlight the necessity of appropriate language support on SoB. Language is recognised as an important part of communication (Hennick, 2008), which helps develop trust and belonging (Allen et al, 2021).

Building on this, participants discussed opportunities to develop language both within and outside of the educational setting, including language classes, interpreters, extracurricular activities, and social events through charities or youth groups. While many opportunities were discussed, one young person explained how English lessons often teach aspects of English that do not feel relevant to YPSA. “If you study English, okay, you study grammar rules, but in real life you’ll not be able to communicate with other people, you know.” (Julius, 20, Sudanese unaccompanied asylum seeker in Chichester).

What came across most strongly, however, was the importance of interacting with individuals of a different language and practicing English language regularly. Which demonstrates that while young people can lack confidence in their English ability, motivation to develop their language skills can build their confidence over time and support them in all aspects of life in the UK.

“I came by myself so didn’t speak to each other and was not comfortable, but I feel very brave because English is not my first language. So, when with some friends from another country and talk to English so I feel very brave. I say, I can do it. I can speak English, so I’m, I’m perfect (Jon, 17, Afghani unaccompanied asylum seeker in Bournemouth).

“I do not speak with too much people, yeah. Just my like, some, like, Arabic friends and some like Albania, no English people. Because I am shy so that’s why I don’t speak too much” (John, 18, Afghani unaccompanied asylum seeker in Poole). As in this quote, some YPSA described the impact of nervousness on their interactions with English-speaking students. This came across
as a reciprocal relationship where English ability impacts interaction with English-speaking individuals, but limited interaction with English-speaking individuals reduces practice and English language development. Other ways identified that support language development include radio, television, magazines, mobile phone applications, and social media use (Kuning, 2020).

Views shared by YPSA explained that understanding people can be particularly difficult on the phone and when individuals speak fast or have an accent. This likely feeds the inclination to build friendships with same language peers, and to seek out individuals similar to oneself (Riley and White, 2016), as this can increase self-esteem (Morse and Gergen, 1970). In line with this, YPSA suggested that building friendships with same language peers can help build an initial SoB to a group but slows language development and SoB to the wider community. “I think, it wasn't helpful you not to speak in English when you see someone else from your country. Yeah, you need to speak in your own language, yeah, but it was hard speaking English, so yeah” (Rahim, 22 Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Poole).

Many of the YPSA involved in this study were not confident in their English language abilities and felt uncomfortable interacting with English-speaking individuals because they perceived their spoken English or understanding as inadequate. “Trying to work in English language is like the torrent with crocodiles and currents and rocks and floods and waterfalls, and you’re just getting the core keywords key vocabulary. It's like finding steppingstones across the torrent” (Monica, 54, British EAL co-ordinator at a secondary school in West Sussex).

There was a general understanding across participants that while schools can speed language acquisition, all individuals will develop their language abilities with time and exposure. This emphasises a positive mindset, showing that despite the barriers and setbacks faced, YPSA feel a sense of hope, perseverance, and possibility for the future. “We learning English as well as learning for school. Learning is, wasn’t easy in the start and I remember I, I, couldn't read anything, but I with the time I, I, I learn a lot of things” (Abdul, 21, Afghani unaccompanied asylum-seeker in Bournemouth).

Discussion

The objective of this research was to explore the factors impacting the SoB experienced by YPSA in schools and colleges in South England. Four overarching themes were identified that were felt to narrate the story of the data; learning accessibility, perceived inclusion, coping with stresses, ability to communicate. However, overlap links were identified between categories and themes, illustrated in figure 1.
The theme ‘Coping with stresses’ stems from discussions with school staff about the experiences of their students, as FGDs with YPSA did not highlight sense of self as impacting on SoB. This is cause for consideration as to whether it is not recognised as an important factor by YPSA, or whether something prevented them from sharing their thoughts and experiences around this topic. For example, it could be that the relationship between researcher and participants was not deep enough for them to feel comfortable sharing, or YPSA may have protected their wellbeing because of the possible retraumatisation or distress of expressing these emotions.

YPSA seemed more inclined to give a positive view of educational experiences and tended to minimise negative elements or experiences. It is possible that because these individuals have often come from difficult situations where they have experienced trauma, distress, or uncertainty, they feel very appreciative of the safety and support they receive in the UK and they are hesitant to sound ungrateful. Additionally, YPSA might have felt able to be more open in individual interviews than a group discussion with peers, especially as focus groups were organised by schools and charities that supported them.

Many of the factors identified through this research align with research into trauma-informed practice, such as the importance of trust, stability, self-esteem, and autonomy. Trauma-informed practice is a strengths-based approach that works to build resilience (Nicholson et al, 2019). The key principles in trauma-informed practice and building trust through reliability, helping individuals feel safe, empowering them to build their self-esteem and sense of autonomy, providing choice, and working collaboratively (Miller et al, 2019; Levenson, 2020).

The findings of this study highlight the importance of feeling safe, relationships, stability of housing and asylum status, and self-efficacy and sense of competence on SoB. This aligns with Maslow (1943)’s theory of human motivation which suggests that physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs must be fulfilled for an individual to experience self-actualisation. Maslow (1943) organises these needs into a hierarchy leading to self-actualisation which was not apparent through this research. The hierarchy of needs has been criticised for inaccuracy and lack of scientific research, and it has been proposed that these needs can be responded to simultaneously (Hill and Tisdall, 1997) and for some people, inability to meet a need can help them identify their life goals and work towards self-actualisation (Henwood et al, 2015). The findings of the current research also fit with the ideas presented in Self-Determination: that competence, autonomy, and relatedness are needed for an individual to reach optimal motivation and engagement in education (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

The results of this study reflect the key concepts of theory of belonging which highlights that individuals have an innate need to build and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). To maintain these relationships, Baumeister and Leary (1995) state that individuals require consistency of interaction and
emotional connection. In addition, the current research identifies that YPSA’s belonging needs relate to previous research suggesting that shared beliefs, supportive environments, self-esteem and interaction can influence SoB (Ma, 2003). Further research suggests that belonging is impacted by motivation, emotional stability, individual characteristics, parent support, peer support, teacher support, gender, race and ethnicity, extracurricular activities and environment (Allen et al, 2018). Through the current study, an additional layer of intrapersonal and environmental factors is identified that may be more relevant to specific groups of individuals, including YPSA. These include ability to manage distressing emotions in relation to past experiences, ability to trust others and accept support, sense of autonomy, and perception of own abilities. Additionally, feelings of safety and permanence both in the UK and in school were identified as factors impacting belonging for YPSA. This means there are many individuals with additional belonging needs that are not currently recognised in belonging theory.

**Limitations**

TA is a flexible approach that enables the generation of new ideas and concepts derived from the data, making it an accessible approach and allowing detailed exploration of the data. The flexibility of TA allows the researcher influence over how data is interpreted and what is perceived as important, meaning that this thesis represents one of many ways in which the data could have been interpreted, though portrays this interpretation of the data in great detail (Nowell, et al, 2017) and the results were not limited by existing theoretical knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a critical realist, I recognise that my interpretation of the data will have been influenced by my own bias and experiences (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Coming from a family who fosters YPSA, it is likely that my experiences will have created underlying preconceptions of the needs and difficulties of these individuals.

What makes qualitative data so in-depth is the opportunity to gain insight into the experiences and perspectives of individuals, however the question must be raised regarding whether the themes that emerged are likely to be an accurate representation of the opinion of the target population, due to the small sample size (ten YPSA and five school staff) and underrepresentation of certain groups; including female YPSA and male school staff. It is also important to recognise that six of the ten YPSA participants were from Afghanistan, and as asylum-seekers are such a diverse group of individuals their experiences may vary considerably (Chin and Cortes, 2015). The use of focus groups, along with the limited sample, may have led to insights or experiences being missed or unexplored, limiting the implications of this research (Hajian-Tilaki, 2014).
Implications and future research

Four areas were identified in which practical changes could be made in educational settings. The first is to provide access to higher numbers of teachers with experience teaching English as an additional language to help them to understand how the young people learn, and support language development alongside academic development.

Secondly, more practical support could be provided initially upon starting education to increase YPSA’s access to education and remove additional stresses, including providing; documents YPSA can translate prior to beginning education, school maps marking key areas such as toilets, travel information, and lessons and extracurricular activities timetables. Additionally, providing access to additional extracurricular activities could enable YPSA to build relationships with a wider range of students and to relax and have fun with a reduced reliance on English language.

Finally, more choice and autonomy in education would enable YPSA to influence their own experiences, which can improve achievement and feelings of safety, particularly for individuals who have experienced trauma or anxiety (Ghorbandordinejad and Ahmadabad, 2016). Choices offered could range from the food they would like in the canteen to the subjects they study.

Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs) include opening discussions with schools around the support they offer YPSA, ensuring they are provided with the academic, emotional, and social skills to be actively engaged in education, and promoting the inclusion of YPSA in decision-making processes facilitating enjoyment and engagement in learning. EPs can also build and promote trusting relationships that encourage open communication and constructive relationships within the school and communities surrounding the YPSA. Further implications include providing training and development opportunities for school staff to support them to meet the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of YPSA. Furthermore, EPs are in an optimal position to inform policies at both a local and national level regarding interventions and support for YPSA, including involving the results identified through this study.

This topic remains under-researched in educational psychology, and more broadly, and future research should continue to explore the SoB experienced by YPSA in education. Research could work to gain insight into the experiences of YPSA from different backgrounds and settings, for example, research into gender or geographical differences in SoB experienced by YPSA in education.
### Appendix A  Search Syntax

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PsychINFO</td>
<td>(asylum seek* OR refugee* OR immigrant* OR asylum-seeking* OR migrant*) AND (UK OR United Kingdom OR Britain OR Great Britain OR England OR Wales OR Scotland OR Northern Ireland) AND (sense of belonging OR belonging OR belongingness OR feeling belonged OR social connectedness OR social-connectedness OR social belonging OR resilience OR wellbeing OR well-being) AND (education OR school OR learning OR classroom OR education system or college OR apprenticeship OR sixth form OR university OR high school OR highschool OR high-school OR secondary school OR pupil* OR student*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education Resources Information Centre’</td>
<td>(asylum seek* OR refugee* OR immigrant* OR asylum-seeking* OR migrant*) AND (UK OR United Kingdom OR Britain OR Great Britain OR England OR Wales OR Scotland OR Northern Ireland) AND (sense of belonging OR belonging OR belongingness OR feeling belonged OR social connectedness OR social-connectedness OR social belonging OR resilience OR wellbeing OR well-being) AND (education OR school OR learning OR classroom OR education system or college OR apprenticeship OR sixth form OR university OR high school OR highschool OR high-school OR secondary school OR pupil* OR student*)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B  Data Extraction Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (year)</th>
<th>Article title</th>
<th>Research questions/aims</th>
<th>Publishing context</th>
<th>Participant characteristics and context</th>
<th>Methods (design, data collection and data analysis)</th>
<th>Summary of results</th>
<th>Additional notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ritchie and Gaulter (2020)</td>
<td>Dancing towards belonging: The use of a dance intervention to influence migrant pupil's sense of belonging in school.</td>
<td>To examine whether dance might influence the wellbeing of migrant pupils, in particular their sense of belonging (SOB), given evidence linking this basic human need to positive educational outcomes.</td>
<td>Published in 'International Journal of Inclusive Education', which is a peer reviewed journal.</td>
<td>13 female migrant secondary school pupils from a school in a socially deprived area in the South East England. All were between the ages of 11 and 15.</td>
<td>Dance intervention: 6 x 60-minute hip hop dance classes (hip hop chosen by pupils). Qualitative methods used to explore their experiences and the impact of the classes. Semi-structured focus groups of up to 6</td>
<td>Key themes highlight that participation in the dance intervention fostered opportunities to build sense of belonging by: 1. Connecting with others</td>
<td>Interviews were also held with staff from the school, and researcher field notes were kept – these are helpful though do not give us the CYP views. Also include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welphy (2015)</td>
<td>Re-imagining Otherness: An exploration of the global imaginaries of children from immigrant backgrounds in primary schools in the UK in the last 3 years.</td>
<td>Study to explore the global imaginaries of young immigrant-background children in a way that allows their voices and multiple identities to be heard.</td>
<td>Published in 'European educational research journal'. This is a peer reviewed journal.</td>
<td>34 participants aged 10 and 11 and attending a primary school in a low-income area either in the UK or France (17 from each – only data from the UK in the last 3 years). These included photo-elicitation methods (shown photos of dance sessions). Semi-structured group and individual interviews including questions, games, and drawings.</td>
<td>French school themes: 1. Otherness as belonging 2. Joint-cultural creation (with other CYP of different backgrounds)</td>
<td>Context of the research – country and educational settings. Epistemology – can note if not provided.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
France and England.  

interpretations to be heard.  

regarding those in the UK were included in this review)

In the UK – 7 Second generation immigrants and 10 British CYP.  

In France 11 second generation immigrants and 6 French.  

Nationalities of origin include Hmong, Laotian, Indian, Moroccan, Algerian, Turkish,  

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded thematically using NVivo  

Diaries for CYP to write about their experience of school.  

different nationalities).  

3. Global imaginaries, intersecting spaces (impacted by school, local environment, TV, etc).  

UK school themes:  

1. Constructing the other (children described otherness as a basis for separation between peers)  

2. Points of imaginary
| Hamilton (2013) | It's not all about academic achievement: Supporting the social and emotional needs of migrant worker children. | 1 To identify whether migrant children have access to inclusive educational and social opportunities. | Publishe d in ‘Pastoral Care in Education’, a peer-reviewed journal. | 40 Eastern European CYP from schools in North Wales aged 3-11. 23 boys and 17 girls. Nationalities: Polish (28), Russian, Cambodian, Bangladeshi, Italian, and Portuguese | Semi-structured interviews with open-ended-free-sequence questions. Interviews were digitally recorded for practitioners and encounters (future aspirations built on knowing friends from different places) 3. Transcending local separations (current separation based on otherness, but future projections of belonging to the world and inclusion). | Key themes: 1. New things to get used to – initial adjustment |
2 To ascertain whether migrant children are making successful transitions within their new school environments.

3 To gain insight into the lives of migrant children beyond the school setting.

Lithuanian (5), Slovakian (3), Latvian (1), Estonian (1), Rumanian (1) and Bulgarian (1).

Other participants included 37 teachers, 8 EAL teachers, 9 Eastern European parents, and 6 community practitioners manually recorded for parents and CYP.

Other data collection methods:
- Observation
- Documentary analysis
- Questionnaires from additional schools who did not provide participants
- Analytical process

2. They started talking to me – peer attachments
3. I thought Miss might shout at me – pupil-teacher relations
4. My parents are always working – changing roles and family structures.

In a climate preoccupied with raising academic attainment and in communities where there has been significant
| Oddy, Harewood, Masserano, and Lounasmaa (2022) | Experiences of forced migration: learning for educators and learners: a report. | To explore the importance of the student’s voice as a culturally sustaining pedagogical approach to strengthening trauma-informed teaching approaches | Publishe in ‘International Review of Psychiatry’, a bi-monthly peer-reviewed journal. | 8 students considering/starting university at University of East London – no ages, genders, or ethnicity information given. | Interviews – participants were provided with questions about their experiences and any suggestions they might have for future teaching, which they could respond to while recording themselves on camera or audio. However, they were also encouraged to use the questions as guidelines and go off script if they wished | Key themes identified: 
1. Welcoming environments (impact of having/not having).

This included Having voices heard/not heard, feeling liked/hated, any race/gender bias, pastoral support, how ‘grouped’ they... | cultural change, the holistic needs of individual migrant learners may not be fully recognised. |
| Sobitan (2022) | Understanding the experiences of school belonging amongst secondary school students with refugee backgrounds | **Aim:** To understand how secondary school refugee students experience school belonging in the North East of England. | **Research question:** What are the experiences of school belonging? | **IPA sampling strategy** was used to recruit homogenous participants, who may share similar experiences of the phenomenon being studied. | **IPA** sampling strategy was used to recruit homogenous participants, who may share similar experiences of the phenomenon being studied. | **7 participants aged** | **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis,** which looks at how experiences impact how a person perceives something. IPA is not limited to simply analysing data but influences how researchers design their research and develop questions. | **Four superordinate themes were discovered in the data,** which could support an understanding of how refugee students experienced school belonging in the North East. These are | **Critical realist approach - suggests that natural and social reality exist independent of human knowledge (Bhaskar et al., 1998).** |
### Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belonging</th>
<th>11-16 years (3 female, 2 male)</th>
<th>Semi-structured interviews via Zoom used to encourage free and open discussions.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amongst secondary school students with refugee backgrounds (UK)?</td>
<td>- Asylum seekers and refugees</td>
<td>1. agency - the extent that participants feel in control of themselves, their environment and their future.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Attended secondary school</td>
<td>2. participation - participants’ desire to contribute to school life and take part in extra activities beyond the classroom.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Good understanding of English and communication skills</td>
<td>3. safety - feelings of acceptance and their relationships with teachers and peers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Recruited through local authority organisations</td>
<td>4. separation -</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
highlighted how negative experiences caused participants to internalise feelings of separation and difference.

Participants indicated that positive relationships with teachers, such as receiving support and encouragement when needed, made them feel like they belonged.

Participants described
enhanced belonging when the various aspects of their identity and experiences were respected and affirmed within the school, contributing to their feelings of safety.

Participants expressed a desire to engage in after-school sports and other extracurricular activities as a way of experiencing school belonging.
Participant\(\text{s}\) from this study identified that negative relationships with teachers contributed to a lack of safety and were considered barriers to their school belonging.

Participant\(\text{s}\) stated that the COVID-19 restrictions curtailed participation in school activities and restricted access to additional support, which impacted
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fuller and Hayes (2019)</th>
<th>Matthew Fuller and Ben Hayes (2019): What are the experiences of education for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in the UK?</th>
<th>To ascertain the experience of educations for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people</th>
<th>Published in an international, peer-reviewed journal: ‘Child: Care, Health and Development’.</th>
<th>Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 18 and 19 living in the UK.</th>
<th>Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the data.</th>
<th>Key themes:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 males 1 female</td>
<td>Countries of origin include Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iran.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Education facilitating socializing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Education and English proficiency leading to a better life in the UK</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. The impact of transitions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. The impact of external stressors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hek (2005)</td>
<td>The role of education in the settlement of young refugees in the UK: The experiences of young refugees</td>
<td>This is an article based on a small-scale qualitative research project which aimed to gain the perspective of young people about what helped them settle and achieve in school.</td>
<td>Participants were refugees who attended either a mixed comprehensive or a boys comprehensive school in an area of the UK that is predominantly working class. 9 males and 6 females between the ages of 13 and 17, and from varying ethnic backgrounds but...</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews (topics predetermined with space for interviewees to raise additional issues or comments)  No information on what analysis tools were used to create themes</td>
<td>Themes discussed: 1. settling in school 2. friends 3. the whole-school attitude towards refugees 4. bullying and the anti-bullying ethos 5. teacher’s attitudes 6. Links with home</td>
<td>Specific ideas given for what would be most helpful in initial stages of joining a school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Study Title</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Themes Identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Valenti, Sporton, and Nielsen (2009)</td>
<td>Identities and belonging: a study of Somalian refugee and asylum-seekers living in the UK and Denmark</td>
<td>To understand how young Somalis negotiate and discursively position themselves within hegemonic social narratives that are not of their own making and which define what it means to be Somali, Muslim, or British/Danish, social narratives that are racialised and gendered.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Being Somali: memories and practices 2. Being Muslim: communities and regulation 3. Being British/Danish: belonging to the nation</td>
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</table>

Valenti, Sporton, and Nielsen (2009) published in 'Environment and Planning D: Society and Space'. This uses both a peer reviewed journal and an editor reviewed companion website. Focus on social struggles over access to and control of space, place, territory, region, and resources. Purposive sampling. Participants from Sheffield, UK, or Aarhus, Denmark. 50 Somali asylum-seekers and refugees aged 11-18. Same methods and research questions used in both UK and Denmark: observation in Somali community spaces, interviews with Somali asylum-seekers, and interviews with key stakeholders. No information about data analysis or how themes generated. Quotes included.
<table>
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<tr>
<td>Therefore, the aim of this study was to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer pupils in schools in NI, according to newcomer pupils themselves and those who work most closely with them, specifically school staff and youth workers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publishe in Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, a peer reviewed journal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sampling was purposive. Two primary and two post-primary schools in urban settings participated as well as two primary and two post-primary schools in rural populations (n = 8 schools).</td>
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<tr>
<td>39 pupils in total aged 9-18 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant views and lived experiences were explored through questionnaires, online surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Semi-structured focus groups of 4-6 participants to explore what the newcomer pupils liked most and least about being a young person in NI, any challenges they have faced and how these issues made them feel, and their</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results suggest that, while many newcomer pupils have adapted well and display average levels of emotional well-being, many have experienced a range of adversities that may negatively impact mental health. Recommendations are made that relate to the emergent themes: to consider pre-existing stress and trauma (especially among refugees); respect socio-cultural differences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facing newcomer children and young people with respect to mental health and wellbeing?</td>
<td>2. What recommendations could be made to schools, youth services and communities in order to contribute effectively in supporting and enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 themes:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. Family and Friendships - Isolation and Relationships
(parent mental health difficulties such as depression were often present in children also, stress of translation for family, loneliness and isolation. Better when larger support network)

4. The Impact of School (pupils were intentional in their studies and motivated to succeed, children praised the
| Bradby et al (2019) | Visibility, resilience, vulnerability in young migrants. | Aims not discussed. | Published in Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine, a bimonthly peer-reviewed healthcare journal. | 24 care-leavers aged 17-24. 11 UAS – 8 male, 3 female (where identifiable, only the views of young people aged 18 and under were included in the review)  
Recruited through Children’s Interviews – 5 group and 16 1:1. | Some felt well supported while others described feeling vulnerable, anxious, angry or sad. These experiences, if linked with the insensitivity of even one professional, could lower young people’s expectations of healthcare to the schools and particularly the strategies and support they received from individual teachers). |
| Services within a LA | extent that they avoided contact with service providers. In supporting young migrants’ resilience to meet everyday challenges, friendly support from peers, carers and professionals was important. They needed determined advocacy at key moments. |

Themes from interviews:

1. Trust and uncertainty in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>health and care services</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. visibility and vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. key contacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our scoping review found very little research on young unaccompanied migrants’ own experiences of, or priorities for, health and social care services. Our study of young migrants addresses a gap in understanding the
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Including migrant worker children in the learning and social context of the rural primary school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton (2013)</td>
<td>This article seeks to close this gap by outlining the experiences of Eastern European children who settle into unfamiliar education systems within the UK. The progress made by migrant pupils is influenced by an intricate web of factors that stem far beyond individual schools and classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton (2013)</td>
<td>Published in Education 3-13 - International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education, a peer reviewed journal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes:
1. Adjusting to an unfamiliar education system
2. Pedagogy (certain factors are making needs of this group.
| 3 main aims:                                                                 |                                                                 |
| 1 To identity whether migrant children have access to inclusive educational and social opportunities. |                                                                 |
| 2 To ascertain whether migrant children are making successful transitions within their new school environments. |                                                                 |
| 3 To gain insight into the lives of migrant children. | it difficult for teachers to personalise the learning environment and eliminate obstacles which exist within the educational and social context for migrant learners. Consequently, some children might be at risk of underperforming. |

3. Supporting migrant children beyond social fluency (This study has identified certain factors within the school environment which...
| Hasting (2012) | The experience of male adolescent refugees during their transfer and adaptation to a UK secondary school. | This research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how male adolescent refugees experienced their transfer and adaptation to a secondary school in the UK. It is hoped that this research might bring the reader closer to understanding the unique challenges faced by these students. | The study took place in a non-selective, non-denominational community school for boys aged 11 to 16. The school was ethnically diverse and located in an inner city with high rates of poverty and deprivation. Purposeful sampling was used. | The research used a qualitative design, it was idiographic and the approach adopted was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, enabling the author to be sensitive to the diversity of experiences and cultural backgrounds of each participant, whilst at the same time allowing commonalities to emerge. The data generated three superordinate themes which reflected the participants' sense of being in need of help during the early stages of their transfer, their process of adapting to school and developing a sense of belonging in this context, and their overriding need for safety. | Can support by:  
1. providing a “holistic mentor” in school  
2. help CYP learn to know people, places and rules  
3. create opportunities to make positive contributions  
4. use a family framework |
| Understanding and relating to the experiences of refugee children. | Used to recruit 6 male participants who had refugee status, had experienced transferring into a UK secondary school, had level 3 English speaking and listening, were aged 12-16, and attended the selected school. Participants were from Afghanistan, Somalia, and Turkey. | Between accounts to be acknowledged. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Main topics: 1. the experience of transferring and adapting to secondary school in the UK 2. the experience of a sense of belonging during this time 3. the role language played during their transfer | Themes: 1. Needing and getting help (All participants identified needing help to begin with, the way help was given mattered, protection from bullying as well as learning support, peer/teacher/family support) 2. feeling safe and secure (Feelings of fear and loneliness were particularly prevalent during the early stages, bullying by peers) 3. highlight positive impact of using and developing child’s first language at school 4. record, monitor, and address bullying targeted at refugee pupils 5. support the inclusion of refugee children in secondary schools 6. Use IPA with children to understand and support learning at home |
### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robb et al (2007)</th>
<th>Looking for a better future: Identity construction in</th>
<th>To explore who aspires to enter (or not to enter)</th>
<th>Published in Social Science &amp; Medicine, a peer-</th>
<th>Schools were recruited from a database of ‘partnership’</th>
<th>Interviews that were tape recorded transcribed, as a barrier to safety</th>
<th>Five influences on the development of academic identity</th>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Adaptation and belonging (a sense of the journey they had made as they came to adapt to life at school and in the UK, expectations vs reality of school, motivation to learn English, sense of belonging and getting to know and be known by others and their environment.)
| socio-economically | higher medical | reviewed academic | comprehensive | and then thematically |
| deprived 16-year | education and | journal covering | schools in | analysed. |
| olds considering a | why. | social science | deprived parts of | In the data |
| career in medicine. | | research on | inner London. | analysis, sections of |
| | | health, including | Participants | text were assigned |
| | | anthropology, | withing schools | preliminary codes; |
| | | economics, | were selected | these were refined |
| | | geography, | from those who | by discussion and |
| | | psychology, | met the minimum | reading of the |
| | | social | academic criteria | literature, and then |
| | | epidemiology, | using the Index of | grouped into broader |
| | | social | Multiple | themes. |
| | | policy, | Deprivation. | |
| | | sociology, | | |
| | | medicine and | | |
| | | health care | | |
| | | practice, policy, | | |
| | | and organization. | | |

Research questions:
1. What are the characteristics of 16-year olds living in socio-economically deprived areas of London who have so far achieved well academically and who seek to apply to medical school?
2. What insights can be gleaned from these motivated reviewed academic journal covering social science research on health, including anthropology, economics, geography, psychology, social epidemiology, social policy, sociology, medicine and health care practice, policy, and organization.

Participants withing schools were selected from those who met the minimum academic criteria using the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

45 16-year-olds living in a deprived area who expressed an interest in studying medicine. These young people were considered by their pupils to medical ambition were identified:

1. The private sphere (Bourdieu’s ‘family habitus’), especially a family meta-narrative of immigration to secure a better future and of education as the vehicle to regaining a high social position previously held in the family of origin.
2. The school (Bourdieu’s ‘institutional habitus’), and especially the
and successful students that might inform efforts to prevent disaffection and promote fulfilment of potential in socio-economically deprived children more generally?  

3. What insights might inform a strategy to increase the proportion of medical students from groups that are currently under-represented (i.e. notably White and Black males from lower input of particular teachers who inspired and supported the student.  

3. Friends and peers, many of whom the student had chosen strategically because of shared aspirations to academic success.  

4. Psychological resources such as maturity, determination and resilience.  

5. Past experiences (especially
| socioeconomi groupes)?) | traditionally low application rate to higher education. | In 2006 cohort progressive focussing was used. Each student also submitted a one-page personal statement as part of their application, responding to the question “Please tell us a bit about yourself and why you are thinking of studying medicine”. These were analysed the personal statements using quantitative content analysis. | meeting the challenge of immigration, changing school, or dealing with illness or death in a relative), which had proved formative and strengthening to the individual’s developing ego. Suggests that academic success depends on the construction of a coherent identity, and that a psychological perspective on identity (i.e. considering the |
| Newbigging and Thomas (2011) | Good Practice in Social Care for Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children | To identify key components of good practice in social care services for safeguarding refugee and asylum-seeking children. | Published in Child Abuse Review, a bimonthly peer-reviewed academic journal with a focus on child protection, including research findings, practice | 20 participants (8 male and 12 female) took part in focus groups. Participants ranged in age from 10-20 years (where identifiable, only data from participants aged | The primary research data collection consisted of three elements: (1) two focus groups with children and young people to explore definitions and indicators for good practice in social care from their perspective; | Four key themes emerged in relation to the social care response to young asylum seekers and children: 1. Language and communication, with a consensus that it is essential... |
| developments, training initiatives and policy issues. | 18 and under was used in this review). | (2) a national survey of relevant organisations including local authority children's services in England and Wales and health and social services boards in Northern Ireland to explore indicators for good practice for asylum-seeking children and young people; | that services establish what languages someone speaks and are able to communicate with young asylum seekers in order to understand individual needs. |
| Participant s were recruited via a refugee organisation. | | (3) follow-up visits or telephone interviews to gather more details on the good practice examples. | 2. Attitude and trust. Being kind, friendly and open were identified as important attributes, and understanding and acceptance as key to good social services. |
| The location was a city with a long history of immigration and the focus groups took place at the base for the refugee organisation. | | | 3. The role of family was seen as central, with the impact of |
| minors and young people in families, with eight countries represented. | uncertainty about status and parental well-being, particularly poor mental health, having an impact on the whole family. | 4. Emotional wellbeing, both for the young people and where relevant other family members, was identified |
### Appendix C CASP quality assurance checklist

The Critical Appraisals Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) qualitative checklist was used to evaluate the quality of the studies in this systematic literature review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study author and date</th>
<th>Section A: Are the results valid?</th>
<th>Section B: What are the results?</th>
<th>Section C: Will the results help locally?</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ritchie and Gaulter (2020)</td>
<td>1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?</td>
<td>2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?</td>
<td>3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?</td>
<td>4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welphy (2015)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton (2013) A</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oddy et al (2022)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller and Hayes (2019)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>CAN’T TELL</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>CAN’T TELL</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hek (2005)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine, Sporton, and Nielsen (2009)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMullen et al (2020)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevant findings, clear conclusions, and recommendations made.

Focus on sense of belonging/identity. Hard to follow and seems to be based on preconceptions.

Makes recommendations to support pupils in
<p>| Studies                      | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | YES | CAN'T TELL | CAN'T TELL | Detailed information, but no discussion of limitations, recommendations, or future research suggestions. | 5/9 |
|-----------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------------|------------|________________________________________________________________________________________|     |
| Bradby et al (2019)         | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | YES | CAN'T TELL | CAN'T TELL |                                                                                           |     |
| Hamilton (2013) B           | YES| YES | YES | CAN'T TELL | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | Has some implications and recommendations                                                   | 8/9 |
| Hastings (2012)             | YES| YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | YES | YES | YES | Detailed implications for practice. Not solely focused on belonging, though is covered     | 8/9 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>CAN’T TELL</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>CAN’T TELL</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>The focus is not fully belonging, though an element is covered</th>
<th>8/9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newbigging and Thomas (2011)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>CAN’T TELL</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Highlights best practice and some limitations. Detailed input from young people and supporting adults</td>
<td>6/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D Systematic literature review thematic synthesis coding manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Example quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of relationships</td>
<td>Navigating peer relationships</td>
<td>Experiences of bullying and racism</td>
<td>‘... the students swearing at me ... Nigga, and like this ... get the fuck out of here ... ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dangers of only mixing with limited peers</td>
<td>Although the daily activities linked to Catholicism may help children to develop an immediate connection and sense of identity, there is a danger of migrant learners circulating predominantly within their shared heritage groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling alone or isolated</td>
<td>When you first come to England and you don’t speak English you don’t have anyone to talk to, no friends or anything and you’re like really, really lonely and by yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling different</td>
<td>Regardless of what they chose to reveal about themselves, some described feeling that they were treated in a different way from UK-born young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling rejected</td>
<td>When I was playing they were saying, “You can’t even play with other people, you can’t even speak English”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building relationships based on shared experiences</strong></td>
<td>Shared experiences created through the dance intervention provided a space to make connections and may have helped to sustain and strengthen the friendships beyond the sessions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feeling happy, loved, and comfortable around friends</strong></td>
<td>I’m really happy, it’s really funny and you’re go home when happy. It’s because you’re friends.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers aiding language development</strong></td>
<td>First it was the teachers that helped me learn, and then it was one of my English friends, well it was my best friend who was helping me with English and giving me help so that I’m going to do my best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends shape how you feel about school</strong></td>
<td>But I’ve got quite a lot of friends there, yeah I think that makes such a difference as well, they shape how you feel about college and school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoyment of activities helps build relationships</strong></td>
<td>Without experiencing enjoyment, the migrant pupils in our study might not have connected with others, felt safe or engaged in the process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance of friendships and social support</strong></td>
<td>Every student in the study stressed the importance of their peer group. Friends shaped and validated each other’s attitudes, values and self-image; they helped each other stay on course academically; they discussed and planned their future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking out peers with similarities</td>
<td>I know this girl... she is from Africa, she’s got black parents... we can talk to each other about our parents. It’s different from white people. It’s nice to talk to someone who is like me, if that makes sense?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying with peers who speak home language</td>
<td>But there were Polish children in my class and they started talking to me. I stopped feeling scared and thought school is cool. Miss is nice. I like helping her when new Polish children arrive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of other asylum-seeking young people</td>
<td>So, I was part of that team and I used to help others like other Eritreans, some other foreigners, some unaccompanied children who studied there so we used to help each other out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing a sense of belonging through otherness</td>
<td>Andre’s global imaginary is not just a narrative of freedom and mobility in isolation, but builds on intercultural exchanges and friendships. These imagined global connections participate in constructing a sense of belonging through Otherness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with adults in school</td>
<td>Difficulties being dismissed or overlooked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of praise from teachers</td>
<td>Feedback from teachers was the single most significant influence on students’ confidence. Many described how a teacher had ‘believed in’ them and rewarded them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Feeling understood and valued | With high grades, moving them to a higher set, putting them on the ‘Gifted and Talented’ register, giving extension work, and praising them.
|-------------------------------|
| Impact of teacher support     | Experience of having a supportive teacher who ‘... knows more of my story, so he’s like more careful what he says to me and stuff’.
|-------------------------------|
| School staff support going above and beyond | Thank god I had a nice teacher, you know, I still love her, she kept an eye on me, I didn’t even know how well she protected me and she saved me, you know what I mean, all those days.
|-------------------------------|
| Language support from adults  | Protecting them from bullying; providing advice; raising their aspirations; listening to and finding solutions to personal problems, and providing directions to places inside and outside of school.
|-------------------------------|
| Student-teacher relationship  | First it was the teachers that helped me learn, and then it was one of my English friends, well it was my best friend who was helping me with English and giving me help so that I’m going to do my best.
|-------------------------------|
|                               | I was feeling like I’m having the best teacher in the world, thanks god, I was feeling really happy about it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home-school communication</th>
<th>Interpreters provided to aid parental involvement</th>
<th>Most said that the main reason their parents feel welcome and understand the school set-up is because teachers are helpful and there are interpreters available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needing to support family – particularly in translation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maybe your parents rely on you because they cannot speak English and you have to help them all the time because you got to the point you are OK . . . It gets a wee bit annoying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive parent-school relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Where the school had policies on promoting contact with parents, such as home-school liaison and making interpreters available, the students felt more positive and able to consider themselves part of their school. They also clearly felt that school gave them and their families the chance to be part of the wider community in a new place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and family relationships</td>
<td>Needing to support family – particularly in translation</td>
<td>Maybe your parents rely on you because they cannot speak English and you have to help them all the time because you got to the point you are OK . . . It gets a wee bit annoying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from family</td>
<td></td>
<td>He [brother] teach me more things than the teacher. How to write, he start me A, B, C, D and how words come together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wanting to make family proud</th>
<th>I really feel it’s an injustice that he [father] has so many degrees and he doesn’t have a fixed hob. I want to do justice for him as well, get myself a good degree and do well for myself so that he can be proud of me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unsupported or experiencing difficulties at home or with family</td>
<td>Parents might be consumed in trying to financially provide for their families, so may not be in a position to fully appreciate how their children are coping with such change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family separation/staggered migration</td>
<td>The war happened and I got lost from my family. I don’t know where they are. Some people found me on my own and they just brought me here, they left me and then I went in a children’s home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Having positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to learning</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of workload without adequate support</td>
<td>Coping with these differences and learning a new language, whilst trying to engage with the required school work, all contributed to children feeling isolated, stressed and lacking confidence during the initial period of transition into life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand or know what to do</td>
<td>I used to get angry .... A headache .... Because you have to work and you don’t understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling as though they could learn better alone at home</td>
<td>He repeatedly uses some variant of the phrase ‘I can do it by myself’ and describes how he wanted the teacher to guide his own learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of education struggles on health</td>
<td>One participant described how this sense of not knowing had an adverse effect on his emotional and physical well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to do well</td>
<td>I’d like to be an engineer and when I started here, I was thinking about this and if I improve my English here I can continue to university and continue my education and touch my future. I was thinking about this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and education can lead to</td>
<td>Many of the participants perceived their education as a way of learning English and progressing academically, which would lead to a better future in the UK, often characterizing their education as a journey with steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desire for additional learning resources and opportunities</strong></td>
<td>He felt that his experience of education would be enhanced by more differentiated learning experiences and more autonomy in his learning. He frequently emphasized how this would allow him to learn at his own pace. described how the school days in Afghanistan were much longer; there were less holidays and more homework. When describing his experience in the UK, his accounts focussed on how he wanted a faster pace of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing confidence through praise and academic rewards</strong></td>
<td>Felt more confident after receiving achievement points from her teacher for moving to a higher set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Having positive role model</strong></td>
<td>There’s another girl in my year and she just works so hard, you just think, ‘How do you do it?’ She must be a machine. And she’s really down to earth as well and you just think, ‘Wow’. I love the way she is. I’m close to her as well. But it’s nice to have that chat with someone when you admire them. It just makes you want to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being made to feel like a failure impacts confidence</strong></td>
<td>When students had experienced failure, put-downs by teachers or friends, or the inability to ‘win through’ in a particular situation, their confidence had taken a substantial blow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills as a barrier</td>
<td>Vigour and trying your best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills impact relationships</td>
<td>Difficulties with English language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination based on language ability</td>
<td>he told me to write down, and I told him I can’t understand you. And he say no, you can understand ... he angry with me ... I think he hate me. I didn’t know why, I didn’t do anything to him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaudia remained virtually silent for an entire year, she found other ways to communicate, but this involved physical contact with other children which intimidated and annoyed her peers, resulting in Klaudia initially being rejected by her classmates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of language on learning</td>
<td>Degree of stress he felt trying to meet the demands of the A-level curriculum and keep up with the other English students when he transitioned from ESOL to A levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking language needed to ask for support</td>
<td>The first day I come to here I don’t know where I am. I don’t know where the toilet is. P2. Yeah same! P5. I was like that! P1. Me too! P4. I didn’t know anything. P3. I don’t know where is the toilet and I can’t speak English and I go home and crying because I don’t have friends and I can’t speak English and I don’t know where is the room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of support in school</td>
<td>Impact of COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in a safe and nurturing environment</td>
<td>Some participants described having a positive nurturing environment in their first setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School as a source of resilience</td>
<td>Schools can be a source of resilience for migrant children, providing a stabilising routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptations and differentiation to support newcomer pupils</td>
<td>Higher levels of one-to-one adult support and an emphasis on learning through play, which was beneficial for second language learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended connections with peers are made through social</td>
<td>The environment was welcoming and [BUT] also you know there wasn’t any you know processes that were put in place whereby all the students would have their chance to relax it down and get to know each other, you know probably designate one day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities provided by school</td>
<td>whereby we all sit, and we just talk, we have a general discussion just to figure out who we are. If they were able to put these systems in place, it would be beautiful'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education is like a game of snakes and ladders</td>
<td>Students have likened progress in the educational system to ‘a game of snakes and ladders’, thus diminishing their confidence and engendering feelings of being hated by the society they sought refuge in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being underestimated and labelled as low ability</td>
<td>Work experience – my teacher picked it for me, so he put me through to it. Hairdresser in Mayfair. And I didn’t go in for two days because it’s not my type of thing. I did not want to go, because it was like standing around, holding hair and watching people dye hair and – because it’s definitely one of the last things I would want to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More individualised support and resources needed</td>
<td>So many of us have come from different circumstances that are not the same like other people, so I think if they can consider that and try to feel us, I think they can help us a bit more. I think it will be a bit of a different kind of approach for them because it won’t be just teaching, it will be the same as helping them out with a lot of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of support impacts access to learning</td>
<td>The impact of this drop in support meant that Asmara dropped out of college and decided to apply as an independent candidate for his A levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like more autonomy in learning</td>
<td>Don’t like this one, give me like four lessons now and the next week I’m asking you. I can prepare for that, I have dictionary, I can translate to my language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of transitions</td>
<td>Feeling unprepared and unsupported at college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of fear, loss and sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of school flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older children struggle with adjustment</td>
<td>Older pupils were more likely to struggle with adjustment, perhaps because of having a stronger sense of cultural identity and firmly established social anchors in the home country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support being withdrawn before the student feels ready</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Community inclusion | Feelings of value and acceptance | Making a contribution | During my primary school years I was given the responsibility to translate from [ethnic language] to English to parents that had difficulty with the language. I asked the school if I could have that responsibility as I believed this will grow my confidence in speaking English. The school thought it was a great idea. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes towards diversity</th>
<th>Experiences of discrimination, othering, and unfair treatment</th>
<th>I think people look at me and I’ve got [physical disability] and they think, they think to themselves oh sorry, like, you’re not supposed to feel sorry for me, just it’s quite ridiculous behaviour and I don’t like it to be honest, you know, like why you feel sorry for me?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not feeling valued or understood</td>
<td>he told me to write down, and I told him I can’t understand you. And he say no, you can understand . . . he angry with me . . . I think he hate me. I didn’t know why, I didn’t do anything to him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Whole school attitude towards refugees and asylum-seekers** | The young people interviewed talked about this in terms of the ethos of the school. They said that where staff and pupils were encouraging towards them, this allowed them to identify as refugees and feel that their experiences and contributions were being valued; this helped them to gain a sense of belonging more quickly. |

| **Belonging is a two-way process** | The process of adaptation and developing a sense of belonging emerged as a two-way process; it was both as a result of the participants’ impact on the world around them and the impact of this world on them. |

| **Building confidence and self-esteem** | **Enjoyment of adult praise** | I like my teacher and I have lots of friends. It makes me happy when my teacher says I have done good work |

| | **Building confidence in own strengths and abilities** | Well, anything is achievable, you just have to work for it. So, it’s up to me really. I think I can achieve it. That’s my new target so I have to work for it. |

| | **Impact of enjoyment in learning and activities** | Time goes really fast. Every single session that I’ve been to I was like, it seemed like 5 minutes or something like that’ and another contributed ‘Yeh, when you like something, you don’t understand where the time has gone.’ |

<p>| <strong>Impact of asylum-seeking process</strong> | <strong>Difference between country of origin and new way of life</strong> | Described how the school days in Afghanistan were much longer; there were less holidays and more homework. When describing his experience in the UK, his accounts focussed on how he wanted a faster pace of learning |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin and the United Kingdom</th>
<th>Missing things from country of origin</th>
<th>I like living here and don’t want to go back, but I miss my grandparents very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of safety in the UK</td>
<td>Some children talked about feeling safer and more secure in NI than in their country of origin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of asylum-seeking process on education</td>
<td>Disruption of uncertainty</td>
<td>He felt badly affected by his own uncertainty and fear about how his appearance might lead to hostility in public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education as a distraction from other stressors</td>
<td>So being in school really helps you because you kind of lose that feeling and you focus on a good thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education is like a game of snakes and ladders</td>
<td>Students have likened progress in the educational system to ‘a game of snakes and ladders’, thus diminishing their confidence and engendering feelings of being hated by the society they sought refuge in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of journey and progression</td>
<td>I would say I am in a good stage right now because I went through the bad stage. I think that shaped me into who I am today and I would not change my experience at all. So I am just really proud of myself and everything that I have been through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-school related struggles</td>
<td>I don’t have for example asylum case, they would not give us like a flat. It should be a shared house ... I have stress about this at the moment, when I turn 18 where should I go and live? And all of them has some effect on my education and learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding their own cultural identity</td>
<td>Discomfort talking about past experiences</td>
<td>A young man linked his acute mental health problems to his uncertain migration status and the pain of having to explain himself to professionals. He described an intense pain in his chest ‘that wants to blow and it’s like grenade’. He found the pain alarming, as he ‘couldn’t find the difference between a physical pain or an emotional’. When admitted to hospital he described being looked after by two people overnight in a way that was ‘really, really friendly’. But he found repeating his story to each new professional distressing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to learn more about their culture and background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and anxiety</td>
<td>Feelings of fear and anxiety</td>
<td>Feelings of fear and loneliness were particularly prevalent during the early stages of their transfer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress and PTSD symptoms</td>
<td>The experience of being bullied in his secondary school had been identified as triggering posttraumatic stress disorder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E  Topic Guides

E.1 Topic guide for focus groups with young people seeking asylum

Topic guide

Young people semi-structured topic guide: How do young asylum seekers experience belonging in education?

