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**The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of
Young People in Scotland –with a Focus on Young Refugees**

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Abstract

In 2024, Scotland enshrined the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) into Scots law, demonstrating a commitment to and protection of children's rights. Simultaneously, Scotland has gradually implemented and refined the *New Scots* refugee integration policy, further demonstrating its dedication to upholding children's rights and promoting the social inclusion of young refugees and asylum seekers. However, literature has found that despite supportive and inclusive policies, the realization of the rights of young people, including young refugees, remains limited in practice. In the Scottish context, youth work is instrumental in supporting the realization of young people's rights. Despite increasing policy and practical attention to the empowering potential of youth work in recent years, literature on how youth work can specifically empower and support the realization of the rights of young refugees remains sparse. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Human Rights Education (HRE) and critical pedagogy, this study, through a qualitative research method consisting of semi-structured interviews and online surveys with youth workers, explores how youth workers understand and support the realization of the rights of young people, including young refugees. The findings indicate that youth work in Scotland provides a safe and inclusive HRE environment for all young people, based on the principles of voluntary participation, trust-building, and empowerment. Youth work also promotes young people's awareness of human rights through imparting human rights knowledge and facilitating equal dialogue, thereby supporting the realization of their human rights. For young refugees, youth work provides targeted and vital support through rights-based, inclusive practices. Whilst positive, this study also identifies structural challenges that may limit youth participation and the effectiveness of youth work, particularly under-funding and limits on interagency cooperation. Through analysis and discussion of practitioners' perspectives, this study provides recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and future research, hoping to promote the development of youth work in Scotland and safeguard the further realization of young people's rights.

Keywords: youth work, children's rights, young refugees, Human Rights Education, critical pedagogy, Scotland

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1. Introduction

Recently, the realization of children's human rights has become increasingly prominent in international and national policy discussions. Based on the more comprehensive interpretation of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989), children now enjoy a wide range of economic, political, cultural, and social rights and are recognized as rights holders. The UNCRC is of great significance for ensuring that all children, including those from marginalized groups, can fully enjoy their basic human rights.

In 2024, Scotland officially incorporated the UNCRC into law (Scottish Government, 2024b), signaling the Scottish government's commitment to protecting children's rights. At the same time, the situation of young refugees and asylum-seeking children in Scotland has received increasing attention. Scotland's progressive integration policies, such as *New Scots* (Scottish Government, 2024a), demonstrate the Scottish government's concern and protection for the realization of the rights of refugee groups. Although Scotland's refugee integration policy largely reflects the inclusiveness of this group (Slade & Dickson, 2021), a large number of studies have shown that there is a large gap between supported policy and practice (Meer et al., 2019; Strang et al., 2018), and the realization of the rights of young refugees is still limited (Kohli et al., 2024).

In this context, supporting the realization of youth rights has become increasingly prominent, and as this work will evidence, youth work has made contributions in this field. Although the definition of youth work is complex and diverse, the literature (Coburn, 2010; Coburn & Gormally, 2015; Jeffs & Smith, 1987; Ord, 2016) generally emphasizes three core characteristics: youth work requires the voluntary participation of young people; focuses on the empowerment of young people; and is essentially a process-oriented practice that values relationship building and dialogue. These fundamental characteristics construct youth work as a practice rooted in respecting young people's rights and supporting their realization.

Youth work is an important supplement to formal education. Research shows that formal education doesn't meet the needs of every child; some children may struggle to adjust (Batsleer & Davies, 2010). In this context, youth work can provide inclusive practices for marginalized youth groups through rights-based approaches. To better respond to the diverse needs of young people and promote their holistic development and social participation, youth work has gained legal recognition as a non-formal and informal form of education (Education Scotland et al., 2014; Scottish Government, 2017) in Scotland. Therefore, youth work prioritizes young

people's rights and has become crucial for educating about human rights and supporting their fulfillment.

1.1 Research significance and research questions

The debate surrounding children's rights is complex. While supportive policies exist, the practical realization of children's rights remains challenging. Scholars have noted that children's voices can be marginalized in practice due to adult-led structures (Freeman, 2000; Tisdall & Konstantoni, 2023), hindering meaningful youth participation. The unique identity of young refugees is compounded by practical factors, such as language and psychological barriers, and limited access to resources (Kohli et al., 2024; Meer et al., 2019), making it even more difficult for their voices to be heard. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how youth workers understand and practice the realization of children and young people's rights and how they support young refugees based on their specific needs and rights.

This study is significant on various levels. Academically, existing empirical research on young refugees in the Scottish context often focused on school-based educational settings (e.g., Smyth et al., 2010), while research on youth work as a form of informal education supporting this population is limited. To fill this gap, this study thus aims to integrate the theoretical frameworks of Human Rights Education (HRE) (F. Tibbitts, 2002; F. L. Tibbitts, 2017) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) to explore how youth work can provide safe and trustworthy educational spaces for young people, including young refugees, and how it can empower them and promote social change.

At the policy and practice level, the research explores how youth work can build on the policy framework and promote the realization of young people's human rights, following the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law. Through empirical research involving youth workers, including those supporting young refugees, this study aims to provide timely insights into the current inclusive practices and limitations of youth work.

Given this context, this study undertakes an extensive literature review and employs a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews and online surveys, to answer the following research questions:

- a) What is the role of youth work in supporting the realization of human rights, including for young refugees?
- b) How do youth workers in Scotland understand their role? What specific

practices are employed to promote rights awareness and facilitate social participation among young people, including young refugees?

- c) What obstacles and challenges does youth work in Scotland encounter in their efforts to support the realization of the rights of children and young people?

Through analysis and discussion of interview transcripts, survey responses, and relevant literature, this study explores the particular contributions of youth work to rights education, emotional support, and youth participation. Furthermore, this study provides practical insights for future policy development and youth work program design.

1.2 Structure

This study is structured into four sections. (1) Literature Review chapter, which explores the definition of youth work and the development of children's rights. This chapter also focuses on youth work in the Scottish context and the realization of the rights of young refugees, and introduces the theoretical framework of this study. (2) The Methodology chapter elaborates on the philosophical position, research methods, and ethical considerations of this study and reflects on the limitations of the research methods. (3) Findings and Discussion chapter, combining relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, this chapter discusses and analyzes the perspectives of Scottish youth workers on the role of youth work in realizing the human rights of young people, especially young refugees. (4) The conclusion chapter reflects on the limitations of this study and reviews and summarizes the entire study.

2. Literature Review

This chapter first explores the concept of informal and nonformal education, laying the foundation for understanding youth work, and discusses the development and challenges of youth work in Scotland. The second section explains the human rights of children. In the third section, the human rights of young refugees and their specific practices and challenges in Scotland have been further discussed. Finally, Human Rights Education (HRE) and critical pedagogy are introduced as the theoretical framework of this study.

2.1 Understanding Youth Work

2.1.1 The concept of informal and nonformal education

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) divide the education system into three separate parts: formal education, informal education, and nonformal education. In contemporary educational research, both nonformal and informal education are recognized as important complements to the traditional school education, playing a significant role in the context of youth development and lifelong learning.

Formal education is described as “a systematic, organized education model” (Dib, 1988, p. 300), and its typical characteristics are institutionalized management, standardized curriculum learning, and continuous education (Dib, 1988). Nonformal and informal education are often discussed together, yet they represent distinct, though overlapping, modes of learning. Nonformal education occurs outside the framework of formal education and involves organized and planned educational activities that provide a specific type of learning for a particular group of people (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; La Belle, 1982). In contrast, informal education often occurs in everyday life. Jeffs et al. (1996, p. 4) define informal education as “the process of fostering learning in life as it is lived; the concern with community and conversation; the focus on people as persons rather than objects”. Therefore, although informal education is decentralized and unstructured, it is a purposeful learning process that still aims to promote dialogue and democracy.

Later scholars (La Belle, 1982; Melnic & Botez, 2014) believe that these three forms of education are intertwined. Although informal education and nonformal education are different in definition, in practice, “the lines blur rapidly” (Jeffs et al., 1996, p. 71) between the two, because they both occur outside the formal education system and may occur simultaneously in

the same environment or experience.

Additionally, informal and nonformal education is often seen as a necessary supplement to formal education. It is proposed that in a relatively flexible environment, individuals can be more likely to develop social skills, democratic awareness, and reflective abilities in dialogue (Jeffs et al., 1996). However, La Belle (1982) also argues that although nonformal education contributes to promoting individual or social change, in some cases (such as unequal distribution of resources), it may exacerbate existing inequalities.

2.1.2 Youth work as informal and nonformal education

Seeking a universal definition for youth work can be challenging. It is difficult to come up with “a simple operational definition of youth work” (Cooper, 2018, p. 3) due to the diversity of policies and theoretical systems. Nonetheless, scholarship and policy documents can consistently identify a core set of characteristics of youth work across different contexts (Cooper, 2018).

Youth work is generally considered to be both nonformal and informal education. It is rooted in the realities of young people’s lives and can promote individual development and social change (Davies, 2005).

Voluntary participation is often considered a basic principle of youth work (Coburn & Gormally, 2015). When young people choose to participate, they retain a certain amount of power within the process (Davies, 2005). This fosters youth workers to respect the rights of young people and consult with them sincerely.

Empowerment is closely related to voluntary participation. Ord (2016) points out that although voluntary participation may not be feasible in all cases, it is still a key condition for empowering young people. According to Úcar Martínez et al. (2017, p. 408), empowerment can be defined as allowing individuals to gain “control and power over their own lives” in society. In practice, this requires youth work to create an environment centered on young people and to truly respect and uphold their rights. As Davies (2005, p. 11) emphasized, the practice of youth work should “proactively seek to tip balances of power in young people’s favour” and provide space for promoting young people’s critical and democratic participation.

Scholars have also raised concerns about youth work. Although youth work focuses on youth-centeredness, participation is usually carried out under adult-led structures (Jeffs & Smith, 1987), which may hinder young people’s expression. In response to these concerns, Coburn

and Gormally (2015) suggest that power be shared with young people and youth workers to jointly construct meaningful realities.

Another notable feature of youth work is relational dialogue, which emphasizes face-to-face communication and dialogic education (Jeffs & Smith, 1987). Spence (2008) highlights the significance of the emotional dimension in youth work, arguing that emotional support through dialogue exemplifies its relational nature. From this perspective, youth work should be understood as a process where young people voluntarily participate and build trust with each other. Therefore, knowledge can be generated in dialogue without boundaries (Coburn, 2010). However, an exclusive focus on process can sometimes risk neglecting concrete outcomes. Davies(2015) warns that youth workers should be wary of youth activities evolving into pure entertainment.

2.1.3 Youth work in Scotland: Development and challenges

The origins of youth work in Scotland can be traced back to bottom-up working-class movements in the early 19th century (Davies, 2009). A significant turning point came with the *Alexander Report* (Alexander, 1975), which recommended combining youth work, adult education, and community work. This has laid the foundation for the inclusion of youth work in the field of community education.

In 2004, the introduction of the *Community Learning and Development* (CLD) framework identified adult learning, youth work, and community development as the three national priorities and provided an institutionalized, youth-oriented, cross-sector collaborative platform for youth work (Scottish Executive, 2004b). In the same year, the Scottish Government (Scottish Executive, 2004a) proposed the *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE), which created space for the subsequent cooperation between youth work and formal education.

By 2010, youth work was recognized as an important component of CfE and emphasized its unique role in promoting personal achievement, social participation, and diverse activities (Scottish Government, 2010).

