

***Doctorate in Professional Educational,
Child and Adolescent Psychology***

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**Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent
Psychology**

THESIS REPORT

**Care-experienced young people: What supportive
relationships facilitate transition to and participation in
post-16 Education, Employment or Training (EET)?**

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Word count: 38,830

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to give a very special thanks to the young people who shared their stories and incredible journeys with me, and the professionals who gave so generously of their time to take part in this research. This work would not have been possible without your voices and personal insights.

I would also like to warmly thank my supervisors Vivian Hill and Emma Sumner for their dedicated support and expert guidance throughout this process.

Finally, to my personal support network who have encouraged me all the way on this journey and see it to completion – I thank you all!

This work is dedicated to my Father whose profound love has nurtured in me a fearless spirit.

DECLARATION OF WORK

I, Chinelo Mortune confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Post-16 transition is described by care-experienced young people as an incredibly challenging period, and their outcomes at this stage continue to remain a concern. This current study aimed to extend the literature by exploring the impact of multiple transitions and the relationships that young people experienced as most meaningful in helping to facilitate their transition to and participation in post-secondary EET activities; and how they attribute these relationships to their own outcomes. Professional partners' views (from the LA and Voluntary sectors) on supporting young people at this stage was also sought to inform recommendations for practice. Risk and protective factors were examined through Transitions and Ecological Systems Theories.

Seventeen participants were recruited: 12 young people from care backgrounds (aged 16-24) from three LAs, and 5 professional/adult participants from one LA and two London-based community/charity organisations. A qualitative multi-informant mixed-method design was employed. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from all participants. Additionally, a demographic questionnaire and ecomap supplemented the data from the young people. The data was analysed thematically.

The findings revealed factors at child and systems levels that increase risk of young people becoming NEET. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) was identified as the most common need for many care-experienced young people during transition. Multiple gaps in support and resources were identified in various layers of the system. Foster carers and Mentoring and Befriending services were valued the most by young people in their attributions of improved outcomes. Educational Psychologists (EPs) appeared to be an untapped resource at this point of transition.

The findings of this study have implications for policy makers and practitioners supporting young people in the role of corporate parent. This study put forward recommendations for practice and highlighted the need for EPs to support the transition pathway process as a core centrally funded activity.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The end of Year 11 (KS4) ushers in a period of transition to greater independence/adulthood that can increase young people's vulnerability. Some young people experience several transitions simultaneously and find the transition from child to adult support systems including social care and health services, educational, vocational and job training systems a challenge. It is therefore unsurprising that many care-experienced young people continue to remain at higher risk of exclusions, dropping out and becoming NEET. The extension of statutory protection up to age 25 for supporting vulnerable CYP in the Children and Families Act (2014), makes the post-16 population including their transition from KS4 to post-secondary activities an area worthy of exploration.

Previous research highlighted strong supportive relationships as a determining protective factor in ensuring successful transitions to post-secondary EET activities for care-experienced young people. This current study aimed to extend the literature by exploring the impact of multiple and simultaneous transitions and the relationships that young people experienced as most meaningful and impactful in helping to facilitate their participation in post-secondary Education, Employment and Training (EET) activities; and how they attribute these relationships to their outcomes. Professional partners' views (from the Local Authority [LA] and Voluntary sectors) on supporting young people's successful participation in EET was also sought to inform recommendations for practice. Risk and protective factors were examined through Transitions and Ecological Systems Theories.

The findings from this study identified SEMH as the most common need for many care-experienced young people during transition. Mental health difficulties are prevalent in the lives of care-experienced young people and while they are at the centre of multi-systems of support, these needs can remain largely unmet. Although multiple gaps in support and resources during transition to post-secondary activities were identified in various layers of the system, foster carers, and mentoring and befriending services were valued the most by young people in their attributions for improved outcomes. The findings raised implications for policy makers and for practitioners supporting young people in the role of corporate parent.

Recommendations for practice highlighted the importance of good collaborative practice, multi-agency working and knowledge-building of young people through processes that include a young person's views and the views of adults with whom they have supportive and enduring relationships with; early identification,

intervention and training; facilitating joint working and shared understanding of trauma; and supporting pathway plans for CYP 16-25.

EPs play a key role in multi-agency working that promote systems of support able to respond to the needs of young people ensuring support is provided in meaningful ways. This research highlighted the unique contributions EPs could make as corporate parents working with the extended age range such as: providing a deep understanding of the needs of this vulnerable population, promoting shared understanding and equitable practice, and undertaking this work as part of the centrally funded LA core service. The support of CYP 16-25 is still a relatively new area and should continue to form part of EP initial training, continuing professional development and research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CYP	Children and Young People
CAMHS	Children and Adults Mental Health Service
DT	Designated Teacher
EET	Education, Employment and Training
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychologist Service
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
IV	Independent Visitor
KS4	Key Stage 4
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
NEET	Not in Education, Employment and Training
PA	Personal Adviser
PEP	Personal Education Plan
RPA	Raising the Participation Age
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children
VS	Virtual School
VSH	Virtual School Head

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Relationships are the most powerful mental health intervention of all time”

Treisman (2016)

For the purposes of this thesis, care-experienced young people refer to looked after children (LAC) and Care Leavers, unless otherwise indicated in the referenced literature.

Research has found that care-experienced children and young people (CYP) have poorer life chances and outcomes than their peers. In adulthood, they are at higher risk of being unemployed, criminalised and suffer from ill health (Ferguson, 2018). As such, promoting the achievement of LAC and care leavers has rightly been a high priority in government policy (Carroll & Cameron, 2017; Ferguson, 2018).

1.1 Who are LAC and Care Leavers?

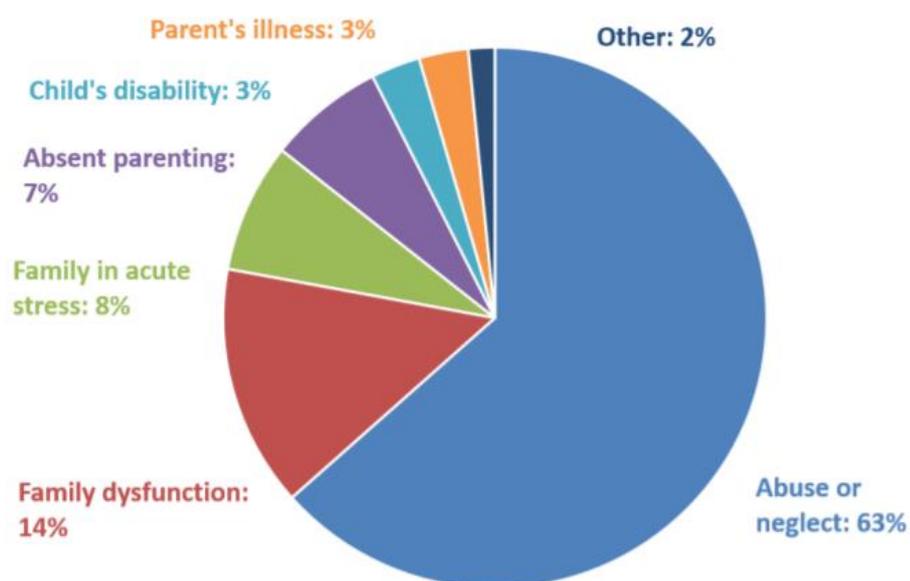
Under the Children’s Act 1989, the term ‘looked after’ has a specific, legal meaning to describe all CYP who are under state responsibility i.e. Local Authority (LA) care and are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, are subject to a care order or subject to a placement order (DfE, 2018). Amendments to the Children’s Act 1989 reflected in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 defines a care leaver as a young person between 16 to 18 years of age who has previously been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks before the age of 16, but is no longer legally “looked after” by the LA Children’s Services.

1.2 The demographic profile of LAC and Care Leavers

The number of LAC has increased steadily over the last 10 years. In 2019, the number of CYP coming into care peaked at 78,150, a significant increase of 4% from the previous year. 30,479 of these children were reported to be of school age, and 28% had an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP). There were 39,590 care leavers aged between 17–21 (DfE, 2019).

CYP come into the care system for a number of reasons (detailed in figure 1), including those who are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The increase in the care population may be attributed to this group, who make up 6% of all children looked after in England (DfE, 2019).

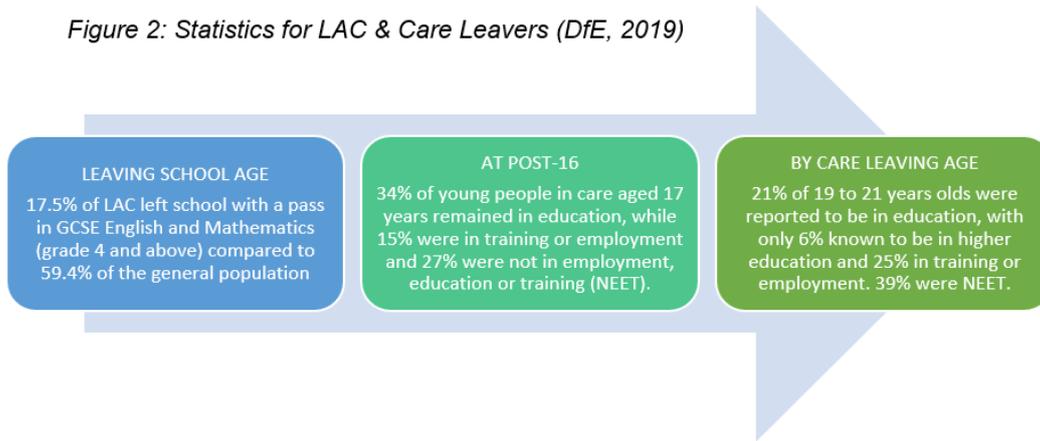
Figure 1: Reasons why CYP come into care (DfE, 2019)



Generally, most young people remain in education or training after completing Year 11, however, for young people in care, the post -16 transition including progression to Further and Higher Education (FE and HE), coincides with the transition to adulthood, greater independence, and leaving the care system (Clayden & Stein, 2005). The transition to greater independence/adulthood can increase YP's vulnerability and reduce their participation in post-secondary EET activities. Some YP experience several transitions simultaneously and find the transition from child to adult support systems including social care and health services, educational, vocational and job training systems a challenge (Cameron et. al., 2018; Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Stein, 2006, 2011). It is therefore unsurprising, that YP from care backgrounds continue to remain at higher risk of dropping out, being excluded and becoming NEET (Viner & Taylor, 2005; Sebba et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2017). Some startling statistics¹ based on 2019 figures from the Department for Education (DfE, 2019) are illustrated in figure 2:

¹ Government LAC statistics that show association of being looked after on educational attainment, only include those children who have been continuously looked after for at least 12 months (DfE, 2019).

Figure 2: Statistics for LAC & Care Leavers (DfE, 2019)



1.3 Legislation and Support structures

Over the past two decades legislation has been introduced to strengthen the support offered by LAs to young people leaving care. Following the Children (Leaving Care) Act (2000), services for care leavers have markedly improved (Ferguson, 2018). More recently, the Children and Family Act (2014) placed into law, the extension of statutory protection up to age 25. This amendment called for streamlined transitions for CYP across education, health and care services (Department for Education [DfE]/ Department of Health [DoH], 2014). Raising the Participation age (RPA) was also introduced to encourage young people to stay in 'education and training' until they are 18 (DfE, 2018). Young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16, which could be through: full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider; full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more) combined with regulated part-time education or training (about one day per week); or an apprenticeship or traineeship (DfE, 2018).

The Virtual School (VS)

In terms of education, a statutory duty is on LAs to safeguard and promote the welfare of CYP in their care including promoting their educational achievement (DCSF, 2010a). This responsibility is discharged by a Virtual School Head (VSH) and was made statutory in 2014 (Carroll & Cameron, 2017). The VSH usually works with a team of staff that includes social workers and designated teachers (DT) to form a 'Virtual School'. The VS plays a central role in raising the awareness of all those who work with LAC. They are well placed to act as advocates and measure the progress and impact of the support it provides across schools for LAC (Carroll & Cameron, 2017). The VS is responsible for managing the Personal Education Plan (PEP), a statutory document describing a course of action to help LAC achieve and is reviewed at least three times each academic year (DfE, 2018); and the Pupil premium plus funding aimed at improving LAC educational outcomes

(DfE, 2018). The VS is responsible for managing the use of this funding and allocating it to schools and alternative provisions. Statutory guidance states that interventions supported by this funding should be evidence based and in the best interest of the child (DfE, 2018). Following an Ofsted (2012) report reviewing the impact of VS, it was found that the VS model improved the educational progress of LAC, showing steeper improvement for younger children at Key Stage 2, and also progress, albeit slower at KS4. Encouragingly, evidence has also found improved attendance, reduced numbers of exclusions, stability of placements, enhanced sense of self-worth and emotional well-being (Ofsted, 2012).

Designated Teacher (DT)

Within schools, it is the statutory duty of the DTs to promote the educational attainment of LAC who are attending school (DfE, 2018). DTs are involved in completing the PEP and provide evidence through the PEP on how the pupil premium plus funding will be used for each child. They also play a key role in enabling LAC to make a smooth transition to a new school or college and manage the engagement of LAC with relevant people and external agencies (DfE, 2018). The role of the DT is clear for young people up to age 16 and in schools, and for young people aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at a sixth form school. There is however no explicit guidance for DTs in FE institutions, and this gap in support is problematic. For FE institutions, employing a DT is discretionary, and not a statutory requirement. Given that compulsory education has been extended to age 18 due to the RPA legislation introduced in 2013, the DT role or its equivalent is equally necessary in FE institutions to ensure young people are receiving the right kind of support to meet their needs in relation to their learning and transition. Evidently, much research is needed into effective collaborative practice and ways of working between VS, and FE colleges (with or without the presence of DTs) to support the process of transition to post-16 education.

The Staying Put policy

To improve the life chances of CYP living in and leaving LA care, a young person is no longer mandated to leave care when they are 16, unless they feel ready to be more independent (DfE, 2018). The 'Staying Put' policy introduced in 2013 placed a legal obligation on LAs through the Children and Families Act (2014) to offer young people the opportunity to remain with their former foster carer/s after their 18th birthday, until they reach the age of 21 (DfE, Department for Work and Pensions [DWP] & Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs [HMRC]; 2013b). In 2018, 55% of young people aged 18 years remained with their foster carers 3 months

after their 18th birthday. After 3 months, the percentage drops to only 19%. Similarly, for 19 to 21-year olds in care, only 8% continued living with their foster carers. Interestingly, the greatest increase in NEET numbers is seen for 19 to 21-year olds, with 39% of this cohort reported as NEET, compared to around 12% of all young people of the same age (DfE, 2018).

The Personal Adviser (PA)

When a LAC reaches his or her eighteenth birthday, they are no longer legally “looked after” by the LA Children's Services. Their status changes to become a young adult who is *eligible* for help and assistance from the LA (DfE, 2018). Once a young person ceases to be looked after, the LA is no longer required to provide a social worker to plan and coordinate care instead a PA is appointed to support them (DfE, 2015). The PA is responsible for providing and co-ordinating support for the young person throughout their transition to adulthood and independent life and ensuring the implementation of the pathway plan and the needs assessment process (DfE, 2015). A crucial part of pathway planning is preparing young people for adulthood and making considerations for more long-term goals, covering budgeting, day to day management of finances and supporting them in finding pathways into FE, employment or training, and appropriate housing. Reports however, show that emphasis tends to be placed on immediate needs such as accommodation and clothing than long-term developmental needs, such as careers advice (Craddock, 2008). A lack of focus on long-term planning can leave young people unprepared and hinder a successful transition to adulthood.

Under previous legislation, all care leavers were entitled to receive PA support until they reached age 21. This was extended up to the age of 25 for care leavers in education or training alone. However, the Children & Social Work Act 2017 (Section 3) has introduced a new duty on LAs, to provide PA support to all care leavers up to age 25, irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training (DfE, 2018). This includes care leavers who return to the LA at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request PA support (DfE, 2018).

The Local Offer

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 also places a new duty on LAs to consult on and then publish their ‘local offer’ for care leavers, which sets out both care leavers’ legal entitlements and the additional discretionary support that the LA provides (DfE, 2018). The local offer is a formal system that brings together information, advice and guidance for CYP and their parents/ carers. When planning for young people’s transition, the local offer can help in promoting professionals’ and service

users' awareness of resources for CYP and their families with SEND (Ofsted, 2015).

1.4 Some causes for concern

While discussing some of the changes that have been made to legislation in the preceding sections, such as the raising of the participation age to 18 and the staying put policy, the role of the VS, DTs and PAs were highlighted briefly. These layers of support form part of a wider system of support around care-experienced young people. Although such changes to legislation are providing steps in the right direction and improving outcomes for care leavers, a widening gap persists between the outcomes for care-experienced young people and the rest of the population at this stage (Ferguson, 2018). Gaps in the system of support around young people may offer one plausible explanation. For example, the PA remains the designated professional responsible for supporting young people leaving care to negotiate systems of support to ensure participation in EET, often resulting in heavy caseloads and high staff turnover. These factors limit the opportunity for strong support channels for young people to be developed (Ferguson, 2018).

In addition, there remains no statutory requirement for a designated professional to work with care leavers in FE institutions. This presents a significant gap in coordinated support needed to support the engagement of care leavers in post-16 education. The absence of a shared and coordinated framework for responding to the needs of those in care and care leavers present challenges for practitioners and policy-makers in LA Children's Services, including measuring their outcomes and providing appropriate interventions or timely referrals to services (Coman & Devaney, 2011). Furthermore, an increasing number of CYP enter and leave care, yet LA budgets remain the same or have faced austerity cuts making it increasingly difficult for LA services to fulfil their duties to this vulnerable group (Ferguson, 2018). The next section will explore research that address the range of relationships that contribute to care-experienced young people's transition and outcomes and identify any gaps in our understanding of supporting this vulnerable group.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature that was conducted using several advanced searches and search term combinations with specific inclusion criteria. Whilst engaging in a critical review of the identified literature, and in order to better understand the impact of supportive relationships on improving outcomes, it was helpful to discuss the psychological theories and models that emerged as relevant during the literature review including: Transitions and Ecological Systems Theories. The literature review process identified some protective and risk factors associated with the lived experiences of care-experienced young people during the transition to adulthood. The gaps identified in the extant research helped to shape the aims of this study and offer a rationale and its unique contribution.

2.1 Literature search strategy

The literature search was conducted between March 2019 and December 2019 using UCL Library Explore (IOE Journals, IOE LibGuides, UCL LibGuides), which searches databases widely including PsycINFO, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, British Education Index, ProQuest and ScienceDirect. Several advanced searches and search term combinations with specific inclusion criteria were used. For the initial search, which used the Boolean operatives that included both “Looked after children and young people” and “secondary education or post-16 education or post-secondary education”, no results were returned. See table 1A below.

Table 1A: Initial search terms

SEARCH ONE – SEARCH TERMS	
0 RESULTS RETURNED	0 RESULTS RELEVANT
“Looked after children” or “foster care” or “children in care” or “care leavers” or “young people leaving care” or “aging out of care”	
AND	
“secondary education” or “post-16 education” or “post-secondary education”	
AND	
“Resilience” or “Relatedness” or “Agency”	
AND	
“Relationships” or “Support” or “Supportive networks”	
AND	
“Ecological model”	

In subsequent searches, the search terms (highlighted in red) “secondary education” or “post-16 education” or “post-secondary education” were then replaced with “Transition to adulthood” or “Transition to independence”. This combined with searches for the terms “Looked after children” or “foster care” or “children in care” and separate search terms for “Care leavers” or “young people leaving care” or “aging out of care” returned 116 and 23 results respectively. On

careful review of the abstracts, 14 and 10 results were deemed relevant. See table 1B below.

Table 1B: Subsequent search terms

SEARCH TWO – SEARCH TERMS	
116 RESULTS RETURNED	14 RESULTS RELEVANT
"Looked after children" or "foster care" or "children in care"	
AND	
Transition to adulthood" or "Transition to independence"	
AND	
"Resilience" or "Relatedness" or "Agency"	
AND	
"Relationships" or "Support" or "Supportive networks"	
AND	
"Ecological model"	
SEARCH THREE – SEARCH TERMS	
23 RESULTS RETURNED	10 RESULTS RELEVANT
"Care leavers" or "young people leaving care" or "aging out of care"	
AND	
Transition to adulthood" or "Transition to independence"	
AND	
"Resilience" or "Relatedness" or "Agency"	
AND	
"Relationships" or "Support" or "Supportive networks"	
AND	
"Ecological model"	

An analysis of the returned literature showed that much of the literature on the transition from care to independence is written from a social care perspective which addresses areas such as accommodation and employment, rather than education. Those that do refer to education, pay little attention to the theoretical underpinnings for the educational trajectories for LAC and their outcomes (Jackson et al., 2011). Nonetheless the following inclusion criteria, was used to select relevant papers for this literature review:

Peer-reviewed journal articles and doctoral theses were included in the literature search. Papers reviewed for this research included the experiences of LAC at particular points in their care journey such as their pre-care, in care and leaving care experiences, their transition to post-16 activities and the types of support cited by young people during this period.

Both qualitative and mixed methodologies that sampled participants of school age up to age 25 and conducted within the UK and internationally were included. These were limited to English-speaking populations. The inclusion of school age children though this study focuses on young people at the age of transition and

above, served to provide a foundation for understanding outcomes based on earlier experiences.

A well-known difficulty for researchers is that hard-to-reach populations such as LAC and care leavers are often difficult to recruit (Dixon, Biehal, Green, Sinclair, Kay & Parry, 2013; Murray, 2005), therefore studies into this vulnerable group tend to be limited. As this research does not aim to generalise findings due to the epistemological stance taken (discussed in more detail in chapter 3), research based on small sample sizes was also included.

In addition to the academic literature search, a search of relevant publications from government websites and charitable organisations was also conducted. These provided information on updated statistics relevant to this area of study.

2.2 Theoretical frameworks

Transition theory and Ecological Systems theory emerged as significant in helping to understand the experiences of looked after CYP during transition and some protective and risk factors at individual and systems level.

2.2.1 Transition Theory

Transition has been conceptualised as the ongoing experience of changing, and adapting to new social and cultural experiences (Gorgorió, Planas & Vilella, 2002; Jindal-Snape, 2010, 2017; Newman & Blackburn, 2002). These changes arise from the individual's need to live, cope and participate in different contexts, to face different challenges, and take advantage of the new situation arising from the changes (Gorgorió, Planas & Vilella, 2002). Many studies of transition tend to focus on the outcomes of transition, for example, measuring the well-being of children before and after the move from primary to secondary school and much less attention has been paid to examining the process of transition as a catalyst for change or rupture (Crafter & Mauder, 2012; Hviid & Zittoun, 2008). Rupture is described as arising from the uncertainty that changes in cultural contexts, sphere of experience and relationships or interactions creates (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). Studies have shown the transition to post-16 for many young people in care creates rupture, as many young people are impelled into independent living before they are ready (Briheim-Crookall, 2011; Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). In fact, care leavers are forced into independent adulthood much earlier than their peers and often have to cope with a multiplicity of life changes at the same time (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

Multiple transitions to adulthood

For most young people, the transition to adulthood is a gradual process, with most living at home until their mid-twenties or beyond while young people in care experience an accelerated and compressed transition process (Briheim-Crookall, 2011; Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Munford & Sanders, 2015). Unsurprisingly, the transition to independence as young people leave care is often described by them as a challenging and difficult period (Clayden & Stein, 2005). Stein (2006) proposed Coleman's 'focal theory' as shedding light on the impact of transitions on young people moving to independence (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). A central tenet of this theory proposes that young people focus on changes during adolescence one at a time. Coleman (1974; 1978; 1989) sampled 800 young people aged 11 to 17 from the general population, and interviewed them on the issues in their lives that they felt were stressful.

Coleman found that the difficulties raised by the young people varied in importance for different ages. For example, worries about relationships with peers and personal appearance presented earlier on than concerns relating to their choice of career. He also found that young people addressed each new challenge as it occurred rather than tend to them all simultaneously. In so doing, they were able to avoid, or at least ameliorate challenging and stressful periods. In considering how focal theory sheds light on our understanding of the impact of transitions on the lives of care-experienced young people moving to independence, Hollingworth & Jackson (2016) reviewed two studies which tracked the educational pathways of care-experienced CYP after post-secondary transition. One study was 'By Degrees', a study of university students with a background in public care (Jackson, Ajayi, & Quigley, 2005; Jackson, 2007), and the other was a cross-national project 'Young People in Public Care: Pathways to Education in Europe' (YiPPEE) which investigated the post-compulsory educational experience of young people who had been in public care as children (Cameron, Jackson, Hauari, & Hollingworth, 2010; Jackson & Cameron, 2012, 2014; Jackson & Hojer, 2013). The majority of those interviewed were aged between 18 and 21.

Hollingworth and Jackson (2016) found that focal theory offered some explanation for the poor educational achievement and social exclusion of care leavers, however the notion that CYP tend to face one challenge at a time was anomalous to the lives of care-experienced young people. The lived experiences of the research participants in both studies were found to be characterised by disruptions and uncertainty, with multiple changes confronting them in quick succession; and

imposing stresses in relation to education, housing tenancies, employment, managing finances/budgeting, friendship and other relationships and so on (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Stein, 2006, 2011). In addition, those with health problems found the move from child to adult status resulted in a loss of access to services (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). These types of factors made it difficult for care-experienced young people to pace their transitions as focal theory proposes other young people are able to do (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

The evidence that has shaped policy

For most care leavers, the focus on one transition or change at a time does not resonate with their experience, nor are they in a position to pace their transitions in the way that focal theory would suggest is desirable. A study by Simmons et al. (1987) examined the impact of experiencing several major life transitions simultaneously in adolescence. On the basis of focal theory, the researchers hypothesised that the stress experienced by young people during transitions would be reduced if they occurred at different stages and were tackled individually. Their findings supported this hypothesis as CYP who experienced many changes over a short period of time were at greater risk of poor outcomes including educational attainment (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

As mentioned in the introduction section, the RPA was introduced to encourage young people to stay in 'education and training' until they are 18 (DfE, 2018) to improve educational outcomes. However, in 2019, the national statistics reported that only 17.5% of LAC achieved a grade 4 or above in GCSE English and Mathematics, compared to 59.4% of all school children (see figure 2). The poor educational outcomes of care-experienced young people continue to be reflected in the research literature. In both the YIPPEE and By Degrees studies, most of the care leavers had experienced instability, unpredictability, and interruptions in their educational pathways mostly due to moving in and out of care, placement breakdown, neglect and poor treatment (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). When several of these difficulties or stress factors occurred simultaneously, young people ran the highest risk of dropping out of their studies with one in four young people leaving their course prematurely (Jackson et al., 2005).

Hollingworth and Jackson (2016) note that as a result of research evidence including the response to this research, legislation has been put in place in England to enable care leavers to stay with their foster family up to the age of 21. Known as the Staying Put policy (Children & Families Act, 2014), extending the age to 21 responded to the need for greater flexibility and a much more gradual transitional

period. Regrettably, this does not apply to CYP living in residential homes and remains an area of contention. Despite these measures, the national statistics in 2018 showed that only 19% of young people remain with their foster carers 3 months after their 18th birthday, and only 8% of 19 to 21-year-old in care continued living with their foster carers. For comparison, it is also worth noting that only 6% of care leavers were in HE compared with 43% of young people nationally (DfE, 2019). The low figures for those that stay put and go on to HE may denote a correlation between stability and the likelihood of young people accessing HE. As mentioned previously, the greatest increase in NEET numbers is seen for 19 to 21-year olds, with 39% of this cohort reported as NEET, compared to around 12% of all young people of the same age (DfE, 2018).

There is ample evidence from research to support the focal theory proposition that multiple, simultaneous changes lead to negative consequences for care leavers at a broad level. Despite the changes to policy, more complex factors are at play at a strategic level to explain why some young people achieve success despite the challenges they face while others become NEET (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

Transition as a meaning-making process

Beach (1999) argues that transitions are consequential as they have an impact on the individual, involving a process of development associated with personal progress. Individuals bring their own cultural worlds with them and use their previous sociocultural experiences, to form templates for encountering new situations. As a result, the needs of each CYP and the support they require during transition will vary (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). Further to this, every transition experienced has the potential to engender change in the individual through the personal reflection and sense making that takes place (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). The change may be in the form of knowledge construction; the adaptation of old skills or the incorporation of new ones; change in identities; and/or change in social position (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). These changes reflect an individual's struggle to reconstruct knowledge, skills, and identity (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). According to Beach (1999), transitions with associated outcomes of personal progress include mediational transitions which simulate CYP involvement in an activity yet to be fully experienced. For example, facilitating the transition between education and work using work experience or taster days at a new school or college. Such experiences enable CYP to get a 'taster' of what the real experience will be like, and so support the process of reconstruction (Crafter & Mauder, 2012).

The notion that transition can facilitate a process of reconstruction or change in the individual is developed further by Zittoun (2004, 2006) who explores the social and cognitive resources available during transitional processes. Zittoun (2004) suggests that cognitive resources include practical and formal kinds of knowledge that people draw on to make sense of a new situation; and include the skills that help the individual think and behave in new ways. Equally, people gain social knowledge through experience, therefore the use of social resources in transition impacts the redefinitions of identities and changes in cognitive resources (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). For example, pupils frequently reinterpret and readjust their sense of self during encounters with peers and teachers (Galton & Morrison, 2000). What is clear, is that the transition journey is just as important for the individual as the outcome. Despite the uncertainty, unfamiliarity and feelings of discomfort associated with change, learning to navigate this process is personally constructive and involves valuable identity work which CYP need to be given adequate opportunities to experience (Crafter & Mauder, 2012).

Zittoun's and Beach's conceptualisations of transition both emphasise the role of identity shifts, with the individual changing or 'becoming' a different self. They pay less attention to the adjustments occurring in others consequentially. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice framework on the other hand, view transitions as not only happening to the individual through the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, meanings and identities, but also in the community itself by the inclusion of new members, refinement of practices and continuum of expertise. In this way, transition is seen as a two-way dynamic process (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). Situating the individual in a wider social and cultural context compliments Ecological Systems theory, which will be discussed in the next section. The Communities of Practice framework does however fail to address moments when an individual becomes 'stuck' and is unable to become a competent member of a community of practice, such as CYP who disengage from education and become NEET (Crafter & Mauder, 2012; Hodges, 1998). Having said that, Simmons et al. (1987), argued that young people are better able to deal with discontinuities and difficult transitions when they have resources and attributes that serve as protective factors (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). Social resources come into play when relationships with others, like forging new friendships, have the power to reconstruct identities and promote resilience (Crafter & Mauder, 2012).

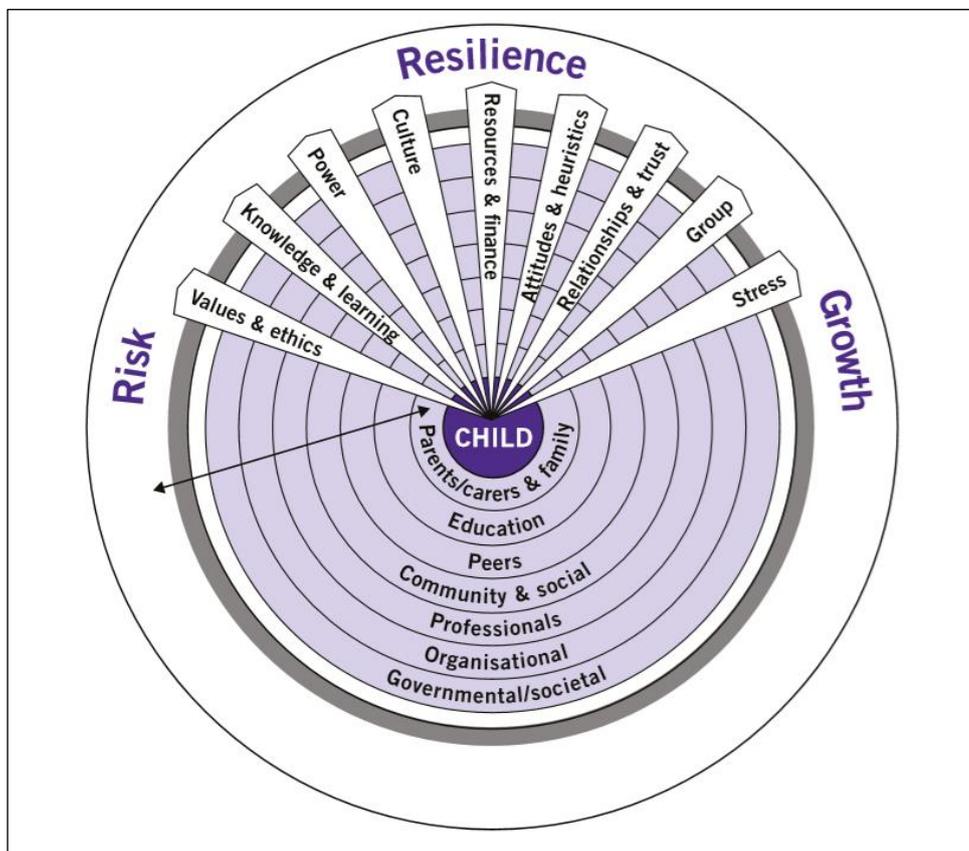
Social resources such as positive peer and professional relationships are crucial for facilitating transition (Pratt & George, 2005) because other people can provide

social knowledge about ways of behaving or ways of being. For example, friendships offer support to individuals undergoing the uncertainty and confusion associated with transition (Demetriou, Goalen, & Rudduck, 2000; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005), and also help instil a sense of belonging to the new community (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittgerber, 2000). The influence of such interactive relationships will be explored through Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory in the next section.

2.2.2 Ecological Systems Theory

The ecological model first proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and underpinned by social constructionism considers the complex and interactive layers of influence that move from the individual to wider social systems that include the home, school and community (Kelly, 2008). The model highlights the role of interacting layers in the formation of social connections or relationships in the life of an individual. A model for safeguarding CYP by the British Psychological Society (BPS) draws on the Assessment Framework (DfE, 2000) and Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model. The model illustrates structures of influence such as government policy, funding, values and ethics of organisations, power and professional decision-making (see figure 3).

Figure 3: A Model for decision-making in safeguarding practice for psychologists



The model shows interacting proximal and distal layers (of support) that exert influence on the child, and the structural factors that impact these and lead to increased risk or resilience in the system (BPS, 2018). Risk factors are defined as conditions associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes from the effects of adversity (Masten & Reed, 2002), while protective factors are defined as attributes or conditions associated with positive outcomes that mitigate the negative effects of adversity. Within an ecological framework, resilience reflects the complex interplay between protective and risk factors at all layers of the system, and how these interact and change over time to support growth (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003). The transactions between a child or young person and their environment are viewed as reciprocal and ongoing (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003).

Ungar (2008, 2012) describes resilience as the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and also for the environment to provide these resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, 2012). This presents resilience within an ecological framework that implicates both processes and outcomes related to an individual's identity, agency and subjective experiences of support from formal sources such as education, health and care professionals; and informal sources such family, friends or peers (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007) in its development. Therefore, an individual is only as resilient as their environment allows (Ungar, 2012). Growth refers to the personal growth for CYP characterised by their improved ability to achieve their potential cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically; and be supported in working towards their aspirational outcomes (BPS, 2018). In the context of this study, growth is assumed in the improved ability for young people to make successful transitions to post-secondary EET activities, with meaningful support from a responsive system.

At the individual and systems level, reviews of protective factors highlight the importance of sense of personal agency for developing resilience (Callaghan et al., 2018; Ungar, 2008, 2012), and the influence of supportive relationships with at least one adult in surrounding systems around the young person (Cameron et al., 2018; Driscoll, 2013; Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Luthar, 2006; Rainer, 2007). In addition, risk factors such as mental health difficulties were highlighted to increase vulnerability and were notably prevalent in the LAC population (Dixon et al., 2006; Dixon, 2008; Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin et al., 2003; Pinto and Woolgar, 2015). These factors will be reviewed in turn.

Personal Agency

As previously mentioned, transitions are complex and multifaceted, involving a search for meaning and shifts in personal identity which impacts the individual's sense of self and agency (Beach, 1999). An individual's sense of agency is described as their ability to 'undertake a preferred action' (Axford, 2010, p. 742), and is influenced by how embedded or connected a person feels to the surrounding system of support, or put another way, how situated they are in the social and cultural contexts they inhabit (Zittoun, 2006). A 10-session small group intervention study by Callaghan and colleagues (2018) on promoting resilience and agency in CYP who have experienced domestic violence, sampled 58 CYP aged 11-19 (with most attending at least 6–7 intervention sessions). A mixed method approach was used in this study. Session by session ratings of wellbeing outcomes were measured and participants' experiences of the intervention were captured through qualitative interviews. The researchers found the following: wellbeing measures and individual's capacity for exercising agency improved. The researchers suggested that participants had a shared history with other survivors of domestic violence which promoted trust and enabled the active construction of a resilient sense of self in relation to their adverse experiences. Although this is a key finding, it should be treated with caution. The absence of a control group makes it difficult to conclude the improvements observed were due to the intervention. Furthermore, the absence of later follow up measures adds to the difficulty in confirming whether these improvements were actual and enduring. Despite these limitations, this study highlights the transactions between individuals and their environment as key in influencing change.

In relation to care-experienced young people's transition from care to independence, Geenen and Powers' (2007) qualitative study which sampled 88 participants (through focus group interviews with young people, foster parents and professionals) found that for young people, goal-oriented supportive relationships and the development of personal agency were deemed necessary to create competitive environments that ensured providers of services were responsive to the needs of young people leaving care. Young people's ability to exercise agency appears also to be linked to their perception of what they feel is possible for them to achieve within specific historical, cultural and sociological contexts (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). It is important to note that power structures that perpetuate the stigma that young people feel in relation to their care status, greatly impact their construction of meaning, self-perception, sense of belonging and agency (Ferguson, 2018). Identity is implicated in this process because it is conceptualised

as a dynamic search for a sense of self and social position that is informed and situated within sociocultural contexts such as families, peers and school, and can be negatively influenced by power structures that marginalise groups (Munford & Sanders, 2015). Erikson (1968) described adolescence as a period when identity crisis occurs as a young person actively develops their sense of individual identity through the negotiation of resources. Erikson acknowledged that the culture and environment determine whether the 'crisis' moves to a healthy positive outcome. As transition to adulthood occurs during adolescence, a focus on building and maintaining supportive relationships between young people and the surrounding system is especially crucial in helping them to ameliorate stress or 'crisis' and ensure successful engagement in post-secondary activities.

Relationships

A synthesis of resilience research in child development across five decades concluded that "Resilience rests, fundamentally, on relationships." (Luthar, 2006, p.780). Strong supportive relationships are identified in literature as key to the development of resilience (Driscoll, 2013; Luthar, 2006), and a determining protective factor in ensuring successful transitions (Coyle & Pinkerton, 2012; Reid, 2007). Successful transitions therefore do not occur in isolation but rather involves social interaction and active participation between an individual and the surrounding systems. How securely connected a person feels to other individuals or groups in a social context describes their sense of relatedness (Prince-Embury, 2008).

A predominant understanding of the impact of nurturing relationships on child development is offered by the Attachment framework. This describes how a child forms strong bonds of affection to a significant other during the sensitive or critical period of development typically from six to thirty months (Smith, Cameron & Reimer, 2017). The relationship of a primary caregiver to a child provides a secure base from which an infant can explore the world around them. Over time, trust is built with the child as they gradually move from dependence to independence and internalise their early life attachment experiences (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005). This creates their internal working model and shapes their future relationships (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005). Bowlby (1979) proposed that individuals who do not form secure attachments during childhood, due to inadequate caregiving and/or disruption to early attachment figures, can create negative internal representations of love, security and trust. They experience difficulties in understanding and preserving their relationships in adulthood (Rholes, Simpson,

& Stevens, 1998).

Studies have shown that for care-experienced young people, a history of lack of care and rejection influenced how they internalised and interpreted their interactions in care (Driscoll, 2013; Gaskell, 2010). Adverse pre-care experiences can have a long-lasting impact on some CYP, especially if their time in care provides an equally challenging and traumatic experience for them (Dixon, 2008; Driscoll, 2013; Ward, 2011). Stein (2008) found that the failure of the care system to help CYP make sense of the separation from their families and feelings of rejection greatly impacts a young person's ability to move on psychologically, trust and relate to others and develop a positive self-perception and identity. This can leave them feeling powerless and lost, lacking the agency to bring about positive changes in their lives (Jackson & McParlin, 2006). These experiences can severely disadvantage young people and reduce their life outcomes and opportunities (Jackson & McParlin, 2006).

The problematic usage of the Attachment framework

While the attachment framework has been used to understand and examine aspects of supportive adult-child relationships because of the emotional bonding and closeness between two people at different stages of development (Ragins & Cotton, 1999); the over-reliance of its usage by non-clinical professionals has led to an imprecise application of this framework to describe relationships and predict later personality development of CYP and their behaviour (White, Gibson, Wastell & Walsh, 2019). Woolgar and Baldock (2015) illustrate this point in their analysis and review of 100 referrals of adopted and fostered children for a specialist assessment of a complex range of social, emotional, and behavioural problems. They reviewed the symptoms each child was experiencing as described in the referral, and the explanations given by the referrers. Woolgar and Baldock (2015) found that attachment disorders were not only 'overidentified', in that the symptom information did not correspond to expectations for attachment disorder, but also more common issues such as depression, anxiety, autism, epilepsy, along with other conditions, were 'under-identified' when compared with prevalence statistics.

With attachment theory becoming embedded into policies and practice guidelines, imprecise use of terms such as good, poor, strong attachment or attachment problems by non-clinical professionals to describe the disposition of CYP has become more common place (Shemmings, Shemmings & Cook, 2012; Smith et. al., 2017; White et. al., 2019). It is important to note that such imprecise categorisation is inconsistent with the theory's usage of 'secure' and 'insecure'

attachments (Shemmings et. al., 2012; White et. al., 2019). Nonetheless, attachment descriptors indicate a scientific knowledge base for the legitimisation and justification of practice decisions made by professionals that can stigmatise CYP and their families (Shemmings et. al., 2012; White et. al., 2016). This can have grave consequences for family preservation as descriptions of a child's relationships and 'attachments' are salient for courts making decisions about contact and future placements, as well as inform threshold decisions about significant harm (Shemmings et. al., 2012). In addressing concerns about the misinterpretations of disorganised attachment in child welfare contexts, Granqvist et al., (2017) highlight that some infants may display disorganised attachment with one parent but not with other caregivers, to whom they may even be securely attached, therefore it is not a fixed property or trait of the individual child but tends to be relationship specific, showing only modest stability over time.

It is imperative that caution is exercised in the application of concepts from attachment theory with Shemmings (2018) asserting that social workers 'say what they see', rather than apply pathologising and imprecise theoretical language to explain their observations. In addition, professionals' observations are often made in naturalistic settings which fail to provide the clinical context in which the meanings of attachment classifications were originally derived (White et. al., 2019). Evidently, the identification of attachment patterns lends itself to diagnostic categories that promote within-child discourse, conceptualising non-standard relationship experiences within a frame of psychopathology and deficit (Smith et. al., 2017). This limits opportunities that invite change and does not fit with the social constructionist philosophical stance taken in this study.

The experience of relationships as transformative

Shemmings (2016) argues that the word 'attachment' is oftentimes used in place of the word 'relationship'. Using ideas of 'mattering' may be more appropriate than attachment in the context of this study to understand the impact of supportive adult relationships with adolescents who are beyond the 'critical' developmental period (Smith et. al., 2017). The concept of mattering is developed through co-constructed relationships of meaning, so where a young person feels they matter to others and to themselves, then they tend to do well, and the converse is also true (Smith et. al., 2017). Such relationships can develop irrespective of early attachment experience (Smith et. al., 2017). Many studies have shown that attachment patterns and internal working models may be transformed throughout the life-course (Smith et. al., 2017). For example, Rutter et al.'s (2007) studies of children

adopted from Romanian orphanages found that they mostly recovered from their early deprivation after receiving warmth, loving care and stimulation (Smith et. al., 2017). He reframed children's development as being about understanding the interactions between internal and external factors, introducing the prospect of developmental pathways rather than specific stages of development (Smith et. al., 2017).