School Belonging: how accepted, respected and included you feel at school.
Belonged: feeling as though you have a good sense of school belonging.

Introduction (10 mins):

- Welcome participants to the group. Go over the participant information sheet and consent form and give space for participants to ask any questions about the project.
- Remind all about the importance of confidentiality and highlight that we cannot guarantee 100% anonymity and confidentiality due to the nature of focus groups.
- Make sure participants know where the toilets, ‘coffee corner’, and exits are. Let participants know that we will have a scheduled break 30-45 minutes into the discussion, however they can use the bathroom or use the ‘coffee corner’ at any time. They can also leave the discussion at any point if needed.
- Remind participants of where to find follow-up contacts if they want to talk through any of the issues raised, and mental health support if they find any of the content upsetting.

Main question:

1. What impacts your sense of belonging at school? Try to illustrate with examples as much as you can.

Follow up prompts if necessary:

Background:

1. Let us start by sharing some of the things you enjoyed about learning when you were younger, if you feel comfortable to do so. (Jess to hand out post it notes to participants if desired, or to capture key words mentioned on post it notes herself) Remind participants that any written reflections on these notes will be included in the data analysis and that the discussion will be recorded. Remind them that they can write, sketch, doodle—anything they need to express their ideas.
   - Education
   - Relationships
   - Community
Culture and identity:

2. Let’s think about some examples of how you feel you can be yourself at school. (Researcher to check participants understanding of ‘being yourself’).
   - Let’s discuss how you feel that different cultures are viewed and valued (by children and adults) and what is the impact of this on your belonging
   - Let’s discuss how you feel that speaking in other languages is viewed at school and the impact of this
   - Let’s talk about how you feel you are able to express your cultural identity and the impact of this
   - Let’s talk about how you feel that differences are viewed and the impact of this

3. Let us discuss times when you may have felt understood or misunderstood in the class environment. What factors might make them understood, or misunderstood? It might be useful to think about instances/cases when misunderstandings have taken place.
   - Asylum-seeker labels
   - Understanding different cultures and life experiences
   - Feelings of acceptance at school
   - School protocols

Relationships:

4. Thinking again about your time at school, let’s discuss the relationships that you have experienced, and how these might impact their sense of belonging?
   - Depth of relationships
   - Dispersal policy of the Home Office
   - Impact of poverty/low income (e.g., parents’ inability to work as AS)
   - Cost of maintaining relationships (birthdays/outings/etc.)
   - Others understanding of their perspective/experiences
   - Language barriers
   - Impact of peer relationships at school
   - Impact of adult relationships at school

Learning experience:

5. What was your experience of learning like, and how could this have impacted your sense of belonging at school?
   - Adults’ expectations and understanding of how you learn
   - Peers’ expectations and understanding of how you learn
   - English as an additional language (initial schooling in first language?)
   - Your understanding of how what you learn in school is relevant and useful (may feel trivial following previous experiences)
   - Feeling capable in your learning
• Your experiences outside of the UK

**Free time:**

6. Next, let’s discuss how you spend your free time and how this impacts your sense of belonging?
   - Break and lunch
   - With their friends
   - After school / outside of school
   - In the community

**Other:**

7. What could school change to help you to feel more belonged?

8. We have some time now to discuss anything else that you would like to share.

**Wrap-up (5 mins)**

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today and to share your views and experiences. It is important that everything discussed in this focus group needs to remain confidential, so I remind you not to share any of the information discussed with anybody outside of this group. Please also refer to the information sheet given to you for contacts if you feel you would benefit from some support following our discussion today. You can also contact me via the email address on this form (j.l.clapham@soton.ac.uk) if you have any questions.

• Researcher to hand out physical gift cards/voucher codes and/or collect email addresses if the participant would prefer the code emailed.
E.2 Topic guide for focus groups with young people seeking asylum

Topic guide

Teaching staff semi-structured topic guide: How do young asylum seekers experience belonging in education?

School Belonging: how accepted, respected and included you feel at school.
Belonged: feeling as though you have a good sense of school belonging.

Introduction (15 mins):

- Welcome participants to the group. Go over the PIS and consent form and give space for participants to ask any questions about the project.
- Remind all about the importance of confidentiality and highlight that we cannot guarantee 100% anonymity and confidentiality due to the nature of focus groups.
- Make sure participants know where the toilets, ‘coffee corner’, and exits are. Let participants know that we will have a scheduled break 45 minutes into the discussion, however they can use the bathroom or use the ‘coffee corner’ at any time. They can also leave the discussion at any point if needed.
- Remind participants of where to find follow-up contacts if they want to talk through any of the issues raised, and mental health support if they find any of the content upsetting.
- Give participants 5 minutes prior to beginning the discussion to think about and reflect on the last asylum-seeking young person that they supported. Hand out post-it notes to participants to aid them in this time, and remind them that any written reflections on these notes will be included in the data analysis and that the discussion will be recorded. Remind them that they can write, sketch, doodle—anything they need to express their ideas.

Main question to discuss (90 mins):

What are the factors that impacts the sense of belonging at school for the young asylum seekers that you support? Try to illustrate with examples as much as you can.

Culture and identity:

1. Let’s think about some examples of how the asylum-seeking young people that you work with are themselves at school. (Researcher to check understanding of ‘being yourself’).
   - Let’s discuss how you feel that different cultures are viewed and valued and what is the impact of this on belonging (By children and adults)
   - Let’s discuss how you feel that speaking in other languages is viewed at school and the impact of this
• Let’s talk about how you feel individuals are able to express their cultural identity and the impact of this
• Let’s talk about how you feel that differences are viewed and the impact of this

2. Let us discuss how young asylum seekers may feel understood or not in the class environment. What factors might make them understood, or misunderstood? It might be useful to think about instances/cases when misunderstandings have taken place.
   • Asylum-seeker labels
   • Understanding different cultures and life experiences
   • Feelings of acceptance at school
   • School protocols

Relationships:

3. Thinking again about your experience of being in the classroom, could we discuss the relationships the asylum-seeking young people have experienced, and how these might impact their sense of belonging?
   • Depth of relationships
   • Dispersal policy of the Home Office
   • Impact of poverty/low income (e.g. parents’ inability to work as AS)
     o Cost of maintaining relationships (birthdays/outings/etc)
   • Others understanding of their perspective/experiences
   • Language barriers
   • Impact of peer relationships at school
   • Impact of adult relationships at school

Learning experience:

4. How does learning experience impact belonging at school of the young asylum seekers you support?
   • Adults’ expectations and understanding of how they learn
   • Peers’ expectations and understanding of how they learn
   • English as an additional language (initial schooling in first language?)
   • The young person’s understanding of how what they learn in school is relevant and useful (may feel trivial following previous experiences)
   • The young person feeling capable in their learning
   • Let’s think about how the young person views their experiences outside of the UK

Free time:

5. Next, lets discuss the way in which the young asylum seekers you work with spend their free time and how this might impact their sense of belonging?
   • Break and lunch
   • With their friends
• After school / outside of school
• In the community

Other:

6. What could school change to help the students you work with to feel more belonged?

7. We have some time now to discuss anything else that you would like to share.

Wrap-up (5 mins)

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today and to share your views and experiences. It is important that everything discussed in this focus group needs to remain confidential, so I remind you not to share any of the information discussed with anybody outside of this group. Please also refer to the information sheet given to you for contacts if you feel you would benefit from some support following our discussion today. You can also contact me via the email address on this form (j.l.clapham@soton.ac.uk) if you have any questions).

• Researcher to email the voucher codes to the school gatekeeper immediately following focus group.
Appendix F Transcriptions

F.1 Transcript 1: School staff

Focus group details:

Date, time, location: 27.02.23, 13:00, In person – at their school
Running time: Approximately 90 minutes (including 15-minute break)

Researcher: R
Participant pseudonyms: Sonia, Maryam, Zara

Focus group transcript:

R: We are here today to discuss what you think the factors are that impact the Sense of Belonging at school for the young people that you support in school. It would be really useful, where possible, if you can use examples to help me accurately understand what is discussed. Would anybody like to start off the discussion?

ZARA: Umm, for us, I guess we, we have to build relationships with them quite quickly and they know that they can come to us. And they do, don’t they? For anything at all. I know that goes to the year office as well, but they because we’re quite a small department, we get to know everything about them and they come and tell us everything. So we try and make sure that when they first arrive, they spend quite a lot of time with us. In fact we shadow them to start with for most of their classes and make sure that they know where to go at break time and they're comfortable enough to just come in and chat.

SONIA: yeah

ZARA: And that's really important. You just start with that.

R: So that relationship with you guys?

ZARA: Building the relationships, yeah.

SONIA: And that ties in with what you said before. What helped them, that induction, that was good for them and their families when they first came here, showing them around the school. Talking about the rules.

ZARA: Yeah, so, when the Ukrainians first arrived and we supported them through getting their uniform and their shoes and yeah, we gave them a tour together with their families, which was nice, which we don't always do anymore. We used to. And then with COVID, it's stopped. But with them they all came in and host families as well, which was really nice.

R: Thank you for sharing those insights. What do you think the impact of that support might have been for the young people?

ZARA: I think when they started, they felt, they weren't so nervous about coming because they had already met us.

SONIA: Less terrified of the school.

ZARA: Yeah
SONIA: Cause some of them came from smaller towns where the school was literally one building. One of the students said that today, so combined primary and secondary. So they're all in one building, and suddenly they're here.

ZARA: And they said their uniform before or anything like that.

SONIA: So school meals. Sorted things out.

ZARA: Yeah.

MARYAM: Yeah.

MARYAM: They didn't have a lot of what we would consider school rules [in home country]. So they were allowed to wear nails, makeup, eyelashes. Earrings. And here we're not allowed to do that at all. So it's a big change.

SONIA: That was very different

ZARA: Massive

R: Yeah, some massive change for them. And as you say, having you guys as the support for them is like their most safe space for them to come to.

ZARA: Yeah.

SONIA: We did a two week TEFL course with them so we were in a separate room

ZARA: Yes, so we took them out of their classes and spent time with them just doing pure English lessons and which really helped their confidence. I think some of them were fine but you're going into class but some of them were really, really quiet in class and then when we took them out of class and Justin Pier English, they came out of their shell, you know, they were totally different in that. Just nice was really nice.

SONIA: And as you can see on the board. We see quite a lot of them in the morning in tutor time. You know we do well grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation.

MARYAM: So they get a lot, and a lot of the time it's things like helping them. We've had two that came in originally from Afghanistan, had never used a computer before. They didn't even know how to use the mouse and things. So, we'd spend quite a lot of time with them just doing, you know, this is how you turn it on. This is how you; you know. She'd never been in education at all, so would quite often get up and walk out of a class to go to the toilet without saying, you know she just thought she could do what she wanted all day.

R: I see what you mean

ZARA: These big changes, it's things that you wouldn't necessarily think of that that they don't know how to do so.

MARYAM: Do you think you've learnt from that, moving forward?

ZARA: definitely

SONIA: Ohh yeah, a lot.

ZARA: Definitely. They I think they were the biggest ones that we learnt from, definitely. The two from Afghanistan when they came in, because everything was so different for them. There was no English. They obviously have different culture totally. Their reading.

ZARA: So the little girl hadn't been to school, so she couldn't read or write in her own language, so we couldn't even translate anything because she couldn't read it.

SONIA: No google translate. Only pictures.

ZARA: It was pictures for everything.

SONIA: We're still doing MacBeth using pictures.

R: Oh really? So is it the work that her peers are doing that's been differentiated to suit her

ZARA: Yeah, by us.

SONIA: By us. Because that's another issue; some teachers don't [differentiate] or they do it initially for a couple of lessons
ZARA: And then it's it is extra work for them. So, we yeah, we were happy to differentiate a lot of them materials still.

ZARA: Yes, it's the cultural side that I think that you learn. And we've certainly learnt a lot from them.

SONIA: But I also think it affects their personality, 'cause we've got a couple who I think they were quite outgoing in their country. But here because there's no friends or they had to make friends from scratch their naturally more shy.

ZARA: Yeah.

SONIA: And then yeah, so yeah, it's their personality as well.

R: So there's a couple of things that I've picked up from our discussion, which were the cultural side and the sort of difference in rules from previous schools to coming here. And you also mentioned the impact of language skills as well.

SONIA: Oh a lot. 'Cause some of them have, well we have the boy who had no English and he is in year 11 so suddenly it's GCSEs.

R: Okay, so would you say that impacts then on their learning?

SONIA: Well yes because for example some of them sometimes they know the answer, but, if you put yourself in their shoes, they're afraid to put their hand up because they're thinking I'm gonna be judged not only on what I say, but how I say it. If I make a mistake. And obviously the ones who are more confident will put their hands up. But the ones who are shy, thinking ooh everyone's looking at me, I don't wanna.

MARYAM: Don't want to speak, yeah, they might laugh at me, yeah.

SONIA: 'Cause a couple of times we were like, 'come on you know the answer'. But no. And you can't really force them, it's their decision. They'll be ready one day. And, yeah.

R: Okay, it sounds like what you are saying is that supporting these young people is an ongoing process, Not just people come in and then we do the things that help and it's finished, is that right?

SONIA: Yeah, and there's always something else coming up. Just when you think 'ohh, this is sorted', there's something else happening.

ZARA: Yeah

MARYAM: Yeah

R: And how do you manage that then when there's lots and lots of different things coming up?

SONIA: It was very stressful to begin with

ZARA: When they first came it was very Stressful

SONIA: Because there were so many of them

ZARA: Of the Ukrainians

SONIA: Yeah, yeah

ZARA: Yeah, there were there was a lot going on when they first arrived. But the year office, you must see them a lot as well, do they come to you? (asking to P2)

MARYAM: Umm ish, I support year 11 so, yeah.

ZARA: You get parents queries more than us cause we don't get parents.

MARYAM: No. Well, no because well. CYP’s dad is here, isn't he? Not mum.

ZARA: Yeah, dad.

SONIA: He doesn't make any contact.

ZARA: OK.

MARYAM: Yeah, and the boy.

ZARA: His mum can't speak English.

MARYAM: Well, she well, I don't know. She types a lot of emails.

ZARA: OK

SONIA: Ohh, the one who misses a lot of school?
MARYAM: No, CYP
ZARA: OK. No, his mum does speak English.
MARYAM: Yeah, so she emails. I don’t think I’ve. That’s the only two that I’ve ever had any
contact with. But interestingly, yeah, they those two come in a bit, but not, I wouldn’t say
a lot, but I think probably they come to you.
ZARA: We see them every morning, they pick up translator from here in the morning. So
we see them. So if there’s any issue they quite often say.
MARYAM: So I think probably you are now everything that might come to me. He comes
in every now and again if he needs to ask me something, but umm yeah. But they know
we are there if they need us.
ZARA: Yeah
SONIA: But the girl who just knocked on the door, she was the prime example cause
normally it would be the year office, but
ZARA: She comes to us for lots of things and you see we get a lot where the parents can’t
do anything. And the parents don’t speak any English so the children take on roles that
the parents should be doing. So, she’s asked if we can teach her to use the Internet to
book doctor’s appointments and things because parents can’t understand how to do it.
MARYAM: Yeah, yeah
ZARA: So, we’ll get lots of queries from them about stuff like that.
R: That’s a lot of additional responsibility for a teenager, isn’t it?
ZARA: Yeah.
SONIA: Yeah. And I think she was very worried and obviously it makes them, I think, more
anxious because, it’s them.
ZARA: Well, their language isn’t very good anyway. So, it’s really difficult for them
because they’re then having to teach parents how to do things. And, you know, yeah, I
don’t remember when they came in. I think they’ve been here just over a year.
SONIA: Before Christmas
ZARA: Yeah, just over a year.
SONIA: Yeah.
ZARA: And they obviously, she’d not been to school before and didn’t have any English.
So, she’s come on loads. And funny enough they those two in some ways have been
better because they were just the two of them at the time. They’ve made all their friends
are English, aren’t they? So even when she couldn’t speak English, you see her outside
playing.
MARYAM: Is that the two from Afghanistan?
SONIA: Yeah, and chatting, so
MARYAM: Well I found that, not that I know them that well, their demeanour to be very,
well certainly the little girl to be very upbeat and very joyous.
ZARA: Yes, yes.
MARYAM: Not the same with the Ukrainians.
ZARA: No, it’s a bit more of an attitude, I think.
SONIA: I think I wonder if [for her] it’s also like ‘wow, I’m at school’. I actually thought she
told me she, like, sometimes we walk together, and she says loves being here because she
can walk on her own. She’s got much more freedom [than at home]. Yeah. ‘Because we
take it for granted. But for her, it’s like, ‘wow’.
MARYAM: So, I think that’s quite infectious, isn’t it?
ZARA: Yeah.
MARYAM: But that’s not the same as Ukrainian.
ZARA: No, it sounds bad, but they are more difficult. Yeah, they’re more demanding. And
they are less I don’t want to say grateful cause it makes it sound like they should be
grateful. But you can see the difference. The Afghans seem to be pleased about most
tings, and excited about most things.
MARYAM: she was skipping round the school from a long time, literally skipping round,
SONIA: Whereas because we have issues with the Ukrainian girls like P1 mentioned with
ails and makeup because in their schools before they were allowed and suddenly it was
a big problem. I've rolling and or why should I? So that took a while
ZARA: I guess they're here more in a forced situation. They didn't probably don't wanna
be here at all, whereas for the other two, I think they were quite pleased.
R: It sounds like you are saying 1 almost are getting more freedom, being in school, and
one getting slightly less freedom than they used to have to leave you. There's something
around that as well
SONIA: I think mentally also for the Ukrainians, it's a bit of a limbo situation because they
don't know if or when they are going back. If so, I suppose, yeah.
MARYAM: Yes, they feel this is temporary.
SONIA: Yeah, cause a lot of them do Ukraine too, so that's how it came out. One of the
boys was lagging behind with his maths homework and it turned out that he was, like a
lot of them, study online and they do their Ukrainian school online as well. So, it's like 2
lots of homework. And because they've got a big exam in April or May [in Ukraine], a lot
of them will be doing that online
ZARA: Because they don't know whether they go back, so they have to keep up with it.
MARYAM: Yeah, do you think the year 11’s are doing that?
ZARA: I need to speak to them. I think they’re certainly doing school work for Ukraine, I
don't know whether they've got exams coming up.
R: I wonder whether there's an impact on thinking that you might be going back to sort of
allowing yourself almost to build the relationships.
SONIA: And the sort of life here.
ZARA: Yes, because we got one family who I think will stay, and the parents have got very
good jobs here.
SONIA: But their whole family is here.
ZARA: Their whole family is family here, they brought their dog over, and interestingly,
they are much more open to doing, to building like a life here. You know, they've joined
clubs out of school. And it's really nice. And they seem much more settled, don't they?
SONIA: Whereas others, because if half of them, so for example the boy. So, he's here
with his mum, but his older brother and his dad are in Odessa. So obviously OK. It makes
it harder because their immediate family is split and not all of them are here. So yeah.
R: I see, do and what do you think the impact of separation or slow migration across the
family is for these young people?
SONIA: I'm Polish, I understand some of when they speak to each other in Ukrainian. So, a
couple of times for example, you hear them whispering in the lesson and it's not related
to the topic, but they're discussing what's like my city's just been bombed or something.
ZARA: So, it's easy for us to forget after they've been here for a while. Because they have
been here for a while, you forget the impact it has. I think because they just become like
other students that you support.
MARYAM: I think that's probably because this school is so big that you do. Funny enough,
we were talking about the boy, because one of the senior tutors had to escort him over to
one of the exams last week. She came back, she said 'Ohh God, I forgot'. But, you do.
Forgetting about them sounds horrible, but because they're sort of, they're not on your
radar. You think 'Ohh, they're all fine, they're all enjoying SCHOOL life' Because there's
over 300 kids in each year group. It's a lot of children, so I think that's a downside, and I
wonder moving forward where there should be some sort of, I don't know.
SONIA: But you, you are right
ZARA: Like a check in or a reminder for
MARYAM: Or we say once a month on a Monday in tutor we get all of them with with you
    guys and we just do a massive cheque in, I don't know, but it's very easy and I thought
    ‘God. Yeah, I don't think I've seen so and so for quite a while’, do you know what I mean?
    But it's not on purpose. It's because. Well, the girl that came and went, yeah, was
difficult. She was in my office a lot because she didn't settle well at all.
R: She's left the school now, did you say?
MARYAM: Yes. I don't know. Did they go back?
ZARA: Yes, did they go back to Ukraine or to Poland?
SONIA: Umm, Poland first, and then Ukraine. I don't know if CYP is still in touch with her.
MARYAM: Yes. So, although they paired up, which was good. It wasn't a good
    combination at all. But they were in [our office] quite a lot. Mainly on negative notes, but
    at least you have that contact even though it was a bit spiky.
ZARA: Yeah.
MARYAM: Whereas CYP, I see periodically because he
SONIA: and his attendance is not good
ZARA: Yeah, we did have a translator in for them though, was it before Christmas?
SONIA: Uh, It a couple of week ago
MARYAM: It was just after Christmas.
ZARA: Seems like ages ago. Err, we got Ukrainian translator in, and we had appointments
    for parents to come in and sit and chat about anything it could be school, it could be
    home. And then we bought the students over at the same time
    from, she was Ukrainian and she was over here because of what had happened. She's had
    a different job in Ukraine, but that was really useful. And we've said we will do it again at
    some point because, well
MARYAM: That might be quite useful for year officers to attend for their year. So maybe
    just sitting on side.
ZARA: Yeah, definitely. It was interesting because there were things that came up. So one
    of them – the boy in year 11, the quiet one – his mum can't speak any English at all.
    They're lovely. Really, really is such a nice boy, but very nervy. And quite shy. And his
    mum was having real issues applying for Universal Credit as she couldn't get her National
    Insurance number right, because she's got 2 passports. And so the interpreter just sat
down with her and we went through all the forms and sorted that out and free school
    meals and things. And that was really, really useful because it was clearly something that
    he was really, well, worried about but couldn't express it.
MARYAM: That that's not nice, is it?
SONIA: No, that's not right. That's assuming the responsibility that they're too young for.
    But what P2 also said, some of the students from Ukraine who came here, they were
    quite good students and praised a lot in their schools and suddenly here because they're
    put in bottom sets, not because of their ability or knowledge, but because of their English.
    Because that's what CYP, for example, complained about because she was used to being
told how wonderful she was and suddenly it was 'Oh, you are in lower set, but only
    because of the English', but I think that also affects their confidence because suddenly it's
    like ‘ohh, I actually know more than those people’ but they can't express it.
MARYAM: Yeah.
ZARA: This is like maths. There was way ahead of their flying there because they're saying
    when we did this, when we were about 10 in our country.
MARYAM: Oh right. That's a little embarrassing [for us].
ZARA: You have.
R: Okay, so you’ve mentioned about the difference between schooling, and trying to get used to their experience here, when it is probably quite different what they’re used to.

ZARA: The one lesson which has been really good. And it’s interesting because when they first arrive, teachers are really like, ohh, no, we can't possibly teach them because they've not done this subject before, is French. They always do really well in French because it's a language and it's new for everybody. We’re not very good in England at languages. So the students typically are quite low and don’t retain it, so ours [asylum seekers], even the two Afghans are now like, really, really good at French and they’re quite near the top of the class.

SONIA: And quite confident.

ZARA: Quite confident because of the style of the lesson.

MARYAM: So, in a way that's nice confidence boost for them, isn’t it?

SONIA: Yes it is, because there is a look of whiteboard work and show me tasks.

ZARA: And games and things like that, so they actually end up doing better in French than most of their other subjects. And they’re on a par with their peers and their, which is lovely.

ZARA: It’s not something you think about, and the teacher’s don’t either. They’re terrified when you bring them a new student and you say ‘oh they haven’t studied French before’, they said, ‘well, we can't have them in here cause these have had two years of French’, but actually it doesn’t take very long for them to catch up.

R: Ohh that is interesting.

ZARA: it’s nice to see them doing well in it, you know.

SONIA: But even the girl from Afghanistan, I was in with her in maths last year a lot and we started from literally 1 + 1 and we had counters. And now OK she's in the bottom set but she’s actually doing better than some of the other students when I was in maths with her the other day. So, looking at the progress she’s made and they were doing very basic equations. But she could do it and I was like, ‘wow’.

MARYAM: Yeah, probably. The difference is there she didn’t. This is a bit of a sweeping statement. But, umm, she wants to learn. Where as often in bottoms set she'll have got a bit of a mix in there.

ZARA: Yeah.

MARYAM: Yeah, you've got your people that do just need to support and people that just aren’t interested.

R: Okay. We’ve discussed a lot of stuff there that’s really useful. We have covered this a little bit, but I was wondering if we could discuss cultural identity and some examples of how the young people you support might feel able to sort of express their own culture at school. This might include how different cultures are viewed and valued by peers by adults in school, or I know you just mentioned about speaking in their own language at school, could we talk a little more about how that's viewed by peers and adults?

ZARA: We encourage it. We never used to. It used to be thought that they should only speak English, but actually we do realise that it’s really important that they retain their home language as well. So a lot of their texts and classes are translated into their own language by the teachers. So we've asked them to do that, haven't we? And we translate things into their own language as well and with the Ukrainians, they have a choice of either Russian or Ukraine, cause some of them prefer Russia and I think.

MARYAM: Depends which week.

ZARA: But yeah, they’re not discouraged. I mean, obviously they’re not supposed to talk a lot in class anyway, but they come in here in the morning and they’re all chattering away and Ukrainian. And it’s like we [P1 and P3] both come from language school background and there we were always like English only. We were told there that they’re never
allowed to speak their own language because they were only short term usually, so it's really just coverage there. But here they chat away in their own language and it's nice.

SONIA: And it is natural for them.

ZARA: It's nice and the little girl from Afghanistan or it's not a brilliant influence that's found a girl in an older year group. You [other participants] probably know who I'm talking about, who speaks Pashto as well. And you do see them together sometimes. And although it's not the best influence, it's nice that she's got another girl to speak Pashto with, because although her English is okay now, she's not gonna be able to speak about everything she wants to in English.

R: Yeah.

SONIA: And also, in year 11. So, we've got students that I support in English pretty much every day. So they both Ukrainian but one of them he came with better English; the one who was absent quite a lot, and he's been here longer, so he translates for the weaker one.

R: oh nice

SONIA: Obviously it speeds things up a bit. Or he explains. So yeah, that that's good

ZARA: They're very good with each other, actually, aren't they? All of them generally they look after each other.

R: Do you find that their sort of initial relationships they make in school obviously apart from with you and adults are with similar language peers?

ZARA: The Ukrainian’s have all stuck together. Yeah. I think some of them have got friends from - They haven't really made many friends in their own classes, but they’ve made friends that group like some of them go to clubs and things. So, they'll talk to others. The Afghan girl and boy

SONIA: she’s very sociable

ZARA: Both of them have integrated with English people. But the Ukrainians have stuck together as a group, even across age groups. They still -

SONIA: But that is quite because, for example, the girl who is in year eight. She's got a brother. She's lovely, but the girls in her class are not so nice. So, they're not necessarily someone she would be friends with, even if she was English. Yeah. And I do feel a bit sorry for her cause she doesn't have friends in that class and she is lovely. And they haven't encouraged, Like no one talks to her.

I think they do like she said, that they [her family] do because, obviously, there's so many Ukrainians here now. And she was talking this morning about on Saturday because of the anniversary of the war started. So, they had the big meeting in Bournemouth. Yeah. And because there's quite a lot, I think they meet up with other Ukrainian people. Yeah. I don't think she's made any English friends.

ZARA: No, I don't think she has either.

R: What do you think the impact of that might be them for her.

ZARA: I do feel sorry for.

SONIA: I do too. I think she feels - it's like even those little bits in the lesson where the for example doing an experiment and you know they're paired up and the teachers preparing something. So, they've got time to chat to each other and she has no one, I was with her, but obviously she was looking at other students and that must feel horrible, but I don't really wanna ask her, ‘Have you made friends?’ Because it's putting the pressure on her.

MARYAM: You don't want to emphasise it

ZARA: She's a rare kind of really nice, very pleasant, and lovely. You know, she would never be nasty, and that's quite unusual for girls in that age group here, and especially the ones in her class, they are not very nice.

MARYAM: Is it just because, um, there's no chance of there being moved?
ZARA: No
SONIA: I think as her English improves, but it's quite difficult to move sets now. Because they are just for maths.
MARYAM: Hmm, yeah, what year?
ZARA: Eight.
SONIA: Yes.
MARYAM: Ah, so you haven't got the X and Y split yet.
ZARA: Next year it would be good
MARYAM: Because obviously then you've got two bottom sets.
ZARA: Yeah, she's higher up, isn't she? She is, isn't she? or not?
SONIA: The moment they have no, like English split. It's only one at the moment, there still not divided. Yeah, but she's still with her brother who was a completely different character, but so at least she's –
ZARA: And they each other at break time. The other students, they got the same breaks. We've only got one lunch break now, which makes it easier. So they're all together.
R: So does she talk to the other Ukrainians?
ZARA: Yeah. Yeah.
SONIA: Yeah
MARYAM: You want them to build friendships, but you can't force it.
SONIA: But it takes time. It's the same with my daughter, you can't tell them, 'I want you to be friends with this person, not this person'. Well, you can tell them to them, but it's their decision at the end of the day.
R: So, do you find that as language skills increase, there's a building of more friendships with English people. Or is it still quite a divide
SONIA: So, like, the ones from Afghanistan. Definitely. But the kind of in Ukraine –
ZARA: They've just thrown themselves in and I think the thing is with them they've got no - they don't seem to have any filter of embarrassment about making mistakes, which is really good. They just have just embraced it, haven't they?
MARYAM: Yeah, but also, they probably are trying to build a life here.
ZARA: Yes, they are.
MARYAM: All those your mindset is different as in.
SONIA: And the Ukrainians, because they have each other, that kind of hinders developing other friendships. So it's like, is it like a double edged sword really? Because on one hand you've got someone to fall back on, but then it doesn't encourage you to at the moment explore other possibilities.
MARYAM: Yeah. She's got a long way to go in this school if she stays.
ZARA: Yes, she has
MARYAM: Cause you're right. It's not like, yeah, year 11 or 12 where you're thinking you're not going to be in this sort of rigid environment for too long.
SONIA: But then hopefully as her English improves, she picks it up really quickly, she'll be put in better sets with nicer people.
ZARA: Nicer people, yeah
R: And I guess maybe, like you say, it comes back to that not knowing whether she this is gonna be home.
SONIA: Yeah, it's like a limbo
R: It's hard cause that's not something we can really change, isn't it?
ZARA: No, no.
SONIA: You know, and then this was the funny thing when they started quite a few teachers said ‘Ooh, you know how long they here for?’ and I thought ‘How long is it a piece of string?’
MARYAM: But now, obviously, it's been ages, so.

R: We just have to see what happens faster, ongoing process. So, kind of similarly, but just well, we're talking about the sort of. I know we've mentioned a bit about the other young people in the class and maybe their attitudes in general. If we're thinking about their attitude sort of towards young people coming in from different cultures and towards accepting sort of newcomers, is there anything that comes to mind? That might be impactful for the asylum-seeking young people.

ZARA: I think generally here they're quite good, aren't they? We have so many foreign students, not just refugees, but it's quite normal.

SONIA: Or one parent is British.

ZARA: Yeah. I mean, yeah, I don't think it's a big shock to them when anybody's started. We've got a new starter today from Turkey, I think, we haven't seen him yet, but it it's quite normal for them and in most classes there's somebody that's got a parent or that comes from a different country, so.

R: Yeah

SONIA: I wonder if it also the younger they are the more but then the student that we talked about who hasn't made that manifest, she's in year 8.

MARYAM: Yeah. Yes, she was here in year 7, and it didn't really help.

ZARA: I don't know. Sometimes they're quite interested. You know, when we had CYP start and as they all knew, all the girls were quite interested. But he was very shy and couldn't speak.

SONIA: He was terrified.

ZARA: Absolutely terrified. Didn't speak for about a year. But I think I'm quite - I haven't heard, although we tend to hear things cause we sit in a minute in amongst them rather than the teacher being at the front. We hear a lot of things going on cause they forget you're there after a while and I'm not really heard anything negative towards any of them.

R: Yeah.

ZARA: What think about? I think I don't know. Do you hear things in the year office about any kind of like?

MARYAM: No. Nothing like that.

R: And I guess that potentially might have a positive impact on their sort of sense of belonging in school is feeling that people accept them, even if those friendships aren't built. They do potentially feel quite welcomed by accepted?

ZARA: Yeah, and they will help them, won't they? They, the other students generally are quite helpful in class and things too.

SONIA: Because that's another thing I just thought about, which is the double edged sword. Because obviously if we're with them, then they cannot be sat with another student.

ZARA: Yes. Sometimes we probably hinder them.

SONIA: So because that's how somehow friendships develop. But then we there to help them and to give them more confidence and more English. So, and we know in all lessons. R: I think it's difficult isn't it because both are important the language in the long run, the language will probably help the friendships like yeah, but yeah, it's just I guess you're right. Maybe having someone sat there is a bit of a barrier.

SONIA: And an adult when you're a teenager is like, you know

ZARA: The interesting thing is that the students that don't have you with them. Ask you questions and are quite jealous sometimes, and it's like, well, how come he gets help and why aren't you helping me? You know, but the ones that you're with quite a lot of them are like they see you coming and even the Ukrainians, you've got one at the moment that he said he's like 'I don't I don't need you in here, can you go?'
SONIA: Yeah, I had to say to him, the teacher has specifically asked me to be there in your lesson, and he is kind of like Urgh OK.

R: But do they engage with you quite well when you are there?

ZARA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we do. We're quite lucky we don't have many behaviour problems with our students. They tend to be pretty good. Although at the moment we've got two that I think the more Language they pick up depends on the, the, the cheekier they are. When they can express themselves. Yeah, like this student that we've just mentioned. And I have to be very blunt with him. And I just say I am here to help you. So we need to go.

ZARA: Yeah. Because I think they think when we're there, they have to do more work, you see.

SONIA: And he's quite relaxed, let's put it this way

ZARA: If we are not there to help them, they can get away with saying 'Ohh wait, I don't understand'.

SONIA: Because they're very often sat at the back 'oh you've got your Kindle. OK, OK'. But this time, he's the front with me. So he's like, 'urgh'. They're still teenagers, really, aren't they?

R: Ohh it can be interesting. And see, I feel like that it sounds like that is an area or maybe actually is working quite well. So belonging at the moment and people hopefully are feeling quite included and accepted by their peers and adults around them, which is really nice. And similarly, we have talked about this, it's just that there was anything else to sort of mention was around the sort of relationships. So thinking again about your experience of being in the classroom or around the young people. Is there any sort of relationships that come to mind that you think might be impacting their belonging either positively or negatively? So, it's sort of thinking about like the depth of the relationships that they build and even their sort of home relationships. I know we've talked about a little bit and maybe how they're impacting their ability to sort of feel like they fit in at school you it won't.

ZARA: Before you came, it was talking about how the two, certainly the two boys from Afghanistan, now that their dad's not around and can even the girl to some extent a lot of being at secondary school socially is to do with things like sleepovers and meeting each other in town and things like that. And I think that probably impacts on their friendships because I don't think they can do any of those things.

SONIA: No, they won't. They won't be allowed.

ZARA: So, we know that they prefer being at school than not being at school. In the holidays, they're always really upset.

SONIA: The only ones who are like 'Ohhhhh'.

ZARA: They don't want to be on holiday, because they say they do nothing.

SONIA: It's boring, that's what the boys say.

ZARA: It's boring. They just stay in all the time, and they don't socialise. So of course, when they come into school. They are really excited to be back again and that's when you've got a bit more freedom now,

SONIA: Especially the girl.

ZARA: Especially the girl, because I think she literally doesn't go anywhere at all when she's at home. So yeah. I mean, I guess the Ukrainians are lucky because they've got each other, so they can speak in their own language to each other and talk about everything they need to in their own language, whereas, with the Afghans because of the culture he doesn't like, they don't like to be together at all, do they? And to start with, they put them in the same class, and he wouldn't help her with anything. He wouldn't translate. He used to just pretend he hasn't heard you if you asked him to help. But it's a bit of a sexist
thing where he, he's older, he's been back-yeared anyway, and she's a girl, so she's not as important. So. And they've split them now, but obviously they don't have anybody else at school really that they can speak their own language to. So even though she plays outside with other kids, they're not. They have a very superficial level of, yeah, what they can talk about.

SONIA: Yeah. Because although she obviously has made so much progress with her English, but it's still very limited because she knew nothing. It's almost like the other we want when you think about it, the students from Afghanistan, they met, they made a lot of friends at school, whereas the Ukrainians haven't. But outside school, the Ukrainians and the some of the Ukrainian parents, and they do came friends. So obviously now visit each other. Yeah. So it's almost like the other way round.

MARYAM: You are not being straight with English people though, the Ukrainians, outside of school?

ZARA: No their not, no. Especially since they've gone out of their house families now most of them. So, they probably don't.