Currently, youth workers have been included in the category of educational practitioners (Scottish Government, 2017). *The National Youth Work Strategy (2014–2019)* further defines youth work as: “an empowering process... one of the very few practices whose remit provides for young people to exercise genuine power” (Education Scotland et al., 2014, p. 31), which means that Scotland recognizes youth work as a legitimate form of informal education.

There remain tensions between the practice of youth work and education policy in Scotland. MacKie and McGinley (2012) highlight that the government requires public services to demonstrate quantifiable outcomes, which conflicts with the process-oriented intrinsic values of youth work. Additionally, although youth work is often positioned as a policy priority, youth work often faces the problem of insufficient funding and is forced to adjust plans in practice (MacKie & McGinley, 2012; McGregor, 2015). Ward et al. (2024) further observe that although young people can express their voice with practitioners in youth organizations, their opportunities to effect meaningful change in broader power structures and policy systems remain limited.

2.2 Human Rights

2.2.1 The framework and principles of human rights of children and young people

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, lays a solid foundation for subsequent human rights protection (OHCHR, n.d.). Human rights are generally viewed as universal, inalienable, and fundamental claims that all individuals enjoy under their humanity. However, the application of these rights to children is historically complex.

Currently, the mainstream legal and moral framework supporting children's rights is the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989), which summarizes the political, economic, social, and other rights that all children should enjoy, aiming to provide comprehensive rights protection.

Article 12 of the UNCRC is often considered one of the most revolutionary provisions. This provision stipulates that States Parties (a country that ratifies and adheres to the convention) shall ensure that children have the right to express their views on any matter that affects them, and that due weight is given to them by their age and maturity (United Nations, 1989, Article 12). This provision has the potential to promote children as genuine rights-holders. However, children's participation may still be marginalized due to various practical factors (Freeman, 2000). Lundy (2007) further proposes that merely providing children with space to speak is insufficient; realizing children's right to participate requires institutional support.

An important debate about children's rights is about whether children can become true rights holders. Opponents usually believe that children lack complete rationality (O'Neill, 1988) or

that children's rights may cause to conflict with their parental authority (Guggenheim, 2007). However, this view is increasingly being challenged. Lansdown (2005) argues that denying individuals their rights based on age or assumed incomplete rationality undermines the universality of human rights. To reconcile this contradiction, Lister (2007) proposes the concept of *differentiated universalism*. This idea maintains that, although basic human rights apply universally to all individuals, including children, the specific ways to realize these rights must take into account the unique developmental stages of children. As a result, the exercise and support of these rights may differ according to children's particular needs and contexts.

Additionally, Freeman (2011) believes that resistance to recognizing children's rights often stems from adult attitudes and paternalism. Current laws and policies often emphasize the vulnerability and incapacity of children, but this may strengthen adult control and ignore children's agency (Tisdall & Konstantoni, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to change the perspective of childhood. Children should not only be seen as "becomings" but also as "beings" (Freeman, 2011, p. 27), recognising them as autonomous subjects.

To address these complex situations, scholars advocate incorporating children into the social fabric, recognizing the interdependence and relationship between children and adults (Tisdall & Konstantoni, 2023), and empowering young children and affirming their status as rights holders (Lansdown, 2005).

2.3 Young Refugees: Human Rights and Challenges

2.3.1 The human rights of young refugees in the UK

The human rights of young refugees in the UK are underpinned by international law, in particular the UNCRC (DfE, 2022) and the 1951 *Refugee Convention*. These two conventions aim to protect children's rights to education, protection from harm, and the best interests of the child (United Nations, 1989, Articles 28, 20, 21). However, there are tensions between international law and UK domestic policy, with evidence suggesting that young refugees are more likely to face barriers to the realization of their rights.

The UK government acknowledged these tensions in its *Child's Rights Impact Assessment* (CRIA) of the *Illegal Migration Bill* (Home Office, 2023). Although CRIA states that the best interests of children will be considered, systemic pressures in policy may limit the full realization of children's rights in practice. More obviously, their right to education, right to express opinions, and right to have an adequate standard of living (United Nations, 1989,

Articles 28, 12, 27) may be undermined due to structural problems, such as the complex administrative procedures brought about by immigration control and the lack of clear protection measures. In addition, CRIA also raises concerns about the mental well-being and living stability of children affected by the Bill.

Research has shown that the UK treats young refugees as a general immigrant category and provides them with less structural support, which will limit the ability of young refugees to make independent decisions (Gateley, 2015). Similarly, Morrice et al. (2020) also point out that the current structural barriers in the UK, such as the rigid age-based resettlement system and the lack of bridging courses, hinder the right of young refugees to education.

2.3.2 The realization and challenges of human rights for young refugees in Scotland

The realization of human rights for young refugees in Scotland is based on international instruments such as the UNCRC and the 1951 *Refugee Convention*. In July 2024, the UNCRC was incorporated into Scottish law, which means that children's rights are respected and protected (Scottish Government, 2024b). As young refugees are a more vulnerable group of children, their human rights require greater institutional and legal protection. In response, the *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2024a, 2024c) is issued, reflecting Scotland's strong commitment to promoting the rights of all children.

Scotland's refugee integration strategy can be seen to provide more supportive mental health resources, educational pathways, and youth support services (Mulvey et al., 2023). In the *New Scots delivery plan 2024 to 2026* (Scottish Government, 2024c), the Scottish government proposed six strategic outcomes, including recognizing and meeting the rights and needs of refugees, promoting social participation, and forming their rights through education, culture, and employment.

Social work plays a vital role in facilitating the integration of young refugees. Kohli et al. (2023) highlight that safe environments and stable interactions between young refugees and social workers can enhance the sense of security and belonging. Additionally, Hopkins and Hill (2010) underscore that providing clear information about services and support mechanisms strengthens young refugees' resilience and autonomy. Youth work offers an important avenue to communicate and provide information.

However, despite policy and institutional support, the realization of rights and access to

resources for young refugees remains limited. Firstly, Scotland's inclusive approach to refugee integration may often clash with exclusionary UK immigration policies. Although devolution has brought Scotland the freedom of autonomous decision and policymaking, according to the UK constitution, the Scottish government still cannot directly decide on immigration affairs (Kohli et al., 2023). Visa requirements can still hinder young refugees' access to services and opportunities that are crucial for the realization of their rights (Kohli et al., 2024). Next, there is often a period of chaos in the transition from seeking asylum to becoming a refugee. Problems such as unstable housing, delayed welfare payments, and complicated procedures are still barriers for young refugees to realize their human rights (Strang et al., 2018). Finally, educational needs also remain a critical concern, with English language training identified as a primary priority (Hopkins & Hill, 2010). Currently, although language classes for refugees are provided, due to limited resources and funding, and a lack of close connection with the *New Scots*, young refugees still face language learning barriers (Meer et al., 2019).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

While there have been numerous studies exploring the challenges that young refugees may encounter and how policies and relevant institutions support them, there is limited empirical research on how youth work can provide a rights-based, educational space for young refugees. To explore more deeply the role of youth work in realizing the human rights of young people in Scotland, including young refugees, this study uses the integrated theoretical framework of human rights education and critical pedagogy.

2.4.1 Human rights education

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing emphasis on Human Rights Education (HRE) in both research and educational practice. It has been widely used not only in formal education but also increasingly expanded to informal education environments. In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* (UNDHRET), reflecting the importance of HRE in the international community. The most widely accepted definition of HRE is the three-dimensional framework proposed by UNDHRET (United Nations, 2011, Article 2), namely education *about*, *through*, and *for* human rights (Struthers, 2015). Education *about* human rights means knowing and understanding the principles and basic values of human rights; *through* human rights means creating a learning environment that respects the rights of educators and learners; and *for*

human rights means empowering learners so that individuals can “enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others” (United Nations, 2011, Article 2.2).

This three-dimensional framework is consistent with the youth work philosophy in Scotland. As the national youth work agency, YouthLink Scotland is committed to always putting young people’s rights first and respecting and promoting the rights of all young people (YouthLink Scotland, n.d.-b). Youth work practices that are considered informal education are more likely to achieve the three dimensions of HRE: helping young people understand human rights, creating an educational environment, and encouraging young people to actively participate in social activities.

To deepen the understanding, this study draws on the three practice models for understanding HRE proposed by Tibbitts (2002): the Values and Awareness Model, the Accountability Model, and the Transformational Model. Among them, the last model is closely related to this study, which emphasizes empowering marginalized or traumatized individuals through informal and nonformal education and promoting social change through individual critical reflection and community support (F. Tibbitts, 2002). Then Tibbitts (2017) further refines the classification, emphasizing the irreplaceable role of informal and nonformal education in transformational HRE, where learners can more effectively participate in the process of social change and human rights realization due to their rights-based voluntariness and autonomy. Moreover, *egalitarian dialogue* is a valuable component of HRE (Duffy, 2025); when teachers and students engage as equals and knowledge is constructed together, learners are more likely to develop critical reflection awareness.

Based on this theoretical framework, it is increasingly acknowledged that youth work can provide fertile soil for HRE (Brander et al., 2012; Gavrielides et al., 2018). In a rights-based, learner-centered educational environment, youth workers can not only help young people understand human rights knowledge but also cultivate the skills required for them to participate in and realize human rights (Gavrielides et al., 2018). In Scotland, youth work organizations have integrated human rights principles into practice, respecting and promoting the realization of the rights of all young people (YouthLink Scotland, n.d.-b). Through HRE, young people can actively participate in social life and promote social justice.

Although HRE has great potential for emancipation, it is often criticized for its educational neutrality and failure to address structural equality issues. Coysh (2014) points out that HRE has currently been simplified into a neutral knowledge transfer of raising human rights

awareness, tending to lose its essence of empowerment and liberation (Zembylas & Keet, 2019). In other words, HRE is moving towards symbolic slogans or the universality of human rights that is divorced from the community environment. However, HRE should be deeply rooted in people's daily lives and social environments (Coysh, 2014) to support the realization of young people's rights.

2.4.2 Critical pedagogy

HRE emphasizes critical reflection and social change, which has many overlaps with the critical pedagogy proposed by Paulo Freire (1970). This study will make links between human rights education and critical pedagogy (Duffy, 2025).

Critical pedagogy is rooted in the work of Paulo Freire (1970), which views education as a political and dialogical process where learners develop a critical understanding of structural issues and are empowered to take action.

The key concept of critical pedagogy is conscientization (*Conscientização*), which refers to the development of critical consciousness that enables individuals to perceive and challenge structural oppression (Freire & Macedo, 2018). However, it is worth noting that critical pedagogy is slightly different from the commonly referred to critical thinking. Instead, it emphasizes a liberating educational culture that empowers marginalized learners (Ryoo et al., 2009) and encourages them to actively participate in society.

A prominent principle of critical pedagogy is to emphasize that education is a “political intervention” (Giroux, 2004, p. 34), advocating that education should be committed to achieving social justice, democracy, and equality. The traditional formal education system, criticized by Freire (1970), often relies on the Bank Model, which means knowledge is deposited in the learner's knowledge system from top to bottom. However, this may ignore the views and feelings of non-mainstream youth from diverse cultures, languages, and life experiences, such as young refugees. Critical pedagogy believes that education is not only a technical practice, but also a moral and political practice, including democratic participation and identity construction (Giroux, 2004). As Kincheloe (2004, p. 11) states, education has never been neutral: “To refuse to name the forces that produce human suffering and exploitation is to take a position that supports oppression and powers that perpetuate it.” The proposal is that if education fails to empower students to critically examine the construction of power relations, it means depriving marginalized groups of their voices and subjectivity.