Complimenting ecological systems theory, is Honneth's (1992, 1995) assertion that the interaction between individuals, between individuals and states, and between individuals and communities is rooted in the concept of recognition, which he describes as essential to the way the normative life of society is structured (Smith et. al., 2017). Honneth argues that recognition is interactive, reciprocal and changes over time, as it is produced through struggle. Honneth emphasises the foundation of positive relationships in terms of a basic moral demand for recognition and being recognised by others. This is in contrast to the singular focus on dyadic, familial and essentialised relationships, as represented by attachment theory (Smith et. al., 2017). Recognition therefore lends itself to a more holistic, reciprocal perspective on professional–child relationships that acknowledges the necessity for comfort, warmth and familiarity to be gained from close relationships with a small number of people. (Smith et. al., 2017; Turney, 2012). Getting to know the other and how to care for them is a process of mutual discovery which depends on communication and dialogue, though not exclusively (Smith et. al., 2017). Recognition becomes emotional when the relationship takes on meaning for each person, and involves establishing relationships as sources of support and well-being. This is characterised by mutual support/love, that is often framed as 'going the extra mile' for someone you care about (Smith et. al., 2017). The relationships deemed supportive by care-experienced young people undergoing multiple transitions will be explored further in the next section.

2.3 Supportive Relationships and the Corporate Parent

For this study, it is worth exploring how young people experience supportive relationships at vulnerable points, notably transition to adulthood, how these relationships mitigate risk factors and the mechanisms that enable young people to negotiate their surrounding environment. Driscoll (2013) emphasised the importance of personal relationships and social support. Social support refers to the interaction between individuals in the surrounding system and the quality of those relationships (Marion, Paulsen & Goyette, 2017). These may be formal (such as professional services) or informal in nature (such as family, friends and peers)

(Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). In terms of relationships and statutory responsibilities, the guidance for LAs makes it clear that when a child comes into the care system, the LA becomes the Corporate Parent. This term highlights the collective responsibility of the LA, including its elected members, employees, and partner agencies, towards the children they look after and their care leavers (Bradbury, 2006; DfEE, 2000).

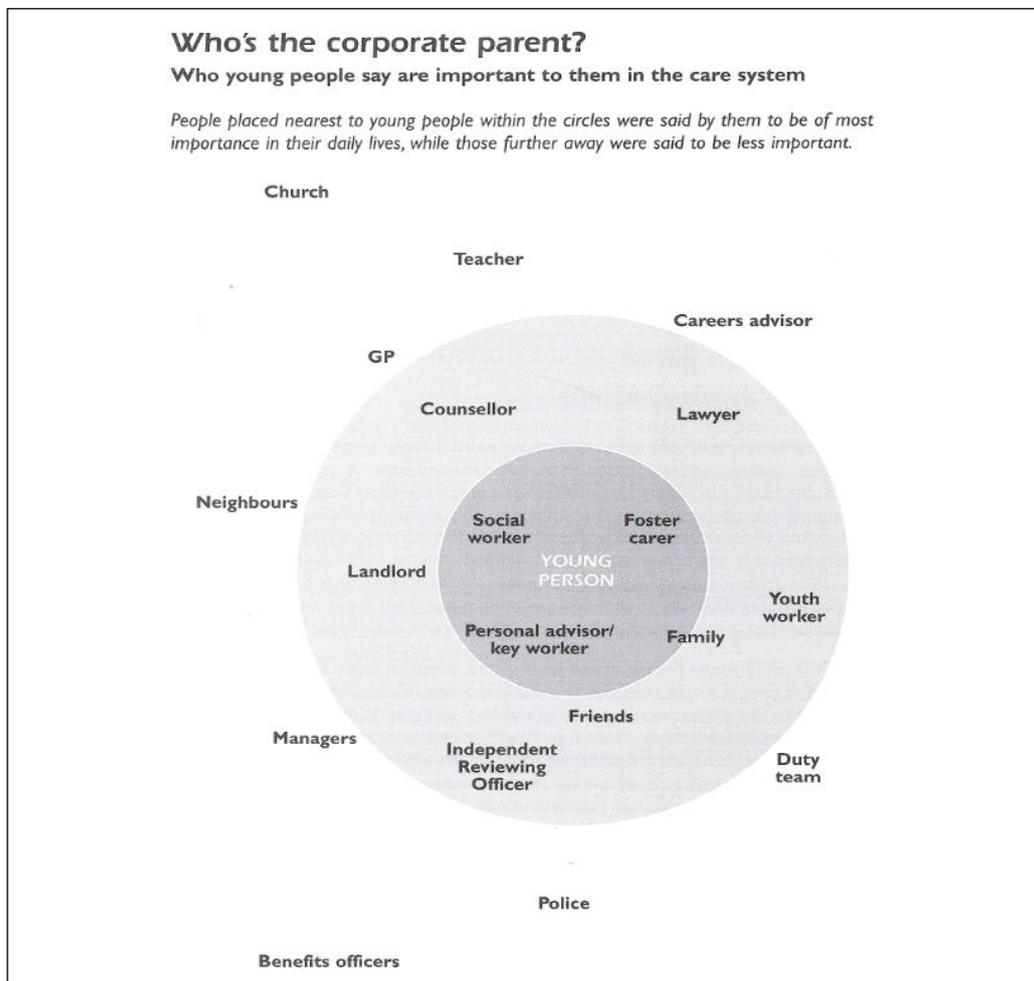
The role of the corporate parent was devised to ensure that children in public care received the same support as other children receive from 'good parents' (Bradbury, 2006). Where there is an absence of a shared and coordinated framework for responding to the needs of LAC and Care Leavers, this vulnerable group of CYP slip through the net without receiving appropriate intervention (Coman & Devaney, 2011). The role therefore places a demand on the LA to ensure that all strands of a child's life, such as health, care, education, leisure, friendships and future planning, are considered in a joined-up way (Bradbury, 2006). Ideally, the corporate parenting principles should facilitate secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for looked after CYP and enable positive outcomes for them (DfE, 2018). In adherence to these principles, the strengths, skills and resources of each parent should be used to the maximum advantage of CYP they look after (Bradbury, 2006). In addition, a clear understanding of the contribution of each parent is necessary to ensure efficacy of support without duplication of roles; involving only relevant professionals around a young person (Bradbury, 2006).

One example of efficacious practice was demonstrated in one LA that appointed a dedicated teacher to work full-time as part of the Leaving Care Team (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). Before his appointment, education was not prioritised in team discussions, rather the main concern was accommodation and employment. The appointment of a teacher to the team was to ensure all young people known to the team engaged in some form of further education, and in all suitable cases to aim for university (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). Interestingly, within five years the number of care leavers going to university from this LA had risen from one to 18 (Jackson & Cameron, 2014). The teacher not only provided educational encouragement and advice but also a high level of practical and emotional support that was much appreciated by the young people (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

Rainer's (2007) 'What Makes the Difference?' project explored the importance of relationships and the corporate parent. The project involved 265 care-experienced young people aged between 15 and 23 from 25 LAs. Young people's views were gathered through interviews on what they felt made a difference and what could

have made a difference while they were in and leaving care. Findings included the following: young people valued adults with whom they could form stable, trusting relationships with and especially those that take on the role of 'care parent'. This included foster carers, social workers, PAs and support workers/residential care staff. Other adults that were also mentioned were shown in figure 4. The relationships highlighted were arranged according to relative importance: those in the inner circle were viewed as more important than those in the outer circle and furthest away from the young person. Although Rainer's study provides insight into the types of relationships that benefit young people, it does not address whether the importance of these relationships for young people change over their time in care or as they transition out of care.

Figure 4: Rainer (2007) What Makes the Difference? Project



An earlier qualitative study by Allen (2003) examined factors that affected care leavers engagement with EET from young people's perspective. Interviews were conducted with 36 care leavers at two time periods a year apart. During both interviews, young people were asked questions relating to their supportive relationships. The study found that just after leaving care, professionals made up

42% of the support received, family members made up 24% and friends 26%. A year later, the proportions in the support received changed to 23% for professionals, 25% for family members and 44% for friends. The authors suggested that the reduced support from professionals and increasing support from friends may indicate a positive shift towards growing independence.

That said, instability and insecurity were found to be associated with the lack of continuity in relationships which may also account for the drop in professionals' support. Interestingly, the care leavers sampled in this study had only known 64% of the supportive adults for over a year highlighting the transient nature of many of the relationships. The professionals who did maintain consistent long-term relationships with young people were those relationships that were more informal in style and making the young person feel known and cared for. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the rest of the population, it raises areas for further enquiry pertinent to this current research, such as: how the change in density and permanence of formal and informal relationships might also impact young people's engagement with post-secondary activities. This is worthy of further examination in order to address gaps in support and mitigate risk factors during transition.

In the next section, the value of some informal and formal relationships will be briefly explored.

2.3.1 Informal Supportive Relationships

For many care-experienced young people, family relationships are characterised as problematic or missing (Stein, 2008). In a study by Driscoll (2013), young people described their relationships with their birth families as sources of stress and negative influence. Birth families were also found to not be involved in the future planning for young people. Ward (2011) noted that while some older teenagers tended to return to their birth families after leaving care, these relationships often broke down, leading to further instability. Leaving care at age 18 for many young people is a final event meaning that the opportunity to return to the care of the state or family is limited, thus presenting a lack of a safety net (Ferguson, 2018; Stein 2006). Having said that, relationships with extended families are more often described in positive terms by CYP, and maintaining that contact, helps fill that gap as they provide a sense of emotional permanence (Broad et al., 2001). Where arrangements were made for CYP to live with their extended families, they expressed feeling more safe and secure from the love received (Broad & Philpot, 2003).

Within the family system, sibling relationships were characterised as understanding and deeply emotional (Rushton et. al., 2001). A study by Brannen et al. (2000) found that sibling relationships held special importance to children including children from care backgrounds. The emotional bond between brothers and sisters meant they took each other's problems to heart, reacting empathically (Rushton et al. 2001). The Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies (2002) discuss the nature of sibling relationships. They summarise that sibling relationships of LAC are often complex, linked by biology and shared experience. This complexity must be considered when finding care placements for CYP. They also make clear that although placing siblings together can lead to more stable and positive experiences, the individual perspective of each child must be taken into consideration before deciding on placements.

In a study by Sinclair and Wilson (2003), the pivotal role of the foster carer relationship was explored. Inclusiveness, warmth, persistence, setting reasonable boundaries, respect for and liking the child were highlighted as characteristics that made for a good carer. They found a correlation between parenting qualities and placement outcomes for a child. They identified the importance of matching and 'having chemistry' (positive interaction) between foster carer and child for producing positive outcomes. Rejection was found to play a harmful role in undermining placements. Although overt rejection was rare, the study suggested that CYP's challenging behaviour often precipitated rejection as a response. Nonetheless, they highlighted the mediating role of carer commitment in mitigating negative outcomes, and responsive parenting in handling attachment difficulties and developing a child's self-esteem.

Positive friendships have also been found to help build self-esteem and social and emotional development (Brannen et. al., 2000; Dixon & Baker, 2016; Hollingworth, 2012). A study by Brannen et al. (2000), found that CYP from care backgrounds placed a higher value on peer relationships and friendships. They found that LAC placed a great reliance on friends, even though they had lower than average contact with friends. Dixon and Baker (2016) assert that opportunities to connect and share experiences with others from care backgrounds through a variety of forums including formal peer mentoring schemes or informal social events help the building of meaningful relationships with their peers. Emond (2002) suggest that peer relationships were important to care-experienced CYP because they had a choice in selecting friends, and were able to manage these, whereas they had no control over who they lived with or how they lived with them. That said, instability and feeling different to their peers and challenging life circumstances can make

forming and maintaining long-lasting friendships difficult for them (Kelly et al., 2016), and further increase the risk of social exclusion and vulnerability (Ridge & Millar, 2000).

Furthermore, distinguishing a loving relationship from a sexual one may pose a challenge for some young people. Barn and Mantovani (2007) suggest that emotional vulnerability increases the risk of teenage pregnancy for young people from care backgrounds. This vulnerability may at times add an imbalance to the relationship which makes them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, increasing their risk of early or unplanned pregnancy (Mezey et. al., 2015). Research shows LAC and care leavers are three times more likely to become teenage mothers than their non-care peers (Craine et al., 2014; The Centre for Social Justice, 2016). Duncan et al. (2010) highlighted that teenage parenthood may be positively negotiated by some young people and become a turning point for them, thus promoting a sense of purpose and connectedness (Mantovani & Thomas, 2015).

2.3.2 Formal Supportive Relationships

Care-experienced young people acknowledge professional relationships as necessary in meeting their practical, financial and in some cases emotional needs (McLeod, 2010; Munro et al., 2011; Rainer, 2007). The study by Rainer (2007) mentioned previously, highlighted in particular young people's relationships with their foster carers, social workers and PAs as nurturing, making them feel cared for, making things better, being someone they could talk to and seek advice from. These qualities were experienced by young people in relationships they deemed as positive and caring, and was also found to be what made the positive difference overall for young people. More generally, Baker (2017) found that young people valued relationships with professionals who took a genuine interest, were reliable and responsive, showing a desire to help them achieve and go the extra mile. Where social workers are concerned, McLeod (2007) found that for children in care, having a positive and sustained personal relationship with their social worker promoted their well-being. However, greater emphasis on business efficiency in undertaking direct work with LAC (Morris, 2000; Trevithick, 2003), and the demands of pressurised workloads reduce the time they have available to build relationships where the young person feels relaxed and able to confide in their social worker (McLeod, 2007). Furthermore, these relationships need to be ongoing and positive before young people feel ready to talk about issues that concern them (McLeod, 2007).

Crucially, as CYP spend a large proportion of time in schools, ample opportunity is provided for teachers to develop sustained relationships with their students, often informally acting as mentors and advocates (Cameron, 2007). A small-scale study of care leavers in England by Driscoll (2013), explored the significance of supportive relationships in the context of resilience in enabling CYP to make decisions about their future and overcome setbacks in educational attainment. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven young people aged between 16–20 years. The findings highlighted the significance of not only teachers but also foster carers' support in young people's stories of educational success. Examples of young people achieving educational success in the face of multiple adversities was also evidenced in the By Degrees and YiPPEE projects. In cases where young people felt overwhelmed and considered dropping out, but managed to persevere, overcome their problems, and go on to complete their education successfully, a strong internal locus of control was implicated (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). This was characterised by their sense of ambition and a strong desire to build a more stable and happy future for themselves (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). The authors highlight that ultimately the young people's resilience was due to the presence of supportive relationships that provided a consistent source of encouragement, advocating for their education, ameliorating feelings of isolation and loneliness, and building their sense of belonging (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

In cases where foster carers and workers demonstrated positive attitudes and approaches such as attending school meetings, events and reinforcing school attendance, this helped young people stay in school and achieve educationally (Jackson & Ajayi, 2007). Foster carers who had themselves attended university and/ or had children who had gone to university, were better equipped to support LAC to achieve educationally, offering advice and practical support (Jackson & Ajayi, 2007). Additionally, Geddes (2009) emphasised schools and teachers as best placed to influence the educational paths of care-experienced young people. In terms of making a difference, young people especially valued receiving educational support from teachers/tutors that took a one-to-one format (Rainer, 2007). The quality of the relationship was key to the success of the support and found to improve care-experienced young people's school attendance, motivation, confidence, predicted grades and finding employment (Rainer, 2007).

Equally, professionals who provide employment support such as careers advisers, job centre workers, and benefits officers involved in developing careers, were

valued for their practical support in this area (Dixon & Stein, 2002). Young people who were encouraged to talk about what they wanted to do in future and share issues as they arose were more likely to remain in FE or training (Rainer, 2007). Despite these positive benefits, a 2012 survey by The Who Cares? Trust found that young people do not always get this type of support. The survey sampled 100 care-experienced young people in relation to careers advice. They found that almost half had not been provided with a meaningful level of input to support them making decisions about their future. In the absence of this support, young people sought advice from their carers, teachers and social workers instead. An Ofsted (2016) report supported these findings in its inspection of 17 FE providers, which revealed that careers advice at the point of transition from school to college was poor. Some learners felt that recommendations were made on what setting to attend based on proximity and links with schools rather than individual learning needs and interests (Ofsted, 2016).

Furthermore, adverse experiences can make it difficult for care-experienced young people to trust professionals in the absence of a consistent professional as a source of advice (Baker, 2017; Driscoll, 2013). Therefore, systems of support that include too many professionals, can be 'bewildering' or 'offensive' to some young people and discourage them from engaging with LA services (Driscoll, 2013). Equally a strong sense of self-reliance may hinder the formation of supportive relationships (Driscoll, 2013). Rainer (2007) asserted that where the involvement of many professionals becomes detrimental to the wellbeing of a young person, it falls to lead professionals to make decisions with the young person to reduce the number of adults in the surrounding system, as well as signpost them to support from outside agencies such as independent visitors and advocates whose involvement can make young people feel more stable and secure.

2.3.3 Mentoring, Befriending and Advocacy Services

Mentoring & Befriending

CYP in care seek at least one person who genuinely cares about them. Some already have genuinely positive relationships with their foster carer, a relative, teacher or a social worker; but many are missing out (Kersley & Estep, 2013). Mentoring and befriending schemes present a golden opportunity to bridge that gap for many CYP and is increasingly being recognised by the care system as a valuable investment for the young people it supports (Kersley & Estep, 2013). UK

government initiatives have supported the general use of these schemes to support LAC (Gilligan, 2009).

The terms mentoring and befriending often appear interchangeable. There are, however, very subtle differences. Both mentoring and befriending services use volunteers, however some mentoring programs may use professional (paid) mentors (Children's Commissioner, 2018). In addition, the differences may arguably be linked to the outcomes sought which fall into two main categories: 'hard' outcomes related to EET, or reducing offending behaviour, and 'soft' outcomes such as self-esteem and personal development (Clayden & Stein, 2005). Mentoring relationships are typically linked to hard outcomes – setting goals around learning, education, training and is likely to be time-limited (Kersley & Estep, 2013; Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan & Herrera, 2012), whereas befriending relationships have soft outcomes, with less formal aims, are more fluid and are longer term (Kersley & Estep, 2013).

There have been very few controlled evaluations of mentoring programmes in the UK, and far less have focused on the impact of this intervention on LAC and Care Leavers' outcomes. A study of care leavers by Clayden and Stein (2005) analysed 181 mentoring relationships (adult or peer mentoring) from 13 projects affiliated with the Princes Trust, and interviewed 17 young people. The young people were aged between 15 and 23. The study found that most referrals were made for young people seeking help with independent living skills, wanting a 'listener' or 'role model', help with relationship problems, building confidence and improving self-esteem and emotional well-being. Having a mentor for over a year increased the likelihood of young people achieving the goals set at the start of the match. In addition, the young people in the study reported that the mentoring could be improved by better matching and greater flexibility.

There is a much larger evidence base on mentoring in the US (Hall, 2003). Some studies show school-based mentoring (SBM) to improve self-esteem and school-based outcomes e.g. attainment and engagement, however the outcomes are varied (Randolph and Johnson, 2008; Schwartz, et. al., 2011; Núñez, Rosário, Vallejo, González-Pienda, 2013). In SBM programmes, interactions between youth and mentors are typically confined to the school setting (Randolph & Johnson, 2008), they tend to be less enduring and can be very costly to government bodies placing them at risk of closure (DuBois, 2011). A survey of 1000 mentoring programmes in the US, found that more than half (53.8%) had these concerns (Anuszkiewicz, Salmon, Schmid & Torrico, 2008). Although there is a demand for long-term mentoring programs, they are difficult to sustain, especially where

mentors are paid. Studies have shown that mentoring relationships which end prematurely harm vulnerable CYP (Children Commissioner, 2018).

Independent Visitors (IVs)

The Children's Act (1989) introduced legislation that gave LAC statutory entitlement to IVs whose role involves 'visiting, advising and befriending the child' (Hurst & Peel, 2013). IVs are adult volunteers who freely give up their time to be with LAC, doing things that the CYP enjoys. They use that time to talk and listen to CYP problems, decisions, and everyday issues (Hardy, 2007). As well as visiting and befriending a CYP, an element of the IV role is also to 'advise', which may add a 'mentoring' aspect to the relationship. LAs are to appoint IVs to those they are looking after if this type of support is deemed in the best interest of the CYP. However, LAs do not have to provide IVs for young people over 18 who have left care (Morgan, 2012).

Few studies have explored the relationship of IVs (Hurst & Peel, 2013). A qualitative study by Knight (1998) found that CYP were very positive about having an IV. Young people viewed their IVs as friends who they could go out with and talk to and who they felt could support them in their placement review meetings. Although IVs have different roles to Advocates, this study showed that IVs acted as unofficial advocates. A subsequent qualitative study by Hardy (2007) found that where CYP's relationships with family were poor or non-existent, the IVs greatly impacted a young person's life. For CYP who had been matched for longer periods, the relationship with the IV became more significant over time. The continuity of an IV relationship provides a 'sense of sameness (Hardy, 2007) which can serve as a protective buffer during ongoing periods of transition for young people. Oakley and Masson (2000) found that all the young people and volunteers hoped their friendship would continue irrespective of any placement changes.

It is difficult to establish a clear set of criteria for evaluating the work of IVs due to the unique nature of each relationship and the needs of each CYP, consequently the findings should not be generalised. This notwithstanding, the evidence gathered in the studies demonstrate the positive experiences of young people regarding their IVs. The views and experiences of CYP offer insight into the benefits of such services (Oakley & Masson, 2000), however it is worth noting that IVs are not made available to all CYP in care who qualify for them (Knight, 1998; Oakley & Masson, 2000; Morgan 2012). The persistently low numbers of CYP accessing this service may be due to insufficient IVs and the lack of awareness of the role among social workers and foster carers (Morgan, 2012).

Advocacy

The Children's Act (1989) also gives LAC the right to make representations and complaints to the LA regarding their care arrangements. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the expectation for children to express their opinions freely, and to participate in decision-making procedures that concern them, thus justifying a need for advocacy (DfE, 2018). Children's capacity to engage in decision-making have been addressed in legislation such as the Mental Capacity Act 2005, which set out guidance on supporting CYP with mental health needs.

The Care Leavers Act (2010) asserts that support from Advocates for LAC and care leavers should not be limited to complaint procedures. Advocates should also be considered for processes such as LAC reviews and social worker meetings where young people need to make representations about the quality of their care and support. It is crucially important that LAs share information about advocacy services with LAC. The benefit of having this support comes into focus when decisions are being made regarding a young person's readiness to move from their care placement (DfE, 2018).

The existing literature shows that CYP use advocacy services mainly for concerns that include issues with placements, child protection, and for support at meetings (Brady, 2011; Dunstall 2011; Oliver et al., 2006). The referral of young people to Advocacy services are typically made by foster carers, social workers, youth justice workers, family, and friends (Brady 2011; Harnett 2002). Although all CYP have a right to access independent advocates, potential barriers remain. Ofsted (2010) reported on children's knowledge on accessing an advocate. 1,113 young people were sampled. 56% said they did know about the service and 30% said they did not know what an advocate was.

In some LAs, parents, carers and friends have been welcomed as potential advocates for CYP, however, this practice raises concerns. CYP value confidentiality, and many report that due to the stigma, they were reluctant to disclose their care status with friends (Oliver et. al., 2006). Furthermore, there is potential for emotions to get in the way preventing family, carers and friends acting as effective advocates (Oliver et. al., 2006). A study by the Thomas Coram Research Unit (2006) captured the views of young people who have used independent Advocacy services. They found that most young people felt that having an advocate had been valuable and empowering for them. This made them feel listened to and more able to share their views and feelings. A survey of

advocacy services identified perceived benefits for children who used them including enhanced wellbeing and self-esteem, improved care packages and the reversal of decisions that were contrary to their wishes or welfare (Oliver et al., 2006).

The existing research highlights the importance of personal agency and supportive relationships as protective factors that help to develop resilience and improve the outcomes of care-experienced young people in responsive environments. That said, mental health is a risk factor that increases vulnerability and will next be explored.

2.4 Mental Health

Some of the factors that contribute to the development of mental health difficulties in LAC are related to growing up in poverty, witnessing domestic violence, parental mental illness or substance dependency, and/or experiences of abuse and neglect (Pinto & Woolgar, 2015). LAC present with high rates of both emotional, behavioural and neurodevelopmental difficulties (Pinto & Woolgar, 2015) due to their experience of trauma and difficulties that are over and above those experienced by their peers (Berridge, 2006). They are more likely to have a special educational need (SEN), and be significantly overrepresented in the number of permanent school exclusions (Evans et al., 2017; Sebba et al., 2015; Viner & Taylor, 2005), and in the juvenile and adult Criminal Justice System (which may also contribute to the NEET statistics). Layard et al. (2012) suggests that there is an association between the high rate of LAC and care leavers who are NEET and the high incidence of mental health diagnoses in this vulnerable population.

A 2001 survey focused on the prevalence of mental health problems of CYP in care in England. 2500 CYP between the ages of 5-17 made up the sample. It was found that 45 per cent of CYP in care have a diagnosable mental disorder compared to 10% of all children - a rate that is four times higher than that of the general population (Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin et. al., 2003; Mental Health Foundation [MHF], 2016). A mixed method study by Dixon, Wade, Byford, Weatherly and Lee (2006), analysed outcome measures for young people's transition from care to independent living. Standard measures were used to measure wellbeing. Data was captured from 106 young people 3 months before they left care (baseline) and 12-15 months after leaving care. The study found that mental health difficulties doubled from 12 to 24 percent between baseline and follow-up points with depression and stress frequently reported. Although the study

concluded that the demands on young people during transition to adulthood affected their overall health and well-being (Dixon et. al., 2006; Dixon, 2008), attributing cause to transition can only be assumed as there are so many other influencing variables.

Dedicated CAMHS service for CYP in care provide fast track access to mental health professionals and referrals to secondary and tertiary health care including arrangements for transition to adult services where needed (Rainer, 2008). Unfortunately, mental health services are overburdened, leading to the break-down in support that care leavers experience during transition to adult mental health services. Improving the mental health and wellbeing of CYP has featured highly on the government agenda in the UK for over a decade (Weeks, Hill & Owen, 2017). More recently, the Green Paper (2017) set out reforms that made three core proposals that aimed to create a pathway between schools, colleges and external agencies to help reduce the demand on mental health services (Weeks et al., 2017). On a pre-emptive level, this current research is important as its exploration of systems around young people including wider systems of support such as mentoring and befriending services will inform how they serve as protective buffers for young people against risk factors that adversely impact their mental health and wellbeing (Clayden & Stein, 2005; Stein, 2008).

2.5 The Pathway Plan and Transition to Independence

For the purpose of developing a strategic plan towards improving the educational outcomes of care-experienced young people, LA's are expected to collect and monitor data through PEPs (Firth & Fletcher, 2001). The views of LAC captured in PEPs inform social workers and education professionals including VS and DTs on best ways to meet the needs and interests of CYP in care (Hayden, 2005). VS and DTs have legal responsibilities for CYP of school age and are involved in completing the PEPs. However, from the age of 16 upwards, the PEP is completed as part of the pathway plan reflecting the LAs responsibility to all care leavers up to age 25, who are engaged in education or training (DfE, 2018).

In the absence of a DT for care leavers in colleges, the difficulty in gathering information from a consistent key adult who knows the young person hinders effective communication and information sharing between education providers. Driscoll (2013) explored the transition of care-experienced young people to colleges. The study sampled two LAs from which 20 students, 12 DTs and 2 VSHs were interviewed. Significant barriers to communication were found between schools and colleges due in part to the absence of DTs from the transition planning

stages. The DTs felt that the responsibility for transition plans fell to the LA leaving care teams. With support from VS ceasing at age 16, schools were unclear about the support offered by colleges. VSHs also reported a high number of their students dropping out of college.

There has been a national policy drive to make FE colleges and training organisations more responsive to young people's individual needs in order to reduce drop-out rates (Swift & Fisher, 2012). In the UK, FE colleges are the largest provider of education for 16–19 year-olds, and one of the main providers of education for CYP from care backgrounds (Crawford, Meschi, & Vignoles, 2011; Fletcher & Perry, 2008). In addition to academic courses such as A-levels, these colleges also provide a wide range of non-school based or apprenticeship courses (Herd & Legge, 2017) and the opportunity to re-take GCSE subjects including English and Mathematics. A study by Jackson et al. (2005) found that young people from care backgrounds tended to study vocational rather than academic subjects, possibly due to a lack of self-confidence, low expectations and high-grade boundaries required for entry. Having said that, the uptake of vocational courses is still low among the LAC population. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) reported in 2016 that only around 3% of all young people in care aged 16-18 were on an apprenticeship last year compared to around 10% of the same age group in the general population. The report highlighted poor promotion and support as likely barriers to participation.

Arguably, the pattern seen here may also be due to the preoccupation of Year 11s with their leaving care arrangements. For example, Driscoll (2013) conducted a three-year longitudinal study of 20 LAC aged 15-18 (from years 11-13) who were followed and interviewed. The study found that LAC in year 11 faced challenges that hindered successful educational transition to FE, citing real concern at the cumulative effect of multiple transitions at this stage on young people's lives. The link between stability and continuity in supporting care leaver's successful transition to post-secondary education was highlighted in several studies. The YIPPEE project for example, identified stability of educational and care placement and positive relationships with carers who also prioritised education as key factors that promoted success (Jackson et al., 2011). This is noteworthy as the value of supportive relationships is pertinent to this current research. Further to this, the project highlighted that young people were provided the security to pursue their educational objectives by having a supportive adult in their lives who cared about them, celebrated their achievements, and encouraged their educational

aspirations. In addition, having suitable and stable accommodation and consistent personal and financial support was equally key (Jackson et al., 2011).

Studies that explore care-experienced young people's transition to employment and training are sparse. A quantitative study by Dworsky (2005) sampled 8511 former foster youth and found that young people who were employed while in care, secured employment far easier upon leaving care than those who did not. This finding compliments Parry and Weatherhead's (2014) critical review of research into the experiences of young adults leaving foster care services. Their analysis of relevant studies on young people who transition to employment and training, revealed that working and studying not only served as useful resources to develop resilience and independence, but also helped put distance between young people and their foster youth identity. In another study into the experiences of care leavers transitioning to independent living, the findings revealed that young people looked forward to gaining independence and the freedom to make decisions for themselves, however the reality of independence did not live up to their expectations (Baker, 2017). Difficulties cited were with low incomes, budgeting, and a lack of satisfactory housing options (Baker, 2017). In the face of challenges, some young people described themselves as survivors, adopting emotional self-dependence far advanced for their developmental stage in order to cope. They achieved things on their own even in the apparent lack of familial or consistent professional support (Parry & Weatherhead, 2014; Stein, 2008).

Young people often describe their transition to adulthood as falling off a 'cliff edge,' following the sudden reduction in the support services available to them (HM Government, 2016; CSJ, 2016). The transition to paid employment may mitigate some of the financial challenges that young people experience as they move to independence. In cases where care leavers continue to benefit from the presence of a positive relationship with a significant adult, educational and employment outcomes are far improved (Grossman & Bulle, 2006). However, for young people who experience unstable and unsatisfying foster care relationships, the likelihood of leaving care occurred earlier. They achieved fewer qualifications, and sometimes entered low paid or unfulfilling jobs (Stein, 2008). Where multiple factors overwhelm young people, such as mental health and emotional difficulties, frequent placement moves, unemployment, homelessness, isolation on leaving care, Stein (2008) asserts that strong supportive relationships become crucial for successful transitions. On this basis, the current research aims to develop the evidence base in this area by exploring the factors that facilitate successful

transitions to adulthood for care-experienced young people and address gaps in support that may contribute to increasing risk of poor outcomes.

2.6 Rationale & unique contribution

Most of the research relating to the education of LAC predominantly focuses on school age experiences up to age 16 (Jackson et al., 2011), however government statistics indicate that the largest proportion of LAC are represented at KS4 and post-16 (DfE, 2019). In light of the RPA that was introduced to encourage young people to stay in 'education and training' until they are 18 to improve educational outcomes, that national statistics continue to show their educational outcomes are far below that of their peers with only 17.5% of LAC achieving grade 4 or above in GCSE English and Mathematics, compared to 59.4% of all school children. Despite legislation to delay the age of leaving care to support better transitions to adulthood and work, the greatest increase in NEET numbers is seen for 19 to 21-year olds.

What is clear is that post-16 transition runs in parallel with many other pivotal life transitions (Jackson et al., 2011) which can leave young people vulnerable and enhance their risk of psychosocial problems (NICE, 2016). That said, it is worth exploring the relationships that young people find most meaningful and impactful in mitigating risk factors at this stage of transition into adulthood. This, in addition to the gaps in support that this research uncovers, will serve to further our understanding, and contribute to the knowledge production of best ways to support this vulnerable group through the demands of multiple and simultaneous transitions. The extension of statutory protection up to age 25, provides an opportunity for EPs as corporate parents themselves to develop a role in facilitating and supporting professionals, carers, and the young people (Dent & Cameron, 2003), in what can often be a complex transition process. This research will also add value to the profession by exploring the contribution EPs could make with this very vulnerable group when working with the extended age range.

2.7 The aims of the research

Within the parameters and timeframe of DEdPsy research, this study aimed to extend the literature by exploring the relationships that young people experienced as most meaningful and impactful in helping to facilitate their participation in post-secondary activities. This research was conducted through the lens of Transition and Ecological Systems theories. Young people's participation was not assumed to be a passive process but one in which the young person shows a level of agency. In addition, it was necessary to gain an understanding of how young people

experienced a range of relationships and how these contributed to their transition and how they attribute these to their outcomes. Both current and retrospective views of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 were sought for this study. The views of professional partners' (from LA and the voluntary sector/ care leavers charities) on supporting young people's successful participation in EET was also sought to inform and provide recommendations for practice.

Main research questions

1. What are the concerns, needs or anticipated needs of care-experienced young people during transition from KS4 to post-secondary participation in EET?
2. In exploring the supportive relationships around care-experienced young people, what factors facilitate young people's active participation in EET and how do they attribute these to their own outcomes?
3. What are professional partners' views on supporting young people to successfully participate in EET?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This section will first outline the epistemological and ontological positions taken in this research. This will be followed by a discussion of the methodology selected and applied, covering the approaches to data collection and analysis. Finally, the ethical considerations and protocols followed will be highlighted.

3.1 Philosophical standpoint: Epistemology and Ontology

The belief system and world view of the researcher influences how research questions are designed and the way the data is interpreted and reported. The researcher must therefore consider their philosophical standpoint in order to shed light on the conceptualisation of the knowledge generated in the research process. (Creswell, 2007). Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how we come to know what we know (Phoenix, 2002). This study adopts a social constructionist epistemological stance. The epistemic sense of social constructionism rests on the assumption that people's understanding of the world is constructed through language and that meaning making is subjective, resulting in diverse and multiple interpretations of individuals' experiences (Burr, 2003).

Ontology is the study of being and existing in the world (Phoenix, 2002). Realism and Relativism are the two main ontological positions with a third, Critical-Realism sitting in-between these two positions (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013). With regards to how the experiences of individuals shape their perception of reality, Relativism appears compatible with the epistemological stance taken in this study because it assumes that reality depends on human interpretation thus giving rise to multiple constructed realities (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco-systemic model underpinned by social constructionism is a theoretical framework used in this study to provide insight into the mechanisms and processes involved in the construction of an individual's known world. The model emphasises the active participation of individuals in the creation of their realities through interactive and transactional processes within developmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This model provides an ecological perspective for understanding mechanisms for developing resilience, and supportive professional-child relationships.

3.2 Research Design: A Qualitative interpretative approach

Whilst quantitative methods value objectivity and the generalizability of findings and patterns across the data, they tend not to capture the rich perspectives of participants, whereas qualitative methods recognise contextual data and endeavour to understand complex accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A qualitative methodology was adopted for this study and falls under interpretative paradigms. Interpretative paradigms have the potential to achieve high conceptual validity, which refers to the identification and measurement of the indicators that best present the theoretical concepts that a researcher seeks to measure (Starman, 2013). The current study examined young people's experience of transition points, notably the transition of care-experienced young people from KS4 to post-16. It was therefore important to consider carefully the qualitative interpretative approach that would be most suitable in capturing the participants depth of experiences within their individual contexts.

With respect to the epistemological and ontological stances taken in this current study, this research used an interpretative multi-informant approach to interrogate the research questions. This approach was considered appropriate for this study as it allows for the in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives rich in knowledge about the topic under investigation (Wagner et. al., 2010). Such knowledge-rich perspectives inform understanding of the key concepts/constructs that provide meaning from the patterns in responses (Wagner et. al., 2010).

Using multiple case study approaches was also considered for this study. While this approach provides a holistic approach for the interpretation of meaning through case descriptions (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013; Merriam 1988, 2009), it was deemed inappropriate for this study. This was primarily because case study approaches tend to be bounded in scope (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013; Merriam 1988, 2009), and much better suited to Narrative enquiry which focuses on stories as vehicles that reveal much about the meaning making within social and cultural contexts (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013). Although this approach had much to offer this study, the current study was interested in the transition points, notably the transition from KS4 to post-16. Capturing the complex and multifaceted life stories of a range of students had the potential to take focus away from this narrow period of interest.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) explores the lived experiences, and the meaning people attach to those experiences. It involves a double hermeneutic where, the researcher tries to make sense of the participant trying to

make sense of their world. The dual focus on individual cases allows for very in-depth analysis and makes it suitable for research involving very small sample sizes of four to six participants, forming a homogenous group (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2007). This approach was not considered appropriate for this study because of the sample size. Also, the diverse nature of this vulnerable group discounts them as a homogenous population.

Lastly, Grounded Theory as a qualitative approach was deemed inappropriate to adopt for this study as the current research did not aim to build a theory from the data outside of a theoretical conceptual framework or philosophical position (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013).

3.3 Participants

The sampling approach here was purposive and involved selecting participants on the basis that they will provide insight, and in-depth understanding from experience on the topic of interest (Patton, 2002). Participants were recruited through PAs, and social workers who had referred their young person to the EET Aspiration Panel (a panel that sits monthly to review referrals made for a variety of EET activities), from a London borough sixth form college, and from a Care Leavers conference.

Participants eligible to take part in this study had to meet the following criteria: (i) be between the ages of 16 and 25, thus reflecting the extended age range; (ii) be a care leaver or in the care of the state for at least one year; and (iii) be in their final year of school (Year 11) or have already transitioned to post-16 EET. It was necessary to have a minimum time in care as a criterion to ensure young people had sufficient care experience that they could draw on during the interview process. Researchers of vulnerable groups often face challenges recruiting participants from hard-to-reach populations of LAC (Dixon, Biehal, Green, Sinclair, Kay & Parry, 2013; Murray, 2005) and so participants from different boroughs were welcome in this study.

It was the initial intention of the researcher to include participants who were currently NEET as a distinct group, however participants who fell in this category were difficult to recruit and access. The decision was subsequently taken to include participants currently engaged in post-16 activities who may have had a previous history of NEET. In addition, the adult participants (i.e., professional partners) were recruited purposively through direct contact from the researcher, and the researcher's participation on the Aspiration EET Panel. The roles included in this

sample ranged from managers to professionals who work with young people on a daily basis across various systems – LA departments and one college setting.

The data included in Table 2A and 2B below contains the participant data for young people and professionals. The final sample comprised 17 participants: 12 young people from care backgrounds between the ages of 16-24 from three LAs, and five professional/adult participants from LA [A] and from London-based community voluntary organisations. All participants were fluent English speakers. For confidentiality purposes, participant names are pseudonyms chosen by them.

Table 2A: Young people’s participant information

	Local Authority	Age	Gender (Male [M] / Female [F])	Entering care age	Length of time in care	Number of foster placements	Current living situation	Number of secondary school settings	History of NEET	SEN
Delvine	A	16	F	5	11	2	FP	1	No	Yes
Frank	A	16	M	8	8	2	FP	1	No	No
Michelle	A	16	F	15	1	4	FP	1	No	Yes
Anna	A	18	F	7	11	Multiple	SEMI-I	1	No	No
*Yuri	A	19	M	15	4	1	SEMI-I	1	No	No
Jack	A	19	M	8	10	4	SEMI-I	1	Yes	No
Kira	B	20	F	17	1	2	INDPT	1	Yes	No
**Sarah	A	21	F	13	5	4	INDPT	3	Yes	No
**Cora	C	22	F	12	10	4	INDPT	2	Yes	No
Kingsley	A	23	M	9	10	2	INDPT	1	No	No
**India	A	24	F	13	5	4	INDPT	2	No	No
**Zara	A	24	F	13	5	2	INDPT	2	Yes	No
<u>Key</u> * UASC Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Child/ren ** Young people with dependants FP Foster Placement SEMI-I Semi-independent living INDPT Independent living										

For the young people, detailed contextual data (e.g. known SEN, history of NEET, future aspirations/goals etc.) is included in Appendix E – Participant Vignettes, and Table 1 of Appendix G1 which shows system layers & description of relationships as cited by the young people themselves.

Table 2B: Adult Participants' information

	Gender (Male [M] / Female [F])	Role	Years/ Experience	System
Derek	M	Director for Inclusion and Opportunity with overall responsibility for SEND/ College SENCO	5+	LA - A
Dinah	F	Virtual School Inclusion Coordinator for children in care	10+	LA - A
Margaret	F	Adult Social Care (Young Adult Service) Mentoring Participation and EET Coordinator	10+	LA - A
Naomi	F	THF Charity - Care leavers program Manager	5+	Community/ Voluntary
Mollie	F	DF Charity - Head of youth engagement	2+	Community/ Voluntary

A sample size of between 15 and 30 individual interviews is a common range used in research that aims to identify patterns across data (Terry & Braun, 2011), however for qualitative research no rules apply for sample size (Patton, 2002). Rather factors that should be considered are the quality of the data, the time available, and establishing a sample size conducive for generating enough data to tell a rich story (Braun & Clarke, 2013). These factors influenced the design of this study, and the analysis of the data generated from the sample size chosen revealed a level of saturation in that new data was not generating substantially new ideas (Bowen, 2008).

3.4 Methods of data collection

Research methodologies under interpretative paradigms typically use subjective approaches to data collection and analysis, thus adopting qualitative methodologies. Interpretative paradigms, however, also offer the flexibility to employ quantitative methods in addressing the research questions (Simons, 2009). For this study, a mixed-method approach to data collection was used during face-to-face meetings with participants. Careful consideration was given to the selection of tools appropriate for capturing the rich views and experiences of young people from care backgrounds, being mindful also that some topics of exploration may be sensitive for some participants. The different methods for data collection deemed

appropriate for this research included questionnaires, ecomaps and semi-structured interviews. The reasons for their selection are discussed below.

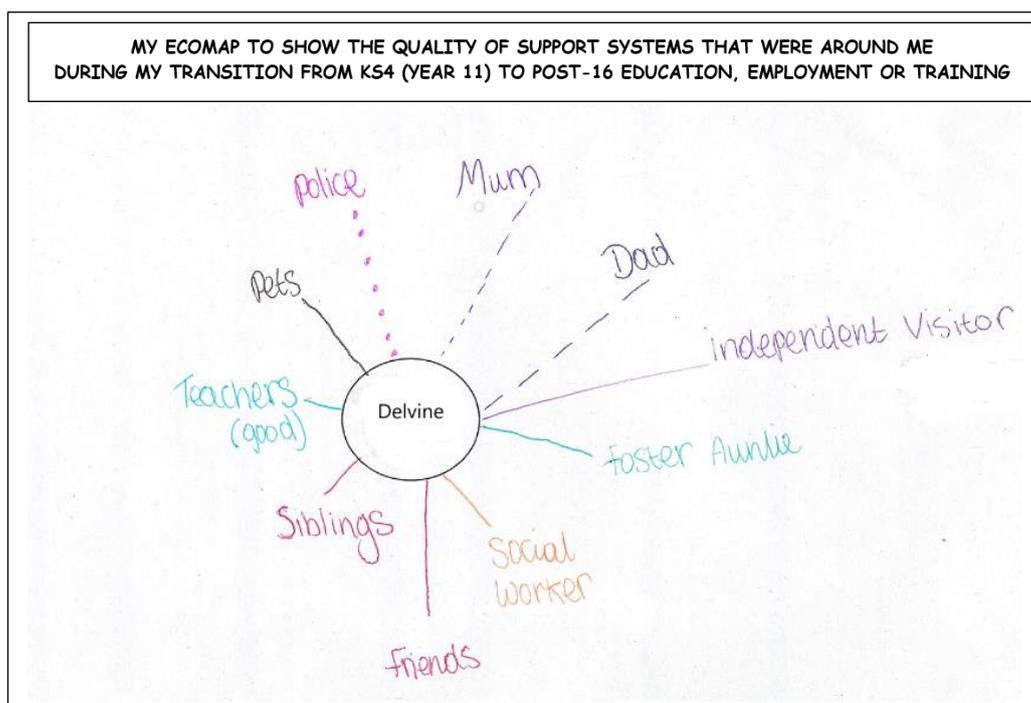
3.4.1 Tools used to elicit data from young people

Use of Questionnaires and Ecomaps – fed into RQ1 and 2

A short questionnaire was designed to quickly capture the demographic data of the young people. The contextual data included: age, gender, languages spoken, length of time in care, current education, EET status, previous history of NEET and reasons etc. The questions mostly elicited responses through tick-boxes or rating Likert scales. This was purposefully done for the ease of quantifying the data. See Appendix B – Short Demographic Questionnaire. Such information can be useful in revealing patterns and potential themes in the experiences of young people (Hill, 2010). Descriptive reporting of quantitative data generated from the questionnaires was used to support findings. The questionnaire took about 5 minutes to complete.