MARYAM: No

ZARA: And a lot of them [the parents] have fairly good jobs, the ones that are still here. There is one that's a radiographer in the hospital, somebody else is at JP Morgan, they've got good, good jobs and they're the ones that have stayed. There is couple that haven't I think, as well. One is a housekeeper at the Hilton, but you can see the difference in I guess where they've come from in Ukraine

SONIA: and their status, social status as well, yeah

MARYAM: So do you think that they are bothered that they are not integrating with English children?

SONIA: They've never said it, but, but then I don't know if a teenager would come to us and say I feel very sad because I haven't made any English friends, do you know what I mean?

MARYAM: It's difficult to be. If you put yourself in, their shoes, it would be weird to be in a environment where you're just speaking to the people that even now and not speaking to someone from that country.

ZARA: That's what tends to happen though, isn't it? I mean, you [P3] you've had that experience. I've had that experience you. But you [P2] have obviously been here for a long time, but I used to live in Turkey and my only friends were ex Pats.

MARYAM: I see what you mean. Yeah.

SONIA: So for me, my friends were, my initial friends were my husband's friends.

ZARA: But then did you speak really good English originally?


ZARA: See, I didn't speak very good Turkish to start with. So it's like, I craved English company because then you can actually have a proper conversation with people. So.

MARYAM: So wonder whether they they can't offload things. I think they're maybe they're keeping a lot of stuff in because they don't want to meet up with any other Ukrainian and just offline personal things, whereas you and I may, I might come and find you out and offload you because you don't really know me. That. Would you see what I mean?

ZARA: Yeah. So what you mean? Yeah

R: I think a couple of things I've kind of picked up on from that discussion was maybe one about support of the community outside of school as well as a sort of facilitator for feeling like you belong and you fit in. I think like you're saying maybe the Ukrainian people's have kind of stuck together in school. It sounds like outside of school they've
maybe got more support and more from other families than the Afghan asylum seekers that have maybe been a bit more in school.

ZARA: Yeah.

R: And then also I hear coming across maybe something to do with the social status from before they migrated across maybe having an impact.

SONIA: Cause you can see the differences in education as well.

ZARA: Definitely and with the two Afghan boys in year.

SONIA: Ohh yeah, of course.

MARYAM: I don't know what year they are now.

SONIA: Nine

ZARA: We thought when they both - when one of them arrived we thought ohh brilliant we've got a friend for him they were like totally one would speak to the other one.

MARYAM: Oh, okay.

ZARA: Because they, because ones that Dad works at the university here has come from a really wealthy background, was well educated and the other has come from a village in the mountains

SONIA: They are almost like nomads because they're trouble. Yeah. So.

ZARA: And they're certainly a class divide there, and they don't have any interaction even though they speak the same language.

SONIA: They view them as inferior, or almost inferior. He's not rude because I am with them in English. But you can see that he likes to keep his distance.

ZARA: Yeah, he is very nice.

MARYAM: I guess it's like throwing two people together from the same country. You think, 'Ohh, they're gonna get on just because they speak the same language'

SONIA: What's like with our Ukraine and some unlikely friendships developed because X wouldn't necessarily become friends with Y, but because they're both from Ukraine and they're in the same class or set they become, do you know what I mean?

ZARA: These two haven't though, the Afghans, have they?

SONIA: And I don't think they will have it.

ZARA: I guess it depends as well, doesn't it? On the sort of cultural values from that they've been brought up with as well. And the difference that sound like we were saying about the male female split. I know that's very different in Afghanistan to how it would be here or potentially in the Ukraine as well, you know

SONIA: Cause we have this should of cooked food though.

ZARA: So yes, he really wouldn't do it.

SONIA: It's the boy the boy from Afghanistan

ZARA: Woman's work and then would wash up or help to the washing after

SONIA: so we were showing him pictures of Gordon Ramsay, and you [P1] found a chef from Afghanistan.

ZARA: He was a man and we were saying that it's, you know, men here are very good chefs, It's not embarrassing to be, but he's still didn't really. He didn't engage with that very well.

SONIA: I think he's polite. So now he nods along and he does it at school because he he has to.

ZARA: But he used to throw his food away. Didn't wanna take it home because he had made it and it was embarrassing that he'd made it.

R: I guess that's difficult, isn't it? Because he doesn't want to give up his values. But that probably also makes him feel a little bit uncomfortable, but also potentially a little bit different to his peers, who are all happy to get involved.
ZARA: Yeah, he's definitely calmed down a lot. There were a lot of cultural problems to start with, weren't there? I do think. I don't know if you've ever heard anything.

SONIA: Ohh that religion wise as well?

ZARA: Religion, wise views and also kind of inappropriate behaviour towards girls because.

SONIA: A lot

ZARA: Yeah, which we think has calmed down a little bit

MARYAM: Well it has. But I what I well, I don't know if it winded its way back to the parents cause he used to pick on a few year Elevens, didn't he? Saying inappropriate comments and umm, but they actually just used to scream and find it hilarious.

SONIA: They egged him on

ZARA: The girls?

MARYAM: Ohh yeah, I know, I know. Yeah. But I wonder whether if they went home and said to their parents this boy at school said this to me, whether that would be phone call the next morning.

ZARA: Yeah. Some of the girls probably encourage it, don’t they?

MARYAM: Probably yeah

ZARA: Because that's funny. Yeah. There has been a few.

MARYAM: There's been that, but it's not. It's not been taken seriously by the girls.

ZARA: But there was some younger ones that

MARYAM: That's older girls saying there just laughing it off. But if it's going down school, that's different, isn't it? Year 11 girls, are practically grown-ups, aren't they these days?

ZARA: Yeah. So we've had to have conversations. Male staff have had to kind of take him aside and explain that, you know, what's inappropriate.

R: It must be quite hard to find a balance between sort of respecting his cultural values, but also explaining to him those values which are maybe not so acceptable in school or in UK in general?

SONIA: Yeah, and his age makes the difference because all his life he's been told or exposed or taught that women are inferior and suddenly he's here and it's different. So, it's not gonna just he's not gonna change just like that. Yeah.

R: I suppose then, do you think there's an impact of other people's understanding the young people's cultural backgrounds and maybe their experiences that have led to them seeking asylum?

SONIA: Some students don't. They have very limited knowledge. Cause I had students saying to me in year 11 English, ‘Miss, where Ukraine, where's Ukraine?’ And you know, it's Europe, so Afghanistan or someone who is from much further away.

ZARA: He's the worst actually. Though I have to say he's the worst for saying inappropriate things for the Ukrainians.

R: Ohh really?

ZARA: Yeah, and although he knows because he's come from that. He would laugh and say ‘ohh you know, there's a war in your country’ and things so he even though he’s come from it, I think he’s the only one I have heard trying to kind of wind them up a bit.

SONIA: ‘Ohh Ukraine’s not a country’

ZARA: Yeah and ‘no it's not, it's belongs to Russia’. So there's a lot of you know and that's the only time actually that I've heard any students saying anything in appropriate to them really

MARYAM: I mean there's probably a lack there’s probably some students that lack understanding. And they shouldn't be unaware, because everyone has religious studies lessons all way throughout school. But I would agree it's probably there is a bit of a lack of understanding from some students maybe.
R: Okay, what do you think the impact of that is?

ZARA: Possibly their feelings of inclusion, they had an assembly.

MARYAM: Yeah, which is quite sad in a way, because she think, well, they've been sitting
sat through lots of educational lessons.

ZARA: And they did do this assembly and they had an assembly when it all happened
before they arrive. Yes, we had an assembly so that the students were aware of what was
going on. And we are quite good, really. I mean, when there was the earthquake in Turkey
recently, we went round and checked on all our students that had any kind of Turkish
background or connection, just to make sure that they were OK. They knew that they
could come and talk to anyone if they were worried. So, they are quite aware here of
things. But whether the students take it in, some go and sit in assembly and won't even
listen to it all won't even know where Ukraine is.

SONIA: I think what P2 talked about. I don't, I think with some students does not much
understand. They'll just dismiss them, 'Ohh, You know he treats women like this', but
they don't know that in their culture and that must influence.

R: Yeah, I think with a lot of people, you can hear something, but not necessarily
understand it.

ZARA: Yeah, and the impact that might have for asylum-seekers. People say they
understand what's happening in Ukraine, but they might not think about the impact that
that has for people that are coming across with reference here to specific students.

MARYAM: Yeah.

R: (47mins 20seconds) Okay, we will take a just a break because I know that it is our break
time, yeah. Please remember you can help yourselves to coffee and snacks. And we will
come back together in around 15 minutes. Welcome back

ZARA: Sometimes don't find it and their parents can't help them. That's the other thing.
There is even things like parents evening. For lots of them the parents aren't confident
enough to do the parents evening, so I'll phone them and try and chase it up. If they
haven't understood. But even if they don't want to do the parents evening, we do, we get
their reports and printer often sit student down, explain their report to them and then
can go home and translate their parents. So it's all that kind of thing that I guess,
yeah.

R: You take the provincial well if you. Yeah. And I think that makes sense. You kind of they
need somebody, don't they in school, don't they, that is that link person. And it sounds
like you guys are probably the best place people to be that for most people

SONIA: Otherwise, zero. If they don't have much English like how do I even I remember
ZARA: And they're going to a school that's got 300 students per year. So they like P2, her
office has never got nobody waiting.

MARYAM: Yeah, from the minute it opens in the morning until they go home. There's
some problem or some issues.

R: Okay, I guess that you say that's the impact then of having this specific area that is
actually just for EAL pupils.

ZARA: It's really important, I think. And the students have a choice, but because of the
sensitivity of it, we offer home language GCSE so that they can get extra GCSE

R: So, for example, they could take Ukrainian?

ZARA: We don't have Ukrainian, but we do have Russian.

R: OK.

ZARA: Some of them didn't want to do it. Because of what's going on at the moment and
were very adamant. And that was fine. But one of them is doing Russians as a GCSE, so it
will give him an extra qualification.

R: That's lovely, yeah.
SONIA: Working here, it's been amazing. And I used to work with P1 anyway, before. I'm really. Yeah, she's, she's great as a line manager and just very understanding. Very empathetic. Because it's like she said initially everyone's like, yeah. Yeah. You know they [the asylum seeking students] get given sheets in Ukrainian, and but after a while teachers just assume that's it. And I didn't have that much English and be it's not like they're learning English here, they're learning MacBeth, or they have to write a paragraph. And how do you write a paragraph with someone who can't even construct a basic sentence? So, it's kind of, yeah, it's very interesting too to see how they progress. And obviously some of them make progress faster than others because they're natural language learners, the most studious, they pick it up. So the girl from Afghanistan, because a lot of the culture is oral.

R: okay,

SONIA: So she understands, her comprehension, is really, really good, though when it comes to reading and writing, obviously much slower.

R: And that's just that difference in culture?

SONIA: We're pushing the reading because writing, but I said to her is really important for you to be able to read what's on the board.

R: Yeah.

SONIA: Because initially it was like, man. And obviously their sounds system. Everything is so different.

R: I think reading is so important, even if you don't go into an academic job it even just in life like being able to.

SONIA: Reading labels, reading on an Internet page to book a doctor's appointment or to fill out your Universal Credit form. My daughter's, well, you're never fully bilingual because her father is English is and because she was born here. So, I speak to her in Polish, but obviously her English is much better. Her range of vocabulary, etcetera. But, and I was never bothered about her writing, but reading I pushed. There were moments when she would throw a book and say no, I don't wanna do it. So I stopped because I thought, well, we'll just pick it up some other time. And she, she's a voracious reader, but when she reads in Polish, it will be stuff for probably, so she's 15, for 8 year olds because obviously it needs to be shorter sentences and that, but at least she's picked up that skill.

R: Enough to get by?

SONIA: Yeah.

ZARA: But it in reality, in school, it's impossible because they can't produce the work that they need to be in the upper sets.

SONIA: Especially in English.

R: Do you find that they move up sets as their English Ability gets a little bit better?

SONIA: Some of them have already, especially maths and science.

ZARA: Yeah.

SONIA: Because English, I don't think any of them have.

ZARA: It's so, the content is so different and they haven't got the prior knowledge. So they haven't studied any of the technical- so even things like Christmas Carol. We all know the story because we watch it every Christmas. No, a lot of them won't have ever seen it. So they don't know the story. They don't know the characters, you know, it's just.

R: Yeah

ZARA: MacBeth, I think Shakespeare. It's just impossible. You know, for them to. You know, just an impossible mission.
SONIA: Actually, *** just told me this, but actually it's not a bad idea - Graphic novels in the library, so I'll get one from start and we'll just have a look at pictures. I've shown her lots of pictures already.

ZARA: The language [in English literature], you know, it's it's so difficult even for our students. So

MARYAM: I think every everything even, like you say, your maths and science, you're doing, you know it's numbers but it's still involves a lot of language.

ZARA: It does. The word –

SONIA: Well, it's easy to see with *** for example. Because he will understand words like 'envy'. But sometimes he doesn't know how to use the past tense correctly. Because he's been exposed to all that language here he's kind of doing it backwards. First the difficult words that he means for English or chemistry, whatever.

R: And then the more conversational things?

SONIA: Yeah. Because his comprehension is amazing, now is really.

ZARA: He's a really interesting case though. He came in from Poland. Really, really angry.

SONIA: Didn't wanna be here at all. Came because his parents had jobs here and wouldn't speak, took months for him to say anything and he's now, he came in at the end of year nine and he's in year 11 doing his GCSEs and he's come on massively. He's still they are going back to Poland after he's finished his GCSEs, but he's gone from saying I just wanna be in Poland to -

SONIA: 'I hate it here'

ZARA: Yeah, he hated it here, and he wouldn't, he wouldn't accept that there was anything good about being here. But I actually think if he was honest now, there's quite a lot of things that he likes here and his English has come on amazingly, hasn’t it?

SONIA: Yes, because he said they are staying for the summer, 'cause he'll be working with his mum. because initially it was “as soon as I take my GCSE’s I’m going”

R: Ohh, and now he's staying this summer?

ZARA: Yeah, now he's staying for the summer and he's much happier and he’s come out of his shell. He actually said that he used to be really naughty in Poland. He was in an awful lot of trouble all the time. And that it’s done him good coming here because he doesn't get in trouble at school at all. And he's got better relationship with Mum.

R: That sounds likes great progress and some lovely positives.

R: Okay. Is it okay to revisit something that was discussed in the break? About the environment of the school. We talked about how the room we are in has the different flags up and also having different sort of things in the room that make it feel welcoming. And I guess just a really quick point maybe about how you think that might impact well young people?

ZARA: Well it does, they definitely like coming in here. We try and do things at Christmas to - even the Afghans we had them writing in their own languages on the window, happy New Year. So and and even though they're quite cultural in that when they first came, they were saying he was saying ‘ohh I you know you don't believe in the real God’ and things like this. Actually, they were quite excited about Christmas in the end, loved it and really enjoyed decorating the window.

SONIA: Chocolates. Sweet.

ZARA: Yeah, they love chocolate. But we try, but I've got a display for Eid that can go on the window. Um, because they've got Ramadan this month, well in March. And we do try and sort of include them in things like their celebrations as well.

SONIA: And last year, a student in year 11 who I supported who was Muslim. So, I spoke to a couple of teachers because Ramadan affected his ability to concentrate.

ZARA: Yes.
SONIA: So. So you do know this, but you sometimes teachers need to be reminded because he was nodding off in a lesson because of the sugar level dropping, obviously.

R: I see

SONIA: And they up all night praying.

ZARA: Yes. So they getting up really, really early. And they’re going to bed really late. So we do have a function on our emails where we can e-mail ‘teachers of ...’ and it will go to every teacher that teaches them or comes into contact with them during the day. So, if there’s anything specific culturally that we think they need to be aware of, we will e-mail all of their teachers and let them know.

R: I’m sure, the fact that you do things fall like you say, Ramadan, and for Eid is probably going to be something that’s really helpful.

ZARA: Yeah, I think it just adds to those feelings of inclusion, hopefully.

R: So then the next one I’ve got was just about the learning experiences. So I think we’ve touched it a little bit about the sort of difference and how they might they might be used to learning and how maybe teachers would expect them to be able to learn. And then yeah, sort of also maybe around their understanding of the relevance of what they’re learning for them, and maybe the impact of how important they feel like it is, I’m throwing these things out. There might be nothing, but just wondering.

ZARA: So, for example, religious studies, I’ve heard a lot of complaints from the Ukrainians saying ‘why are we learning this? We don’t need to learn about other religions’, because we don’t just learn, we learn about all religions here and a few of them have said ‘I don’t understand. We don’t do this in our country.’ ‘Why do I need to know about Buddhism?’ or ‘Why do I need to know about Islam?’ You know, they think they’re never gonna use this. We do it here because they take it a year earlier and it’s just an extra GCSE that they get out of the way and it’s quite easy. So. But they haven’t really been -

SONIA: But the detention is a very big issue.

ZARA: Ohh, yeah.

SONIA: Because, yeah, it’s not common. It’s the same in Poland because I very often compare because there are very similar, Poland and Ukraine, in terms of education system, but detention for lack of homework doesn’t really exist - we’ve got other ways or you can give an extra homework, for example, parents are called so here detention was a big issue.

ZARA: Yeah, and we do have quite a strict behaviour system here and most of the time our students, umm, the only thing they tend to fall down on is homework, isn’t it really? Because they’re usually fairly well behaved in class and teachers do tend to give them a bit more leeway with speaking in class and things because they need to translate

SONIA: Their attendance is very good

ZARA: Attendance is generally very good. It’s just, yeah, homework detention. And they gave them leeway at the start, but obviously they’ve been here a year now, they expect them to do the same.

SONIA: And a lot of teachers are quite understanding and saying I don’t expect them to do 100%, but as long as I see everyday that it’s been attempted and not just copied, but even instead of a paragraph writing a sentence or two, that’s good enough. But I need to see this because otherwise I’m not fair on other students who are doing it.

R: And do you think it’s from, like, a language barrier perspective that it’s not being done or potentially from a difference in what was expected?

SONIA: I think mainly the language

ZARA: Yes, probably the language, but I think also yes, because now they know what the consequences are. So, they will sometimes come in and ask us for help if they do, if they
haven't understood something will come in here and say, could, you know, I don't understand what we can you help us with homework.

SONIA: Sometimes we’re a bit limited because I find - I've already spoken about it - one of the teachers frustrating for the Afghans students because I've already raised it so many times that the homework is too difficult. The content is too difficult, but I can only do so much.

ZARA: We do have issues, and we've brought it up lots of times, with teachers not understanding that students need things differentiated and we've had several, we've sent we have an end of day email system and we've put things on there so many times, we've sent them ideas of how to differentiate because, we, our jobs effectively are teaching assistants, and we're supposed to go in and sit next to the student and help them, but we're not supposed to actually prepare work for them, and we don't often know what their scheme of work is.

R: I see, and you said earlier you are quite often the ones that are differentiating, is that right.

ZARA: Yes, on the spot as well, because we don’t have time to do it in advance and we don’t see what they're doing in the lesson in advance. It seems some teachers are better than others.

SONIA: Some teachers are brilliant

ZARA: And some translate whole PowerPoints or give them handouts, and they've even bought copies of books in in their language themselves, not through the school, you know, which is really nice. But, you get others that I think see it as just as extra work and ‘ohh they've got someone with them so I can ignore that student because it's easier for me not to engage with them’.

R: Do you see a difference in the young people and the differences in the lessons where they've got a lot of differentiation and the ones where their teachers leave it to you?

ZARA: Interestingly, yes. Yeah. So we've been doing learning walks and we did them last term. I've done a few last term, where we go in and look at our students when they've got support. So when they've got one of us with them, and when they have nobody with them and the different levels of support that the teachers give them in terms of translating, and there's a huge difference. So when they've got a teaching assistant with them, umm, the teacher will ignore them more, but they're getting the support they need so it's not, yeah, too bad. But there are some lessons, unfortunately, where the students in the lesson and is totally ignored.

R: Ohh really?

ZARA: Because it's too difficult and the teacher I think thinks ‘Oh my God they don't understand this, I'll just pretend that I haven't noticed’

SONIA: And they already have 20 other studies.

ZARA: Yeah.

R: Are these the teachers that maybe aren't doing so much differentiation?

ZARA: Yes, they’re not no.

R: And then when you see the other people in the class where there's lots of differentiation, so they get the the PowerPoint in their own language, or a text book –

ZARA: Yeah, they can get on and do some work. And, there’s a there’s an English teacher in particular, Mr ***, who's very good. Every time you go, you know, because sometimes I'll go in late, 'cause I get held up here. And, so, I know it's genuine because I walk straight into a lesson they’re in the middle of. They've got their translated PowerPoints in front of them. And, you know, they’ve already started writing. You can see he's checking on them. Yeah, he's doing what he should be doing.
SONIA: Yeah. Whereas in English you have got the completely opposite, where a couple of times I had to say this is too difficult, because I’m not an English teacher, I don’t know how to explain this to a person who, like that girl from Afghanistan who can't read Pashto, so I can’t even translate. So we literally do Macbeth-Bad, Lady Macbeth-very bad.

All: Laughing

ZARA: Because you have to draw pictures and things, like a comic strip of the story. But it would be very easy for the teacher to create an activity that was a really, you know, even if they just we’ve said before, even if you just provide four key words that you want that student to learn in that lesson and you can provide, you know, have a picture with a word and a matching activity or something. Then that would be better than them sitting there and not understanding anything at all.

ZARA: And when it comes to exams they are not allowed a translator. And they get no extra time. Interestingly, some exams that they are allowed to dictionary but they don’t get extra time Yes, which to me seems unfair because of the time searching, it is an additional need in a way because they they’re disadvantage.

SONIA: It’s like even if they had the understanding of what they’re being asked to do, the limitations from their their language and from writing ability might mean that they can’t show the knowledge that they have of the topic.

R: Yeah. Do you mean that they might understand, so for example if you ask them verbally, then you might get a lot from them, but then when it comes to exams, they might suffer because of writing ability?

SONIA: Well writing is always more difficult. Putting your ideas into paragraphs, you know.

ZARA: But they do really well considering, when you think about what they have to do in an English exam.

SONIA: Some of, some of them, they scored higher than-

ZARA: Yeah, some scored higher than the English students.

SONIA: cause I’m there in the bottom set because of the language ability and two of them are really bright and even the third one. But because he joined so late cause he joined this year with no English and he's in year 11.

ZARA: But he's still going in to do his mock GCSEs at the moment. So.

R: So still yeah, there is that custom that sort of adjusting isn’t there, it’s just obviously. It’s difficult. It’s really difficult. I’m thinking back to the young girl you mentioned that did really well in school before migrating and now is not getting so much praise in school.

Maybe the impact that that could be having?

ZARA: Well, she went back and she’s gone. She went back.

SONIA: But the other one is still –

ZARA: The other ones, we’ve got, there were two of them are ones still here. But she's Ukrainian, is she? Where she from?

SONIA: No, oh, I’m talking about the one with the demanding mum, cause she she's been exactly the same thing

ZARA: Ohh yeah, okay.

SONIA: In her country she was praised a lot.

ZARA: Constantly praised, yeah,

SONIA: And the mum’s quite, I think, ambitious. And she is as well and this is the issue that I have with have an English and I have to speak to her because when there was to write the paragraph others are writing and just occasionally looking up words but she because she wants to get it totally right, she spends ages translating whole sentences. And I said to her, it’s taking too long. Don’t worry. And it stresses you out just. But she wants to -
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ZARA: It has to be perfect.
SONIA: Yeah, it has to be perfect. So that’s possibly the impact of her mum at home.
ZARA: I think some of them do have incredibly pushy parents, the Ukrainians, yeah.
SONIA: And also, if you were used to being praised and being the best, you feel a bit lost when you are not understanding simple things. And they must be really frustrating because sometimes you’ve got the content knowledge, you’ve just don’t know how to say it or how to express it. So yeah.
R: But it must be really difficult.
SONIA: It is. They’re very brave.
ZARA: They are, and it’s really easy for us to forget because they’ve been here for a long time and they’re kids, so they do sometimes have attitude and, you know, try it on and mess about a bit. But they, in some ways, that’s a good sign because it shows that they’re relaxed, you know, when they do. Yeah, it shows that they’re comfortable. Yeah, I think they’ve adapted really well. The ones that we’ve got left now, there were a few that you could see there was one girl in particular that never settled.
SONIA: She wouldn’t speak English.
ZARA: She wouldn’t speak
SONIA: She wasn’t eating properly.
ZARA: No, she wasn’t bringing lunch. She wasn’t. And she was clearly really, really unhappy. And I think in when the weight lifted, didn’t it when she came in and said, ‘I’m going back’.
SONIA: It was as if she had wings. Big smile on her face.
ZARA: Yeah, yeah, because she just didn’t settle
ZARA: Because we’ve got a couple who are torn because, for example, they want to go back and be with their friends, but their parents are happy here and quite settled. And then that also creates because one of them said to me, ‘I really missed my friends. I want to go back, but my mum wants to stay here.’
R: On that note then, we won’t know everything that they’ve been through and their full experiences, but do you think there is an impact on their ability to sort of feel that they fit in and belong here based on what their past experiences?
ZARA: We had a lad. He’s not here anymore. He was only here for a short time. He shouldn’t have been at school, but he was back yeared and he came in from Afghanistan via Syria and Turkey on his own. His parents have been killed in Afghanistan and he travelled all the way through it took think it took, he told us it took something like nine months for him. He kept being placed in different settlements in different countries and he came across under a lorry, the last part, on his own into Poole Quay, and then was like an asylum seeker. But he was 16 and they backed him so he could do some time at school. Couldn’t speak any English. Such a polite boy, but he had terrible flashbacks, couldn’t sleep. The other students were lovely with him, but he couldn’t, he just couldn’t integrate because he used to come in here and fall asleep all the time because he’d been awake all night and he had nightmares. And I mean the other two that we’ve got from Afghanistan, I think, their dads were already working in England. And I think when the war happened, it was a good way of their dad’s bringing their family.
SONIA: They came here very quick.
ZARA: Yeah. And I think it, I think I don’t think there were impacted so much by the war. I think it was more right okay, so there is a war, now we can use it to bring them across. So, I don’t think they’ve had the same traumatic experience.
SONIA: That’s the difference between them and the Ukrainians, because for them, because obviously Afghanistan has been unstable for such a long time, whereas in
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Ukraine it happened suddenly, it was like, wow, I can't believe this is happening. So, also, the attitude towards war. I think it's very different.

ZARA: Yeah. So they see war differently. That's why he laughs about, I think. He sees it as a normal kind of thing. And he, he does laugh and make jokes when he does, laugh when he's uncomfortable.

SONIA: Yeah, he laugh also when he's uncomfortable. Yeah. So, we noticed that cause initially you think ohh you're being really rude but then once you get to know them you realise it's a weakness almost.

R: So it sounds like these experiences as much as we don't really understand them cause it's not saying we've been through sounds like maybe they are impacting relationships and potentially engagement in school as well. I'm just thinking about the young boy's head, not by choice, obviously, he couldn't engage with school because actually his basic needs weren't being met.

ZARA: No, no, yeah.

SONIA: Yeah, 'cause I remember when I when I went to Poland last Easter and I helped my friend works in the refugee centre. And we are also at the train station giving out free coffee. And you see all those people. [begins crying] Sorry.

R: Are you OK?

SONIA: Yes, I am okay. So for me it was very overwhelming, let alone for them, and they are kids, so.

ZARA: Yeah.

R: Yeah, it's a really tricky topic, would you like to take a moment?

SONIA: No, it's okay, thank you.

ZARA: Yeah. I think for most of us here, it's unreal because we haven't, although we have seen them come over. It's just, 'Ohh, there's some Ukrainians coming in', but we haven't actually seen, the reality of it, you know.

SONIA: Yeah.

R: So for us having not had the experiences, we may know what is happening, but it is hard to understand?

SONIA: Exactly. Well that's for me. When I saw all these people coming out of the train and hugging the dogs, cats, everything. So feels real.

R: That must have been really difficult. Are you sure you are okay? We can pause or stop so that you can get some fresh air?

SONIA: Yeah, no, I'm good.

ZARA: Yeah, it seems, yeah, I guess it's things like them having to leave their pets behind and things and we've got some that have got grandparents still there that can't believe, you know, 'cause they're the elderly and yeah.

SONIA: Ohh one of them is here. So he is here with his aunt and uncle and his grandmother. So his mom and dad are over there. So that's hard.

R: How do you think that might impact their sense of belonging in school?

ZARA: I feel sorry for them cause I think sometimes we're not very understanding. So, I spoke to one of our students, the one you're talking about, who parents aren't here. His sister is here and he is keeps being late for school now. We had a tutor notification come through here. Ohh, can you please speak to the student because he's late for school everyday. So, I sent back an e-mail saying it could he please have some leeway because he's here without parents and he's taking his sister to school every morning before he can come to school. She's only 9.

SONIA: She's in primary school and I see him every morning. So he's doing this.

ZARA: I spoke to him and I said, you know, you need to be here because you'll end up getting detentions for being late. And he said, 'but my sister's so slow, you know, I'm
trying to get her to school and she won't walk fast enough or she won't her shoes on in time’. And you think this is a like, 14-year-old boy with no parents here, who’s trying to take his sister to school. Personally, I don’t think it matters if his late because he’s doing something really important to get his sister to school before he even comes to school himself, you know. And I think sometimes there’s that lack of understanding. And actually not just that, but his parents are still in a warzone, so you know it, people sometimes need reminding. I think. I think it comes back to what we were saying: you can understand what's happened, but you can't understand what people are going through. You can’t just expect people to adjust because actually they’re not all going to adjust. And it's different for everybody.

R: I agree, it’s not the same for everybody, and everybody’s experiences and how they respond to those can be different.

ZARA: No, it’s different.

SONIA: It’s a tricky issue asking them about the families, because I occasionally ask them, but I don't wanna be too invasive, because I don't want to put pressure on them. Because what if the answer is no, they’re not safe or the building has collapsed or there’s no electricity and my grandmother can’t get to the hospital. So it almost like afraid to ask.

ZARA: You don’t. It’s funny cause at the same time you think you don't want them to think that you don’t care either, and that you're not interested in what's going on at home. I mean, the one that’s just been bereaved, we do ask is ‘How is your mum?’, ‘How are things at home now?’. Because to start with it was just diabolical and they weren’t coping.

SONIA: And because of their culture she can’t go out to the shopping, or-

ZARA: But he did actually say last time or no she, she's, she's much better than she was. So, you know at least they know that we are interested you know.

R: Yeah, I think that’s what you really can do isn’t it it’s just make sure they know that if they want to talk to you they can come here.

ZARA: Interesting, the two Afghans that we’ve got here, actually. They've settled really well and their really happy here. She does say, though, when you say, ‘Oh, do you miss Afghanistan?’ She says, ‘yeah. Well it’s my country? You know, it's mine’, and she loves showing you if you go Google Maps or, you know, what’s it called? Google Earth. Where you can actually go down. She’s so excited to show you where she came from.

R: How lovely that she wants to share that with you. And to show you her affinity to her own culture and country. But the fact that she wants to share that with you shows that there is trust.

SONIA: We always talk about food.

ZARA: Yes. Yeah. She bought some food in, didn't she? That she made with her mum. That was really nice. Exactly. To sort of share her culture and have it accepted.

SONIA: She’s quite settled, because we often see her with *** and some other students.

ZARA: Yeah, she is. And she’s.

R: We don’t have too long left, so lets move on to discuss maybe the way in which the young asylum seekers you work with spend their free time and how this can impact their belonging. I know you previously mentioned that there are some asylum-seeking young people that integrate quite well with their peers in break times.

ZARA: They do, the Afghan students. We’ve also got a few that go to clubs now after school.

SONIA: Because we gave the list of clubs that they could join.

ZARA: So a couple of them joined sports clubs after school

SONIA: And art club.
ZARA: One of them, ***, goes to a basketball club. He's in a basketball team outside of school. It's *** club. I can't remember what it is called, but he's in the, like, A team. So, he's found that himself outside of school. A few of the meet up and go cycling at the weekends, don't they?

SONIA: And then one of them does the art club.

ZARA: Yeah.

SONIA: Yeah. How about the students from Afghanistan? Do they do any?

ZARA: I think they go to homework club and things, because they have been pushed that because it's good for her because there's a teacher there who can help if she struggles.

SONIA: A homework club and things, because they have been.

ZARA: Yeah.

SONIA: But obviously there's no Wi-Fi and, and it's [homework club] very beneficial for her 'cause she can get help.

ZARA: And she has limited resources at home. They don't always have the Internet.

SONIA: But we do provide them with the laptop.

ZARA: So if they don't have laptops at home, then we do loan them laptops.

SONIA: But obviously there's no Wi-Fi and, and it's [homework club] very beneficial for her 'cause she can get help.

ZARA: The other students, apart from them, though, they have contact with their friends in their own country through gaming. They still do online gaming and things, so a lot of them chat to friends that aren't here, that are back there. So they are keeping, so maintaining some relationships.

SONIA: Lots use the telegram, which is like the equivalent of WhatsApp.

R: Ohh okay.

SONIA: Yes.

ZARA: So yeah, they do have still some contact. The Afghans don't have any contact with anybody that's there at all. I think that's just because they can't because it's too difficult. I don't know, they've both got phones though, yeah, they came without phones and he seems to have mastered like, TikTok and Instagram that quick anyway.

SONIA: We take it for granted.

R: That's really helpful. Thank you. And I, I guess then, yeah, what do we think that impact of going to those sorts of clubs and activities is?

ZARA: Good. That's very good. Definitely. A lot of them probably, I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think English parents generally are really laid back and don't tend to push their kids into doing things out of school, and I think in Ukraine they probably do and they used to being busy outside of school and doing clubs and things so here the parents were asking, 'What clubs are there?', 'What can they do?', You know, 'In Ukraine, they do this, that and the other'. And so, I think they were quite pleased when they could realise they could sign up for clubs and things after school and they could just go, they don't have to pay.

SONIA: And they can have more opportunities to meet different, like, friends.

R: Thank you. We only have a short time left now, so, is there anything we haven't discussed that you think is important or anything that you think could be changed to help young asylum seekers feel like they belong in schools?

ZARA: I do wonder whether we've got it slightly wrong in this country compared to others, where, when we here think that they need to go straight into education in a normal school and integrate in all lessons. In some countries like Germany, they have centres where they teach them English as a foreign language first. When they first come in, they'll have a programme 6 weeks or six and sometimes it's long term.

SONIA: Yes, can be long term. The students from Afghanistan did it.

ZARA: Yeah. And I do think that might be a better way of doing it because they tend to stick together anyway and don't seem to be making friends with English children. It would
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

give them a really good knowledge of the language and then it would help them outside
of school, you know, cause sometimes I think they can cope in school, but when they go
out into the community, can they actually speak to anybody?

R: Okay, so the subject specific language they learn is different to conversational
language?

ZARA: Yeah, it is.

SONIA: It’s like with ***, he would know what envious means,

ZARA: And he can do poetry. But he might not be able to go and have a conversation with
someone in a shop, maybe. I don’t know.

SONIA: I totally agree with P3. I think you have to learn to crawl before you learn to walk.

And it will boost their confidence because once you have a bit of language, even turning
around to one of the English kids, ‘Hi, how are you?’ Having a bit of a conversation rather
than just.

R: Yeah, I guess how if they had that first say they went and had an English Foreign
Language Course first and then came into school, how do you think, maybe, that might
impact their feelings of belonging when they attend school?

ZARA: I think they’d be more confident, like P1 said, to actually speak to other students
than things because they’d have more conversational English

SONIA: And then put their hands up in lessons because a lot of them know the answer to
the question, they just don’t know how to say. Once we translate, they don’t know how,
but they don’t know how to how to answer the question because they haven’t got the
language, but they know it in the head, like maths equations. Whereas if you have a bit of
English, then put your hand up, you become more confident.

ZARA: Yeah

R: OK, so maybe better in their learning and their friendships?

SONIA: In the long run, yeah.

ZARA: Yeah

SONIA: ‘Cause that English cause that we did with them-

ZARA: It was brilliant. But, we can’t always do it. They [school leadership] won’t, like, let
us take them out of their normal lessons, see, cause it’s supposed to be it fully immersive
in all subjects. So, we kind of, they keep asking, don’t they? ‘When can we have another
course, when can we have another course?’; so we’ve said we’ll do it at the end of the
summer term when you know the exams are finished and lessons have kind of calmed
down a bit just before we finish, but ideally, really, they should have that before they
start school so that they feel confident.

SONIA: Yeah. Because here when we do it - again and said double edged sword - because
we’re giving them English, but they’re not in class, so they’re missing out, and especially if
you in year like 10 or 11, that makes a huge difference if you miss out on like 2 weeks of
content. So.

R: So, what do you think is needed?

ZARA: Something in the middle that they can do as like a first resort that is those basic
skills that are needed for school.

R: That’s useful, thank you. It’s very interesting to think about.


ZARA: Yes. It’s their grammar. Their basic grammar and-

SONIA: Vocabulary and how to construct a sentence

ZARA: And general conversation. Yeah, it wouldn’t take very long. I don’t think. Cause in
two weeks we noticed a huge difference.

SONIA: Could be a couple of weeks, couple of months, maybe.
ZARA: We said culture with them, didn't we? As well, as part of it, British culture, you know, and because some of them will come and live here, but they don't know anything about it.

SONIA: I think that happens a lot when you live in a community that is all very, all from one area. Like the Ukrainian students that are all friends outside of school. Quite often if you're not exposed to a new culture you continue with the same culture you've always had without maybe understanding. I remember I had a student when I was at ***. It was funny then, but it's not really funny, because she went hungry because her host family went out and they left her a note saying ‘tea’ is in the fridge. So, she opened the fridge - no cup of tea. She didn't realise that it meant dinner. So then yeah, she said 'I had no dinner last night', and I said, ‘how come?’, and she said ‘I didn't realise that it meant dinner’, and things like that. But it's obvious to us, but it's not.

ZARA: Yeah.

R: Of course, ‘cause you got tea, dinner, supper. All different things.

ZARA: When I came here I was straight out of uni, so I trained as a teacher of English, and I remember one of the girls that I met in the pub and she said the way you speak is like reading Shakespeare, cause I didn't know any idioms. I didn't know that tea meant dinner.

R: Yeah

SONIA: Let alone someone like that. So a lot of it is, yeah.

R: Yeah, absolutely. Is there anything else that we wanted to share at all cefore I stop the recording? I feel like we've been through a lot. It's been really valuable.

ZARA: I think our students are really, really lucky here. I think that they get a lot of support. They, you know that. Like I said, there's not many schools that have a separate department for EAL. So they are, they're not only getting support from their year offices, but they've got a department which is just for them. So, they are very lucky and the school do support us like, *** the head is very, you know, he sees you, EAL is really important within the school so, you know, they are lucky. And I'm, I'm sure that maybe they, they don't always realise because they haven't been, haven't had any other experiences of school in England. But, like you've said, they wouldn't get if we went now study in Poland or Ukraine we just get thrown in and expected to get on with it. So, it does support wouldn't be there wouldn't be any EAL support.

SONIA: You wouldn't get anyone like us. Because we has a boy from Kazakhstan, and he said that to me. ‘It is really cool to have you in lessons because in Kazakhstan I and will be the same’. And if an English person want to study in Poland, I don't think they would get anyone.

ZARA: They would be expected to learn the language and just get on with it so yeah.

SONIA: I'm gonna say we do quite a lot of pastoral support, yeah.

ZARA: A lot job of our job is pastoral now

SONIA: And especially when they started there was something every day coming.

ZARA: Yeah, it was constant.

SONIA: And it wasn't even school. Ohh, ‘I don't know how to do this’, or you know.

ZARA: Or uniform. A lot of the time we're replacing uniform and they come in and they say. We've got one that we're washing [their uniform] all the time at the moment or. And, you know, food related, we have a lot of like, have you had breakfast? Have you got any lunch with you today? OK, well, you know, we sort those things out.

R: Yeah

SONIA: And the ladies in the cafeteria are amazing because a couple of times, because some of the mums or parents didn't know how to sort out the Universal Credit, so they were just providing them with lunch anyway.
R: Thank you for everything you have shared, I can hear how much you care about these young people, and it sounds like as a school you offer a lot of really worthwhile support.
OK, I'm gonna stop the recording there, if that's OK?
ZARA: Yep
SONIA: Yeah, thank you.
F.2 Transcript 2: Young people seeking asylum

Focus group details:

Date, time, location: 04.03.23, 14:00, In person – at their supporting charity venue

Running time: Approximately 60 minutes (including 15-minute break)

Researcher: R

Participant pseudonyms: Rahim, Abdul

Focus group transcript:

R: There are some post it notes here, so if there is anything that you want to make sure we cover, or anything that you think of while we are talking, you can write it down and we will make sure we talk about it. So like I said, at any point, if you would like a pause or want to stop, that's fine, just let me know, we'll stop and you can go on your way and enjoy the rest of your Saturday. And obviously, just to remind you that everything that we talk about is confidential, which means that we won't talk about it with anyone after the discussion. I will use the things that you, you say today in my research and I might look for things that you've said that are similar to things that other people say, but nothing with your name, your college, or any information that can be linked to you will be in the, in the research.

R: So, today we are going to discuss some of your experiences at school and things that you feel impact your sense of belonging in school. Sense of belonging can mean how included and respected you feel, or how well you feel you fit in. Is there anything that immediately comes to mind?