Another core principle of critical pedagogy is to emphasize that knowledge is generated through dialogue (Freire, 1970). Dialogic education encourages students to express their opinions rather than remain silent (Kirylo et al., 2010). From this perspective, critical pedagogy is a liberating process (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Foley's (2007) study on deaf protests demonstrates that students' critical reflection on their situations and their joint efforts with teachers have great power to promote change. However, dialogic education does not mean accepting all opinions uncritically. Kirylo et al (2010) also remind that educators need to question and critically analyze students' opinions while remaining open.

While the research on critical pedagogy has gradually matured, the majority of the existing literature focuses on exploring how critical pedagogy can be applied to formal education, with relatively few empirical studies focusing on informal education (A. Smith & Seal, 2021). Given the theoretical fit between youth work and critical pedagogy, this study argues that this framework is significant in exploring the role of youth work in realizing the human rights of young people, including those of young refugees. As young refugees often experience marginalization, youth work, especially under a rights-based framework, can provide an informal educational space for equal dialogue, empower young people, and guide young refugees to realize their rights.

3. Methodology

This chapter details the methodology used in this study. First, this chapter introduces the study's philosophical stance. Then, this chapter outlines the research design, which involves purposive sampling to recruit relevant participants, data collection through semi-structured interviews and online surveys, and the use of thematic analysis to identify key themes. The chapter subsequently discusses the ethical considerations of this study, then reflects on the limitations of the research method.

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study adopts a relativist ontological stance, arguing that reality is a social construction based on the experience of individuals or social groups (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For children in Scotland, human rights is not a fixed or universal legal instrument, but is constructed through the interaction between individuals and society. Therefore, this study focuses on young people's interactions with youth work agencies in Scotland and how human rights are realized with the support of youth workers.

In line with the relativist ontology, this study is based on constructivist epistemology. Social constructivism argues that knowledge is not discovered but is constructed by social activities and cultural practices (Kim, 2001). This is closely related to the dialogical and participatory nature of youth work, meaning that young people can understand human rights and develop critical reflection through interaction with youth workers (Corney et al., 2021). Additionally, the theoretical framework of this study, HRE and critical pedagogy, advocates the creation of an environment that facilitates the co-construction of knowledge. This implies a fit with constructivist epistemology, which tends to believe that knowledge is generated through interactive creation. Within such an environment, young people (including young refugees) can actively participate in social practice and define human rights from their perspective.

Therefore, this study is consistent with the interpretivist research paradigm. It explores how individuals understand and construct social reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) and how they co-construct meaning through language, interpersonal relationships, and contexts (Krauss, 2015). Youth work is a process-oriented and informal education that promotes the understanding and realization of human rights through dialogue and participation. This aligns with the view of interpretivists, who advocate that social reality is shaped by individuals' viewpoints and is continuously evolving (Hollstein, 2014). This perspective is particularly relevant to this study, as young people's identity and rights awareness are often formed through

interactions with society, communities, and youth organizations.

Moreover, the researcher is not independent of the research (Ryan, 2018), but a member who co-constructs meaning with the participants. Krauss (2015) emphasizes that interpretivism believes knowledge is jointly produced and shaped by the researcher and the participants' perceptions, values, and experiences of the world. As Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) stress, interpretivism focuses on the depth of research rather than its breadth. This is conducive to an in-depth exploration of marginalized groups' cognition and understanding of social reality.

Combined with the study's philosophical stance, a qualitative research approach is an appropriate methodological choice (Hollstein, 2014). This study explores how Scottish young people, including young refugees, understand and realize human rights through youth work. The understanding and realization of human rights are influenced by factors such as social environment, policy system, and personal experience, the capturing of which is usually difficult to achieve through a quantitative approach. This highlights a typical feature of qualitative research: it focuses on constructing meaning from the perspective of participants through the analysis and interpretation of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with open questions, participants can be encouraged to express their views in their understanding, thereby promoting the construction of meaning between researchers and participants.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Sampling strategy and participants

Participant recruitment for this study was supported by NGO YouthLink Scotland. This is the representative organization for youth work in Scotland and a liaison and policy advocate for youth organizations across Scotland (YouthLink Scotland, n.d.-a). As a well-established umbrella organization, YouthLink has a wide network of local youth organizations, youth workers, and diverse young people, which makes YouthLink an ideal partner for this study, and their support is crucial. YouthLink helped identify and connect with individuals and groups with relevant knowledge and experience, making participant recruitment more efficient and relevant.

This study adopted purposive sampling, since it requires a specific group—youth workers and young refugees—who are in and affected by the Scottish social context. The sampling method helped to ensure that the participants have relevant knowledge or experience, allowing this study to dig deep into the insights of the target group (Campbell et al., 2020).

The original plan was to include three groups of participants: representatives of youth work agencies, youth workers, and young refugees. Agency representatives and youth workers were to be identified with the help of YouthLink, and then young refugees aged 16-18 were to be identified by the corresponding youth workers. However, despite strong support from YouthLink during the recruitment process, young refugees remained a highly marginalized and hard-to-reach group. Despite the researcher's efforts to promote the survey and seek the assistance of youth workers, it was ultimately not possible to collect data reflecting the perspectives of young refugees.

Finally, this study collected interview data from two youth work agency representatives and online survey responses from ten youth workers from various agencies.

The two youth work agency representatives were identified with the help of the NGO YouthLink: The first participant is a senior coordinator who manages a network of multiple youth projects in Scotland, focusing on issues such as racism, sectarianism, and prejudice, and providing support to young people facing racism. The second participant manages a network of all Black-led charities in Scotland, providing support to ethnic minority youth. The two participants had in-depth insights into the realistic problems and opportunities faced by young people (including young refugees) in the field of youth work in Scotland.

Additionally, this study recruited ten youth workers with rich experience to complete the online survey, eight of whom had more than three years of work experience. The participants' work environments included community centers, schools, and youth clubs, providing support to young people, including young refugees and ethnic minority backgrounds.

3.2.2 Data collection methods

To gain deeper insights into how youth work supports the realization of human rights of young people in Scotland, this study used two qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews and two online surveys to collect participants' perspectives.

The interviews with the two youth agency representatives were conducted using a semi-structured interview method, one-on-one video online interviews via Teams, and each lasted approximately 45 minutes. With the consent of the participants, each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed via Teams. Online semi-structured interviews are an effective interpretive research method (Al Balushi, 2016), which not only keeps the interview under a certain theme but also leaves room for the participants' insights (Magaldi & Berler, 2018), thereby enabling the researcher to explore their understandings more flexibly and deeply.

The online survey was designed with open-ended questions as the main component, aiming to understand the participants' perspectives and personal experience of youth work and children's human rights. It encouraged participants to express their views and reflections without restriction. Furthermore, the questionnaire design included a small number of closed-ended questions to collect background information.

This study originally designed two online surveys, one for youth workers with experience in supporting young refugees and the other for young refugees aged 16-18, which were distributed through YouthLink to diverse youth work organizations. However, due to the unsatisfactory results in the middle and late stages of data collection, the researcher, under the advice and guidance of the supervisor, designed a third, shorter, and more widely applicable online survey for youth workers. This shorter survey was designed to capture the perspectives of youth workers regarding their support for the realization of children's rights in general, rather than restricting participation to those working specifically with young refugees. This survey was also disseminated through relevant youth work agencies. Taking advantage of the online survey's ability to reach a wide range of or difficult-to-reach populations (Braun et al., 2021), this study was able to enhance the effectiveness of data collection.

3.2.3 Data analysis

Combining the data collected through semi-structured interviews and online surveys, this study uses thematic analysis to analyze the data.

The data analysis process followed the six analysis stages proposed by Braun and Clark (2006; 2014). This was a method of identifying and analyzing themes in qualitative data, not just summarizing the data, but also understanding and interpreting the meaning of the data (Clarke & Braun, 2014). The six analysis stages involved data familiarization, coding, developing initial themes, review, theme definition, and combination with research objectives and theoretical frameworks. Given that the data sample of this study was small, manual coding is feasible. Thus, the research data were largely dependent on the researcher's interpretive judgment.

Reflexivity was integrated throughout the entire process of data collection and data analysis. The researcher's characteristics, such as individual experience, language habits, and emotional reactions, can affect the interpretation of the data (Berger, 2015). Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in continuous self-reflection, especially on the position as an international student rather than a local Scottish student. Although this identity may bring

unique insights, it is important to acknowledge that the analysis process may lack language sensitivity (Berger, 2015), which can affect the complete presentation of the data.

Although this study did not introduce an outside reviewer to enhance the trustworthiness of thematic analysis coding (Alhojailan, 2012), the coding and thematic steps in the analysis process were recorded in detail, which provided a logical and traceable audit trail and enhanced the dependability and confirmability of the research (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.3 Ethical Considerations

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Edinburgh Ethics Committee, and all research activities follow the university's ethical guidelines.

Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and were assured that they could skip any questions or pause at any time. Representatives of relevant agencies who participated in the interviews provided informed consent by signing a consent form. For youth workers who participated in the online survey, the Information Sheet and consent request were embedded in the questionnaire. Participants were required to tick the consent boxes and sign before answering the questions to indicate that they had read and agreed to participate in the study. It should be acknowledged, however, that this method has its flaws. Participants, although in this case professional participants, may have a hasty browsing or fail to fully understand the content of the informed consent and sign it directly (Hokke et al., 2018); there is then the risk that this undermines the integrity and authenticity of the informed consent.

Although ultimately no young refugees took part in the research, additional safeguards had been put in place, which are described here, given that the participants came from a potentially vulnerable group, young refugees aged 16-18. To protect the psychological well-being and autonomy of the participants, youth workers known to the young people were asked to provide support for the young refugees during the survey filling process. There was to be no direct contact between the researcher and the young refugee. No identifiable information was to be garnered from the young refugee. The language of the survey was also designed to use straightforward English and avoid questions that might make the young refugees feel uncomfortable.

Finally, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly followed throughout the study, and all youth worker participants' personal identification information was anonymized.

3.4 Limitations

This study has certain limitations that may affect the trustworthiness of its findings.

To begin with, the sample size of this study was limited, involving two representatives of relevant youth work agencies and ten youth workers in Scotland. This study mainly focused on understanding the independent ideas of individuals, which may not be able to generalize the views of the entire sample group (Adams, 2015). In addition, as Silverman (1998) suggests that research should shift from analyzing how people understand things to focusing on people's practices. Although this study surveyed people with two different positions, due to time and ethical considerations, no field observations were conducted; the results thus may only partially reflect the relevant realities and practices.

Furthermore, the qualitative research, obtaining the perspectives of marginalized and vulnerable groups, is a significant challenge (Pincock & Jones, 2020). Although young refugees were more accessible and their voices were more easily heard through the assistance of youth workers, this study ultimately failed to collect data on their perspectives. This suggested that research on marginalized groups should more carefully and thoughtfully consider employing innovative qualitative research tools (Nudzor & Finlay, 2017), such as “visual methods, mapping and drawing” (Pincock & Jones, 2020, p. 8), to promote the participation of marginalized youth. Moreover, this study employed a traditional online survey in English as the research method. Although this study simplified the language and explained the terms, as a non-English speaking youth group, even if written responses were used, language proficiency may still reduce their willingness to participate (Leung, 2013) or become a reason for exclusion (Carter, 2009).

Another key challenge was the limited time available to establish contact with young refugees. The period from contact with YouthLink to the completion of data collection was about a month, which seemed to be insufficient to build contact with youth workers who could then engage in conversations with young refugees and consider participation. Previous research on young refugees has highlighted the difficulty of building trust with this group (Ali, 2024; Ramirez & Matthews, 2008) and the considerable time and effort required (Neag, 2024). Although this study endeavored to shorten the time to build trust, namely through support from their youth workers, this strategy proved more complex and time-consuming in practice.