The Ecomap is a visually creative method of data collection. It was used to capture, organise and explore the relationships in a young person's life. The ecomaps were also used to facilitate discussions during the interview stage about how these relationships influenced the young people's outcomes. The ecomap has a standard pre-formed design (see Appendix C1) that captures in a diagrammatic format the relationships that surround the young person. The young person is placed at the centre (circle) of the ecomap, and in dialogue with the researcher, the participant explores systems of support/ relationships they feel have influenced them during their transition to independence/ adulthood. The relationships that surround the young person are placed around the centre circle and the young person is asked to draw different types of lines to indicate the nature of the relationship. For example, a strong relationship indicates a solid line, a weak relationship indicates a dashed line, while a stressful relationship indicates a dotted line. Some participants chose to represent a stressful relationship with a zig zag line. This flexibility in approach was allowed in order to encourage free expression of thoughts and views. Figure 5 below provides an example of a completed ecomap. Completing the ecomap took approximately 10 minutes.

Figure 5: Example of a completed ecomap by a young person



As the ecomaps provided a less formal way of engaging participants, it helped to build rapport quickly and put the young people at ease. The ecomaps stage was found to be particularly helpful for gaining insight into the complexities of narratives that were at first difficult for young people to remember especially for older participants. The images produced provided a tool to communicate experiences more consciously and holistically (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013; Weber, 2008). See Appendix C2 for more examples of completed ecomaps.

Both questionnaires and ecomaps have their limitations; notably their inability to capture in-depth views of participants, however their use in this study fed into and appropriately supported the interview stage.

3.4.2 Tools used to elicit data from young people and adult participants

Use of semi-structured interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews provided the tool for generating rich data and the opportunity to explore the contextual information provided on the completed questionnaires and ecomaps. Semi-structured interview techniques allow participants to talk openly and for the researcher to keep the interactions focused (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Major & Savin-Baden, 2013). This was achieved using an interview protocol (pre-set questions that the researcher can add to in response to participants comments), thus allowing for further exploration of topics

relevant to the research as they arise (Bell, 2005). In this way, participants can steer the discussion towards the issues that are pertinent to them, and in turn enables the researcher to be attuned to participant responses and get as close as possible to the lived experiences of the young people (Cohen et al., 2011).

This flexibility in questioning was an advantage that was helpful in maintaining the rapport built between the researcher and the young people in the initial questionnaire and ecomap stages, and also helped to minimise researcher influence. Semi-structured interviewing as a method of data collection is not without its drawbacks. Compared to other forms of data collection, interviews are time-consuming not only in their administration, but also in the transcription process (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Smith and Osborn, 2003). Furthermore, the data generated can be difficult to analyse and ensure reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2013). To improve reliability in this study, the researcher routinely asked participants some clarifying questions in order to check that the interpretation of the meaning conveyed was close to the participant's expressed representation of their realities.

Power dynamics may present further challenges when conducting interviews, especially with CYP from vulnerable groups who appear less forthcoming with their experiences (Hill, 1997). Building rapport with the young people through a combination of formal and creative data collection methods worked to minimise this during the interview process.

Initially, Focus Groups were considered as a method of data collection for the adult participants in this study due to its potential to: elicit a wide range of views, provide insight to the shared understanding of issues across various systems (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Underhill & Olmsted, 2003), develop depth in discussions and generate data quickly from a group of participants than individual interviews (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013). Despite these advantages, this method of data collection was discounted after weighing up some issues such as the potential for participants to influence each other's responses and the challenges this might pose for the researcher to ensure equal participation. This form of data collection also has added ethical issues around confidentiality and poses some challenges to data transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.4.3 The Interview schedule

The interview schedule for the young people and adult participants contained questions that covered areas identified by the literature review and relevant to the research questions.

The schedule for young people

There were two main topic headings in the interview schedule for the young people: Context and needs of young people during transition (relating to research question 1) and Relationships & Systems of support (relating to research question 2). The questions for the young people were formalised through trialling a preliminary interview schedule with two young people aged 16 and 21. Academic supervision was also used to guide this process. From the young people's engagement with the questions, a number of changes were made (see Appendices D1 and D2). After conducting the preliminary interviews, the decision was made to remove questions, such as age, length of time in care etc as such demographic data was already being captured in the questionnaire. It was necessary to rephrase the wording of some of the questions to improve clarity. Also, the sequencing of some questions was changed as participants pre-empted topics before they were asked (at a much later point in the schedule). Changing the order allowed for information to flow logically when evoking similar threads of thought (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). New questions were also added as these topics were highlighted by the young people as they spoke of their experiences. When eliciting the skills that young people felt they had developed as a result of the support they had received, it was necessary for the researcher to use a prompt as some participants struggled to articulate this clearly (Smith, 1995).

The schedule for adult participants

The questions in the interview schedule for the adult participants explored more generally their views on supporting young people to successfully participate in EET (relating to research question 3). The questions were designed to probe the professionals' day to day experiences of working with young people (see Appendix D3 – Interview schedule for adults). The aim was to gain a sense of the issues and systems they felt were effective in responding to those issues. The questions for the adult participants were formalised through informal discussions with professionals within schools, VS, and social care, as well as through academic supervision meetings.

The questions for interviewing young people and adults were designed to be open, using clear and concise language to minimise differences in interpretation of the questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kumar, 1999) and increase reliability (Smith, 1995).

3.5 Procedure

For participants referred through PAs and social workers from the LA [A] EET Panel (n=7), the young people provided a date and time most convenient for them to meet. The Adult Social Care premises was chosen as a preferred location for data collection (completing questionnaire, ecomaps and interviews in one session) as young people were familiar with the premises. A quiet room was booked in advance for the interviews. For participants recruited from the college (n=4), the College SENCO suggested a day and time that guaranteed the students would be present. Interviews conducted in the college took place in a quiet room. All the students were provided the information sheets and consent forms before the interview process began. For participants recruited from conferences (n=1), contact details were exchanged with the researcher. Information sheet and consent forms were then sent to them by email. When interest was expressed to take part, a suitable location and time was agreed. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Just before the interview process began, participants were again provided with the opportunity to hear about the aims of the research and what their participation entailed. They were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and the processes involved for data collection. Participants were reminded that their identity would be kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality, they could withdraw from the interview at any point, they could skip questions they preferred not to answer and have a key person in the room with them. Once written consent was received, the students were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire. The next stage was for the young people to create an ecomap with the researcher to capture visually the relationships that surrounded their lives.

In dialogue with the researcher, the young person was helped to explore systems of support/ relationships that influenced them during transition to independence/ adulthood. The ecomap built with each young person as well as the questionnaire were referred to during the interview stage. The process of administering the questionnaire, ecomap and the completion of interviews lasted approximately one hour.

For the adult participants, information sheets and consent forms were emailed ahead of the interviews. For LA staff and staff from charity/ voluntary organisations, interviews took place in LA meeting rooms that were pre-booked. For the college SENCO, interviews took place in the SENCO's office. Following the gaining of

written consent, the interviews commenced, and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. These were also audio recorded and transcribed.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Full ethical approval was obtained from the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee. The Ethics form submitted can be viewed in Appendix M. As all participants were aged 16 and over, informed written consent to take part in the research was sought from them. Details of the research was provided on an information sheet which covered the study aims as well as what their participation would require (see Appendix A1 and A2). As already previously highlighted, the researcher spent time building rapport with the young person before starting the interview. It was important to be mindful that the target group for this research would likely have experienced traumatic events and significant disruption in their lives, including the involvement of many adults and professionals over short periods of time. To minimise young people's disengagement from this process, both questionnaire and interview questions were designed not to be too invasive about past experiences but to focus more on what can be done to help support young people in future. Support to complete the questionnaire if required was provided by the researcher. Sensitive conversations were not anticipated however participants were reminded that they could skip questions or shorten answers if they felt they needed to. Also, following safeguarding procedures, the young people were informed that they could have in the room with them a named staff member or known adult with whom they were familiar with to offer them support should they become distressed/uncomfortable. If they became distressed, they were reassured that the interview would be terminated immediately, and the designated safeguarding officer and/ or a trusted adult immediately informed so that appropriate support would be provided them.

3.7 Data Analysis

Responses from the questionnaire were used to build a demographic profile for the young people in this study (see Young People's Vignettes – see Appendix E). The data was also quantified to produce a tally chart of young people who felt worried and supported during their transition to post-secondary activities – see Appendix H1-5). Thematic analysis was conducted on the short responses derived from the short demographic questionnaire and the interviews. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This method adopts an interpretative approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

and is compatible with the philosophical positions taken in this study and research design. In thematic analysis, two approaches to the generation of themes are noted as theoretical/deductive and inductive. An inductive analysis describes the process of identifying themes from the data (bottom up) without reference to the existing literature and the researcher is assumed to have no experience or disciplinary knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2013). A deductive theoretical analysis on the other hand, is guided and shaped by existing theory and researcher's disciplinary knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This research is framed within philosophical positions that seek to explore participants' subjective experiences. Willig (2001) argues that the use of researcher's preconceived categories is not compatible with qualitative research that seek to explore meanings, and as such deductive theoretical analysis limits findings. Flexibility in qualitative research is necessary therefore to allow new ideas and categories of meaning to be identified. In terms of data analysis for this study, it is acknowledged that the researcher's professional experience/disciplinary knowledge may have influenced the analysis, however, the approach to the analysis was inductive, and the findings were verified with previous research. Unpacking these in more detail helped to add value to the existing literature.

3.7.1 Generating codes and themes

Interviews were fully transcribed and listened to several times to increase familiarity with the data. The data from young people made up one dataset and the data from the adults made up another dataset. The contribution from professionals was considered to be distinct from the young people's data due to their role as corporate parents, with expertise to provide unique insights at a systems level. Codes were drawn out from the rich accounts. Initial/first level codes were identified from the analysis of the individual interviews (see Appendix F for one example) and then compared across the dataset for relevance. Codes were grouped together to form the themes and sub-themes.

When analysing some of the data from the young people, the dataset was split into two age bands. This was done primarily to emphasise some emerging patterns which were more common for a particular age band (16-19; 20-24). For example, Support workers were cited in the narratives of young people in the higher age band and who had transitioned to semi-independent living. Also, befriending support was not evident in the 20-24 age group. Funding/ financial assistance was also significant in the narratives of those in the 20-24 age band who were no longer eligible for the government's 16-19 bursary fund, but still aspired to go to university.

Highly relevant themes should reflect the majority of participants (Joffe & Yardley, 2004), therefore the following was used as a guide when reporting findings for the young people's data only.

All young people (12 participants) ages 16-24

Table 3A: Whole dataset: Relevance of quotes (n=12)

Frequency of accounts	Across the whole sample (n=12)
1-4	Less common
5-8	Common
9-12	Strong

Young people ages 16-19 (6 participants) and 20-24 (6 participants)

Table 3B: Split data set: Relevance of quotes (n=6)

Frequency of accounts	Across each age group (n=6)
1-2	Less common
3-4	Common
5-6	Strong

The flexibility that thematic analysis affords in relation to the coding of data and establishing themes, added to its suitability of use for this study. This method of analysis however, is not without its limitations. Most notably is that its focus on analysing patterns across datasets does not lend itself well to providing a sense of continuity and contradictions within individual accounts. The risk of losing the voices of individual participants also increases especially when dealing with large sample sizes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Performing qualitative content analysis on some areas of the data helped to minimise this.

3.7.2 Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis converts qualitative data to numerical data in order to show frequency of responses or codes, and similar to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Maryring, 2004). In qualitative content analysis, the focus is still on the content, however a tally of the words used is recorded (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013). Following the generation of codes, the frequency of the usage of the content or codes became the necessary subject of analysis to address research questions 1 and 2 in a number of areas: Identifying the types and frequency of support at each layer (see Appendices G3 and G4), the number of young people who felt

worried and supported during transition to post-16 activities (see Appendix H1), the nature of the worries or concern during transition to post-16 (see Appendices H2 and H3), the frequency of unmet needs expressed as ideal support (see Appendix H4), a tally of areas of need and responsiveness (see Appendix H5), young people's outcomes and attributions/ influencing layers (see Appendices I1 and I2). Valuing the voices of the young people, and to aid transparency, all relevant quotes associated with the above sections listed, were tabulated and included in the appendices.

3.7.3 Reliability

Reliability relates to the possibility of the same results being generated when the same measures are administered (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Yardley, 2016). This is problematic for qualitative research as the interpretation of participants' experiences is inevitably influenced by the researcher's own experiences, values, and beliefs, and the resulting production of knowledge. Braun & Clarke (2013) argue that the inter-rater reliability as a means of increasing reliability is problematic because of the assumptions that coding of qualitative data can be objective. Having said that, employing open and transparent process when analysing data is necessary in qualitative research (Yardley, 2016). For this study therefore, the views of fellow researchers and academic supervisors were sought with regards to the interpretation of the data and the reflexive notes kept by the researcher. Reflexivity contributes to the openness and transparency of the research by acknowledging the reciprocal influence of both participants and researchers experiences on 'co-construction' and meaning-making (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013; Willig, 2001). Included in Appendix L is the researcher's brief reflexive summary.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents an outline of the themes and sub-themes drawn from the analysis of two separate sets of data. The first set of data was generated from the young people in this study and captured through the use of short demographic questionnaires, ecomaps and semi-structured interviews. The second set of data was generated from the semi-structured interviews from the adult participants. Two overarching themes resulted from the views and perspectives of the young people that took part in this study (see Table 4A), and pertain to research questions one and two only. A further two overarching themes resulted from the views of adult participants (see Table 4B) and pertain to research question three only. The themes generated are supported by illustrative quotes.

Table 4A: Thematic table: Themes present in the accounts of young people's experience and negotiation of the care system.

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Theme 1: The System: Care and insecurity/ instability	1.1 Relational poverty
	1.2 A fragmented sense of belonging and identity
	1.3 Instability and multiple transitions
	1.4 Further adversities
	1.5 Coping with and masking vulnerability/ Surviving
Theme 2: The System: Contexts of support	2.1 Strong supportive relationships and types of support
	2.2 Areas of need and responsiveness
	2.3 Agency & Negotiating support
	2.4 Outcomes & Attributions

Table 4B: Thematic table: Themes present in the accounts of adult participants/professionals' experience of working with young people.

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Theme 3: Factors that challenge the system	3.1 A young person's realities and established barriers
	3.2 Disparate processes across Local Authorities
	3.3 Stretched resources
	3.4 Gaps in communication and availability of information
Theme 4: Empowered corporate parenting	4.1 Knowing the young person
	4.2 Growing meaningful support across systems

4.1 Thematic Findings

Theme 1: The System: Care and Insecurity/instability

This theme captures the challenges that young people experience at various points of their journey, specifically their entry into the care system, their duration in care and their transition from Year 11 to post-secondary activities. The latter oftentimes

coinciding with their transition to independence. From these points of reference, young people highlight their care journey in a context of insecurities/instability. Where the abbreviations **(TM)** and **(NEET)** are used, this denotes participants who became *teenage mothers* during the transition period, and those who had a history of NEET.

Subtheme 1.1: Relational poverty

The separation of young people from supportive relationships and familiar surroundings as they enter the care system was evident in the accounts of **four** young people in this sample, and therefore a less common subtheme. They highlighted some difficult feelings and emotions arising from the rupture/ changes in their lives and relationships, which created uncertainty.

Anna was separated from her parents and siblings and described the experience as hard to deal with.

ANNA, 18 *"...the court just said you're going to be in foster care. I got separated from my mum and dad and went off to a new family. I was really young like seven, so I didn't know anything at the time. Contact with my younger siblings just got cut off, so it was a bit hard to deal with that. A lot of them don't even live in the UK anymore. The social worker said contact is not possible because they're still adopted...and there's the confidentiality".*

Both Sarah and Cora spoke of geographic relocations that separated them from their familiar relationships and surroundings. Sarah spoke of feeling isolated while Cora described the experience as horrendous.

SARAH, 21 *"I felt so isolated because everything I'd ever known is London, so it made absolutely no sense for them (social services) to put me in foster care in Manchester. Literally the only reason why I was in Manchester was because my uncle had moved to Manchester and I moved with him. When things broke down, they should have moved me back to London. I went to Reception, primary school and secondary school in London, all my friends were in London".*

(TM)
(NEET)

CORA, 22 *"My mum had got alcohol-related dementia because she was an alcoholic. I kind of made that phone call...and put myself into care, and me and my brother got separated. The move felt like they were taking me away from everything I knew...my auntie and uncle who were basically like my mum and dad, you know...and I was sadly separated from that support".*

(TM)

Kingsley who was not a UK national and was in the care of his aunt, entered the care system. This separated him from his family here in the UK, and his native country. He described the experience as confusing.

KINGSLEY, 23 *"My aunty brought me to this country in 2004 and I was living with her. When I started school here, the teachers recognised certain things and called social services. I was taken into social care...and lost contact with my family back home in Bangladesh... I had only been in the country for a few months by this point, so I didn't know any English. I had an interpreter, but it was all still very confusing...all my stuff was just put into a bag..."*

Subtheme 1.2: A fragmented sense of belonging and identity

The adverse care experiences for some young people living with their birth families, and the continuity of these experiences into their foster placements was evident in the account of nine young people and was therefore a strong subtheme. Unsurprisingly, young people describe their pre-care experiences and relationships with their birth parents as weak or stressful (see Appendix G1) due to the following reasons: physical abuse/ threat, parental mental health issues and physical/geographical separation (also see Appendix K for corresponding quotes).

Accounts of weak and stressful relationships with at least one foster carer continue in young people's experience of their care placement, with most citing neglectful care/being made to feel separate from the foster family. Some examples of these quotes are given below.

DELVINE, 16 *"I was there [first placement] until I was twelve. I didn't like it there. I didn't like the foster parents. If we were in trouble, they would slap us. I told my social worker about it all"*

JACK, 19
(NEET) *I've been suffering from insomnia for a long time and when I was in care, my foster carers, they knew I wasn't sleeping, and they didn't try to sort that out for me or anything. They just thought well he's just a bad kid for not sleeping".*

KIRA, 19
(NEET) *"It was just like a segregation – I'm the foster kid and you know, I'm only there because they get money and stuff like that to have me. They went out sometimes without letting me know so it was just very clear that I was the foster kid..."*

CORA, 22
(TM) *This second placement was an isolating time. I spent the two years pretty much living in my bedroom. They had children of their own and it felt very much like you were the foster kids and these are our kids. This was demonstrated through the fact that on a weekend, they would all sit down together and have a takeaway or something whilst me and my brother would be upstairs in our bedrooms doing nothing".*

Kingsley cited cultural differences, but with time, he was able to overcome these and have a positive experience.

KINGSLEY, 23 *"I was first placed with an Indian family...it was a bit of a shock at first cos I'm Bangladeshi. There was a difference straight away including the food. I did live there for a good amount of time, so things got better. I actually learned the language as well".*

India cited that her breaking of curfews and verbal confrontations made her placement insecure.

INDIA, 24 (TM) *"In the first foster placement, I stayed out quite a lot. Once you stay out past a certain time, they have to call the police. We had a big argument and it was kind of like we can't have her here no more, she needs to leave. So, the next day, a police officer came to the house and I left there..."*

For Kira, Cora and India, their care experiences also had an impact on their sense of identity which they characterised as losing one's confidence, direction and sense of self.

KIRA, 20 (NEET) *"... because of all the stress of going into care and stuff, I lost a lot of my passions, and hobbies and I didn't know what I liked anymore. I was just thinking you know, what could I be good at, and because my confidence dropped, I didn't think I'd be good at anything, and I just didn't want to go to uni anymore".*

CORA, 22 (TM) *"When I was about 16, I had no sense of self. I felt lost. I didn't know who I was. I was just really, really lost. I think now that I'm older, and I've been in positions of vulnerability, I can understand what my mum went through cos I almost ended up in that same cycle where I hit the bottle. I had to identify with it in order to steer myself away from it".*

INDIA, 24 (TM) *"I used to have dreadlocks, and my dad had dreadlocks. By the time I was in the second foster placement, I just cut them off one night... I can't remember what I was going through or what I was thinking at that moment. I think maybe I felt different and just wanted to fit in...or take on a new identity...I don't know".*

Losing confidence and direction persisted in the narrative of Sarah and Cora who became pregnant as teenagers while in care. For Sarah, she felt she was not equipped with the necessary skills to cope with the multiple changes she was experiencing, while Cora felt her pregnancy would hinder her from achieving her goals.

SARAH, 21
(TM)
(NEET) *“When I found out I was pregnant, I wasn’t thinking about a career anymore. I knew I was smart, and I knew that I could go out there and be someone...I just didn’t know how to, so I just became a stay-at-home mum and a girlfriend”.*

CORA, 22
(TM) *“I’d always wanted to take the traditional route; GCSEs, A-levels, university, get a car, get a house, not have kids until I was like 27 or 30, so when I found out at 17 that I was pregnant, I was just like genuinely not ready. My confidence was knocked. Having a baby for me was the end of my world. For me, it meant I couldn’t go to university, I couldn’t pursue my dreams and I couldn’t have a career and everything else...”.*

Subtheme 1.3: Instability and multiple transitions

Placement instability and constant moving around was a common subtheme in the accounts of **six** of the young people in this sample. Repeated changes in foster placements, transitions to semi-independent and independent living were reported as adding to young people’s challenges to engage in education.

The young people mentioned that the moves were unsettling and emotionally difficult, causing stress and anxiety for some. This impacted on concentration, behaviour, punctuality and attendance for some young people, with two dropping out altogether as a result of the increased distance from the college.

ANNA, 18
Foster placement moves *“The constant moves were just stressful. It just put a lot of like anxiety on me. I always felt nervous about where I was going, whether I would feel safe or comfortable in that house. I had like behaviour problems. I wouldn’t be able to concentrate... sometimes I wouldn’t go to school...it affected my attendance”.*

INDIA, 24 (TM)
Foster placement moves *“When I moved to my third foster carer’s house, I had to travel from east to north London for school. It was a bit long. She wanted me to move to a school that was closer to her, so I moved. I got into a lot of arguments in the new school. It was difficult to settle there”.*

ZARA, 24 (TM)
(NEET)
Move to independent living. *“I was in college when I moved from semi-independent to independent living. The move made it harder to get to college because I moved further out. It was quite a journey actually, but I couldn’t do anything about it”.*

The increased distance from college, in addition to a lack of monetary funds was implicated in the difficulty Jack had in sustaining his participation in further education. However, Sarah who had secured funding to start her college course, missed out on the opportunity to begin her studies due to the problematic timing of her transition to semi-independent living (referred to as the mother and baby unit).

JACK, 19
(NEET)
Move to semi-independent

"...when I started college, that's when I went into a semi-independent and it was hard, being in this new place...and it was like a two-hour bus ride from my school; whereas before moving, I was living like five minutes away from my school. I didn't always have oyster money, so I would just end up walking, and it took like three hours and stuff like that, so I'd always turn up late or not bother".

SARAH, 21
(TM) (NEET)
Move to independent living

"To be honest, I never really felt like I was settled. But when I was moved to the mother and baby unit, this changed. I started to feel settled and even decided to apply to a college nearby. I was entitled to Care to Learn, which means my daughter's childcare would be funded while studying. I was only 18 at the time and that funding stops when you're 19 so I didn't have a lot of time left. I got accepted and was supposed to start at the college, but then social services moved me to the other side of London. It was like a two-hour journey to commute so that just didn't make any sense, so I didn't go to college after that".

For Kira, moving to independent living during term time and the responsibilities of setting up household amenities affected her attendance. She states:

KIRA, 20
(NEET)
Move to independent living

"When I moved to my council property, there were times where I'd have to take days off school because like the gas engineer was coming. I couldn't just tell them to come next week because I needed the gas straight away, and that would fall during school times, so I had to miss out quite a bit of school".

Subtheme 1.4: Further adversities

This subtheme captures the risk of further adversities that young people face as they transition to college and/or leave care. This was found to be a less common subtheme evident in the accounts of four young people. Kira spoke about developing poor mental health which meant she could not cope with the demand of her course and so disengaged from education. While Cora, Kingsley and India spoke about poor money management and making poor choices which made falling into debt inevitable. Their quotes are given below.

KIRA, 20
(NEET)

"They (first college) put so much stress on me that I started missing a lot of school...it was very bad, I went like, downhill...Erm...this is when I went and actually started taking medication for depression. I'd missed literally like weeks and didn't hear anything from the school...they just ended up writing me a letter saying... 'Oh, perhaps school's not the best for you' sort of prompting me to leave, so I left".

CORA, 22
(TM)

"You know, in care, you have an allowance for everything, and the system makes you accustomed to that almost. Then when you move to independent living, you have nothing. I still wanted nice clothes and I had an image of what I wanted my home to look like so I took out a lot of pay day loans...spending money I haven't got. Just complete and utter irrational thinking and I got into a lot of debt...but it had a lot to do with low self-esteem, and depression.

KINGSLEY, 23 *"My foster carers opened an account for me and saved for about a good five years so that when I got to 18, I could have that money. But I was a bit stupid. I just went and bought a car. That's another regret of my life and this made living independently so much harder...I learned the hard way and a lot of debt got piled up".*

INDIA, 24 (TM) *"I struggled to manage money at that point of transition...it's so easy to fall into debt which happened to me. I feel we should get me help with this..."*

Subtheme 1.5: Coping with and masking vulnerability

The ability to cope with adversity and mask vulnerability was found to be evident in the accounts of four young people and a less common subtheme in this sample. The young people spoke about coping strategies such as remaining detached as a response to multiple social workers and pretending to be fine to hide emotional vulnerability. Where there were gaps in support, the risk to young people was increased.

ANNA, 18 *"I've had more than 20 social workers...I can't keep count...student social workers, all different types of social workers. The first time one left, I was just like why is this happening to me? But you just get used to it and feel nothing...I just block out everything that's happening, and try to study, try and get on and get a good education...you just got to do it somehow...."*

JACK, 19 (NEET) *"I missed a lot of school cos of my depression. The GP was just like, take antidepressants or we'll pretty much send you to a unit, like a mental health unit where you're always being watched. So, I kind of just cancelled the whole thing and stayed away from the meds, because I was fine...I wasn't, but I had to pretend like I was."*

SARAH, 21 (TM) (NEET) *"It became very difficult for me to make friends...I was someone who was scared to get close to someone because then I'm leaving. Why do I want to build this relationship with my foster parents and have this great relationship then leave? It was always easy for me to leave, always...I just don't get comfortable".*

CORA, 22 (TM) *"I was adamant I could fix him and nobody knew I was in an abusive relationship. I was very naive and I just wanted somebody to love me and pay attention to me. I have very low self-esteem and what I thought was love was actually far from it. I fell pregnant with Ollie, and was still able to sit my exams...yeah I really covered up the abuse well..."*

Theme 2: The System: Context of support

This overarching theme captures the formal and informal supportive relationships referred to in the narratives of young people and the overall responsiveness of the system in meeting their needs. Furthermore, young people's perception of the approaches of carers and professionals in helping or hindering their access to support is also discussed.

Table 1 of Appendix G1 shows 26 layers (A to Z) of support which were identified (as strong, weak or stressful). These were organised into four main systems: Informal system - (i) Parents/ carers and family; (ii) Friends/peers and partners; Formal system - (iii) Professionals; and (iv) Community and Social groups. The 26 layers across the four systems, and the types of support these provide are captured in Appendices G1 to G5.

Subtheme 2.1: Strong supportive relationships and Types of support

For this subtheme, only the relationships that young people in this sample deemed as 'strong' was the focus, as these relationships could provide insight into the quality of support experienced as meaningful and impactful. The types of support that are more commonly cited by a particular age band (16-19; 20-24) and pertinent to post-16 transition, is highlighted where necessary. Exemplary quotes are used to support findings, however all corresponding quotes from the participants in this sample are given in Appendix G2 and G3.

Notably, the Foster carer layer (D) and School staff layer (I) yielded the highest number of occurrences of strong relationships, followed by the charities, layers (W and X), Social worker layer (O) and Friends/peers layer (F). From young people's accounts (corresponding quotes presented in Appendix G2 and G3), the types of support evident at each of these layers, were coded into 23 categories which ranged from Advisory support to Signposting/ referring to Support with post-16 pathway (giving room for some overlap in support) – see Chart of support in Appendix G4 and G5.

At the Foster carer layer (D), eight young people described at least one foster carer relationship as strong, while 4 young people described every single relationship with a foster carer as weak or stressful. In addition, this layer had the highest number of occurrences for weak or stressful relationships, which is reflective of some young people's accounts evidenced in the previous theme: fragmented sense of belonging and identity. Across the sample (ages 16-24), foster carers were most often reported to offer: emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to, language and cultural support, educational support, practical support to return to education and support with post-16 pathways.

Some exemplary quotes for support at this layer are given below:

Anna's response highlighted that the support she received from her foster carer was non-judgemental which also encouraged her to talk about her mental health.

ANNA, 18
Supported
with Post-16
pathway/
applications

"She helped me look through colleges. I picked this one and she's now like a governor here. She knows a lot about young people and how to support them. I'm able to talk with her about what I've been through and like mental health issues, without her like judging me or whatever..."

Cora found that the educational support she received from her foster carer made her feel that she mattered and was being invested in.

CORA, 22
(TM)
Educational
support

"When the second foster placement broke down, I was kind of going through my GCSEs, so it was the last thing I needed. The move to this third foster placement worked out because they really like guided me on what subjects to pick. Even when I'd come home from like a Psychology lesson, Eddy would be sitting at the table waiting for me and we would literally sit for two hours talking about everything that I'd learned. Not only did that tell me that he was interested in what I was doing, but it also helped me consolidate what I'd learned...and, you know, it was just that sitting down with me one to one at the end of the day that I'd never actually had before. I ended up getting a B in my AS level psychology"

At the School staff layer (I), nine young people described at least one relationship with a member of school staff, usually a teacher as strong, with two young people giving more than one example of strong relationships with multiple teachers. On the other hand, two young people described every single relationship with a school staff/teacher as weak or stressful. Across the sample (ages 16-24), school staff were most often reported to offer: educational support, protective & safeguarding support for all participants, support with peer relationships/ bullying, support with post-16 pathway/ general applications, advocacy support, emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to, and signposting/ referring. Exemplary quotes are given below:

Frank felt his needs were recognised when his teacher went out of his way to support him with his student oyster application.

FRANK, 16
Support with Post-
16 pathway/
general
applications

"I couldn't do my Oyster and Mr Samson stayed with me after school for a whole hour...I didn't know how to scan and things like that and he helped me. I would not have got that Student Oyster in time if it were not for him. It's nice when teachers go out of their way to help..."

Kira also appreciated her teacher who not only noticed the change in her behaviour at college but also supported her in taking steps to safeguard her emotional wellbeing and mental health.

KIRA, 20 (NEET)
Educational
Emotional
Signposting
Advocating

"...there was a lovely teacher I had last year. She would sit with me after school for hours to help me catch up cos I missed so much school... She noticed before I did that I just looked down every time she saw me around school. She kind of kept an eye on me until I started crying all the time like, and she just said to me you know, I think you need to speak to someone. She encouraged me to go to the doctors... I asked if she could write a letter to help me explain to the doctor what was going on, and she wrote me a

letter to take to the GP. She'd check up on me on emails and stuff like that, she was really nice".

At the Voluntary sector/ Charities layers (W and X), nine young people described the relationship with the adult or organisation as strong, with no young person describing any relationship in this layer as weak or stressful.

The Charities were most often reported to offer: support with the post-16 pathway including applications and careers advice, as well as support with Mental health and wellbeing for all participants. The younger age group (16-19) also reported emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to, mentoring/ role models, and befriending support, while the higher age group (20-24) also reported a higher prevalence of needing ongoing support with employability skills, advisory support, signposting/ referring, protective & safeguarding support and funding/ financial assistance. The befriending support was not evident in the 20-24 age group. Some exemplary quotes for support at this layer are given below:

Delvine appreciated her IV listening, advising and encouraging her especially during her transition to college which made her feel anxious, while Jack reported that the meaningful input from a charity counsellor helped him overcome his fears with re-starting college.

DELVINE, 16
Befriending support
– personal, social
emotional

"...she (IV) visits me nearly every month and likes art as well so when we go out, we visit Museums and art galleries...it kind of depends on how we feel, but sometimes we might just go out for lunch. I was worried about starting college and she would listen to me and give me advice. I'm really shy and don't have a lot of friends and she encourages me to talk to people. I've known her for four years now, so she definitely helps".

JACK, 19 (NEET)
Support with Mental
health and wellbeing

"...there's a service called LXP (real name not used), and they – I did some courses with them over the summer to deal with conflict and anxiety and that helped me a lot, especially with re-starting college. To be honest, I didn't want to go back to college because I was...I was a bit scared – I'd already been out for a year...and like I'm older than everyone...and that was also another worry. They helped me come out of my shell, become a bit more confident and improve my general wellbeing as well... I really liked my counsellor. He supported me back into college by helping me apply..."

Sarah spoke of receiving Career Advice, and support with entry into employment. She reported that upon gaining employment she continued to feel supported by her employers who themselves received training on how to work with care leavers.

SARAH, 21
(TM) (NEET)
Support with post-16 pathway/
employability skills
Signposting/
referring

“The Charity Career Adviser has been great in like finding out what I want to do. He helped me with interview techniques and to update my CV. His support was what helped me get the job at the Civil Service. Also...if you don't have like something to wear for your interview, they link you with another charity that provide smart work clothes. Even when I got the job and was working, they held like workshops at my workplace on resilience for employers. That was really good in supporting employers to support us care leavers”.

Cora who was in an abusive relationship, received support from a women’s charity that put measures in place to protect her from her son’s father.

CORA, 22 (TM)
Protective and safeguarding
Support with

“I had the support from The Haven, a women's charity, similar to Women's Aid. They assisted me in getting like a non-molestation order by doing like MARAC (Multiagency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings because Ollie's dad was turning up on my door and kicking my door down and all these kinds of stuff. So, yeah, they were really helpful in that aspect so I could continue studying with less interruptions”.

India was pleased to have received funding for her university course. This helped her to secure a place at the university, providing the stability to complete her course.

INDIA, 24 (TM)
Funding assistance

“GBD Charity (real name not used) paid for the nursery at the uni...they helped me basically get into uni and provided that assistance to help me finish uni. It was my Family Nurse that signposted me to GBD”.

At the Social worker layer (O), eight young people described one relationship with a social worker as strong, while four young people described this relationship as weak or stressful. This relationship was found to be strongest for young people in the lower age group and mostly weak or stressful for young people in the higher aged group. Although older participants were asked to give retrospective accounts of their care journey focusing particularly at the point of transition to post-16, the pattern seen here may be indicative of young people above 18, making the transition from social worker to PA, thus accounting for the decreased influence of the social worker for the higher aged group. Nonetheless, from the accounts of young people, there was a clear overlap in the role of the social worker and PA. Across the sample (ages 16-24), both social workers and PAs were most often reported to offer: Advisory support, emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to, and signposting/ referring.

Exemplary quotes are given below:

Michelle, Jack and Kingsley all highlighted the caring and attentive approach of their social workers or PAs in supporting them through times of difficulty.

- MICHELLE, 16 *"I'm really emotional at times and talk to my social worker about things. My previous social workers and the social worker that I have now, suggested CAMHS and they were right. They have made a difference".*
- JACK, 19 (NEET) *"My current social worker has really helped me and been quite nice. She's easy to talk to about stuff. She linked me with a Mentor (from the charity) to help me back into college. He talked with me about what I liked and what I would like for the future. She set up the mentor stuff".*
- KINGSLEY, 23 *"I told my PA what I wanted to do, like my plans for the future. She came across an opportunity that she thought I might be interested in and gave me a ring one day. She said this company was taking on apprentices...and it's not something they do often. As soon as she said that, I said thank you very much, I'll be there...".*

At the Friends/ peers layer (F), six young people described the relationship with their peer group as strong, while three described this relationship as weak or stressful. In addition, two young people in the higher aged group highlighted their romantic partners as strong supportive relationships also. Across the sample (ages 16-24), friends/ peers were most often reported to offer: Social and emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk. Specific to the higher age group, partners were also identified as offering emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to. Some exemplary quotes for support at this layer are given below:

Frank, India and Zara highlighted the sense of empathy from friends or romantic partners who are a constant support, who listen, respect and encourage them on their journey.

- FRANK, 16 *"...I have that group of friends ...close friends that I have known for a long time... they all motivate me—they might not have the same drive I have but they understand where I'm trying to go...".*
- INDIA, 24 (TM) *"I've got my friends from my first school who have been with me from the beginning and up until now and I feel like they've really helped me. I feel like they really help me to overcome a lot of stuff...just by listening and really being there".*
- ZARA, 24 (TM) (NEET) *"We've been together since we were 15 and I don't know, he's just been there ever since. Any ups and downs, we go it together. We talk through things which is so necessary, but we can also have strong mad arguments... At the end of the day, we're still here, still together, you know".*

Evident in the accounts of young people who had transitioned from children to adult social care, were the targeted layers (labelled Q to U in Appendix G1) in the Professionals system: EET Coordinator, Corporate Parenting Officer (CPO), Support workers, Finance and Housing. From these targeted layers, the Support

worker layer (S) yielded the highest number of occurrences of strong relationships in this sample. Support workers were most often reported to offer: Advisory support, support with post-16 pathway/ independent living skills, support with post-16 pathway/ applications and emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to for the older age groups (20-24) only.

One exemplary quote for support at this layer is given below:

Zara particularly valued the informal approach adopted by her support worker who often went above and beyond her duty in supporting her through her transition from secondary school to college.

ZARA, 24 (TM) (NEET) *“...So, I moved into semi-independent when I was 16, 17...and I was transitioning from secondary to college at the time...I had a support worker who used to come and visit me twice a week just to see how I was doing. I think her visits were meant to be like for an hour but she used to stay for longer than that. She helped me with filling out college applications, child-care forms, write my CV, housing issues, paying bills, anything. She even helped me with personal issues with my partner...she was great and gave really good advice. She was just like there on hand...twice a week for seven, eight months and was just a really good support...”*

Additional observations

From the chart of support in Appendix G4 and G5, the following observations are worthy of note:

1. Support provided at the various layers overlap, with ‘Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to’ cited most frequently across the sample.
2. The occurrence of support categorised as ‘signposting/ referring’ is highlighted only once in layer (O) Social worker in the chart of support for the lower aged group (16-19) and six times in the chart for the higher aged group (20-24) at these various layers: (I) School staff, (N) Family Nurse, (P) PA, (Q) EET, (R) CPO and (X) Charities, thus showing the greatest increase in this support type from the younger to the older age group.
3. The most supportive layer with the highest incidences of support type is the charities layers (W and X) across the sample and was strongly implicated in supporting the post-16 pathway for young people such as applying for college, jobs and preparing for independent living. This layer as previously discussed also showed the second highest incidence of strong relationships as described by young people.

While this research is focused on exploring supportive relationships and factors that facilitate care-experienced young people's active participation in post-secondary activities, the types of support they receive at prior stages of their care journey is equally important to provide context and understand the persistence of need. All corresponding quotes for this subtheme are presented in Appendix G2 and G3.

Subtheme 2.2: Areas of need and responsiveness

For this subtheme, the areas of need and responsiveness is explored and supported by the data in Appendices H1 to H5.

Areas of Need

Young people expressed needs and concerns that fell into nine categories (see Appendix H2 and H3): social relationship needs (e.g., Making new friendships bullying); emotional and mental health needs (e.g., exam anxiety, self-harming, self-esteem); personal organisation (e.g., organising workload, maintaining attendance and punctuality); educational support (e.g., needing a tutor, worried about meeting entry requirements for FE); financial assistance; surviving the multiple moves; guidance on post-16 options/ careers advice; mentor support; and needing support to apply for post-secondary activities. For two young people (Kira, 20 and Jack, 19), SEMH needs led to them becoming NEET. Some exemplary quotes are given below (also see Appendix H3 for all corresponding quotes). For one young person, Yuri, 19 (UASC), no needs/ concerns were cited.

Michelle's needs arose from the bullying she experienced at school which not only fuelled her desire to drop out of school but also made her apprehensive of her move to college. She states:

MICHELLE, 16 <i>Social relationship needs – bullying</i>	<i>"When I was in year 11...I wanted to leave school as soon as possible. The students there thought it was funny to like bully and harass you. I had concerns about moving from school to college because you don't know what school you're going to end up in and if them people from year 11 might end up in the same college and start the drama back again and all the stuff..."</i>
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For Kira, she felt she needed emotional support. She presumed her teachers would notice the changes in her behaviour and support her. When they did not, Kira felt overlooked/ dismissed. (In subtheme 2.4, Agency in negotiating support, Kira is generally proactive in seeking support but is less so when seeking emotional support).

KIRA, 20 (NEET)	<i>"I felt like I needed emotional support and I don't feel like I got that, and I don't know if it's because like, I was more quiet, but I kind of assumed</i>
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*Mental health/
Emotional needs*

teachers had training to identify when kids are struggling...in my last year of secondary school, I felt like the school did notice but they kind of dismissed it...".

Sarah's needs arose from the instability she experienced from the multiple moves. Unable to return to her old school to complete her education, her sense of belonging to a familiar community of learners was impacted, leaving her demotivated to even consider college.

SARAH, 21
(TM) (NEET)
*Surviving the
multiple moves*

"...When I moved to Manchester, I was probably 12...I did year nine and a bit of year 10 there, but I didn't finish year 10 cos I ran away back to London. I was then missing from education for a long time and when my social worker told me that I couldn't go back to my old school to do my GCSEs, this news crushed me. Without GCSEs, I felt like I was going to be behind, so I didn't even see the need to go to college. Trying to survive all the moves was my main concern".

Kingsley shared that the lack of careers advice support, left him unequipped to know his skill set and make the right course choice at college.

KINGSLEY, 23
*Needing guidance
on post-16 options/
careers advice*

"I did not get much support...like I don't think I received anything like careers advice and someone saying oh, I think you should do this because you're good at this. When I applied to college, I picked mechanical engineering because I thought mechanical engineering was to do with cars, but when I started the course, I thought 'what is this?' I had confused motor mechanics with mechanical engineering...".

India felt her needs arose from the absence of having someone one-to-one to encourage her with her education.

INDIA, 24
(TM)
Mentor support

"I had an 'I don't care' attitude. I didn't understand the seriousness of education and why I needed it. There was lots of emotional baggage to deal with...I wasn't really very interested—I was done with it. My social worker in a way highlighted the importance of education, but not my foster mom, not really. She made sure I went to school, but no one was pushing me to succeed. I think I needed a Mentor to talk to about things or someone one to one to motivate me and like push me to focus...".

The quotes recorded in Appendix H3 showed that seven young people (58%) cited needs that fell into three of the following categories: (i) social relationship, (ii) emotional and mental health and (iii) mentoring support. These categories of needs make up more than half of the sample, and thus a commonly cited immediate need during transition. Interestingly, the most common ideal support young people would have liked to receive was 'counselling/ emotional support/ needing someone to talk to'. This was also cited by seven young people (58%), again highlighting social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) as the most common unmet need. In addition to counselling support, one young person mentioned needing an Advocate, and another mentioned needing educational support. Some exemplary quotes are given below (however see Appendix H4 for all corresponding quotes).

Jack reported that unsupported mental health needs meant he could not cope with the demands of college. Although he recognised that he would have ideally liked counselling support, he was afraid to seek help.

JACK, 19
(NEET)
Someone to talk to:
Counsellor

“I moved to a new college but again, things went downhill. Just didn’t go into school, just couldn’t sleep. I was depressed, but I didn’t want to talk about it. I didn’t really feel supported, but I think like talking to someone like a Counsellor would have helped at the time, but I was too scared to ask for help”.

Sarah however stressed that she would have liked to have had the support of an Advocate for her education considering the multiple moves and instability she experienced, and a Counsellor who she felt could have helped her ameliorate the stresses of transition.

SARAH, 21
(TM) (NEET)
Advocate and
Counsellor

“...when I first got into foster care, I think a support that I wish I had was someone who was advocating for my education...and just someone who would say, ‘All these moves are not good for her.’ Do you know what I mean? I really did need someone to be pushing for my education because it felt like no one thought it was important. ...and just having like counselling because you don’t realise that what you’re going through is killing you on the inside until you just can’t take anymore, and you have like a meltdown. It’s not fair and it’s not normal and it’s not necessary for a child to move around so many times”.