ABDUL: Umm, I'm not sure.

RAHIM: No.

R: That's okay. So, I suppose, yeah, would it be helpful to start off looking at some of my prompts together?

ABDUL: Yeah, I'm not sure.

RAHIM: No.

R: Okay. The first thing that might be useful to think about is the things that when you were younger, were, you really enjoyed about learning? So, if you were at school when you were younger. So, this might be even to start with might be even before you came into the UK, was there anything that was really nice or helpful?

ABDUL: Like at the school, or?

R: Yeah. It could be anywhere, but particularly thinking about school.

ABDUL: I don't know, it's hard.

RAHIM: For example, myself like and I'm gonna sound like I haven't been like, to school, a lot. Like when I was a child.

R: OK. And so when you came to the UK, was that sort of the first time that you were in regular in school?

RAHIM: Yeah, because there was, there wasn't the opportunity to go to school, yeah.
R: Yeah, and what was it like when you first started school, when you came to the UK?

RAHIM: The UK? Uh, I think I was unlucky because of the Covid-19 started.

R: Mhm.

RAHIM: I was one year in lockdown, and after that for college. I went to school actually for two weeks, in *** school. And, yeah, after that uh it was lockdown I think, yeah, for 3 or 4 months. Then I apply for college, yeah.

R: Yeah, that must have been difficult coming in, sort of, and then suddenly being in isolation in COVID and not being able to see lots of people.

RAHIM: Mhm.

R: I guess it might be useful to think about then some of the relationships, maybe the adults or the other young people. I mean, either in those two weeks in *** school, or maybe at college, was there anything that was really helpful that the adults or the other students did?

RAHIM: Do you mean at school, yeah?

R: Yeah.

R: But also out of school is important, so of course school is really important, but sometimes friends outside of school can be equally as important.

RAHIM: Yeah. Ok, it’s gonna be helpful if the students are like, to be like friendly. You know, like meeting people, yeah. When we’re going to school like the first time.

R: Yeah.

RAHIM: They need to help them and yeah, like understanding.

R: Yeah, okay. Could you tell me what you mean by understand?

RAHIM: Having people that are like, understanding of, of me and some of the differences.

R: Yeah, yeah. Is that something that you found as well?

ABDUL: Um, mine is different, and I've I study school in my, my country as well, yeah. And it was like not for long time but like seven/six years, yeah. I study umm, and when I came here I started college directly.

R: Okay.

ABDUL: But, but the different I saw there is little, umm restrictions. There is a lot of restrictions there and, and here is not here. Here is is like friendly here.

R: Yeah.

ABDUL: And yeah, this is a lot of things, but I just found this is, like, the main thing. Yeah, between here and there. Umm, yeah.

R: Okay, so just to check, would you say that before it was quite, quite strict? And then when you came here it was, there was a little bit more bit more freedom?

ABDUL: Free. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Friendly. Yeah. Yeah, which is nice, uh, it give me comfort and I can do a lot of things. Yeah.

R: Yeah

ABDUL: Yeah

R: That's nice. And was that friendly from the adults or the other, other young people?

ABDUL: Mixed, yeah.

RAHIM: It is a little, yeah, mixed. Yeah.

R: Yeah? Lovely. And can you tell me anything about school or college that helps you feel like you can, sort of, be yourself? So, some examples could be how other people acted, or you’re sort of ability to speak your home language in school, or how you think your culture might be valued?

ABDUL: Yeah, here in the UK, yeah?

R: Yeah, yeah.
ABDUL: It just like it was difficult in the starting to, to catch up with them. And it was OK. And when we a little bit, eh, after the time, then it was, OK. Yeah, but in the start of the year, of course it was difficult to catch up with them and understand, like, how to do friendship and this kind of thing.
R: Yeah.
ABDUL: Yeah. But, well, with the time it was improve, and then we learned as well and they understand as well. Yeah. Yeah.
R: Yeah. Nice, and how did the language barrier impact your learning?
ABDUL: Yeah, we learning English as well as learning for school. Learning is, wasn't easy in the start and I remember I, I, couldn't read anything, but I with the time I, I, I learn a lot of things. It's become easy when you when you find the friends and speak with them and study as well.
R: I see.
ABDUL: It is more, eh, easy to, to learn the language here. Yeah
R: Yes, that's really interesting, thank you. So you've got to learn at the same level as everybody else in college, but also you've got some of that language to catch up?
ABDUL: Yeah, yeah.
R: And do you think that learning the language had impacted your building friendships at school and college as well?
ABDUL: Yeah, I think, yeah, it's helpful. Yeah. And when you study [English] together, make a friendship as well, yeah. So yeah, it is like, yeah.
R: And what was your experience?
RAHIM: At first here, like, I just study English like ah, in *** [charity] I don't know if you know ***?
R: Yeah.
RAHIM: Yeah. I went there like, there was class like every Tuesday, in the morning.
R: Okay.
RAHIM: After that. Yeah. At college I studied just English, yeah. And for one year after that, I applied for engineering, and there was [students] from different countries. English people and foreign, yeah.
R: Yeah. And how was that? How did you find the difference between the two?
RAHIM: Between, uh, the ESOL [language course] was like, ah, it was just for language. Yeah, it's for - you’re learning, uh, just English
R: Just English, okay.
RAHIM: But the course, like, when I applied for the engineering like you learned a lot of other things. Yeah.
R: And do you think that having that language course first was helpful?
RAHIM: Yeah, of course. Yeah.
R: Do you think there was anything about your sort of friendships and your relationships with adults, in the English learning course or the engineering course that helped you feel like you belonged or fit in?
RAHIM: Umm like, it, helped a lot, you know, with my studying with the engineering. The other subject [English language] it helped me a lot. Yeah.
R: Okay, do you mean that it helps you build friendships?
RAHIM: Build the friendships, yeah. With the other people, yeah.
R: Thank you. It's really it's really interesting, isn't it? Different experiences that you both had. But some of the same things coming through that sort of that when the language develops is when the sort of friendships began to develop. Thinking about school, was there anything that helped you to feel more sort of understood or misunderstood?
ABDUL: Like, catch up?
R: Maybe, but also thinking about how you felt accepted when you came to school?
RAHIM: Uh, especially when I start my engineering course, they were, like, respectful and, yeah, they will ask me about where I'm from and, you know, about the culture. They knew everything, I think that they studied in the school about the culture and everything. That's especially good, yeah. I think it's good, yeah, that they are teaching the younger children it.
R: So, they were quite welcoming when you came in?
RAHIM: Yeah, it was good.
R: It was that similar experience for you?
ABDUL: Yeah. It was though, though, like, I was thinking they were on a surprise. I was thinking they will, like, saying something like 'you are like this' and like this. But, but they were very friendly and, and, like, welcoming there they for them it was doesn't matter who is there. Yeah. So, it was very nice.
R: Ohh, nice. Okay, thank you. And was there anything that was really helpful or, or really not helpful that adults in school did?
RAHIM: Uh, the teachers, yeah?
R: Yeah
RAHIM: They were helpful, and yeah, they were great,
ABDUL: Yeah, the teachers okay. It was very helpful. Especially that they know who needs the help, especially the language at school was difficult for us, so they were more trying to help us to understand, yeah, I noticed this thing there.
R: And can you tell me about anything else they did that was particularly helpful?
[pause]
ABDUL: Like so, anything different for us [than other students]?
R: Yeah, it could be.
ABDUL: Yeah, like he was teaching something and we didn't understand. Then he, he tried to explain more to us, to, to understand this thing, yeah. Yeah, this kind of thing, yeah. It was.
R: Just to check, do you mean that the teacher gave you some additional explanations?
ABDUL: Yeah.
R: Thank you. And how about for you?
RAHIM: Same, yeah. They make it clear. Yeah.
R: Thank you. Was there anything they did that wasn't helpful, anything that made it more difficult?
ABDUL: Yes, some teacher is like, you know, they don't realize that we understood or not the, the thing that it was [the learning]. But a lot of them they understand, they know that we need more explanation for understanding. Yeah. But some is not that much, but it's better if, if the teacher knows that what we need to understand things here.
R: Yeah. And I guess, how they know that is by getting to know you and by sort of building that relationship.
ABDUL: Yeah.
R: Let's talk about your experiences of learning. So, what you were taught in your lessons. Do you feel like there was anything that made you feel more or less like you belonged?
ABDUL: Yeah, umm, about what did you say
RAHIM: It might be.
R: I mean when it came to the actual learning. So, I know you said the teachers were really helpful because they, sort of, adjusted it. But I wanted to know whether there was anything, sort of, about the content of what you learnt?
RAHIM: At first. Like, you took a test, like speaking and yeah. Then after that, umm, they find out which level we are and they put the in different classes that level. So different sort of level, yeah.

R: OK. That's useful to know. Thank you. And what about for you?

ABDUL: Yeah, same for me. There, there had the test. Especially, I remember when I came it was January and there was starting after the holidays so they already had some classes, but they said ‘we're gonna see in where, where you can fit you’. Yeah. So they took a test from me and then they, they put me with other class, yeah.

RAHIM: School is different. You know when you go to school, like you're gonna start like in year 10 or 11. Yeah, you have to study about the other people like studying.

R: Okay.

RAHIM: Yeah. So you go into all of the lessons. Yeah. It was hard. Yeah. I didn't know anything like. Yeah.

R: That sounds really tricky. And you mentioned you were only there a couple of weeks before the COVID-19 lockdown happened?

RAHIM: Yeah, not long to make friends or [make my] language better.

R: Okay. In COVID, where you having any education?

RAHIM: Yeah, we had like a online education.

R: OK. How was that?

RAHIM: Of course, yes, my school is pretty uh helpful and that also it was all on computer.

ABDUL: Yeah, computer. But for me was boring, but it was better than nothing. Just I was thinking that. But online is I, I don't think it's that much helpful. But, but if you think if you’re doing nothing then that's [online learning] better, yeah.

R: Yeah. What about the online learning made it feel unhelpful?

ABDUL: Umm. You know online, well, there's many guys and you, you want to understand The thing is, is not easy online. Everyone is like making confusion. So, then this is a thing is difficult and it's not able to learn a lot of things from online thing.

R: Yeah.

ABDUL: Specially you have the whole class, yeah. There's just one teacher, so it's there's not easy. Yeah

R: Okay, so was it difficult because they weren't able to, sort of, give extra explanations or break it down to help you?

ABDUL: Yeah, yeah, that's, that's the thing. Yeah.

R: And was that similar to your experience online?

RAHIM: No, I liked. See, I've got my teacher was just strict like everyone was quiet, you know? Yeah, yeah, it was good. Yeah.

R: And did you find that this sort of support that you got online and in person has been different

RAHIM: Of course, person is different. Face to face is a lot different from online. Yeah.

R: Okay, but you still find the learning was okay and the teacher quite helpful?

RAHIM: Yeah. Yeah.

R: Was there any impact on building friendships [of online learning]?

ABDUL: Yeah.

RAHIM: Yeah, yeah, I think so, yeah. When you're listening to the teacher you don’t talk with friends if there's no, like, break time outside.

R: Yeah. And I suppose, it might useful now to discuss things outside of school that have helped you feel included and feel like you belong. So was there anything outside of school that's impacted that?

RAHIM: *** [charity] yeah. Yeah, like. Yeah. I used to go like, until like one years ago here.
R: Okay, you said that was useful for the language. Was that also helpful for anything else?
RAHIM: Like building friendship yeah. Talking to other people actually nice.
R: Could you tell me a little bit more about that?
RAHIM: I don’t know, I think, it wasn’t helpful you not to speak in English when you see someone as from your country. Yeah, you need to speak in your own language, yeah, but it was hard speaking English, so yeah, yes.
R: And what about your experiences outside of school?
ABDUL: Yeah, that issue, and I I study as with the for the extra time [free time] and we had English as well and we had the cooking classes as well. Yeah, I like cooking. So, I had to cooking class as well there. And the other thing they have some, uh, they making the activities, yeah, activities to take the guys to somewhere nice. So, we had the this as well, yeah, and many new guys I met there and some of them are still I know them. Yeah.
R: They are still your friends now?
ABDUL: Still friends now, yeah. So it was, *** [charity] is very helpful as well, yeah.
R: Yeah, it sounds like it was helpful for their language and helpful for sort of meeting people?
ABDUL: Meeting people yeah.
RAHIM: Also, when I came at first like the they showed me the route, like how to get the bus and yeah, they we helpful with that as well.
R: Thank you for sharing that. We don’t necessarily think about it when you’ve been here a long time, but at the beginning it must be quite scary having lots of things and not knowing how it works.
ABDUL: Yeah, it is really helpful when someone guide you about the city, especially we, we didn’t know anything at the start. Yeah. And it was very helpful. Yeah. And there’s a youth club as well, I’ve been there many time. Youth club. Yeah. I don’t know if it’s belong to the *** [charity] or something, I don’t know. But I used to go there and when the college come then we start online. So we had the quiz competitions, yeah. So, it was very nice. Games and things, yeah. So, yeah, I remember that it was very helpful. Yeah.
R: That sounds lovely, thank you. Was there anything else about your free time, or time at home, that you would like to share?
ABDUL: At home?
R: Time when you are not at school, for example things you do in the evenings.
ABDUL: Yeah, it was like. I used to live with the boys and we play sometime together in the garden and we was doing some stuff and watching TV. Uh, Yeah. If you had a friend, friend, uh, good friend with you. So it’s, it’s helpful, yeah. Especially when you come to home and you had the friend.
R: That’s nice. So seeing friends outside of school is important to you?
ABDUL: Yeah, and the other thing for the language was uh, I used to live with my foster care and she was very helpful for me. Like when I didn’t know something I will, I was asking her, and she was helping for that. Yeah. So yeah, if you have someone like this it is really helpful.
R: Okay, helpful for learning English language, do you mean?
ABDUL: Yeah, the language, yeah.
R: Thank you. Okay, let’s think about lunchtime or breaks between lessons at college. Let’s discuss what sort of things you do that, sort of, impact how included at school you feel. Is there anything that comes to mind?
ABDUL: At the Cornish.
R: Yeah, so when you have lunchtime or a free lesson.
RAHIM: Lunchtime. I’m just going to eat, that’s it, like.
R: Yeah, that’s okay. Do you eat on your own or in the canteen?
RAHIM: You’re not allowed to eat in the classroom, so yeah I’m going out to eat, yeah, to
the canteen, sometimes with friends is better. Yeah, it’s fun, you know? Good to have
time with our friends, yeah.
R: Is there anything that the college could change that would help you feel more like you
belong, or just be helpful for you?
[pause]
R: Or thinking about when you first started at college. If there's anything they could have
done differently, or that might help more new people when they first start?
ABDUL: Yeah. I think we say there's a lot of things. And if we, if we are someone ask us.
Yeah. To do for the guy like, you know, in the back [in my home] country we when I was
studying, I remember, eh, they making like eh, matches for, for the like cricket matches
and football message which I, I didn't see here. Yeah. So I think if you have something like
this it would very helpful. Yeah, it's very, very good. Yeah.
R: Okay, so having, like, teams at the college?
ABDUL: Teams at the college, yeah, and doing some sports stuff here, yeah.
R: Yeah, and what would that be helpful for? Having things that you enjoy.
ABDUL: For happy, yeah. Which is that I didn’t see. Yeah. I started in *** College and then
it's been two year in *** college, and I didn't see any enough activity. So yeah, I really
like this kind of activity, yeah, would be nice if they had that.
R: Okay, could that impact your friendships as well?
ABDUL: Yeah, with everything is, I think this is very helpful. Make you fresh every time
you are studying and then if you have something exciting things then make you like fresh
and yeah.
R: Some excitement and motivation?
ABDUL: Yeah, yeah.
R: I understand that. And how about for you? Is there anything you think college could
change that could be helpful for new starters?
RAHIM: There was football, but not like other sport this, you know like no more option.
R: And anything other than sort of sports teams that you think could be helpful to make
people feel like they fit in?
ABDUL: I don't understand what was it?
R: Yeah, So, like the sports teams, is there anything else that would be helpful for new
people starting?
ABDUL: Um, I found that well like in the *** college, where was doing the and the
different class was like the coming together with each other. They’re talking to each
other. So, I think this is also helpful- to meet the other classes as well and you, you can
talk with them and learn from them, and then they ask you something like, you know,
new things is good to learn.
R: Yeah
ABDUL: I think it's a good idea.
R: We're they other classes within the college?
ABDUL: Yeah, in the college. Yeah. Yeah. In the college. Even if you sometime if you had a
two or from the other college or something like this and meet the new people I think it's
very helpful. Like we, I'm playing cricket so you going to another cities and meeting with
the new people. And it's very good, yeah, so, you learn a lot of thing. Like we, we learn
about the tickets. So many kind of place and [unintelligible- maybe bowlers?]. But I think
this kind of things is also helpful.
R: Lovely, thank you. And is there anything at all that's been unhelpful in college?
ABDUL: Unhelpful?
R: Yeah, is there anything that's made it harder for you in school? You already mentioned about the language, but is there anything else?
ABDUL: No
RAHIM: Umm, no I don't think so.
R: I mean, that's good. It's nice to hear that you have had a good experience. I just wanted us to have the opportunity for us to discuss it if there is anything.
ABDUL: I didn't really notice there's anything.
R: Okay. Could we talk a little bit more about your friendships?
RAHIM: Uh, I make friends a mix across countries, yeah, from Europe, Eritrea, yeah.
R: Okay. It's nice to be able to make friends from different areas.
RAHIM: Uh, when I change my course, like to *** college like there's like a lot of English people as well, yeah. But when I used to study the just the English language, there was like from different countries there wasn't any English people.
R: It's nice to have that exposure to different people. We have covered a lot today and it is really helpful, thank you. Is there anything else, thinking about school and college, if there's anything else that you wanted to talk about that we haven't discussed yet?
RAHIM: Yeah we covered it.
ABDUL: I don't have no.
R: I mean, we have talked about so much useful information, which is really helpful. I just don't want to have missed anything that you thought sort of, if there's anything we haven't talked about.
ABDUL: No, that's okay, yeah.
RAHIM: Yeah, no.
R: Okay, brilliant, thank you so much for your time today, I will stop the recording now.
F.3 Transcript 3: School staff

Focus group details:

Date, time, location: 06.03.23, 16:00, In person – at their school

Running time: Approximately 90 minutes (including 15-minute break)

Researcher: R

Participant pseudonyms: Gina, Monica

Focus group transcript:

R: So, to start with, is there anything that immediately comes to mind in terms of maybe factors that impact sense of belonging and feelings of inclusion in school for the young asylum seekers that you work with?

MONICA: I could talk for weeks about it. I don’t know whether it is better to go through your structured questions because otherwise I could just rabbit on.

R: OK. So let’s go through them and then at the end, we will have some time where we can discuss anything else that you think is relevant.

MONICA: Okay.

GINA: That would be good.

R: So first, let’s think around culture and identity, so it’s it’d be quite useful if we can try and sort of illustrate with examples where they’re relevant, just because that makes sure I’ve definitely understood it the way it’s meant. So, let’s think about some examples of how the asylum-seeking or refugee young people can sort of be themselves at school.

GINA: What comes to mind for me is celebrations. Like the one recently was Christmas and, jumping to Ukraine as we have Lots of students from Ukraine, but they do something after Christmas, don’t they?

MONICA: Yeah. Ukrainian Christmas is later. 7th of January.

GINA: 7th of January and some, not all, participated in that time to celebrate it. But not all of them joined in. I guess across lots of different cultures there are lots of different celebrations that are potentially missed or bypassed because we don’t know about them after Christmas, don’t they?

MONICA: Yeah. Ukrainian Christmas is later. 7th of January.

GINA: 7th of January and some, not all, participated in that time to celebrate it. But not all of them joined in. I guess across lots of different cultures there are lots of different celebrations that are potentially missed or bypassed because we don’t know about them after Christmas, don’t they?

R: Yeah, I understand that. It’s really difficult, isn’t it?

GINA: That is the thing that came to my mind.

MONICA: Ramadan starts next week. We have students who are Syrian who obviously have refugee status and we work closely with the RE [religious education] team. Umm, we have a breakfast club, EAL Breakfast Club, that takes place every Monday. There’s just a couple of 6th formers and bring their friends along and nominally it’s to, you know, learn English language. But really, it’s about saying how are you checking in? Giving people a sense of ownership and then they come up with brilliant projects and as it’s Ramadan, we’ve got hold of, advent calendars. They’re Ramadan calendars. So, you open the window and there’s a date or a halal chocolate and it takes to the whole way through...
R: Okay, that sounds lovely.
MONICA: Last year when it was Ramadan, *** was in year seven. And she's very capable. But, you know, she's been five years in a camp. Yeah, and had to leave overnight because ISIS were coming into their town. So left in their pyjamas. Pretty much. Five years, in a camp, very frightening, her parents couldn't afford school for their daughter and then into a primary school and lockdown and then into straight into year seven, so a big ask. And you're the only person you are wearing head scarf. And you're Syrian. And you come from Ultra conservative family. But her form teacher talked to me and we had a think and we asked her what she wanted to do and she ended up doing a talk to the class, at the beginning of Ramadan, and then as a surprise he got all this Eid, decorations and decorated the form in two to time, got food in and they had a party. And that was when *** suddenly became this very chatty, bouncy Tigger.
R: Yeah, that sounds lovely.
MONICA: Having before been so serious and her body language was so closed. I think, you know, we both work together with students who've been through very challenging times. You [P7] work with students from all backgrounds, I just do one little slice of the pie, but some of those have overlapping very big things that they brought with them.
GINA: I think that's probably the biggest thing - asking.
MONICA: Yeah.
GINA: What and how much do they want to celebrate. Like, when they I worked with an EAL group the other day. So we had the, there was a minute silence to mark the start of the war in Ukraine last week.
MONICA: Yeah, it was on 24th of February, a couple of weeks ago.
GINA: A couple of weeks ago. And I had my EAL group coming up to work with me and we asked and they didn't want to take part in it because they were like, we don't need the reminder, we live it.
MONICA: Yeah.
R: Okay
GINA: And so I guess talking to them asking what they want to participate in and what they don't.
R: Yeah.
GINA: And like, I guess that's
MONICA: I think it's incredibly important to be respectful and not overlay our interpretation of what people want.
R: Yeah.
MONICA: Because the... We're already working with people who've lost so much control and power and autonomy and place in society and identity, and you come to a new culture and then people make assumptions - often very caring assumptions - about what people want or how they feel or who they want to be, or what they like doing. And as you
[P7] said, when we had the Ukrainian Christmas celebration it was very much the head just said, ‘would you like to?’ And it was very low key and there was no pressure. And we do get approached by outside organizations, but there are some organizations who want to give something, but they want to have a reward for giving. And I’m nominally the EAL coordinator, I’m nominally helping people with their English. But that’s just on the skin of it, isn't it? It's like you’re normally doing stuff, but there’s so much underneath the skin that there's not identified, but is MONICA: I didn't expect it GINA: multi-faceted, umm, approach. So, it's like it's like looking to diamond and you can look at the diamond through just one facet and then turn it around the other facet. And there’s another facet and they look upside down there's another. So, we get approached quite a lot by people who say, well, we're gonna give you this because you want this and isn't it great cause we've got some money because you've got these guys at your school and now we want this out of it. An awful lot of saying I hear what you're saying, thank you, but no – and possibly thinking something rather stronger in one's head. R:  Yeah.

MONICA: It can be quite testing at times. But one of the absolutely most important things is to say to people, ‘I see you as a person and therefore I see you as a person with choice.’ R:  Yeah.

MONICA: And sometimes you have to say you’re a person with choice, but actually you’re 12 and you will turn up to lessons on time. And being Ukrainian doesn’t let you off the hook. Because there are umpty, umpty, umpty students have umpty, umpty excuses, but they still have to turn up in time, and those boundaries will make you feel better. And but other stuff is like, I see you, and you really don't have to go and eat Ukrainian Christmas food and you really don't have to tell anyone about how it feels to be Muslim, or you don't have to talk about your time in a camp in Burundi. And you don't need anyone to speculate because you're coming here to learn not to have to sing for your supper. R:  Yeah.

MONICA: And I I think that's something I feel incredibly strongly about. R:  I guess, yeah. The impact of that for young people being given the choice like knowing that the things are there for them, but being given the choice, what do you think the impact of that is for those young people?

GINA: For some of them it's., I think two ways. For some of them it's quite hard because they're like choosing not to take part in something, and I think that's an internal battle within themself and yeah, they’re choosing not to take part in the Christmas celebration because they don't want to celebrate. It's bringing up a whole plethora of emotions. Umm. The fact that they’re given that choice definitely builds up and their ability to say ‘right, this is who I am, this is what I want to focus on, this is where I’m going, these are my goals’ and that gives them that autonomy. And I guess on the flip side, you’ve also got somebody that all of a sudden thinks, ‘right, this is part of me, although I'm not in the same country this will always be part of me, and actually I'm going to celebrate it’. So it kind of goes in both ways.

MONICA: And in some ways, students might want to think. And some students are really made a lot of friends and they don't - There's a student in year 8, and year 8 is quite a complicated group of students, it's quite a spiky group. And there are lots of interesting dynamics in that particular little group. A lot of power games and people echoing their parents stuff. But there is a child in there who when they’re with the group of Ukrainian students they sit in the corner and doesn't want to engage and it's miserable. When they’re in class life and soul of the party, loads of English friends, they just don't happen to get on with the students who are Ukrainian. But almost you can say ‘what a success
story’ because they’re just being themselves, and they’ve chosen who they like being with not based on race, colour, gender, or cultural identity. It’s just ‘I’m this person and this is who I like hanging out with, I really don’t like hanging out with the Ukrainian kids in my class’. And there was an incident last term -

GINA: The sandwich incident?

MONICA: Mhm, the sandwich incident. And there was just - It was a bullying incident and it had to be told to be dealt with as a bullying incident and really where people are from was irrelevant. It was just stuff. And again, that’s this sort of idea of you come here and you leave behind, umm, the way in which you’re viewed by the culture, you come as a refugee and you’re just yourself, and that might also be you bring a lot of rubbish with you. Or you bring behavioural stuff. I think sometimes you move countries and it inflates stuff, for some people it’s a chance to shed stuff, for some people it’s a chance to explore stuff, and I think all we can do is a school is just be this constant, constant, reliable, repetitive, open minded Forum.

R: Yeah.

MONICA: You come to learn that we don’t use the word refugee in school, ever ever, ever ever, ever ever, ever ever. Because it’s it then becomes, umm, well, it can be somewhere to hide, it can be somewhere that’s very constricting, suffocating, and it it’s a label, isn’t it? It’s been extraordinary experience, hasn’t it, The last few years> GINA: Mhmm.

MONICA: But I mean you [GINA] understand, because you work with children from all sorts of backgrounds.

GINA: So, I’m the head of alternative education.

R: OK.

GINA: So any child that can’t access mainstream education, we will kind of work through them. And I also do outreach for lots of different groups for lots of different reasons. And which is where the EAL Group come up.

MONICA: And you’ve been sort of lifebelt when it all started and you just said, ‘look, would you like everyone to come up and do forest school and have support’.

GINA: Even before that, *** was one of the first [asylum seekers] I was aware of –

MONICA: He was in the jungle, wasn’t he?

GINA: Yeah. And came in from Calais on the back of the van. And then I think ended up in *** [local authority] somehow, *** [local authority], actually. And whoever took him in chose *** [this school], he was the first student I worked with in, like, an alternative provision setup where I was just building social skills and building relationship with him to then helping him into classes and to help him with those sorts of things. So, it’s started, he was here six years ago, and I think from there it’s just been building and building and building.

MONICA: And he’s so interesting, isn’t it because he came over on his own and he’s definitely older than he said he was, significantly, because he came as a child, but probably a late teenage child rather than a young teenage child, and that’s not unknown for people coming from the African continent, for a multitude of reasons. Umm, and he’s not come with a parent or a family member, or a godparent or an uncle. You know, or an Auntie.

R: So he came completely alone?

MONICA: Completely alone, and he’s now the family that Fostered him have now adopted him. And so his English has gone [whistles and moves arm upwards], but he’s had to make this enormous change.

GINA: He got English and Maths GCSE, didn’t he?
MONICA: I'm actually - he got eight for Maths.
GINA: And then he stayed on to do A-Levels. I think he wants to go to the military, that's the latest thing.
R: That's a real success story, really, isn't it? For somebody that came over with very limited English, no relationships to then –
MONICA: The way he had totally engage. Because he, I mean, he does have a mum back at home officially, he told students he didn't have a mum, but now he does have a mum.
It's so complicated. And I just feel who are we to judge? I just said to my husband, she's like, Blimey, I went well. You think about it and if everything was actually dire, you would just do anything in your power to give your child a chance. Even if it meant losing that child.
R: Yeah. And it's hard, isn't it? Because there's lots of different reasons why people withhold information. And we we can't know why or what's the right thing to do.
MONICA: And we have another student, a venerable student in year 10. Who's from, gosh I'm trying to think, East Africa. On her papers it says Rwandan but she's actually from Burundi and she ended up on her own in a camp in Rwanda at the age of 10. And she lost all contact with her family. And there are a number of theories as to why that happened, like child trafficking or child slavery, and she's epileptic and that's seen as a sign of witchcraft. And she's been with us since two days before Easter last year. And she's got guardians, and you know, she's clean and fed, but she's vulnerable.
R: Yeah
GINA: Yeah. And we have one intervention which has worked so well for her, so we have voluntary readers.
MONICA: So largely retirees, but actually her voluntary reader - this we started up in the autumn. Through the local churches and it sort of spread out and then people came screened and do lots of forms and DBS and da da da da.
R: What is voluntary readers?
MONICA: Some comes in, so our voluntary reader just finished the library today and comes in spends half an hour week reading one child in the library and *** reads with this lady who I then found out is a theatre director. I was talking and saying, 'gosh, her body language is changed, she's just so much more confident because she used to speak like this [quietly] and talk to her feet and very, very fast'. And she said 'Oh yes', and that's when she told me about the theatre ‘I'm teaching her to inhabit her body and I'm teaching her to look at people, because what was polite in her culture - not to look - is wrong in our culture’. And you think, gosh, it's so exciting you can have a volunteer coming in and doing intervention, you would never think of, but she's opened so many doors for this one person, and she she's such an amazing sponge. She really absorbs so much and it also she has really connected with a Ukrainian student. And that Ukrainians student has very high anxiety and I think came over here with a lot of baggage, highly academic, but huge pressure because, is the case of quite a lot of students, when everything else is falling apart, you want your child to do well. You gave majorly sacrifice if your child, your child, has got to do well, and then a child has a huge burden of doing well. And they're probably also interpreter for the family. So, it's some people fall apart.
R: That sounds like a lot of pressure.
MONICA: But these two girls have become friends, haven't they? And they really look out for each other.
GINA: One another thing I thought, that in sports the rules are the same across the world.
And, umm, it doesn't matter what's going on with that if I'm like, 'oh, you wanna play this?' They're like, 'yeah!'. So lots of our students play sports either after school or when they come up to me and we do at least half an hour. The first thing they do is say, 'Can we
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MONICA: You even get them sawing wood, don’t you?
GINA: Yeah.
MONICA: Do you remember that moment when everyone was sitting there sawing wood?
And it was one of those cold yucky days, and you were with ***, and you said ‘you’re really good at this’, and he said ‘ohh, I always did this with my granddad’. His grandad is stuck behind Russian lines. And you think - But there he was so happy he wasn’t going ‘[crying noises] ohh I used to do this with my granddad’. So, and that’s sort of real zone.
GINA: I think that’s it, isn’t it, it’s finding what it is for that person to if it’s the sport that they love that they don’t need English language to play, they can understand the rules, or if it’s the sawing, or the activity that works for them, that’s where it comes into building those relationships and knowing what each person loves. We played capture the flag for two hours last week.
R: Really?
GINA: Yeah.
MONICA: That’s wonderful
GINA: We were supposed to be in the forest and forest school activities, but I said ‘I don’t know if you have ever played this game, capture the flag?’ and they were like ‘Ohh yeah, yeah, yeah’. So we said we would play one game and then we’ll go and go and forest and then that one game turned into ‘OK we want to try and better ourselves on new tactic’, so I said okay, but after 2 games then it was a draw and they had a break in top 10s, and they just played for hours and it was so silly. But they were like, yeah, we've all played this played at home, different rules, but –
MONICA: And that's also it's so lovely because you need to be silly cause, you're living with a host, or you just living in a host country, or you might have moved permanently to the country if you are from a Syrian family where the whole family has come over. And this is it. Umm, and you're sort of on your best behaviour the whole time and the chance to be silly and no ones judging your saying. Well, ‘that's an 8 for that one’, or ‘how's your English coming?’ just to be playful.
GINA: Mhmm.
R: Yeah.
MONICA: I was really thinking a lot about the different interventions, infact, Breakfast Club we only have two or three students going, but it doesn't matter. And this week, especially today, it really hit me hard because we've got a thing where we worked hard with the local Cricket Club, to do two cricket taste a days and they're here on a Sunday morning last Sunday this coming Sunday and we worked with two other secondary schools and said five students from each school, so 15 altogether and cricket coach is coming. And then there's a view to one or two students maybe having a bursary to go and do cricket because obviously this could be a good thing. We saw Freddie Flintoff program all about. Yeah. And so we’re gonna give it to go, but I guess I've got used to the idea that even if one person does it, that's brilliant. And even if nobody does, it's brilliant. It's just the matter they have choice.
GINA: Yeah, we, we sign them up to lots of activities, don't we?
MONICA: And then sometimes they come and sometimes they don't come and it’s absolutely fine.
GINA: Over the holidays, summer holidays, Easter holidays, Christmas holidays, there will be activities that we, well I get sent a lot and I forward them onto you [P6] and then you [P6] share them. So the Forest school ran sessions, a farm run sessions –
MONICA: Christian youth enterprise run tester sessions
GINA: Sailing days

MONICA: And ohh gosh, where does *** work? Oh yeah, *** church. They're amazing.

R: So, these are places that you as a school have links with?

MONICA: Yeah. And then they offered us saying this is what we can offer for free for young people across the school, like it doesn't have to be asylum seekers and refugees, it could be anyone. This is open to –

MONICA: The theatre do something

GINA: Yeah, umm, and students struggling with anxiety. But I pass them on to Susie. Susie passes around the families. And one of the things, *** church, it's a church down in *** [town], and they've done this huge youth celebration like a basically like a youth festival.

R: Yeah.

GINA: And loads of the Ukrainian students went.

MONICA: And actually, one ended up working as interpreter before she joined us at sixth form.

GINA: We have clergy visit at the *** - the alternative provision center that I work at. And they do clergy visit and they come up once a week. And the guy that ran the youth service came up on the same day that the Ukrainian students were there and he walked in he was like 'hello!' And literally their faces lit up, it was so cute. Because all of a sudden – he hasn't seen them since summer, they haven't seen him since summer, he remembered all their names, he went and chatted to them.

MONICA: He is such a lovely person.

GINA: It was just all of a sudden, like all the other kids that are there all the time were like, 'how do you know him?' and all of a sudden it got everyone talking about how you know this one person. And it all comes together

MONICA: So it's forging connections. It's forging a network. I always think – I was saying to someone again with this cricket thing because the 15 people is 5 people per school, 3 secondary schools or five people from here, though one got sick, one had mocks on Monday and had a panic – he was in year 11. Two came and one's mum took her son to the wrong venue because of language and she's just in the middle of moving house and she's so stressed she can't think straight. Yeah. And took him to the wrong venue.

MONICA: And so two out of the five came, but to me, 2 out of five is like whoopee, amazing! And from the other two schools nobody came, so they had two people instead of 15 people. And I got this rather grumpy e-mail saying 'well, we're not doing it the second day of the taste of the next week if only two are coming'. But I wrote back and said 'two people coming, just think that's two lives and two people having an opportunity to just think do I like this?'. And they said that the two students they had were really good and they really loved it, so I think 'how can you let them down by not doing the following Sunday when you promised? How could you break your promise?' I really, I'm really upset about it because I realize I've got to the point where I don't think any more about how we've got 15 places so if we haven't got 15 filled it's not right, I just think we're giving you an option, and if somebody likes it, great. And if they don't like it, it's also great. But we did it and we have to live up to a promise. We can't walk out half ago. Well, you two came, but you two don't count because we want 15 of you, and then we can go tick.

GINA: And yeah, It's not consistent and stable as it can be.

MONICA: The one who is ill is desperate to go, and the one whose mom took him to the wrong address and drove around town is desperate to go too. There will be a guaranteed 4 from here, probably 5. But we don’t know what is happening yet as they emailed saying, ‘What's the point in us doing this? We haven't got 15’, but we are like 'each one of them is a human'. So, I realize that I've been totally impacted by this school, cause here it is all
about the individual, everybody mattering, everyone being equal. And you can only
operate like that if you totally buy into it on every single level and just fall into the
embrace of that ethos.

R: Yeah.

MONICA: And so, I'm looking at where it's gonna take place because I'm so upset about it.
It's not a case of, well, you two absolutely loved something, but we're cutting it off
because the others didn't go and therefore your time wasn't valid. I think this is how this
is sort of how we're dealing with it isn't in terms of everything. and it hasn't the fact that.
You can't say well, no one else came, so even though you enjoyed it, we're gonna stop it.
Because if 15 people had gone, they'd be like, oh, that was a great success. Let's do it
again. It's a real success already. Refugee and asylum-seeking families find change very
difficult. They find getting from A to B very difficult. They're living under immense strain,
and also, just getting paying for a bus fair is very difficult. And It's also very overwhelming
being offered something extra. And it's keeping everything in your mind and
remembering it all as well. It's just there's a lot, a lot to process for them at the moment.

R: I can see how difficult that must be. We have touched on the sort of next topic as well.
I might move on if that's okay?

MONICA: I told you I could rabbit on!

R: It's great, and what we are discussing is really useful for my research and gives me an
idea about what some of the additional challenges these young people may face. I would
like move on to thinking about your experiences of sort of being with young people, and
to discuss how the relationships that they build in school can well in school and how
these can impact their sense of belonging? So, this could involve relationships with adults
and with other young people.

GINA: So, I think my relat
ionship with the students isn't very strong. I see them once
every two weeks. Umm, I know them, but they drip feed little bits of information about
themselves, they don't open up.

R: Okay.

GINA: So I know little bits about students, but I wouldn't say I know them very well. I
don't think they'll open up to me about something specific. But that's, I guess, that's not
why I'm working with them. I'm working with them to give them a place where they can
just not have to think about anything and actually learn skills. In terms of relationship
building, we have quite a set structure at school where we have a tutor, head of house,
then head of Key stage, and they were being encouraged to work on the relationships
with all of those and then more specifically, refugee students work with P6 and ***, so in
terms of staff they will see them with regards to anything that they need to discuss as to,
I guess, anything really. Mainly pastoral, but I reckon they're probably closest with you
[P6] when it comes to talking about their life before coming to the UK, their tutor in their
head of house are focused on pastoral, o something's going on there behaviour or they're
turning up to lessons late or really anxious, those two were kind of oversee that and they
will have quite a strong relationship with both the longer they're here. And then the final
one key stage 4, the head of their key stage will have an oversight, so will know all of
them and will pick them up and be like ‘oh, where you supposed to be now’ and support
them. But it's again it's supposed to be more like me where we know who they are but we
don't necessarily know about them. And so that's the staffing thing that they have
available to them, plus all their teachers and stuff like that. But they're the specific staff.
And I think the good thing about the house system, is you, you do - students do have that
sense of belonging through it.

MONICA: Absolutely. Absolutely.
GINA: I think more schools should have a house system because straight away you have a sense of belonging and it becomes competitive. Yeah. And we thought we've got grandparents who - and it's ridiculous - the grandparent will bring their child to school and that their grandchild to school and even ask, can they be put in the same house that I will say when I was there. And you're like, it doesn't work like that, I'm really sorry. But like, that's what they want, they want that continuation. And they have their head of house from your seven will go through to you 11, that same pastoral support, that same person

R: Okay, so consistency then in their relationships, is helpful.

GINA: Exactly, and I think consistency of who to go through for what and as well so they have that consistency which is I think really important for all kids; even more so for asylum seekers

MONICA: Yeah, because it is dependable. It's solid ground under their feet. And they know exactly what happens and you have tutor time every day. So you know that someone is checking in with someone and you are the focus.

R: Yeah

MONICA: 30 of you every single day. So like the teacher doing a surprise Eid party - That's because they're his tutor group and they matter to him and they are special to him. He wasn't a whole school thing, it was for *** and her tutor group. And that was amazing. I say, amazing, but I'm, I have only been here a few years and I'm not a teacher, and I'm constantly surprised and overwhelmed by the way it's like lots of little families within a big family. It's almost quite tribal, isn't it?

GINA: Cult like? No, I'm kidding.

MONICA: Yeah, but it's just there is an element of lots of families within a greater whole. And I think that is a huge safety thing. And then in addition, these interventions, again, are an opportunity, if you want to, to form a connection. So, one thing that's very popular with a group about between 10 and 15 students is games Café

R: Oh, nice

MONICA: And it is for EAL student, particularly those seeking asylum or with refugee status. And one or two others for various reasons have come along and three sixth formers now come and help, and just by chance one is Vietnamese heritage another one you know, they have something, and it's run by the parents of our head of languages. And when everything kicked off these just so we want to do something to help and we'd like to do a club. And I I've had a lot of support from the *** [charity], which is not the *** [charity], but it sounds like it is. Anyway, look it up, it's massive thing funded by Einstein in the 1930s and they now setting up -they've been in the UK for a few years. And they've actually been very, they do genuinely constructive support rather than me- dare I say, sort of [indistinguishable word] support, which is what we sometimes get.