As the perspectives of young refugees were not available, this study has relied on the perspectives of youth workers. Although they have worked with young people and provided

valuable insights into the lives of young people (including young refugees), this study acknowledged that such adult and practitioner perspectives lead to the lack of young people's perspectives, which would have enhanced the findings of the research.

Finally, the exclusive focus on Scotland represented both a strength and a limitation. Although this study provided unique insights into how youth work can promote the realization of human rights for young refugees, these were influenced by Scotland's unique historical background and policy framework. Consequently, the results may not be transferable to other regions or countries (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the transferability of the research results should be treated with caution.

4. Findings and Discussion

Through an in-depth qualitative analysis of responses from two interviewees and ten survey respondents, and drawing on literature reviewed earlier, this chapter explores and summarizes findings alongside analytical discussion.

Firstly, the chapter explores the core values and theoretical foundations of youth work in Scotland, followed by a discussion of how youth work is an important place for the practice of Human Rights Education (HRE) and critical pedagogy. Next, the chapter discusses the multiple challenges faced by young refugees in Scotland in their struggle for rights realization, and analyses how youth work can provide inclusive support and empowerment in response to these issues and barriers. Finally, the chapter highlights the structural barriers to youth work in Scotland in the existing context.

4.1 The role of youth work in realizing young people's human rights

This section discusses the research question “How do youth workers in Scotland understand their role?” from three perspectives: how youth workers understand the core values, views on children's rights, and methods for supporting these rights. Furthermore, this section finds that the rights-based approach enables HRE and critical pedagogy to be more effectively integrated into youth work practice.

4.1.1 The core values and theoretical foundations in youth work practice

This section examines the core values and theoretical foundations of youth work within the Scottish context.

Youth work as relationship-oriented and voluntary

Youth work in Scotland is widely considered a non-formal and informal education, with relationship building and voluntary participation as its core characteristics. This study finds that practitioners regard trust, equality, and voluntary participation as the guiding principles of youth work.

When discussing the defining characteristics of youth work, Interviewee 1 emphasized that “the biggest thing...that it's voluntary”. Unlike formal education, the relationship between youth workers and young people is based on the principle of voluntariness (Spence, 2004). Youth workers treat young people as “equal partners” (Interviewee 1), a perspective that affirms

the autonomy of young people and facilitates the equitable sharing of power. As Respondent 3 noted, “We are trusted safe adults that can offer guidance and safety”. The establishment of equal relationships allows young people to feel respected and supported, and “are able to thrive” (Respondent 3). As Rodd and Stewart (2009) stated, a trusted relationship can provide a safe environment for young people to support their knowledge exploration and individual development.

Youth participation and empowerment

Meaningful youth participation is a core theme in the participants’ narratives. This goes beyond superficial negotiation, requiring practitioners to focus on the needs of young people and provide continuous feedback on young people’s opinions.

Interviewee 1, a representative of a youth work agency, emphasized the importance of centering young people in youth work, stating, “put them at the soul and the heart of it, the barrier shouldn’t become an issue”. By centering on the rights and needs of young people and recognizing them as active participants, youth work can become a solid force in supporting them to overcome real-world challenges.

Additionally, youth workers are committed to empowering young people and involving them in meaningful participation in decisions that affect their lives. For example, Respondent 8 explained: “We offer a safe space for social connections, advocacy and representation...” Respondent 4 further noted that, in youth work, young people can “explore their identities, develop their skills, and gain confidence in their abilities”. These perspectives indicate that youth work not only offers opportunities for young people to develop knowledge and social competencies but also strengthens their sense of agency.

Some literature has questioned the authenticity of youth participation, arguing that existing policies often simplify participation to consultation, which allows young people to express their voices but does not solve realistic problems (Percy-Smith, 2006). In response, participants have made efforts to move beyond tokenistic participation. For example, Interviewee 1 illustrated the dialogic and emancipatory nature of youth work as a form of informal education by describing the process of consultation and feedback on issues such as hate crimes:

“...lots of young people who have very kindly shared their stories, and I’ve always gone back to them and said... This is how what you told me has impacted on this legislation, for example.”

As Freire (1970) states, dialogue is at the heart of liberatory education, which can promote

students' reflection and action. Through this "dialogue-feedback-dialogue" model, youth workers can support the development of young people's critical consciousness, empower them to move from passive acceptance to active participation.

Youth work as informal and non-formal education

As non-formal and informal education, youth work is often characterized as a process-oriented and experiential educational practice (Corney et al., 2024). Unlike result-oriented formal education, youth work is an important place to cultivate social skills and knowledge that are difficult to quantify in young people. As Respondent 4 stated, youth work focuses on developing young people's confidence and self-esteem:

"Building confidence and self-esteem provides a safe and supportive space... Enhanced self-esteem is essential for young people to recognise their own worth and to advocate effectively for their rights."

This statement highlights the significant role of youth work in fostering the development of young people's social skills. By creating a safe and trusted learning environment, youth work can support young people in exploring their identity more confidently and pursuing the realization of human rights.

Additionally, as previous research has shown that traditional education may not meet the needs of all children (Batsleer & Davies, 2010), youth work can serve as a valuable supplement to school education. Respondent 5 shared that: "Some primary schools teach rights in a way that children find boring." In contrast, youth work is grounded in the interests and needs of young people, accommodates individual developmental differences, and employs educational approaches to foster young people's awareness of rights and critical thinking. Moreover, respondent 6 pointed out that youth work can provide children with additional learning opportunities, "such as sports and arts (for free)".

4.1.2 Human Rights Education and critical pedagogy

This section finds that youth work in Scotland is not only grounded in the principles of the UNCRC but also serves as a significant site for the implementation of Human Rights Education (HRE) and critical pedagogy. By adopting rights-based and empowerment principles and approaches, youth workers play an important role in supporting young people to understand their rights, develop critical consciousness, and promote the realization of these rights.

Understanding and respecting children's human rights

The UNCRC outlines a comprehensive set of rights for children, and participants frequently refer to it, with one describing it as “the framework we use for rights-based work” (Respondent 8).

As discussed in the earlier chapter, the debate on children’s rights is complex. Critics such as O’Neill (1988) argue that children lack full rational capacity and thus oppose their being rights holders. However, most participants acknowledge that children enjoy universal human rights equal to adults, based on the fact that they *are* human, rather than *becoming* human (Freeman, 2017; Tobin, 2015). For instance, they highlighted that:

“Human rights are a list of things that all people, including children and young people...” (Respondent 7)

“All human rights. All people should be entitled to all human rights... Just like any adult or baby or child or anybody.” (Interviewee 1)

“Children and young people have the same general human rights as adults...” (Respondent 4)

The particularity of childhood and the vulnerability of children are not ignored in practice. As Respondent 4 stated: “...they also have specific rights related to their unique needs... like the right to education and protection from harm.” Children enjoy specific and additional rights that reflect their special needs and developmental stages, including the right to education, the right to play, and the right to be free from harm (United Nations, 1989, Articles 28, 31, 19), which recognize the special situation of children. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of children is not overemphasized in youth work. Supporting children’s autonomous decision-making ability and agency, while protecting children’s vulnerability (Tobin, 2015), has become the main theme of youth work.

Therefore, youth work provides a special educational space where children’s rights are not only recognized in policies but can also be actively realized in practice. This study finds that Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) is particularly valued in practice, with practitioners encouraging and supporting children to express their views and ensuring that their voices are heard and have a meaningful impact. Youth workers emphasized the importance of “echoing [children’s] voices” (Respondent 10) and “having [children’s] voice heard” (Respondent 5) in supporting the realization of children’s rights. This practice echoes Varadan’s (2019) theoretical view that prioritizing children’s free expression and recognizing their evolving abilities are important ways to support them to exercise their human rights in practice.

Human Rights Education and critical pedagogy in youth work

HRE is often seen as a major component of youth work. Most youth workers believed that HRE and youth work were deeply intertwined, describing their duties as “to inform [children] of their human rights and echo their voices” (Respondent 10). This reflects the core concept of HRE: to teach young people *about* human rights *through* an equal and respectful education process, and to educate *for* realizing and defending human rights (Struthers, 2015; United Nations, 2011, Article 2).

A core task of youth work is to teach young people the basic relevant human rights. Interviewee 2, a representative of a youth agency that manages several Black-led charities, notes that youth work includes raising awareness of human rights and supporting young people in realizing human rights:

“Making people understand, educating people basically on what their human rights are, because a lot of people don't have any awareness, especially people coming from outside of the country... they want to be treated fairly...”

Many young people, including those from marginalized backgrounds and those new to Scotland, lack knowledge of basic human rights and access to information. Youth work addresses this gap by providing accessible and comprehensible HRE, reflecting the real practice of the *about* dimension of HRE (Struthers, 2015).

Compared with formal education, youth work can provide HRE with an equal and inclusive educational space, namely education *through* human rights (United Nations, 2011, Article 2). Respondent 5 pointed out that “we run our clubs in a child-led way and enable young people to have their voices heard”, which implies that youth work always focuses on children’s rights and insists on power-sharing. These commitments and approaches help to form an equal and respectful learning environment.

The third core concept of HRE is to go beyond knowledge transfer and actively support young people to protect and defend their own and others’ rights. Tibbitts (2002; 2017) emphasizes empowering young people through critical reflection and dialogue, which can be applied to youth work. As Respondent 2 stated, youth work focuses on “helping young people understand life and other things we take for granted”. Cultivating young people’s critical reflection skills lays the foundation for meaningful youth participation. Respondent 7 highlighted that youth work has made many efforts to empower and promote youth participation, “promoting their human rights by access to better vocational education, social inclusion, and participation in

decision making”. This not only entails a profound understanding of children’s rights but also the deliberate integration of respect for these rights into practice, actively inviting young people to meaningfully participate in all aspects of work that are closely related to them.

Furthermore, this also reflects the application of critical pedagogy in HRE. Respondent 9, a practitioner with many years of experience in Community Learning and Development (CLD), described how they empower young people through knowledge and encourage them to actively participate: “Raise [children’s] awareness of exploitation and abuse of human rights.” Respondent 8 also highlighted the efforts in supporting young people to “engage in their local communities and nationally on issues that affect them”. Consistent with what Duffy (2025) states, educators can cultivate learners’ critical thinking through egalitarian dialogue and support them to identify, question, and challenge existing injustices.

4.2 Supporting the rights of young refugees

This section explores the challenges faced by young refugees in realizing their human rights and the inclusive practices adopted by youth workers to support their integration and the realization of their rights in Scotland.

4.2.1 Challenges in realizing young refugees’ rights

This section elaborates and discusses the challenges of realizing human rights of young refugees in light of existing literature and the perspectives of youth workers.

Language barriers

A common challenge faced by young refugees is language barriers, which greatly affect their right to education and participation in social activities. A study on the policy and practice of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Scotland (Meer et al., 2019) shows that although Scotland provides free ESOL classes for asylum seekers and young refugees, and is relatively active in accommodating young refugees at the policy level, due to complex funding sources and regional differences, there is still numerous young refugees who cannot equally and conveniently access language education resources.

For young refugees, participation in educational activities is far from as straightforward as simply walking into a classroom. Practitioners highlight that young refugees may face numerous barriers. For instance, young people can have care obligations to their families as “young carers” (Interviewee 2), while others struggle with the cost of transportation,

particularly “if [they] don’t have a Young Scot card or there isn’t a bus” (Interviewee 1). These socioeconomic issues may hinder their access to educational resources, including language education, and limit their ability to fully engage in learning opportunities.