System Responsiveness

The responsiveness of the system to young people’s needs was analysed in Appendix H5: System – Areas of need and responsiveness. Overall, 10 categories of need were generated from a combination of young people’s narratives of: (i) immediate needs and worries during transition to post-16 and (ii) the ideal support they would have liked to receive.

The data in Appendix H5 revealed that the varying types of support offered by layers A to Z in Appendix G4 and G5 could generally respond to the 10 categories of need, apart from personal organisation difficulties. Having said that, one young person’s responses (Jack, 19) implicate SEMH needs in the presentation of his personal organisation difficulties, which he described as difficulty maintaining regular attendance and punctuality.

JACK, 19
(NEET)

“...to be honest, the needs I had then was mental health needs. I was not doing good, self-harming and stuff like that. I pretended a lot like I was fine and because of all that, I was always late and had really like poor attendance. In the end, I just dropped out of school. I didn’t do the end-of-year exams... I was too scared”

Despite the general capacity of the support in the surrounding system to potentially respond to needs, the SEMH categories as mentioned before was a common need at point of transition and remained a common unmet need. Although the narratives of young people (presented in Appendices G2 and G3) implicate various layers in providing support for SEMH categories of need, much of this type of support was provided casually/ informally, while the involvement of some charities provided more focused support. These layers are listed below with the most influencing layers (as already mentioned in subtheme 2.1) highlighted in red bold text below.

Table 5: Incidences of various support cited at each level.

		The layers in red bold indicate the most commonly cited support for SEMH needs	
		For young people aged 16-19	For young people aged 20-24
Total number of incidences of various support cited at each level (also presented in Appendix G4 and G5)	8	Vol. sector/ charities	
	7		
	6	Vol. sector/ charities	
	5	EET	
	4	School staff/ teachers Virtual school	Foster carers School staff/ teachers Family Nurse CPO Support Worker
	3	Foster carers Social Workers**	Personal Adviser**
	2	Known siblings Friends/ peers School mentor/ counsellor CAMHS PA	Known siblings Friends/ peers
	1	Biological parents* Extended family/ relatives Pet GP Finance Police	Biological parents* Extended family/ relatives Partners School mentor/ counsellor Finance Housing Police Employer
	0	EET CPO Support Worker	

*Please note that although parental relationships were cited, the support provided at this layer was relevant for only two young people in the sample, Yuri, 19 (UASC), and Zara, 24 who explained that a more positive relationship with her mother was fostered after she left care. This layer remains a generally uncommon supportive layer for young people in this sample (see Appendix G2 and G3 for corresponding quotes).

**Also, the data showed overlapping roles of PAs and social workers.

Taken from questionnaire responses, the frequency and degree of young people in this sample who felt worried or supported during the transition to post-16 activities showed that 7 in 12 (58%) always or often felt worried, while 6 in 12 (50%) always or often felt supported. Despite only 6 in 12 always or often feeling supported, eight young people described having more strong supportive relationships than weak and stressful ones in the surrounding system. The four young people (Anna, Jack, Sarah and Kingsley) who reported having more weak relationships than strong ones showed the following characteristics: 3 in 4 (75%) had been in care for 10 years or more, 3 in 4 (75%) had the highest number of changes in foster placement, 2 in 4 (50%) had multiple educational settings, 2 in 4 (50%) had a previous history of NEET, 3 in 4 (75%) had retakes in GCSE English and/ or Maths, with one other taking Functional skills (instead of GCSEs) and 1 in 4 (25%) had a first pregnancy at age 16.

Subtheme 2.3: Outcomes and Attributions

As a result of supportive relationships in the systems that surround young people, perceived improvements in the outcomes of young people were highlighted. These improvements fell into 10 categories as given below (also see Appendix I1: Outcomes and Attributions).

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Confidence | 7. Personal organisation skills |
| 2. Communication/ social skills | 8. Resilience |
| 3. Academic Achievement | 9. Strong leaderships and mentoring skills |
| 4. Re-engagement with education | 10. Literacy skills |
| 5. Mental health and wellbeing | |
| 6. Life and independent living skills | |

The young people in this sample attributed these improvements in outcomes to the different layers of support they had access to, with an average of 3.3 attributions made per young person. The foster care layer (D), and the Charities layers (W and X) were cited the most by young people in their attributions (see Appendix I2 - Systems and Outcomes – Influencing layers). Two exemplary quotes are given below, however for all corresponding quotes, see Appendix I1.

Delvine attributed improved outcomes in her confidence and social skills to her IV and foster carer who she has enduring and positive relationships with.

DELVINE, 16 *"...in school I didn't have many friends, so if I was walking down the corridor or outside, my head would always be down low and I wouldn't really look at anyone, and if some people said, hi, I would just air them and walk away. But now, I say hi to people and I would not go to the shops by myself... I would ask someone else if they could do it. Now I go out by myself and I know how to give the right amount of money to the person, and I know how to talk to them. My foster aunty (carer) and Cheryl (IV) have helped me".*

Jack found the support from his counsellor (a more transient relationship) helpful in building his confidence.

JACK, 19 (NEET) *"...I've always been scared of hearing 'no', so I've just been too scared to ask for help, but I've been doing so a lot recently, my confidence has sky-rocketed. The LXP (real name of charity not used) helped my confidence 100%...and I'm now back in college and enjoying it this time. I'm actually the class representative...and really happy there. Their support has really helped..."*

Subtheme 2.4 Agency in negotiating support

This subtheme captures young people's sense of agency in relation to their negotiation of support. Eleven young people in this sample expressed being proactive in seeking support with some highlighting the types of relationships that facilitated their sense of agency.

For Yuri, he exercised agency in seeking support, distinguishing between personal and professional relationships for meeting particular needs.

YURI, 19 *"...I have to go and find support. You can't just wait there, cos people don't know, like what you need and how you're feeling. So, you have to go and ask for help. My friends, family and foster carers are my first choice to turn to about personal issues, because I am more connected to them personally and spend more time with them than other people involved. Then if they can't deal with it, then I've got the social worker...but sometimes I ask them to do something for me and they take too much time, while some others do it quickly".*

Yuri differentiated social workers as good and not so good by how quickly they act.

For Kira who felt proactive in seeking support generally, she felt less so when seeking emotional support.

KIRA, 20 (NEET) *"I'm very proactive. If I need assistance and help, I would go and get it. I'd call social services and just ask them for advice...but you have to make that kind of step to ask for help – they don't offer it...and I don't know if that's just how they are or if it's just because they know the sort of person I am...that I'll come when I need help... But I'm not always proactive in getting emotional and mental assistance. That was something that I needed a big push to do from the school. Social services weren't really involved in that push, but definitely my teachers were".*

Cora went beyond her established relationships to seek the support of an official Advocate, who amplified her voice in the decisions that were made about her living arrangements following the birth of her son.

CORA, 22 (TM) (NEET) *“The LA had bombarded me with assessments left, right and centre; PAMS assessments left, right and centre, trying to say to me that I was going to have to go and live in a mother and baby unit to be assessed. I know them places set you up to fail, you know, 90% of people that go into them leave without their kids, you know? I was like, that’s not happening, so I went and got myself an advocate”.*

Two young people India and Zara highlighted the importance of increasing young people’s knowledge of the systems of support available to them, so they know what support is out there to meet their needs.

INDIA, 24 (TM) *“Sometimes, I would ask for help. My Family Nurse introduced me to GBD (real name of charity not used)—I think there was something I asked her and then she went and looked it up for me. So, you’ve got to ask... I personally feel lucky with the people I met throughout my life, cos one girl said that her family nurse was non-existent, but then mine was very involved. I feel like at the same time, you’ve also got to know who and what support is out there”.*

ZARA, 24 (TM) (NEET) *“I wouldn't have known how to get support from certain areas at all like applying for college and childcare. If no one tells you how to do it, you're not going to know. So I think that it would be more beneficial if people knew the kind of support that they can use cos even things like counselling is really important for young people coming out of care to have... I think adults should be asking questions that would then prompt a young person to be like, “Actually, yeah, I think I need that support” because the young person might not always know what they need, especially when their emotions are confused as well...”.*

Delvine, indicated that she was not proactive in seeking support, highlighting shyness as a factor that impedes her sense of agency.

DELVINE, 16 *“I wait for people to see that something's wrong. It kind of depends on how I feel. I'm really shy...”.*

Theme 3: Factors that challenge the system

From the accounts of adult participants/professionals in this sample who work closely with young people from care backgrounds, this theme captures the challenges encountered within various layers of the system, specifically as young people transition from Year 11 to post-secondary activities.

Subtheme 3.1 – A young person’s realities and established barriers

Some of the realities that young people face, and the barriers that increase their likelihood to disengage are captured in this subtheme. Instability, poor attendance, and low academic achievement were highlighted by Margaret and Derek as limiting the EET opportunities of young people.

MARGARET *“There’s a lot of instability in young people’s lives and even just the number of professionals that are in and out of their lives, they begin to put a kind of a barrier up and don’t engage... oftentimes what our young people don’t realise is that when they start missing college or being late, they can lose their place at that college, and if it’s one of those colleges that sits under one umbrella college, it will affect them reapplying to attend any of the other colleges that come under the same umbrella college... Luckily for us I’ve got one of the college’s outreach workers in our office every Tuesday who can help bridge that gap for those at risk”.*

*EET
Coordinator*

DEREK *“Low attainment in literacy and numeracy means so many young people don’t have the requisite level two qualifications which is now a grade four or grade five minimum, and that’s a barrier. A lot of decisions, judgments are made on actual achievements and what they’ve done, and little consideration paid to circumstances so if they’ve been moving from place to place to place due to the system...that’s going to be a disadvantage when it comes to employment, education, and training. And I think those are huge challenges that can stop them accessing certain opportunities”.*

*College
SENCO*

In addition, Dinah highlighted that when young people enter college, the environment is less nurturing in the absence of those strong relationships forged in their secondary school years. Margaret also implicated further pressures during the transition period such as instant independence. These factors make dropping out of college an inevitable reality for some young people.

DINAH *“College is very different to school. Your teacher in school will know you very well, your strengths and weaknesses from when you were in year 7. Colleges on the other hand, young people aren’t in them for very long, young people move around them very quickly, they’re huge, they’re vast, the staff are very, very busy, and a young person can easily get lost in the system, and drop out altogether”.*

*VS Inclusion
Coordinator*

MARGARET *“Look, these kids are basically hand-fed, they get everything from the system, from 0 to 18, birthday money, holiday money, clothes money...and when it comes to their 17th year and 364th day, all finance stops, and they have to sign on for universal credit, and housing benefit etc. This kind of overnight or instant independence is like a cliff edge and can be a very daunting process. Once this happens, the stress of making ends meet adds to one of many factors that increases drop-out rates”.*

*EET
Coordinator*

Both Naomi and Mollie highlighted trauma as a factor that sets up barriers for young people to engage and continue with post-16 activities. Mollie also highlights the unnecessary criminalisation as a further disadvantage for young people who already face many challenges not least, a lack of a gradual transition to adulthood.

NAOMI *“They can hinder themselves if they’re not motivated. Then it’s a kind of an uphill struggle for you to kind of motivate or encourage them to go to this job interview, to stick at this job, to go to college on time. And obviously trauma is very real and everyone processes trauma differently, and as care leavers, you can process it even later. This can be very challenging for them”.*

*Care leavers
Program
Manager*

MOLLIE *“The trauma experienced by young people sets up barriers for them...and there’s the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. There’s heavy police presence in their lives especially in children’s homes and young people are criminalised ten times more frequently than their non-care-experienced counterparts who get the benefit of all that*

*Head of
Youth
Engagement*

nice and gradual transition period into adulthood. For a care leaver, the reality is just so much different”.

Subtheme 3.2 – Disparate processes across LAs

For this subtheme, the different ways of working between LAs was highlighted as a challenge to the system, particularly in pathway processes such as the application for Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) and PEPs for young people.

DEREK *“...going through the process for the education health and care plan to get the funding necessary to provide support, I have to liaise with five, six, possibly seven different boroughs and they will have different processes...and all have different thresholds to meet in order to ensure someone gets an EHCP. Wading through the different paperwork can be very time-consuming and add to the lengthy wait time for young people receiving support”.*

College
SENCO

DINAH *“Virtual schools have government guidance, but it falls to Local Authorities to raise their LAC teams however they see fit to do that. This leads to very different ways of working especially in the capturing of data for young people in the PEPs...even the ePEPs look different from borough to borough. I think if it was streamlined, with one policy that everybody had to follow in a particular way, I think it would help us better support young people coming in from other boroughs. Every LA designs their own, and so the data and even the way they are completed can be so different and does hinder the way we work with young people”.*

VS
Inclusion
Coordinator

Dinah further stressed the absence of the statutory role of the DTs in colleges as contributing to the disparity in professional practice in colleges towards young people from care backgrounds. The lack of a clear role with responsibilities widens that gap for young people to fall through. She states:

DINAH *“Raising the participation age does raise the bar for young people in terms of expectation to engage in EET when they finish school, but what the government didn’t do was enforce that up until the age of 18, so it’s very loose. At the moment, the statutory duty for LAC falls to the secondary schools. They also have to know the destination of where a young person is going, but nothing is monitoring whether or not they got there...because there are no designated teachers in colleges, and a lot of them are falling through the gaps. Also, if a young person is 16 and over, the PEP is done as part of the pathway plan, so a good college would want to be involved in this, but they don’t have to and can actually say, no, I don’t need to attend. It’s a little bit grey with the colleges unlike schools for whom it’s a statutory duty and the designated teacher attends the PEP meetings”.*

VS
Inclusion
Coordinator

Naomi who works for a charity organisation and not for the LA, mentioned this observable disparity in ways of working across different LAs as a factor that reduces equity across systems for young people.

NAOMI *“I work with three different boroughs and they all operate differently...and in some cases, some young people are getting better opportunities than others just because of how differently they all work. Do you get what I mean? If all young people were given exposure to the same opportunities regardless of what borough they lived in, it would make for a much fairer system”.*

Care leavers
Program
Manager

Subtheme 3.3 – Stretched resources

Limited budgets and funding cuts were factors that were strongly emphasised in this subtheme. Derek highlights the significant reduction in the support available to meet young people's mental health needs. He states:

DEREK
College
SENCO
“Sometimes, you need the human resource, the specialist. But then you need to have the budget to buy this in and it can be very costly. The last decade of austerity and funding cuts has meant that, you know, opportunities to support young people in a variety of different ways, youth clubs for example are no longer there. We have a lot of talk about getting funding for young people to have mental health support but the CAMHS waiting list is very long...these are significant barriers and young people don't get the support they need, and they struggle”.

Dinah links budget cuts to the increased demands on the widening role of professionals, and thus limiting the opportunities for professionals to work together. Naomi acknowledges that these challenges have created opportunities for LAs to contract different organisations to meet the needs of young people.

DINAH
VS Inclusion
Coordinator
“The attendance forum which is a multidisciplinary team meeting doesn't happen routinely anymore. It's about time, because you have to prepare paperwork, it's about money you know, the number of cuts that have gone through the LAs in the last five to ten years. People are stretched, everyone's doing four, five different roles, so to then invite them to sit down for an hour every other week is a lot”.

NAOMI
Care leavers
Program
Manager
“From my experience working with the PAs, they do have high caseloads. If the LAs don't have as much funding, resources, time to do stuff, it obviously makes sense to outsource. I know they (LAs) do that for some of the employability stuff, but employment is just one strand of what they have to focus on. There's housing, mental health well-being of the young person, their education, also helping asylum seekers get their stay. Young people don't understand there's wider systems that PAs have to negotiate on their behalves”.

Naomi further highlighted that target driven funding from governments incentivise charities to work with LAs. Despite these opportunities, Naomi stressed that challenges remain at a structural level when trying to work with care leavers who aspire to go to university. She states:

NAOMI
Care leavers
Program
Manager
“So if a charity has recently got the money from the government to get a hundred young people into employment a year, obviously it's in the charity's best interest to fulfil those targets by going out to as many organisations with young people including the LAs leaving care teams. However, it's kind of hard to do something geared to a particular group when no one holds that group in the LA. This is the case for young people who aspire to go to uni. There isn't an allocated person in the LA that you can liaise with...it's very scattered. So, let's say a University wanted to welcome care leavers, I would need to contact every single PA to see if they had care leavers interested in going to uni on their caseload. It makes ways of working with that group less straightforward”.

For these opportunities to be operationalised, Dinah shared that professionals still have to invest time and resources in administrative/ preparatory work in order for such partnerships to be effective.

DINAH *“Being able to work with external bodies, like charities creates work, so sometimes it’s not necessarily about funding alone, sometimes it’s about professionals within the LA having the reasonable capacity to do the preparatory work that will enable the charity to do their work effectively with the young people...”.*

VS Inclusion
Coordinator

In light of these limited resources at organisational levels, Mollie highlights that a young person’s agency in making a self-referral provides an avenue through which support can still be accessed.

MOLLIE *“In order to work with young people, we need to be funded to do it, but we’ll always accept self-referrals from young people. If a young person is proactive enough to get in contact with us or is signposted to do so, and they say hey, sign me up, we won’t turn them away”.*

Head of Youth
Engagement

Subtheme 3.4 – Gaps in communication and availability of information

For this subtheme, factors that challenge the flow of communication through the system, and the availability of information were evident in the narratives of professionals in this sample. Young people’s reluctance in sharing information about their care status was strongly emphasised as disadvantageous in terms of their access to support. Equally, increasing young people’s knowledge of what they can access as care leavers to help them exercise their own autonomy in ways that are beneficial to them was also highlighted.

DEREK *“The fact that they’re in care and not wanting to tell people that they are in care, because they feel it’s a stigma, and the fact they have had to endure physical and emotional difficulties; means there’s a whole side of them that they don’t want to show and it’s not immediately evident there may be a need. So they are not accessing the support. Now, if they’re under 18, there are safeguarding processes that enables you to share information, so they get that support. But if they are of a certain age and they make it very clear that the information they’ve told you cannot be shared, well then, you have to respect their wishes”.*

College
SENCO

MARGARET *“Not all young people identify themselves as a care leaver for a number of reasons and we can’t force them to, but we can encourage them to do so by explaining the benefits they can have when they get into college, uni or training”.*

EET
Coordinator

DINAH *“A lot of our LAC do not declare their LAC status, so they go in and colleges and sixth forms don’t even know they’re looked after, they don’t even know there’s additional hurdles that these young people are having to jump over. To encourage them to disclose their care status, I send out a post 16 pack every year, to every year 11 getting ready to leave school. It’s a pack that lets them know what they’re entitled to, what’s out there that can help them. It’s about educating them on what they are entitled to”.*

VS Inclusion
Coordinator

NAOMI *“Where the young people themselves are concerned, the knowledge gaps set them back. They don’t know what they don’t know. A great PA may pass useful information to their young person but then that knowledge is not equal cos not all young people know about it. One of the things that I try to do in my capacity is gather all the information I can from a wide network and give that to young people so that they can see the benefits of disclosing their care status and have the best possible outcomes”.*

Care leavers
Program
Manager

Derek further highlighted changes in internal structures, such as high staff turnover, in breaking down the flow of information.

DEREK *“When there’s been changes in internal structures because of staff illness, or high turnovers especially with social workers, this has led to a breakdown in communication and flow of information related to young people in care”.*

College
SENCO

In terms of information being made available in the local offer, some factors were highlighted by Derek and Margaret as potentially restricting and confounding some users.

DEREK *“The local offer is a starting point, but I still get queries from people who struggle to find information from it. In some instances, the contact information provided is out of date...The problem is that it’s too all-encompassing which makes it too unwieldy to find what you need. It’s too web-based and if you’re not proficient in IT or English is a foreign or second language or you just don’t have access to the internet...it makes accessing this information difficult. There’s some sort of... socio-economic disadvantage to being able to access information this way and sometimes I think people forget that”.*

College
SENCO

MARGARET *“Care leavers have access to the Care Leavers Handbook which is on the LA website. The local offer itself needs to be made a bit more youth friendly, it’s a bit wordy but it’s there”.*

EET
Coordinator

Derek further emphasised the selection of provisions in the local offer as oftentimes favouring services or organisations that are more well-known than smaller local ones, potentially limiting the information captured.

DEREK *“Some local offers are pretty good, but how accurate are the local offers because there’s always things springing about with pools of money or resources. But the provisions we are aware of, generally speaking, are the ones that have big campaigns and stuff like that. There’s little awareness of the smaller, more local level ones who could do fantastic work as well because they know the community, their catchment. It’s not possible for the local offer to capture all this”.*

College
SENCO

Theme 4: Empowered Corporate Parenting

This theme captures some of the factors that adult participants/professionals in this sample highlighted as empowering the roles of corporate parents in ways that enable the efficacious support of young people from care backgrounds.

Subtheme 4.1 – Knowing the young person

Attention was drawn to the importance of using child-centred approaches and processes to understand the needs of young people and support them appropriately to minimise their risk of becoming NEET. The value of having the early involvement of those who know the young person well was highlighted. In addition, processes such as the PEPs and the EET Aspiration Panel were implicated in the building of knowledge base about young people.

DEREK
College
SENCO
“We want a young person to be with us for two, three years, but sometimes, it’s not possible to keep them in the college. Finding an alternative solution that the young person is happy with early on, needs to involve them in that process, along with those who know their needs well and have supported them. We can be our own worst enemy when we try to keep a young person ‘cause we feel we’re doing the right thing. When the young person is not coming in despite having all the support, have we actually helped them feel heard, and understood?”

DINAH
VS Inclusion
Coordinator
“I think a key aspect to minimising the risk of a young person of looked after status becoming NEET when they move to post-16 activities is the year 11 PEP, their last year 11 PEP, regardless of whether they’re in or out of school. That year 11 PEP needs to have the right people in that space. The school PEP is statutory up until the age of 16 and then it’s done as part of their pathway plan up until the age of 18. It’s key because it’s part of their statutory documents that should paint an accurate picture of the young person at the earliest point before they transition”.

MARGARET
EET
Coordinator
“We share the same intake of young people, so the virtual school sits on the EET Aspiration panel. Dinah knows them well, and her feedback can be invaluable. The panel serves to get different services together to listen to the young person’s needs and work together to find ways to best support them”.

The stability of the educational placement and long-term relationships of professionals with young people were mentioned as protective factors that can influence positive change.

DINAH
VS Inclusion
Coordinator
“People have always looked at stabilising the care placement of LAC and by doing so everything else will be okay, but actually it’s a stable educational setting that can have the greatest impact. If a child remains in the same school from the age of 11, potentially up to age 18, those staff members are going to know them inside out, and be able to provide much needed insight for foster carer A, B and C...not forgetting also that social workers change frequently. It’s the consistent setting that will impact the greatest”.

NAOMI *“I’ve been at the charity foundation for five years, and work closely with the virtual school. I’ve known the young people since they were in Year 8 like 13 years old and have that relationship with them. I’ve seen them grow into young adults 4 years later...Having that relationship is what makes engaging with them a lot easier I find, and the fact that they still call me up for advice or still message me about stuff. That just shows they come back when they value your support”.*

Care leavers
Program
Manager

For external organisations, knowledge of young people’s needs has helped change the way they are supported into employment. Mollie states:

MOLLIE *“Big employers all have their kind of corporate social responsibility aims like we’ve got to get this under-represented group here. At first, the way we worked was like a kind of job brokerage. Employers need interns or whatever and our young people need jobs so let’s partner them up almost like a recruitment agency. And then when we got to know our young people, we soon found out that it needed to be more than that, more than just right here’s the job, go for it. There needed to be that kind of one to one intensive wrap around support because actually care leavers are going through so much, housing issues, mental health issues etc”.*

Head of
Youth
Engagement

Subtheme 4.2 – Growing meaningful support within systems

For this subtheme, effective ways of supporting young people to engage in EET activities was made possible through the involvement of wider support systems. An organisation’s knowledge of their strengths and limitations was highlighted in the process of forging meaningful systems of support.

MOLLIE *“We have a number of formal partnerships with corporates and LAs, and we’re also connected to other charities. We’ve got established communication with most boroughs in London. It’s about knowing your limitations and having that network there, being well connected so the gaps can be filled in together. Systems need to be working in collaboration”.*

Head of
Youth
Engagement

NAOMI *“LAs have to see what their strengths and limitations are and partner up with a youth organisation. I think 9 out of 10 times, the charity is going to be the best to engage with young people. If it’s employment focused, it might be in their best interest to go to an employment charity because they would have the expertise to really move the young people from A to B in terms of progression employment wise”.*

Care leavers
Program
Manager

Working with charities and bringing people together were highlighted as mechanisms that encourage collaborative practice and necessary for growing of meaningful support systems.

DINAH *“At the moment we do some work with a charity that is also working across several LAs and brings them all together. It’s a good avenue that’s effective in facilitating and coordinating collaborative practice”.*

VS Inclusion
Coordinator

NAOMI *"I'm part of the EET Aspiration panel that Margaret leads on and it's a great space that brings many employers together for this target group. The young people themselves are invited to sit with us to share their views, needs and interests. It's really good".*
Care leavers
Program
Manager

MOLLIE *"We bring people together through our breakfast mornings. We're not just an employment focused charity. For one of them, we invited loads of widening participation teams from universities. Universities might not necessarily know about all the support that's out there for young people. We put links on our website".*
Head of Youth
Engagement

MARGARET *"Finance, Commissioning, Housing, every avenue you can think off comes under the remit of being a corporate parent. Now when you think of those who spend a lot more time with that young person, like the key workers, their presence at the EET Aspiration panel is obvious".*
EET
Coordinator

Partnerships that widen opportunities for young people to engage in EET activities beyond the LA were highlighted very strongly in the area of work experience.

DEREK *"We engage with some organisations and charities to find work experience for our learners. It's just being able to know who...where to go, and then putting that all together in a meaningful package to signpost and support our young people".*
College
SENCO

DINAH *"Schools used to provide work experience but, not so much anymore. It's not a statutory requirement, so some schools still do it but a lot don't. We all know it's an invaluable opportunity for young people. As a LA, we are able to offer work experience to every looked after child through the T.H. Charity Foundation (real name not used). The hope is that work experience will support their transition into future EET".*
VS Inclusion
Coordinator

MOLLIE *"We've got corporate partners who might have ring fenced opportunities. The employment consultants will then help young people secure positions and take advantage of these opportunities. They help them make their CV up from scratch and do interview prep, and all that kind of preparation and will signpost them to other charities that provide smart clothes etc".*
Head of Youth
Engagement

Effective wrap around support for young people was highlighted as key when selecting providers/ corporate partners. Advocacy support, Mentors/ hand-holding support and online access to services were given as examples of this type of support.

MARGARET *"I'm open to anybody who can come and work with our young people in a mentoring type coaching type role. Providers that are able to handhold a young person through getting to that interview stage helps because there's a lot of self-sabotaging that goes on. They lack confidence and just don't turn up to interviews or stop going into work. For those interested in going to college, one of our charity partners created a web link that tells you all the colleges that have a worker appointed in the college for care leavers. It's a very helpful link".*
EET
Coordinator

DEREK *“More wrap-around provisions are needed like online counselling for example. With long waiting lists for CAMHS, if a young person wanted to do online counselling, that would be available as a first step. There’s also a text-based app that they can use. We want to give parents and carers an opportunity to be involved in this, so young people can have support at home as well”.*

College
SENCO

DINAH *“I think especially with our LAC, there needs to be more handholding. I don’t think that social workers have enough time to do that, I don’t think foster carers have enough energy to do that. I think it needs to be a combination of both, and I think that there should be some kind of advocacy or support service that is there for certain transition areas in a young person’s life that they can turn to when they’re struggling”.*

VS Inclusion
Coordinator

The role of the VS in facilitating closer partnerships/collaborative working between foster carers and social workers was also noted, and the role of EPs in supporting this process. However, at the point of leaving care, Margaret noted the absence of EPs in the support that surround young people.

DINAH *“It’s important for virtual schools to encourage schools and foster carers to work together to ensure a young person is attending school and achieving. It’s about empowering them to work collaboratively. We also have allocated Educational Psychologists in the Virtual school team who have input on the way LAC are supported”.*

VS Inclusion
Coordinator

MARGARET *“Young people present with a lot of different challenges and you wonder why they are self-sabotaging. These things need to be looked into you know, but I’ve not really thought about working with an Educational Psychologist. You just assume young people are referred to them when they’re younger, school age maybe up to 19. And then you’re also thinking of the cost of buying the service with limited budgets. Their input is definitely missing with our care leavers”.*

EET
Coordinator

Providing training to corporate partners who work with care leavers was integral to ensuring meaningful partnerships endured, and that young people were given the best possible outcomes.

MOLLIE *“Some employers aren’t very understanding of what young people have gone through. So, for every employer that we are going to have a formal relationship with, we try and educate them wherever possible. That involves contracting psychologists to train employers on the impacts of trauma and some of the things that these young people might be going through. We think the police should be trained in this as well or there should be trauma champions in the police. If the police knew why young people present some of these behaviours, it might not get to the point where that young person has got a really bad criminal record for the rest of their lives”.*

Head of
Youth
Engagement

NAOMI *“It can be tricky to find corporate partners who understand young people. DF Charity (real name not used) hold workshops with the employers they place care leavers with. The last workshop they held was about trauma. I thought that was amazing because it really gets the employers to think about how they*

Care leavers
Program
Manager

work with care leavers. I think charities that are focused on care leavers can really lead the way on supporting employers to support young people”.

This section highlights several findings, the implications of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This section will begin by discussing the findings with respect to the research questions and will draw upon the existing literature. This will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical and wider implications of the study and for professional Educational Psychology practice. Recommendations for future research will be highlighted and the study evaluated, presenting both the strengths and limitations of the research.

5.1 Findings and existing literature

This current research took a qualitative approach and generated four overarching themes namely: Theme 1 - The System: Care, insecurity and instability, and Theme 2: The System: Contexts of support. These emerged from the views and perspectives of the young people that fed into RQ1 and 2 only. A further two overarching themes namely: Theme 3 - Factors that challenge the system and Theme 4 - Empowered corporate parenting. These resulted from the views of adult participants and were related to RQ3 only. The contribution from professionals was considered to be distinct from the young people's data due to their role as corporate parents, with expertise to provide unique insights at different systems levels. Consequently, the professionals' data was presented separately.

5.1.1 RQ1 - What are the concerns, needs or anticipated needs of care-experienced young people during transition from KS4 to post-secondary participation in EET?

At the point of transition to post-secondary activities, young people in this sample expressed needs and concerns that fell into nine categories: social relationships needs (e.g. making new friendships, experiencing bullying); emotional and mental health needs (e.g. exam anxiety, self-harming, self-esteem); personal organisation (e.g. organising workload, maintaining attendance and punctuality); educational support (e.g. needing a tutor, meeting entry requirements for FE); financial assistance; surviving the multiple moves; guidance on post-16 options/careers advice; mentor support. Unsurprisingly more than half the sample (58%) cited needs that fell into three of the above categories namely social relationship, emotional and mental health, and mentoring support categories.

To gain an understanding for the prevalence of the SEMH needs in this sample, it is worth discussing some of the adverse pre-care experiences highlighted in theme one – The System: Care and insecurity/ instability. Most young people in this study

came into care due to physical abuse/ threat, parental mental health issues and physical/geographical separation; and most described their relationships with their birth parents as weak or stressful. Parental relationships were cited as strong for only two young people in the sample, an unaccompanied asylum seeker and a care leaver who forged a relationship with her mother after leaving care. This finding aligns with existing studies that have shown that CYP suffer adverse experiences, with most coming into the care system as a result of abuse and neglect, and family dysfunction (Barn, 2010; Dixon, 2008; Ward, 2011). For UASC settling in the host country, relationships with family members tend to survive the separation suggesting stronger relationship bonds that may contribute to the resilience, personal agency and ambition they demonstrate (Hopkins & Hill, 2010; Kohli, 2006) when in care.

Upon entering the care system, young people in this study often reported experiencing relational poverty. They described being separated from immediate and extended relatives, and their peers and friends. Some young people continued to experience insecure relationships with their foster carers. Most young people in this study experienced foster carer relationships as weak or stressful at varying points in their care journey. This was primarily due to their feelings of being treated differently from the foster family unit, with some citing neglect, physical abuse, cultural differences, and confrontations. The continuation of adverse experiences during foster placements highlighted the enduring nature of adversity which appeared to contribute to a fragmented sense of belonging. This also appeared to impact on some young people's sense of identity, giving rise to a general sense of feeling lost, having little confidence and no sense of direction. This finding corroborates with existing research that have shown that CYP's experience of separation from their families and their continuing feelings of rejection or lack of support from the care system, can hinder their ability to form positive relationships with others (Ferguson, 2018; Stein, 2008).

This finding aligns with both Ecological Systems and Transition theories that highlight the importance of positive relationships with others in providing an environment that will better support transitions, equip young people with the social knowledge about ways of being, aid the reconstructing of their identities and help to instil a sense of belonging to a new community (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittgerber, 2000). Where this is not provided, young people are unable to adjust to changes, and the process of reconstruction is more difficult. Honneth (1992,

1995) emphasises the foundation of positive relationships in terms of a basic moral demand for recognition and being recognised by others (Smith et. al., 2017). Recognition becomes emotional when the relationship takes on meaning for each person. Such relationships are seen as a source of wellbeing (Smith et. al., 2017) in a two-way dynamic process where meaning is acquired through community inclusion (Crafter & Mauder, 2012). Through this lens, a history of a lack of care and rejection not only impacts the formation of meaningful relationships but also impacts the ability for CYP to develop positive self-perceptions/ identity (Driscoll, 2013; Ferguson, 2018; Stein, 2008). This often leaves young people feeling isolated, powerless, and lost (Jackson et al., 2006), and can result in emotional dysregulation and low resilience (DfES, 2007; Yates & Masten, 2004).

Losing confidence and direction persisted in the narrative of two young people who became pregnant as teenagers while in care. Some studies have implicated underlying SEMH needs such as low self-esteem, isolation, and increased vulnerability to peer pressure as factors that increase the likelihood of teenage pregnancy (Mezey et. al., 2015). Mentoring support was identified by one young person (who was a teenage mother) as a support they felt would have helped motivate them to better engage with education and provide them with someone to talk to. This finding corroborates with other studies that highlight that young people mostly sought mentor support to meet their needs for a 'listener' or 'role model', to help improve their confidence, self-esteem, and emotional well-being (Clayden and Stein, 2005). This emphasises that social support resources are beneficial to young people when the relationships they forge with others have the power to support the reconstruction of their identity (Crafter & Mauder, 2012), and improve their self-perception. This has implications for corporate parenting practice, and their due consideration for investing in mentoring and befriending services that support the young people they look after through strong and meaningful relationships. This support is especially crucial to fill the gap in light of the demanding roles of corporate parents, which might limit their time and opportunity to engage adequately and meaningfully with young people.

Surviving placement moves was an area of concern highlighted by many young people in this study. Young people found the instability of care placements and multiple transitions to independent living unsettling and emotionally difficult, causing stress and anxiety for some, and disrupting their relationships and education. The constant moves adversely impacted young people's concentration,

behaviour, punctuality and attendance. In some instances, the young people were moved too far from their educational setting that it made it difficult for them to continue at the college they had enrolled in. Studies have shown a correlation between multiple placement moves and poor outcomes which include behavioural and mental health difficulties, low educational achievement, unemployment and offending behaviour (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Stein, 2008). In addition, making poor choices and poor mental health were challenges young people encountered during transition to independence. Constant disruptions and uncertainty, with multiple changes over a short period of time, make it difficult for care-experienced young people to pace their transitions as focal theory proposes other young people do, thus putting them at greater pressure and enhanced risk of disengaging from post-secondary activities (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

Considering that the RPA legislation was put in place to raise standards, the lack of time and space afforded young people to prepare for these changes sets them up to fail, and continues to raise questions for how young people are supported through post-16 transition. Arguably, the Staying Put policy that was developed in response to the need for a much more gradual and flexible transitional period, has done little to narrow the gap between care leavers and their non-care peers. The national statistics show that less than 20% of young people remain with their foster carers 3 months after their 18th birthday, falling to only 8% for 19 to 21-year-olds. The small number of those choosing to stay on with their foster families raises questions about the context and management of transitions. A better understanding of focal theory could make an important contribution to improved practice in managing transition to adulthood and the uptake of the staying put policy by young people (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016). The importance of a gradual transition period as conceptualised by focal theory needs to be understood and internalised by the young people themselves and those providing care and support during this critical stage (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016).

In terms of need, the findings in this study showed that SEMH remained a common unmet need for more than half the sample (58%) who expressed their desire to have received 'counselling/ emotional support/ needing someone to talk to' during transition. This was a clear gap in support. In addition, the need for an advocate was also highlighted by one young person who felt her education had not been advocated for or considered by professionals in relation to the multiple placement moves she experienced and which impacted her educational outcomes. This aligns

with studies which have highlighted the involvement of educational advocates in not only improving educational outcomes (Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005), but also enhanced self-esteem (Oliver et al., 2006). Evident in the narratives of some young people was the impact of their mental health difficulties on their personal organisation particularly in maintaining regular attendance and punctuality. This difficulty eventually led to them becoming NEET. Ecological Systems theory posits that gaps in support increases risk. The high prevalence of SEMH needs in CYP from care backgrounds due to their experiences of trauma and difficulties correlates with high NEET figures in this vulnerable population (Layard et al., 2012). This is a concerning pattern which highlights the role of the corporate parent and the importance of a shared and coordinated framework for responding to the needs of LAC and Care Leavers. Identifying what is happening in practice is necessary to prevent many slipping through the net without receiving appropriate intervention.

Additionally, educational support; financial assistance; guidance on post-16 options/careers advice; and needing support to apply for post-secondary activities were other areas of need cited by young people in this study. These equally highlight the need to respond to gaps in practical support such as budgeting and the management of day-to-day finances, as well as supporting pathways into post-secondary EET activities. A crucial part of pathway planning is preparing young people for adulthood and making considerations for more long-term goals, however reports show that emphasis is often not placed on these long-term needs, such as careers advice (Craddock, 2008). Furthermore, support in this area at the point of transition from school to college was found to be poor by Ofsted (2016). These raise implications for practice, and the need to accurately capture the transition needs of young people in their pathway plans.

Despite young people's awareness of their SEMH needs, these needs remained unmet. One reason for this may implicate young people's coping strategies. The ability to cope with adversity and mask vulnerability was a subtheme in this study. For some young people, remaining detached as a response to frequent changes in professionals support, and pretending to be fine to hide vulnerability were among some of the coping strategies evident in their narratives. Nonetheless, studies have shown that adverse experiences can make it difficult for care-experienced young people to trust professionals and actively seek support from them (Baker, 2017; Driscoll, 2013). Equally some young people may develop a strong sense of self-

reliance which can make seeking support less of a priority (Driscoll, 2013). This notwithstanding, care leavers' construction of themselves as principal agents rather than partners in their management of service use, should encourage professionals to value self-reliance and adjust their ways of working to suit the needs of the young person, rather than assume that support is not needed (Cameron, 2007). It is worth noting here that transition is a two-way dynamic process that is not only happening to the young person but also to the community itself through the adjustment and refinement of practices (Crafter & Mauder, 2012).

The analysis of the types of support cited by young people revealed that a majority of SEMH support provided by the surrounding system was offered casually/informally by foster carers, friends/peers, school staff/teachers, social workers, PAs, support workers, and voluntary sector providers/charities. The involvement of these layers of support in facilitating transition will be discussed further in the next section.

5.1.2 RQ2 - In exploring the supportive relationships around care-experienced young people, what factors facilitate young people's active participation in EET and how do they attribute these to their own outcomes?

For this study, Theme 2: The System: Contexts of support was understood through the lens of Ecological Systems Theory. Analysis of reports from the young people revealed five layers of support which were most often reported to facilitate their engagement in post-secondary activities. These were the foster carer and school staff layers which yielded the highest number of occurrences of strong relationships. This was followed by the Voluntary sector/charities layers, Social worker layer, and Friends/peers layer. With respect to the importance of positive relationships with teachers, this finding was prominent in this study compared to the Rainer (2007) study where the young people sampled (ages 15 to 23) placed teachers in the outermost circle away from the centre of support that included the young person, their foster carers, social workers and PA (see figure 4). The shift in pattern may reflect changes in policy relating to compulsory post-16 education since the Rainer study was conducted, and has implications for practice. For example, the inclusion of teachers to Leaving Care Teams in one LA had a positive impact on the uptake of young people to HE (Jackson & Cameron, 2014). Also worthy of note is that while VS have teachers appointed to their teams, their intervention ceases at the end of KS4. This, in addition to the lack of DTs in FE colleges, leave huge gaps in support from educational staff which young people

clearly find beneficial, and are crucial in supporting transitions into the FE sector. (see figure 6).

With that said, the top 5 layers of support aforementioned by young people in this study overlapped in one key area: emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to, and was very telling of the primary need expressed by care-experienced young people. Getting to know and care for a young person involves communication and dialogue (Smith et. al., 2017). The interaction becomes emotional when the relationship takes on meaning for each person, establishing relationships as sources of well-being (Smith et. al., 2017). The overlap in emotional support is therefore a positive finding, particularly in relation to the professional layers of support that can be too formal in their approach. Kersley and Estep (2013) warn that care systems are careful to steer professional relationships away from becoming too close, however professional distance can make it difficult for formal systems to be flexible in their approach and respond well to the needs of LAC and care leavers. This however is counter-intuitive to creating key authentic relationships that make young people feel like they matter and are recognised. Studies have shown that care leavers value professionals who show genuine concern and interest in their personal journey when preparing for adulthood, who make themselves available and foster personal connections that do not feel contractual but authentic (Atkinson & Hyde, 2019).

Foster carers, school staff, and support workers were also highlighted in the narratives of young people in supporting the post-16 pathway. Unsurprisingly, young people valued the practical, hands on support provided by carers and professionals in supporting them with post-16 transitions. Dixon and Stein (2002) in their study reported that professionals involved in developing career pathways for young people leaving care, were valued by care leavers for their practical support. Having said that Rainer (2007) asserts that it is the quality of the relationship that is key to the success of the support. Furthermore, it is those who were encouraged to talk about their future goals and aspirations and share issues that were more likely to go on to and remain in further education, training or find employment (Rainer, 2007). The pattern suggests that when a young person feels they matter to others and to themselves, they are more likely to succeed. This supports Smith et. al.'s (2017) assertion that when working with adolescents, the ideas of mattering developed through co-constructed relationships of meaning, can be better applied to our understanding of supportive relationships than attachment.

Not only does this emphasise the importance of authentic supportive relationships in improving outcomes for young people, but it also makes clear that changes to the environment in terms of practice, invites the opportunity for developing ecological resilience and growth. Also reported by some young people in this study was the involvement of foster carers and school staff in providing educational support at the point of transition. Some young people spoke about their carers involvement in making decisions about colleges, and course choices. This supports findings that care-experienced young people benefit from supportive relationships with their carers who prioritised education and encouraged educational aspirations (Jackson et al., 2011). For one young person the one-to-one study support from her foster carer (who was a teacher in a school himself) was identified as a contributing factor to passing her exams.

In relation to teachers, one-to-one support was highlighted as beneficial from the narratives of some young people in this study. Studies have shown that teachers are best placed to influence the educational paths of care-experienced young people (Geddes, 2009); however, in terms of making a real difference, Rainer (2007) asserts that LAC especially benefitted from support that is one-to-one. The narratives of some young people also highlighted teachers as effective advocates, who acted on their behalf, and were able to provide appropriate support based on their knowledge of the young person. Cameron (2007) highlights that the duration of time CYP spend in schools, gives teachers the opportunity to develop positive and sustained relationships with their students, often acting as mentors and advocates. The enduring nature of relationships with school staff/ teachers can serve as a protective factor when young people experience instability.

Charities also provided support with the post-16 pathway, such as applying for college, jobs and preparing for independent living. Crucially, young people reported the involvement of charitable organisations in providing more focused SEMH support. Examples included charities such as LXP (real name not used) which provided mental health support that helped one young person with a history of NEET, to re-engage with education. Long term involvement also highlighted the importance of sustained relationships in improving outcomes. For example, only one young person (age 16) in this study highlighted the long-term input from her IV in supporting her transition to college, which was a worrying time for her. Studies have found that CYP positively regarded IV support with many highlighting the benefits of having an IV to talk to about social and emotional issues they may be

experiencing (Hardy, 2007). The continuity of an IV relationship is particularly important during times of transition for the young person, as the sustained involvement provides a sense of sameness through periods of instability such as change of placement or change of school (Hardy, 2007). Although the statutory age limit for IV support is 18, research in this area suggests that IVs are not being made available for all CYP in care who qualify for this type of support (Knight, 1998; Oakley & Masson, 2000; Morgan 2012), and thus opportunities to provide CYP with sustained supportive relationships into adulthood are being missed, presenting a further gap in support (see figure 6).