R: Do these individuals give support to you at school, or directly to the families?

MONICA: To schools, yeah. On how to help people. And so, it's umm, healing classrooms. It's really interesting you look up *** [charity] healing classrooms, they are absolutely brilliant. And they are coming to us at the end of this term to do some training and I hope you [P7] will be coming, not that I think you would need any training.

GINA: We have had EMTAS

MONICA: Ethnic Minority and Travel Advisory Services.

GINA: Yeah, came in and gave inset training to all of our staff.

MONICA: EAL strategies in the classroom, EAL strategies for exams and revision, and EAL and emotional well-being.

GINA: So that supports the staff but where the staff is more supported, I guess it can support young people.
MONICA: Well, it trickles down, doesn't it? Cause it's very hard in a mainstream class if you've got somebody sitting there and they don't speak a word or they they're volunteering me.

GINA: We have quite we have quite the kids, just when they're with me, maybe it's me, when they're with me, but they do just cry. They're so emotional and I think where they're all of a sudden with me and I'm doing something completely random and they're just like [deep breath out], and I think that is quite tough.

MONICA: Oh because it's all too much. They let go.

GINA: But I think if seven or classroom and teacher has a child crying, it's how do they deal with that whilst trying to deal with everybody else.

MONICA: Yeah, not making people feel worse.

GINA: But yeah, so I think EMTAS coming in and helping, that was really good.

MONICA: And they worked reasonably close with that closely with us and ***, which is the Polish lady who's the local, she covers *** [local authority] and she's very proactive because she's she gets it, it's her lived experience. But no in terms of games Cafe what is nice there is it's run by grandparents and it's so obviously grandparents, and you know Julie comes in and does baking, and it's always involving chocolate because you discovered anything cheese nobody cares. It's like, ‘uhh’. And they've made pancakes and cookies and cupcakes and more pancakes and more cookies. And that's every Tuesday afternoon in school because one of our lovely food tech teachers said we could use their kitchen. And there is gardening, so they've been growing bulbs in the garden in the summer and clearing the raised beds and and, and also board games so Jenga, Gruffalo snap, stuff you might play when you're really little, but they're rules are simple and it brings you back to that sort of security. So, I've been told they have Gruffalos in the mountains in Ukraine, did you know that? No, they do. We played Gruffalo snap and *** said, ‘but miss, they have Gruffalos’.

R: It sounds really nice to have so many options.

MONICA: And that, and that's again a relationship and you know the option is to everybody.

GINA: We love board games, they're such a good way.

MONICA: Jenga.

GINA: We play at Launchpad, so I've got, this is like with my alternative education stuff. I have 15 kids that bicker all the time, not big fans of each other, forced friendships cause they've there's only 15 them and then like today we sat down for Uno, and it doesn't matter who sat next to you're trying to stitch me up.

MONICA: Oh fantastic.

GINA: And all of a sudden there's an alliance of all the kids versus me and they're laughing and they're giggling and they forgot what happened at the weekend and they forgot that. And they're just trying to beat me.

R: [Laughs]

MONICA: [Laughs]. Uno is hugely popular with all the things we do and yeah, and Dobble is another one. Even if you don't have much English, you can still play. Yeah, they love ganging up on the grandparents. Yeah, and they absolutely adore it.

GINA: All of a sudden they have a common interest of beating the person in charge.

MONICA: And another things have got this, for example, have just set up based on the EMTAS EAL training on inset day, one of our teachers set up the lunchtime art club. When she came, it was set up last week and nobody came, and I just said, ‘don't worry, it takes ages for people to come, and if you don't, one person coming fabulous’. And I, I really mean that. If just one person has found somewhere they feel comfortable. We have one Ukrainian student who comes every Thursday, and she came here into your 11 insane
pressures of expectation from family and host, and she's very bright. But we said she really ought to be back-classed because she's doing her GCSEs having missed 2/3 of the syllabus and in a foreign language. But there's such pressure of expectation because she's got to be the family success story. And she is very capable, but it's brutal. And it was against the school's best advice. But anyway, she's in the 11, she's doing well, but she said she said I have no time to make friends. And she's her mum's care because Mom is very capable but doesn’t really speak English.

R: Okay, so do you mean carer as in a translator?

MONICA: Translator, communicator, you know, if you get the gas bill or you’ve got a letter from the Council about free school lunches or trying to get themselves some shoes, or booking doctor’s appointment. It's endless, and they have so much paperwork. And, but we've managed to persuade her to go up and do some art on a Thursday lunchtime and it's so nice because she stopped to think, sitting just chatting. And it's these little victories.

R: Yeah, but they might feel little, but they're also really big at the same time, getting something that they can engage in.

MONICA: So, you talk about relationship building. Yeah. It's like some, I mean, there are a couple of students who say to me pretty much every day, when am I going to Launchpad?

You know, what P7 does at Launchpad is, it's just so joyous, isn't it? And it's like you loosened up emotions and you loosened up the person. It's almost like, got floppy joints cause they just in there and all the sort of expectations and pressures. And I said they will cry and laugh and squabble and be beastly.

GINA: There was one boy that was, umm, so very low when he first came over and he was drawing bombs and swords and dead people and all that.

MONICA: Very angry, and quite scary.

GINA: Just so angry, yeah. And you said the first time you saw him smile was when he came up and was doing the clay and was just working with clay, and somebody made it something really out of clay.

MONICA: He thought it was hilarious.

GINA: He thought, and he was, and you [P6] said ‘I’ve never seen him laugh’. And they were just laughing at the clay.

MONICA: I remember sitting around the farm with you, and I just, I have not seen this child smile. And all of a sudden, it starts in connection.

GINA: You’re just like everyone finds that sort of thing funny now, Willy Willies out of clay are just the best thing ever.

MONICA: Keep that in [laughing].

GINA: [Laughing]

R: [Laughing]

MONICA: Yeah, but no, I think you're right. It is just that something that they can connect with, whether it is a, a clay Willy or whether it is just something else that-

GINA: It was just so silly and so innocent that same time as being very inappropriate.

MONICA: But you're [P7] so wonderful because you don't impose expectations, you give people a place to just let go, but also with the doing something that’s universally familiar. Yeah, play, basketball, sawing wood, melting marshmallows.

R: Things that can take the language out of it and still be able to do

GINA: And it doesn't matter if you’re from Burundi or you're from East Ukraine, or whether you’re with your family - because there are lots of tensions, cause some people come with their dad, some people haven't. Some people speak Russian at home, some people speak Ukrainian at home. Some people’s mum might have got a decent job, because she speaks English. Somebody’s mum might be a scientist, but she’s cleaning. So there could potentially be so many tensions. But we’ve also got this sort of idea that
language is not politicized at school. So actually, 2 new students are hoping to join the
school going into 9 and 11, being back-classes, coming next week, possibly.

GINA: How many students does that take us up to now?

MONICA: Well, it changes every year because some leave got 30 Ukrainians, 4 Syrians – I
say got it sounds awful, doesn’t it?

R: That’s okay, I know what you mean.

MONICA: On role is what I meant to say. And then two people have left this term, which is
really tough, isn’t it?

R: Do you mean left as in they moved to another school?

MONICA: One is going to Poland, one has gone back to Ukraine and we just found out
today someone who joined us at the beginning, ***, is going back at Easter. So *** and I
will be getting the hankies out. And the one going back to Ukraine is quite concerning
because we know where they live. And then another four or five may be going back, but
then more people come in and sometimes they are going back because Granny’s had a
heart attack and somebody needs to look after them, and some people are going back
because they are just in denial about it or some because the child can’t cope, or mum’s
missing her husband, or they can’t find anywhere to live as one family – like one that has
just gone back, his little brother was gonna start with us and the autumn, ***’s family.

GINA: ***’s gone back?

MONICA: *** has gone back. They gave three days notice. He was a very bouncy Tigger,
very sporty, lovely person, lovely person.

GINA: Full of energy.

MONICA: And I they wanted to stay here in the circumstances they are going back to are
not ideal, he is from Medessa. But it's so hard here to live, cause the cost living so high,
rental properties are so scarce, and it's the highest - it's the most expensive place to live
in England because of the low salaries and the high accommodation.

R: Yeah, it's difficult, really difficult.

MONICA: So what do you do to keep slugging away even though you know your child is
happy? But your child also wants to go home because it's like dreamland and they can't
wrap their head around the fact that there's no - you get water once a week and there's
no heat and no light.

R: And I’m quite sure there's certain things that parents protect their children from. So
children maybe aren't aware of –

MONICA: And then some families were they don't protect them. You can almost pick it
off, you can just go ‘that family - they've said we will do the worrying, and you go into
school and this is your this is your school family, get on with it, do your homework’.

R: Yeah.

MONICA: And then other families, the children come and tell us, ‘Well, we might be
moving to Poland. Well, we might be doing this. Well there's no point me learning cause
I'm not staying here. Oh this is all bad. And we hate this’. And you know, some of the
children are just giving you their parents stuff.

R: And do you see a difference, then, between those children in school and look how
they fit in in school?

MONICA: Yeah massively.

GINA: It’s their attitude and their engagement.

MONICA: Willingness to make friendships.

GINA: Willingness to attempt and practice English. The ones who have that little glimmer
of going home, they hold on to it, umm, and then it sets us back. And it doesn't just
happen with asylum seeking students. Any student I find that has an option to be
somewhere else - as soon as they've got that. So, I had one student I'm working with. The
mum told them they were gonna be going to a different school and all of a sudden they were like, ‘Well, I’m not listening to you, because you’re not going to be my teacher in two weeks time’.

R: Yeah.

GINA: And then the child doesn’t go into the other school. So, all of a sudden you are working with the disappointment and the embarrassment and then kind of trying to build back up that relationship, that they purposely destroyed because they thought it’s easy to push me away and then to be pushed away.

MONICA: Absolutely.

GINA: And all of a sudden you’ve got a confused child who’s between their heart and their head. Not knowing whether they are coming or going and not knowing what they really want. And then, so, I think the easiest thing to do is push everyone away and give up. Which is really tough because –

MONICA: And absolutely applies to the students with this status that we’re talking about today. But, you know that’s absolutely how it is and it’s, it’s sometimes really hard work isn’t it because you’re trying to engage someone who's discuss saying, ‘Well, my parents say we’re going back next month, so this is a waste of time, you can just talk to my phone’.

R: It must be really difficult. For the adults supporting them too I am sure, but it must be really difficult for these young people just not knowing.

MONICA: Yeah, I mean what an exhausting way to live. So, you come home and there’s the dinner table conversation of – I mean its all just very raw, isn’t it? It's unfiltered, you just get your parents stuff.

GINA: Some of them do. Some get absolutely everything. Then others yet so little that they come in again on the other side. They don’t get told anything because their parents aren’t talking to them because they’ve gone to do something and they just want to ignore it and crack on. They come in and they don’t know what's going on. They don't know how their families doing. They don’t - and that is again another set of worries. And so there is, like, very few students in the middle ground by their like they know enough, but they don’t know too much.

MONICA: Yeah, I was thinking about our colleague, ***, who wasn’t able to make it today. So, she’s a secondary school teacher from the east of Ukraine. So, the area is under the areas under Russian occupation, so it’s pretty hideous. It's been a civil war since 2014. And her nephew’s at this school. And you can just see that they’ve got this the balance right in this little collective of families that have all come over together and it’s like, ‘no, you could only your studies. We'll tell you stuff, we'll do our best, but this is what we need you to do and you could be here for three years. So, you, you need to work hard, and you might stay here for university’ and, I heard her say the other day, ‘Look. We were saving up to send you to someone school in England, but look you’re here anyway, so that's one thing Putin’s done for you. So isn't this fun? So yay for you, because this will help your career, and you're gonna have this superpower speaking English. And we want this to be good for you, be, you know, have this as an adventure’. And I think it does work.

R: So is that the view or the way that the parents sort of betray their views to the young people can impact their engagement. And I get it must be really hard to want to feel like you fit in somewhere when you don’t think you’re gonna stay there when you fit in and you’re school in Ukraine or wherever you have moved from.

MONICA: Or you fantasise about where you were before, it suddenly becomes the perfect place. So, one student is going back, possibly. But you know, there's all this sort of game playing because I know she’s talked to her granny about it because her host has told me
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and the hosted loves her dearly, but today you need to know. But Sophie will say, ‘Oh, no, no, no, no, I’m staying here long term’, but it’s like a secret and it’s all spiralling around.

And so, some of you know, and it’s also this fantasy world. She thinks ‘If I go back to Ukraine, my mom will love me’ because her Mum has stayed in Ukraine to be with her boyfriend because it was a choice between boyfriend and daughter.

R: Did she come over with a family member?

MONICA: She came with her granny who doesn’t want to be here because Granddad’s not well. And Granny said to the host, ‘Can you keep her, and we'll go back’. And the host said, ‘I don’t think that's right’. So she’s built this fantasy world where she’s going to go back to Ukraine and mum will love her and be there for her and she’ll have a friend.

Although, she has actually made friends, she is really good friends with ***. I think the reason I’m bringing that story and is not so much because it is very personal story, but more just as an example of how children cope. I’m sure you [P7] must see this whole time you build this fantasy world of what if- GINA: They always think that the grass is—well, everyone does always. Like if I if quit and worked at another school, I could get paid more. I could get XYZ. But actually you get there and you’re like, OK, I did really like it before, so, I’m gonna go back. So the you, you, you, the thing that humans can’t do is you can’t see into the future and you can’t change the past and I think students that we have, lots of students and parents, are split between what’s happened and wanting to build for the future that they can’t they can’t focus on the now and that is really difficult for them.

R: Yeah, I can see that being really tricky.

MONICA: And it's almost easier for the families, for example, from Syria, because the horrendous thing is there’s no going back.

R: Yeah.

MONICA: To get refugee status as a Syrian person, they’ve come from the camps on the border with Syria, they haven’t come on the boats. Their situation must be so terrible that they’ve got refugee status because it’s so hard to get it. But it’s the way they’ve had that. It’s a path, it’s a route forwards, and they have to engage with where they are to survive. But in a way, it's sort of the first rung on the ladder. I mean, it's the great immigrant story, isn't it? Mum and Dad come here with nothing, work like mad – like a huge Hollywood film. That's what I'm saying, that you know, one of these films set in New York, they end up in the backstreets and it's all terrible, but they push forward and then the next generation does this and, you know, you see the children say, well, I'm going to be a dentist, I'm going to be a teacher, I'm going to be a doctor. And like, whoa, that's a lot of pressure. Yeah. But the same point that is that they've gone through that grief cycle and a lot of accepted that this is where they have to be, and even though there have been bumps and they be terrible sadness when somebody back home is lost, their building this as a home for their children, whereas if you come and you're a victim of war and your husband’s back at home and your granddad and the teachers and the dog.

GINA: Yeah, lots of them talk about their animals.

MONICA: Yeah, still so much.

GINA: Constantly, ‘Ohh I had chickens, I really miss them’.

MONICA: And then think of *** who brought her dog with her.

GINA: Yeah. And then my cat.

MONICA: But they are just being split down the middle because if you’re parents haven’t bought into being here and are on the phone saying, is Dad alive? Do you think can go back? Oh, look, they might have water next week.

R: It sounds like they have a lot to deal with as well as education
MONICA: And you can have a very nice house. Many Ukrainians had very nice houses, there's a lot of money sloshing around in Ukraine. Their highly cultured, the have an amazing education system. It's not like people are living in without running water.

GINA: What's the schools relationship with the, umm, the host families.

MONICA: Very mixed.

GINA: So does it depend on the host?

MONICA: Depends on the host and depends on the family and not everyone's with a host family because the six months are up.

R: Yeah, there's some stayed on but some have ended the—

MONICA: So some are still with the same host and they've just been absorbed into the family. Quite often people who are retired, or there are a lot of very wealthy people round here. There's also a lot of very hard up people around here. So, you're from an old *** [town] family, you're probably living *** [suburb] or [suburb] on commuting in because you can't afford to live for any longer. But, a lot of stuff people have second homes, there is the highest proportion of wealthy retirees in the country.

R: OK

MONICA: I used to work in the local paper, so I love all this data. It's all in the local plan. And so second homes, annexes, holiday homes, wealthy retirees.

R: So people with potentially more space to have people?

MONICA: But maybe there are some hosts, but there are some hosts who, umm, If they have a family living with them behaviors, if they have parental responsibility, and they legally don't. For some hosts it's— It's really hard, I always say I love my dad, but if he lived with me for more than three days I'll be under the table with a gin bottle. Don't quote me. But I really would, so six months is a long time when you have different eating habits, different sleeping patterns, different cultural norms, you've got miserable, grumpy teenagers in your spare room who you know does not the front door or something, or forgets to feed the goldfish, or yeah, or you might feel you sort of slightly a sense of ownership with our family.

GINA: I think that the relationship with the host family again will impact everything else. Because if it's going well and you think, OK, this is my home, I'm gonna be staying here. That's something that's stable.

MONICA: But if you're tiptoeing around, you come in. And so, that's another initiative that's going on at *** development trust in *** [town]. So, there was a remember stuff used to be here who has various hats. He is a youth group leader, and he and the team at *** Community development trust have set up an initiative where a youth club for students with this particular status and it started off with a pilot with *** [this school] cause *** and I went, ‘Please help us’. Like you've got some funding... Hello!. And it's been extended now to secondary school age children called leading those that college notes were home schooled to go and have a club or they can go straight after school every Wednesday, hang out as most beautiful place, I don't know if you have ever been there, it’s stunning, it's an architect converted chapel.

GINA: And it has a little cafe as well.

MONICA: It’s amazing. They got music and spaces and sofas and nooks and crannies. But it’s incredibly cool and beautiful and it's absolutely stunning. And they give them supper and the children now have a say, cause they said ‘we'll give you pasta’ and Ukrainians don't like pasta, they think it is yucky, so they had made borscht and all this sort of stuff.

R: So they made things that they like things they would be eating back in Ukraine?

MONICA: Absolutely. And there is a Ukrainian person working with cafe who's a student at the university, and so and, umm, it just gives them a space to hang up because we had
worked with *** who said to us one of the hardest things is that you are on your best
behaviour at school and on your best behaviour with your host, so where do you hoof
about and be a teenager?

R: Yeah.

P^: Where'd you sort of, you know, sit there strumming a guitar and sing out of tune?
Where do you just relax because you can't sort of hoof about in the host house, can you?
You can't just lie on a sofa? Especially not at the beginning when you don't know them
very well. After a while when they getting irritated with you.

R: Yeah, yeah.

MONICA: Or you play music loudly or you wanna have a friend over you want to see
someone outside of school and actually it's a nice place to go and hang out, and
friendships are being made with other students. And, and they thought they'd get
masses. And the said 'Well, we only got 5’ and I said ‘No five is amazing, five is a lot!’.
Those are five people who feeling better now but, umm, yeah, it’s very difficult
sometimes with hosts, but I think host it absolutely brilliant. But one or two the wheels
have come off - we've had a student who is with the host and it all went pear shaped,
because I just think they all had very different expectations of what was normal and then
maybe the guest would do something the way that they thought was a thank you and the
host would be like ‘Oh my God and I’ve got to eat this’.

R: Yeah. Maybe that comes from a difference in culture.

MONICA: And everyone came in with the best intentions, and when people are under the
height pressure, people that are sort of traumatized and stressed and might not always
be showing off their best selves or able to adapt to other people in their house. And so,
this child was with the host and then they went into temporary accommodation in ***
street, and then they were given a room in a hotel for three months with no access to
Internet and kept getting homework detentions, well, then then we found out Mum
couldn't afford to pay for Internet access, so school dealt with that.

R: That sounds like so much uncertainty.

MONICA: And now they're finally up in ***[suburb], it's half an hour on the bus, but
they're a much happier child. Eventually. In a hostel they've created for Ukrainian families
like lots of little flat-lets in a former hotel in ***[suburb].

R: So it sounds like they have possibly found somewhere that feels a bit more
permanent.

MONICA: So the host thing is tricky, isn't it? Which is another reason why Launchpad is so
brilliant. Everyone just goes there, as you said, they feel free, it’s not necessarily
academic, it’s a chance just to do activities. Say you're going to visit your favourite great
auntie at the weekend, it would be absolutely lovely and they probably give you a nice
cake, but you wouldn't be able to necessarily walk around your PJ's with the headphones
and just –

GINA: I also like it that I don't know who they're talking about so they can complain about
as much as they want about teachers down here.

MONICA: [Laughing] Yeah.

GINA: So I'm like ‘How are your lessons?’, and they are like, ‘Oh, this teacher...’ and I was
like, ‘Alright, I don’t know who that is, but it sounds rubbish’.

MONICA: And I don’t always come because I'm too flat out all the time to come, but it's
quite good. They just they go with you and *** goes, yeah. And then we also have
students doing work experiences at *** university, which is great.

GINA: One is doing the undergrad for being an Ed Psych right now.

MONICA: She's fantastic. And then another one who's third year SEN and EAL studies.
And we've got one who clearly is just doing time and hates every living minute of it and
keeps on going out for a cigarette break out there and saying, ‘Oh, I can't come and got a
sniffle’. ‘I've got a tummy ache’ or ‘I'm hungover’. Ohh dear, or nobody answered the
door I think was one when I came at 8:00 o'clock and I was like, OK so. But generally that's
a really good intention.

GINA: Do you want to move on to the next bit?
R: In just a second, yeah. Just the last bit of this I think is probably useful is about the
friendships these young people make in school.
GINA: You'll probably be able to answer this better than I can.
MONICA: I think it's sort of. I know like with all kids in varies.
GINA: I know that every child, regardless of where they're coming from and who they are,
if they join the school late, they get given a buddy in their tutor group. So every single
student–
MONICA: And actually, Ukrainians get two buddies because it's quite intense for the
buddies.
GINA: So, they, they have all had buddies with them and they're, they're all encouraged,
like I said, to do sports and activities any after school club. So, we, we run so many clubs
as a school next so many. And on Friday I was down and there was *** she was playing
football and she's there with all her friends she gets really well with them. Because I guess
friendships are made where you have common interests in something or good friendship
is made when you have a common interest, something. So we do encourage people,
anyone, to go to sports and clubs.
MONICA: And the sports department are absolutely brilliant. It's really about sports and
clubs. Yeah.
GINA: We just try to encourage as many students.
MONICA: Art, music. If you want to when you come over you can have free music lessons
and you can borrow instrument as long as you're here. And that's because- and again. So,
we got someone's doing violin, someone is doing saxophone, another doing drums.
Another few people doing guitar. It's not everybody, but you just happen to be that if
that's who you are, then you want to unpack that and carry on being that person.
GINA: I think we tried to force friendship, but that's like, like you can't force friendship.
But forcing people to get together, they have buddies and then they're encouraged to
join stuff and to do things. And then from their tutor and the head of faculty we are
basically given list of students - I know we shouldn't and everyone's different - but you'd
get told like, how many people premium students are doing in activity in your
department? How many EAL students are doing an activity in your student? OK, well,
you've got a huge disparity in the number of English-speaking students and English as
additional language taking part in your art class – what can you do to support that? And
so, there is quite a large pressure on staff to create something not, not in like a I guess it’s
positive pressure and like, if you know this information you know that you don't have a
representative from whatever groups is, then what can you do? So at some teachers and
faculties might not do anything but lots of them do try to encourage all students.
R: And that brings it really nicely into the next point, which is about their learning
experience. And so let’s talk about how learning experiences can impact belonging in
school for young asylum seeking and refugee students.
GINA: Now, I don't know if this is true, but one of my students got a letter saying they can
sit some of the GCSE's in her first language. Is that true?
R: Oh that is lovely
MONICA: Well, there's a letter saying what they called heritage languages, as I
discovered. We're running the initiative, so, so people have studied Latin, French, German
and Spanish. Any everyone has the option to do that at GCSE, but we're also an exam
centre or working with our brilliant examination officer to, umm, be a base where you can
take exams in your in your home language. If it's a heritage language, so Arabic, Russian,
unfortunately not yet Ukrainian, but Ukrainian and Russian are very close.
R: Oh brilliant, Yeah.
MONICA: And the majority of our students speak Russian at home because their from
industrial cities or the east, and also the president speaks to national his first language, so
it's not a biggie. Um, Polish. What else have we got? Hungarian. Greek. You know you
name it. So, they've got the opportunity. The letter went out to every single child and
every single family in the school; you know, parents and carers, saying if your child speaks
another language at home and they would like to do a GCSE in their language and that
option exists in that language, we will endeavour to do. We can't teach really a language.
We don't have resources, but we will work with EMTAS to find specialist speakers. We've
got people in the school who speak Russian, people who speak Polish.
GINA: So, my student, she's French and so she's going to be doing her exams in French
R: So does that mean they gonna do all of their GCSEs in French, or an additional French
GCSE?
MONICA: So with the heritage GCSes it is the language, so Polish GCSE, or Russian GCSE,
just like you might so Spanish. I didn't actually know about it where you could do all your
subjects in some languages.
R: Lovely, okay
GINA: So, I thi
R: It sounds very hard.
MONICA: And one of our university students who is in year 3 was specializing in EAL was
absolutely horrified and said, ‘how can this be right?’ So we've got three EAL students
with refugee status doing their GCSE's this summer and they won't have extra time. But
we're giving them the option not to do things like English lit or RE that are very text heavy
and are all about context and analysis. They're very hard to do in a second language.
R: So there is a bit more flexibility about what they do.
MONICA: But there is one student who will do it and she'll absolutely nail it. But she's, she
gets that choice. But also, the other thing we're doing I-GCSE English as a second language
because that's acknowledging. It's, it's a globally recognised GCSE but it's written for
people who don't speak English at home and I just as a way that they can get a high
grade.
GINA: Yeah, they got something that key stage four students are expected to just follow
the syllabus, sorry key stage 3 so years 7, 8, and 9. They're expected to just follow the
syllabus for which would then lead into GCSEs. And the other than the only adaptations in
curriculum would be the I-GCSEs.
MONICA: Yeah, and dropping English lit, for example, or RE. The other thing we're doing
now is setting up a hybrid sixth form. So, we have a 12 students who are doing a year 14.
MONICA: Extra year, language challenges, or whatever.
GINA: Basically a barrier to learning.
R: Yeah.
MONICA: Yeah, people who have sort of, divergence.
GINA: Yeah, so some of them stay on it and do GCSEs in the first year and then A levels second and third year. But there's only there's only extreme cases that they've happened. So, like there's some students with extreme mental health and struggles that haven't been able to- at the time of their GCSE's weren't able to access. And then others who were only here for a year before the GCSE's and then didn't, didn't do as well as they wanted or came in year 11 halfway through them and like, no I'm not going to sit them, so they get another opportunity.
MONICA: And then with some of our new EAL students, there's going to be an option to maybe knock up a few more GCSEs in what would have been lower sixth. Or maybe do an A level and some GCSEs or two A levels because you have to leave with maths and English and we feel we- and there funding to keep doing that.
GINA: You keep, you have to keep studying English and maths until you're 18 if you don't achieve a level 2, which is grade C and above. So if they don't get a four, old money C, they have to keep studying English and maths until they're 18 and your parents can get fined if they don't. And so if, for example, a student leaves school 16, and what's going to work, they still have responsibility to then join a college or a sixth form to sit and do the English and Maths and to learn it.
R: So do you find that when young people initially have very little English it impacts their engagement in their learning and their lessons?
GINA: Yeah, and they get to a point where their English isn't very good, but they start picking up and they become comfortable with it. All of a sudden, they know enough to get by, but not enough to fit in. So, they just stop talking. Yeah, that happened with *** didn't it?
R: So they learned enough to say when they need to have something, but not to build relationships?
MONICA: Yeah, we had *** who came here and had been voluntary mute his primary school and he wouldn't- there were other Russian and Ukrainian speaking students in his class in year six, but he wouldn't talk to anybody. And he had clearly has a learning difficulty, but he comes from a culture where if you had a learning difficulty go mainstream education and there was no help unless you paid for it. So there's a horror of admitting there's a challenge.
R: Okay.
MONICA: But parents are slightly left in there to sink or swim and talking to ***, she said this is probably the first time in his life that he's had all these interventions, all these people just determined to help him. He's got the head of English giving him tutoring, she's with him in loads of his lessons and she speaks to him in Russian and English.
R: So does she support him by translating too?
MONICA: It's not- She doesn't even translate, she just gets him going and she's teaching him. And then he also has various interventions. And I think he can run but he can't hide almost. And he's like 'woah', he's never had to do that before, so it's very tiring. But it's also we're just really want to open the door for him to see what he could do it. But I think it's very common, as P7 said, it's extremely common to get to a certain stage or people come to us and they sort of pre intermediately done a few years at school in Ukraine or wherever and they think they can get by and suddenly get to here and it is like this tidal wave of words and it's easier just to close off than admit you can't do it.
GINA: And I know teachers say that they find they don't be patronizing. So, it's working out what the level of, umm, what words do you need to translate to them so they have the translation. Do you just give them a dictionary and ask them to translate the words? How much support how, how much English do they know? Am I assuming they know nothing? Or- and it's really difficult. I was talking to a couple of colleagues who, who did feel that they were patronizing some of the students because they were putting— in terms of ability, you've got a high level student, high ability, clearly very able, but their English language very low. So, they get printing off these very basic, umm, support mats for them that they will be giving the lower ability students. So, they're looking at and just filling in one word, Umm. There must be something in that as well around being a high ability student and being given simple work.

R: So maybe if somebody has had a lot of success in school then coming into a school in the UK where they know the work but not the language to access the work—

MONICA: Well together with EMTAS, we've been, sort of, saying to staff that actually when you have high ability students it is critical they go into the high ability class because although they don't have the language, the motivation stays.

R: Okay.

MONICA: So I'm not a teacher, I don't have PCCE, but because I'm a journalist I'm used to getting information and passing it on, not understanding thing myself, but just being a channel for it because I'm not an expert on this. But I can tell you what everyone says. And going around stuff and saying no, believe me, trust yourself and put this high ability child in the high ability class, cause otherwise they'll be depressed.

R: Mmm.

GINA: And I think that's what was happening at the beginning, especially. You're gonna go into the bottom set because there's lots of additional support and there's lots of this-

MONICA: And that's really damaging then.

GINA: And then actually they already knew all the information, like they could do the-they could understand every part of the plant they could label it just not in English. But actually, their memory of what it is and what- so if they're in the lesson and you've given the opportunity to translate the words, they can understand it. But it's, it's so difficult.

MONICA: It is difficult. And, and, one, one thing we found very helpful again the *** [charity] and EMTAS tasks and I've done is to put all the stuff online stuff. Pre teaching. So allow people to — if you are doing something in a subject as a new topic, send out and put everything on the Google Classroom and allow people to look at it. They can use their phone, they can just look at Google Translate and have some naughty words and they're whoopee, you know because it's very iffy. But just to get a taste and also a pre teach key critical vocab so *** in year eight loves science, and she's really bright. She came here with really limited English but thirst for knowledge and she's so able. And in science, we work very hard with staff, to encourage them to give them a chance to read things when advance so they can learn vocabulary.

GINA: The homework is usually for the next lesson, too.

MONICA: It is just wonderful. So in advance of the lesson she would already have that superpower of these words. Or *** in geography, I remember she couldn't say the days of the week, so she was dropped into the middle of her geography lesson and they were doing climate. So, the geography team got me the stuff and we, she and I and her supporters at *** worked on teaching her core vocabulary. And I was sitting in there with her in the lesson and they showed pictures of things because we decide this is the way to make it very even and they ask people what something was and suddenly this hand went up, 'Miss, miss, miss! Anemometer'. She couldn't say Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, but knew anemometer.
So she had learnt some subject specific words? That is lovely.

MONICA: It was amazing. It was just wonderful and encouraging. Again, I think, I think it's like trying to work in English language is like the torrent with crocodiles and currents and rocks and floods and waterfalls, and you're just getting the core keywords key vocabulary. It's like finding stepping stones across the torrent.

GINA: It was so funny, last week when I was working with my EAL group, one of the girls said 'English is silly'. And I tolle her I don't know what do you mean, and she was like in French you have le or la like male or female, but in England you have anything. I just walked off and I was like, 'yeah, you're right, We do'.

MONICA: Like how lovely! English is silly, though, isn't it silly? Very silly language.

GINA: It was so funny, last week when I was working with my EAL group, one of the girls said 'English is silly'. And I tolle her I don't know what do you mean, and she was like in French you have le or la like male or female, but in England you have anything. I just walked off and I was like, 'yeah, you're right, We do'.

MONICA: How lovely to have a teacher that you can say that to. But I mean, isn't that doesn't just say everything about what P7 does? And we love it. They can just be silly.

GINA: And then we were just being silly and saying ‘le table’ and she was like ‘La hair’.

MONICA: It's just strange word to use as well, silly. English is silly, yeah, you're not wrong.

GINA: And then we would just being silly and putting ‘le’ and ‘la’ in front of everything.

R: It sounds like that was a nice way to build a relationship with them by accepting what they say and listening to them.

GINA: I mean, I don't get it. I'm dyslexic, so for me I was like, yeah, English is silly. I get that.

R: And is there anything we think that schools in general could change that might help increase belonging for asylum seeking young people?

GINA: I don't think all schools run many clubs.

MONICA: No, I agree.

GINA: And I know that in the PE world that you'll go and even in a friendship – like some of my friends have kids, I talk about clubs they’ve got running here and they’re like, ‘My child has the option of netball, football and rugby, and that's it’.

R: So not many options at all then.

GINA: And that’s it, because the staff don’t want to run it and it comes down to the fact that you don’t get paid to run clubs, that’s just something that staff are willing and offering to do to try and increase engagement in their subject, but also build relationships with those who need it.

R: Yeah.

GINA: So, I know lots of schools that don't, umm, because like I said, it's it comes down to money and like commitment, because since the pandemic less and less teachers and staff in schools are willing to give up that time, cause where they've worked from home, and they've enjoyed it, and they've really used to having their time and have realised that actually I don’t have to work till 5:00, o' clock at night for free, I can go home at my directed hours. And *** the head teacher here is a real advocate for it and says if you don't have a reason to be here, go home - well, finish your work at home because, like, I think he doesn't want people to stay here beyond the time that they need to because everyone got families. But I think there has been a decline in some schools in the amount of activities and after school clubs that they do offer.

MONICA: Oh, they are so important. Yeah, so brilliant and different age groups, people of different experiences, all shapes and sizes.

GINA: Also like outside of schools as well the connect the- so part of my job is I work with lots of external agencies like loads from farms to fishing companies to work experiences places, to cafes, or therapy sessions, like I work with lots of them, and within my role I also talked to lots of schools and I’m like, ‘ohh, have you, have you heard of this?’ And their like ‘ohh, no’. And then in the outreach, I think more schools need to be confident in
going out and asking for help. Because I think a lot try to do it in hand or in school, and can't cope, and then the only person that's impacted the young person.

R: But if you build those connections and you have like a group approach So you've all the support of everyone around you?

GINA: It's almost like, if I was able to go to *** Council and say I have a young person that has gone through this, what agencies are out there that can support me starting at £0 and I have a budget of £100 per child. And them say okay, this is the interventions you can get, this is the cost. That would just make life so much easier for schools and for the young people and families.

R: Yeah, that sounds great. It feels like that is a council/government change that would be helpful, rather than a school change.

GINA: Yeah, it should be the council in charge of those sort of things and that, but they're just not, and so schools are responsible for looking themselves. And unless you have a member of staff willing to look, it gets missed.

MONICA: And I think also trickles down from the head. I mean the head from day one and has the attitude that everyone is welcome they are all on a level playing field, everyone matters, and that's a that's permeated the whole school, hasn't it?

GINA: Ohhh yeah.

MONICA: It absolutely has, it's extraordinary.

GINA: And I think even for example, so we had the Ukrainian flag flying and then when the queen died, it came down. But he bought all the Ukrainian students in to explain why he had taken the flag down and why he was changing it rather than just doing it.

MONICA: It's so respectful, isn't it?

R: Yeah, that is very thoughtful.

GINA: And actually. He is really respectful. And I again, I can't speak for other schools and what that's like.

R: Do you feel like that filters into the students as well, that respect?

MONICA: Certainly. Totally. I mean, everyone's— we were very lucky also to have a member of staff who's Lithuanian who's speaks fluent Russian, who's got family in Ukraine and Russia. So when the invasion happened obviously there was stuff but she was absolutely amazing. There was a lot of stuff going on, and I have my stepchildren half Russian, so I wrote to the head and said look, I totally get this, but we have to remember a lot of Russian speaking people at the school and it's an awful police state and these children can't carry the burden of that and their shoulders and we can't make any judgments. And she did the same. And she said right, OK, then you can come and deal with all this. So that would be very typical, I think. And she has been absolutely extraordinary because from day one she said to all the families, 'Look, I don't speak Ukrainian, but I speak Russian so we can all communicate, isn't this great? So on we go'. And but she's very, very direct, which is very typical communication style on that part of the world. And she's so committed and so kind. And she forms — I mean, you talk about relationship building, she is a head of house and she knows every child there and she has formed great relationships because I think the other thing.

GINA: One thing I was going to say is having that- So for the Ukrainian students we have 31 at the moment. We have two members of staff who can speak to them in their in their language.

MONICA: And understands the culture.

GINA: But there are other students that may struggle because they don't have that. Like Syrian.

R: So other nationalities?
MONICA: Yeah, I have been banging the drum for so long to get someone who’s speaks Arabic. We had somebody who was a TA at another school who would have done it, but then we have the cultural issue. One family said, ‘Well, it’s the wrong sort of Arabic’ and, ‘They’re from that part of Syria’. And you’re just like, ‘OK’. Whereas luckily with the Ukrainians, because we have such an enormous group of Ukrainians, if you started playing that game because we have *** our Lithuania colleague, at the beginning just going ‘if you don’t like me speaking Russian, get out of yourself because we are all here to work together’. And that sounds quite harsh, but it was brilliant because it also dealt with the fact we have so many things to do speak Russian at home who were scared and had been bullied for it outside of school.

GINA: I just wanted to say that in schools, I think that would be, again, something will be amazing for all schools - if they had access to, even if it’s just short term, something about the government initiative that says, right, ‘have you got an asylum seeker in your school? What language do they speak? This is what we can offer your school for six weeks’ and like just having at something available for all schools.

MONICA: [Participant retracted sentence]. We have less funding for refugee children and we get the mainstream children, and I’m so angry. Yeah, but actually, this is something. I’m passionate is probably a tactful way of saying it, but we promise one thing, then something else, and then what’s come through. So, we are having this because of the - we’re talking about what schools could learn and I think one of the really powerful messages we could share with schools is that when children come to *** [this school] that they are given a free school uniform and a laptop stationary and buddies, so from day one they look the same. And we had an event, didn’t we? In the summer in the marquee they had up for the prom and we invited all the Ukrainian families and lots of other people from the communities as we are trying to get awareness and somebody came and said, ‘So, which are the *** students and which are the Ukrainians?’. And we went there all *** students, and you could not tell because they just had blazers on and they all look absolutely the same, you know, teenagers. Yeah, they just look like a load of teenagers hoofing around and trying to eat all the cake.

R: Yeah.

GINA: That’s one I was trying to set up, wasn’t I? I keep trying to set up terminal events with all the families.

MONICA: So it gets families involved, gives them all the same starting line, same uniform. Notice the buddies. Dictionaries - you not even use it, but it’s basically an-. We found one in Ugandan for ***

R: Is this a language dictionary?

MONICA: Yeah, you have the bilingual dictionary, it’s probably too embarrassing to use in class, but it is basically just saying, ‘I see you, I acknowledge you’.

R: It sounds like you have found a way of helping them access – so, the words that they don’t understand, they don’t have to look at them there, they can go home and look them up. So they’ve got an ability to check out what that means.

MONICA: I don’t- the other thing I wanted to say is that, I think currently the third lowest funding in the country in *** [county].

GINA: So they went through this huge funding thing about schools because we were in an affluent area that and because the results of schools was like outstanding, good, and that.

MONICA: So your damned if you do and you’re damned if you don’t basically.

GINA: So we got less funding.

R: So they give you less help because schools are doing better?
GINA: Yeah. So, there was a huge movement about five or six years ago just saying pay up for like these school’s need more, so we were the lowest funded schools in the country. And like it didn't have an immediate impact, but ten years of the lowest funding has, has an impact.

MONICA: And there wasn’t an EAL person, this has just grown out of thin air and I spend a lot of time fundraising and so does the head. So, everybody, you know, we're just constantly looking under the sofa cushions. And, I can say it's sometimes really demoralizing because you can see what you need to get, but I've got to fight to get money for people to do just a little something in that can make a huge amount of difference. And you know there's globally things are really tough, and I've got to go out into the community and just beg for something to enable somebody to have shoes or to have a dictionary or to have, you know, the somebody come in and assess their English. And if I was in an inner-city school, if I was in a big city school, I would not have this battle. None of us would have this battle and it takes - I think it removes dignity from - I don't want young people here to realize we're having this struggle, but I think it's really hard. I had a letter from *** [charity] two weeks ago and I haven't got back to them, I'm seeing the head this Thursday and he and I will do our level best saying can you help us provide, I know I keep saying shoes, but parents can't afford to buy shoes, and it's so humiliating for a child not come in with the right footwear.