Martzoukou and Burnett (2018) advocate that English proficiency is an important basis for refugees to obtain information, develop autonomy, and rebuild their identity. If English proficiency is not sufficiently developed, young refugees are likely to rely on external intervention to obtain basic rights (Strang et al., 2018), which can undermine their autonomy and face greater obstacles in integrating into Scottish society.

Cultural differences and local knowledge

Cultural differences and a lack of local knowledge are other important factors that hinder young people from obtaining basic human rights, which is reflected in the daily lives of young refugees. Interviewee 1 proposed the concept of “local knowledge”. In practice, they observed that many young people who had just arrived in Scotland had difficulties in understanding the local culture. For example, Interviewee 1 reported that some young people mistakenly believed that the “NHS is not free” and that reporting a crime to the police could lead to negative consequences. As a result, they were reluctant to seek help from law enforcement.

Similarly, previous studies have found that most refugees have few contacts with local Scottish people and therefore have limited ability to obtain community information and services (Strang & Quinn, 2021). Unfamiliarity with local information and basic rights makes it difficult for young refugees to integrate into Scotland.

Mental health

Trauma, displacement, and ongoing uncertainty and social exclusion will continue to affect the mental health of young refugees. Respondent 6, a youth worker who provides one-on-one support to refugee youth, observed that “traumatic experience hinders [young refugees] from realizing their human rights”. Many young refugees may have experienced traumatic events such as war and disasters before arriving in the host country, which will damage their mental health (Dangmann et al., 2022) and affect their daily lives.

Article 24 of the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) stipulates that children have the right to the highest attainable standard of health. However, relevant research shows (Wright & Ord, 2015) that in practice, young people have limited access to professional mental health services, and their distrust and rejection of professional institutions may hinder them from receiving further psychological support. Applying this to the context of young refugees, narrowing this gap

requires policies and institutions to rethink how mental health services are provided to young refugees in a more inclusive and targeted manner.

Social exclusion and stereotypes

Social exclusion and stereotypes may also have an impact on the mental health of asylum-seeking and young refugees, increasing their sense of loneliness. Several youth workers mentioned that young refugees face discrimination and exclusion in society:

“There are some people who don’t think these people [refugees] should be in this country, and so they [young refugees] get attacked online or in the media or whatever.”

(Interviewee 2)

“Media portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers [and] views that rights are a privilege rather than [a] fundamental [entitlement].” (Respondent 9)

Research shows that many young refugees have experienced racism and have difficulty building friendships with their peers (K. Smith et al., 2021). Moreover, their situation is exacerbated by social exclusion and media stereotypes about refugees. Therefore, addressing social exclusion requires not only helping young refugees adapt to their current environment but also supporting them in challenging social structures of discrimination and inequality.

4.2.2 Inclusive and rights-realizing practices

This section discusses the important role that youth work plays in supporting young refugees’ integration and human rights realization.

The youth workers involved in the study described their role as “a bridge between young refugees and the realization of their rights through empowerment and awareness raising” (Respondent 8), helping them to live confidently in the community. This position reflects the *for* dimension in HRE, emphasizing the empowerment of young people with knowledge to realize human rights; it also echoes the vision of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) to enable marginalized youth to become active participants in shaping their lives.

Firstly, establishing initial connections with Black Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and young refugees is a major challenge in youth work practice. As Interviewee 1 described, even if practitioners recognize that relevant refugee children and young people can benefit from youth work, a lack of trust often leads them to hesitate or even reject youth workers. In response to this challenge, youth workers have reported adopting innovative strategies based on

partnership and representation:

“They partnered with another local organization who are black-led... They essentially came and did some partnership working, so they had one of the black youth workers come and attend and start delivering sessions, and more of these young people started coming in through the door.”

This innovative initiative reflects youth work’s respect for refugee identity and experience, and a safe and trusting environment is created. Young refugees and BAME people “could see themselves reflected” (Interviewee 1). This echoes the research of McPherson (2020), who finds that working-class young people in Edinburgh are more willing to trust and accept services provided by adults with similar backgrounds or experiences to themselves, which may be relevant to young refugees. Youth work, with its relationship-oriented characteristics and rights-based working methods, has particular advantages in building trust and co-constructing knowledge with young people.

Moreover, youth workers believe that it is vital to provide progressive, targeted local information and basic human rights knowledge to young refugees. Practitioners often deliver HRE and promote their social skills development through community-based workshops and informal social activities, such as coffee mornings.

Furthermore, language is a persistent barrier to the integration of young refugees into social and learning life. Article 28 of the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) states that children have the right to education, which is actively supported in youth work environments. Respondent 9 described their efforts to protect the right to education and improve language skills for young asylum seekers and refugees in the community:

“...I started working with an EAL [English as an Additional Language] class in a local secondary school...we created the EAL youth club night specifically for young refugees and asylum seekers new to [Scotland]. This night allowed young people a safe environment to practice conversational English, meet other young people, engage with their community and have fun.”

EAL youth club night provides valuable educational resources for young refugees in the community and focuses on peer learning and collaborative participation. This finding aligns with Smith et al.’s (2021) research that highlights the value of interaction between peers from similar backgrounds, which can guide youth work practice. In a more equal and empowering way, young people are encouraged to integrate into community practices and become subjects

of rights.

This study finds that youth work is vital in supporting the mental health recovery and overall well-being of young refugees. A core theme expressed by practitioners is to create a safe, trusting, youth-centered space where young refugees feel respected and heard. For instance, Respondent 7 emphasized that they usually provide “youth counselling and group work spaces” for BAME young people in the community. Establishing trusting relationships with trusted adults and peers can reduce their sense of isolation and helplessness, making them more willing to express their voices. This youth work environment embodies the main purpose of critical pedagogy, which is to encourage marginalized groups to speak up through dialogue and become actors who actively interact with the world (Freire, 1970).

4.3 Challenges in realizing human rights

Although youth work is vital in promoting the realization of young people’s human rights, structural problems such as insufficient funding, limited capacity, and broader social prejudices remain prominent. These issues are discussed further in this section.

Funding

The most commonly cited and widely acknowledged challenge among participants was the lack of funding. Firstly, participants all agreed that the existing funding support has limited the arrangement of youth work activities and the autonomy of youth workers to a certain extent. Secondly, a lack of “consistent multi-year funding” (Interviewee 1) may become the biggest challenge for youth work. The uncertain source of funds and annual funding applications limit the long-term planning of youth work for specific projects. This instability of funds has weakened the organizational capacity of youth work, resulting in excessive work pressure for practitioners, which is not conducive to the sustainable development of rights-based youth work. Finally, consistent with previous literature, the existing policy design and funding allocation are often more favorable to young people who already have certain social skills and power, while those who are genuinely marginalized risk being excluded (Coussée et al., 2009). As Interviewee 2 indicated and suggested:

“...what would help get the voice of young people heard more is by engaging with charities that support specifically refugees and not just young people in general.”

Since most funding is directed towards generic or open youth work in the community, there is a lack of attention and funding for specific marginalized groups, such as young refugees. This

imbalance hinders the realization of their rights and limits their opportunities to be heard.

Challenges to youth participation

In practice, young people still face various practical and social barriers to effective participation in youth work. Practitioners acknowledged that these factors are sometimes beyond the control of youth work. Factors such as inadequate social accessibility to transport and high transportation costs, and family care obligations have a particularly severe impact on young people, especially young refugees. These barriers may lead to their exclusion from educational spaces designed to promote empowerment and the realization of rights.

Additionally, youth workers recognize that structural issues limit youth participation and their autonomy in supporting and realizing young people's human rights. Respondent 1 noted that "adult-led/initiated structures that mean participation (in particular) is more difficult". This impact is particularly evident among marginalized groups, due to structural constraints such as language barriers, lack of representation, and specific funding, their voices are at risk of being further marginalized.

These findings point to a deeper contradiction in youth work: while centering young people's rights is a core approach, adult-led structures and uneven resource distribution often limit meaningful youth participation. In practice, youth work may unintentionally replicate the social structures it seeks to challenge, particularly when genuine power sharing is not fully realized.

In line with the views of Corney et al. (2022), this study emphasizes that youth workers need to more fully integrate the perspectives and agency of young people into the practice of youth work. In doing so, youth workers can more actively view young people as partners in knowledge construction, working together to resist and change invisible adult-led structures, thereby promoting a more equitable realization of human rights for all young people.

Fragmentation or collaboration

The lack of information sharing and coherence in the establishment of networks and inter-agency collaboration poses further challenges. Participants consistently noted the importance of multi-agency collaboration. Respondent 8 emphasized that the lack of "a central bank of information for activities" is the root cause of confusion and inefficiency in activities. This fragmented model makes it more difficult for youth workers to reach young people, especially marginalized groups.

Additionally, Respondent 8 further emphasized, "All local authorities have a range of different

approaches.” Variations in practices across local governments further exacerbate the unequal distribution of resources and lead to inconsistencies in information dissemination. The lack of information sharing and coherence in cross-organizational collaboration hinders youth work from achieving true youth empowerment. Similar to Block et al. (2014), this study underscores that creating an inclusive environment for marginalized youth groups, especially young refugees, depends on the concerted efforts of schools and supporting agencies. This study argues that such collaboration should not only involve the efforts between institutions but also treat young people as equal partners and active actors. This requires youth work to foster power sharing and drive bottom-up social change through dialogue (Freire, 1970) and joint action with young people.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter argues that youth work plays an important positive role in supporting young people in realizing their human rights, including providing educational resources, promoting individual all-around development, and empowering young people.

Based on the principles of voluntary participation, trust, and equality, youth work can provide a unique educational space for children and young people, so that children’s rights can be recognized, protected, and supported under the guidance of the UNCRC. Youth work can not only effectively cultivate young people’s social skills, self-esteem, and confidence, but also invite young people to participate in the learning of human rights knowledge, cultivate their ability to question the current inequality, and support them to participate in social activities actively.

Moreover, this chapter also emphasizes the need for youth work in supporting the special needs of young refugees. This chapter finds that youth work can effectively identify the obstacles and challenges faced by young refugees through equal dialogue and cross-institutional cooperation, while providing them with opportunities to access resources, fostering autonomy, and enabling meaningful participation in community and social life.

There is, however, a need to acknowledge that youth work efforts are constrained by several factors. This chapter argues that better leveraging the potential of youth work to realize young people’s human rights requires not only long-term funding and efficient cross-organizational information sharing and collaboration, but also a commitment to sharing power with young people and challenging the underlying structural challenges.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the role of youth work in Scotland in realizing the human rights of young people, with a focus on young refugees. Building on the previous discussion, this chapter summarizes and concludes the study, presenting the research questions, methods, and findings. Furthermore, this chapter identifies the study's limitations and offers suggestions for future research.

5.1 Main findings

The research question of this study is: What is the role of youth work in supporting the realization of human rights, including for young refugees? In response to this research question, the study finds that youth work in Scotland plays a distinctive and significant role in promoting the realization of young people's rights.

Practitioners emphasize that the essence of youth work is rooted in voluntary participation, equal dialogue, and a strong commitment to empowerment (Ord, 2016; Rodd & Stewart, 2009; Spence, 2004). Unlike formal education, youth work provides a safe, trusting educational environment and equal partnerships, encouraging young people to freely and confidently explore their identities, develop social skills, and express their voices.

Another key result is that youth work supports meaningful youth participation. Specifically, youth workers encourage young people to express their views and ensure that their views receive feedback and have a real impact. This approach of equal dialogue and fostering participation embodies the principles of Human Rights Education (F. Tibbitts, 2002; F. L. Tibbitts, 2017) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). Meaningful youth participation supports young people in becoming active participants and actors in society, which further safeguards the realization of their rights.