Beyond the provision of emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to, social workers and PAs, were most often reported to signpost and refer young people for additional support from external agencies. Some young people in the higher age group (20-24) had real problems with debt and needed advice/ support with their finances. Funding/ financial assistance was also significant in the narratives of those who aspired to go to university. Engagement with HE, often occurs at a later age for care leavers that is beyond the ages of eligibility for the government's 16-19 bursary fund. With that said, the data showed that effective sign-posting helped facilitate young people's engagement with HE. For one young person, she was signposted to funding assistance by her family nurse. This study highlighted that professionals' rich knowledge of the resources in the surrounding system is essential to meeting need, but more importantly, these resources must be provided in ways that are meaningful/ beneficial to the young people (Geenen & Powers, 2007; Ungar, 2008, 2012). This raises implications for practice regarding the inaccessibility of support and guidance from professionals to support young people effectively.

Although some young people demonstrated a 'detached' coping style that may have implicated a lack of trust in professionals, most of the participants in this study expressed being proactive in seeking support. They also highlighted the relationships in the surrounding system that facilitated their resilience and sense of agency. For example, one young person consulted personal relationships for personal issues, naming friends, family and foster carers. Where the immediate system presented a gap in support, one young person demonstrated agency in negotiating support beyond her familiar support network to find an Advocate. Through the lens of Ecological Systems theory, a person's agency in negotiating support does not occur in a vacuum but also depends on the environment's

capacity to provide these resources in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008). Supporting this view, this study further highlighted that increasing young people's awareness of the systems of support available to them was necessary in helping them negotiate support. Vulnerabilities however were evident in the narratives of young people who were less agentic. One young person expressed less agency in seeking emotional support while another shared that her shyness made her less proactive in seeking support. These individual differences in young people's narratives lays an emphasis on the role of corporate parents in promoting practice that ensures that the individual needs of CYP are identified and met, akin to the type of support non-care CYP receive from 'good parents' (Bradbury, 2007). Including the views of young people and those who know them best in decisions that concern them is paramount to good practice.

Young people undergo multiple transitions, that not only include transition to post-secondary EET activities but also transition to semi-independent and independent living. Therefore, evident in the retrospective accounts of the older age group (20-24) were support workers who supported them during their transition to semi-independent living which typically occurs at age 18 for most young people leaving care. Support workers yielded the highest number of occurrences of strong relationships and were most often reported to offer: Advisory support, support with post-16 pathway/ independent living skills, support with post-16 pathway/ applications and emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to. The support from friends and partners across the sample (ages 16-24), also benefitted a lot of young people during transition points. Some young people described the presence of friends and partners in their lives as motivating, providing them with a sense of security, and helping them to overcome adversity.

As a result of the input from the surrounding systems of support, the young people in this sample reported improvements mostly for soft outcomes which included: improved confidence, communication/social skills, mental health and wellbeing and life and independent living skills. Only three young people cited hard outcomes such as academic achievement. Interestingly, the foster carer and the mentoring and befriending (charitable) services were regarded as most valuable by young people in their attributions. In studies that have explored good carer characteristics, the importance of matching and 'having chemistry' between foster carer and child in producing positive outcomes is strongly implicated (Sinclair & Wilson, 2003). In this study, there were more weak and stressful relationships between foster carers

and the young people which might highlight that careful matching is not always possible, especially when challenging behaviours are presented. Sinclair and Wilson (2003) highlighted that challenging behaviour can produce rejection as a response in carers and a lack of bond. Thus, the careful training of carers to understand how trauma affects looked after CYP would help to foster more positive and authentic relationships between pairings and prevent young people feeling segregated from their foster families.

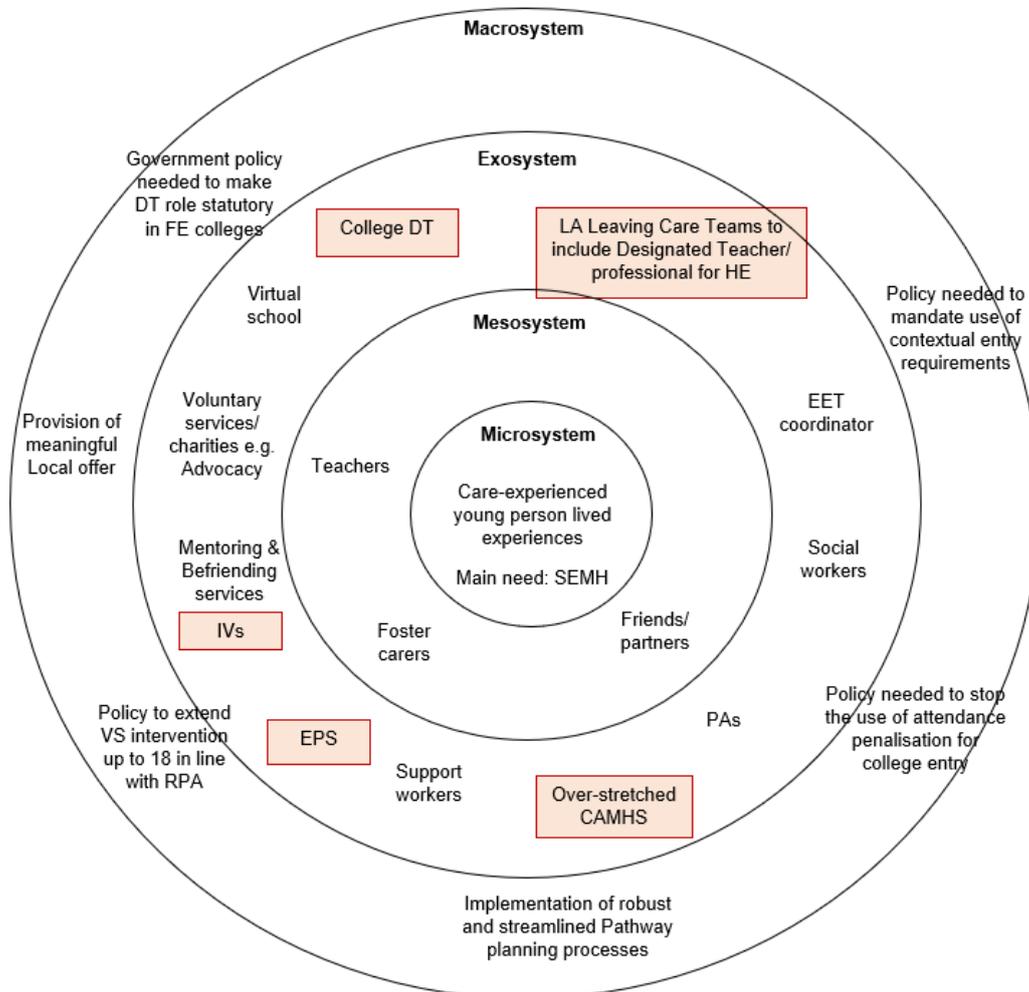
The importance of matching is also true for mentoring and befriending services. Hardy (2007) asserts that the relationship between LAC and IV becomes more significant when CYP are carefully matched and are involved with CYP for longer periods, demonstrating the increased importance of the enduring relationship over time. The input from these services have been shown to also help improve social, emotional and mental health (Clayden & Stein, 2005; Stein, 2008), positively impact educational outcomes such as attainment and engagement (Randolph and Johnson, 2008; Schwartz, et. al., 2011; Núñez et. al., 2013) and also improve 'hard' outcomes, such as gaining employment, education or training (Clayden & Stein, 2005).

Studies have shown that for care-experienced young people, positive relationships help improve outcomes and develop resilience (Geddes, 2009). Evidently, the four young people in this study who reported having more weak relationships than strong ones overall, presented with more factors that increased risk, namely 75% had been in care for 10 years or more, they had the highest number of changes in foster placement, and had to retake their GCSE English and/ or Maths; 50% had experienced multiple educational settings, had a previous history of NEET; and 25% had a first pregnancy at age 16. The pattern in this sample supports existing literature which have shown that poor educational and life outcomes for care-experienced young people increases when certain risk factors are in play, such as long-term foster care riddled with unstable placements, the experience of several and simultaneous transitions (Berlin et. al., 2011; NICE, 2016), multiple educational placements in secondary schooling that inevitably deny young people the opportunity to gain suitable qualifications (Fletcher-Campbell & Archer, 2003), and teenage pregnancies (Craine et al.2014; DfE, 2018; Mezey et. al., 2015; The Centre for Social Justice, 2016). These factors also impact young people's social support and the continuity of relationships, with some feeling isolated.

5.1.3 RQ3 - What are professional partners' views on supporting young people to successfully participate in EET?

The adult participants in this study held varying roles in college, LA and community systems, with the majority being in role for 5 or more years. Empowered corporate parenting described in theme 4, highlighted factors such as knowing the young person and growing meaningful support within systems. These were considered key in encouraging active participation of care-experienced young people in post-secondary activities and understood through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: Ideal Layers and Processes of Support around Young People. The shaded squares denote gaps in support.



Adult participants in this study recognised stability of educational placement and long-term relationships between professionals and young people as facilitators for engagement. In this study, pathway processes such as the Year 11 PEPs and the EET Aspiration Panel were highlighted as especially key in minimising the risk of

young people becoming NEET at post-16. The views of LAC captured in PEPs inform social workers and education professionals including VS and DTs on best ways to meet the needs and interests of CYP in care (Hayden, 2005). However, the absence of DTs in FE colleges is an added risk factor as mentioned previously (also see figure 6).

Additionally, the disparate processes across LAs was reported in Theme 3 as a factor that hindered pathway processes for care-experienced young people. Time-consuming processes including paperwork and the varying quality of data accompanying young people coming in from other boroughs were highlighted. Watson (2006) states that different procedural protocols and documentation for example, can make the move towards 'joined-up' working a challenging task at inter- and intra-organisational levels. In addition, Driscoll's (2013) study highlighted that these bureaucratic processes often create problematic and inflexible ways of working with young people. Driscoll noted that some young people experienced processes such as the pathway planning and review processes as impersonal and uncaring. They felt professionals approached this as a monitoring and form-filling exercise more than an opportunity to give considered advice appropriate to young people's individual needs and circumstances; thus resulting in some young people disengaging from the process.

This study found that within the LA service, the EET Aspiration Panel played a role in bringing systems together such as the VS and Adult Social Care teams with the aim of building professionals' knowledge base of young people's strengths and needs. Considering that VS intervention is "cut-off" at end of key stage 4, the inclusion of the VS in the EET Aspiration Panel in this LA meant that historic knowledge of young people previously supported through the VS informed the process. This knowledge helped smooth transitions between child and adult services on ways of supporting the same young people through their post-16 journey. Equally, the knowledge of care-experienced young people's needs was highlighted as informing the way community agencies support young people into employment, and the importance of one-to-one intensive wrap around support was emphasised in this study. This echoed the views of young people in this study who valued the one-to-one input from the relationships forged at various layers of support including foster carers, teachers, IV, and employment mentors. Notably, agencies who could provide this level of input was a criterion preferred by professionals in this study when choosing providers/corporate partners. Mentors

able to hand-hold and online access to counselling services were given as examples of effective one-to-one wrap around support. Online access to services was reported by the College SENCO as especially beneficial in light of long waiting lists for CAMHS.

It is well documented in literature and health reports that services like CAMHS are overburdened, and this presents a large gap (see figure 6) between need and access to resources (NHS, 2017; Weeks, Hill & Owen, 2017). Professional participants in this study highlighted trauma as a potential barrier for young people in engaging with and continuing with post-16 activities. These difficulties are reflected in the research literature and make the limited access to CAMHS for some care-experienced young people, a worrying prospect. Trauma training was emphasised as necessary in increasing professional partners' understanding of the emotional and behavioural challenges that young people face, and integral to ensuring meaningful corporate partnerships endured. Studies have shown that more generally, carers and professional agencies did not fully understand the emotional trauma and loss often experienced by care-experienced young people nor offer appropriate support (Cameron et al., 2010). Factors such as increased police presence in children's homes and increased incidences of criminalisation among the LAC population was highlighted in this study, and the necessity for the police to be trauma trained. The national protocol on reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of LAC and care leavers recognise that care-experienced young people are at higher risk of criminalisation compared to the rest of the population. The protocol highlights the role of police and local agencies working collaboratively to help reduce unnecessary criminalisation. It underscores the importance of all professionals working with care-experienced young people at both senior and frontline levels to undergo training on the impact of trauma and abuse on development and to work proactively and preventatively (DfE, 2018).

LA partnerships with charities in the voluntary sector were strongly implicated by professional participants in this study as a mechanism that encouraged collaborative working across LAs, corporate parents and partners including employers and universities. In addition, the role of the VS and EPs was highlighted in facilitating collaborative working across layers of support for care-experienced young people of school age (up to age 16). Worthy of note however was the absence of EPs in the surrounding support systems of care leavers at post-16 (see figure 6). This raises questions for EP practice and their contribution as corporate

parents in light of the RPA and legislation that made statutory the necessity for multi-agency collaboration in facilitating change in the lives of vulnerable CYP from 0-25 years (Atkinson et al., 2015). Ideally the strengths, skills and resources of each corporate parent should be used to the maximum advantage of CYP in public care (Bradbury, 2007). With that said, a lack of clarity about the role of the EP, limited budgets, and the expense of buying in the service were cited as disincentives for using the service. While buying in EPs has become necessary to meeting the educational needs of vulnerable CYP, budget limits may increase the preference for commissioners to buy in other services that are able to provide a service at a lower cost (Lee & Woods, 2017). This raises questions for schools on how the pupil premium plus for LAC might be used strategically to meet the needs of their young people.

Overall, limited budgets and funding cuts were strongly highlighted by all the professional participants in this study as barriers to supporting young people engage successfully in post-secondary activities. The expense of services as previously mentioned, was reported to significantly reduce the support available to meet young people's mental health needs, thus imposing barriers to their engagement with post-secondary EET. Despite these limited resources at organisational levels, young people's access to support from external agencies through self-referrals, was highlighted. This again brings into focus the importance of developing clear accessible pathways and well-informed support services with an improved local offer. Ofsted (2015) reported that the local offer can be effective in promoting professionals' and service users' awareness of resources available for vulnerable children, young people and their families. The tendency for the local offer to be unwieldy/ all encompassing, too web-based and capture information for more well-known services/ organisations than smaller local ones was reported in this study as a factor that potentially limits the access to opportunities for young people.

Although limited funding was highlighted in this study as a factor that challenges the system, this in turn created opportunities for LAs to outsource and contract different organisations to meet the needs of young people. Likewise, target driven funding from governments have also incentivised charities to work with LAs. The impact of budget cuts on organisational practice, was also reported to limit opportunities for multi-disciplinary teams to work together and for professionals to operationalise effective partnerships. This has led to fragmented services and

increased risk to care-experienced young people. Factors such as limited resources skew the balance of forces between growth and regression towards less beneficial outcomes for the system or service, and its service-users (Maslow, 1998; Hayes, 2014; Watson, 2006). Crucially therefore, an organisation's knowledge of its strengths and limitations were reported by professional participants in this study as critical in closing the gaps in support. To this end, the evaluation of systems as a process of analysis is necessary in promoting ecological resilience. Gaps in provisions for work experience and pathways to employment was reported by the professionals in this study. Closing these gaps in support influenced professionals' decisions to forge partnerships with services that facilitated the meaningful preparation of young people into adulthood. Mediational transitions such as work experience involve a process of development associated with personal progress for CYP (Guile & Griffiths, 2001). Studies have shown that where opportunities were provided to raise young people's employment-related expectations, their educational outcomes were found to improve also (Beal & Crockett, 2010).

Some additional barriers reported by professional participants in challenging the system and limiting care-experienced young people's engagement with EET opportunities included factors such as instability, poor attendance, and low academic achievement, which are factors well established in research (Ferguson, 2018). Alarming however, poor attendance in one college was reported to potentially affect a young person's chances of enrolling into other colleges. Considering the challenges care-experienced young people face, such enrolment practices raises questions regarding equity of access into FE institutions. Equally attainment grades were highlighted as forming the basis for decisions made by professionals regarding young people's suitability for entry onto college courses thus limiting their access to post-16 opportunities. Jackson et al. (2005) found that young people from care backgrounds studied more vocational rather than academic subjects possibly due to high grade boundaries. Other reports have identified processes such as the use of contextualised admissions that consider the context of individual circumstances, rather than relying on attainment alone, in providing more equitable access to FE colleges and HE institutions for young people from care backgrounds (Schwartz, 2004). A recent survey however found that only 57 participating universities and colleges were using contextualised admissions in the 2015 entry cycle (UCAS). Furthermore, LA Adult Social Care Services that lack a designated officer/ coordinator to oversee the cohort of care leavers who aspire to go to university, and act as a point of contact was highlighted as a clear gap in support (see figure 6). This is a key observation considering that

only 6% of looked after school leavers go directly into HE, compared to 41% of all school leavers (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Sulimani-Aidan, 2015), and where young people had an educational advocate, outcomes improved (Hollingworth & Jackson, 2016; Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005), as previously mentioned.

In addition, the disparity across colleges regarding the appointment of DTs was reported as a further gap in support. Driscoll's (2013) study found that the absence of DTs from the transition planning stages presented significant barriers to information sharing between schools and colleges, thus impacting the way young people were supported. In terms of information sharing, changes in internal structures such as high staff turnover of social workers was highlighted by the college SENCO, as breaking down the flow of information pertaining to young people in care. Studies show that vulnerable young people frequently experience changes in social workers and these changes often correlate with placement instability and poorer outcomes (Ungar, 2013). Also, the absence of strong, nurturing relationships in large college environments were implicated in this study as possible contributing factors to young people dropping out from the system. With respect to the RPA, this presents a considerable amount of incongruity between policy and practice.

Furthermore, instant adulthood for care leavers akin to a cliff-edge was highlighted in this study as an incredibly daunting and stressful time for young people with huge pressures placed on them to make ends meet. Research shows that care leavers viewed the support offered by the corporate parent as being based on age, rather than needs (Atkinson & Hyde, 2019). The inflexibility of these arrangements was described as uncompromisingly harsh, inadvertently setting care leavers apart from their non-care peers who were not suddenly cut off from the familial safety net because they had reached a particular age (Atkinson & Hyde, 2019; Butterworth et al., 2016; Horrocks, 2002). Furthermore, the findings of this study also noted a disparity across different LAs that reduced equitable access to resources for young people. In addition, young people's reluctance in sharing information about their care status was reported to contribute to limiting their access to support. In supporting engagement with post-secondary EET activities, the importance of increasing young people's knowledge of what they can access as care leavers was emphasised by adult participants in this study and align with ecological systems theory. This brings to attention the importance of developing young people's sense agency and autonomy in negotiating support they deem as

beneficial, and for services to better respond to the needs of young people at multiple transition points. This is especially important to ensure NEET risk is minimised and young people's individual struggles with self and identity move to healthy positive outcomes.

5.2 Wider implications of the study and for EP practice

Many of the findings in this study are consistent with the existing literature as discussed in the previous section and have implications for both policy and practice. The Children and Families Act (2014) which introduced the extension of statutory protection of vulnerable CYP up to age 25, brought into focus the importance of providing service continuity and future planning for young people through to post-16 and early adulthood. The necessity for protocols to be aligned in order to establish more coherent pathways for CYP accessing services into adulthood and engagement in post-secondary EET activities was highlighted. With that said, the incongruence between policy and practice in relation to the way support is delivered to care-experienced young people aged 16 and over is evident. It is therefore unsurprising that young people continue to find it a challenge to successfully participate in post-secondary activities. Considering the gaps in support evidenced in this research such as VS intervention being "cut-off" at the end of key stage 4, the lack of Designated Teachers in FE colleges, the lack of teachers or designated professionals in leaving care teams to support young people who aspire to go to university, the limited access to services such as CAMHS and the IV service, and the absence of EP support during post-16 transition, contribute to the increased risk of young people becoming NEET. In addition, inflexible, rigid and time-consuming processes and practices can adversely impact the time and opportunity professionals have to form meaningful relationships with young people. Further to this, the use of contextual grades to gain fair and equitable entry into FE and HE institutions would encourage more young people to stay on in education despite low attainments grades in GCSE English and Mathematics.

Supportive informal and professional relationships appear to be crucial for facilitating transition for care-experienced young people, mitigating risk factors associated with the uncertainty and confusion created by rupture from familiar social contexts and multiple changes. Multiple gaps in support and the demands of accelerated and compressed transitions make it difficult for young people to ameliorate the stresses they experience at multiple transition points, thus

increasing their likelihood of becoming NEET. Evidently, there is a need for a gradual and supported move towards independence, and the ability for young people to do so successfully is facilitated by experiencing supportive and consistent relationships built on genuine concern from those acting in the role of corporate parent. Practitioners should therefore prioritise the development of relationships for care-experienced young people undertaking any transition process wherever possible. Furthermore, the experience of transitions as a two-way dynamic process should serve to not only bring about change in young people's lives but also create the opportunity for professionals to refine their practice. With that said, to better facilitate young people's transitions to and participation in post-secondary EET activities, it is essential that legislation is put in place to make statutory the involvement of VS for young people up to age 18, thus bringing the RPA in line with policy targets. A statutory framework on the use of equitable practice such as the application of contextual grades, and an urgent review of attendance criteria that precludes a young person from accessing other institutions is necessary to ensure young people are given ample opportunity to succeed. Furthermore, a trained designated professional should be appointed in post-16 institutions to support young people from care backgrounds.

Encouragingly, more colleges are providing a key person for care-experienced young people, and this shows a promising shift in the right direction. However, without legislation that makes this role and its responsibilities statutory, the disparity across colleges will continue to mean that some young people receive inadequate support. Moreover, these considerations can only be effective if young people declare their care status. Arguably, if young people's transitions were better supported their care status would be known. Nonetheless, increasing young people's awareness of the resources and systems of support that are available to them will help mitigate their experience of a 'cliff-edge' reduction in the support services available to them. This can be supported by a robust, meaningful, and accessible local offer. Furthermore, promoting the engagement of care-experienced young people in further or higher education, requires a key worker/contact person in Adult Social Care teams to make young people's access to educational opportunities more streamlined. This should be a point of consideration for LAs.

5.3 Recommendations for EP practice

EPs have a lead role in applying their psychological knowledge and skills and developing specialisms to work more effectively with CYP in care and training, supporting and empowering other agencies who share the corporate parenting role (Bradbury, 2007).

5.3.1 Inclusion of young people's and supportive adults' views

Listening to CYP's views is necessary to inform practice and the provision of ongoing support through multiple and ongoing transitions. Support should be in line with CYP's specific needs and should consider the changes they are experiencing in different aspects of their lives (Jindal-Snape, 2010, 2017). EP work with young people is crucial in helping them to understand their strengths and needs, and in identifying services and individuals who can support them. Through systems thinking, EP consideration for the context in which concerns exist, makes the drive for change possible (Dowling & Osborne, 2003; Wagner, 2008) thus enabling young people to see themselves as active agents of change. A transition protocol and meaningful person-centred planning should be put in place to enable and activate full participation of young people and those who support them in the transition process (Jindal-Snape, 2010, 2017). EPs should routinely highlight Advocacy support as vehicles that ensure young people's voices are heard and empower their sense of agency during such challenging transition periods. The inclusion of wider stakeholders (e.g., foster-carers, VS, teachers, keyworkers, mentors, and IVs) who bring knowledge of the young person and strategies that work, help build a clearer picture for more holistic support around transitions. Engaging in forums such as the Aspiration EET panel, provide opportunities for EPs to communicate the needs of care-experienced young people with professionals and wider community stakeholders including employers. Such forums also provide opportunities for EPs to offer supervision and consultation to those working more directly with the young people.

5.3.2 Early identification, intervention, and training

Before young people reach the point of transition to adulthood, they spend a large proportion of their lives in school, therefore schools are the ideal forum for early identification and intervention (Weeks et al., 2017). Some suggestions have been made for EPs to carry out more direct work with CYP as they enter the care system, to ensure their educational and psychological needs are identified and met at the earliest point (Jackson & McParlin, 2006); and for EPs to work in partnership with

systems of support to identify and implement strategies of support (Bradbury, 2007; DECP, 2006). However, professional participants view in this study corroborate with existing literature which highlight that buying in services can become an expensive commodity and reduce the support available to meet young people's mental health needs (Atkinson et al., 2015). Due to the vulnerability of this group, EPs should prioritise this work with LAC as a free core/ statutory function of their service.

Strategically, at a whole school level, EPs can increase awareness of evidence-based interventions that help to improve outcomes for LAC. They can also deliver training to school staff especially DTs on how to appropriately identify pupils for intervention and support them. Through ongoing consultation and EP supervision, school-led interventions can widen CYP access to support and offer value of service. Where needs appear to persist, it becomes imperative that EPs support schools in the process of identification for specialist support and careful consideration given to vulnerable CYP.

5.3.3 Facilitating joint working and shared understanding of trauma

While care-experienced young people are at the centre of multi-systems of support, mental health difficulties continue to be prevalent in their lives and these needs can remain largely unmet. There is an increased need for EPs to work directly and proactively with CYP and bring care and education plans together. However, the practicality of meeting the high demand puts the onus on the EPS to respond creatively to this priority (Bradbury, 2007). Therefore, in a consultancy role, EPs can work with the carers, LA professionals, and workers from voluntary sector organisations notably IVs and Mentors, who have direct and more authentic, longstanding relationships with care-experienced young people. Achieving a constructive relationship with some CYP 'is the work of many months, or even years, and will not easily be achieved in a regime where brief interventions are the norm' (McLeod, 2007, p. 285). Empowered corporate parenting can therefore be achieved by working alongside significant adults who have ongoing and positive relationships with CYP within a multi-agency framework.

The importance of close adult/ professional relationships in working with care-experienced young people was implemented in a 2019 pilot project led by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. The project aimed to provide mental health assessments for CYP as they enter the care system in order to build a child-focused and needs based framework. For the effective delivery of the assessments, the pilot considered who would be best placed in the support system

around the CYP to undertake this, and through collaborative work promote a community of practice to share learning. In supporting mental health initiatives like this, EPs are well placed to work closely with the professionals who know the CYP best, rather than to engage in direct work with CYP. Working this way minimises young people's experience of feeling bombarded by too many professionals. Developing multi-disciplinary understanding of need and support through joined up working that is efficacious can help facilitate young people's engagement with LA services (Driscoll, 2013).

The LA plays a key role in developing structures and processes that empower professionals to respond effectively (DfE, 2018) and make timely referrals to services for CYP identified as high risk of developing mental health difficulties (Roffey et al., 2016). Trauma trained corporate parents are essential to this end. EPs can play a key role in promoting an understanding of trauma and attachment through multi-agency working across education, health and care services, as well as the criminal justice system. It is equally necessary that foster carers are trauma trained to equip them in developing more positive and enduring relationships with the CYP in their care. With an understanding that attachment type is not fixed (Smith et. al., 2017; White et. al., 2019), concepts of mattering and recognition should be emphasised in fostering positive relationships.

Bringing systems and agencies together in this way empowers corporate parents to respond efficaciously to the needs of young people akin to 'good parents'. Each parent should therefore have a distinct contribution to enrich the lives of the young people they work with (Bradbury, 2007). Also, corporate parents should be aware of the roles each other play to avoid duplication and unnecessary professional involvement (Bradbury, 2007). It is equally important that professionals undertake continued professional development (CPD) to ensure their own needs are met and that they are well-equipped as corporate parents to support young people properly (Jindal-Snape, 2010, 2017).

5.3.4 Supporting pathway plans for CYP 16-25

Professionals' knowledge of available resources support pathway planning processes. VS and Adult Social Care teams are integrally involved in the transition of care-experienced young people from the end of Year 11 into post-secondary EET activities. EPs can facilitate and support aspects of the pathway planning processes working closely with VS and services/ agencies to ensure outcomes are meaningful. Such planning should feed into young people's course choices, career pathways, prioritise contexts that provide stability, continuity and highlight where

additional educational support and referrals to mental health services need to be made. Equally, important work must be done with the young people and their carers to ensure that the importance of a planned and gradual transition period is understood and supported. Crucially, carers and professionals are the most important supportive relationships around young people transitioning to independence, therefore models of good collaborative practice should be promoted at every opportunity.

Additionally, the use of the pupil premium plus to improve the educational outcomes of LAC should be carefully considered in the planning process for those in Year 11 and its use in preparing a young person for successful post-16 transition. EP involvement is particularly crucial in facilitating a shared understanding of need and the interventions that are effective in minimising the risk of young people becoming NEET. Knowledge of evidence-based interventions, services and resources should be reflected in the local offer in a meaningful and accessible way. It is essential that corporate parents increase young people's awareness of the resources and systems of support that are available to them. This will help mitigate their experience of a 'cliff-edge' reduction in the support services available to them.

5.4 Strengths and limitations of the study

The sample size of this study (n=17) offered a rich exploration of the lived experiences of young people and the supportive relationships that facilitate their engagement in post-secondary activities; as well as the views of professionals which highlighted the systemic facilitators and barriers that impact young people's participation in these activities. This study however did not include the views of the adults with whom most young people reported having supportive relationships with notably: foster carers, teachers, and workers including social workers, PAs, and Support Workers. The sample of young people who participated in this study did not include those with disabilities, profound and complex needs nor represent in depth the challenges associated with UASC status. Also, most participants were taken from one LA. These limitations narrowed the data capture.

Although the sample size used in this study was viewed as a strength, there were also drawbacks due to the overwhelming amount of data generated especially for the young people (n=12). This posed its own challenges to the researcher in terms of presenting a continuous, and cohesive narrative of young people's stories using thematic analysis. Upon reflection, a smaller sample size and a narrative analysis

may have addressed the aim to represent young people's voices better. As the research employed a qualitative methodology, this study did not set out to generalise findings and as such cannot represent the entire population of young people from care backgrounds. Additionally, CYP from care backgrounds are often difficult to recruit for research purposes (Dixon et al., 2013), especially those young people who are already NEET. Consequently, a strength of this study was that the experiences of this under-researched group were captured including those who had a history of being NEET, and their voices reported to wider stakeholders to increase knowledge production and inform recommendations for practice.

The use of multiple methods to capture qualitative data was also a strength of this study. The data collection tools encouraged participation from the young people. The short demographic questionnaire and ecomaps completed prior to interview not only helped to build rapport, but were also found to be effective in encouraging less confident young people to better articulate their experiences. The in-depth interviews provided rich data, and the flexible approach served to reduce the possible influence of interview-effect. It is worth noting that for young people in the older age brackets, providing retrospective accounts of their transition experience to post-secondary activities, raises issues of accuracy with regards to their recollection from memory. To minimise inaccuracies, the information recorded by young people in the questionnaire and ecomaps were cross referenced with the young person to check consistency and support patterns that emerged during the interview stage. Furthermore, interviews were carried out by the same researcher thus increasing consistency and further limiting extraneous variables (Creswell, 2009).

5.5 Dissemination

It is the hope of the researcher to disseminate the findings of this study to both practitioners and academic audiences through the following means: Feedback to LA Educational Psychology Service, the Virtual School and Social Care Leaving Care Teams. The findings of this study add to our understanding of how supportive relationships facilitate young people's transition to post-16 EET activities, and where gaps in support increase risk. This researcher hopes to publish this study as an article in key Educational Psychology journals such as Educational Psychology in Practice (AEP) and Educational and Child Psychology (DECP/BPS), and Social Care journals such as Adoption and Fostering and Child and Family Social Work.

5.6 Recommendations for future research

Future studies that explore the gap in the support systems for NEET groups will shed light on ways disenfranchised groups can be encouraged to re-engage with post-secondary activities. Also, rather than rely on retrospective accounts of experiences, future studies should follow this group during the transition period. The barriers and facilitators implicated in reducing access of service for young people should be explored and include the views of wider stakeholders. Due to time constraints, the views of carers, teachers, and workers were not included in this study. Further to this, systems such as colleges and the virtual school protocol at the point of post-16 transition needs further examination as many young people still fall through the gap. The role of EPs in supporting systems to promote resilience pathways for care-experienced young people and their engagement with post-secondary activities is worthy of future research. The support of CYP 16-25 is still a relatively new area and should continue to form part of EP initial training, continuing professional development and research (Atkinson et. al. 2015). This study would endorse the consideration of making EP support for the transition to adulthood for LAC part of the centrally funded LA core service.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Care-experienced young people are particularly vulnerable during transition points, of which the end of Year 11 ushers in a period of change. This study revealed some of the risk and protective factors at child and systems levels that impact on young people's ability to participate and engage with their post-secondary activities. These factors were understood through the lens of Transition and Ecological Systems theories. Multiple and simultaneous transitions adversely impact young people's outcomes and increase their likelihood of becoming NEET. This study highlighted multiple gaps in support in various layers of the system that increased young people's vulnerability during post-16 transition, aligning with risk and resilience factors evidenced in the research literature. The presence of supportive and consistent relationships facilitated a more successful move towards independence for young people. Foster carers and mentoring and befriending services were valued the most by young people in their attributions for improved outcomes.

This study has implications for those acting in the role of corporate parent. The experience of transitions creates opportunity for change not only for CYP but also for professionals to refine their practice. A responsive environment capable of providing support meaningfully to care-experienced young people is crucial in promoting growth and resilience. Recommendations for practice highlighted the importance of good collaborative practice, multi-agency working and knowledge building of the young people through processes that include a young person's views, and the views of adults with whom they have supportive and enduring relationships with. There is a need for EPs to support the transition to adulthood pathway process as a core centrally funded activity, promoting shared understanding and equitable practice that ensure improved outcomes for care experienced young people.

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APPENDICES

Included in this Appendices, are the following sections:

- A1 – INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORMS – YOUNG PERSON
- A2 – INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORMS – ADULTS
- B – SHORT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
- C1 – ECOMAP DESIGN & INSTRUCTIONS
- C2 – EXAMPLE OF COMPLETED ECOMAP BY A YOUNG PERSON
- D1 – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – PRELIMINARY – YOUNG PEOPLE
- D2 – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – FINAL – YOUNG PEOPLE
- D3 – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – ADULT/ PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANTS
- E – YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIGNETTES
- F – THEMATIC ANALYSIS – FIRST LEVEL CODING OF DATA/ BROADLY GENERATING THEMES
- G1 – SYSTEM LAYERS & DESCRIPTION OF RELATIONSHIPS
- G2 – YP (AGE 16-19) SYSTEM: STRONG INFORMAL & FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS
- G3 – YP (AGE 20-24) SYSTEM: STRONG INFORMAL & FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS
- G4 – CHART OF SUPPORT – YP (AGE 16-19) SYSTEM: STRONG INFORMAL & FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS
- G5 – CHART OF SUPPORT – YP (AGE 20-24) SYSTEM: STRONG INFORMAL & FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS
- H1: TABLE 1A – CHART OF WORRIES AND SUPPORT
- H1: TABLE 1B – TOTAL NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO FELT WORRIED/ SUPPORTED
- H2: IMMEDIATE NEEDS & WORRIES DURING TRANSITION TO POST-16 (AGE 16-24) FROM QUESTIONNAIRE
- H3: IMMEDIATE NEEDS & WORRIES DURING TRANSITION TO POST-16 (AGE 16-24) – FROM INTERVIEW
- H4: IDEAL SUPPORT DURING TRANSITION (AGE 16-24)
- H5: SYSTEM – AREAS OF NEED & RESPONSIVENESS (AGE 16-24)
- I1: OUTCOMES & ATTRIBUTIONS (AGE 16-24)
- I2 – SYSTEMS & OUTCOMES – INFLUENCING LAYERS (AGE 16-24)
- J – NEGOTIATING SUPPORT (AGE 16-24)
- K – FRAGMENTED SENSE OF BELONGING (AGE 16-24)
- L – RESEARCHER'S INTEREST & BRIEF REFLEXIVE SUMMARY
- M – ETHICS FORM

Young Person's Information Sheet

Care experienced young people:

What supportive relationships facilitate transition to independence/ adulthood?

Who am I and what is the purpose of this research?

My name is Chinelo Mortune, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the UCL Institute of Education. For my doctoral research project, I am exploring the supportive relationships that help care experienced young people transition successfully to independence/ adulthood.

If you are a care experienced young person aged between 16 and 21, it would be helpful to find out the following from you:

1. What are the concerns, needs or anticipated needs of care-experienced young people during transition from KS4 to post-secondary participation in Education, Employment and Training (EET)?
2. In exploring the supportive relationships around care-experienced young people, what factors facilitate young people's active participation in EET and how do they attribute these to their own outcomes?

What will the research require you to do?

If you agree to take part in the research, you will be asked to complete a 5-minute demographic questionnaire and take part in an interview. If you consent to take part in the interview, the interview will feel more like an informal chat, lasting no more than 45 minutes.

What type of questions will you be asked?

The short questionnaire will capture demographic information such as your age, length of time in care, current education, employment or training status etc.

The interview questions will focus on factors that have helped you transition to independence. This will be explored through the use of an ecomap which looks at the relationships in your life and how these have influenced you. You will be asked questions on topics such as your current care and educational and/ or employment context, your experience of transition from Key stage 4 (year 11) to post-secondary participation in education, employment or training.

Your participation to complete the questionnaire and take part in an interview is voluntary. This means that you may withdraw at any time, if you no longer wish to take part in the study. If you choose to take part, you have the choice to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Any data collected before your withdrawal will not be included in the study.

How am I going to use the information you provide?

Everything you share with me as a part of the research will be anonymised meaning that any personal data provided as part of this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the questionnaire data. All data collected will be securely stored.

Privacy notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. For more information on UCL's privacy policy, please follow the links below: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice> If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at: **[contact details given]**

What do I need to do now?

If you would like to take part in the research, please indicate your consent below.

Young Person's Consent Form

Please fill out and sign this consent form if you wish to take part in this research

*This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the
UCL Institute of Education, University College London.*

Statement		Please circle	
I have read the information sheet and the research has been explained to me		Yes	No
I understand what the research is about and can ask/ email the researcher, Chinelo, if I have any questions about the research at: [contact details given]		Yes	No
I understand that my participation is voluntary so I can change my mind about taking part in the research at any time		Yes	No
I understand that the information I share in the demographic questionnaire and subsequent interview will be strictly confidential, unless I say something that suggests that I or someone else might be at risk of harm		Yes	No
I agree for the interview to be recorded, and that recordings will be kept secure and confidential. Interview transcripts will be anonymised.		Yes	No
I understand that data collected will only be used for the purposes of the research and will be securely stored and deleted from data records as soon as possible.		Yes	No
I understand that any publication of data will be provided only in a format that preserves the anonymity of all the participants.		Yes	No
I understand that I will be required to leave my preferred contact details. My personal data will be pseudonymised and I will be given an ID number to preserve confidentiality and privacy.		Yes	No
Name		Date	
Signature		Preferred contact (phone or email) details	

Adult Participant Information Sheet

Care experienced young people:

What supportive relationships facilitate transition to independence/ adulthood?

Who am I and what is the purpose of this research?

My name is Chinelo Mortune, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the UCL Institute of Education. For my doctoral research project, I am exploring the supportive relationships that help care experienced young people transition successfully to independence/ adulthood. Leaving care or transitioning to independence is often described by young people as a challenging and difficult period. I would therefore like to find out about the following:

1. What are the concerns, needs or anticipated needs of care-experienced young people during transition from KS4 to post-secondary participation in Education, Employment and Training (EET)?
2. In exploring the supportive relationships around care-experienced young people, what factors facilitate young people's active participation in EET and how do they attribute these to their own outcomes?
3. What are professional partners' views on supporting young people to successfully participate in EET?

What are the advantages of taking part?

Data from this research would provide information about the perceived support young people from care backgrounds receive during transition to independence/ adulthood. The research may also have wider implications in supporting LA to build effective models of practice that consider community services when brokering support for young people and implementing this at the earliest point of planning. Outcomes from this study may also inform policy on the level of support young people in care/ leaving care require in order to remain in education and gain qualifications that open doors, and/ or seek employment or training.

What will the research require me to do?

If you agree to take part in the research, you will be asked to take part in an interview. The interview will feel more like an informal chat, lasting no more than 45 minutes.

What type of questions will I be asked?

You will be asked questions on topics such as your role, professional experience of working directly with young people from care backgrounds, the factors that you feel help or hinder young people's engagement with education, and the opportunities you feel there might be for engaging wider community systems of support in supporting young people during transition to independence/ adulthood.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. This means that you may withdraw at any time, if you no longer wish to take part in the study. If you choose to take part, you have the choice to

skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Any data collected before your withdrawal will not be included in the study.

How are you going to use the information I provide?

Everything you share with me as a part of the research will be anonymised meaning that any personal data provided during interview will be kept confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained, unless something is shared that suggests that you or someone else might be at risk of harm. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Transcripts will be anonymised and stored on a password protected electronic device. The anonymised data will only be used for the purposes of the research, will be securely stored and deleted from data records as soon as possible. Only the researcher will have access to the transcripts. Copies of transcripts can be provided to you if so desired. Identifiable information will not be mentioned in resulting reports or publications.

How am I going to use the information you provide?

Everything you share with me as a part of the research will be anonymised meaning that any personal data provided as part of this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the questionnaire data. All data collected will be securely stored.

Privacy notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. For more information on UCL's privacy policy, please follow the links below: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice> If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at: chinelo.mortune.17@ucl.ac.uk

What do I need to do now?

If you would like to take part in the research, please indicate your consent below and return to [\[contact details given\]](#) by **Dec 1st, 2019**.

Adult Participant Information Sheet

Please fill out and sign this consent form if you wish to take part in this research

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London.

Please ensure that you have read the information sheet provided and asked any relevant questions prior to completing this form.

- I have read the information sheet and the research has been explained to me
- I understand what the research is about and can ask/ email the researcher, Chinelo, if I have any questions about the research at: [\[contact details given\]](#)
- I understand that my participation is voluntary so I can change my mind about taking part in the research at any time
- I agree for the interview to be recorded, and that recordings will be securely stored and deleted from data records as soon as possible
- I understand that to preserve confidentiality and privacy, interview transcripts will be anonymised and my personal data will be pseudonymised.
- I understand that data collected will only be used for the purposes of the research, and that any publication of data will be provided in a format that preserves the anonymity of all the participants.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Preferred contact (telephone or email) details

APPENDIX B – SHORT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Young Person
ABOUT ME
Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 | |

2. What is your gender?

- Male
 Female
 Prefer not to say

3. If English is not your first (home) language, please specify what language(s) you speak

4. Approximately how long have you been in care?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Months to 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 6-9 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 years |

5. What best describes your current situation?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living with relatives | <input type="checkbox"/> Living independently |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living with carers | <input type="checkbox"/> Left care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living in residential care | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In semi-independent living | |
-

6. Do you consider yourself to have a special educational need?

- Yes
 No

7. If yes, how would you describe this need?

8. Which best describes your post-secondary activities?

- In college
 In employment
 In training
 Other

9. a) If you are in college, what level of study/ course are you on?

b) If you are in training, what type of training are you on e.g. apprenticeship etc.

c) If you are in employment, describe your role and activities

10. How did you do in your GCSEs, particularly in English and Maths?

11. Have you ever dropped out of education, employment or training?

Yes

No

12. If yes, what reasons were behind you dropping out of education, employment or training?

Consider these following statements, and select which answer describes you best.

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
13. I felt/ feel worried about my transition from secondary school to post-secondary education, employment or training					
14. I felt/ feel supported during my transition from secondary school to post-secondary education, employment or training					

15. Briefly describe why you may have been worried during your transition from secondary school to post-secondary education, employment or training.

16. What support, if any, did you receive or are currently receiving during your transition to post-secondary education, employment or training?