R: Yeah.

MONICA: It's so humiliating from parent to have to ask, and it's actually wrong for a school to have to put all their energy to finding shoes when they should be getting interventions, language support, help form a psychologist. And it's, it's sort of like that Solomon's judgment, isn't it? What's more important? And everyday staff are making those judgments about what do I actually think is more important to this child? And I mean, I'm passionately glad that Launchpad and what P7 does is right at the top of the pile, because it's - you just see it straight away. If you went up, you’d just go 'oh yeah.'

R: Yeah, there's some things you can just tell straight away that they are helpful

MONICA: And it has always ripple effects.

R: Yeah
F.4 Transcript 4: Young people seeking asylum

Focus group details:

Date, time, location: 10.03.23, 14:00, In person – at their charity venue
Running time: Approximately 90 minutes (including 15-minute break)

Researcher: R
Participant pseudonyms: Ekon, Ada, Ivan, Julius

Focus group transcript:

1. R: Okay, so we will start the discussion, but if I say anything too fast or you would like me
   to say anything again, just let me know. So, the main think I wanted to talk about today is
   what you think impacts your sense of belonging in school or college. So, I do have a few
   prompts to help us, but was there anything that comes to mind to start with?
2. IVAN: Should I go first?
3. R: Alright.
4. IVAN: Well, I feel like everyone is, uh, they are friendly to me and I don't, I don't, I haven't
   seen any racism in either college or the university. But of course, there are, well, in every
   place there are good and bad people. So, you know it happens, things can go wrong as
   well. But in a college I, I am treated fairly actually, and the teachers are really friendly and
   helpful, so they don't discriminate between me or the others. And, uh, I think they, they
   give us a lot of opportunity to, you know get beyond what we study, either. Yeah, like
   that.
5. R: Yeah, okay. So, it's a bit about the, the relationships with the teachers and also the
   other people that are attending college or university.
6. IVAN: Yes, yeah.
7. R: Lovely, thank you. And was there anything that sort of came to mind for anyone else?
8. ADA: So you ask - umm can you repeat please?
9. R: Yes, of course. So it's what impacts your sense of belonging in school? So, what makes
   you feel like you fit in in school?
10. ADA: I like to study it in Chechnya, in the college and school. In school, I like learning. I
   like, I don't know, learn new things.
R: That's nice to hear, thank you. So, it would be useful to think about some examples of how you feel like you can be yourself when you're at college here or at university in the UK. Does anybody have anything that they would like to share?

IVAN: So maybe if we feel like we're comfortable in the UK?

R: Yeah, being yourself means feeling like you're able to just be you, do what you like to do, and other people accept that.

IVAN: Well, at university? Because the, the course was, uh, well, big group and we have to we are to discuss a lot of stuff. We have to talk and, uh, it was really fun for me.

R: Yeah.

IVAN: Although I I'm not a social person, but still I enjoy talking big, well, deep discussions. So, that was really fun because we did have a lot of things to talk about. And I enjoyed that because I could be open. Otherwise, I'm, I'm just really quiet.

R: Okay. So, it gave you the opportunity to be a bit more open and join in discussions?

IVAN: Yeah. Yeah.

R: Thank you. Does anybody else find anything in college at the moment that makes you feel more comfortable and able to be yourself?

ADA: Yes, but my course is too easy for me. It's just easy and we learn alphabet, and yeah.

R: Thank you. So, you said too easy and that you already know a lot of it before. And what's the impact of that for you, on your sense of belonging?

ADA: I need to change my level to like the entry three.

R: Okay, so you would like to move up to something a little bit more difficult?

ADA: Yeah. Uh, other people in the class move up quicker, so I little bit frustrated.

R: And do they tell you why you're in the group you're in, or is there a process you have to go through?

ADA: I don't know.

R: Okay, that sounds really difficult for you, not knowing when you might be able to move to a new class. So while we're talking about college here, do you feel like there's lots of opportunities to express yourself your own cultural identity in college?

ADA: Yes.

IVAN: Yeah, yeah. Well, uh, there is no one to talk to with my own language. But if I will call someone, there are obviously, I can. But the, the other things like, you know, celebrations, because there are not so many people from my country there and they are mostly well from England and we, we don't, we don't do any celebrations there, which is why, I mean, I don't expect it to happen.

R: Yeah. So, they don't, they don't do any of the celebrations that they you potentially would have celebrated before coming to UK.

IVAN: They do not as far as I can tell.

R: Okay, and you do you think that impacts how welcome you feel at this at college?

IVAN: Not, not for me. No, I don't. I don't feel like, you know, something bad because I don't expect it to happen. And I can celebrate outside [of university] if I want to, of course.

R: Okay, that's good to hear. So, I guess let's think a little about how you feel that differences between students are viewed at college or university. This could be positive or negative views.

IVAN: You wanna go first?

ADA: No, I listening first.

IVAN: Yeah. I think that I, I cannot, I cannot actually. Well, do you mean like, for example, what can I say that is positive for me being there? Or did I, did I say anything positive regarding helping me to study even more?
R: It could be either. Just your experiences of feeling different and how other people view the differences.

IVAN: Yeah. Well, I think that in the in the class. There are some people, British people, who already really friendly and, you know, we made good friends, but there are some who well, you know, are not.

R: Okay.

IVAN: Yeah, it’s a fact, you cannot change that. But the teachers they were, they were, they were all helpful to me and they all really, uh, helping. If I have a problem, for example in Maths or anything, I will ask them and they will be like, ‘of course we can help you’. And the, the managers, they are all fine, they help you with everything if you want to go for a higher course, you can do this. But you have to ask him.

R: Okay, so they are helpful if you go to them and ask?

IVAN: Well sometimes, if they see that you are not able to go for higher course then they say no. So yeah, they are pretty, pretty straightforward. Yeah.

R: Okay. I guess it can be nice to have it clear and sort of laid out so you know what they’re thinking. And you know how to ask for help if you need it.

IVAN: Yeah. Yeah.

R: Lovely. And for anyone else? Was there anything about how differences are viewed in college?

ADA: Umm so, so, so first time I didn't know how to, how to go to the college and what to do and my friends and teacher can help me with some forms. And secondly, I think it would be better if the, if the college, uh, provides information, uh, important information such as travelling, finding there, and because many people didn't know how, I don't know how, were not able to find some information and, uh, they don't, cannot ask, not able ask the teachers, 'cause they have barrier language.

R: Language barriers made it difficult?

ADA: Yeah.

R: Okay. That's really helpful, thank you. So, some of the practical things like how to get to college and how to find different rooms could be better?

ADA: Yeah, I think so.

R: Thank you.

IVAN: I do agree with that because in the in the college or anywhere in England, the, the numbers of the rooms are kinda by the zigzag, or they go straight, or it's really confusing. There is not one system.

R: Okay, yeah. I ca see how that must make it difficult. And was there anything that was helpful or made it easier?

IVAN: I will go first, I, I first saw that they are not well organised, yeah, but after, after a while it's you get used to the, the system and the situation the, the programs work or the, the lessons work. You get used to it after a while because you, you find your way out. And if you ask people, they will, they will, they will guide you to go to it. Which is fine.

R: Okay. So, it's coming back to the people in college that are really good. But some of the sort of practical things that, maybe, they haven't thought about can be a little bit difficult?

IVAN: Yeah, some of the plannings, but uh, it's much better than in my country. OK, I have to say that.

R: Thank you. And was there anything either of you wanted to share [P10 and p11]?

JULIUS: I understand, they make a good point, yeah.
R: Okay, and is there any times that you felt really like you have been able to be yourself in college?
JULIUS: Yeah, I would say, yes.
R: That's good to know. Is there anything makes it harder at all, for any of you?
JULIUS: Umm, talk to people, like, over telephone.
R: Okay, so having the opportunities to speak to people face to face is better?
JULIUS: Yes, is really nice.
R: Thank you. And was there anything that comes to mind for you at all [P10]?
EKON: Yeah, sometimes got, like, sometimes find, like, feel like you are sad, you go your room or whatever to the same like them. Sometime. So, not always like to be happy or not always to be like it's gonna be perfect. So, I mean, sometimes gonna be good.
R: Yeah.
EKON: Sometimes to meet new people, to talk to them. And sometime even if you in, like, a bad situation or whatever.
R: Yeah, of course, thank you.
R: Okay, so everybody has mentioned the relationships in school a little bit. So, it might be good to discuss these relationships a little bit and think about how they might impact how well you feel like you fit in in school. Does anyone have anything they want to share?
EKON: Yeah, I've actually got, like, because, yeah, like anyone for this anyone sitting there, so if you wanna share with them, you can go exchange with them, or to share your ideas, to give your opportunity or to have some ideas and then to share yourself. And the other thing just to me, sometimes if you want friend, or whatever, or your friend I guess opportunity the friend of your friend to meet and then to talk with them on that.
R: Yeah, okay. So having people that introduce you to new people and building friendships that way?
EKON: Yeah exactly.
R: Lovely. That's really helpful, thank you. Is it the other young people, like your friends in college, that introduce you to new people? Or the adults?
EKON: Young people. Yeah. Yeah, it's very useful.
R: Thank you. And anyone else have anything sort of to build on that at all?
JULIUS: This is tricky one, because, in terms of culture in, for example, like friendship, Sudan and here is totally different so. Here you have like school friend and then outside of friend, so someone might be really good with you at the school and say hi to you and speak to you, but when you see, when you see them outside and you say hi, no maybe he not answering to you this is really strange. So in Sudan we don't have, like if you have friends, they friends inside the school and outside school, even teachers. I remember when I've met one of my teachers in *** [UK city], and ohh, I said. ‘Hi!’, she's, she just looked at me and I guess like ‘What, who is this?’ And then, and then the day after when we came back to college she said, ‘Oh, don't take it personally’. So, it's quite complicated honestly.
R: Yeah. And what’s that like? That difference when you experience the difference between Sudan and the UK? How does that feel?
JULIUS: Hmm, frustrating. But after a while, we have to understand this, here in England, so, people they meant to have, like school friends, out of school friends and yeah, have the different.
R: So you have had to get used to somethings that are quite different.
JULIUS: Mmm, different dynamics. So when you make friendship with someone so you have to make sure he's outside friend not at the school so, yeah.
R: Thank you for sharing that. And did either if you have anything to add about relationships? Anything that been helpful or unhelpful?

IVAN: About relationships?

R: Yeah. So, with friendships or with teachers?

IVAN: Well, uh, I am a friend with one of the managers there at my college and we already actually good together. So, we do talk about almost everything and he’s been a huge, huge help to me. So, he introduced me to another course, a higher one— actually double higher one.

R: Oh wow.

IVAN: So that was great and he, he’s actually amazing person because, you know, he helps everyone and goes beyond his, his work, which is really inspiring for me. And I sort of look up to it. And it just work for me.

R: Yeah, yeah.

IVAN: But any but, but relationships I haven’t seen anything until now and I hope that I won’t see any.

R: Okay, thank you. How about you, P8?

ADA: No, I don’t have friend in the college. But I have met with many people, with teachers and many Ukrainian people. Because language little, yeah, and I’m going to college just two months and yeah.

R: Thank you. And the people that you are friends with outside of college, where did you meet them?

ADA: Oh, umm, some, some trends in from church and yeah, and some from college.

R: Nice. Okay, so are these people that you spend time with when you are not in college?

ADA: I go to a, we have a drop in church and I see them here.

R: OK. Yeah. It sounds like you have people that you speak to outside of college as well.

EKON: Mhm, yes. I do too.

R: Lovely. So that leads into one of the prompts I wanted to discuss which is about what you like to do in your free time. So, when you’re not at college or not at work and when you’ve got time to yourself, what kind of things do you enjoy doing?

IVAN: Umm, sleeping.

JULIUS: Play computer game.

R: Computer games, yeah, yeah.

EKON: And play football with JULIUS

R: Very nice. Are you good at football then?

EKON: Yeah [laughs]

R: Nice. And are those things you do with other people as well?

JULIUS: Yeah, definitely. We have a team.

R: Lovely. And P8, what kind of things do you do outside of college?

ADA: Outside, after college, I’m go to home, look after my children. Yeah.

R: Very nice. So, you like to spend time with your family?

ADA: Yeah.

R: That’s really nice. It sounds like you all spend time with other people outside of college which is lovely.

IVAN: I don’t really, I just sleep a lot.

R: That’s okay though, some time to relax can be very useful. Let’ think a little now about the, the learning in college. So, I know, P8, you said that the learning is too easy at the moment.
ADA: Yeah, the school, it's too easy. Yeah. But maths, maths is good but some words is difficult for me, yeah.

R: Okay, thank you. How does that impact you? When you find a difficult word what can you do that makes it easier?

ADA: Umm, I translate with phone. But sometimes when we doing some tests we don't, uh, we cannot have to translator and I do it.

R: That must be difficult when you can't have the translation. And is there anyone in college who can help you?

ADA: Yes, my teachers. They trying, uh, translate me. Yeah. Yeah.

R: I'm glad that there is somebody to come and help you, but you said that's still something that can be quite difficult sometimes.

ADA: Yeah. Sometimes.

IVAN: There is a functional skills in the college, format, and they, they teach you all the, all the words for English if you want to do that. You can learn a lot of words in English for the maths and you will do some maths as well.

ADA: Yeah.

IVAN: It's nice if you want to do that. Yeah.

EKON: First thing, yes. Yeah, I do go maths at the moment. But the maths is sometimes different, uh, difficult I mean. The teachers they are give you some examples. If you get that, if you didn't, if you didn't get it, maybe they give you some more examples and then they will see you if you understand that, and make sure you understand that and then the 4th time maybe you understand that, OK. But if you don't understand that, then maybe they can give you opportunity to use your phone in your language to make sure to understand the next time when it came back again. It's good.

R: So they can give you, give you some support.

EKON: Some support and then and some. In our class someone understand nothing in English. When they speak their language to speak, their teacher don't understand them. The teacher then to give him like, OK, just use your phone, your Google Translate, and then to look at in your language, maybe it's gonna helpful.

R: Yeah. And is that helpful?

EKON: Yeah. Sometimes.

R: Okay, and is there anything else that college do that is helpful?

EKON: Uh, they gonna give you like, if you wanna like text different to learn something. So let them know and then they will choose one day to give you, like, extra lesson to learn about that. Yeah.

R: Yeah, thank you. Is that the same for you?

JULIUS: It's my second year of College in terms for functional scale, both English and Maths I think there's not best very accurately for level this kind of mix of level. And the resources are also very randomly, there's no very, for example for entry 1 there's no like a book or something very specific content to see what you should achieve by the end of the year. So, the teachers, they just normally came to us on pick whatever topic like vocabulary or reading or listening. That's it. At, umm, beginning of December, no, end of December, they have like this exam. If you pass this exam, you, you, you are qualified to move to the next level, but you still you have to come to college until June, so you come for nothing. I remember last year I passed entry 3 both reading, writing, speaking, and listening at end of December and then I have to attend college until June 4. Even I have just to come and sit in the class. So, I would say and also as I mentioned earlier, the level is really, really mixed. For example, if, if you picked a student from entry 1, entry 2, entry 3 they are all the same, all three, level 3, level 1, level 2, all the same.
R: So, some people are at a higher level but might not be more advanced in English ability?

JULIUS: Yeah. But exam are not really actually, honestly. For example, if you have level 1, someone might be entry 3 maybe better than you, so. I, I don't really understand.

R: Yeah, it seems very confusing.

JULIUS: Really, really confusing.

EKON: I think, yes, quite a little bit. I, I understand that like sometimes depending in your age, sometimes when your age, you know, even if you should higher place they didn't give you chance to move you somewhere. And sometimes they are looking for 'when they came?' ‘How, how many years he be here in England?’ . You can see that in some kind.

When they saw you like; you are staying a long time and your English is much better or improve your English, and they're gonna put you higher level and for nothing. When you came to the direct activities, some people they are making, uh, really want actives or something like that.

R: Do you mean activities within the lessons?

EKON: Activities in the lesson, yeah, so, just like that. And, and sometime they just gonna get mixed like that and they you are friendly with them or something that they are like ‘Okay, he is lovely’ they are gonna put your high, higher level.

R: Yes, it’s sounds difficult. So, it sometimes feels like it’s not based on how well you do, it’s based on the people that you're friends with or how you how teachers see you?

JULIUS: Honestly, I, I knew many of people from different countries, Sudanese and different nation, they are less, less motivated to move to the high level, not because they're not want to study, but because of the years [it takes]. For example, if you are new, probably start with entry level one, entry one, and then you need entry 2/3, and then level 1 and level 2. This is about five years. Five years and then you, you still haven't got your GCSEs. So they say ‘Ohh, come on, I'm not gonna spend like, five years at college to, to move to level 2’. And then if I want to go to university, I still have to do GCSE Math and English, and then you need your A levels. So, when they think like that, ‘Ohh no, I should just do something else instead of college’.

R: Okay, and do you feel like there are there many other options?

JULIUS: For me on a personal I don't agree with this system. I think for example, if someone he doesn't know how to read or write at all. They, they, they should be like in year, for, for the for the full qualification. If you’re pass, for example, in January when you really, really good, maybe they give you a chance to try another year. So, it might be really helpful for, for many people. Yeah. To have a, a system that's more better.

EKON: And to get, yeah, to learn that in summer. And then to get the harder to get another place, you know, to see how the next one like. Last year, when I did that, [unintelligible], and you know I stop working there because I passed the exam, all of them like English GCSE and Maths, all of my classes. And they even say to me when I come to college I move, and then they barred me again. They, they just said at the moment no you can't [move up a level], who has give you that place?’ and then I say to them, ‘Alright, very well’, they ask for them and that was good and I was in the right one, so I can't stay here like entry two or whatever and waste my time and they said, ‘Okay, cool. Maybe I'll see if you can entry 3.’ And then when we did the exam, the first mock exam that I failed, the next one, I did that and I passed and when I passed they said ‘OK, you passed. You speak, read and listen words so you might be stay here until you get you someone place and then to get you there’. I stayed. I say there still and then, I get my certificate from my last school there and showed them about that and they accept that. They said OK, they said to me, they look at my age and they look at when, how many years I have in this country and they look at that, they say ‘nah there's no way for you’ or ‘You're almost, you
have like one year in this country so you not allowed to go like level one or level up', like that, so. So, they saying do your EASL and then after that when you finish that and then we'll see. So, I have passed all of them, so, before I was study hard when they, when they talk to me later about what they say, I say ‘Okay, so why I’m gonna waste my time to do that’. And then, so there's not anything helpful about them. No. It's.

R: So, every time you sort of did one thing that you needed to do that was more that you needed to do.

EKON: And another, yeah. And then someone comes to them and talk to them about this and he was arguing with them and he say ; I’m Just gonna give up one to do something else soon’.

R: Is there anything we think that could be changed about the learning in school that would make you feel more supported and included? I know you mentioned about changing the system–

JULIUS: Changing the system and also we really need like someone who has an experience of teaching EASL because they, they are totally different. Most, many of our teachers, they have like experience of teaching GCSEs rather than EASL and they both say bit different. Yeah, so.

R: Okay, so having somebody that was there that is specifically experienced in teaching people who English is their second language.

JULIUS: Yes, mhm.

R: Okay, is there anything else that might be useful?

IVAN: I do actually like the, uh, we have an app that we study and, you know, it is online, it is online learning. So when you go home, you can study on this, uh app, which is called ****. I really like it because, you know, you can do everything online, you don't have to write it down, and there are all the assessments that you can do, uh, which is really helpful both for English and math, physics, everything that you want to do with. Uh, there was from entry one until GCSE, so it's really good. I quite like that. But, then there's some sometimes, you know, it changes, like for example you do something, I don't know, but the answer is not accurate, but it's rarely happens, so not that often.

R: Yeah. So sometimes that the system doesn't work as well as it is supposed to?

IVAN: Yeah, for example, the answer that you give the system, it doesn't accept it. Well, it's correct, but it doesn't accept it.

R: OK, so does that make it difficult to show that you actually are doing the right thing?

IVAN: Yeah, yeah, because it won't let you put it in unless you tell the teacher and they can see it. This is really good because they can see your progress whether or not you did well or did your best.

R: Okay, thank you. So maybe there is a need for something that's a bit more stable and accurate so that you can use it to show your understanding?

IVAN: Yeah, it's a bit difficult to use it first, when you, when you want to learn it, because you know it's your, it's an AI system if I am right. It's really, uh, complicated. But then if you get to know the, the system, you can you can, well, get your way around this. It's really, really good in my opinion. But for some people it's not useful, they don't like it, especially the- I heard it from the well, the English younger adults or teenagers who are doing the GCSEs. They don't like it, I don't know why.

R: Okay, so that's a system that's used by everybody across the college?

IVAN: Yeah, that is for everybody.

R: So maybe they need some alternative options for people that find it more difficult. And what about in the actual sort of the content of what you're learning itself, is there anything that school could do to help with making that better for you?

EKON: The whole content?
R: Yeah. So what you are learning in the lessons at college.
JULIUS: I think, yeah. I don't know the correct thing is, but this way I'm not doing EASL now, for the last year now. I don't think they have like very accurate content, they just randomly just sometime teaching, sometime go home, sometime you have to watch video on YouTube or programme.
R: Yeah, okay, so, it's not consistent.
JULIUS: I don't think, no.
EKON: Sometimes it's good. It's good to develop this skill. So sometimes we have that they used to like, we got 'life in the UK' aspect. So, when you do that, you get a little bit sometimes they like to take us into the computer and to show you how to use the computer and give you some ideas how to understand this technology, very useful. But the one things, yeah, I guess when they, they move me into the one class for the mistake or for the wrong way, I don't know, and I move that there was only, yeah, the students that was born here, I mean, the citizens. And I learnt with them and I found, yeah, I don't know why they put them into the higher level and I cannot understand because inside them, it is nothing. Cause when the teacher asked the question on something that no one can answer, I answer them and then and after that the teacher made me finish in the final year. And then yeah, in the final class, she asked me about 'what level do you want in reading at the moment?', and she say, 'why they put you only in the EASL?', and I say, 'I don't know'. So that I found something when I, when I finish that class I was told, I thinking like, 'Maybe they are, they yeah, they must have language. That's why they put them in the higher level and for nothing'. And so, so why we are here learning how that we do something and why if you can put into whole class higher level.
R: Do you feel like you possibly should be in a higher level than you've been in?
EKON: When they class is and I found that out is, you know, there is just nothing for me.
R: That sounds like it can be quite difficult.
ADA: The topics in college for me, yeah, it's difficult for because we didn't know nothing about vegetarian, we, we all eat meat, and so the topic was not relevant to the culture. We know nothing about vegetarianism and not interesting to us.
R: So, you mean like some of the things that you learn about, maybe you just aren't really relevant to you?
ADA: Yeah.
JULIUS: Yeah, and for me, yeah.
R: Was there any choice over what you could write about?
ADA: No.
R: So, you had to write an essay on something that you didn’t already understand, didn't know very well and weren't interested in? I can see how that could lead you to feel quite excluded.
JULIUS: In our class there is option they're gonna give if you want. So, when we learn like life in the UK they're gonna say OK if you, if you don't wanna do about here, the weather here for example, then you can write about your, about your country. And then they're gonna see that and they don't think you not work, yeah.
EKON: Yeah, there is option.
JULIUS: Yeah, that is in our class. Maybe not in other class.
R: That sounds like that's a bit more positive because you get the choice.
JULIUS: Yeah, we get the choice.
R: And do you think that is helpful for you?
EKON: Yeah.
JULIUS: To be honest, in, in real exam we don't have choice. So, we have to, if there is a topic you have to write about. Because I, I quite ideally agree with this one, because the
language could be about anything. So, we should describe everything, even if you're not interested in so. It might be hard, so for example, I personally interest in football and if there is a topic about football I can write very easily, I know a lot of words probably about it. But if it's about something else, for example, rugby, maybe. I have no idea about rugby or but, yeah, I know it's important because the language could be about anything, yeah.

R: That's really helpful to have both perspectives. So obviously having different topics to choose to write about is really useful, but like you say, also knowing that some of that language might just be needed to write about it. OK, let's take our break now and come back together in 15 minutes.

R: Okay, so thinking back to a little earlier in our discussion, did you say that you are learning in classes with other people from the UK already? Or are there separate classes?

EKON: Separate, separate.

R: Okay, and is that the way you would prefer it?

EKON: I just want to earn, just learn. Now you can learn like perfect English. So here, here or just grammar perfect and vocabulary perfect, and that's it.

R: Okay.

JULIUS: Because when you say like with the, yeah, the people are born here or the people here, sometimes they are using but for language the accent. And the accent is different. Like when someone came from *** [town] or *** [town] is different than here. And you confused, you know, about his accent, understand his accent, like, to understand.

R: I see. What you mean is actually, sometimes it can be useful being in the class just with other people that are also learning English. And P8, what about your experiences? Do you learn with English pupils and people from other countries together?

ADA: Just Ukrainian people.

R: Okay.

ADA: Ahh Maths uh so, Scottish people and Afghan.

EKON: Maths we are together.

R: Oh lovely, you are in the same Maths class. How is it different for your learning with other Ukrainians and learning with people from different countries?

ADA: Can you repeat?

R: Of course. Do you prefer to be with people who don't speak English? Or do you like it when there are English people and other people in class?

ADA: It's not important for me, I think.

R: So, you're happy with either.

ADA: Yeah.

R: What is important in the learning then for you?

ADA: Important?

R: Yeah, what makes you either really like a lesson or not like it.

ADA: I enjoying to learning because I need, umm–

JULIUS: To improve your English, yeah?

ADA: Yeah, and I like English language, yeah.

R: Okay, so you like it actually learning new information and getting better at maths and English.

ADA: Yeah.

R: I know we spoke a bit about free time earlier, is that but is there anything that college do that helps you make friends? So, it could be things like if they've got clubs or activities for you to go to.

EKON: Yeah, they go call up football class. So, if you want you just register your name and then they will call you when they got match to go training and to go with them and then to get to know each other.
R: Yeah.

EKON: Football and I don’t have all the other teams, but yes, we got football team.

R: Okay, so some sports teams in college.

JULIUS: For me, honestly, maybe it’s hard to share or, every, every activities outside of the college, I feel like I’m missing a little bit scared. This happened to like two months ago I had really- not bad experience, but something I’m not, not looking forward to it again. We had, like, I’m doing health and social care. We had an activity to meet, like an old people. It’s called ‘Generation bridge’.

R: Okay.

JULIUS: They came outside from college, and they just want to sit with young people, have chat with them so. Hmm, in my class like I’m I am the only one, like, from not British, yeah. There’s one she is from Macedonia, but so straight or people they notice ‘oh he is different’. And there was one lady, she start asking me straight away questions like ‘where you from?’ like it a normal question, then I say I am from Sudan. And then, ‘why you’re here?’, I said, ‘to study’, now she say, ‘I mean like why did you come to the UK?’. I said to her, ‘I have war in my country’, and then she didn’t stop for this one, she asked me, ‘how did he come to UK?’ I said ‘ohh, I came by for Libya. Chad, Libya, Italy, France and here’. And she said to me, ‘why didn’t you stop and stay in France instead of coming here to, to the UK?’ I was fed up and I said ‘now is enough’.

R: Yeah, completely understandable.

JULIUS: I said ‘Sorry, I cannot answer to that question. Can you change the topic, please?’ And she say ‘Oh, sorry, I just want to know, it’s not, it’s nothing like—’, so I said ‘that’s okay’ and then I told my teacher. It’s like, if the college run a program like this, there’s there should be like a limit of question, and yeah, they should be monitored. And they, they need let us know what, what kind of question they’re gonna ask for us. So, [I can decide] if I’m happy to share to, to share with, with, with them or not. Not just to, to college take me somewhere to sit with people and they gonna ask me about where am I from. So, I think that this things, college should be really careful of it, it might hurt people who might have experience different things. When I come home, I said, ‘oh, this is not the course for me, I should do something else’ then I said ‘no, no, no, no, not all people the same’ because I really, really has really good experience here as well when I came first time, you’d have very good social workers used to live in the shared house with other people as well, really good staff as well. So yeah, I received a lot of lots of help, yeah, one of my dream is I want to work for a charity for like about 3-4 years, so yeah I know not, not all people the same, but college should be really careful of these things. So, even, even if at free time in college at lunchtime, there is people work from charity I think, but I don’t know what kind of charity. Also, they can talk to people if they if you met them or not, also they ask the same question, the same question, and they only talk to people who are not from here [UK].

R: That sounds like it was a really difficult experience and I’m really sorry you went through that. I will come back to that, I would really like to talk at the impact of that for you. But before we do, does anyone else have any experiences of things college offer that is helpful for building friendships?

IVAN: Well outside of the lessons, no, no. Well, I haven’t seen anything. But inside when you study the teacher always says do it in person, like, for example, if she or he gives you an activity they say that do it in person, like to, you know, talk to someone else so you don’t do it alone. Which is good because you know you will interact with other people and you will talk to them. So, it helps it. You share ideas, with each other. But, you know, if you do it alone, if you prefer to do it alone, then it is your choice. You know, you can do it alone as well.
R: So they give you that flexibility. And is, is there anything that you think school or college could do that would help you or other new people when they start to feel like they fit?

IVAN: Well, I was happy with the college myself, so I, I have no complaints, minors I do, it always safe. I see something, but then I always say and so far so good with me. I mean, I didn’t have any problems. So it’s fine, I like the system, it’s a bit slow the system, I can say that. And the, the exams, the way they go are a bit confusing at first when you do them, especially the mock exams. But then when you go and sit down on the on the will exams, they are a bit, a bit painful to understand. But other than that. I have not seen anything.

R: Okay thank you. I’m glad to hear that you have had a positive experience so far. And P8, did you have anything to say? Do you have anything that they help you to make friends at college?

ADA: Uhh, make friends?

R: Yeah, do they have any parties, or clubs, or celebrations?

ADA: No, just go into college and then you come home, yeah.

R: Okay, so, you go in and do your learning and then you go home?

ADA: Yeah, I don’t have time.

R: Yeah, I see. If they had options to meet more young people, is that something that you would like to do?

ADA: Oh, it would be lovely. Yeah, of course. But everyone is going to home because they all the people have families. But, it would be nice.

R: Thank you, P8. P11, I did want to just come back really quickly and say I’m really sorry that you had that experience that you shared with us.

JULIUS: No, that’s alright. I know not all people the same, yeah.

R: No, but it’s still not a nice experience for you.

JULIUS: No, it’s not nice, yeah.

R: Did you feel like the college was supportive afterwards?

JULIUS: No, no.

R: Is it okay to ask a little more about that?

JULIUS: Yeah, I mean, they took my statement and then [said] ‘you will receive feedback’. I said OK. And then nothing, yeah.

R: That must be really difficult. I’m really sorry.

JULIUS: It’s alright. Yeah.

R: Thank you for sharing your experience. It can be difficult to discuss these topics, but it’s really useful to understand how they happen, and the impact, so we can highlight ways to try to make it easier for you and for others going forwards.

JULIUS: Of course.

EKON: But still more people coming in still asking the question.

JULIUS: Yeah, those are coming in for the during lunchtime. Umm, yeah, so, they still, that one is separate one, but they people volunteer, they’re coming from charity. They come when everyone is there.

EKON: Yeah, everyone is there. Sometimes, they used to invite some student if you want to engage with them is like three or four, and then to, yeah, to engage with them, to get to know each other by relationship with, umm, Asian people like Korean–

JULIUS: like Japan.

EKON: Just invite everyone. We can visit them to enjoy and then sometimes they used to take- before they turn around and he said they said to me, if I want, they gonna take, like, to borrow their car to take out of city in here to go to work, to show them farm or whatever. I mean, it’s about that, yeah.

JULIUS: Yep, yeah.
EKON: That’s it, that kind of thing. And sometimes they are asking like, ask you as *** said, sometimes they are asking right question, personal question. Yeah. So that is not right. It’s not something to learn about culture now or something.

R: Yeah, so there can be personal and unnecessary questions?

EKON: Yeah, I don’t know about this country culture is different, so, when you meet like someone to ask personal question in our country is not like that, okay. If your friend, even your friend, just gonna to know his name and you he know what is your name, you know. But on each other or where about you live, and no, so it’s not okay to ask something personal there.

R: Yeah, I see.

JULIUS: But for me, I, I love talk to people, honestly, yeah. Even if when, when I was in Sudan when I was young, I always see my grandma and grandpa talk to them. But, for here, for example, if you don't know someone at all, for example, some of they, they lost their families, so they don’t have family at all. So just came to they came to sit down and someone ask you ‘did you talk to your family?’, ‘No’, ‘Why?’. And they tell you, ‘Oh, I don’t have family’, ‘Where’s your family?’. So you bring that emotion, you don’t know what that person have been through in his life to this point. So what I realized is they don’t have, they don’t know, they don’t have any idea about us and how we came here, they think, like every student from Asia–

EKON: Yeah, or from Africa.

JULIUS: They think they came for apprenticeship, or they have like, million, million of pounds or dollars and they came here to study and to have fun, and then go back home. No, it’s a bit different. So, if you don’t know someone really, really well, you cannot ask him like, very, very specific question.

R: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I know this is a difficult question, and you don’t have to answer, but what’s the impact for you when or you and your peers when some of the difficult questions are asked, how does that make you feel?

JULIUS: For, for me, when these people they come at last time like every Thursday, I feel like college sent them to ask us.

EKON: Yeah, to make show like.

JULIUS: Because they have the badge of the college and then they return like volunteer, but we don’t know what kind of volunteer, what their job really is, so.

R: Oh okay, so you’re not you’re not sure if there are people from college from the college or people that are from elsewhere?

JULIUS: We sure they’re from college, but, when you feel like why, why like only ask us, for example, like refugees, why they only talk to refugees? Why they’re not talking to British people? So, you feel like ohh yeah, something might be–

EKON: Something around there. Yeah, sometime when they are asking like that and they wanna know, they want to know what do you wanna leave here? And why you’re here for?

JULIUS: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

EKON: Yeah. So that’s something like a little bit difficult, like someone talk and want to know something before you get there and you want to know what is your plan exactly. I can’t say with him like that. I’m first of all came here, that so I at the moment, I’m here, everyone here. That is good for the everyone. So, when you come when someone came here, like, for example, college or whatever, so they just have to learn. First he want to improve his English, later he will find like qualification or work experience, and that’s it to go to do work.

R: Yeah. So, am I right then it sounds like there are two things coming out there. One is that actually some of the questions that are being asked are questions that in your home
culture would be completely inappropriate to ask anybody. And the second is that you feel maybe a little bit like they're singling out specific types of students, in this case refugees?

JULIUS: No, it's not about culture.

R: Okay.

JULIUS: It's about experience about life experience. For example, for me, took me 3 years from Sudan to come here and even now I don't know where is my family. So, when someone come and sit with you and ask you about family and ask you about that. So, it's kind of bring emotion back to you. So, it's a time maybe you don't want it, so yeah.

R: Okay, absolutely. I'm really sorry that you have had these experiences. I can't imagine how it must feel.

JULIUS: Yeah, thank you.

EKON: And you are in bad situations and you didn't know that exactly. So, you can't ask him like, like that. Sometimes he's asked you like your culture here in English you already see that you're here you stay here, and we see what is happening what is, yeah, what will happen, we see that, so. In our country, we see that it's look different, much different. Someone gonna ask me about your family and even he has family here, he they don't take care about his family or his family they don't care, they don't have care or commitment each other. So, you know, our country and our culture is not like this, if someone to ask you about your culture or your family or something else, he wanted to share with you or someone close to you and then to get to know each other. They need to build trust first.

R: Yeah.

JULIUS: Yeah, trust, that's all, that's all, yeah.

EKON: Yeah. But, but people here [at college] doesn't do that [build trust], when someone ask how old you are, and when you answer you think he get to know and then they're gonna leave me like that, like something, but then, you know, ‘what is your plan?’ And I say, that's it, maybe he will talk to someone else. They say, this, uh, this young person, his, uh, his plan like that, he will do like that, he don't do that. They share with other one, so why, why am I gonna tell you.

R: Yeah. No, I understand that. So, they are people that you don't know asking personal questions that actually they're not appropriate to ask in school.

JULIUS: Yeah, but I mean with my classmate, yes, teachers we have a lot of fun, I like them, they like me, so yeah, we got a really, really good teacher. But the problem is when people come from outside the college, they don't know much, they have absolutely have zero idea about us. My, my teachers never asked me very specific person question like that. For maybe half of two years she never asked me a question like that.

R: Just to clarify, you like the fact that your teacher is your friend but doesn't push or ask anything personal?

JULIUS: Yeah, unless if I want to share something.

R: Yeah, so it's all on your terms at school with teachers.

JULIUS: Yeah, yeah.

R: That's really useful. Thank you. And it's like I say, I'm sorry there's been some quite difficult experiences, and I'm very glad that you've got some people around you, your teachers, and your friends that are really supportive and therefore you. So before we end today, I would like to discuss what college could change that would help you or others to feel like you belong?

ADA: I would like the levels to be quicker. I don't know, we have lovely teacher, he's really nice, so yeah.

R: So just maybe having more opportunities to move up levels quicker?

ADA: Yeah.
R: And you mentioned earlier having maybe something in place where you can meet with other people after college?

ADA: Yeah.

R: Thank you. And was there anything anyone else thinks that college could do differently that would be helpful?

JULIUS: Yeah, it seems they need, they need, like, more qualified EASL teachers, I think. Yeah. And they should be like a content or for, for each level, and for, for anyone can tell, yes, this is this is this is level, and that is this level, because as I told you I sat in September and then I passed in yeah in December so it's not a big difference no, but then had to wait until, until June. June is the end of the year, so wait for another year.

R: And what were you doing in that time you were waiting?

JULIUS: Just come to class, have fun.

R: Okay, so it's nice to see people, but maybe actually you'd already done a lot of the learning.

JULIUS: Yeah. For me, like for, for me, it was like waiting nine months and then I moved to level one. And after that I said no, I don't want to, I don't want to study EASL anymore, and they said to me, ‘oh, you have to’. I said ‘no, I don't have to’ and then I apply to level of health and social care, and there is no inter requirement for that course.

R: So you were able to study that one?

JULIUS: Yeah.

R: Brilliant. And so, I guess maybe there's something in there around school needing more options similar to what P8 was saying, more options to move up.

JULIUS: To move up, to give this system, for example for someone if you get 2 at GCSEs, it's better than level two or level one qualification, even if you get like one GCSE, it's still much better than someone has got level 2, level 2 EASL. So, and also it will give the EASL, EASL student a chance to mix with other student as well. Honestly at first, I felt really, really isolated, I asked myself many time, ‘Why we are just, like, foreigners in the same class?’ ‘Why we not mixing with other with other student?’ So, if you, if you study English, okay, you study grammar rules, but in real life you'll not be able to communicate with other people, you know. So, yeah.

R: So maybe some more options early on—

JULIUS: Yeah, more options.

R: To mix with different people at the beginning.

JULIUS: Yeah. For someone who doesn't know anything, for example, how to read and write? Maybe he need more support, more lessons than normal ones on four or five days a week. Or if you get improved in terms of reading and writing, I think they, they should move him not through system like entry one, entry two, level one, no. They should move him straight to the GCSE classes. For me, as I said, if you get one mark out of nine, still GCSE is better.

R: Yeah. That's really helpful, thank you. And was there anything that you wanted to add to that at all, P10?

EKON: Hmm, last year in my school there and in the college now they are different. It's not like my other school. My other school they are, they got, like, something where you must do something, but here it is up to you. Other college they tell you what you must do and you study hard, and when you finish there and then they're gonna give you homework, and then they get it back to you sometime, maybe. And the college now, I reckon, if someone his English is not improve, he come to improve his English, just to work or to study hard and then when he improve a little bit in English and then to come
Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK

here college and then you find more the [unintelligible] at college just like to give you
code and then to use it if you don't use it [shrugs].

R: Okay so, you've described to sort of quite different experiences between the two
colleges, was there one approach to learning that helped increase your belonging?

EKON: They were different because the way, the way I found it in the other school, if
someone did, even if someone come to learn English, and you study there and then you
will learn quicker. And then because it's harder. But here, you can relax or whatever just
three days a week, and the other days to do whatever sometimes then can forget
something relevant, and then when you get back you have to learn then again, again,
again, see. I prefer *** [previous college], yeah, as you learn quicker there. Here, bored
and then you gonna waste time to stay and then later, even if you pass, as I said, you
gonna stay at the end of the year, and then they gonna move you. So there is not any
fast.

R: So, am I right that in your first college in ***, you felt like you were making more
progress? And the college now lets you go at your own pace, but it feels slower to learn?

EKON: Definitely slower, yeah. There isn't encouraging here to do something. To get
support in college sometimes they are taking demands, and sometimes you can't talk.

Yeah, like for all the class, I'm trying to show up and then to see [everyone] and then to
go to together to play football together. [unintelligible], if they don't want go, never
mind.

R: It sounds like there is not quite as much motivation at your current college.

EKON: Yeah.

R: Okay. We are quite near the end of our time now, is there anything anybody wanted to
share that I we haven't discussed yet?