The second research question of this study is in two parts: How do youth workers in Scotland understand their role? What specific practices are employed to promote rights awareness and facilitate social participation among young people, including young refugees? This study has found that youth workers view themselves as trusted adults who serve as educators, equal partners, and advocates for the rights of young people. Through ongoing dialogue, feedback, and the creation of meaningful youth participation, youth workers strive to ensure that the voices of all young people, including those from marginalized groups, are heard and valued.

Moreover, the study finds that youth workers see themselves as a bridge between young refugees and the realization of their human rights. Compared to local peers, young refugees often face more obstacles and challenges, including language barriers, lack of local knowledge, psychological trauma, and social exclusion. Participants emphasized that these barriers limit young refugees' rights to access to education and basic services, which further hinders their ability to independently participate in social activities. To address the specific needs of young refugees, youth workers have implemented a variety of inclusive practices, including organizing community language classes, collaborating with local organizations, and providing counseling services. By providing additional educational opportunities and establishing a safe social environment, young refugees can acquire knowledge and skills with the support of youth workers, which can empower them to face social life independently and promote social change. However, concerning the research question, which asked about the obstacles and challenges youth work encounters in supporting the realization of the rights of children and young people, this study finds that youth work faces significant structural challenges. Youth workers noted that a lack of long-term stable funding support, insufficient targeted financial investment, and poor inter-agency cooperation limit youth work decision-making capabilities and work efficiency. Furthermore, invisible adult-led structures further constrain young people's autonomy and participation. This study argues that youth work should continue to uphold the concept of youth-led practice, leverage the power of young people, and jointly promote policy making and social change through a bottom-up approach.

5.2 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

Due to time constraints and the challenges implicit in reaching marginalized research participants, this study ultimately failed to receive responses from young refugees. This highlights the challenges faced by marginalized groups in expressing their opinions. Future research should allow sufficient time to connect with these groups and gradually build trust with them in a respectful and equal manner. Furthermore, future research targeting young refugees could more carefully and comprehensively design innovative research tools (Nudzor & Finlay, 2017; Pincock & Jones, 2020), fully considering objective factors such as language barriers and traumatic experiences, thereby promoting their participation and voice.

Furthermore, this study was limited to the perspectives of two national youth agency representatives and ten youth workers in Scotland. The limited sample size may prevent the study from generalizing the views of the entire group. This study acknowledges that limited

perspectives and a single source cannot truly reflect the voices of young refugees, and that the study could have enhanced its trustworthiness by adopting multiple perspectives. Future research could conduct more empirical research in Scotland on the role of youth work in supporting the realization of human rights for young refugees, including more data on the perspectives of young refugees themselves, to gain a deeper understanding. Furthermore, future research could conduct a longitudinal study of youth work in Scotland to track how youth work identifies the needs of young people, empowers them, and promotes social change.

5.3 Overall summary

In conclusion, this study argues that youth work has transformative potential to advance the rights of young people in Scotland, including young refugees. Youth work, as a legitimate form of non-formal and informal education, can promote young people's participation in social life through human rights education and dialogue as equal partners. Although youth work still faces challenges, including funding, adult-led structures, and limited collaboration, it remains a valuable platform for young people, including young refugees, to explore identities, develop social skills, and gain autonomy.

However, to ensure the effective operation of youth work, not only are continuous external policy support and financial investment needed, but also the internal principle of always adhering to the youth-led approach. Policymakers and youth workers need to closely consider the voices of young people, advocate for inclusive and equitable approaches that meet the evolving needs of all young people, and empower them to make social changes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Application Form



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Moray House School
of Education

Research and
Knowledge Exchange
Ethics Committee

PGT STUDENT ETHICS APPLICATION FORM 2024/25

Instructions for students: Please complete this form as fully as possible, and make sure that each section has some information added. Your dissertation course organizer and/or supervisor will advise you on the deadline for completion.

PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This form must be completed by all Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students and approved by the Dissertation Supervisor (or through programme-level review) prior to the commencement of the dissertation project. If you have any ethics queries about your study, please contact your supervisor in the first instance, but ethics lead Marlies Kustatscher is also happy to discuss any project-level queries with dissertation supervisor-student teams (Marlies.Kustatscher@ed.ac.uk).

SECTION 1: STUDENT & PROJECT DETAILS

Student Name: Jiaying Wang

Programme: Education (general pathway)

Supervisor(s): Colin Morrison

Institute: Moray House School of Education

Title of Research Project: The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland

Proposed research start date: 01/05/2025

Project Duration: 4 months, May -- August

SECTION 2: ETHICS CATEGORY & GUIDANCE

2.1 Please tick the box which best describes your proposed research study:

Level 1: Your research project is completely desk-based (i.e. does not involve participants) and does not use information about living, identifiable individuals ('data subjects').	()
Level 2: Applies to non-intervention research where you have the consent of the participants and data subjects. This may include, for example, analysis of archived data, classroom observation, or questionnaires on topics that are not generally considered 'sensitive'. This research can involve children or young people, if the likelihood of risk to them is minimal.	(✓)
Level 3: Applies to novel procedures, research without consent, sensitive personal data, or the use of atypical participant groups. Also projects in which ethical issues might require more detailed consideration but are unlikely to prove problematic.	()
Level 4: Applies to research which is potentially problematic in that it may incorporate an inherent physical or emotional risk to researchers or participants; involve covert surveillance or covert data collection; or includes research studies in the NHS involving humans, their tissue and/or data.	()

PGT Dissertation studies should fall within Levels 1-3. Additional guidance on the Levels has been developed to support supervisors and students to identify the ethical risk level of the proposed study, and is available as **Appendix 1** of this document.

For studies within the Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Health Sciences, there exists a separate extended set of Levels, which encompass Ethics and Sponsorship –these are provided in **Appendix 2** and are recommended for use for PGT dissertations in the Institute for Sport, Physical Education and Health Sciences.

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
Please specify which ethical guidelines have been/will be followed (e.g., BPS, BASES, BERA, British Sign Language).	BERA
Does the project require the approval of any other institution and/or ethics committee? If YES, give details and indicate the status of the application at each other institute or ethics committee (i.e. submitted, approved, deferred, rejected)	No

SECTION 3: DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH – Please provide a brief description (no more than 500 words) of your research. This should include, as appropriate, the aims and objectives of the study, the research question and/or hypothesis to be investigated, details of the sample, and data collection methods.

The aims of the study

This research explores the role of youth work in realizing the human rights of young people, with a particular focus on young refugees in Scotland. The study aims to understand how youth workers understand and practice human rights promotion, how young refugees experience and perceive youth work, and what opportunities or challenges exist in this process.

The research question

- How do youth workers in Scotland understand their role in supporting the realization of human rights, including for young refugees?
- What methods do youth workers use to promote rights awareness and social participation for young people, including young refugees?
- How do refugee youth view the role of youth work in helping them realize their human rights?
- How does youth work follow the National Youth Work Strategy (2020-2025) in realizing the human rights of young people, especially young refugees, or what obstacles and challenges does it encounter?

Details of the sample

Supported by YouthLink Scotland, the research aims to recruit 3 representatives of relevant youth work agencies, 10 youth workers, and 10 young refugees (aged 16-18 years).

Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews with 3 representatives of relevant youth work agencies. The interviews will explore their understanding of the role of youth work in realizing human rights, with a particular focus on realizing the human rights of young refugees.

An online survey of 10 youth workers will be conducted to understand their daily youth work practices, their understanding of realizing human rights, and how they can help young people, especially refugee youth, realize their human rights. If necessary, follow-up questions will be asked to understand their in-depth responses, which may be done by email.

An online survey of 10 young refugees aged 16 to 18 years, with the support of YouthLink staff and youth workers, will be conducted to explore their awareness of human rights and the impact of youth work on their experiences. To ensure confidence in the process and to maximize the quality of data, it will be suggested that the youth worker known to the young person supports completion. If follow-up questions are required, information will be collected from young refugees through youth workers.

SECTION 4: PARTICIPANTS

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
How many participants is it hoped to include in the research?	23
What criteria will be used in deciding on the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the study?	<p>3 representatives of national or regional youth work agencies.</p> <p>10 youth workers, recruited through the national/regional agencies.</p> <p>10 young people who will be: known to youth work agencies; aged 16 – 18 years old; are or have been refugees.</p>
How will the sample be recruited?	With the support of YouthLink Scotland
<p>Will participants receive any financial or other material benefits because of participation?</p> <p>If YES, what benefits will be offered to participants and why?</p>	No
<p>Are any participants likely to experience difficulties in participating fully in the study? (e.g. due to age, knowledge of English language, physical ability, additional support needs etc.)</p> <p>If YES, please outline the nature of this issue, and explain how participants will be supported to participate.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Young refugees may face difficulties because of the knowledge of the English language.</p> <p>When they are completing online survey, they will be supported by a youth worker.</p>

SECTION 5: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS/RESEARCHER

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
<p>a. Could the research induce any psychological stress or discomfort in the participants?</p> <p>If YES, state the nature of the risk and what measures will be taken to deal with such problems.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Young refugees may encounter discomfort in completing the online survey when they recall their uneasy lives.</p> <p>A youth worker can support them.</p>
<p>b. Does the research require any physically invasive or potentially physically harmful procedures?</p> <p>If YES, give details and outline procedures to be put in place to deal with potential problems.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>c. Does the research involve the investigation of any illegal behaviours?</p> <p>If YES, give details.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>d. Is it possible that this research will lead to the disclosure of information about child abuse or neglect?</p> <p>If YES, indicate the likelihood of such disclosure and your proposed response to this. If there is a real risk of such disclosure triggering an obligation to make a report to Police, Social Work or other authorities, a warning to this effect must be included in the Information and Consent documents.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>e. Is there any purpose to which the research findings could be put that could adversely affect participants?</p> <p>If YES, describe the potential risk for participants of this use of the data. Outline any steps that will be taken to protect participants.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>f. Could this research adversely affect participants in any other way?</p> <p>If YES, give details and outline procedures to be put in place to deal with such problems</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>g. Could this research adversely affect members of particular groups of people?</p> <p>If YES, describe these possible adverse effects and the protections to be put in place against them.</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>h. Is this research expected to benefit the participants, directly or indirectly? If YES, give details.</p>	<p>Yes This research may help youth workers, relevant agencies, and young refugees reflect on their experiences and strengthen awareness of human rights, which could improve youth work in the future and benefit participants indirectly.</p>
<p>i. Will the true purpose of the research be concealed from the participants? If YES, explain what information will be concealed and why. Will participants be debriefed at the conclusion of the study? If not, why not?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>j. At any stage in this research could researchers' safety be compromised or could the research induce emotional distress in the researchers? If YES, to either or both, give details and outline procedures to be out in place to deal with potential problems.</p>	<p>No</p>

SECTION 6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
<p>a. Will written consent be obtained from participants? If YES, please also submit to your supervisor a copy of your information sheet and consent forms (covering project details, confidentiality, freedom to withdraw at any stage of the project). If NO, please explain why not. Please note with regards to consent: It would normally be expected that child and parental consent be sought where participants are aged under 18. If consent cannot or should not be sought for some reason, a clear case and rationale for this must be made below.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Administrative consent may be deemed sufficient for studies where the data collection involves aggregated (not individual) statistical information and where the collection of data presents:</p> <p>i. no invasion of privacy;</p> <p>ii. no potential social or emotional risks:</p>	

<p>and for studies which focus on the development and evaluation of curriculum materials, resources, guidelines, test items, or programme evaluations rather than the study, observation, and evaluation of individuals.</p> <p>b. Will administrative consent (eg. from a headteacher) be obtained in lieu of participants' consent?</p> <p>If YES, explain why individual consent is not considered necessary</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>c. Might any potential participants find it difficult to provide/withhold ongoing informed consent? (e.g. due to age, knowledge of English language, additional support needs, student/professional/dependent relationship with the researcher etc.)</p> <p>If YES, please outline the nature of this issue, and explain how participants will be supported during the ongoing consent process. If NO, give reasons.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Some young refugees may have limited English proficiency or feel pressure due to their relationship with youth workers assisting them. To support ongoing consent, all information will be provided in clear, simple language.</p> <p>Participants will be reminded that participation is voluntary, they can withdraw at any time without any consequences.</p> <p>The staff of YouthLink or a youth worker will provide additional support if needed.</p>

SECTION 7: RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN/ 'VULNERABLE' ADULTS

Complete this section **only** if your research involves minors, (i.e. individuals who are less than 18 years) or adults considered 'vulnerable'.