17. What borough do you live in?

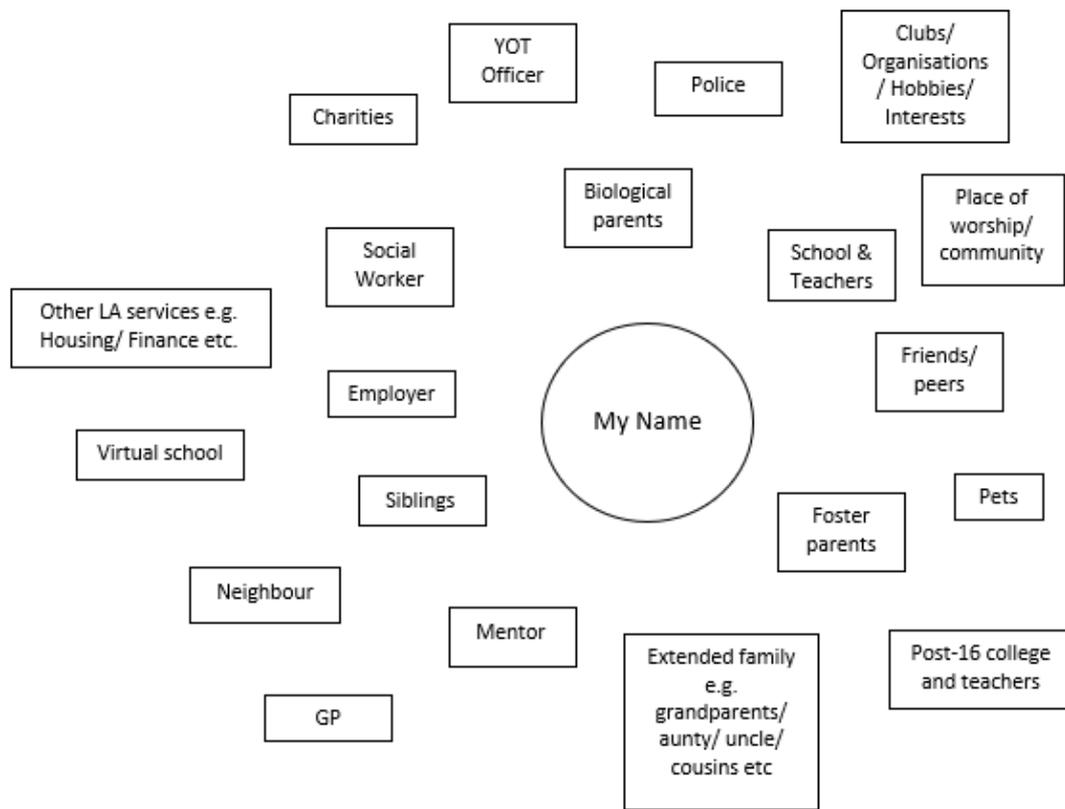
18. What borough do you travel to for your post-secondary activities?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire

LONDON BOROUGHS

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Barking and Dagenham</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Barnet</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bexley</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Brent</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bromley</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Camden</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>City of London</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Croydon</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ealing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Enfield</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Greenwich</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hackney</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hammersmith and Fulham</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Haringey</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Harrow</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Havering</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hillingdon</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hounslow</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Islington</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kensington and Chelsea</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kingston upon Thames</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lambeth</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lewisham</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Merton</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Newham</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Redbridge</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Richmond upon Thames</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Southwark</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sutton</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tower Hamlets</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Waltham Forest</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Wandsworth</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Westminster</i>			

MY ECOMAP TO SHOW THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT WERE AROUND ME DURING MY TRANSITION FROM KS4 (YEAR 11) TO POST-16 COLLEGE, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING



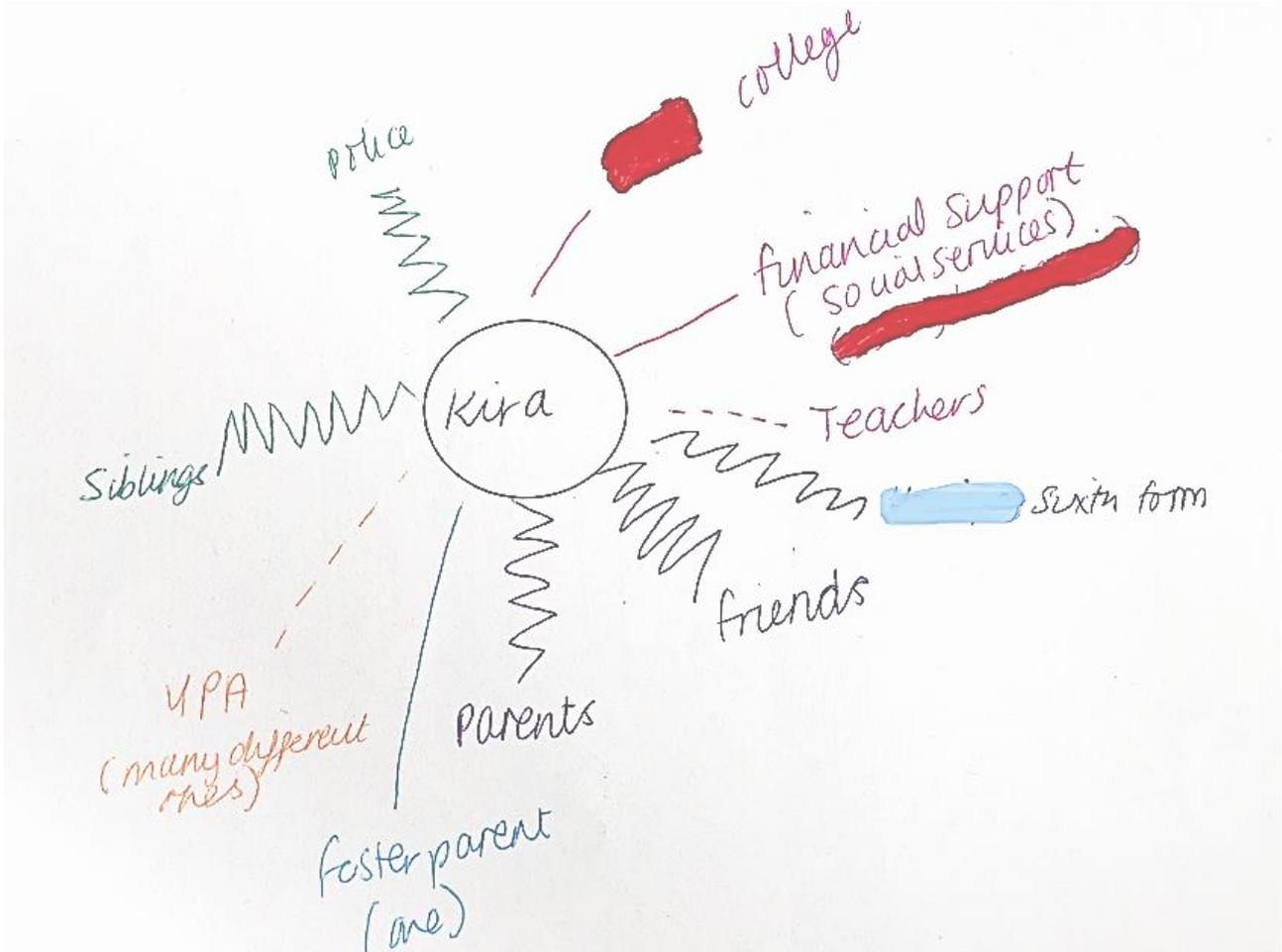
Instructions

1. Write your name in the centre (circle) of the ecomap.
2. The Researcher will help you to explore systems of support/ relationships that influenced you during your transition to independence/ adulthood.
3. The relationships that make up your network will be placed around you in the centre circle.
4. Draw different types of lines to indicate the nature of the link or relationship.

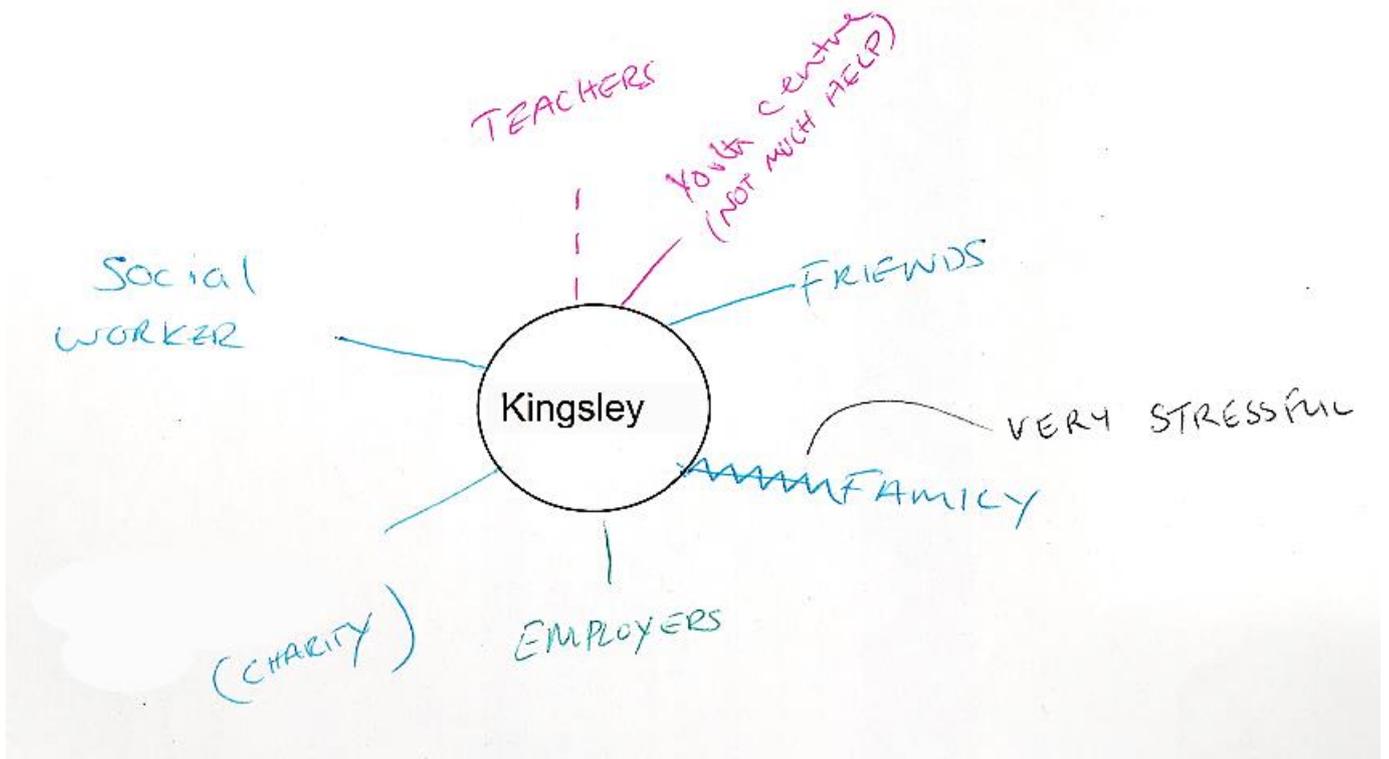
Strong
 Weak
 Stressful

APPENDIX C2 – EXAMPLE OF COMPLETED ECOMAP BY A YOUNG PERSON

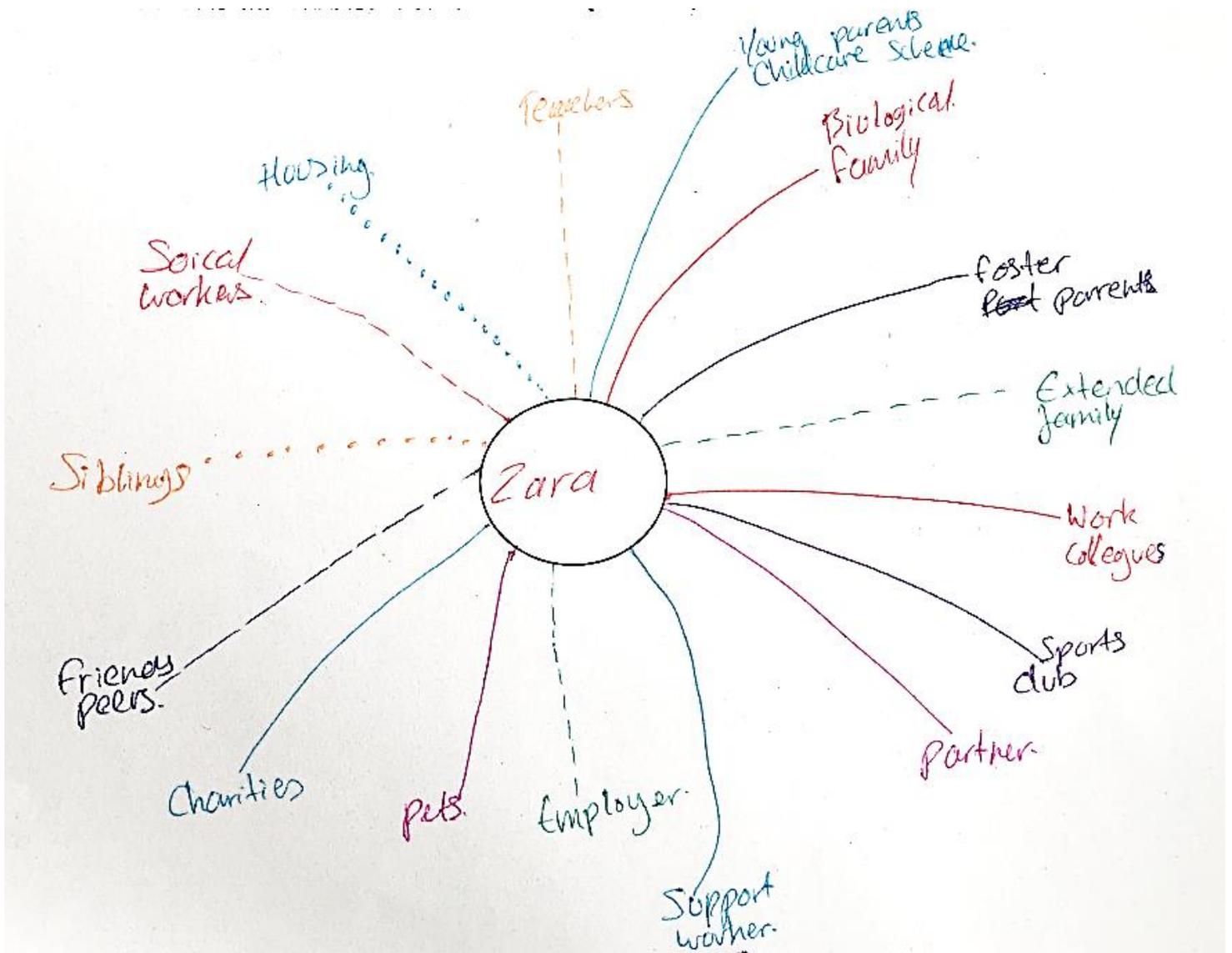
MY ECOMAP TO SHOW THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT WERE AROUND ME DURING MY TRANSITION FROM KS4 (YEAR 11) TO POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING



MY ECOMAP TO SHOW THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT WERE AROUND ME DURING MY TRANSITION FROM KS4 (YEAR 11) TO POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING



MY ECOMAP TO SHOW THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT WERE AROUND ME DURING MY TRANSITION FROM KS4 (YEAR 11) TO POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING



PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The changes made to the preliminary interview schedule run along the left column. These changes are reflected in formal interview schedule

<p>Q1 removed and captured in questionnaire</p> <p>Q4 and Q5 rephrased</p> <p>Q10 rephrased</p> <p>New questions were also added</p>	<p><u><i>Context and needs of young people during transition</i></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To help me to understand your experiences, please could you tell me: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How old you are now? b) What age were you when you first went into care c) If you have left care, what age were you when you left care? 2. How many foster placements have you lived in during your period of being in care? 3. What has been your experience of your placements? 4. Have you moved or are you planning to move to semi/independent living? 5. Tell me about your experience of moving to semi/independent living. 6. Are you currently at college, in employment or training? 7. What would you say were/ are your needs during transition from KS4 to post-secondary education, employment or training? 8. What factors helped your participation in EET? 9. Give examples of factors/ issues that made it difficult/ challenging for you to engage in EET? 10. What are your goals and aspirations? Do these influence the decisions you make re. your post-secondary activities
<p>The order of questions in this section was changed for it to flow better</p> <p>New questions were added</p>	<p><u><i>Relationships & Systems of Support</i></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What types of support, if any, have you received during your transition to post-secondary education, employment or training? 2. Who were the people (and roles)/ organisations/ services who provided you with this support? 3. How did they help you? 4. How would you describe the quality of each of these relationships? 5. Tell me about your experience of having these supportive relationships during challenges you have faced? Examples 6. Which relationship was most meaningful/ supportive for you? <p>See Formal interview schedule for final version</p>

<p>Changes</p> <p>New questions added are highlighted in red</p>	<p>Context and needs of young people during transition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To help me understand your experiences in care, how long you have been/ were you in care? 2) How many foster placements have you lived in during this period? 3) What has been your experience of these placements? 4) What is your current living situation? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Have you moved or planning to move to semi-independent or independent living? b) How old were you when you moved to semi-independent or independent living? c) Did the move occur while you were in education, employment or training? d) Tell me about your experience of moving to semi-independent or independent living 5) For the record, are you currently in education, employment or training? 6) When you were in year 11, how was your attendance and engagement with school? How did you feel about and approach your GCSEs? 7) What were your needs during your transition from KS4 (Year 11) to college, employment or training? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Give some examples of factors/ issues that made it difficult or challenging for you to engage in education, employment or training b) What factors helped you engage in education, employment or training? 8) What are your goals and aspirations? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Do your goals and aspirations influence you to seek support?
<p>Changes</p> <p>Order of questions changed</p> <p>New questions added are highlighted in red</p>	<p>Relationships and Systems of Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) From your ecomap, please tell me who the people (roles)/ services/ organisations are in the support systems around you and describe the quality of the relationships and why? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Did you receive support/ help when you transitioned from Year 11 to post-secondary education, employment or training? b) During periods you have found challenging, are there any other types of support/ help you would have liked/ would like access to? c) What do you do when you need help/ support (prompts – do you ask for help? Who do you ask for help from? Give examples of how you position yourself to gain access to support 2) Which of the relationships on your ecomap was most meaningful/ supportive for you, and why? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What skills do you feel you have developed as a result of the support you have received? (use prompt to explore if needed) – related to improving outcomes b) From your ecomap, who is most responsible for helping you develop these skills and how did they help you do this?

PROMPT FOR QUESTION 2a (used by Interviewer)

If young person gets stuck, the list below (not exhaustive) will be used to explore what ways / supportive relationships may have helped the young person

- Social skills (e.g. improved my ability to make friends and maintain relationships etc.)
- Language and Communication skills (e.g. improved my ability to initiate and hold conversations with people, make oral presentations of my work, etc.)
- Emotional literacy (e.g. improved my ability to understand others' feelings and emotions etc.)
- Emotional regulation (e.g. improved my ability to manage my own feelings and emotions etc.)
- Life skills (e.g. improved my ability to make safe choices, to prepare me for leaving care, to live independently, find accommodation etc.)
- Engagement with education (e.g. providing additional support for my special educational need or disability, supported me by attending my PEP and LAC Reviews, supported me in making subject choices, helped to develop my aspirations and interests etc.)
- Sense of identity (e.g. helped me to feel valued, have my voice heard, have a sense of belonging, preventing gang attachments etc.)

1. Please state and describe your role? How long have you been in this role?
2. How do you work with young people from care backgrounds and support them into education, employment or training?
3. What challenges do you feel hinder young people's engagement with education, employment or training?
4. What training best supports young people from care backgrounds?
5. From your experience of supporting young people, what works well?
6. What value do you feel your support has given the young people/ person you support?
7. How do you know your young person values your input?
8. Have you noticed any changes in the young people following your involvement? Can you tell me about those?
9. Do you work with other organisations (charities, virtual school, social care etc.) to support young people from care backgrounds? If you do, how do you make referrals to these organisations?
10. How might systems of support around young people work together to build effective models of practice to minimise the risk of young people becoming NEET?

APPENDIX E – PARTICIPANT VIGNETTES & NUMBER OF STRONG/ WEAK/ STRESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTIONS

3 1 7

DELVINE



I am 16 years old and have two siblings. I currently live in a foster placement

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 11 years, entering care at the age of 5
- I have lived in two foster placements so far, together with my siblings.

Education

- I have Dyslexia (SEN)
- I have no history of NEET
- I recently transitioned from Year 11 to College
- I am studying Media and retaking GCSE Maths and English
- I always felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, but I often felt supported during this period.
- Making friends was my main worry during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel between two different Local Authorities to attend college

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I would like to be a Make-up Artist
- I don't know what to do after College to get to this goal

0 0 7

FRANK



I am 16 years old. I currently live in a foster placement

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 8 years, entering care at the age of 8
- I have lived in two foster placements so far,

Education & GCSE Attainment

- I do not have a SEN
- I have no history of NEET
- I recently transitioned from Year 11 to Sixth Form school
- I am studying A-level Maths, Chemistry, Biology and Economics.
- I achieved 8s in both GCSE English and Maths (no retakes)
- I sometimes felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I often felt supported during this period.
- Organisation was my main worry during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to attend Sixth Form

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I am split between Finance Management or going down the Science route
- I want to see where my achievements/ qualifications take me

4 3 8

MICHELLE



I am 16 years old
I am Bulgarian and moved to the UK with my family 8-10 years ago.
I currently live in a foster placement

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 1 year, entering care at the age of 15
- I have lived in four foster placements so far

Education

- I have Anxiety/ Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- I have previously been NEET because I was excluded from my previous (secondary) school
- I recently transitioned from Year 11 to College
- I am studying Entry Level 1 Public Services, and retaking GCSE Maths and English
- I always felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I always felt supported during this period.
- Having emotional flashbacks was my main worry during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to attend college

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- Interested in Criminology or Law. be a Lawyer
- I haven't thought about what to do after College to get to this goal

3 4 5

ANNA



I am 18 years old
I have 11 siblings, but I do not live with them. I am in semi-independent living

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 11 years, entering care at the age of seven.
- I have lived in multiple foster placements so far

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have no history of NEET
- I am currently attending College
- I am studying Level 3 Health & Social Care and retaking GCSE Maths and English
- I sometimes felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I often felt supported during this period.
- Making friends was my main worry during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to attend college

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- My goal is to pass my GCSEs and my Maths and English. And pass my level 3 with like a distinction
- Be able to go to college or university, and study midwifery.

KEY: LINES (Also see Appendix G)

Stressful 

Weak - - - - - 

Strong _____ 

0 1 9

YURI



I am 19 years old. I came alone into the UK from Eritrea in 2015 as an UASC. I currently live in a semi-independent placement.

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 4 years, entering care at the age of 15
- I have lived in one foster placement so far, together with my siblings.

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have no history of NEET
- I am currently at College and studying Level 3 Public Services and passed my GCSE English and Maths (no retakes)
- I never felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I always felt supported during this period.
- I travel within my Local Authority to attend college

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I would like to be a Firefighter

5 1 4

JACK



I am 19 years old. I currently live in a semi-independent placement.

Care Experience

- I have been moving between mum and care for over 10 years
- I entered care at the age of 8, but it could also have been earlier at age 1.
- I have lived in four foster placements, and three semi-independent placements.

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have a history of NEET
- I am currently at College and studying Level 3 Game Design
- I passed my GCSE English but re-took Maths.
- I often felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I sometimes felt supported during this period.
- Personal organisation, attendance and punctuality and mental health were my main worries during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to attend college

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I have a goal to have like a full-time and a family.

4 3 6

KIRA



I am 20 years old
I have siblings who live at home with my mum. I do not live with them. I am currently live independently

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 1 year, entering care at the age of 17.
- I have lived in two foster placements before living independently

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have previously been NEET
- I am currently attending College
- I am studying A-level English. I passed GCSE English and Maths
- I often felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I rarely felt supported during this period.
- Making new friendships, having financial assistance and my mental health were my main worries during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel between two different Local Authorities to attend college

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- My goal is to pass my A-levels and go to university
- I want to be a Social worker.

4 5 8

SARAH



I am 21 years old.
I currently live independently with my partner. We have a daughter who is 5 years old.

Care Experience

- I was in care for 5 years
- I entered care at the age of 13
- I have lived in four foster placements

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have a history of NEET
- I am currently in employment
- I did not sit GCSE exams but I completed Functional English and Maths
- I often felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I rarely felt supported during this period.
- Constant change in placement was my main worry during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel between different Local Authorities to attend my place of employment

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I did not have a goal or aspirations when I was at school

2 4 9

CORA



I am 22 years old.
I currently live independently with my son who is 4 years old.
I deliver Total Respect training

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 10 years
- I entered care at the age of 12
- I have lived in four foster placements

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have a history of NEET
- I am currently at university studying Psychology and working part-time within my Local Authority.
- I passed my GCSE English and Maths and began my A-levels however I fell pregnant in the first (AS) year
- I often felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I sometimes felt supported during this period.
- Making friends and struggling with a higher level of study were my main worries during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to engage in EET activities

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- From a very early age, I always knew I wanted to go to university.

1 5 5

KINGSLEY



I am 23 years old
I currently live independently

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 9 years, entering care at the age of 9/ 10.
- I have lived in two foster placements before living independently

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I do not have a history of NEET
- I am currently in full time employment
- I attended College where I completed a Level 2 Engineering course
- I retook both GCSE English and Maths while at college
- I rarely felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I sometimes felt supported during this period.
- Having financial assistance was my main worry during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel between two different Local Authorities to engage in EET activities

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- My goal is to own my own business and retire by 40.

2 3 9

INDIA



I am 24 years old.
I currently live independently with my two sons.

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 5 years
- I entered care at the age of 13
- I have lived in four foster placements

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I do not have a history of NEET
- I am currently not in education, employment or training
- I passed my GCSE English but had to retake Maths
- I attended College and completed an Access course to Social Work while retaking GCSE Maths.
- I sometimes felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I often felt supported during this period.
- Making friends and fitting in were my main worries during transition to post-16 EET
- I travelled between different Local Authorities to engage in EET activities

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I didn't have goal and aspirations until I had my son. I think I want to become a Social worker.

2 5 8

ZARA



I am 24 years old.
I currently live independently with my son and pregnant with my second child.

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 5 years
- I entered care at the age of 13
- I have lived in two foster placements

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have a history of NEET
- I attended College and completed an Accountancy apprenticeship
- I retook my GCSE English and Maths.
- I often felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I sometimes felt supported during this period.
- Making friends, achieving high grades, and personal organisation were my main worries during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to engage in EET activities

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- I just wanted to get back into education and now I hope to finish my Level 4 Accountancy and move into a permanent house.

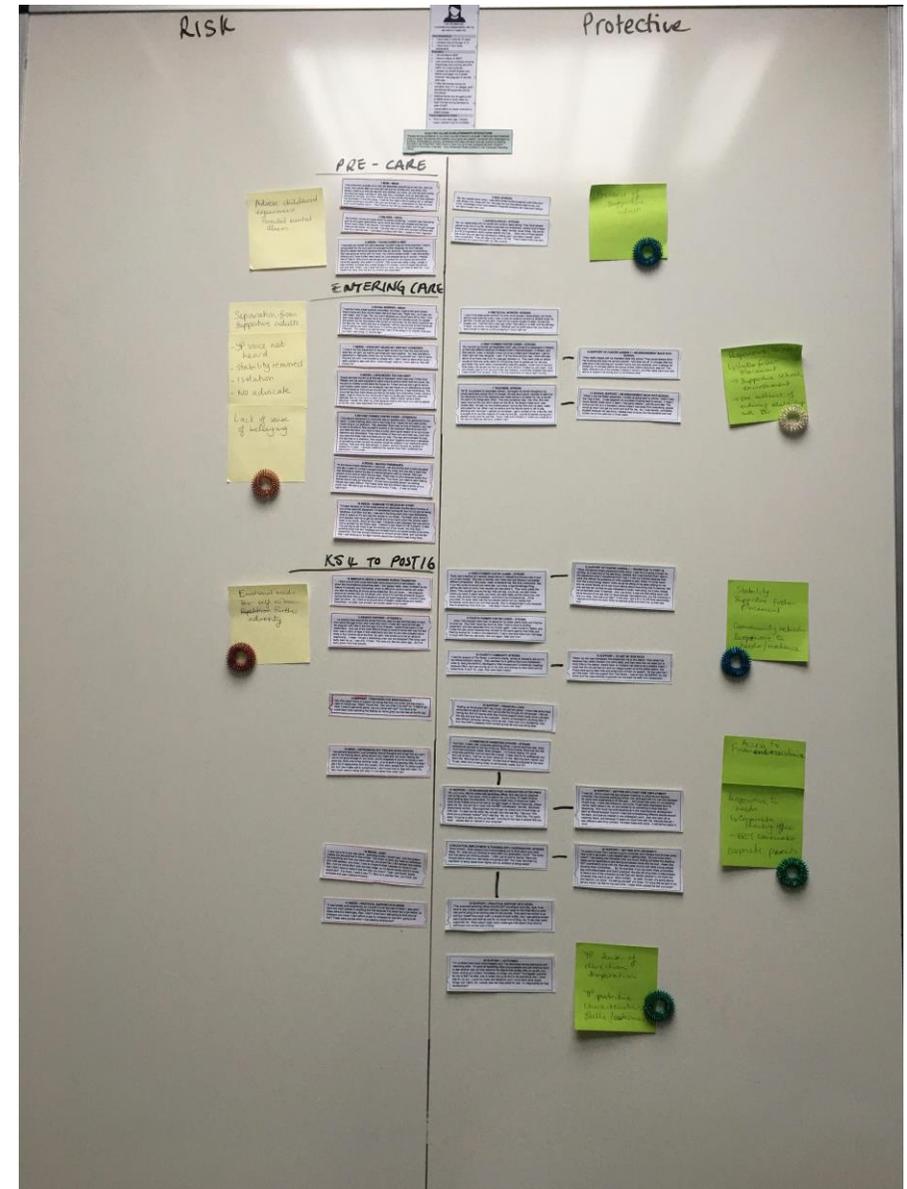
This is the process the researcher used for all young people’s data.

Quotes were coded into three broad categories:

- Supportive relationships & interactions
- Needs and opportunities for connections
- Young person’s awareness of their own agency

The supports identified were then put in a timeline for each young person (as seen in the picture to the right). This was done to show context in terms of the relationships and support at key points (pre-care, entering care, and KS4 to post-16), and the resulting outcomes. The sticky notes running alongside are the corresponding themes.

The example given in the illustration (picture A) is for Cora. Her data covered the breadth of themes/ patterns seen across my dataset for young people.



PICTURE A: Sorting out quotes into themes:
This example is for Cora, 22 years old

LAYOUT OF INFORMATION IN PICTURE A

CORA



I am 22 years old.
I currently live independently with my son who is 4 years old.
I deliver Total Respect training

Care Experience

- I have been in care for 10 years
- I entered care at the age of 12
- I have lived in four foster placements

Education

- I do not have a SEN
- I have a history of NEET
- I am currently at university studying Psychology and working part-time within my Local Authority.
- I passed my GCSE English and Maths and began my A-levels however I fell pregnant in the first (AS) year
- I often felt worried during my transition from Y11 to college, and I sometimes felt supported during this period.
- Making friends and struggling with a higher level of study were my main worries during transition to post-16 EET
- I travel within my Local Authority to engage in EET activities

Future Aspirations/ Goals

- From a very early age, I always knew I wanted to go to university.

QUALITIES VALUED IN RELATIONSHIPS/ INTERACTIONS

"The Corporate Parenting Officer and EET coordinator... having confidence in you when you don't have it in yourself...that's the most important thing I'd argue cos there's been so many occasions where I just, you know, I want to give up and go and work as a shelf stocker... but being around people that are really proud to invest in you and that really take an interest in your progress is what keeps me going. They enable me to grow as a person... I'll say to them, "I got this result on this assignment" and they're like, "we knew you'd smash it, you're just so capable, we're so proud of you," you know, that's the bit that makes the difference. Not updating my pathway plan to make sure I'm on track. What matters is that somebody out there is proud of me and takes an interest in what I'm doing".

Stressful & Weak relationships/
interactions

5

Strong positive relationships/
interactions

10

CORA - PRE CARE EXPERIENCES

RISK

- Neglectful care - Parental mental illness
- Weak familial relationships

1 MUM – WEAK

“I’ve come from a single mum who did absolutely everything on her own, and you know, she looked after us—she had me and my brother and, you know, she always made sure that we was fed and clothed, you know, up until the point where she become really mentally ill. She was very vulnerable, and my dad was very abusive to her and, you know, that’s one of the contributing factors of what sparked her alcoholism in the first place. I lived for five years without seeing her or refused to have anything to do with until I got old enough to I understand it a little bit more until I could identify with it. I don’t have a very strong relationship with her...”.

2 SIBLINGS – WEAK

“My brother comes and goes when he wants something. I wouldn’t say that we’ve got the strongest relationship, we’re more like chalk and cheese and we only bother each other if we have to. I’ve never met my older sister, but I’ve got younger ones as well some I’ve not met. I’ve only met my other two younger brothers and they’re in care as well. I still keep in contact with them, I speak to them

6 NEEDS – YOUNG CARER & NEET

“I basically put myself into care because I couldn’t cope at home anymore. I was a young carer for my mum and my younger brother because my mum had got alcohol-related dementia because she was an alcoholic. Because of everything that was going at home with my mom, my uniform always smelt, I was like always stinking and I was bullied really badly so I just stopped going to school. I missed half of Year 8. She (mum) almost got put in prison for my truancy but she didn’t have the capacity, she wasn’t in control”. The house was really untidy, unkept, it was horrible; it looked like a doss house if I’m honest. I kind of made that phone call and said, ‘Right, I can’t deal with this no more, you just need to take me’. I put myself into care, and me and my brother got separated”.

PROTECTIVE

- Presence of supportive adults

1 AUNTIE & UNCLE – STRONG

“So, my relationship with my auntie and uncle is really strong. They have always played a big role in my life, always supported me emotionally, always kind of been there when I’ve been through some really, really horrible, tough times. They still play a big role in my life. They’ll watch Ollie (my son) sometimes. My auntie is a bit of a godsend, she’s a great listener and just... She’s one of those people that when she can see that somebody’s feeling pain, she feels it herself, she’s really empathetic. They still play a big role in my life”.

2 NAN –STRONG

“My Nan passed away when I was about three months pregnant with Ollie and I was always very close with her, she was the one that always said to me, you know, knowledge is the most powerful thing that anybody can have and nobody can take it away from you”.

CORA – IN CARE EXPERIENCES

RISK

- Corporate parent (social workers) – inconsistency/ short duration
- Relational poverty – impoverished decisions made on meeting needs: separation from supportive adults/ familiarity, voice not heard, stability removed/ isolation, interventions not meeting need
- Lacking a sense of belonging in foster placement/ repetition of neglectful care
- Relational poverty - No one to advocate for young person

SOCIAL WORKER – WEAK

“I had too many social workers (chuckles), too many. It got to the point where they’d come and they did the initial visit and they’ll say, “Right then, you’ll see me next week,” and I’ll say, “No, you won’t because you would have left by then.” And then what used to infuriate me is the social worker who leaves would not update the system so the next person that turned up would ask me the same questions as the last one. So, there was just no progress, nothing was moving forward because you’re asking me what I was doing 12 months ago when it’s now completely irrelevant. You need to be asking what I want to be doing in 12 months’ time and not what I was doing 12 months ago”.

NEEDS – VOICE NOT HEARD/ MY VIEW NOT CONSIDERED

“I lived in the first placement for about eight months and then the local authority were like, all right, we want to get these pair back together. So, they identified a placement in Cannock where we (my brother and I) could both live. The move felt like they were taking me away from everything I knew... I had to leave Kris and Jim, my auntie and uncle who were basically like my mum and dad, you know...and I was sadly separated from that support Even though I said no, I don’t want to, they still moved me”.

PROTECTIVE

- Responsive to needs – Stable & supportive foster placement
- Responsive to needs – Stable & supportive school environment
- Enduring relationship with Corporate parent (for 2 years) – made an impact

ONE SOCIAL WORKER –STRONG

“—one of the best social workers I’ve ever come across I would argue, you know, left the local authority when I was 14 and he wrote to me and my brother when he left that. I’ve still got his card. I had him for a good couple of years, he was the longest one. I met him like a year ago while I was sitting in a café, and we still stay in touch, you know, it’s because I mattered and he cared about me, you know, to care enough to want to continue staying in touch with me”.

FIRST FORMER FOSTER CARER – STRONG

“So, me and my brother got separated, and I was moved to a placement in Walsall, so that was different because I’d always lived in Wolverhampton, in Bilston, and that was all I knew. It actually turned out to be a really good placement. I got on really well with their daughter. I was 12 at the time and she was, I think she was about 20 so there was a bit of a age gap between us. They were quite an elderly couple so that was quite useful for introducing them to people as my nan and granddad; they were really understanding beautiful people. I knew how to knit but **Kris (nan)**, she taught me how to cast on and off and I knitted my own scarf. And she always used to knit me and Finley like dresses, homemade dresses that she’d made herself from scratch. lived in the first placement for about eight months...”.

NEEDS – I WAS MOVED TOO FAR AWAY

"Social services moved us all the way to **Cannock**, which was even further than Walsall, and we were expected to catch a bus to school which took two hours. So, me and my brother would leave the house for 7:00am and we won't get to school until 9:00am which meant we constantly had late marks on our attendance records. School finished at 3:00 but we wouldn't get home until five. It was horrendous. The move felt like they were slowly just taking me away from everything I knew. Once a week, I had to travel for two hours just to see my auntie and uncle who were like basically like my mum and my dad, you know. Ollie's middle name's Dillon because I named him after my uncle because that is how much of a role he played in my life, and I was separated from that support".

SECOND FORMER FOSTER CARER – STRESSFUL

"This second placement [in Cannock] was an isolating time. The placement broke down. It was breaking down over a very long time. I spent the two years pretty much living in my bedroom. I felt, alienated, there was no kind of freedom; you had to ask to be able to help yourself to snacks in the cupboard. Bed-time was 9:00 and after that time, you have to have a pretty damn good reason to be out of your bedroom and downstairs. They had children of their own and it felt very much like you were the foster kids and these are our kids. This was demonstrated through the fact that on a weekend, they would all sit down together and have a takeaway or something whilst me and my brother would be upstairs in our bedrooms doing nothing. They took their kids abroad, to Spain, and put me and my brother in respite for a week...I actually preferred the respite more than I preferred the placement, if I'm honest..."

NEEDS – MAKING FRIENDSHIPS

"At the second foster placement in Cannock...we (my brother and I) were allocated one day a week for contact unsupervised with my uncle, and one day a week that was allocated to spend the day (in Wolverhampton) with our friends. We'd get picked up but have to catch the bus back. There was no point because buses kind of stopped running at 6:00, so they were like, "You know, you need to start making friends around here (in Cannock)". I'm just not a sociable person, so making friends was really difficult. The Foster carer had this brilliant idea to enrol us in a youth club. We had to go to this youth club every Friday... it was my worst nightmare."

NEEDS – SOMEONE TO BELIEVE MY STORY

"I'd been banging on to the social worker for absolutely months about moving us out of this (second) placement. I'd considered running off, but I'm not one for being rebellious. And then one day, I was sat in the living room and I was deliberating what to watch on TV and had the remote on my cheek. The foster carer came in and basically told me to get the remote out of my mouth when the remote wasn't even in my mouth. About an hour later, I received a text message that was sent to me by accident by the foster carer. I believe it was meant for her husband. It read, 'I've just had to tell **Cora** to get the remote out of her mouth, the dirty bitch'. I screenshotted that text message and emailed that to my social worker at the time. Apparently, that was enough evidence to remove us from there, and not the fact that I was banging on for eight months about how horrible it was living there..."

SCHOOL SUPPORT – RE-ENGAGEMENT BACK INTO SCHOOL

"When I was living with my mum, I just stopped going to school cos I was bullied. I missed half of Year 8. I ended up going back to school like in Year 9 when I was in the first foster placement. I would literally break down in tears. I had panic attacks...just the pure fear...it was apparent going back to school was causing me great anxiety.... The school put me up in a transition centre where I was away from everything, people would go down and get my lunch and stuff for me. So, I was literally, completely isolated because the last thing I needed was to bump into the students that had bullied me for the past two or three years..."

SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS 1 – RE-ENGAGEMENT BACK INTO SCHOOL

"They (foster carers) really helped with my transition back into school. They would always drive me to school and drop me off 10 minutes after the gate shut in the morning so I wouldn't bump into any students, and I'd always get picked up 10 minutes before the school ended, before everybody else left. They really went over and above to support me during such a horrendous time and it helped to relieve a lot of the anxiety of being in school".

TEACHERS –STRONG

"Mr B, my godsend in secondary school...he fought my corner throughout my whole secondary school life if I'm honest. He was like a senior member of staff and he influenced a lot of the decisions that made school a lot easier for me, to be fair. He wasn't the Designated officer. That was somebody else - Ms Hillis. He always made sure I was looked after. He was my one trusting person during that time and he really, really advocated for me. He was the one that agreed I could arrive 10 minutes later and get picked up 10 minutes earlier. When I sat my exams and the results came in, Mr B was, standing with me when I opened my envelope. I got a number of As, a few Bs, and a couple of Cs, but the majority of it was As and Bs...and Mr B started crying and I started crying, and he was like, "Cora, I told you'd smash it, I knew you could do it." He was an absolute diamond, brilliant man".

CORA – TRANSITION FROM KS4 TO INDEPENDENCE

- Immediate needs at transition - emotional needs/ poor self-esteem/
- Corporate parent (PA) - Lack of support at point of transition to independence
- Limited emotional support – depression
- Emotional needs/ poor self-esteem/
- Further and multiple adversities – domestic violence/ abusive relationship, getting into debt

- Responsive to needs – stable & supportive foster placement
- Responsive to needs - Community support
- Responsive to needs – Access to Financial assistance
- Responsive to needs - Corporate parenting officer acts as a buffer
- Responsive to needs – EET Coordinator acts as buffer
- YP having a sense of direction/ aspiration
- YP attributed outcomes

IMMEDIATE NEEDS & WORRIES DURING TRANSITION

“...I think a lot of work could have been done around kind of self-esteem...I fell pregnant around six months into my AS levels, and I think if I'd had that emotional support earlier on at school, then a lot of situations would not have happened like spending three years in an abusive relationship... so, I think one to one support around kind of healthy relationships and healthy friendships... I wouldn't have been as naïve...experiencing those dark places unnecessarily because they are preventable with the right support in place so yeah, just emotion and social needs to be honest”.

THIRD FORMER FOSTER CARER – STRONG

“Eddy was a teacher at a special needs school in Walsall and Pauline was in and out of care herself. She was a midwife, and I think that just offered a completely different perspective. She really, really understood me, like truly understood. Say if you like come home and you were late, you know, a typical teenage thing, getting late back at home; they wouldn't go mad about it. They never called the police. They wouldn't go over the top, they just say, you know, we didn't know where you were, it wasn't safe, you know, we were really worried about you, you know, they showed that compassion, and there'd be consequences...I'd be grounded. I'd never really had the boundaries before but you realise that somebody cared about you and that actually, they're disappointed in you because they're expecting more from you...I still keep in touch with them”.

SUPPORT OF FOSTER CARERS 3 – TRANSITION TO POST-16

“When the second foster placement broke down, I was kind of going through my GCSEs, so it was the last thing I needed. The move to this third foster placement worked out because they really like guided me on what subjects to pick. Even when I'd come home from like a Psychology lesson, Eddy would be sitting at the table waiting for me and we would literally sit for two hours talking about everything that I'd learned. Not only did that tell me that he was interested in what I was doing, but it also helped me consolidate what I'd learned...and, you know, it was just that sitting down with me one to one at the end of the day that I'd never actually had before. I ended up getting a B in my AS level psychology. I learned a lot from him, and I think he learned quite a bit from me, so that was nice”.

FOURTH FORMER FOSTER CARER – STRONG

“...when I fell pregnant there was no space for my foster carers Eddy and Pauline to have me...they didn't have the room so, then I had to move to another placement, and was separated from my brother again. I was moved to **Tipton**, and I knew the new carers because they worked for the same agency that Eddy and Pauline worked for. It was a nice placement, I had a nice time there and I still keep in touch with them as well every now and again, Sally and Tom”.

ABUSIVE PARTNER – STRESSFUL

“...he actually lived around the corner from me, was my age and had been in care from about the age of two, and I was very much—I was very naïve at that age. I fell pregnant with Ollie in the first year of my A-levels. I spent three years in that relationship...and one of the most difficult things to come to terms with was the fact that I was a victim of rape in that relationship and like my son was probably about three or four months old at the time. So yeah, that turned out to be an abusive relationship...I mean, I've got a restraining order cos he kidnapped Ollie twice, and badly beat me up. I was only 19 then. This was only like two years ago...but I've really grown from that actually...”.

CHARITY/ COMMUNITY—STRONG

“I had the support from The Haven, a women's charity, similar to Women's Aid. They assisted me in getting like a non-molestation order by doing like MARAC (Multiagency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings because Ollie's dad was turning up on my door and kicking my door down and all these kinds of stuff. So, yeah, they were really helpful in that aspect so I could continue studying with less interruptions”.

SUPPORT – POLICE INVOLVEMENT

“When my son was kidnapped, the police took me to the station. They aided me because they called Harrison (my son's dad), and they were like, we need you to bring Ollie to the station, there's been an incident, we need to do a welfare check. I knew that the minute he turned up at the police station, the Police were gonna take Ollie and arrest him on assault. The police helped me get Ollie back”.