EKON: I think. Do you know what, yeah, the people who was born here because they are
already are grouped together and they don't mix with other people, if I'm gonna ask
somebody for, like, cigarette or whatever you want, see if you go like ask them maybe
they're gonna share with you together. But the others here, they don't have community
with other people. So, others got the country like Ukraine, for example, lots here, also,
there is lots of Korean, but they stay that called anyone like group. If you don't have like
someone from other countries or like that, you just gonna stay on your own, no-one
gonna talk to you. But yeah, like Ukrainian came here and Ukrainian stay with Ukraine or
East Europe, they know each other's language and so. So Arab with Arabic, Asian with
Asian, English with English.

R: So, it sounds like the language you speak seems to define you into a certain group of
friends.

EKON: Even if you got like friend, friend yeah, he has born here, so maybe he will follow
you, maybe you are gonna follow him. And then when you stay with his group, always his
friend not talking, so just to take your phone and to have them what they are saying or
what they will be if he follow you, he's not gonna ask you like to share ideas with your
friend or something. So.

R: So, it sounds like it sometimes feels like you can't mix with everybody because they've
all got their own group of friends already.

EKON: Yeah, so yeah. If, if I go there today, if I don't have my friends, so I'm just gonna
stand alone or go home, or do whatever, or get out, get out the college. You can't meet
like someone English, or Ukrainian, or Kurdish, or Korean, or something.

R: Is there anything you think would help people feel like more able to mix?

EKON: For me, I think maybe the teacher they are working like even the teacher, they go
team not mix. Yeah, teachers, they're gonna tell all to be friendly with anyone here at the
college, to be friendly to anyone. Anyone in the class to talk to him to do something to get
to know each other. And even someone came from other countries to find him his
know about his country or something and sometime maybe when you gonna come back
go holidays in his country maybe, whatever, so he will invite you into his home to stay
with him rather than to go at the hotel or to pay someone to take you into the, uh, tourist
places or something. If he from, for example, if he from Korea or China or whatever, so
we, you know, we met here together and then we get to know each other, so later we'll
go his house direct and then he will talk us to show the tourists he country and then next,
next year we will so plan like we're gonna go our country. So then there, so, I mean that
came my turn.
R: Yeah, I love that. So, it would be really nice from people from different country to mix
with each other and to have opportunities to share your, your home and your culture.
That's really lovely.
EKON: Yeah, to share. But now you're not gonna get that, like, yeah.
ADA: Yeah, to be friendly.
EKON: Would be good, because when the money you have to pay to the hotel or to pay
for someone tourist to take you someplace, you can share to be his house. To invite your
stay with each other and then to go to came back into his house to build up.
R: Yeah. It sounds like it would be great for just building relationships. But like you say for
travelling for other things.
EKON: Even, even later, like if one of you had a business or something to go each other to
help, for like, just when you get together and then you can do this and then, yeah, you're
gonna build up like teamwork.
R: Lovely. Thank you. But it sounds brilliant. Was there anything else anybody wanted to
talk about?
ADA: Just about provide, uh, how I say? It would be better if they provide some
information and input information to Gmail or text message. Because many people don't
speak English, or like me have a little, so I have barrier.
R: Yeah. So maybe if they could give it to you before you start college. and you've got
time to look at it yourself and understand what's gonna happen before you get to
college?
ADA: Yeah, that would be nice.
R: I think that would be really helpful.
ADA: And maths words.
R: Okay, so maybe if a list of key words that you might not understand could be emailed
whenever they start a new topic. You can look at them and translate them to your home
language and understand them a bit more. I think that'll be really useful.
ADA: Yeah.
R: So we are right at the end of our time together, any final comments or experiences to
share before we end?
JULIUS: Did we talk about food?
R: We haven't. Would you like to share quickly?
JULIUS: Umm, I think college should make survey like every year. They should ask student
what they want to, to eat it in college and what, what food they like to see in the in the
canteen.
R: Ohh, that would be interesting. Yeah. So, tell me a little bit more. I will have to stop us
in five minutes though because that will be the end of our 90 minutes.
JULIUS: Okay. See, for example, for me, it's like everything with single day lunchtime go to
the canteen, pick chips, which is not really nice because now they do have like in everyday
different cuisine, one day Indian, one day Bengali, and then Italian but the, the meat is
not Halal meat, so I have to eat chips everyday with them, yeah. There not enough option, no. There should be a survey like food to ask people like what do they want to eat.

R: Okay, I could see how that could be a great idea.

EKON: Yes, like for example, they our team, as they team and they’re gonna pull out one from Eastern Europe, one from here, one from Asia, one from Africa, and they [canteen workers] don’t know, they don’t know each other how to cook, and they, they don’t approach you or, or religion too, so Muslim, Muslim, Christian, Christian, so Muslim food is Halal, and there is no halal, so just, then really need them to buy, rather than to go, every day we used to go McDonald’s.

JULIUS: Yes. Yeah, we have half of one hour break, for example, and it’s on the other side of town, for example.

R: Yeah. So, it's too far to go in your break. What do you think the impact is of going into the canteen and feeling like there's, there's no food for you?

JULIUS: There is nothing you you, yeah. Yeah, hmm. We very hungry or, yeah, not able to focus more in class.

R: Yeah, absolutely.

JULIUS: Yeah. But some, some people that they, they managed to, to get their own lunch from home, but for me no.

R: But if that’s not an option for you having that limit I guess that impacts what you can eat where you can what you can do at lunchtime, and how well you can concentrate on your lessons and to feel like you've been included in the school.

JULIUS: They've put an option for us, chips. But, but if you’re having to have chips every day, it's no ideal. No ideal.

R: Absolutely, thank you for sharing that. I’m so sorry, but we have just reached our 90 minutes. Are you all happy for me to end our discussion here?

ADA: Yes.

EKON: Yeah, that's it.

R: Lovely. Thank you so much for coming and giving up your Friday, and for sharing some of your experiences with me.
F.5 Transcript 5: Young people seeking asylum

Focus group details:

Date, time, location: 03.04.23, 14:00, In person – at their charity venue

Running time: Approximately 60 minutes (including 15-minute break)

Researcher: R

Participant pseudonyms: Sam, Jon, John, Omar

Focus group transcript:

R: So, we’re here today to discuss the things that make you feel like you belong and you fit in at school or college. It might be things that have been helpful and things that made it harder. It will be useful to try and use examples where we can. So, the first sort of area that I wanted to think about is if you had any schooling before you came to the UK, was there anything that you really liked about it?

OMAR: I can answer?

R: Yeah, of course.

OMAR: In my school, I like respect to the teacher, but there is no respect the teacher. Because whatever you say for the teacher, like I said, ‘Hi teacher’, They no like the teacher name. They said ‘Why? No, tell me in my name’ because it one day in my school in my class and said the teacher and the student like a fight the teacher say, ‘Why you say teacher?’ students say, ‘Why I no say teacher? Because you teacher, your job teacher, I have respect for teacher’. But teacher say, ‘No, in UK, the teacher name no trouble then you can respect. But everyone say, I say it for respect, not trouble. You are my teacher, I can’t say you name, because I have respect for teacher.

R: So, the teacher said they wanted their name used?

OMAR: Yeah

JOHN: Yes, this is true

OMAR: They say use for use for my name, no teacher, no say teacher. When you say for me ‘Teacher’, you say like rubbish or you say like table, ‘come here’ this here.

R: Ohh, I see so is that in the UK?

OMAR: yeah, yes. In Afghanistan is more respect for teacher.

R: Okay, you liked that there was that respect towards the teachers in Afghanistan. Thank you. Does anybody else have anything that they liked about school in Afghanistan?

SAM: About the UK or Afghanistan?

R: The main focus for our discussion is to talk about the UK, but first I would like to know about your time in school in Afghanistan.

SAM: In our country and here we love to study, you know, anywhere, everywhere in the UK, in Afghanistan. So, we would like to go to school. We want to learn our language, second language. And now we live in the UK, so, our first focus, umm, to learn English because there is the first language was the UK is English, so, I would like to learn about
this thing. Uh, also I have big respect for the teachers, for everything. The teacher who, who work very hard with us because, you know, we are Asian people, so, when teacher learn about English so that's quite different, difficult for us because we don't read English in our country, our country, our first language is Pashto. So, we learn Pashto books, our Holy Quran in our schools, these thing let's— these type of things. So, when I come, when I arrive in UK is so since September, so I don't know, I don't know about the English language, so every time interpreter help me.

R: Okay, so the interpreter is useful in school?

SAM: The interpreter help me, yeah. Because I'm Asylum, you know. So when, when I attend college also I work really hard because, so, I need to learn English.

R: Yeah.

SAM: Yeah. So after half an hour, no, half a year, regularly I going to college and I speak with the another, another country boys and also I live with Sudan boy and the name is ***, JOHN know him. So our language different, he speak Arabic and I speak Pashto so when we see each other normally which everyday so we talk English with these things so now, I'm better with everything, that's right.

R: Yeah. So, you feel that your English has really improved?

SAM: Yes, thank you.

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SAM: Yes, thank you.

R: Okay, so the interpreter is useful in school?
JON: So, now you learn everyone have a same problem. You know you don’t have—the English is not our first language. So, I came here [to charity] because I also can’t speak English, so. I lived in the town was after months or two months I could move to accommodation in *** [suburb] so after that I attended College in also appreciate to teacher. I have a big, err, respect for the whole college because they’re doing very hard for us. Yeah, and that’s fine. And appreciate ***[charity] because it is very supportive. Yeah, for me.

R: Thank you.

JON: And the moment I don’t feel comfortable because my English is not good so but I try to my best. Yeah.

R: Thank you for sharing that, I am understanding you really well, but it is helpful to know. If you would like a break or to leave, that is okay.

JON: Thank you, I okay.

R: Do you have anything you would like to share John Wek?

JOHN: Yeah. So, OK. Yeah, it’s same like, yeah, it’s same like me. It's 50:50. I understand English, but I speak— my speaking is not good.

R: I think it is better than you think.

JOHN: Thank you, yeah.

JC And is there anything that school or college could have done at the beginning that might have made it easier for you?

SAM: In our country?

R: When you first came to England and started college? Is there anything that your college could have done differently that would have helped you feel like you fit in?

SAM: Yeah, the college did very better because that’s not only one thing we study in the college to speak better, but to learn some lessons or these things so they have give us some experience as we went outside and did some volunteer. Now summer start the teacher say we have; we have some volunteer to go outside to clean the beach.

R: You will go to clean the beach?

SAM: Yeah. So, we go to some another, another city, ***. So, it’s has very, yeah, good to see the museums and that historical things.

R: Yeah. So, lots of sub opportunities to be outside of the school.

SAM: Yeah.

R: Okay, that sounds really lovely. And what are everybody else’s thoughts? Is there anything that college could, could have done better?

OMAR: And like he say, one time they give me like a option to meet more people like when they go to *** [charity] and when they go to the another college and another student the meeting even more people is better. You can speak a bit and then meeting the more people are- they learning more words, learning more English. Yeah, I have people are going to the London, maybe I learn a lot more things because see there is new people and everything is new then for me.

R: Yeah. So, it seems like they gave you lots of chances to do new things and new experiences.

OMAR: Yes.

R: Great. So, it sounds like it’s been quite positive with college in terms of the teachers that’s come across as a theme that everybody’s mentioned teacher that have been quite helpful. What about the other young people in college? Anything good or bad?

SAM: Our time been very, very good in the college, because we all friends, we all, umm, talk friendly. Some of another country be by example Syrian, Kurdish, Iraq. A lot of
asylum-seekers in the college. We did really better talk to each other and English, so, try
to our best.
R: Yeah. Okay, so you have built some good relationships with other asylum seekers from
across the world?
SAM: Yeah.
R: Lovely. And what about everybody else’s experiences?
JOHN: Everyone has same situation, same college.
R: Oh right, okay. What about the other young people in college that aren't asylum
seekers, do you spend a lot of time with them?
SAM: No, no. We have a separate, uh, how do you say in English? Separate hub.
R: A separate area? Okay.
SAM: Yeah, for asylum seeker in the college. Yeah. So, the British students and some
other foreign students, for example French or Italian, they come to learn something for
example take a engineering classes, take, umm, chef classes, but they have separately.
We are Asian students. So yeah, we have another hub for asylum to go there.
R: Is it just asylum seekers? Or are there also people from other countries learning
English?
JOHN: Yeah.
OMAR: Yeah.
SAM: Yeah. But some British people have get some, get some degree, yeah, like IT,
engineering, or mathematics, or these things they have another hub they have
downstairs. They get another study.
R: And do you think that's quite helpful?
JOHN: Yeah.
SAM: Yeah, we are Asian students, yeah. Our
focus is to learn English, not to gets some
degrees. Yeah.
R: Okay, so you start with the learning English. Do you learn other lessons at college, like
maths, or only English language?
OMAR: Maths and Computers too.
SAM: Yeah, Maths.
R: Thank you. And do you think it's helpful having your separate space for asylum seeking
students?
SAM: Yeah, we are happy. Yeah, because our accent is quite difficult, so some British
people so we can’t understand what, what they said. So, when, when we feel comfortable
when go to college. So, we also we have we also have a chance to move through to get a
class from British people. So first we need to learn English, so we need to get 100%
comfortable in English. So, you said I understand English, I can speak, I can write, I can
read. So, after that, we need to focus on our future, you know. So, the college said we will
promote you, we will provide you everything. What do you want? Yeah. Now I want to be
a chef in the future.
R: Ohh, lovely!
SAM: Yeah. So, teachers say just, umm, just study hard this year and next year will be
moved to a some food hygiene, we will give you some food hygiene. So also the food
hygiene class in the college, so in the kitchen, in the canteen, in the kitchen. Have some
British people also.
So, maybe I will try our best next year, I hope so.
R: Yeah, okay, that sounds positive. It's nice that you've got that flexibility to say this is
what I want to do and to choose what to learn. And everyone else, what are your
experiences with the other young people and also with what you are learning?
JON: I speaking now is little bit better, but the problem is I no understand as much. The
speaking English lesson good, but in reading sometimes I little bit reading as speaking little bit know too much, I think.

R: Thank you, so you are currently learning to speak English and to read English as well?
JON: Yes, is correct.
R: Great, thank you. And what is your experience of the other people in college?
JON: Yes, everyone is good, but everyone is coming for study. Yes and we speaking some English. Yeah, it’s really good.
R: Thank you, and how do you feel about what you're learning? Happy or not happy?
JON: Good my English and my Maths as well, yeah. Is good, maths I study is now, yeah, for two three weeks. But is good, I like.
R: Okay, lovely. That's helpful. I’m happy it is going well so far.
JON: Thank you. And John Wek and Omar Khan, was there anything around the other young people that you would like to share?
OMAR: Yeah, very good.
JOHN: Very good.
R: Okay, it sounds like you've all built up some nice friendships.
OMAR: We go to the college, like, for like a home. For everyone is just one, like, one home. Everyone is very friendly and happy for everyone to speak happy for everyone, and the same as in the family.
R: That is lovely, it sounds very positive, thank you for sharing that. Did anyone have anything to add about the lessons before we move on?
JOHN: Yeah, we like it.
OMAR: Yeah, I have four lessons in college, like, [unintelligible], English, Maths and Computers. Yeah, but I really happy, I like the digital, using computer. Umm, I go to for every one on time and don't miss no Maths, no [unintelligible], no English. I go to for every one but I really like computer.
R: Yeah, that's nice. It's good to have a favourite subject.
JOHN: Yeah, for me English is good.
R: English is your favourite?
JOHN: Yeah, I don't. I don't like, I don't like Maths. I don't like but I passed my exam.
R: You passed it? Well done, that’s excellent! So Maths is okay, but English is better.
JOHN: English is better, yeah.
R: It might be useful to think a little bit as well about how you feel that you can be yourself at school. Is there anything that comes to mind?
SAM: Yeah. Yeah, because that’s why I love the UK, because, you know, we, we see everything on the same way. We don't say that's he from Afghanistan, he's from here, or everyone. The, the rule of law is democracy, and democracy is that we don't feel outstanding [outcast/different] or uncomfortable, so when come to college so we feel comfortable and no one said to us, ‘You aren’t from this country, why you come here?’, yeah, or, ‘Why don't you go back to your country?’. So when I come to college I feel about myself, so I’m from Afghanistan and I come to learn English. So talk to each other friendly.
R: Yeah, thank you. And Jon Wek, what is your experience of feeling you feel like you can be yourself at college?
JOHN: Yeah. But sometimes I am shy. Sometimes, and yeah, I do not speak with too much people, yeah. Just my like, some, like, Arabic friends and some like Albania, no English people. Because I am shy so that’s why I don’t speak to much.
R: Does how people treat you at college make you feel shy or is it that you're naturally shy?
JOHN: [Laughing] I don't know, I don't know.

SAM: He naturally shy.

JON: [Laughing]

OMAR: [Laughing]

R: Thank you, and for you, Jon?

JON: Is the same

R: The same? Okay, so you feel that you can be yourself at school?

JON: So, I came by myself so didn't speak to each other and was not comfortable, but I feel very brave because English is not my first language. So, when with some friends from another country and talk to English so I feel very brave. I say, 'I can do it. I can speak English, so I'm I'm perfect, yeah'.

SAM: He's very good now, yeah.

R: That is really helpful, thank you. And I think you are right, it is very brave. And I think your English is better than you think it is. And Omar, is there anything you would like to share?

OMAR: It's like you're in there is a respect for everyone. Respect for religion. Respect for yourself. Respect for your skin. Not like they say, 'you black, I white', nothing like this. 'You're Muslim, I'm Christian', not like this. 'I no Like your friend', No. No. Like everyone have respect for everyone. Like, have respect.

R: Yeah.

OMAR: One time I go for pray. Then no people will say, 'Why you pray here? Why you Muslim? Go to your country, Why you from Afghanistan? Why you come?' they, they have respect for you coming in UK and that you live in the UK, and they have like a big hope for you.

R: Yeah. And how do you think that impacts you?

OMAR: Yeah, it good.

JOHN: In France maybe not space Muslim, not in France, but here is more respect.

R: We are over halfway through now, so let's pause for a break. We have done a lot of talking, and it will be good to pause for a moment.

R: Okay, welcome back everyone. So, we've have been talking about how people understand you and how you feel you can be yourself in college. Are there any times that you have felt misunderstood, or that people haven't been very respectful?

SAM: So no, I haven't.

OMAR: I don't have any complaint.

JOHN: Okay, for me same, yeah.

JON: No, it's not.

JOHN: [Laughing].

R: Well, that makes me feel very happy.

JOHN: Sorry for the laugh, yeah, really sorry.

R: That is okay, as long as you're not laughing at people and are being respectful.

JOHN: Yeah, I am. It's just, I'm sorry.

R: That's okay, thank you. So, we've talked a bit about what you're learning in school. How do you find the lessons? Do you think the lessons are easy, hard, or in the middle?

SAM: So, first time when I went to college because the accent quite different from US country and UK English. Yeah English and it's called different for example. We know the English is, is a world country or something that and they used everywhere, but in our country, some, some books we use and English, so the English accent is uses an accent. So it's quite difficult so, I, I understand that everything this spring, I came here, umm, when teacher said the things in English, so I feel very difficult. And was I thinking that was it like
that, for example aeroplane in US English they say AIR, in UK English say AER, so that's quite different. This is very difficult. And now when he said when say something, teacher, they give us three example. How I can give you that example? Say for past and present tense we use past for example. So, on the past use 'I was worried', these things, so teacher, with this sentence teacher gave us 3 examples. So now you understand. Its different in US English and UK.

R: So there really helpful thing is that the teachers have given you examples the like aeroplane and airplane, they point them out.

SAM: And that's, they give us example in English, not in our language. Sometimes teachers say translate it. So, when the translator on Google so first thing teacher say, ‘please translate on the English not in your language because so you come here to learn English, not your language’. Because some, umm, some language, some words is quite different though difficult for example ‘disgusting’, or these things, so I translate it in our language I understand, but I can't say to teach that what disgusting is in English, English meaning is done. So, teacher said, please translate in English then you learn better.

R: Okay. So, something around having all of the knowledge but having to learn how to say it the right way so that people understand that you've got that knowledge?

SAM: Yeah.

R: Okay, that's really helpful. Thank you. And for anybody else, anything around whether the lessons are good or anything that college could do better?

OMAR: I have one. About what's in the, like a class. And here in the class, like in same class six or seven Kurdish, four or three Afghans. Like in my class: seven Kurdish, four Afghan, and two Brazilian, and two Sudanese, and three in Arabic language. But this one is not good because the four Afghan they speak Pashto and the same time and Kurdish they speak Kurdish at same time, they can't try English this one is not good for you like the subject yeah. One Afghan, one Kurdish, one Arabic, will every time try English, they can speak English is better, I don't think speaking the same language they can learn English.

R: So, you like it better when there's more mix?

OMAR: Yeah, more mix.

R: Then you're not tempted to speak in Pashto.

JOHN: If you don’t mind, I can give you a solution to solve the problem.

R: Of course.

Omar: Yes

JOHN: Because in our class some Afghani, some of Kurdish, some of Venezuela, some of Ecuador. So, different people from different country. So, our teacher have a rule in our class. You have a rule in our class. So, that rule is that, for example, in our class we have twelve students, the class is very big, so teacher make 4 tables in the corner of the class, for example tables is here, here, here, and here [using hand to gesture around the room].

R: Mhmm. So far away from each other?

JOHN: Yes, far away from each other. So, when I come and see my Afghani friend we speak in our language. So, teacher say, ‘you can understand his language’, teacher say, ‘you can't sit here, you can sit with Venezuela’. For example, he’s from Venezuela, so he can't understand your language, you can, you can speak in English language. So ohh, I have this room for the teacher, so give us the big solution for these things. Because my friend is very far from me, so if I say in my language ‘give me that’, or, ‘what is that answer this question?’, so teacher said, teacher says teacher says it's not good excuse. Need to speak in English. So maybe that's good solution.

R: Yeah, to split everyone up?
OMAR: Just I said this, and here in this class is to English for Afghan. But how can English?
And I have 4 Afghan in my class, they no understand. They want to, I translate for them, this one, this one is not good, like, if you are alone in one class you can try every time your English.
R: Yeah.
OMAR: Not looking for help from more people, but yeah.
R: Yeah. So it’s good to be with the people from other countries so that you have to speak in English. Jon, was there anything you wanted to add at all?
JON: The sentences are quite difficult, but the teacher is telling to us in an easy way, so if I'm trying to understand the teacher I show the picture on the Google.
SAM: For example avocado, the fruit. So, I kind of, I don't know what they were Avocado.
So, teacher say can give pictures so they work hard with these things for us, so then try to learn on the best easy way. So that's good. So every teacher is same.
R: So it's, it's coming back to those teachers actually breaking it down and giving you examples okay. I think that's really helpful, thank you. And it's sounds like there's a lot of things they're doing very well at the moment, which is really good to hear. Let’s discuss now the things that you like to do in your free time both in and out of college?
SAM: I don’t have any big hobbies, so for the lunchtime, break and lunch, so we get a lunch, sometimes take a call, or go to beach side to get fresh air.
JOHN: Yeah, yeah, we both. We got together and see the beach view. It was really good, everywhere is green.
SAM: Yeah, after lessons and after college just been out and, umm, meet with friends. Been to like a park or these things, yes
JOHN: Yes.
SAM: Take a dinner together and also take some fun, that is our record of our time.
R: Nice, it's nice to go out and see your friends. Are the people that you meet after school the same friends from school as well, or they from different places?
SAM: They are from different places. Yeah, we have 4 of asylum-seekers so they have, they don’t come to college, they just came new here like 1 months. They tried to get the college, but now the college is full and it is last term, last term of studies. So that’s not in college.
R: Ohh OK. And are there any groups that you go to or anything that helps you feel like you fit in outside of college?
SAM: First is cricket, and also I will do the gym to feel fit, yeah, so. Yeah, but the college and the cricket been finish, no not really start
JOHN: Yeah, matches.
SAM: Yeah, matches stuff, but I don’t want to play again.
R: You don’t want to?
JOHN: Because he is scaring.
SAM: Yeah. Because I'm not a good player, so I will try to my best. You know, boiling and, yeah. But I don’t want to go to cricket or go to cricket club.
R: But you might go and watch some of the matches.
SAM: Yeah, because he [JOHN] want to start again. Yeah, so when he have a match definitely I will go to watch.
R: And John Wek, was there anything else you like to do in your free time that helps you feel like you belong?
SAM: So, he is every time with me, so.
R: Oh lovely, you spend lots of time together?
JOHN: Yeah. Outside of college I like cricket. I’m good in cricket.
R: Oh are you? I don't know much about cricket. Do you like to bat or to bowl?

JOHN: Yeah, bowler. I’m batting and bowling, but bowling is quite nice. Bowling is good. Bowling is very good. My coach told me, ‘focus on your bowling’, because my bowl is very fast, yeah.

R: Very nice. Well, good. I'm glad cricket starting up again then so you can go back soon.

And what about for you, Omar Khan?

OMAR: Things outside of college. I don’t have something. I finish college, go home, and for one hour relax and go back just alone my work. I don’t, like, meeting more people. I just go alone to the beach and sometimes the park and sometimes go back and one hour or two reading and computer using computer.

R: So, for you it’s important to have some relaxed time and some downtime outside.

OMAR: Yes.

R: Sometimes a break is really useful. I'm the same. When I go home, I like to sit down for a little bit first. So we have had a lovely discussion today, but was there anything else that you wanted to share?

Like in holiday times. And there's activities that sometimes *** [charity] and other organisations put on. And also that the college class on a Wednesday.

SAM: So the month of Ramadan starts. So yeah, you know, yeah, you have to do normally I woke up at 9:00 o'clock with this times I sleep till maybe 11 or 12, because just wake up early in the morning or to take breakfast, so after 16 or 15 hours we don't eat anything so that if we if we take a rest, then maybe that time is going really good [fast], you know.

Yes, I know, now is the holiday so we sleep later. And I know ***[charity] have activities we can do.

R: Thank you for sharing that. And thank you everybody so much for coming and for sharing your experiences with me today.
## Appendix G Empirical project thematic analysis coding manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
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<th>Codes</th>
<th>Example quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Accessibility</td>
<td>Attitudes towards learning</td>
<td>Building confidence</td>
<td>Yes, so we took them out of their classes and spent time with them just doing pure English lessons and which really helped their confidence.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>College helps me find my way</td>
<td>But then now, here I can sort of see my way, but it’s still not clear.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Developing English language is important to me</td>
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<td>I have one. About what’s in the, like a class. And here in the class, like in same class six or seven Kurdish, four or three Afghans. Like in my class: seven Kurdish, four Afghan, and two Brazilian, and two Sudanese, and three in Arabic language. But this one is not good because the four Afghan they speak Pashto and the same time and Kurdish they speak Kurdish at same time, they can’t try English this one is not good for you like the subject yeah. One Afghan, one Kurdish, one Arabic, will every time try English, they can speak English is better, I don’t think speaking the same language they can learn English.</td>
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<td>Finding the positives in a difficult situation</td>
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<td>He actually said that he used to be really naughty in Poland. He was in an awful lot of trouble all the time. And that it’s done him good coming here because he doesn’t get in trouble at school at all. And he’s got better relationship with Mum.</td>
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<td>Lack of motivation in college</td>
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<td>Here, bored and then you gonna waste time to stay and then later, even if you pass, as I said, you gonna stay at the end of the year, and then they gonna move you. So there is not any fast</td>
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<td>Less nervous or scared when starting school</td>
<td>Cause some of them came from smaller towns where the school was literally one building. One of the students said that today, so combined primary and secondary. So they're all in one building, and suddenly they're here.</td>
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<td>Motivation from academic challenge</td>
<td>06.03</td>
<td>we've been, sort of, saying to staff that actually when you have high ability students it is critical they go into the high ability class because although they don't have the language, the motivation stays.</td>
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<td>The young person has goals and aspirations</td>
<td>Yeah. So, teachers say just, umm, just study hard this year and next year will be moved to a some food hygiene, we will give you some food hygiene. So also the food hygiene class in the college, so in the kitchen, in the canteen, in the kitchen. Have some British people also. So, maybe I will try our best next year, I hope so.</td>
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<td>The young person wants to learn</td>
<td>But I want to try and I want to learn formal education, and everyday I go college because now I have 100 percent attendance at my college, there are English people and other people in class?</td>
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<td>Understanding that you can’t be happy all of the time</td>
<td>Yeah, sometimes got, like, sometimes find, like, feel like you are sad, you go your room or whatever to the same like them. Sometime. So, not always like to be happy or not always to be like it’s gonna be perfect. So, I mean, sometimes gonna be good.</td>
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<td>Understanding who they are and who they want to be</td>
<td>But almost you can say ‘what a success story’ because they’re just being themselves, and they’ve chosen who they like being with not based on race, colour, gender, or cultural identity. It’s just ‘I’m this person and this this is who I like hanging out with, I really don’t like hanging out with the Ukrainian kids in my class’.</td>
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<td>Young person feels relaxed and comfortable</td>
<td>it just gives them a space to hang up because we had worked with *** who said to us one of the hardest things is that you are on your best behaviour at school and on your best behaviour with your host, so where do you hoof about and be a teenager?</td>
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<td>Young person’s attitude can impact their engagement and belonging</td>
<td>P7: And all of a sudden you've got a confused child who's between their heart and their head. Not knowing whether they are coming or going and not knowing what they really want. And then, so, I think the easiest thing to do is push everyone away and give up.</td>
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<td>Determining the correct level of support</td>
<td>Adults being available to support young person’s learning</td>
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<td>P5: They were helpful, and yeah, they were great,</td>
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<td>P4: Yeah, the teachers okay. It was very helpful. Especially that they know who needs the help, especially the language at school was difficult for us, so they were more trying to help us to understand, yeah, I noticed this thing there.</td>
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<td>Adults recognised that</td>
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<td>P5: They were helpful, and yeah, they were great,</td>
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<td>additional support was needed</td>
<td>P4: Yeah, the teachers okay. It was very helpful. Especially that they know who needs the help, especially the language at school was difficult for us, so they were more trying to help us to understand, yeah, I noticed this thing there.</td>
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<td>Attendance impacts level of support</td>
<td>But I want to try and I want to learn formal education, and everyday I go college because now I have 100 percent attendance at my college, and the college give me next week, umm next month, one trip to London because they say as your, uh, attendance is very good in your class.</td>
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<td>Balance between offering enough support and allowing independence to build friendships and language ability</td>
<td>P7: And I know teachers say that they find they don't be patronizing. So, it's working out what the level of, umm, what words do you need to translate to them so they have the translation. Do you just give them a dictionary and ask them to translate the words? How much support how, how much English do they know? Am I assuming they know nothing? Or- and it's really difficult</td>
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<td>College provides opportunities to socialise</td>
<td>P9: Well outside of the lessons, no, no. Well, I haven't seen anything. But inside when you study the teacher always says do it in person, like, for example, if she or he gives you an activity they says that do it in person, like to, you know, talk to someone else so you don't do it alone. Which is good because you know you will interact with other people and you will talk to them. So, it helps it. You share ideas, with each other.</td>
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<td>College should encourage all students to mix with each other, not stick to just same nationality</td>
<td>P10: For me, I think maybe the teacher they are working like even the teacher, they go team not mix. Yeah, teachers, they're gonna tell all to be friendly with anyone here at the college, to be friendly to anyone. Anyone in the class to talk to him to do something to get to know each other.</td>
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| College try to accommodate student learning preferences              | P11: In our class there is option they're gonna give if you want. So, when we learn like life in the UK they're gonna say OK if you, if you don't wanna do about here, the weather here for example, then you can write about your, about your country. And then they're gonna see that and they don't think you not work, yeah.  
P10: Yeah, there is option.  
P11: Yeah, that is in our class. Maybe not in other class. |
<p>| Complexity of offering support to young people                      | Yeah, and there's always something else coming up. Just when you think ‘ohh, this is sorted’, there's something else happening.                                                                         |
| Foreign language teachers can support learning of asylum-seeking young people | P11: Changing the system and also we really need like someone who has an experience of teaching EASL because they, they are totally different. Most, many of our teachers, they have like experience of teaching GCSEs rather than EASL and they both say bit different. Yeah, |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It can be easier to close off than admit you can’t do something</th>
<th>But I think it’s very common, as P7 said, it’s extremely common to get to a certain stage or people come to us and they sort of pre-intermediately done a few years at school in Ukraine or wherever and they think they can get by and suddenly get to here and it is like this tidal wave of words and it’s easier just to close off than admit you can’t do it.</th>
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<tr>
<td>It can be hard to identify what is the right level of support</td>
<td>I was talking to a couple of colleagues who, who did feel that they were patronizing some of the students because they were putting— in terms of ability, you’ve got a high level student, high ability, clearly very able, but their English language very low.</td>
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<td>It can be helpful if learning prepares us for exams</td>
<td>P11: To be honest, in, in real exam we don’t have choice. So, we have to, if there is a topic you have to write about it. Because I, I quite ideally agree with this one, because the language could be about anything. So, we should describe everything, even if you’re not interested in so. It might be hard, so for example, I personally interest in football and if there is a topic about football I can write very easily, I know a lot of words probably about it. But if it’s about something else, for example, rugby, maybe. I have no idea about rugby or but, yeah, I know it’s important because the language could be about anything, yeah.</td>
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<td>Level of control teacher has over class can impact learning</td>
<td>PS: No, I liked. See, I've got my teacher was just strict like everyone was quiet, you know? Yeah, yeah, it was good. Yeah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of differentiation impacts learning engagement</td>
<td>P1: Yeah, they can get on and do some work. And, there's a there's an English teacher in particular, Mr ***, who's very good. Every time you go, you know, because sometimes I'll go in late, 'cause I get held up here. And, so, I know it's genuine because I walk straight into a lesson they're in the middle of. They've got their translated PowerPoints in front of them. And, you know, they've already started writing. You can see he's checking on them. Yeah, he's doing what he should be doing.</td>
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<td>Over time adults forget the young people need additional support</td>
<td>P3: It is. They're very brave. P1: They are, and it's really easy for us to forget because they've been here for a long time and they're kids, so they do sometimes have attitude and, you know, try it on and mess about a bit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical support to access learning</td>
<td>P9: I do agree with that because in the in the college or anywhere in England, the, the numbers of the rooms are kinda by the zigzag, or they go straight, or it's really confusing. There is not one system. JC: Okay, yeah. I ca see how that must make it difficult. And was there anything that was helpful or made it easier? P9: I will go first, I, I first saw that they are not well organised, yeah, but after, after a while it's you get used to the, the system and the situation the, the programs work or the, the lessons work. You get used to it after a while because you, you find your way out. And if you ask people, they will, they will, they will guide you to go to it. Which is fine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>School provides incentives</td>
<td>But I want to try and I want to learn formal education, and everyday I go college because now I have 100 percent attendance at my college, and the college give me next week, umm next month, one trip to London because they say as your, uh, attendance is very good in your class.</td>
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<td>and rewards for high attendance</td>
<td>P7: Yeah, it should be the council in charge of those sort of things and that, but they're just not, and so schools are responsible for looking themselves. And unless you have a member of staff willing to look, it gets missed.</td>
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<td>Schools can miss opportunities to support asylum-seeking young people</td>
<td>And was I thinking that was it like that, for example aeroplane in US English they say AIR, in UK English say AER, so that's quite different. This is very difficult. And now when he said when say something, teacher, they give us three example. How I can give you that example? Say for past and present tense we use past for example. So, on the past use ‘I was worried’, these things, so teacher, with this sentence teacher gave us 3 examples. So now you understand. Its different in US English and UK.</td>
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<td>Simplifying explanations if they are not understood</td>
<td>P1: Because it's too difficult and the teacher I think thinks ‘Oh my God they don't understand this, I'll just pretend that I haven’t noticed’</td>
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<td>Some teachers are not prepared to put the effort in to differentiate work to support learning</td>
<td>P3: And they already have 20 other students.</td>
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<td>P1: Yeah.</td>
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<td>Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Some teachers do not realise that the student has not understood the learning and so does not offer help</strong></td>
<td>P4: Umm. You know online, well, there's many guys and you, you want to understand The thing is, is not easy online. Everyone is like making confusion. So, then this is a thing is difficult and it's not able to learn a lot of things from online thing.</td>
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<td><strong>Supported staff are more able to support asylum-seeking young people</strong></td>
<td>P7: Yeah, came in and gave inset training to all of our staff.</td>
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<td>P6: EAL strategies in the classroom, EAL strategies for exams and revision, and EAL and emotional well-being.</td>
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<td>P7: So that supports the staff but where the staff is more supported, I guess it can support young people.</td>
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<td><strong>Targeted support around subject-specific language to support learning</strong></td>
<td>P9: There is a functional skills in the college, format, and they, they teach you all the, all the words for English if you want to do that. You can learn a lot of words in English for the maths and you will do some maths as well.</td>
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</table>
| **Teachers can underestimate student’s abilities** | P1: It's not something you think about, and the teacher’s don’t either. They're terrified when you bring them a new student and you say ‘oh they haven't studied French before’, they said, ‘well,
we can't have them in here cause these have had two years of French’, but actually it doesn't take very long for them to catch up.

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<tr>
<th>Teachers work hard to support us</th>
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<td>JW: Because in our class some Afghani, some of Kurdish, some of Venezuela, some of Ecuador. So, different people from different country. So, our teacher have a rule in our class. You have a rule in our class. So, that rule is that, for example, in our class we have twelve students, the class is very big, so teacher make 4 tables in the corner of the class, for example tables is here, here, here, and here [using hand to gesture around the room].</td>
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<td>JC: Mhmm. So far away from each other?</td>
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<td>JW: Yes, far away from each other. So, when I come and see my Afghani friend we speak in our language. So, teacher say, ‘you can understand his language’, teacher say, ‘you can't sit here, you can sit with Venezuela’. For example, he's from Venezuela, so he can't understand your language, you can, you can speak in English language. So ohh, I have this room for the teacher, so give us the big solution for these things. Because my friend is very far from me, so if I say in my language ‘give me that’, or, ‘what is that answer this question?’, so teacher said, teacher says teacher says it’s not good excuse. Need to speak in English. So maybe that’s good solution.</td>
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<td>P9: So that was great and he, he’s actually amazing person because, you know, he helps everyone and goes beyond his, his work, which is really inspiring for me. And I sort of look up to it. And it just work for me.</td>
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<th>Young people do not always realise</th>
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<td>And I'm, I'm sure that maybe they, they don't always realise because they haven't been, haven't had any other experiences of school in England. But, like you've said, they wouldn't get if we</td>
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</table>
or value the support they are getting went now study in Poland or Ukraine we just get thrown in and expected to get on with it. So, it does support wouldn’t be there wouldn’t be any EAL support.

Young person feels that have to do more work when an adult supports the in class

Although at the moment we’ve got two that I think the more Language they pick up depends on the, the, the cheekier they are. When they can express themselves. Yeah, like this student that we’ve just mentioned. And I have to be very blunt with him. And I just say I am here to help you. So we need to go.

P1: Yeah. Because I think they think when we’re there, they have to do more work, you see.
P3: And he’s quite relaxed, let’s put it this way
P1: If we are not there to help them, they can get away with saying ‘Ohh wait, I don’t understand’.

Flexibility of school systems

Ability to take exams in home language

P6: Well, there's a letter saying what they called heritage languages, as I discovered. We're running the initiative, so, so people have studied Latin, French, German and Spanish. Any everyone has the option to do that at GCSE, but we're also an exam centre or working with our brilliant examination officer to, umm, be a base where you can take exams in your in your home language. If it’s a heritage language, so Arabic, Russian, unfortunately not yet Ukrainian, but Ukrainian and Russian are very close.
<p>| Access to alternative provision support | And came in from Calais on the back of the van. And then I think ended up in *** [local authority] somehow, *** [local authority], actually. And whoever took him in chose *** [this school], he was the first student I worked with in, like, an alternative provision setup where I was just building social skills and building relationship with him to then helping him into classes and to help him with those sorts of things. So, it's started, he was here six years ago, and I think from there it's just been building and building and building. |
| Access to school resources in home language | P8: Just about provide, uh, how I say? It would be better if they provide some information and input information to Gmail or text message. Because many people don't speak English, or like me have a little, so I have barrier. |
| Balance between leeway due to situation and keeping a fair system across the school | P3: And a lot of teachers are quite understanding and saying I don't expect them to do 100%, but as long as I see everyday that it's been attempted and not just copied, but even instead of a paragraph writing a sentence or two, that's good enough. But I need to see this because otherwise I'm not fair on other students who are doing it. |
| College must agree for young person to be ready to progress with learning | And the, the managers, they are all fine, they help you with everything if you want to go for a higher course, you can do this. But you have to ask him. R: Okay, so they are helpful if you go to them and ask? P9: Well sometimes, if they see that you are not able to go for higher course then they say no. So yeah, they are pretty, pretty straightforward. Yeah. |</p>
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<th>Topic</th>
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| Enjoyment of freedom in school | P1: So, we know that they prefer being at school than not being at school. In the holidays, they're always really upset.  
P3: The only ones who are like ‘Ohhhhh’.  
P1: They don’t want to be on holiday, because they say they do nothing.  
P3: It's boring, that’s what the boys say.  
P1: It's boring. They just stay in all the time, and they don't socialise. So of course, when they come into school. They are really excited to be back again and that's when you've got a bit more freedom now  
P3: Especially the girl. |
| Gaining additional qualifications for the young people | But also, the other thing we're doing I-GCSE English as a second language because that's acknowledging. It's, it's a globally recognised GCSE but it's written for people who don't speak English at home and I just as a way that they can get a high grade |
| Funding is preventing the necessary support being provided in some cases | P6: And there wasn’t an EAL person, this has just grown out of thin air and I spend a lot of time fundraising and so does the head. So, everybody, you know, we're just constantly looking under the sofa cushions. And, I can say it’s sometimes really demoralizing because you can see what you need to get, but I've got to fight to get money for people to do just a little something in that can make a huge amount of difference. And you know there's globally things are really tough, and I've got to go |
out into the community and just beg for something to enable somebody to have shoes or to have a dictionary or to have, you know, the somebody come in and assess their English.