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
<p>All researchers who plan to work directly with children and vulnerable adults should obtain application forms from the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG Scheme) See http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/apply</p> <p>a. Have you obtained the necessary, up to date Disclosure Scotland Clearance?</p> <p>If no, please explain why not.</p>	<p>No. There will be no contact with participants who require this clearance.</p>
<p>b. In the case of minors participating in the research on an individual basis, will the consent or assent of parents be obtained?</p> <p>If YES, explain how this consent or assent will be obtained. If NO, give reasons.</p>	<p>No. There are no children under the age of 16 participating.</p>
<p>c. Will the consent or assent (at least verbal) of minors participating in the research on an individual basis be obtained?</p> <p>If YES, what arrangements will be made? If</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Consent will be obtained from each young refugee individually. Information about the study will be provided in clear, simple language. Participants will be informed that</p>

<p>NO, give reasons.</p>	<p>their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without consequences.</p> <p>Support from a trusted youth worker will be available to help if needed.</p>
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SECTION 8: CONFIDENTIALITY AND HANDLING OF DATA

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
<p>a. How will you collect the data you need for your project?</p> <p>E.g. estimate how long interviews might take, how many survey questions you might use, etc.</p>	<p>3 interviews of 45 minutes.</p> <p>Youth workers -- mostly open-ended questions: questionnaires of approximately 8 questions.</p> <p>Young people -- mostly open-ended questions: questionnaires of approximately 6 questions</p>
<p>b. Will the research require the collection of personal information from e.g. universities, schools, employers, or other agencies about individuals without their direct consent?</p> <p>If YES, state what information will be sought and why written consent for access to this information will not be obtained from the participants themselves.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>c. Will any part of the research involving participants be audio/film/video taped or recorded using any other electronic medium?</p> <p>If YES, what medium is to be used and how will the recordings be used?</p> <p>It is recommended that you use MS Teams for conducting and recording research interviews.</p> <p>When using MS Teams, you must ensure that good data management and proper security practices are adhered to. In particular, you must prevent unauthorized discovery, access, and download of recordings and transcriptions in MS Teams.</p> <p>If you decide to use a different platform or social media app for conducting your interviews, you must not use any built-in recording functionality or transcription which the platform or app may have.</p> <p>To ensure compliance with Data Protection Law and Policy as well as your ethical obligations, you are advised, instead, to use OBS Studio for recording interviews on platforms other than MS Teams.</p> <p>OBS Studio can be downloaded from the University's Software Centre.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>During the interviews with the representatives of youth work agencies, I will use MS Teams to record their answers.</p>
<p>d. What other types of data will you collect for your project? (Put a cross next to all those that are relevant).</p> <p>It is important to identify all the different types of data that you intend to collect to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate proper safeguards are in place; • You have sufficient and appropriate storage for your data; • You have considered long-term sustainability of your data, where appropriate. <p>In addition to the data that will underpin your study – e.g. survey data or interviews – keep in mind that you may also</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey data X • Interview recordings X • Additional contemporaneous notes X

<p>have contact details for your participants. You must ensure that <u>all</u> personal/sensitive data is securely stored and appropriate safeguards are in place.</p>	
<p>e. Who will have access to the raw data?</p> <p>Access to Personal Data should always be restricted to named individuals, e.g. you and your supervisor(s).</p>	<p>Only I and my supervisor.</p>
<p>f. How will you ensure confidentiality of data, including the identity of participants?</p> <p>You will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent unauthorized access, e.g. by encrypting your data; • Control access for anyone who needs it, e.g. by sharing your data on a secure platform; • De-identify data (anonymise, pseudonymise, etc.) at the earliest possible opportunity, e.g. when transcribing your interviews; • Securely dispose of your data (don't keep personal/sensitive data for longer than you need it); • Ensuring that you always comply with UK GDPR and UoE Data Protection Policy. 	<p>Encrypting my data; Sharing my data on a secure platform; Anonymise the data when transcribing the interviews; Keep the personal data within the duration of the research; Enduring that I always comply with UK GDPR and UoE data Protection Policy.</p>
<p>g. Is any of your data supplied by a 3rd party, e.g. NHS, Local Government?</p> <p>If Yes, how will you deal with Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and licensing issues?</p> <p>Copyright and other IPR may apply even if data is freely available on the internet. You should always check licensing and other access/re-use conditions before using someone else's data and ensure that you comply with them.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>h. How will you organize your data?</p> <p>Organizing your data is key to keeping it secure.</p> <p>You will need to know what you have and where it is. This requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A file structure (e.g. nested folders, clearly labelled); • A file-naming convention that describes the file contents. <p>For example: 20221021_I_P02.docx.</p> <p>This breaks down as...</p> <p>data collection date_Data Type (Interview)_Participant Number (participant 02),</p> <p>... making it easy to see when the file was created, what kind of data it contains, and who was involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Version control (e.g. adding V1, V2, V3, etc. to file names to indicate major changes and V1.1, V1.2, etc. for minor changes). <p>To provide your data with context and ensure it can always be accessed, understood, and analysed, you should create some basic metadata and documentation. Metadata could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the data is; • How, where, and when the data was created; 	<p>I will organize the data in these ways:</p> <p>A file structure (e.g. nested folders, clearly labelled);</p> <p>A file-naming convention that describes the file contents.</p> <p>For example: 20221021_I_P02.docx.</p> <p>This breaks down as...</p> <p>data collection date_Data Type (Interview)_Participant Number (participant 02),</p> <p>... making it easy to see when the file was created, what kind of data it contains, and who was involved.</p> <p>Version control (e.g. adding V1, V2, V3, etc. to file names to indicate major changes and V1.1, V1.2, etc. for minor changes).</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools/software needed to access the data; • Field codes or abbreviations used; • Documentation could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plain text ReadMe file containing the above information; • A de-identification plan or log; • Consent forms and participation information sheets. 	
<p>i. Where will you store your data during your project?</p> <p>Personal and/or sensitive data must be stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.</p> <p>Do not use laptops, USB drives, or other portable storage devices as these are easily lost or damaged.</p> <p>Do not use cloud-based solutions other than those provided by the University. When using, e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox, or personal OneDrive accounts, you do not know who has access to your data or whether it is being stored within the UK GDPR legal jurisdiction. Therefore, these services do not comply with UK GDPR or University Data Protection Policy and their use could result in a Data Breach.</p> <p>You should always store your data on one of the University's Central Storage Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DataStore Networked Storage <p>DataStore is backed up in multiple locations, secure, and resilient. If you think you will need more than the standard 20gb allocation, please ask your supervisor to contact IS support and request it.</p> <p>Please Note: You <u>must</u> encrypt any personal or sensitive data that you store on DataStore.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OneDrive for Business <p>OneDrive is automatically backed up and secure. Data that is stored on OneDrive is encrypted by default. However, it they will <u>not</u> be encrypted if moved to another location, such as your desktop.</p>	<p>OneDrive for Business</p>
<p>j. Do you wish to retain any of your research data after your project is completed?</p> <p>If Yes, how and where will the data be stored? How long will you keep it?</p> <p>If No, how will ensure that it is securely deleted/disposed of?</p> <p>If your data is to be used for future publication, you should discuss continued storage and appropriate safeguards with your supervisor.</p> <p>You must <u>not</u> retain any personal or sensitive data for longer than is necessary to fulfill the purpose for which it was collected, as specified in your Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms. Once that purpose is fulfilled, the data should be securely deleted.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Currently, the plan is to delete all data after receiving a formal mark.</p> <p>If there is any consideration of future possible publication, this will be discussed with my supervisor.</p>
<p>k. How do you intend for the results of the</p>	

<p>research to be used?</p> <p>Will feedback of findings be given to participants?</p> <p>If yes, how and when will this feedback be provided.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>A summary of findings will be shared with participating youth workers and young people.</p> <p>There will be a discussion with the supporting NGO regarding the publication of a summary or full dissertation.</p> <p>There will be a negotiation about the writing/publication of a blog reporting on the findings.</p>
<p>l. Does your research concern groups which may be construed as terrorist or extremist?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>m. Will your research involve accessing material that could be viewed as promoting terrorism or extremism?</p> <p>If you answer yes to either questions g or h then please contact MHSE RKE Office MHSES-RKEI@ed.ac.uk for guidance.</p>	<p>No</p>

The following questions have been added due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
<p>a. What information about participants will you collect/use? For example:</p> <p>Audio recording</p> <p>Video recording</p> <p>Email addresses</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Audio recording (youth worker interviews)</p> <p>Email address</p>
<p>b. Will you collect or use NHS data?</p> <p>If you are collecting or using NHS data you may require sponsorship and/or Caldicott Approval - Please contact the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences Research Governance office, Cahss.res.ethics@ed.ac.uk, for advice.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>c. Will the information include special categories of personal data (health data, data relating to race or ethnicity, to political opinions or religious beliefs, trade union membership, criminal convictions, sexual orientations, genetic data and biometric data)?</p> <p>If you are collecting special categories of personal data, then to be GDPR compliant you need to ensure additional safeguards are integrated and explicitly demonstrate how</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>This research may involve the collection of sensitive personal data, such as race or ethnicity, and refugee status.</p> <p>Only the minimum necessary data will be gathered, and all personal information will be anonymized. The data will be stored securely.</p>

<p>planned research is in the public interest. Explain what safeguards e.g. technical or organisational you have in place, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the minimisation principle – use only the absolute minimum of personal data required for your purpose • Anonymising personal data if you can • If you cannot anonymise, wherever possible, pseudonymise all personal data • Storing the data securely 											
<p>d. Please indicate how your research is in the public interest (put a cross next to all that are relevant).</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Proposed research is proportionate</td> <td>(X)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposed research is subject to a governance framework</td> <td>(X)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposed research has undergone peer review from a funder</td> <td>()</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposed research is subject to Research Ethics Committee approval</td> <td>(X)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposed research may have Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG) recommendation for support in England and Wales or support by the Public Benefit and Privacy Panel (PBPP) for Health and Social Care in Scotland</td> <td>()</td> </tr> </table>	Proposed research is proportionate	(X)	Proposed research is subject to a governance framework	(X)	Proposed research has undergone peer review from a funder	()	Proposed research is subject to Research Ethics Committee approval	(X)	Proposed research may have Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG) recommendation for support in England and Wales or support by the Public Benefit and Privacy Panel (PBPP) for Health and Social Care in Scotland	()
Proposed research is proportionate	(X)										
Proposed research is subject to a governance framework	(X)										
Proposed research has undergone peer review from a funder	()										
Proposed research is subject to Research Ethics Committee approval	(X)										
Proposed research may have Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG) recommendation for support in England and Wales or support by the Public Benefit and Privacy Panel (PBPP) for Health and Social Care in Scotland	()										

It is essential that you identify and list all risks to the privacy of research participants. You will then need to consider the likelihood of the risks actually manifesting and the severity of harm if the risks actually manifest.