NEED – PREPARING FOR INDEPENDENCE

"My YPA wasn't there to support me during this time, you know, it's was more a case of I would say, "Right, I found this. Can you order it for me?" or, "I need to go here, I need to get some paints, can you come with me?" You have to be supervised when spending the Setting Up Home grant, so that was all the PA did".

SUPPORT – FINANCIAL/ LOAN

"Setting Up Home grant isn't very much, you get two grand. I know that some local authorities it's about £1800, but I got £2,000 but it's just, it's not enough. I did not have any form of income other than income support which pretty much just pays the bills and puts food in the cupboard...there's no leverage for anything else. It was difficult, obviously having a child as well. I then took out a Budgeting Loan from the DWP to basically finish furnishing that flat and everything else".

NEED – DEPRESSION/ NOT FEELING GOOD ENOUGH

"Just general depression, just constantly having thoughts and things that you don't want to be thinking about, going around your head and, you know, feeling like you're not good enough or, you know, you're incapable or you're not doing a very good job, that's one of the common ones...a lot of stuff is regarding Ollie, but then I get a lot of reassurance from the nursery, from other people that I'm doing a good job, but I don't take well to compliments, I don't know how to deal with them. I'm very much used to being told what I'm not rather than what I am".

CORPORATE PARENTING OFFICER – STRONG

"And then, I mean, Abi, corporate parenting officer, I cannot fault that lady, she's exceptional just both in and out of the job. She's phenomenal. She's just like that mum that everybody needs. She's fantastic...I'm forever saying 'Oh, good corporate parenting' and we have like a laugh. I mean they're my colleagues now and one of them, I call her my work mama so I'm like, 'Morning work mama!' and she's like, 'Morning work daughter'. It's that kind of feeling embraced is the word I'd use, really kind of being loved, it's all anybody needs, isn't it?"

SUPPORT TO RE-ENGAGE WITH POST-16 EDUCATION AFTER PREGNANCY & GETTING INTO PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

"I was 20 at the time...and to close that gap between finishing my adult ed and starting university, the corporate parenting officer, Abi, arranged with my now line manager for some work experience to fill that gap. ...Abi knows that when I'm not keeping myself busy, I make bad decisions, you know, I'll get really depressed and my mental health takes a dip, so she wanted to do something to stop that from happening. She found me work experience in the Council's organisational development team. I've been there ever since...it will be two years in June...She's just like that mum that everybody needs...she was just my absolute rock at this point. Even when I was thinking about getting back into education., I said to her 'I'm driving myself crazy in these four walls...I need some intellect around me that is not iggle piddle or bloody Peppa pig, please save me'. So, she put me in touch with the EET coordinator who has supported me through my whole kind of level three up until now. I'd seen her the other day actually and she was like, "Has your YPA done you a university review?" and I was like, "No, no, no." She's like, "For god's sake, I'm going to stick my foot up his ass" And they're the type of people that you need... people take an interest in your progress".

NEEDS – DEBT

"You know, in care, you have an allowance for everything, and the system makes you accustomed to that almost. Then when you move to independent living, you have nothing. I still wanted nice clothes and I had an image of what I wanted my home to look like so I took out a lot of pay day loans...spending money I haven't got. Just complete and utter irrational thinking and I got into a lot of debt...but it had a lot to do with low self-esteem, and depression.".

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING (EET) COORDINATOR –STRONG

"She's brilliant. She's always kind of encouraging you to think about your next steps, 'Have you thought about what your next steps are going to be Cora?' and just by her asking that question starts you thinking and then my aspiration is being raised even higher and my ambition is being raised".

NEEDS – PRACTICAL SUPPORT INTO WORK

"It was initially work experience, so I couldn't cover the cost of travel. I also didn't have any work clothes or anything like that because I've never had a job before, so these were the challenges. Also, I didn't know how I was going to work around childcare, you know, I can't afford to pay for childcare so how am I going to do that? These were worries when I was seeking employment".

SUPPORT – PRACTICAL SUPPORT INTO WORK

"The corporate parenting officer and the EET coordinator were like, right, if we have to pay nursery costs then we'll pay nursery costs for the three days a week that you're going to be working here (in the council). They gave me money to go and buy myself like a work outfit, a couple of work outfits, and I was getting scratch card DaySavers and stuff as well for my travel kind of thing. So, I'll say they really supported me. There wasn't really many challenges that weren't then kind of addressed and solved kind of thing".

SUPPORT – GETTING INTO UNIVERSITY

"I'd always known that I wanted to go to university and I always kind of knew what I had to do to get there, I just needed help in getting there. Do you know what I mean? Like getting into education and, you know, finding out when the deadline dates are for applications are and having somebody come with me and... The EET coordinator came with me and she takes other young people to visit universities...so—it's that going above and beyond, you know. So, for example, if you put down three universities say one's Manchester and one's Liverpool, like she will drive them to Manchester to have a tour of the university so that they can decide whether or not that's the university they want to go to. She's brilliant...so yeah, it's just—it's going above and beyond, you know. It's asking yourself; you know, I'm doing this as part of my job but would I do this for my own child. I mean think outside the box you know".

SUPPORT – ATTRIBUTED OUTCOMES

"I'm confident and much more resilient now. I've developed strong leadership and mentoring skills. I'm good at mentoring other young people and just enabling them to see another way out than become the stigma that society tells us we are, you know, ending up in prison, homeless, or on drugs, you know? The biggest outcome for me is that I've been able to break that cycle and to be everything that I never had for my son. I could've made bad decisions and I could have done stupid things, but I didn't. So, nobody else can take credit for that. I'm responsible for that development. Abi, the corporate parenting officer has just enabled me to grow as a person...she's a phenomenal woman".

APPENDIX G1: TABLE1 – SHOWING SYSTEM LAYERS & DESCRIPTION OF RELATIONSHIPS

	Delvine	Frank	Michelle	Anna	Yuri	Jack	Kira	Sarah	Cora	Kingsley	India	Zara	TOTAL NUMBER OF STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AT EACH LAYER	TOTAL NUMBER OF WEAK OR STRESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS AT EACH LAYER		
Age	16	16	16	18	19	19	20	21	22	23	24	24				
No. of dependants/ age at first pregnancy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/16	1/17	N/A	2/17	2/17				
UASC	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO				
Entering care age	5	8	15	7	15	8	17	13	12	9	13	13				
Length of time in care	11	8	1	11	4	10	1	5	10	10	5	5				
Number of foster placements	2	2	4	MULTIPLE	1	4	2	4	4	2	4	2				
Current living situation	FP	FP	FP	SEMI-I	SEMI-I	SEMI-I	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT				
Number of secondary school settings	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	2				
SEN	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO				
History of NEET	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES				
GCSE English and/or Maths Retakes	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	Functional skills	NO	YES	YES	YES				
Felt worried during transition to post-16	Always	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Never	Often	Often	Often	Often	Rarely	Sometimes	Often				
Felt supported during transition to post-16	Often	Often	Always	Often	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Rarely	Sometimes	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes				
RELATIONSHIPS A TO Z (AS INDICATED BY YOUNG PERSON ON ECOMAPS AND CITED IN INTERVIEWS)																
Parents/ carers & Family	A. Biological parents	F..... M_____	NEM	F_____ M.....	F..... M.....	F_____ M_____	NEM	F..... M.....	F..... M.....	F NEM M_____	F_____ M_____	F..... M_____	F NEM M_____	3	14	
	B. Known siblings	_____	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	NEM	.....	4	2	
	C. Extended family/ relatives	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	.....	_____	.....	NEM	_____	2	3	
	D. Foster carers	1..... 2_____	1 NEM 2_____	1..... 2..... 3..... 4_____	-----	1_____	1..... 2..... 3..... 4.....	1..... 2_____	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____	1_____ 2..... 3_____ 4_____	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4.....	1_____ 2_____	1_____ 2_____	11	20	
	E. Pet	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	1	0
Peers & Partners	F. Friends/ peers	_____	_____	NEM	.....	_____	_____	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	_____	_____	6	3	
	G. Peer Mentors	NEM	NEM	-----	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	0	1	
	H. Partners	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	.....	NEM	NEM	_____	2	1	

Professionals	I. School staff/ teachers/ safeguarding officers	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	NEM	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	11	4
	J. School Mentors/ Counsellors	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	2	1
	K. Virtual school (VS)	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	2	1
	L. CAMHS	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	1	0
	M. GP	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	1	1
	N. Family Nurse	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	_____	2	0
	O. Social workers	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	8	4
	P. Personal Advisors (PA)	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	_____	_____	_____	NEM	_____	4	2
	Q. Education, Employment & Training (EET)	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	2	0
	R. Corporate Parenting Officer (CPO)	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	1	0
	S. Support Worker	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	3	1
	T. Finance	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	2	0
	U. Housing	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	.....	1	0
	V. Lawyer & Solicitors	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	0	1
Community & Social	W. Vol. sector/ Charities - IVs	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	9	0
	X. Vol. sector/ Charities	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		0
	Y. Police	.....	NEM	_____	_____	NEM	_____	.....	NEM	_____	NEM	NEM	NEM	3	3
	Z. Employer	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	NEM	.....	NEM	NEM	NEM	_____	NEM	_____	1	2
NO. OF WEAK OR STRESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS PER YOUNG PERSON		4	0	7	7	1	6	7	9	6	6	5	7		
NO. OF STRONG RELATIONSHIPS PER YOUNG PERSON		7	7	8	5	9	4	6	8	9	5	9	8		
KEY: [N/A = NOT APPLICABLE] [FP = FOSTER PLACEMENT] [SEMI-I = SEMI INDEPENDENT] [INDPT = INDEPENDENT] [NEM = NOT ON ECOMAP] [F = FATHER] [M = MOTHER] [__ STRONG] [___ WEAK] [....STRESSFL]															

APPENDIX G2 – SYSTEM: STRONG INFORMAL & FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS

EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT CITED BY 6 YOUNG PEOPLE (16-19 YEAR OLDS) AT DIFFERENT LAYERS

SYSTEM LAYER	PARTICIPANTS	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES	16 CODES
BIOLOGICAL PARENTS (1)	YURI, 19	<i>"...So, even though they're not here, we still talk on average about like every two weeks. So, they would give me advice and the emotional support as well..." YURI, 19</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
SIBLINGS (3)	DELVINE, 16 ANNA, 18 JACK, 19	<p><i>"Um, some of my sister's friends are my friends, so my sister helped me get more friends". DELVINE, 16</i></p> <p><i>"I have contact with my older siblings and one was already attending at the college, so, she was like, 'we'll explore your choices and everything'...it was nice to have her around. It's just great to like have that bond with them and just talk about how they're coping". ANNA, 18</i></p> <p><i>"He's (brother) very smart...and he's not afraid to advise me even though he knows it's going to hurt me...but he really did help me. A lot of the time, he'd talk to me - he'd give me these long lectures, and I just wouldn't listen and one day, I just like realised he's right, I do need to sort things out, like he's been such a humongous help in my life like...I bought them (mum and brother) a Christmas present today, so...we're still very much in touch, yeah..." JACK, 19</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and emotional support Support with post-16 pathway/ applications Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
EXTENDED FAMILY/ RELATIVES (1)	MICHELLE, 16	<i>"...like my uncle lives in America. He always gives me advice and will always say 'don't worry, we'll sort this out'". MICHELLE, 16</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
FOSTER CARERS (5)	DELVINE, 16 FRANK, 16 MICHELLE, 16 ANNA, 18 YURI, 19	<p><i>Delvine's foster carer prefers Delvine to call her auntie, though they are not related. Delvine states: "She's easier to talk to and she's always there if I need something. And she's really funny". Delvine confirmed that she is enjoying this placement... DELVINE, 16</i></p> <p><i>Little detail given FRANK, 16</i></p> <p><i>"My foster carer is amazing...she is really nice and helpful. She helps me with everything if I have any stress. Any concern, I would just go to her...I can just talk to her about anything, problems I have. Like a parent, she will come and deal with it". MICHELLE, 16</i></p> <p><i>"She helped me look through colleges. I picked this one and she's now like a governor here. She knows a lot about young people and how to support them. I'm able to talk with her about what I've been through and like mental health issues, without her like judging me or whatever... ANNA, 18</i></p> <p><i>"...my foster parent was very helpful... when I first came into the UK in 2015, I didn't really understand English...I couldn't speak English... so, she really helped me cos we speak the same language, we're from the same country. She kind of had to translate things for me". YURI, 19</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to Support with post-16 pathway/ applications Language and cultural support
PET (1)	DELVINE, 16	<i>"My pet makes me feel happy". DELVINE, 16</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellbeing
FRIENDS/ PEERS (3)	DELVINE, 16 FRANK, 16 YURI, 16	<p><i>"I have one friend Kelly (from previous secondary school), who is here also (at the college) and in my class. She's been there for me for five years". DELVINE, 16 [little detail on what support looks like]</i></p> <p><i>"...I have that groups of friends ...close friends that I have known for a long time... they all motivate me—they might not have the same drive I have but they understand where I'm trying to go...". FRANK, 16</i></p> <p><i>"If I'm not in a good mood or want to do something, I'll just ask them and then we can do some things together...they're also very supportive like, emotionally and psychologically". YURI, 19</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and emotional support Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
PARTNERS	-	-	
SCHOOL STAFF/ TEACHERS	DELVINE, 16 FRANK, 16	<i>"There's only like one good teacher that I actually like but she's a TA. She always helps me in lesson... if I need it". DELVINE, 16</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational support

	MICHELLE, 16 ANNA, 18 YURI, 19	<p>"I couldn't do my Oyster and Mr Samson stayed with me after school for a whole hour...I didn't know how to scan and things like that and he helped me. I would not have got that Student Oyster in time if it were not for him. It's nice when teachers go out of their way to help...". FRANK, 16</p> <p>"I always report anything suspicious to the Principal...if anyone bullies me too much or brings in offensive weapons or anything...he sorts it out". MICHELLE, 16</p> <p>"I share the difficulties I have with my peers with the safeguarding officer. I talk to her all the time...and trust her". ANNA, 18</p> <p>"...they're open and really helpful...so if I need help for my assignments and I need guidelines and stuff, I will just go there and they will help for like an extra like couple of hours". YURI, 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with post-16 pathway/ general applications • Support with peer relationships/ bullying • Protective & Safeguarding support
SCHOOL MENTORS/ COUNSELLORS	MICHELLE, 16	"Counselling is a strong relationships 'cause you can talk to them and they always help". MICHELLE, 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with Mental health and wellbeing
VIRTUAL SCHOOL	FRANK, 16 YURI, 19	<p>"See, they provide that support like... holiday school and you go there and you do like Maths, English, Science, so they give you that educational support...and even tickets to the cinema and stuff like that...and trips. At the Virtual school, I really get on with Dinah, she's easy to relate to cos she just gets you like naturally...I can talk to her and she gives good advice...". FRANK, 16</p> <p>"...So, they (virtual school) used to help me with Maths and English. Uh-hmm. I used to go there after college and just practice...There were teachers there that used to help me practice like mock tests and stuff...". YURI, 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational support • Advisory support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Social and emotional support
CAMHS	MICHELLE, 16	"...CAMHS is the hugest relief I've ever had. If you have ever felt anxiety, stressed, any kind of flashback or any kind of bad memory in your life, just come and talk to them. They changed my life... like right now, I'm holding like a thing for anxiety to help me not to worry. I would say I've got a really good relationship".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with Mental health and wellbeing • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
GP	MICHELLE, 16	"...I have irritable bowel syndrome and they (GP) gave me medicine. They are going to speak to me about sexual health and all that stuff about the past that I don't really want to talk about". MICHELLE, 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Health
FAMILY NURSE	-	-	
SOCIAL WORKERS	DELVINE, 16 FRANK, 16 MICHELLE, 16 ANNA, 19 YURI, 19 JACK, 19	<p>"Because she always listens to what I have to say". DELVINE, 16</p> <p>"He (social worker) comes to meetings, has conversations with me, makes suggestions on what I need to do to improve on basically... FRANK, 16</p> <p>"I'm really emotional at times and talk to my social worker. My previous social workers and the social worker that I have now, suggested CAMHS and they were right. They have made a difference". MICHELLE, 16</p> <p>"...my social worker just gave me like leaflets on different colleges and like what you need to do to get in there. She has been really supportive in like any decisions or any meetings...and has advises me, like she says this is wrong, this is right, you need to do this, you need to improve on this...". ANNA, 19</p> <p>Little detail YURI, 19</p> <p>"My current social worker has really helped me and been quite nice. She's easy to talk to about stuff. She linked me with a Mentor (from the charity) to help me back into college. He talked with me about what I liked and what I would like for the future. She set up the mentor stuff". JACK, 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Signposting/ referring • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to

PERSONAL ADVISERS	YURI, 19	<i>"...she's been my personal adviser for about a year now maybe. And she's been really helpful with anything like, she sometimes, she comes to my house and asks me if everything is okay. We email as well, all the time, so if I need anything, I will just ask her". YURI, 19</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
EET COORDINATOR	-	-	
PERSONAL ADVISORS	-	-	
SUPPORT WORKERS	-	-	
FINANCE	ANNA, 18	<i>"Like money was a bit of a struggle. So, I got housing benefits and everything. So, I just like got to stay on top of that..." ANNA, 18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support
HOUSING	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
INDEPENDENT VISITORS	DELVINE 16	<i>"A lady came to our house and from what [foster] auntie thought it would be a good idea to get me one (an Independent Visitor), so the lady had a whole bunch of people that we could choose from, so... so I picked Mandy from a picture of her on a piece of paper and what she likes. She visits me nearly every month and she likes art as well so when we go out, we visit Museums and art galleries...it kind of depends on how we feel, but sometimes we might just go out for lunch. I was worried about starting college and she would listen to me and give me advice. I'm really shy and don't have a lot of friends and she encourages me to talk to people. I've known her for four years now so she definitely helps". DELVINE, 16</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Befriending support – personal, social and emotional development
VOL. SECTOR/ CHARITIES	FRANK, 16 YURI, 19 JACK, 19	<p><i>"I used to volunteer at a bikeshop that's just down the road there. The bike engineers are much older...and they are a motivational source as well cos they tell you like how they've gone through blips...and how they have overcome it. The advice they give kind of like sets your mind and helps you...they're a bit like mentors... it makes a difference..." FRANK, 16</i></p> <p><i>"...I used to go after college and the people there (at the charity) used to help me a lot. For example, I used to ask Naomi about the Fire service and she used to research some information and email it to me and stuff...and she would message back and forth. I could ask her anything". YURI, 19</i></p> <p><i>"...there's a service called LXP, and they – I did some courses with them over the summer to deal with conflict and anxiety and that helped me a lot, especially with re-starting college. To be honest, I didn't want to go back because I was...I was a bit scared – I'd already been out for a year...and like I'm older than everyone...and that was also another worry. They helped me come out of my shell, become a bit more confident and improve my general wellbeing as well... I also started counselling with MND...They were really good. I really liked my counsellor. The Mentor (from the charity) supported me back into college by helping me apply..." JACK, 19</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring/ role models • Support with post-16 pathway/ applications • Support with post-16 pathway/ careers advice • Support with Mental health and wellbeing
POLICE	MICHELLE, 16 JACK, 19	<p><i>"Police are like really useful...because any concern...you just tell them. Why should we feel like scared to speak – he assaulted me, he punched me, he kicked me. No, we go and we tell... until they are arrested, you know what I mean...the police changed my life". MICHELLE, 16</i></p> <p><i>"I think I had quite a positive relationship with the police. They're very helpful at times, like there's a lot of times I had to interact with them because of my mum, because of certain things she did or happened to her or happened to me, so they've always been a positive experience..." JACK, 19</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective & Safeguarding support
LAWYERS & SOLICITORS	-	-	
EMPLOYER	-	-	

APPENDIX G3 – SYSTEM: STRONG INFORMAL & FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS

EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT CITED BY 6 YOUNG PEOPLE (20-24 YEAR OLDS) AT DIFFERENT LAYERS

SYSTEM LAYER	PARTICIPANTS	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES	16 CODES
BIOLOGICAL PARENTS (1)	ZARA, 24	<p><i>"When my dad left, my mum didn't know how to deal with that situation...and her health slowly declined as well– she kind of just broke down completely. I kind of got a chance to connect with them when I started living by myself. Just being a family again, I really liked it. I now spend time with my mum...she's like my friend. Whenever I'm feeling upset, I'll just go around her house and rant (laughs). Our relationship has improved, and her well-being has improved as well. We support each other". ZARA, 24</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
SIBLINGS (3)	SARAH, 21	<p><i>"I had a really, really, really good relationship with my younger brother. He was kind of like my best friend, the person who I could talk to...and he helped me with everything like moving from one foster home to another foster home. He was there helping me, you know, he would babysit if I needed to go out". SARAH, 21</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Practical support/ physical assistance: help to move
EXTENDED FAMILY/ RELATIVES (1)	CORA, 22	<p><i>"So, my relationship with my auntie and uncle is really strong. They have always played a big role in my life, always supported me emotionally, always kind of been there when I've been through some really, really horrible, tough times. They still play a big role in my life. They'll watch Ollie (my son) sometimes...They still play a big role in my life". CORA, 22</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
FOSTER CARERS (5)	KIRA, 20 CORA, 22 INDIA, 24 ZARA, 24	<p><i>"...I started having really bad panic attacks and she'd be up with me, calming me down...one time I had a panic attack on the street, it was about 8pm and I couldn't move. I could not move like, literally I was stuck, could not move...I was just so terrified and I called her and I said, "You need to pick me up, I can't remember my way home, I can't move, I'm scared like..." and she drove all the way, she made me some hot chocolate and then she's cuddling me and it was so nice and truly genuine thing...". KIRA, 20</i></p> <p><i>"When I was living with my mum, I just stopped going to school cos I was bullied. I missed half of Year 8. I ended up going back to school like in Year 9 when I was in the first foster placement. I would literally break down in tears. I had panic attacks...just the pure fear...it was apparent going back to school was causing me great anxiety.... They (foster carers) really helped with my transition back into school. They would always drive me to school and drop me off 10 minutes after the gate shut in the morning so I wouldn't bump into any students, and I'd always get picked up 10 minutes before the school ended, before everybody else left. They really went over and above to support me during such a horrendous time and it helped to relieve a lot of the anxiety of being in school". CORA, 22</i></p> <p><i>"When the second foster placement broke down, I was kind of going through my GCSEs, so it was the last thing I needed. The move to this third foster placement worked out because they really like guided me on what subjects to pick. Even when I'd come home from like a Psychology lesson, Eddy would be sitting at the table waiting for me and we would literally sit for two hours talking about everything that I'd learned. Not only did that tell me that he was interested in what I was doing, but it also helped me consolidate what I'd learned...and, you know, it was just that sitting down with me one to one at the end of the day that I'd never actually had before. I ended up getting a B in my AS level psychology" CORA, 22</i></p> <p><i>Little detail given. INDIA, 24</i></p> <p><i>Little detail given, ZARA, 24</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Practical support/ physical assistance: return to education • Support with post-16 pathway/ applications • Educational support
FRIENDS/ PEERS	SARAH, 21 KINGSLEY, 23 INDIA, 24	<p><i>"My friends and peers, were like my support system in a way ... most of my friends didn't know I was in foster care...they were kind of like a distraction for me because when you're 13, 14, 15, it's just all fun. It's just going to the park and having fun, nothing serious. They helped my mental health at that time". SARAH, 21</i></p> <p><i>"I value my friends...basically I talk with my friends more than my family. I've known them from since Year 7, yeah so that's a good amount of time. We went through the bad and the good times..." KINGSLEY, 24</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Social and emotional support

		<i>"I've got my friends from my first school who have been with me from the beginning and up until now and I feel like they've really helped me. I feel like they really help me to overcome a lot of stuff...just by listening and really being there". INDIA, 24</i>	
PARTNER	SARAH, 21 ZARA, 24	<i>"... my boyfriend...is just like a great support system. When it's just silent and there's no career advisers, there's no PAs, there's no mentors, he's there, you know. Like if there's a problem that is too much for me to handle, he's there supporting me...and that's been very, very important to me because it's just nice to have stability after experiencing so many moves and so many different people in and out of my life. He's seen the journey with me...he's like my human diary". SARAH, 21</i> <i>"We've been together since we were 15 and I don't know, he's just been there ever since. Any ups and downs, we go it together. We talk through things which is so necessary, but we can also have strong mad arguments... At the end of the day, we're still here, still together, you know". ZARA, 24</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
SCHOOL STAFF/ TEACHERS	KIRA, 20 CORA, 22	<i>"...there was a lovely teacher I had last year, she would sit with me after school for hours to help me catch up cos I missed so much school... She noticed before I did that I just looked down every time she saw me around school. She kind of kept an eye on me until I started crying all the time like, and she just said to me you know, I think you need to speak to someone. I opened up to her about a lot of stuff and I think I was very confused about what I was going through myself. She encouraged me to go to the doctors... I asked if she could write a letter to help me explain to the doctor what was going on, and she wrote me a letter to take to the GP. She'd check up on me on emails and stuff like that, she was really nice". KIRA, 20</i> <i>"Mr B, fought my corner throughout my whole secondary school life if I'm honest. He was like a senior member of staff and he influenced a lot of the decisions that made school a lot easier for me, to be fair. He wasn't the Designated officer. That was somebody else - Ms Hillis. He always made sure I was looked after. He was my one trusting person during that time and he really, really advocated for me. He was the one that agreed I could arrive 10 minutes later and get picked up 10 minutes earlier". CORA, 22</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Educational support • Safeguarding • Signposting/ referring
SCHOOL MENTORS/ COUNSELLORS	INDIA, 24	<i>"I had a mentor in school, in my first school, who I used to go and speak to. I had to speak to her actually to kind of get a lot of things off my mind". INDIA, 24</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with Mental health and wellbeing
VIRTUAL SCHOOL	-		
CAMHS	-		
GP	-		
FAMILY NURSE	INDIA, 24 ZARA, 24	<i>"My family nurse saw me a couple of times a week...until my son was 2. I feel like she helped to move me out from my first place because I kept on complaining that it was too small and I told her to write a letter to the housing to tell them...and then I got moved. She was very supportive and gave me a lot of advice...she really understood what I was going through... I felt like she also helped me to keep my child because obviously, she had to do reports on me for the social workers. She saw me more than anybody else...and saw how I was with my son. I feel like her reports played a big part into helping me prove my point that I could look after my son... She also directed me to GBD, the charity who supported me through uni". INDIA, 24</i> <i>"...When my son was about five months old, I didn't have like toys and things for him cos I couldn't afford them...they're not cheap. The family nurse referred me to this charity that basically said yeah, we've got all these clothes, these toys, I didn't have the, you know, the walkers and all of that. So, she helped me with that and brought all the stuff to my house...that was really helpful". ZARA, 24</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Advocacy support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Signposting/ referring
SOCIAL WORKERS	KINGSLEY, 23 INDIA, 24	<i>Little detail given. KINGSLEY, 23</i> <i>Little detail given. INDIA, 24</i>	
PERSONAL ADVISERS	SARAH, 21 KINGSLEY, 23 ZARA, 24	<i>"My PA would actually sit there and talk to me about my problems, and like listen and give me advice. I remember when I was going through something very emotional, like really hard part of my life, she was just like someone who would listen and just give you really good advice". SARAH, 21</i> <i>"I told my PA what I wanted to do, like my plans for the future. She came across an opportunity that she thought I might be interested in it and gave me a ring one day. She said this company was taking on apprentices...and it's not something they do often. As soon as she said that, I said thank you very much, I'll be there...". KINGSLEY, 23</i> <i>"...I recently did a course on how to manage living independently and all the things like that. it was called financial something, budgeting or something – that was something my PA told me I had to do and that it would help me to get a place quicker cos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Signposting/ referring

		<i>it's only if you pass the courses that they then put you for independent living. The course helps prepare you to deal with bills, council tax, housing rent". ZARA, 24</i>	
EET COORDINATOR	SARAH, 21 CORA, 22	<p><i>"The last time I called Margaret, she was in the hospital with her mum...she didn't have to be doing her job whilst sitting there in the hospital with her mum, you know. And I was just calling to ask how to go about putting my daughter in nursery. But it was important enough for her to still sort me out even though she was going through what she was going through". SARAH, 21</i></p> <p><i>"I'd always known that I wanted to go to university and I always kind of knew what I had to do to get there, I just needed help in getting there. Do you know what I mean? Like getting into education and, you know, finding out when the deadline dates are for applications are and having somebody come with me and... The EET coordinator came with me and she takes other young people to visit universities...so—it's that going above and beyond, you know". CORA, 22</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Practical support/ physical assistance • Support with post-16 pathway/ applications • Signposting/ referring
CORPORATE PARENTING OFFICER	CORA, 22	<i>I was 20 at the time...and to close that gap between finishing my adult ed and starting university, the corporate parenting officer, Abi, arranged with my now line manager for some work experience to fill that gap. ...Abi knows that when I'm not keeping myself busy, I make bad decisions, you know, I'll get really depressed and my mental health takes a dip, so she wanted to do something to stop that from happening. She found me work experience in the Council's organisational development team. I've been there ever since...it will be two years in June...She's just like that mum that everybody needs...she was just my absolute rock at this point. Even when I was thinking about getting back into education., I said to her 'I'm driving myself crazy in these four walls...I need some intellect around me that is not iggle piggle or bloody Peppa pig, please save me'. So, she put me in touch with the EET coordinator who has supported me through my whole kind of level three up until now. CORA, 22</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to • Support with post-16 pathway/ work experience • Signposting/ referring
SUPPORT WORKERS	KIRA, 20 SARAH, 21 ZARA, 24	<p><i>"...I was living in a hostel and we had like, this office downstairs where we'd have support officers there. It's set up to give young people like a trial period for like a year and the support workers are looking to see if you can like, cook, clean, look after yourself, if you're going to school, working. If you're working, they want to see if you can pay your rent on time... I remember when I stopped working and had to start signing onto benefits, I didn't even know what benefits were really, so they were there to kind of help with stuff like that". KIRA, 19</i></p> <p><i>"I was in a mother and baby unit...after I left my last foster placement. ...the mother and baby unit was basically like a semi-independent. I moved in there when I was five months pregnant and then I left there when my daughter was just about to turn one. It was a shared accommodation. The support workers were there to check up on us, make sure we were alright and help with anything". SARAH, 21</i></p> <p><i>"...So, I moved into semi-independent when I was 16, 17...and I was transitioning from secondary to college at the time...I had a support worker who used to come and visit me twice a week just to see how I was doing. I think her visits were meant to be like for an hour but she used to stay for longer than that. She helped me with filling out college applications, child-care forms, write my CV, housing issues, paying bills, anything. She even helped me with personal issues with my partner...she was great and gave really good advice. She was just like there on hand...twice a week for seven, eight months and was just a really good support...". ZARA, 24</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory support • Support with post-16 pathway/ independent living skills • Support with post-16 pathway/ applications • Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to
FINANCE	KIRA, 19	<i>"...financially I was very- I was always covered, there was always somewhere I could go if I didn't have the money and say, Oh, I don't have this and they'll be able to provide it for me...". KIRA, 19</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support
HOUSING	INDIA, 24	<i>"I was taken to a police cell after having an argument with my (fourth) foster carer. When I was released, I came back to the house but couldn't stay there so I had to go to Housing cos obviously I was now homeless. They housed me I think that same day or the day after...it was very stressful, but I didn't have to wait too long". INDIA, 24</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing support
INDEPENDENT VISITORS	-	-	

VOL. SECTOR/ CHARITIES	SARAH, 21 CORA, 22 KINGSLEY, 23 INDIA, 24 ZARA, 24	<p><i>"The Charity Career Adviser has been great in like finding out what I want to do. He helped me with interview techniques and to update my CV. His support was what helped me get the job at the Civil service. The charity have also got a lot of good links, for example, if you don't have like something to wear for your interview, they link you with another charity that provide smart work clothes. Even when I got the job and was working, they held like workshops at my workplace on resilience for employers. That was really good in supporting employers to support us". SARAH, 21.</i></p> <p><i>"I had the support from The Haven, a women's charity, similar to Women's Aid. They assisted me in getting like a non-molestation order by doing like MARAC (Multiagency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings because Ollie's dad was turning up on my door and kicking my door down and all these kinds of stuff. So, yeah, they were really helpful in that aspect so I could continue studying with less interruptions". CORA, 22</i></p> <p><i>"The Career Adviser did help quite a lot to get me where I'm right now and prepare me for interview and update my CV... he even done my personal statement...so it was really good support. I used the CV we worked on to apply for the apprenticeship that my PA had told me about. I got called for an interview and got the job. Ever since then as well, he's been texting me or calling me...just checking up on me to find out how things are going...". KINGSLEY, 23</i></p> <p><i>"GBD Charity paid for the nursery at the Uni...they helped me basically get into Uni and provided that assistance to help me finish uni". INDIA, 24</i></p> <p><i>"I think it was only two charities that helped me. One provided clothes and toys for my son, and the other helped me into work. I was helped with interview skills and work clothes". ZARA, 24</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Support • Support with post-16 pathway/ careers advice • Support with post-16 pathway/ employability skills • Signposting/ referring • Protective & Safeguarding support • Support with post-16 pathway/ applications • Funding/ Financial assistance • Support with Mental health and wellbeing
POLICE	CORA, 22	<p><i>"When my son was kidnapped, the police took me to the station. They aided me because they called Harrison (my son's dad), and they were like, we need you to bring Ollie to the station, there's been an incident, we need to do a welfare check. I knew that the minute he turned up at the police station, the Police were gonna take Ollie and arrest him on assault. The police helped me get Ollie back". CORA, 22</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective & Safeguarding support
LAWYERS & SOLICITORS	-	-	
EMPLOYER	KINGSLEY, 23	<p><i>"They're always aware of what I'm doing and will praise me if I'm doing something good and let me know if I'm doing anything wrong... They're actually alright, the people I work with. They do ask me questions like, oh, where would I like to be in x amount of time or what would I want to be doing...like they're helping me plan...and having steady work helps ". KINGSLEY, 23</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with post-16 pathway/ independent living skills

TABLE G5: CHART OF SUPPORT (20-24 YEAR OLDS)

20 – 24 YEAR OLDS SYSTEM LAYERS		Advisory support	Advocacy support (official or unofficial capacity)	Befriending support – personal, social and emotional	Educational support	Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to	Practical support/ physical assistance	Financial assistance/ funding	Housing assistance	Language & cultural support	Medical assistance/ physical health	Mental Health & wellbeing support	Mentoring/ role models	Protective and safeguarding	Social and emotional support	Signposting/ referring	Support with peer relationships	Wellbeing	Support with post-16 pathway/ applications	Support with post-16 pathway/ careers advice/ course choice	Support with post-16 pathway/ course choice - subject choice	Support with post-16 pathway/ work experience	Support with post-16 pathway/ employability skills	Support with post-16 pathway/ independent living skills	INCIDENCES OF SUPPORT TYPE AT EACH LAYER
Parents/ carers & Family	A. Biological parents					X																			1
	B. Known siblings					X	X																		2
	C. Extended fam./ rel.					X																			1
	D. Foster carers				X	X	X													X					4
Peers & Partners	F. Friends/ peers					X									X										2
	H. Partners					X																			1
Professionals	I. School staff/ teachers		X		X	X										X									4
	J. School Ment./ Counsl.											X													1
	L. CAMHS																								0
	N. Family Nurse	X	X			X										X									4
	P. Personal Advisors	X	X			X										X									3
	Q. EET	X	X			X	X									X				X					5
	R. CPO	X	X			X										X						X			4
	S. Support Worker	X	X			X										X				X				X	4
	T. Finance							X																	1
	U. Housing								X																1
	X. Vol. sector/ Charities	X						X					X		X		X			X	X			X	8
	Y. Police														X										
Z. Employer																							X		1

APPENDIX H1: TABLE 1A – CHART OF WORRIES AND SUPPORT

	Delvine	Frank	Michelle	Anna	Yuri	Jack	Kira	Sarah	Cora	Kingsley	India	Zara
Age	16	16	16	18	19	19	20	21	22	23	24	24
No. of dependants/ age at first pregnancy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/16	1/17	N/A	2/17	2/17
UASC	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Entering care age	5	8	15	7	15	8	17	13	12	9	13	13
Length of time in care	11	8	1	11	4	10	1	5	6	10	5	5
Number of foster placements	2	2	4	MULTIPLE	1	4	2	4	4	2	4	2
Current living situation	FP	FP	FP	SEMI-I	SEMI-I	SEMI-I	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT	INDPT
Number of secondary school settings	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	2
SEN	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
History of NEET	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
GCSE English and/or Maths Retakes	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	Functional skills	NO	YES	YES	YES
Felt worried during transition to post-16	Always	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Never	Often	Often	Often	Often	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Felt supported during transition to post-16	Often	Often	Always	Often	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Rarely	Sometimes	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes
NO. OF WEAK OR STRESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS PER YOUNG PERSON	4	0	7	7	1	6	7	9	5	6	5	7
NO. OF STRONG RELATIONSHIPS PER YOUNG PERSON	7	7	8	5	9	4	6	8	9	5	9	8

APPENDIX H1: TABLE 1B – TOTAL NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO FELT WORRIED/ SUPPORTED

Worried / supported during transition to post-16		
Ages 16-24	Worried	Supported
Always	2	2
Often	5	4
Sometimes	3	4
Rarely	1	2
Never	1	0

APPENDIX H2: IMMEDIATE NEEDS & WORRIES DURING TRANSITION TO POST-16 (16-24 YEAR OLDS) – RETROSPECTIVE ACCOUNTS

TALLY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES			
5 CODES	WORRIES/ CONCERNS	Cited by...	No. of participants
<i>SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP NEEDS</i>	Making new friendships	DELVINE, 16 ANNA, 18 KIRA, 20 CORA, 22 INDIA, 24 ZARA, 24	6
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT: MEETING ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR FE	Meeting entry requirements for FE Achieving high grades	CORA, 22 ZARA, 24	2
PERSONAL ORGANISATION	Personal organisation e.g. organising workload, attendance and punctuality	FRANK, 16 JACK, 19 ZARA, 24	3
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	Access to financial assistance	KIRA, 20 KINGSLEY, 23	2
PLACEMENT MOVES	Changes in accommodation	SARAH, 21	1

PLEASE NOTE: Codes for social relationship needs, educational support, personal organisation, and surviving placement moves were repeated in the interview narratives of some young people. These are therefore not counted again and a faint line has been drawn through them to indicate this (see Appendix H3 on next page).