### Interventions that have been helpful

She said this is probably the first time in his life that he's had all these interventions, all these people just determined to help him. He's got the head of English giving him tutoring, she's with him in loads of his lessons and she speaks to him in Russian and English.

### It would be helpful to have a central team in each council that can collect information and suggest relevant interventions

P7: It's almost like, if I was able to go to *** Council and say I have a young person that has gone through this, what agencies are out there that can support me starting at £0 and I have a budget of £100 per child. And them say okay, this is the interventions you can get, this is the cost. That would just make life so much easier for schools and for the young people and families.

### Strictness of college can impact learning

P10: Hmm, last year in my school there and in the college now they are different. It's not like my other school. My other school they are, they got, like, something where you must do something, but here it is up to you. Other college they tell you what you must do and you study hard, and when you finish there and then they're gonna give you homework, and then they get it back to you sometime, maybe.

### Support to apply for college

Also, *** [charity] I have big support of ***[charity], so I appreciate for ***[charity] and they admitted to college. Yeah, because my age was under 16 so they help me to attend the college.
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>The progression to move to more advanced learning feels slow and unfair</td>
<td>At, umm, beginning of December, no, end of December, they have like this exam. If you pass this exam, you, you, you are qualified to move to the next level, but you still you have to come to college until June, so you come for nothing. I remember last year I passed entry 3 both reading, writing, speaking, and listening at end of December and then I have to attend college until June 4. Even I have just to come and sit in the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The system does not always give the correct academic support</td>
<td>P11: For me on a personal I don't agree with this system. I think for example, if someone he doesn't know how to read or write at all. They, they, they should be like in year, for, for the for the full qualification. If you’re pass, for example, in January when you really, really good, maybe they give you a chance to try another year. So, it might be really helpful for, for many people. Yeah. To have a, a system that’s more better.</td>
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<td>Unclear differentiation between learning levels</td>
<td>So, I would say and also as I mentioned earlier, the level is really, really mixed. For example, if, if you picked a student from entry 1, entry 2, entry 3 they are all the same, all three, level 3, level 1, level 2, all the same.</td>
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<td>Understanding the school system and rules</td>
<td>They didn't have a lot of what we would consider school rules [in home country]. So they were allowed to wear nails, makeup, eyelashes. Earrings. And here we're not allowed to do that at all. So it's a big change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of apps and technology to support learning</td>
<td>P9:</td>
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<td>Learning experiences</td>
<td>Enjoyment of opportunities for discussion</td>
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<td>Experience has been positive overall</td>
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<td>Importance of reading and writing skills</td>
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<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Learning focus is on English language ability in college</td>
<td>So first we need to learn English, so we need to get 100% comfortable in English. So, you said I understand English, I can speak, I can write, I can read. So, after that, we need to focus on our future, you know. So, the college said we will promote you, we will provide you everything.</td>
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<td>My ability to learn improved as time went on</td>
<td>Yeah, we learning English as well as learning for school. Learning is, wasn’t easy in the start and I remember I, I, couldn’t read anything, but I with the time I, I, I learn a lot of things.</td>
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<td>Opportunities to go to new places and learn about them</td>
<td>Yeah, the college did very better because that’s not only one thing we study in the college to speak better, but to learn some lessons or these things so they have give us some experience as we went outside and did some volunteer. Now summer start the teacher say we have; we have some volunteer to go outside to clean the beach.</td>
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<td>Use of pictures to support learning</td>
<td>The sentences are quite difficult, but the teacher is telling to us in an easy way, so if I’m trying to understand the teacher I show the picture on the Google.</td>
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<td>Covid-19 impacted the young person’s educational experience</td>
<td>PS: I was one year in lockdown, and after that for college. I went to school actually for two weeks, in *** school. And, yeah, after that uh it was lockdown I think, yeah, for 3 or 4 months. Then I apply for college, yeah.</td>
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<td>Differentiated work needed to access learning</td>
<td>Because you have to draw pictures and things, like a comic strip of the story. But it would be very easy for the teacher to create an activity that was a really, you know, even if they just we've said before, even if you just provide four key words that you want that student to learn in that lesson and you can provide, you know, have a picture with a word and a matching activity or something. Then that would be better than them sitting there and not understanding anything at all.</td>
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<td>Feeling as though their full potential is not being recognised</td>
<td>That's what CYP, for example, complained about because she was used to being told how wonderful she was and suddenly it was ‘Ohh, you are in lower set, but only because of the English’, but I think that also affects their confidence because suddenly it's like ‘ohh, I actually know more than those people’ but they can't express it.</td>
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<td>Feeling as though you want to give up</td>
<td>P11: Honestly, I, I knew many of people from different countries, Sudanese and different nation, they are less, less motivated to move to the high level, not because they're not want to study, but because of the years [it takes]. For example, if you are new, probably start with entry level one, entry one, and then you need entry 2/3, and then level 1 and level 2. This is about five years. Five years and then you, you still haven't got your GCSEs. So they say ‘Ohh, come on, I'm not gonna spend like, five years at college to, to move to level 2’'. And then if I want to go to university, I still have to do GCSE Math and English, and then you need your A levels. So, when they think like that, ‘Ohh no, I should just do something else instead of college’.</td>
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<td>Knocked confidence going from</td>
<td>P7: And I think that's what was happening at the beginning, especially. You're gonna go into the bottom set because there's lots of additional support and there's lots of this-</td>
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<td>Issue</td>
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<td>Belonging in education for young people seeking asylum in the UK</td>
<td>P6: And that's really damaging then.</td>
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<td>P7: And then actually they already knew all the information, like they could do the- they could understand every part of the plant they could label it just not in English. But actually, their memory of what it is and what- so if they're in the lesson and you've given the opportunity to translate the words, they can understand it. But it's, it's so difficult.</td>
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<tr>
<td>being a high achiever in home country to bottom sets in UK</td>
<td>P7: Yeah, and they get to a point where their English isn't very good, but they start picking up and they become comfortable with it. All of a sudden, they know enough to get by, but not enough to fit in. So, they just stop talking.</td>
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<td>Not able to show full potential due to language barrier</td>
<td>P8: The topics in college for me, yeah, it's difficult for because we didn't know nothing about vegetarian, we, we all eat meat, and so the topic was not relevant to the culture. We know nothing about vegetarianism and not interesting to us.</td>
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<td>R: So, you mean like some of the things that you learn about, maybe you just aren’t really relevant to you?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P8: Yeah.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P11: Yeah, and for me, yeah.</td>
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<td>Not understanding the context of importance of the learning</td>
<td>And you’re the only person you are wearing head scarf. And you’re Syrian. And you come from Ultra conservative family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Inclusion</td>
<td>Building friendships</td>
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| Parent expectations can be overwhelming and cause stress | P3: In her country she was praised a lot.  
P1: Constantly praised, yeah,  
P3: And the mum’s quite, I think, ambitious. And she is as well and this is the issue that I have with have an English and I have to speak to her because when there was to write the paragraph others are writing and just occasionally looking up words but she because she wants to get it totally right, she spends ages translating whole sentences. And I said to her, it's taking too long. Don't worry. And it stresses you out just. But she wants to –  
P1: It has to be perfect.  
P3: Yeah, it has to be perfect. So that’s possibly the impact of her mum at home. | P6: 30 of you every single day. So like the teacher doing a surprise Eid party - That's because they're his tutor group and they matter to him and they are special to him. He wasn't a whole school thing, it was for *** and her tutor group. And that was amazing. I say, amazing, but I'm, I have only been here a few years and I’m not a teacher, and I'm constantly surprised and overwhelmed by the way it's like lots of little families within a big family.  
But almost you can say ‘what a success story’ because they're just being themselves, and they've chosen who they like being with not based on race, colour, gender, or cultural identity. It’s just ‘I'm this person and this this is who I like hanging out with, I really don't like hanging out with the Ukrainian kids in my class’. |
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<tr>
<td>Building long term friendships</td>
<td>And even someone came from other countries to find him his [unintelligible] when you are getting to him and to get to know each other and then to know about his country or something and sometime maybe when you gonna come back to go holidays in his country maybe, whatever, so he will invite you into his home to stay with him rather than to go at the hotel or to pay someone to take you into the, uh, tourist places or something. If he from, for example, if he from Korea or China or whatever, so we, you know, we met here together and then we get to know each other, so later we'll go his house direct and then he will talk us to show the tourists he country and then next, next year we will so plan like we're gonna go our country. So then there, so, I mean that came my turn.</td>
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<td>Friendships help them to feel more confident</td>
<td>P4: Yeah, it was like. I used to live with the boys and we play sometime together in the garden and we was doing some stuff and watching TV. Uh, Yeah. If you had a friend, friend, uh, good friend with you. So it's, it's helpful, yeah. Especially when you come to home and you had the friend.</td>
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<td>Have built friendships from across the world</td>
<td>So after half an hour, no, half a year, regularly I going to college and I speak with the another, another country boys and also I live with Sudan boy and the name is ***, JW know him. So our language different, he speak Arabic and I speak Pashto so when we see each other normally which everyday so we talk English with these things so now, I'm better with everything, that's right.</td>
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<td>It is helpful when other young people are friendly</td>
<td>P4: Yeah. It was though, though, like, I was thinking they were on a surprise. I was thinking they will, like, saying something like 'you are like this' and like this. But, but they were very friendly and, and, like, welcoming there they for them it was doesn't matter who is there. Yeah. So, it was very nice.</td>
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<td>It would be helpful to have opportunities to mix with and learn from a wider range of students</td>
<td>And like he say, one time they give me like a option to meet more people like when they go to *** [charity] and when they go to the another college and another student the meeting even more people is better. You can speak a bit and then meeting the more people are- they learning more words, learning more English.</td>
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<td>Making friends with English students</td>
<td>P11: Hmm, frustrating. But after a while, we have to understand this, here in England, so, people they meant to have, like school friends, out of school friends and yeah, have the different. R: So you have had to get used to somethings that are quite different. P11: Mmm, different dynamics. So when you make friendship with someone so you have to make sure he's outside friend not at the school so, yeah.</td>
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<td>Opportunities to make new friends</td>
<td>And the other thing they have some, uh, they making the activities, yeah, activities to take the guys to somewhere nice. So, we had the this as well, yeah, and many new guys I met there and some of them are still I know them. Yeah.</td>
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<td>Opportunities to socialise with friends outside of school</td>
<td>Yeah. And there's a youth club as well, I've been there many time. Youth club. Yeah. I don't know if it's belong to the *** [charity] or something, I don't know. But I used to go there and when the college come then we start online. So we had the quiz competitions, yeah. So, it was very nice. Games and things, yeah. So, yeah, I remember that it was very helpful. Yeah.</td>
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Other young people accepting newcomers

S: Yeah. Yeah, because that’s why I love the UK, because, you know, we, we see everything on the same way. We don’t say that’s he from Afghanistan, he’s from here, or everyone. The, the rule of law is democracy, and democracy is that we don’t feel outstanding [outcast/different] or uncomfortable, so when come to college so we feel comfortable and no one said to us, ‘You aren’t from this country, why you come here?’, yeah, or, ‘Why don’t you go back to your country?’. So when I come to college I feel about myself, so I’m from Afghanistan and I come to learn English. So talk to each other friendly.

Relationships should be built on trust

So, you know, our country and our culture is not like this, if someone to ask you about your culture or your family or something else, he wanted to share with you or someone close to you and then to get to know each other. They need to build trust first.

Celebrating culture and diversity

Being mindful of questions that could upset students

When someone ask how old you are, and when you answer you think he get to know and then they’re gonna leave me like that, like something, but then, you know, ‘what is your plan?’ And I say, that’s it, maybe he will talk to someone else. They say, this, uh, this young person, his, uh, his plan like that, he will do like that, he don't do that. They share with other one, so why, why am I gonna tell you.

Celebrating all holidays and cultural events in school

But her form teacher talked to me and we had a think and we asked her what she wanted to do and she ended up doing a talk to the class, at the beginning of Ramadan, and then as a surprise he got all this Eid, decorations and decorated the form in two to time, got food in and they had a party. And that was when *** suddenly became this very chatty, bouncy Tigger.
<p>| Having culture and values understood and accepted | OK: One time I go for pray. Then no people will say, ‘Why you pray here? Why you Muslim? Go to your country, Why you from Afghanistan? Why you come?’ they, they have respect for you coming in UK and that you live in the UK, and they have like a big hope for you. |
| Learning and understanding UK culture and life in the UK | Sometimes it's good. It's good to develop this skill. So sometimes we have that they used to like, we got ‘life in the UK’ aspect. So, when you do that, you get a little bit sometimes they like to take us into the computer and to show you how to use the computer and give you some ideas how to understand this technology, very useful. |
| Everybody should be treated equally because everyone matters | It’s like you’re in there is a respect for everyone. Respect for religion. Respect for yourself. Respect for your skin. Not like they say, ‘you black, I white’, nothing like this. ‘You’re Muslim, I’m Christian’, not like this. ‘I no Like your friend’, No. No. Like everyone have respect for everyone. Like, have respect. |
| Taking the time to learn about an individual’s culture | And so the two Syrian girls in this little breakfast club are going to do a whole school assembly with the head and *** and the 6th formers and present what Ramadan is. It’s meant to be a year 7 breakfast club by invitation. There are two year Sevens, one Ukrainian boy and two Syrian boys there. |
| Felt welcome and accepted in college | 03.04 OK: We go to the college, like, for like a home. For everyone is just one, like, one home. Everyone is very friendly and happy for everyone to speak happy for everyone, and the same as in the family. |</p>
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<th>Enjoyment opportunities</th>
<th>Ability to be silly and have fun</th>
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<td>P7: Just so angry, yeah. And you said the first time you saw him smile was when he came up and was doing the clay and was just working with clay, and somebody made it something rude out of clay.</td>
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<td>P6: He thought it was hilarious.</td>
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<td>P7: He thought, and he was, and you [P6] said ‘I’ve never seen him laugh’. And they were just laughing at the clay.</td>
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<td>P6: I remember sitting around the farm with you, and I just, I have not seen this child smile. And all of a sudden, it starts in connection.</td>
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<td>P7: You’re just like everyone finds that sort of thing funny now, Willy Willies out of clay are just the best thing ever.</td>
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| Activities with universal rules and little demand for language | Jenga, Gruffalo snap, stuff you might play when you’re really little, but they’re rules are simple and it brings you back to that sort of security. |

<p>| Allowing young people to make their own decisions about what to take part in | We’re already working with people who’ve lost so much control and power and autonomy and place in society and identity, and you come to a new culture and then people make assumptions - often very caring assumptions - about what people want or how they feel or who they want to be, or what they like doing. |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Being a part of clubs and sports teams</td>
<td>P4: Yeah. I think we say there's a lot of things. And if we, if we are someone ask us. Yeah. To do for the guy like, you know, in the back [in my home] country we when I was studying, I remember, eh, they making like eh, matches for, for the like cricket matches and football message which I, I didn't see here. Yeah. So I think if you have something like this it would very helpful. Yeah, it's very, very good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of sports and physical activities</td>
<td>P7: One another thing I thought, that in sports the rules are the same across the world. And, umm, it doesn't matter what's going on with that if I'm like, ‘oh, you wanna play this?’ They’re like, ‘yeah!’ So lots of our students play sports either after school or when they come up to me and we do at least half an hour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free time is used for fresh air and relaxing</td>
<td>Things outside of college. I don't have something. I finish college, go home, and for one hour relax and go back just alone my work. I don’t, like, meeting more people. I just go alone to the beach and sometimes the park and sometimes go back and one hour or two reading and computer using computer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning skills and being distracted from the stresses in life</td>
<td>So I know little bits about students, but I wouldn't say I know them very well. I don't think they'll open up to me about something specific. But that's, I guess, that's not why I'm working with them. I'm working with them to give them a place where they can just not have to think about anything and actually learn skills.</td>
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### Opportunities to express themselves and find where they feel comfortable

We had English as well and we had the cooking classes as well. Yeah, I like cooking. So, I had to cooking class as well there. And the other thing they have some, uh, they making the activities, yeah, activities to take the guys to somewhere nice.

### School working with external organisations to create opportunities

We've got a thing where we worked hard with the local Cricket Club, to do two cricket taste a days and they're here on a Sunday morning last Sunday this coming Sunday and we worked with two other secondary schools and said five students from each school, so 15 altogether and cricket coach is coming. And then there's a view to one or two students maybe having a bursary to go and do cricket because obviously this could be a good thing.

### Understanding that the importance is on giving people opportunities rather than filling up spaces

And from the other two schools nobody came, so they had two people instead of 15 people. And I got this rather grumpy e-mail saying 'well, we're not doing it the second day of the taste of the next week if only two are coming'. But I wrote back and said 'two people coming, just think that's two lives and two people having an opportunity to just think do I like this?'. And they said that the two students they had were really good and they really loved it, so I think 'how can you let them down by not doing the following Sunday when you promised? How could you break your promise?'

### Experiences of prejudice

Access to learning is not always fair

I say there still and then, I get my certificate from my last school there and showed them about that and they accept that. They said OK, they said to me, they look at my age and they look at when, how many years I have in this country and they look at that, they say 'nah there's no way for you' or 'You're almost, you have like one year in this country so you not allowed to go like level one or
| My religious practices have not been taken into consideration | P10: Yes, like for example, they our team, as they team and they’re gonna pull out one from Eastern Europe, one from here, one from Asia, one from Africa, and they [canteen workers] don’t know, they don’t know each other how to cook, and they, they don’t approach you or, or religion too, so Muslim, Muslim, Christian, Christian, so Muslim food is Halal, and there is no halal, so just, then really need them to buy, rather than to go, every day we used to go McDonald’s.

P11: Yes. Yeah, we have half of one hour break, for example, and it’s on the other side of town, for example. |
| Cultural celebrations are likely missed unintentionally | But the, the other things like, you know, celebrations, because there are not so many people from my country there and they are mostly well from England and we, we don’t, we don’t do any celebrations there, which is why, I mean, I don’t expect it to happen. |
| Cultural values prevent them from engaging with certain activities | P3: Cause we have this should of cooked food though.

P1: So yes, he really wouldn’t do it.

P3: It's the boy the boy from Afghanistan

P1: Woman's work and then would wash up or help to the washing after

P3: so we were showing him pictures of Gordon Ramsay, and you [P1] found a chef from Afghanistan. |
| Experiences of racism | And there was one lady, she start asking me straight away questions like ‘where you from?’ like it a normal question, then I say I am from Sudan. And then, ‘why you're here?’, I said, ‘to study’, now she say, ‘I mean like why did you come to the UK?’. I said to her, ‘I have war in my country’, and then she didn't stop for this one, she asked me, ‘how did he come to UK?’ I said ‘ohh, I came by for Libya. Chad, Libya, Italy, France and here’. And she said to me, ‘why didn't you stop and stay in France instead of coming here to, to the UK?’. I was fed up and I said ‘now is enough’.

JC: Yeah, completely understandable.

P11: I said ‘Sorry, I cannot answer to that question. Can you change the topic, please?’ And she say ‘Oh, sorry, I just want to know, it’s not, it’s nothing like—’, so I said ‘that’s okay’ and then I told my teacher. |
| Inappropriate or misunderstood behaviour due to cultural differences | one day in my school in my class and said the teacher and the student like a fight the teacher say, ‘Why you say teacher?’ students say, ‘Why I no say teacher? Because you teacher, your job teacher, I have respect for teacher’. But teacher say, ‘No, in UK, the teacher name no trouble then |
you can respect. But everyone say, I say it for respect, not trouble. You are my teacher, I can’t say you name, because I have respect for teacher.

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<th>People asking inappropriate and uncomfortable questions</th>
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<td>P10: But still more people coming in still asking the question.</td>
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<td>P11: Yeah, those are coming in for the during lunchtime. Umm, yeah, so, they still, that one is separate one, but they people volunteer, they’re coming from charity. They come when everyone is there.</td>
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<td>P10: Yeah, everyone is there. Sometimes, they used to invite some student if you want to engage with them is like three or four, and then to, yeah, to engage with them, to get to know each other by relationship with, umm, Asian people like Korean–</td>
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<td>P11: like Japan.</td>
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<th>Bullying coming from other asylum-seeking students</th>
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<tr>
<td>P1: He's the worst actually. Though I have to say he's the worst for saying inappropriate things for the Ukrainians.</td>
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<td>JC: Ohh really?</td>
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<td>P1: Yeah, and although he knows because he's come from that. He would laugh and say 'ohh you know, there's a war in your country' and things so he even though he's come from it, I think he's the only one I have heard trying to kind of wind them up a bit.</td>
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<td>P3: ‘Ohh Ukraine’s not a country’</td>
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<tr>
<td>P1: Yeah and ‘no it's not, it's belongs to Russia’. So there's a lot of you know and that's the only time actually that I've heard any students saying anything in appropriate to them really</td>
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<td>Difficulty building friendships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling unable to understand peers and adults</td>
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<td>Separation from British students</td>
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<td>Unable to engage in some friendship activities due to culture or religious boundaries</td>
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<td>Relationship with school staff</td>
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<td>Adults working hard to build relationships with the young people</td>
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<td>Being accepted by school staff without judgement</td>
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<td>Complications around age and honesty</td>
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<td>Consistency of relationships is important</td>
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<td>Efforts to support English language understanding</td>
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<td>Encouraging involvement in sports, clubs, and activities</td>
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<td>Feeling that people are interested in you</td>
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<td>Have to build relationships quickly</td>
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<td>Helping young people feel comfortable coming to us</td>
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<td>I like my teacher</td>
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| Pastoral and emotional support needed | P3: I'm gonna say we do quite a lot of pastoral support, yeah.  
P1: A lot job of our job is pastoral now  
P3: And especially when they started there was something every day coming.  
P1: Yeah, it was constant.  
P3: And it wasn't even school. Ohh, ‘I don't know how to do this’, or you know. |
<p>| Positive impact of teachers who have an understanding of what asylum-seeking young people are experiencing | P1: I think our students are really, really lucky here. I think that they get a lot of support. They, you know that. Like I said, there's not many schools that have a separate department for EAL. So they are, they're not only getting support from their year offices, but they've got a department which is just for them. So, they are very lucky and the school do support us like, *** the head is very, you know, he sees you, EAL is really important within the school so, you know, they are lucky. |</p>
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<th>Isolation</th>
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<tr>
<td>School supporting the family</td>
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And so, this child was with the host and then they went into temporary accommodation in *** street, and then they were given a room in a hotel for three months with no access to Internet and kept getting homework detentions, well, then then we found out Mum couldn't afford to pay for Internet access, so school dealt with that.

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27.02  
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P8: No, I don't have friend in the college. But I have met with many people, with teachers and many Ukrainian people. Because language little, yeah, and I'm going to college just two months and yeah.
| Feeling unable to understand peers and adults | J: So, now you learn everyone have a same problem. You know you don’t have— the English is not our first language  
S: Yeah, we are happy. Yeah, because our accent is quite difficult, so some British people so we can’t understand what, what they said. |
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<td>Separation from British students</td>
<td>S: No, no. We have a separate, uh, how do you say in English? Separate hub. JC: A separate area? Okay. S: Yeah, for asylum seeker in the college. Yeah. So, the British students and some other foreign students, for example French or Italian, they come to learn something for example take a engineering classes, take, umm, chef classes, but they have separately. We are Asian students. So yeah, we have another hub for asylum to go there.</td>
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<td>Unable to engage in some friendship activities due to culture or religious boundaries</td>
<td>P1: Before you came, it was talking about how the two, certainly the two boys from Afghanistan, now that their dad's not around and can even the girl to some extent a lot of being at secondary school socially is to do with things like sleepovers and meeting each other in town and things like that. And I think that probably impacts on their friendships because I don't think they can do any of those things.</td>
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<td>Coping with Stresses</td>
<td>Adapting to change</td>
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<td>Change can be very difficult for people who are in a new environment or experiencing a lot of stress</td>
<td>P6: But they are just being split down the middle because if you’re parents haven’t bought into being here and are on the phone saying, is Dad alive? Do you think can go back? Oh, look, they might have water next week.</td>
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<td>Differences between school in home country and UK</td>
<td>P11: This is tricky one, because, in terms of culture in, for example, like friendship, Sudan and here is totally different so. Here you have like school friend and then outside of friend, so someone might be really good with you at the school and say hi to you and speak to you, but when you see, when you see them outside and you say hi, no maybe he not answering to you this is really strange. So in Sudan we don’t have, like if you have friends, they friends inside the school and outside school, even teachers. I remember when I’ve met one of my teachers in *** [UK city], and ohh, I said. ‘Hi!’</td>
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<td>Enjoyment of having more freedom in the UK</td>
<td>But, but the difference I saw there is little, umm restrictions. There is a lot of restrictions there and, and here is not here. Here is, is like friendly here.</td>
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<td>It takes time to adapt views and values</td>
<td>P3: Yeah, and his age makes the difference because all his life he's been told or exposed or taught that women are inferior and suddenly he's here and it's different. So, it's not gonna just he's not gonna change just like that. Yeah.</td>
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</table>
| Level of parental social status or employment in UK | P3: Cause you can see the differences in education as well.  
P1: Definitely and with the two Afghan boys in year.  
P3: Ohh yeah, of course.  
P2: I don’t know what year they are now. P3: Nine  
P1: We thought when they both - when one of them arrived we thought ohh brilliant we’ve got a friend for him they were like totally one would speak to the other one.  
P2: Oh, okay.  
P1: Because they, because ones that Dad works at the university here has come from a really wealthy background, was well educated and the other has come from a village in the mountains  
P3: They are almost like nomads because they're trouble. Yeah. So. |
| Young person struggled to settle in the UK | P1: We had a lad. He's not here anymore. He was only here for a short time. He shouldn't have been at school, but he was back yeared and he came in from Afghanistan via Syria and Turkey on his own. His parents have been killed in Afghanistan and he travelled all the way through it took him nine months for him. He kept being placed in different settlements in different countries and he came across under a lorry, the last part, on his own into Poole Quay, and then was like an asylum seeker. But he was 16 and they backed him so he could do some time at school. Couldn't speak any English. Such a polite boy, but he had terrible flashbacks, couldn't sleep. |
| Feelings of loss | Continuation of relationships from home country | P1: The other students, apart from them, though, they have contact with their friends in their own country through gaming. They still do online gaming and things, so a lot of them chat to friends that aren't here, that are back there. So they are keeping, so maintaining some relationships. |
| Losing their sense of self | | P6: To get refugee status as a Syrian person, they've come from the camps on the border with Syria, they haven’t come on the boats. Their situation must be so terrible that they've got refugee status because it's so hard to get it. But it’s the way they've had that. It's a path, it’s a route forwards, and they have to engage with where they are to survive. |
| Memories of times in home country | P6: Do you remember that moment when everyone was sitting there sawing wood? And it was one of those cold yucky days, and you were with ***, and you said ‘you’re really good at this’, and he said ‘ohh, I always did this with my granddad’. His grandad is stuck behind Russian lines. And you think - But there he was so happy he wasn’t going ‘[crying noises] ohh I used to do this with my grandad’. So, and that’s sort of real zone. |
| Pride in being from home country | P1: Interesting, the two Afghans that we’ve got here, actually. They’ve settled really well and their really happy here. She does say, though, when you say, ‘Oh, do you miss Afghanistan?’ She says, ‘yeah. Well it’s my country? You know, it’s mine’, and she loves showing you if you go Google Maps or, you know, what’s it called? Google Earth. Where you can actually go down. She’s so excited to show you where she came from. |
| Worrying about home country and family | P7: Some of them do. Some get absolutely everything. Then others yet so little that they come in again on the other side. They don’t get told anything because their parents aren't talking to them because they've gone to do something and they just want to ignore it and crack on. They come in and they don't know what's going on. They don't know how their families doing. They don't - and that is again another set of worries. And so there is, like, very few students in the middle ground by their like they know enough, but they don't know too much. |
| Young people moving back to home country | P7: And all of a sudden you've got a confused child who's between their heart and their head. Not knowing whether they are coming or going and not knowing what they really want. And then, so, I think the easiest thing to do is push everyone away and give up. Which is really tough because – |
### Previous experiences

**Emotional impact of choosing not to do something relate to home country**

For some of them it's quite hard because they're like choosing not to take part in something, and I think that's an internal battle within themself and yeah, they're choosing not to take part in the Christmas celebration because they don't want to celebrate. It's bringing up a whole plethora of emotions.

**Emotional trauma of previous experiences**

But, you know, she's been five years in a camp. Yeah, and had to leave overnight because ISIS were coming into their town. So left in their pyjamas. Pretty much. Five years, in a camp, very frightening, her parents couldn't afford school for their daughter and then into a primary school and lockdown and then into straight into year seven, so a big ask.

**Family separation impacts engagement and belonging**

But the same point that is that they've gone through that grief cycle and sort of accepted that this is where they have to be, and even though there have been bumps and they be terrible sadness when somebody back home is lost, their building this as a home for their children, whereas if you come and you're a victim of war and your husband's back at home and your granddad and the teachers and the dog.
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<tr>
<td>Level of information about</td>
<td>P6: And then other families, the children come and tell us, ‘Well, we might be moving to Poland. Well there’s no point me learning cause I’m not staying here. Oh this is all bad. And we hate this’. And you know, some of the children are just giving you their parents stuff.</td>
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<td>home country impacts</td>
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<td>ability to settle</td>
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<td>P2: So wonder whether they can't offload things. I think they're maybe they're keeping a lot of stuff in because they don't want to meet up with any other Ukrainian and just offline personal things, whereas you and I may, I might come and find you out and offload you because you don't really know me. That. Would you see what I mean?</td>
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<tr>
<td>No ability to offload</td>
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<td>stress and worries</td>
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<td>Other people's understanding of the young person's situation</td>
<td>So what I realized is they don't have, they don't know, they don't have any idea about us and how we came here, they think, like every student from Asia—</td>
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<td>P10: Yeah, or from Africa.</td>
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<td>P11: They think they came for apprenticeship, or they have like, million, million of pounds or dollars and they came here to study and to have fun, and then go back home. No, it's a bit different.</td>
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<td>Young people taking on</td>
<td>P1: She comes to us for lots of things and you see we get a lot where the parents can't do anything. And the parents don't speak any English so the children take on roles that the parents should be doing. So, she’s asked if we can teach her to use the Internet to book doctor’s appointments and things because parents can't understand how to do it.</td>
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<td>adult roles and supporting their family</td>
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<td>Stability</td>
<td>Host family relationships as a source of security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>affording to live in the UK leads to further uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>confused and unsure about their situation</td>
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<td>Feeling</td>
<td>uncertain about their situation</td>
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<td>Knowing they</td>
<td>will stay in the UK</td>
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<td>Ability to Communicate</td>
<td>English language development opportunities</td>
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| **External organisations can be helpful for language and friendship development** | P5: Yeah, of course. Yeah.  

P4: Yeah, and the other thing for the language was uh, I used to live with my foster care and she was very helpful for me. Like when I didn't know something I will, I was asking her, and she was helping for that. Yeah. So yeah, if you have someone like this it is really helpful. |
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<td><strong>Impact of limited language ability on school outcomes</strong></td>
<td>But the one things, yeah, I guess when they, they move me into the one class for the mistake or for the wrong way, I don't know, and I move that there was only, yeah, the students that was born here, I mean, the citizens. And I learnt with them and I found, yeah, I don't know why they put them into the higher level and I cannot understand because inside them, there is nothing. Cause when the teacher asked the question on something that no one can answer, I answer them and then and after that the teacher made me finish in the final year. And then yeah, in the final class, she asked me about ‘what level do you want in reading at the moment?’ and she say, ‘why they put you only in the EASL?’, and I say, ‘I don't know’.</td>
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<td><strong>Interpreter support needed</strong></td>
<td>We don’t read English in our country, our country, our first language is Pashto. So, we learn Pashto books, our Holy Quran in our schools, these thing let’s– these type of things. So, when I come, when I arrive in UK is so since September, so I don’t know, I don’t know about the English language, so every time interpreter help me.</td>
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<td><strong>Not having the language skills to express how you feel</strong></td>
<td>Yeah, he laugh also when he's uncomfortable. Yeah. So, we noticed that cause initially you think ohh you're being really rude but then once you get to know them you realise it’s a weakness almost.</td>
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<td><strong>Speaking English in college as much as possible</strong></td>
<td>About what’s in the, like a class. And here in the class, like in same class six or seven Kurdish, four or three Afghans. Like in my class: seven Kurdish, four Afghan, and two Brazilian, and two Sudanese, and three in Arabic language. But this one is not good because the four Afghan they speak Pashto and the same time and Kurdish they speak Kurdish at same time, they can't try English this one is not good for you like the subject yeah. One Afghan, one Kurdish, one Arabic, will every time try English, they can speak English is better, I don't think speaking the same language they can learn English.</td>
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<td><strong>Success in lessons requiring less English language ability</strong></td>
<td>P1: The one lesson which has been really good. And it's interesting because when they first arrive, teachers are really like, ohh, no, we can't possibly teach them because they've not done this subject before, is French. They always do really well in French because it's a language and it's new for everybody. We're not very good in England at languages. So the students typically are quite low and don't retain it, so ours [asylum seekers], even the two Afghans are now like, really, really good at French and they're quite near the top of the class.</td>
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<td><strong>Support to learn English language</strong></td>
<td>I've done is to put all the stuff online stuff. Pre teaching. So allow people to – if you are doing something in a subject as a new topic, send out and put everything on the Google Classroom and allow people to look at it. They can use their phone, they can just look at Google Translate and have</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact of language on relationships</td>
<td>Learning subject-specific language without functional use in conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accents make understanding people more difficult</td>
<td>And was I thinking that was it like that, for example aeroplane in US English they say AIR, in UK English say AER, so that's quite different. This is very difficult. And now when he said when say something, teacher, they give us three example. How I can give you that example? Say for past and present tense we use past for example. So, on the past use ‘I was worried’, these things, so teacher, with this sentence teacher gave us 3 examples. So now you understand. Its different in US English and UK.</td>
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| Learning subject-specific language without functional use in conversation | Or *** in geography, I remember she couldn't say the days of the week, so she was dropped into the middle of her geography lesson and they were doing climate. So, the geography team got me the stuff and we, she and I and her supporters at *** worked on teaching her core vocabulary. And I was sitting in there with her in the lesson and they showed pictures of things because we decide this is the way to make it very even and they ask people what something was and suddenly this hand went up, ‘Miss, miss, miss! Anemometer’. She couldn’t say Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, but knew anemometer. |

| Building friendships with same language peers | It’s nice and the little girl from Afghanistan or it’s not a brilliant influence that’s found a girl in an older year group. You [other participants] probably know who I’m talking about, who speaks Pashto as well. And you do see them together sometimes. And although it’s not the best influence, |
it’s nice that she’s got another girl to speak Pashto with, because although her English is okay now, she’s not gonna be able to speak about everything she wants to in English.

<p>| Correlation between language ability and building friendships | Yeah. But sometimes I am shy. Sometimes, and yeah, I do not speak with too much people, yeah. Just my like, some, like, Arabic friends and some like Albania, no English people. Because I am shy so that’s why I don’t speak to much. |
| Safety blanket of same language peers helps them feel part of a group but limits integration with wider school | P10: I think. Do you know what, yeah, the people who was born here because they are already are grouped together and they don’t mix with other people, if I’m gonna ask somebody for, like, cigarette or whatever you want, see if you go like ask them maybe they’re gonna share with you together. But the others here, they don’t have community with other people. So, others got the country like Ukraine, for example, lots here, also, there is lots of Korean, but they stay that called anyone like group. |
| There is no-one to talk to in my own language | Yeah, yeah. Well, uh, there is no one to talk to with my own language. |
| Better language ability builds confidence | Whereas if you have a bit of English, then put your hand up, you become more confident. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English language improves with exposure and time</th>
<th>So, after half an hour, no, half a year, regularly I going to college and I speak with the another, another country boys and also I live with Sudan boy and the name is ***, JW know him. So, our language different, he speak Arabic and I speak Pashto so when we see each other normally which everyday so we talk English with these things so now, I'm better with everything, that's right.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language is difficult and complex</td>
<td>P7: It was so funny, last week when I was working with my EAL group, one of the girls said ‘English is silly’. And I tole her I don't know what do you mean, and she was like in French you have le or la like male or female, but in England you have anything. I just walked off and I was like, ‘yeah, you're right, We do’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling uncomfortable because of language barrier</td>
<td>P6: Like how lovely! English is silly, though, isn't it silly? Very silly language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P7: It's just strange word to use as well, silly. English is silly, yeah, you're not wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can understand more English than I can speak</td>
<td>So, I came by myself so didn’t speak to each other and was not comfortable, but I feel very brave because English is not my first language. So, when with some friends from another country and talk to English so I feel very brave. I say, ‘I can do it. I can speak English, so I'm I’m perfect, yeah’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah. So, OK. Yeah, it's same like, yeah, it's same like me. It's 50:50. I understand English, but I speak– my speaking is not good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix H Extracts from reflective log for reflective thematic analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Diary/Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.04.2023</td>
<td>Code grouping</td>
<td>Today I wrote out all of my themes onto post-it notes and stuck them to the floor of my living room. I found that this really helped me to engage with the data and felt much less restricting than NVivo when I could only see a small number of the codes on screen at any one time so grouping them became overwhelming. Being able to see all the codes with ease helped me to familiarise myself with the data and I felt it made it easier to recognise when a code stood out or I wasn’t sure that it was currently placed within the correct category and theme. Additionally, being able to view all codes at once and physical move them between categories and themes helped to begin to gain a deeper understanding of the data and the emerging narrative that I want to portray in my results. This also prompted me to consider how the narrative I am beginning to identify might be shaped in part by my own knowledge and understanding of the experience of young people who seek asylum in the UK. This is something that I will try to keep in the forefront of my mind and report transparently in the write up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.04.2023</td>
<td>Theme generation</td>
<td>I decided to revisit my themes today after a few days away from them and when I looked over them I realised that my initial categorisation had been led by my research questions equally to, if not more than, the data. Many of my codes stayed in the same groupings but when I read them I renamed the theme to better encompass the narrative of the codes within. My themes were reorganised from 5 categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I kept the category around learning, however moved one of the themes out of it (opportunities to have fun) as although many of the opportunities happened within schools/colleges, the key message in these was the enjoyment and ability to make their own choices, which is not in itself related to the location the activities took place. I also broke down my ‘relationship’ category as it did not feel like it described what it was about relationships that was important. This category was divided into two categories; one around how language and communication impacts relationships (this was combined with ‘language abilities’ category and is now ‘ability to communicate’,) and one about how relationships can impact inclusion (combined with ‘attitudes to diversity’ category, now ‘perceived level of inclusion’). I then looked at the final categories around previous experiences and again realised that the key points of the category were around stressful experiences that had been experienced and how these impact them in education today. This was renamed.

I then thought I was happy with the final 4 categories and 19 themes, but as I began getting prepared to write my results section I realised that ‘ability to communicate’ and ‘perceived level of inclusion’ appeared to have some overlap. This is because there were similar codes in the ‘difficulty building friendships’ and ‘isolation’ sub-themes. I thought about these a little longer and reflected on what I thought the difference between these two sub-themes should be. After a while, I realised that ‘difficulty building friendships’ needed to be more about the language and communication required, whereas ‘isolation’ was more about feeling alone or different. I had a look at the codes within these two categories again and ended up moving some across to fit within these clearer boundaries I had set. Finally then, I decided to look more closely at the categories ‘what helps language development’, ‘English language difficulties’, and ‘pride in English language development’ again, as there were a few codes that I felt could have fit into multiple categories. I thought about what made
each category different and decided to reduce these into two more clearly defined categories of ‘language development opportunities’ which includes both positive and negative elements discussed by participants, and ‘Perception of own English language ability’ which again has both positively and negatively focussed codes within. By removing the ‘English language difficulties’ sub-theme entirely, I was able to better separate codes into relevant themes without focusing on the negative elements of the code as a priority.

I am now preparing to write my results section with 4 categories and 17 sub-themes within these. I am happy with the definition of each of these and feel that they have been reorganised in a way that will enable me to better portray the narrative of the data.

21.04.2023 Reflecting on quote selection for results

While writing my first draft of my results, I chose the quotes that I felt best portrayed the messages I was trying to get across. While this was a good method, today I thought about whether or not the focus on representing each key point had restricted me from adequately representing the views of all participants in all focus groups. All participant’s views are as important as the others and even if something is raised by only one person, it is a voice and it matters. I feel like this is particularly true for my research in which people shared their personal lived experiences. These experiences may differ, but they are all valid and deserve to be discussed and represented.

I therefore read back over my initial draft to ensure that I was happy I had included a range of quotes that covered the views of individuals as well as messages that overlapped across multiple focus groups. I swapped out two quotes for different quotes with similar meanings that were from individuals I felt had been less represented throughout the results.
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