APPENDIX H3: IMMEDIATE NEEDS & WORRIES DURING TRANSITION TO POST-16 (16-24 YEAR OLDS) – RETROSPECTIVE ACCOUNTS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED DURING INTERVIEW

PARTICIPANTS	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES FROM INTERVIEW	4 ADDITIONAL CODES
DELVINE, 16	<i>"Making friends was my main worry during transition"</i>	Social relationship needs: Making new friendships
FRANK, 16	<i>"...cos I'm doing four [A-levels...it's more about workloads, organization and how I can like manage my time basically because I'm not that kind of person to just work. ... like I need people to nag me..."</i>	Personal organisation
MICHELLE, 16	<i>"When I was in year 11...I wanted to leave school as soon as possible. The students there thought it was funny to like bully and harrass you. I had concerns about moving from school to college because you don't know what school you're going to end up in and if them people from year 11 might come into college and start the drama back again and all the stuff..."</i>	Social relationship needs – bullying
ANNA, 18	<i>"I was quite like scared and quite anxious and nervous because I didn't know what I would get in my exams...so I kept worrying and worrying, and I would like try and study so much that I wouldn't be able to go to sleep or anything...I wouldn't be able to focus in class because I'd be so tired from studying".</i>	Mental Health needs/ Exam Anxiety
	<i>When asked how she coped with her exams, Anna stated: "Not well because I wasn't able to concentrate as well as I should've done if I was able to sleep or get the right kind of tutor. I think that I needed a tutor".</i>	Educational support/ Tutor
YUR1, 19	<i>No needs/ concerns or worries cited</i>	
JACK, 19	<i>"...to be honest, the needs I had then was mental health needs. I was not doing good, self-harming and stuff like that. I pretended a lot like I was fine and because of all that, I was always late and had really like poor attendance. In the end, I just dropped out of school. I didn't do the end-of-year exams... I was too scared"</i>	Mental Health needs/ Self-harming
KIRA, 20	<i>"I felt like I needed emotional support and I don't feel like I got that, and I don't know if it's because like, I was more quiet, but I kind of assumed teachers had training to identify when kids are struggling...in my last year of secondary school, I felt like the school did notice but they kind of dismissed it...and a lot of stuff was still happening when I moved to college and obviously led to me getting kicked out college in the first year."</i>	Mental health/ Emotional needs
SARAH, 21	<i>"...When I moved to Manchester, I was probably 12...I did year nine and a bit of year 10 there, but I didn't finish year 10 cos I ran away back to London. I was then missing from education for a long time and when my social worker told me that I couldn't go back to my old school to do my GCSEs, this news crushed me. Without GCSEs, I felt like I was going to be behind, so I didn't even see the need to go to college. Trying to survive all the moves was my main concern".</i>	Surviving the multiple moves
CORA, 22	<i>"At the end of Year 11, I needed guidance on what subjects to pick for my A-levels., but my foster carers offered me that support. I was anxious moving to a new school for sixth form and this again comes down to self-esteem...I had very low self-esteem and never believed I was good enough to achieve the grades in sixth form".</i>	Mental health/ self-esteem
KINGSLEY, 23	<i>"I did not get much support...like I don't think I received anything like careers advice and someone saying oh, I think you should do this because you're good at this. When I applied to college, I picked mechanical engineering because I thought mechanical engineering was to do with cars, but when I started the course, I thought 'what is this?' I had confused motor mechanics with mechanical engineering... I felt there was no point in me switching courses, I'm here now and I might as well get it over and done with, get the qualification and see where it takes me."</i>	Needing guidance on post-16 options/ careers advice
INDIA, 24	<i>"I had an 'I don't care' attitude. I didn't understand the seriousness of education and why I needed it. There was lots of emotional baggage to deal with...I wasn't really very interested—I was done with it. My social worker in a way highlighted the importance of education, but not my foster mom, not really. She made sure I went to school, but no one was pushing me to succeed. I think I needed a Mentor to talk to about things or someone one to one to motivate me and like push me to focus..."</i>	Mentor support
ZARA, 24	<i>"If I didn't get help from the support worker, I probably wouldn't have gone to college maybe cos I just wouldn't have been aware about how to apply for college and how to go about it. Even the financial side of things because you need to apply for a bursary fund, you need to apply for certain things, even to do with your Oyster card, you need to apply for that too. So, I think these were my needs at the time. The school doesn't really tell you how to do this...I think they assume your family's doing it for you."</i>	Needing support to apply for post-secondary activities

APPENDIX H4: IDEAL SUPPORT DURING TRANSITION (16-24 YEAR OLDS) – RETROSPECTIVE ACCOUNTS

PARTICIPANTS	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES FROM INTERVIEW	1 ADDITIONAL CODE
DELVINE, 16	"A one-to-one. Like a TA, someone I can talk to when I'm feeling down at school". [Delvine was asked if a Mentor might fit this role, but she stated that she had never heard of this role before].	Someone to talk to: One to one emotional support
FRANK, 16	No ideal support cited	
MICHELLE, 16	No ideal support cited	
ANNA, 18	No ideal support cited	
YURI, 19	"... Maybe someone that you can like, speak to in private. So, I mean not a social worker or a foster carer but someone in private. So, you can talk to him about like your feelings and stuff...And no one must know about it cos it's private". [When asked if that support might look like a counsellor, Yuri said 'yeah'].	Someone to talk to: Counsellor
JACK, 19	"I moved to a new college but again, things went downhill. Just didn't go into school, just couldn't sleep. I was depressed, but I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't really feel supported, but I think like talking to someone like a Counsellor would have helped at the time, but I was too scared to ask for help".	Someone to talk to: Counsellor
KIRA, 20	"I feel like I need a professional counsellor, that's what I needed, and this school did not have one when I needed it, I was literally crying out, I even told the teachers you know, I've been having thoughts and I still didn't get the support I wanted. I was so shocked when I heard I had to go on a waiting list, so shocked. I was like, what is the point, schools are supposed to have someone there constantly for you. I felt really, really angry and very disappointed because I know at my old college, there was someone there constantly. I think it's just a very dangerous time when a school doesn't have a counsellor, especially for students who don't have family or anyone to talk to... I'm happy now that Derek told me that they're looking to recruit one".	Professional counsellor
SARAH, 21	"...when I first got into foster care, I think a support that I wish I had was someone who was advocating for my education...and just someone who would say, 'All these moves are not good for her.' Do you know what I mean? I really did need someone to be pushing for my education because it felt like no one thought it was important. ...and just having like counselling because you don't realise that what you're going through is killing you on the inside until you just can't take anymore, and you have like a meltdown because it's not fair and it's not normal and it's not necessary for a child to move around so many times. Do you know what I mean? It's not necessary".	An advocate
		Counsellor
CORA, 22	"...I think a lot of work could have been done around kind of self-esteem...I fell pregnant around six months into my AS levels, and I think if I'd had that emotional support earlier on at school, then a lot of situations would not have happened like spending three years in an abusive relationship... so, I think one to one support around kind of healthy relationships and healthy friendships... I wouldn't have been as naive...experiencing those dark places unnecessarily because they are preventable with the right support in place so yeah, just emotion and social needs to be honest".	One to one support: Emotional and social support: self-esteem
KINGSLEY, 23	No ideal support cited	
INDIA, 24	"Obviously, I would like to have had support with emotional well-being...cos there's deep rooted issues, and I just don't think they have been dealt with. ...like stuff with my dad, it was me that was getting the texts that I'm going to throw myself off a bridge today and...to be getting stuff like that in the middle of the day at college, it's not right. I needed someone to talk to. I feel like also the problem is, something could happen at the weekend, and you can't get hold of anyone until Monday. So, there's nobody there that is accessible all the time. I think a lot of people would need—need that one person who can be there all the time".	Someone to talk to: Emotional support
ZARA, 24	"...the gap in my primary education... maybe six months to a year...really affected my achievements when I went into year 7. I just wasn't at the level that a lot of the other young people were at. I was playing catch up most of my time in secondary school. Having someone there that could have tutored me and sat with me one to one rather than going to those afterschool clubs would have benefitted me more. Also having a child isolated me. I'm a young person with a child, and people used to stare at me everywhere I went, it was not very nice...so, it kind of stopped me from going out sometimes or going to the park, just doing normal stuff, you know...I felt alone and having a friend, going through the same thing as me at the time that I could talk to would probably be the type of support that would've been very helpful at the time".	Educational/ One to one tutoring support (already coded for)
		Someone to talk to: Emotional support

PLEASE NOTE: Codes for 'Mental health/ emotional needs' and 'Educational support/ tutor' already coded for and therefore not counted again. A faint line has been drawn through them to indicate this. One new code for Advocacy support

APPENDIX H5: SYSTEM – AREAS OF NEED & RESPONSIVENESS (16-24 YEAR OLDS)

SUPPORT AT DIFFERENT LAYERS THAT COULD RESPOND TO THE 10 AREAS OF NEEDS CITED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

IMMEDIATE NEEDS DURING TRANSITION (RETROSPECTIVELY)		UNMET NEEDS/ IDEAL SUPPORT (RETROSPECTIVELY)		SYSTEM LAYERS	TYPES OF SUPPORT CITED BY YOUNG PEOPLE	*MATCHED TO NEEDS CITED	SUPPORT (LAYERS A-Z)		
PARTICIPANTS	9 CODES	PARTICIPANTS	1 NEW CODE				16-19	20-24	
DELVINE, 16	Social relationship needs: Making new friendships	DELVINE, 16	Someone to talk to: One to one emotional support at school	A. Biological parents B. Known siblings C. Extended relatives D. Foster carers E. Pet F. Friends/ peers G. Peer Mentors H. Partners I. School staff J. School Mentors/ Counsellors K. Virtual school L. CAMHS M. GP N. Family Nurse O. Social workers P. PA Q. EET R. CPO S. Support Worker T. Finance U. Housing V. Lawyer & Solicitors W. *Charities - IVs X. Charities Y. Police Z. Employer * IV support available for young people up to age 18	Advisory support Signposting/ referring	<i>No needs cited in this area</i>	K/O/P/W/X	N/P/Q/R/S/X	
FRANK, 16	Personal organisation	FRANK, 16	Ideal support not cited/ needs met		Advocacy support (official or unofficial capacity)	Advocates	None cited in this capacity	I/N	
MICHELLE, 16	Social relationship needs – bullying	MICHELLE, 16	Ideal support not cited/ needs met		Befriending support – personal, social and emotional development (including mentoring)	Social needs	W	None cited in this capacity	
ANNA, 18	Mental Health needs: Exam Anxiety Educational support/ Tutor	ANNA, 18	Ideal support not cited/ needs met		Emotional support/ advice/ someone to talk to Social and emotional support Support with peer relationships Mental Health & wellbeing support Mentor/ role model		Mental health/ Emotional/ social	A/B/C/D/E/F/I/J/K/L/O/P/X	A/B/C/D/F/H/I/J/N/P/Q/R/S/X
YURI, 19	No need cited	YURI, 19	Someone to talk to: Counsellor		Educational support (Formal and Informal)	Mentor		I/K	D/I
JACK, 19	Personal organisation Mental Health needs: Self-harming	JACK, 19	Someone to talk to: Counsellor		Financial assistance/ funding	Educational support/ Tutor	T	T/X	
KIRA, 20	Financial assistance Mental health: Emotional needs	KIRA, 20	Professional counsellor		Housing assistance	Financial assistance	No needs cited in this area	U	
SARAH, 21	Surviving the multiple moves	SARAH, 21	An advocate Counsellor		Language & cultural support	No needs cited in this area	No needs cited in this area	D	None cited in this capacity
CORA, 22	Mental health: self-esteem Meeting entry requirements for FE	CORA, 22	Counsellor One to one support: Emotional and social support: self-esteem		Medical assistance/ physical health	No needs cited in this area	M	None cited in this capacity	
KINGSLEY, 23	Financial assistance Guidance on post-16 options/ careers advice	KINGSLEY, 23	Ideal support not cited/ needs met		Practical support/ physical assistance	Moving support	None cited in this capacity	B/D/Q	
INDIA, 24	Mentor support	INDIA, 24	Someone to talk to: Emotional support		Protective and safeguarding	No needs cited in this area	I/Y	X/Y	
ZARA, 24	Needing support to apply for post-secondary activities Meeting entry requirements for FE	ZARA, 24	One to one tutoring support (already coded for)		Support with post-16 pathway/ applications	Post-secondary applications	I/X	D/Q/S/X	
					Support with post-16 pathway/ careers advice	Careers advice	X	X	
					Support with post-16 pathway/ course choice - subject choice		None cited in this capacity	None cited in this capacity	
					Support with post-16 pathway/ work experience	No needs cited in this area	None cited in this capacity	R	
					Support with post-16 pathway/ employability skills	No needs cited in this area	None cited in this capacity	X	
				Support with post-16 pathway/ independent living skills	No needs cited in this area	None cited in this capacity	S/Z		

APPENDIX I1: OUTCOMES & ATTRIBUTIONS (16-24 YEAR OLDS)

PARTICIPANTS	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES FROM INTERVIEW	10 CODES	INFLUENCING LAYERS
	Outcomes identified by young person		
DELVINE, 16	<i>"...in school I didn't have many friends, so if I was walking down the corridor or outside, my head would always be down low and I wouldn't really look at anyone, and if some people said, hi, I would just air them and walk away. But now, I say hi to people and I would not go to the shops by myself... I would ask someone else if they could do it. Now I go out by myself and I know how to give the right amount of money to the person and I know how to talk to them. My foster aunty (carer) and Cheryl (IV) have helped me".</i>	Improved confidence Improved communication/ social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carer ○ Independent visitor
FRANK, 16	<i>"...cos he [SW] is not here all the time, so I have conversations with my foster carer about life and the advice she gives...well it must have been good for me to do so well at school. Yeah everyone really...my foster carer, my social worker, teachers and other individuals outside of school...and like others in the virtual school and a couple of friends as well have helped me". [Frank achieved 8s in GCSE English and Maths]</i>	Academic Achievement	Everyone in his support system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carer ○ Friends/ peers ○ School staff/ teachers ○ Virtual school ○ Social worker ○ Charities
MICHELLE, 16	<i>"I was always angry at the school...but Care definitely changed my life. They [social services] told me they we're here to help me. They told me, 'oh, we will work together'...and the social workers and virtual school helped me back to school...they were like, 'Oh, we need to put Michelle into a safe environment and make sure she is safe'. CAMHS definitely helped build my confidence...and learn how to calm down and stop that frustration. I'm a different person now".</i>	Re-engagement with education Improved confidence Improved mental health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Virtual school ○ CAMHS ○ Social worker
ANNA, 18	<i>"I think I understand people's feelings and emotions better than what I used to. Because I think I was just hiding from my own emotions that I couldn't see anyone else's...my confidence, independence, self-esteem, things like that have improved and my current foster carer and social worker helped. I think my communication skills have also improved...just being able to talk to someone and have a conversation without running out of the room...".</i>	Improved emotional wellbeing Improved confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carer ○ Social worker
YURI, 19	<i>"When I first came here, I wasn't so confident. I didn't know if I was going to be able to pass it (GCSE English and Maths exams) but I got a lot of support from virtual school and my teachers—I would say, I worked hard as well. The first year I came, I did the GCSE Maths exam and then the next year, I did the English exam. I got a B in Math and 4 in English...so, basically, I passed. I would also say developing the life skills like to live independently, you know, like to do your own shopping and manage your own money and stuff. I've learned to be organized and prioritize well. ...and like social skills, being able to like talk to people...and to communicate with other people and know how to ask like for what you need. I would say teachers, virtual school, social workers, and personal advisers, foster parents, friends – so collective effort to help me to develop these skills"</i>	Academic achievement Improved life and independent living skills Improved communication/ social skills Personal organisation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carer ○ Friends/ peers ○ School staff/ teachers ○ Virtual school ○ Social worker ○ Personal Advisers
JACK, 19	<i>"...I've always been scared of hearing 'no', so I've just been too scared to ask for help, but I've been doing so a lot recently, my confidence has sky-rocketed. The LXP (charity) helped my confidence 100%...and I'm now back in college and enjoying it this time. I'm actually the class representative...and really happy there. Their support was really helped...one time I was in a room full of people I didn't know and like I told my story in detail...and just hearing other people's stories who have had similar kind of things happen to them from completely different backgrounds and all this kind of stuff was interesting to see. It helped me see that, you know, I'm not the only one like this. So, if they can overcome, I can overcome..."</i>	Improved mental health and wellbeing Improved confidence Re-engagement back into education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Charities
KIRA, 19	<i>"I used to hate talking on the phone to professionals but then because I started working part time, I got used to it. I feel like a grown up making my own appointments and stuff, but yeah, I had support from my foster mum, and the support workers helped prepare me for independence. I'm a lot more independent. My biggest worry is ending up either back in a hostel or back on the streets, so I make sure that I pay the rent, pay my electricity and gas, pay my service charge, pay food and then everything else, phone bill...my support worker helped to prepare me for stuff like this".</i>	Improved life and independent living skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carer ○ Support Workers

SARAH, 21	<p>"...I've learnt a lot more from the things that didn't go right. I've learnt how to think for myself. I've really learnt how to be independent from a very young age and how to be strong because with everything that's gone on, I'm still standing, I'm a resilient person. I've learnt how to be strong and to just keep on keeping on. No one has helped me develop these skills but I would say my PA and support workers helped with like preparing me to leave care, and learning like how to pay my bills, applying for council tax, housing benefit at that time...so she really helped me with those life skills. Erm...also getting into professional employment with the Civil Service has really improved my confidence. Fred, my career coach told me about the civil service internship and the positions available to apply for were AO or EO (administrative or executive officer). I applied for the AO position because it paid less and I thought the expectation of me would be less. My confidence was knocked so I just wanted to play it safe. Long story short, they interviewed me for the EO position instead...I was like, 'No, no, no are they setting me up for failure, you know?' After, they let me know they wanted to offer me the EO position. For a long time, I couldn't believe that someone would take a chance on me like that.</p>	Improved resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Young person ○ Personal Adviser ○ Support worker ○ Charity
		Improved life and independent living skills	
		Improved confidence	
CORA, 22	<p>"I'm confident and much more resilient now. I've developed strong leadership and mentoring skills. I'm good at mentoring other young people and just enabling them to see another way out than become the stigma that society tells us we are, you know, ending up in prison, homeless, or on drugs, you know? The biggest outcome for me is that I've been able to break that cycle and to be everything that I never had for my son. I could've made bad decisions and I could have done stupid things, but I didn't. So, nobody else can take credit for that. I'm responsible for that development. Abi, the corporate parenting officer has just enabled me to grow as a person...she's a phenomenal woman".</p>	Improved resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Young person ○ Corporate parenting officer
		Improved confidence	
		Strong leaderships and mentoring skills	
KINGSLEY, 23	<p>"I didn't speak much English when I first came here so I think communication skill was the main one cos I never used to talk like this. I also used a lot of slangs...so in terms of communication or speaking, that's one thing I've improved over the years... Having to speak to a lot of professionals must have helped. I got this job cos I got a lot of help updating my CV and stuff but like my employment experience over the years has taught me to be a bit more formal and more professional. I've learned money management. I started learning to save... maturity plays a part also".</p>	Improved social/communication skills	<p>Professionals in his support system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social workers ○ PA ○ Charity ○ Employer
		Improved Independent living skills	
INDIA, 24	<p>"I try and listen a bit more...and I feel I am better at managing my own emotions, but at the same time, feelings can get a bit out of control sometimes. Obviously, I finished my education, like I went uni with the help of GBD which the Family Nurse told me about. I also feel like I have a voice that should be heard. I'm not scared to like speak about stuff so my confidence has grown in certain— certain aspects, yeah. Uhhh, my third foster carer she helped a lot – she helped me calm down and become a woman...also my friends...they listen to me talk...and are very supportive".</p>	Improved emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carer ○ Friends/ peers ○ Family Nurse ○ Charity
		Improved confidence	
		Academic achievement	
ZARA, 24	<p>"My basic literacy and communication skills have definitely improved. My professional skills as well...my current employer helped develop me as a working adult because I went from not knowing much, to literally being thrown into the deep end. I've been there (current employment) just over three years. My support worker she went above and beyond what she needed to do for me. Speaking to someone like her that's a professional, but yet understands you, was what I needed. She helped me improve my life skills like cooking and cleaning... washing, hoovering, things like that, simple things like that, very helpful. I think if she hadn't been there, I probably wouldn't be on the path that I'm on now".</p>	Improved literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support worker ○ Employer
		Improved communication/social skills	
		Improved life and independent living skills	

APPENDIX I2 – SYSTEMS & OUTCOMES – INFLUENCING LAYERS AS CITED BY 12 YOUNG PEOPLE (16-24 YEARS OLD)

		DELVINE	FRANK	MICHELLE	ANNA	YURI	JACK	KIRA	SARAH	CORA	KINGSLEY	INDIA	ZARA	TOTAL CITED AT EACH LAYER
	Young person (themselves)								X	X				2
Parents/ carers & Family	Foster carers	X	X		X	X		X				X		6
Peers & Partners	Friends/ peers		X			X						X		3
Professionals	School staff/ teachers		X			X								2
	Virtual school		X	X		X								3
	CAMHS			X										1
	Family Nurse											X		1
	Social workers		X	X	X	X					X			5
	Personal Advisors					X			X		X			3
	CPO					X			X	X				3
	Support Worker							X	X				X	3
Community & Social	Charities – IVs	X												6
	Charities		X				X		X		X	X		
	Employer										X		X	2

Average number of attributions made: 40/12 = 3.3

APPENDIX J – NEGOTIATING SUPPORT (16-24 YEAR OLDS)

PARTICIPANTS	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES FROM INTERVIEW	5 CODES
DELVINE, 16	I wait for people to see that something's wrong. It kind of depends on how I feel. I'm really shy...	Not proactive - Relies on others to be vigilant
FRANK, 16	"You've got to know what you're doing and how it affects where you're trying to go...and have supportive people around you, always pushing you to do well from like the offset like from year 7...I put myself in situations that I can get the most out of people. ...people need to be more forceful...and go out there and make conversations and make relationships. ...the thing about it is having the drive to do that, and a lot of people don't have the drive. It's like for me A-level Maths is the hardest and I'm struggling but I have the drive to stay after school to get the support".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system
MICHELLE, 16	"I attempt to find help online like. I'll find a bit of information on what to do, but if it gets serious, I just report it to someone. People have told me I don't keep quiet...".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system
ANNA, 18	"Any situation I'm facing, I just ask my foster carer about what she would do, like how she would cope and in those situations...".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system
YURI, 19	"...I have to go and find support. You can't just wait there, cos people don't know, like what you need and how you're feeling. So, you have to go and ask for help. My friends, family and foster carers are my first choice to turn to about personal issues, because I am more connected to them personally and spend more time with them than other people involved. Then if they can't deal with it, then I've got the social worker...but sometimes I ask them to do something for me and they take too much time, while some others do it quickly". Yuri differentiated SWs as good and not so good by how quickly they act".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system
JACK, 19	"Nowadays, I can ask for help when I need it... but like when I was like 16, 17, it was kind of like professionals saying take the support, take the support, and then I was like, no. It got too much, too many people offering support and you're just like no. I'm more confident now and have a nice social worker".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system
KIRA, 20	"I'm very proactive. If I need assistance and help, I would go and get it. I'd call social services and just ask them for advice...but you have to make that kind of step to ask for help – they don't offer it...and I don't know if that's just how they are or if it's just because they know the sort of person I am...that I'll come when I need help... But I'm not always proactive in getting emotional and mental assistance, that was something that I needed a big push to do from the school. Social services weren't really involved in that push, but definitely my teachers were".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system (not very proactive in seeking support for emotional issues)
SARAH, 21	<p>"I'm proactive in seeking support, always. I go and I look for it and I find it. I'm very proactive. I ran away from Manchester...I didn't feel like I fitted in. I was missing my brother too much. All my friends were in London, you know. I was only supposed to be in my foster placement (in Manchester) for like a week. I didn't even bother making friends in Manchester because from my social worker made me think that my accommodation in Manchester was temporary...but the story just kept changing. I was angry at the fact that they basically lied to me...so I ran away and I came back to London myself. I just took matters into my own hands...".</p> <p>"In one of my foster placements, my foster brother like tried to come into my room at night. I just went to my social worker and I said look, I cannot be in this house because of him, and she basically was like, "What the little boy?" because they had a little boy as well and I said "No, her older son." She was like she does not have an older son. I was like, "Yes, she does." So that obviously made it clear to me that my foster carer did not tell social services that she had an older son who lived with her. Literally, the next day, my social worker came to the house and sat me down with my foster carer. I could've easily just bottled that in and still be in that house and Lord knows how that would have ended... I've just learned from a really young age to look out for myself and speak up".</p>	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to taking action by running away Refers to using voice/ reporting issues to make a change
CORA, 22	"...I have those trusting people that I can go to for help and the PA currently allocated to me is not one of them, but there are other people that I can go to for help so, I'm very proactive. This was different when I was a lot younger, I would just go into my little bubble and just get on with it and suffer in silence...but then I realised I had a voice and I realised that voice was powerful and it could make a change. I became the Chair of the Children in Care Council so I pretty much advocated for myself... and every time somebody listened or there was an outcome as a result of my voice, that encouraged me to use it even more...and it is the most powerful thing. I won an award a few months ago from the Mayor – The High Sheriff's Inspiring Others award for the work I do with other young people to share their experiences because they are the experts and that's what they need to hear".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system Refers to using voice and being recognised for doing so
CORA, 22	"The local authority had bombarded me with assessments left, right and centre; PAMS assessments left, right and centre, trying to say to me that I was going to have to go and live in a mother and baby unit to be assessed. I know them places set you up to fail, you know, 90% of people that go into them leave without their kids, you know? I was like, that's not happening, so I went and got myself an advocate.	Proactive in seeking support Refers to seeking an Advocate beyond the surrounding established network
KINGSLEY, 23	When I need help I go to my friends first. I remember a time I was actually walking down the street, called up a mate and just asking what the hell am I doing? It was that bad really. I had no job, no direction. "I told my PA what I wanted to do in life and asking for her support helped me get this job opportunity so yeah I'm proactive in seeking support...".	Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system

INDIA, 24	<p>"Sometimes, I would ask for help. There was a reason why my Family Nurse introduced me to GBD—I think there was something I asked her and then she went and looked it up for me. So, you've got to ask...or in some case people would just tell me things that I take note of just in case it's helpful to me in future. I personally feel lucky with the people I met throughout my life, cos one girl said that her family nurse was non-existent, but then mine was very involved. I feel like at the same time, you've also got to know who and what support is out there".</p>	<p><i>Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system</i></p>
ZARA, 24	<p>I wouldn't have known how to get support from certain areas at all like applying for college and childcare. If no one tells you how to do it, you're not going to know. So I think that it would be more beneficial if people knew the kind of support networks that they can use cos even things like counselling is really important for young people coming out of care to have...they need help with what's happened to them in care and how it's affected them. But not a lot of young people get this so I think adults should be asking questions that would then prompt a young person to be like, "Actually, yeah, I think I need that support" because the young person might not always know what they need, especially when your emotions are confused as well...".</p>	<p><i>Proactive in seeking support: Refers to people in system</i></p>

APPENDIX K: FRAGMENTED SENSE OF BELONGING (16-24 YEAR OLDS)

PRE-CARE EXPERIENCES WITH BIOLOGICAL FAMILY				IN-CARE EXPERIENCES WITH FOSTER FAMILIES			
FREQUENCY		PARTICIPANT	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES (INTERVIEW)	FREQUENCY		PARTICIPANT	FULL CONTEXTUAL QUOTES (INTERVIEW)
GROUP 16-19 (Total 4)	1	DELVINE, 16	"The relationship with my mum is stressful. I find it hard to talk to her when I'm with her...and the relationship with my dad is weak, we don't talk as much". [Little detail]	GROUP 16-19 (Total 3)	1	DELVINE, 16	"I was there [first placement] until I was twelve. I didn't like it there. I didn't like the foster parents. If we were in trouble, they would slap us. I told my social worker about it all". [Lack of care/ security - physical abuse/ threat]
	1	MICHELLE, 16	"...last year, we had a few concerns into the family, so I was removed from home. I wasn't really safe. I was unhappy...if I come home late and all that stuff, you know how parents are like, don't come late or I will smack your face". [Physical abuse/ threat]		1	MICHELLE, 16	"I started with a different carer. Things didn't work out. She wasn't that nice...so, I moved to another carer. They weren't really nice either, so I moved again. I used to do a lot of running away and all that stuff...". [Little detail]
	1	ANNA, 18	"...that's a stressful relationship...". [Little detail]		1	ANNA, 18	"...sometimes I don't get along with them...but we go out to the cinema and stuff like that". [Little detail]
	1	JACK, 19	"I only have my mum...my dad's dead. He passed away when I was one, so most of my experience has been with my mum and very negative. She would get very drunk and...I'd hear her trashing the place. This is probably what started my insomnia... her being drunk made me afraid to sleep". [Parental mental health issues]		1	JACK, 19	"The foster places I lived in, when I was younger were not too good... I've been suffering from insomnia for a long time and when I was in care, my foster carers, they knew I wasn't sleeping, and they didn't try to sort that out for me or anything. They just thought well he's just a bad kid for not sleeping". [Lack of care/ security]
GROUP 20-24 (Total 5)	1	KIRA, 20	"...my dad's in prison...I've just recently started speaking to him and...my mum can't accept what's happened...the arguments and I was literally dragged out of the house by my brother". [Physical abuse/ threat]	GROUP 20-24 (Total 5)	1	KIRA, 20	"The family just made me feel really uncomfortable and I literally would never go downstairs... It was just like a segregation – I'm the foster kid and you know, I'm only there because they get money and stuff like that to have me. They went out sometimes without letting me know so it was just very clear that I was the foster kid...". [Lack of care/ security]
	1	SARAH, 21	"Yeah, they just haven't been around...non-existent basically we don't see each other. Haven't seen my parents since I was five and I'm now 21 so I mean, like there's no relationship". [Separation: no relationship]		1	SARAH, 21	"She didn't care to know me, or what I'd been through...she wasn't interested. For me, it felt like it was her home and she gets paid for looking after me...it was her job, ...it's nothing more than that". [Lack of care/ security]
	1	CORA, 22	"I've come from a single mum who looked after us—until the point where she become really mentally ill. My dad was very abusive to her and probably what sparked her alcoholism. The house was unkept, it was horrible. I was like always stinking and my uniform always smelt...I was bullied really badly, so I just stopped going to school and missed like half of Year 8". [Parental mental health issues]		1	CORA, 22	This second placement was an isolating time. I spent the two years pretty much living in my bedroom. They had children of their own and it felt very much like you were the foster kids and these are our kids. This was demonstrated through the fact that on a weekend, they would all sit down together and have a takeaway or something whilst me and my brother would be upstairs in our bedrooms doing nothing". [Lack of care/ security]
	1	KINGSLEY, 23	"When social services took me from my aunts place, I lost connection with my family in Bangladesh". [Separation: No relationship]		1	KINGSLEY, 23	"I was first placed with an Indian family...it was a bit of a shock at first cos I'm Bangladeshi. There was a difference straightaway including the food. I did live there for a good amount of time, so thing got better. I actually learned the language as well". [Cultural barrier]
	1	INDIA, 24	"...he (dad) helps more now but obviously, he couldn't help much then because he was the problem why I went into care...". [Little detail]		1	INDIA, 24	"In the first foster placement, I stayed out quite a lot. Once you stay out past a certain time, they have to call the police. We had a big argument and from then on it was kind of like we can't have her here no more, she needs to leave. So the next day, a police officer came to the house and I left there...". [Verbal arguments/ confrontations]

My passion for working with looked after children began in my previous role as a secondary school teacher with departmental responsibilities including Assistant SENCO. In this role I quickly became aware of the pattern of needs that looked after children presented, and the effective intervention provided by the pairing of a looked after child with a supportive adult. As a Trainee Educational Psychologist, I continue to see the impact of positive relationships in the lives of the children and young people I work with, not least looked after children and young people. Further to these experiences, developing the competency to work with young people aged 16-25 in light of the changes to legislation that extended statutory protection of EHCP up to age 25, brought to attention young people's transition into adulthood as a relevant area of focus.

It is widely known and accepted that researchers views and personal experiences may influence the interpretation of knowledge, consequently the researcher's engagement in the continual process of reflexivity is necessary (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013; Willig, 2001). Reflexivity contributes to the openness and transparency of the research by acknowledging the reciprocal influence of both participants and researchers experiences on 'co-construction' and meaning-making (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013; Willig, 2001). The approach to the analysis of data in this study was inductive, however it was acknowledged that the researcher's personal and professional experience/disciplinary knowledge may have influenced the analysis. As the researcher of this study, I kept research log notes to help me reflect on my own background, values and personal and professional experiences that may have contributed to my identification of patterns and themes.

For example, as a researcher from BAME background and who has also experienced receiving care from relatives in early childhood, and the death of a parent in later adulthood, I became increasingly aware of how this contributed to my understanding of participants' stories of separation from birth families and the loss of key relationships from their lives as they entered into care. Some young people spoke of being placed in foster families that were racially and culturally different to their own and so required a period of adjustment; while others spoke of feeling segregated from their foster family and being made to feel different and set apart. I was also mindful that these experiences shared by the participants led me to reflect on my own personal experiences of discrimination and how these made me feel like I did not belong or rather was not welcome in some institutions and situations.

Being aware of my own experiences, I was mindful to ensure that my portrayal of the stories was true to the young people. The SEN Code of Practice highlights the importance of the pupil voice – giving voice to those that need it. Through the use of a combination of formal and creative data collection methods, I was able to get as close as possible to the lived experiences of the young people, and minimise my influence in the process. Capturing the experiences of this under-researched group including those who had a history of being NEET, and reporting their voices to wider stakeholders to increase knowledge production and inform recommendations for practice, was worthwhile.

I also reflected on my role on the Aspiration EET panel, and how this may have influenced my understanding of participant's experiences of the panel and the outcomes. I ensured that I challenged any bias by exploring how participants experience of the panel impacted outcomes for them. Some participants highlighted that their social worker or PA's involvement with the panel on the young person's behalf helped provide them with access to mental health services. A few young people spoke about the assistance they received with careers advice, employment and education from a voluntary

organisation/ charity that works with the LA and routinely sits on the Aspiration EET panel. These were strong examples of the positive impact of the Aspiration EET panel on the lives of young people.

Unpacking the stories told by participants and continually reflecting on my views and experiences was an interesting process. Remaining mindful and challenging my views helped to uncover patterns/ themes that corroborated with previous research, and also helped to add value to the existing literature.



Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute of Education (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e. data from which a living individual can be identified **you must be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office before you submit your ethics application for review.** To do this, email the complete ethics form to data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. Once your registration number is received, add it to the form* and submit it to your supervisor for approval.

If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

Section 1 Project details

a.	Project title	Care experienced young people: What supportive relationships facilitate transition to independence/adulthood?
b.	Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678)	Chinelo Mortune
c.	*UCL Data Protection Registration Number	
c.	Supervisor/Personal Tutor	Vivian Hill & Emma Sumner
d.	Department	Psychology and Human Development
e.	Course category (Tick one)	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
		DEdPsy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f.	If applicable , state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.	EdD <input type="checkbox"/>
g.	Intended research start date	01 April 2019
h.	Intended research end date	01 May 2020

i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If research to be conducted abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be required before ethical approval can be granted: http://ioe-net.inst.ioe.ac.uk/about/profservices/international/Pages/default.aspx</i>	England
j.	Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	External Committee Name:
	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ⇒ go to Section 2	Date of Approval:
<p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application. – Proceed to Section 10 Attachments. 		
<p>Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.</p>		

Section 2 Research methods summary (tick all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires <input type="checkbox"/> Action research <input type="checkbox"/> Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Literature review	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled trial/other intervention study <input type="checkbox"/> Use of personal records <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic review ⇒ <i>if only method used go to Section 5.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary data analysis ⇒ <i>if secondary analysis used go to Section 6.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups <input type="checkbox"/> Other, give details:
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Please provide an overview of the project, focusing on your methodology. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, data collection (including justifications for methods chosen and description of topics/questions to be asked), reporting and dissemination. Please focus on your methodology; the theory, policy, or literary background of your work can be provided in an attached document (i.e. a full research proposal or case for support document). *Minimum 150 words required.*

Purpose of the research

For the purposes of this study, care experienced young people refer to looked after children and care leavers transitioning from key stage 4 (KS4) to post-16 and includes those who are not or previously were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those who have remained in education up to age 21. Research has found that care experienced children and young people have poorer life chances than their peers. As such, promoting the achievement of looked after children and care Leavers has rightly been a high priority in government policy (Carroll & Cameron, 2017; Ferguson, 2018). Despite huge investments and incentives in this effort over the past decade, outcomes remain considerably lower for care experienced children than their peers who have never been taken into local authority care (Coman & Devaney, 2011; Carroll & Cameron, 2017).

Generally, most young people remain in education or training after completing year 11, however for young people in care, the transition from key stage 4 (KS4) to post-secondary education, employment or training (EET) coincides with the transition to independence/ adulthood (leaving care) (Clayden & Stein, 2005). Young people leaving care must negotiate a number of systems including social services that support care and health; vocational and job training systems that support employment; and educational institutions that support participation in schooling and college (Cameron, Hollingworth, Schoon et. al., 2018). It is unsurprising therefore that young people from care backgrounds continue to remain at higher risk of dropping out, being excluded and becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) (Viner & Taylor, 2005; Sebba et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2017).

Over the years, legislation has been introduced to strengthen the support offered by Local Authorities (LA) to young people leaving care. Following the Children (Leaving Care) Act (2000), services for care leavers have markedly improved (Ferguson, 2018). More recently, the Children and Family Act (2014) placed into law, the extension of statutory protection up to age 25. This amendment called for streamlined transitions for children and young people across education, health and care services (Department for Education [DfE]/ Department of Health [DoH], 2014), however the evidence suggests that transition services in health and social care are inconsistent, patchy and varied (NICE, 2016).

Evidently, there is an increasing number of children and young people entering care and leaving care, yet despite this, LA budgets remain the same or have been cut back making it increasingly difficult for LA services to fulfil their duties to this vulnerable group (Ferguson, 2018). Equally, the absence of a shared and coordinated framework for responding to the needs of looked after children and care leavers presents its own challenges for practitioners and policy-makers in LA Children's Services (Coman & Devaney, 2011), and means that this vulnerable group of children and young people slip through the net without receiving appropriate intervention.

To inform research and practice models for improving EET (Education, Employment or Training) participation, this research will explore young people's and professionals' perspectives on negotiating the surrounding systems that improve outcomes for care experienced young people and the meaning these relationships hold for them. Data from this research may also have wider implications in supporting LA to build effective models of practice that pay attention to the types of services to consider when brokering support for young people; and more importantly implement these at the earliest point of planning. Outcomes from this study may also inform policy on the level of support young people in care/ leaving care require in order to remain in education and gain qualifications that open doors, and/ or seek employment or training.

The aims of the research

The aims of the present study will be two-fold. Firstly, to investigate generally, the needs of care experienced young people (aged 16 and over) during transition to further education, employment or training and to explore the surrounding systems in terms of factors that facilitated or hindered their participation in these post-secondary activities and the meanings assigned to these relationships. Responses will be compared across those who have remained in education and those who have previously been NEET. Secondly, professional partners' views on supporting young people's successful participation in EET will be gained (e.g. College SENCOs, LA staff such as Virtual school and Young Adult Service, and adults who work with these young people as part of community projects or charities).

Research questions

To meet the first aim, the following research questions have been devised:

1. What are the concerns, needs or anticipated needs of care-experienced young people during transition from KS4 to post-secondary participation in EET?
2. In exploring the supportive relationships around care-experienced young people, what factors facilitate young people's active participation in EET and how do they attribute these to their own outcomes?
3. Is there a difference in the types of supportive relationships that care experienced young people who remain in education and those who were previously NEET say help them to successfully transition to independence?

Further, to meet the second aim of the project:

4. What are professional partners' views on supporting young people to successfully participate in EET?

Research design

This research will be underpinned by a qualitative paradigm and will use an interpretive approach to gather the views of participants in order to obtain an understanding of the experiences of YP in care and care leavers and the professionals in their lives (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The aim is to explore the subjective experiences of the individual and the meanings they hold for them (Starman, 2013) and uncover any similarities and/ or differences in experiences or interpretations of experiences (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

The Research will use a questionnaire to capture the demographic profile and snapshot of needs of care experienced young people and semi-structured interviews to explore in detail young people's and professionals' perspectives on negotiating the surrounding systems of support that improve outcomes for care experienced young people and the meaning these relationships hold for them.

The qualitative analysis of data will focus on thematic development across the cases and perspectives using a multi-informant approach. This approach will allow for an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of real-life systems (Simons, 2009).

Participants

Care experienced young people ages 16 and over. The aim is to recruit participants from colleges and the Young Adult Service NEET Panel in LA X

Sampling

Purposive sampling will be used to select participants.

- Young people who have remained in education (n=8 estimate)
- Young people who have previously been NEET (n=8 estimate)
- Adult participants will include college SENCOs, LA staff such as Virtual school and Young Adult Service, and adults who work with these young people as part of community projects or charities (n=5)

Data collection (including justifications for methods chosen and description of topics/questions to be asked),

Questionnaires

- For young people, the About Me questionnaire (available online - Qualtrics) will be completed during interview or beforehand (**Draft version of the YP About Me Questionnaire attached**)
- Questionnaires will be prepared on Qualtrics and piloted with learners of a similar age to the target group to determine suitability of questions. Wording may then be refined before the questionnaires are distributed.
- Questions will mainly focus on the demographic profile of participants, such as age, gender, ethnic background, languages spoken etc and snapshot of needs. Responses will mostly require participants to box-tick or rate Likert scales.
- Any qualitative data generated from questionnaires will be from questions requiring short responses.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with young people and professionals. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed (**draft semi-structured interview schedules attached**). The interview schedule will also be piloted.

Data Analysis

- Thematic analysis will be conducted on data derived from interviews and from qualitative data from the questionnaires. This will be guided by Braun & Clarke (2006, 2012) due to its interpretative and inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data.

Reporting and dissemination.

This research will be compiled as a thesis and made available on the university's database. A research briefing summarizing the research including key findings, conclusions/implications from the research will be written and shared with participants.

Section 3 Research Participants (tick all that apply)

Early years/pre-school

Ages 5-11

Ages 12-16

Young people aged 17-18

Adults *please specify below*

Unknown – specify below

No participants

NB: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service](#) (NRES) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee](#) (SCREC).

Section 4 Security-sensitive material (only complete if applicable)

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

a. Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?

Yes *

b.	Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> *
c.	Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> *

* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

Section 5 Systematic reviews of research (only complete if applicable)

a.	Will you be collecting any new data from participants?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> *	No <input type="checkbox"/>
b.	Will you be analysing any secondary data?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> *	No <input type="checkbox"/>

* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

*If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) and if you have answered **No** to both questions, please go to **Section 8 Attachments**.*

Section 6 Secondary data analysis (only complete if applicable)

a.	Name of dataset/s		
b.	Owner of dataset/s		
c.	Are the data in the public domain?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
		<i>If no, do you have the owner's permission/license?</i> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No* <input type="checkbox"/>	
d.	Are the data special category personal data (i.e. personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation)?	Yes* <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
f.	If no , was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
g.	If no , was data collected prior to ethics approval process?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>

* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

*If secondary analysis is only method used and no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to **Section 9 Attachments**.*

Section 7 Data Storage and Security

Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

a.	Data subjects - Who will the data be collected from? Young people ages 16 and over, College SENCOs, LA staff and IVs
b.	What data will be collected? Please provide details of the type of personal data to be collected Age, gender, ethnic background, additional languages spoken, education/skills background of IV, Years of volunteering experience for IV, Care status of YP, email contact of participants who give consent to take part in phase 2 interviews.
c.	Is the data anonymised? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No* <input type="checkbox"/> Do you plan to anonymise the data? Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Do you plan to use individual level data? Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Do you plan to pseudonymise the data? Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> * Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues
e.	i. Disclosure – Who will the results of your project be disclosed to? Supervisors: Vivian Hill and Emma Sumner. In addition, findings will be shared with participating colleges, LA staff, and young people if requested ii. Disclosure – Will personal data be disclosed as part of your project? No
f.	Data storage – Please provide details on how and where the data will be stored i.e. UCL network, encrypted USB stick**, encrypted laptop** etc. ** Advanced Encryption Standard 256 bit encryption which has been made a security standard within the NHS Data will be stored in an encrypted private hard drive/ USB which is only accessed by the researcher and data will also be stored on UCL network. Interviews will not be stored on recorder – they will be uploaded to password protected laptop. Any questionnaires completed on paper will be scanned in and converted to electronic format. The paper copies will then be shredded.
g.	Data Safe Haven (Identifiable Data Handling Solution) – Will the personal identifiable data collected and processed as part of this research be stored in the UCL Data Safe Haven (mainly used by SLMS divisions, institutes and departments)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

h.	<p>How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format?</p> <p>Any electronic data will be stored in encrypted files on password protected laptop, and UCL network. These will be kept for 24 months following the hand in date to account for any amendments to be made following the viva exam and also in case findings are to be published.</p> <p>Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area? (If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with GDPR and state what these arrangements are) NO</p> <p>Will data be archived for use by other researchers? (If yes, please provide details.) NO</p>
i.	<p>If personal data is used as part of your project, describe what measures you have in place to ensure that the data is only used for the research purpose e.g. pseudonymisation and short retention period of data'</p> <p>Personal data will be kept separate from the questionnaire and interview data collected. Personal data from the questionnaires will be pseudonymised, and participants will be assigned an ID number so that only the researcher will be able to identify the participants and contact them for a subsequent interview. Personal data from the interviews will also be pseudonymised. The retention period of the data will be 24 months from thesis submission.</p>
	<p><i>* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues</i></p>

Section 8 Ethical issues

Please state clearly the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how will they be addressed.

All issues that may apply should be addressed. Some examples are given below, further information can be found in the guidelines. *Minimum 150 words required.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methods - Sampling - Recruitment - Gatekeepers × Informed consent × Potentially vulnerable participants × Safeguarding/child protection × Sensitive topics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International research - Risks to participants and/or researchers × Confidentiality/Anonymity × Disclosures/limits to confidentiality × Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection) × Reporting - Dissemination and use of findings |
|---|--|

Informed consent: All participants will be asked to provide written consent to take part in the both the questionnaire and interview phases of the study. Young people will be asked to provide consent themselves as they are aged 16 years and over. Details of the research will be provided on an information sheet, which covers the study aims as well as what they will be required to do. The participants will be provided with the researcher's university email address, in case they have any questions they wish to discuss. More detailed explanation of the research will be provided by researcher in person or by telephone, and opportunity for questions invited. Both the consent form and information sheet explicitly

state that the participant is free to change his or her mind about taking part in the study at any point, and can withdraw without needing to provide a reason. If the researchers are at any point concerned about a young person's ability to give consent, they will not proceed with the interview.

Potentially vulnerable participants & Sensitive topics: As the main target group in this study consist of young people in care and/or those that have left care, it is important to be aware that this group is likely to have experienced significant disruption in their early lives, including involvement of many adults and professionals over short periods of time. Therefore, at each stage, the researcher will do the following:

- Before starting the questionnaire, participants will be informed that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with. Also support to complete the questionnaires will be provided them by a named key person in the school/ college. Participants will provide consent to participate in interview stage
- Before starting the interview, the researcher will spend time building rapport with the young person and ensuring that a named person with whom the young person is familiar with is available to offer support should they become distressed/ uncomfortable. This will be arranged through a key member of staff. If they do become distressed, the interview will be terminated immediately.

Both questionnaire and interview questions have been designed to not be too invasive about past experiences but to consider/ focus more on what can be done to help in the future/ support-level – therefore sensitive conversations are not anticipated.

It has been made clear in the information sheet and consent forms that the participant can change their mind at any time about participating in the study. The researcher's university email address will be made available to participants in case they have any questions they wish to discuss. Researcher also has a clean DBS check and will be made aware of school/ college safeguarding procedures which would be adhered to.

Disclosures/limits to confidentiality: There is the risk that young people might disclose sensitive subjects while discussing their views on their needs and the support they have received. In case of any disclosures indicating that the young person or someone else might be at risk of harm, the researchers will not keep the information confidential and this has been outlined clearly in the consent form and information sheet. This will also be explained to the young person. The researcher will follow school/ college safeguarding policy and procedures and inform the designated safeguarding officer. Supervisors will be informed if the researcher feels at risk of being harmed.

Data storage and security both during and after the research: All electronic data will be stored on an encrypted USB/hard drive and saved to password protected files. Students will be assigned an ID number and personal information such as email addresses will be kept separate from any data collected, so that it will not be possible for someone other than the researcher to trace the data back to participants. This will be deleted with 24 months of hand-in.

Reporting: Participants' names will not be used in the reporting of this research. All identifiable data will be anonymised.

Please confirm that the processing of the data is not likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual

Yes

Section 9 Attachments Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached

a.	Information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research (<i>List attachments below</i>)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thesis Proposal 2. Young people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information sheet & Consent Form - Draft Young peoples' About Me Questionnaires - Draft Ecomap and Interview schedules 3. Adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adult Participant Information sheet & Consent Form - Draft Adult Participant Interview schedules 		
	<i>If applicable/appropriate:</i>		
b.	Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
c.	The proposal ('case for support') for the project		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Full risk assessment		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>

Section 10 Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name	Chinelo Mortune
Date	07.10.19

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.

Notes and references

Professional code of ethics

You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:

[British Psychological Society](#) (2018) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*

or

[British Educational Research Association](#) (2018) *Ethical Guidelines*

or

[British Sociological Association](#) (2017) *Statement of Ethical Practice*

Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the Institute of Education <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/research/research-ethics>

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) . If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references

The www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk website is very useful for assisting you to think through the ethical issues arising from your project.

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury.

A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental use

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, the supervisor **must** refer the application to the Research Development Administrator (via ioe.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk) so that it can be submitted to the IOE Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A departmental research ethics coordinator or representative can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. If unsure please refer to the guidelines explaining when to refer the ethics application to the IOE Research Ethics Committee, posted on the committee's website.

Student name	Chinelo Mortune
Student department	Psychology and Human Development

Course	Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DEdPsy)	
Project title	Care experienced young people: What supportive relationships facilitate transition to independence/ adulthood?	
Reviewer 1		
Supervisor/first reviewer name		
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?		
Supervisor/first reviewer signature		
Date		
Reviewer 2		
Second reviewer name		
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?		
Supervisor/second reviewer signature		
Date		
Decision on behalf of reviews		
Decision	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Approved subject to the following additional measures	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Not approved for the reasons given below	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Referred to REC for review	<input type="checkbox"/>
Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC		
Comments from reviewers for the applicant		
<p><i>Once it is approved by both reviewers, students should submit their ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team: IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk.</i></p>		