For EACH of the five risks listed you must indicate how likely it is that it will occur and how severe any harm would be if this did happen. Put a **tick in the most appropriate column for Likelihood of Manifesting AND Severity of Harm for each of the five risks.**

Risk	Likelihood of manifesting			Severity of Harm		
	Remote	Possible	Probable	Minimal	Significant	Severe
1. Identifiable due to data linkage	(✓)	()	()	(✓)	()	()
2. Identifiable due to low participant numbers	()	(✓)	()	()	(✓)	()
3. Identifiable due to geographical location	(✓)	()	()	(✓)	()	()
4. Identifiable due to transfer of data	(✓)	()	()	(✓)	()	()
5. Identifiable due to access of data	(✓)	()	()	(✓)	()	()

QUESTION	PLEASE ADD YOUR RESPONSE IN THIS COLUMN
<p>e. Please identify measures you could take to reduce or eliminate risks identified as possible/significant or probable/severe. Also please list any examples of risk not itemised in above table in section 8.13</p>	
<p>f. Will information containing personal, identifiable data be transferred to, shared with, supported by, or otherwise available to third parties outside the University? Please explain why this necessary and how the transfer of the information will be made secure. If the third party is based outside the University refer to University of Edinburgh Guidance on data protection.</p>	No
<p>g. Other than the use by third parties under section f., will the data be used, accessed or stored away from University premises? Describe the arrangements you have put in place to safeguard the data from accidental or deliberate access, amendment or deletion when it is not on University premises, including when it is in transit, and (where applicable) it is transferred outside the European Economic Area.</p>	No

Please note: Research data can be stored indefinitely as long as it is stored securely. For storage guidance please refer to <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/research-support/research-data-service/after>

SECTION 9: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The University has a [‘Policy on the Conflict of Interest’](#). Regarding research, the policy states that a conflict of interest would arise in cases where an employee of the University might be

“compromising research objectivity or independence in return for financial or non-financial benefit for him/herself or for a relative or friend.”

The policy also states that the responsibility for avoiding a conflict of interest, in the first instance, lies with the individual, but that potential conflicts of interest should always be disclosed, normally to the line manager or Head of Department. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest or to cease involvement until the conflict has been resolved may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could result in dismissal.

<p>a. Does your research involve a conflict of interest as outlined above?</p> <p>If YES, give details.</p>	<p>No</p>
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SECTION 10: SIGNATURES (These can be electronic)

	Students Signature: Jiaying Wang		Date: 29/04/2025
	Supervisor Signature: Colin Morrison		Date: 30.04.25

N.B. Have you attached copies of participant information sheet(s) and consent sheet(s) if appropriate? Have you checked through your application to ensure that you have answered all relevant questions?

APPENDIX 1: EXTENDED LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (NON-SPORTS RESEARCH)

This document provides further detail on the four Ethics Levels which are summarised in the PGT Ethics form. The extended ethics levels are intended to support students and supervisors to assess the level of ethical complexity or risk of harm to participants and/or researchers involved in a proposed PGT dissertation project, to reflect upon these, and to take relevant steps to avoid or minimise these. As noted on the Ethics form, the vast majority of PGT dissertation projects will fall within Ethics Levels 1-3. If you have any questions in relation to the ethics of your research project that you would like support with, please liaise with your supervisor in the first instance. However, PGT Director Pete Evans and Research Ethics Director Marlies Kustatscher are very willing to discuss and support with any dissertation project queries.

Extended Level descriptors

Level 1: Your research project is completely desk-based (i.e. does not involve participants) and does not use information about living, identifiable individuals ('data subjects'). Such research may involve:

- Conceptual and philosophical research including theory synthesis, critique and adaptation or topic typology/ mapping studies.
- Systematic and other forms of literature review.
- Policy analysis relying on published policy documents and statements.
- Archival research using information on deceased individuals and where the research is not reasonably expected to lead to any impact on living individuals.

Level 2: applies to research that carries low and foreseeable risks (to either the participants, researcher, or third parties); where data processes do not pose a challenge to individual data security; and there is no (reasonably perceived) conflict of interest. Such research may involve:

- Secondary analysis of existing quantitative data sources where there is no risk of linking to individual-level or sensitive data
- Secondary analysis of qualitative data where there is no risk of linking to individuals (e.g. where data has been previously anonymised and archived)
- Unobtrusive observation of public places, where research does not include observation (or audio/visual recording) of identifiable individuals or spaces, and where the observation itself does not cause additional risk to the researcher
- Social media analysis or internet-mediated research where there is a clearly established strategy in the literature for foreseeing risks
- Collection of qualitative and/ or quantitative data with children or adults on topics that are not considered sensitive to that population (please note that you should also seek parental permission for children under 16 in Scotland and should follow the legislative requirements in other jurisdictions).

Level 3: applies to research that carries moderate reasonably foreseeable risks (to the participants, researcher, or third parties); where data processes do not pose (or pose a mitigatable) challenge to individual data security; and there is no (reasonably perceived) conflict of interest. Such research may involve:

- Research on topics that are considered sensitive to the participant group, where there

- are established techniques for mitigating this sensitivity
- Small participant pools or conditions (e.g. restricted sub-professional categories) where full anonymisation may not be practically possible, and the supervisor/student have discussed the limitation of this and how to make that information evident to participants. This is particularly relevant for dissertation studies based on research within a single organisation, eg, placement-based dissertations.
 - Quantitative data set (i.e. achieved through an administrative consent process) where there is a reasonable likelihood that the research could lead to the re-linking of data to an identifiable individual but where individual data will not be presented in publication
 - Interventionist research practices, including (but not limited to) experimental research designs where there is a low risk of harm to participants
 - Social media analysis or internet-mediated research where there is no clearly established strategy in the literature for foreseeing risks and where research ethics are contested.

Level 4: research at this level involves activities where there are inherent risks to the physical and/or mental health and well-being. Research studies identified at Level 4 and **not** covered by approved programme specific process such as SPEHS common testing protocols for sport cannot proceed. In such instances, supervisors are encouraged to contact the programme Dissertation Co-ordinator to discuss ways in which the study can be re-scoped to a Level 3 study (in exceptional circumstances a Level 4 study may be allowed depending on the specific research training and professional experience of the student).

November 2023

APPENDIX 2: EXTENDED LEVELS (SPORTS-RELATED RESEARCH)

ISPEHS Ethics and Sponsorship Process – Institute for Sport, Physical Education and Health Sciences

The process below outlines the requirements for Student Projects (Dissertations, Mini-projects, Research Attachments) to have complied with MHSES Ethics and CAHSS Research Governance guidelines. Research Governance request that all Student Research Projects follow this process.

Student projects should follow this process in order to be covered by University of Edinburgh indemnity and insurance.

In summary, Course Teams assess whether the proposed project is MHSES Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 and document these decisions in provided Excel template.

Level 1-3 Projects proceed to Institute Level Risk Assessment.

Level 4 Projects enter a sequential College Sponsorship and School Ethics Review process. The aim is to complete this process in 2-4 weeks. Once approved Institute Level Risk Assessment takes place.

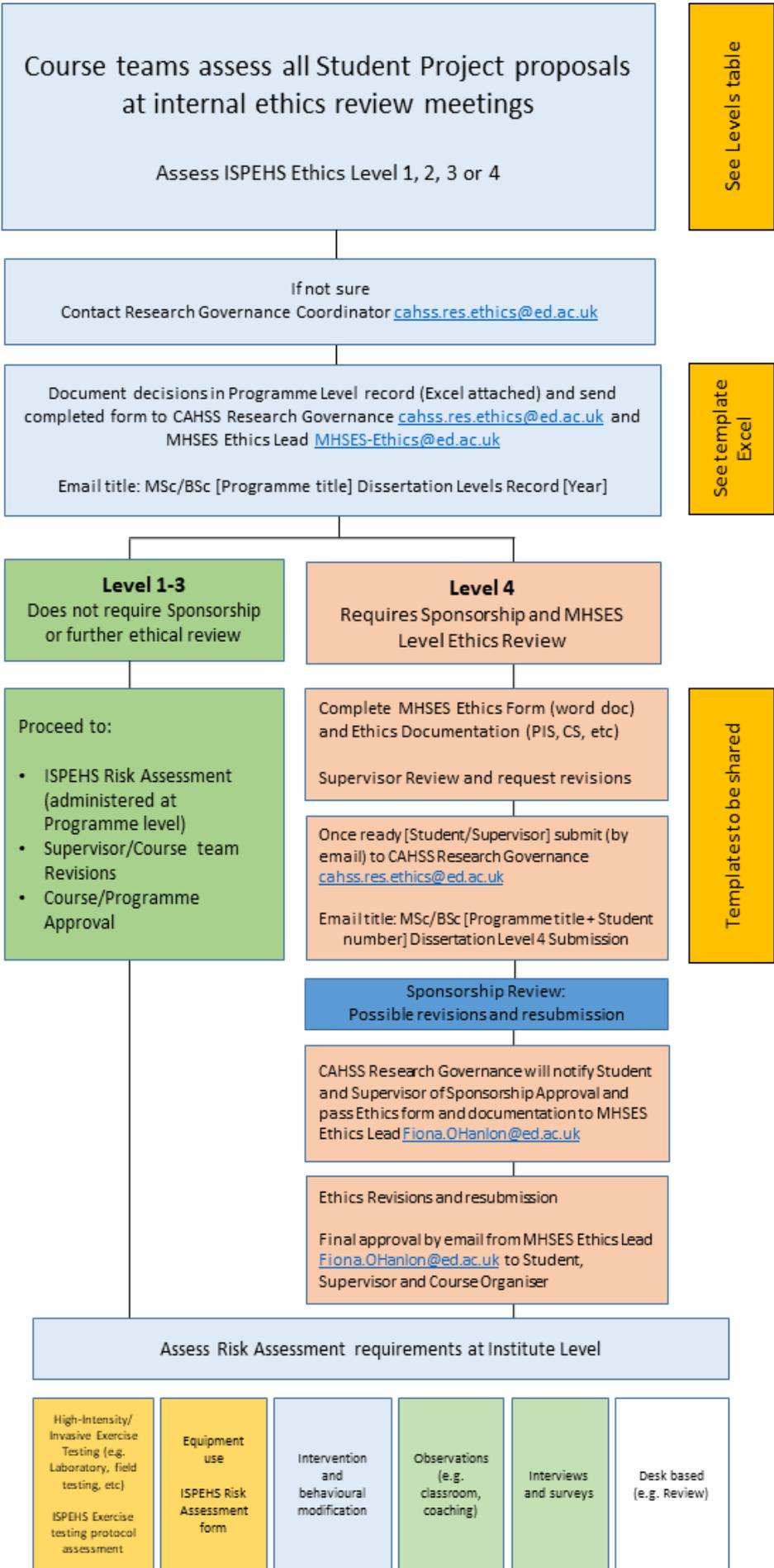
The process is outlined in the flow-chart below.

Updated guidance on the MHSES Levels is provided in table 1 below.

It is anticipated that <10% of UG projects and <20% of PG Projects would be classified as Level 4. This will be reviewed after 1 year.

Sponsorship and Ethics

Risk assessment



See Levels table

See template Excel

Templates to be shared

Table 1. Ethics and Governance Levels

	Levels Descriptor	Specific considerations	Outcome	Action
Level 1	Desk-based research. Does not involve conducting data collection from participants (data may already be reported in previous research). Does not use information about living, identifiable individuals. Systematic reviews, Theoretical research, Modelling research, Document analysis.		Programme level review sufficient.	Document outcome. Provide approval number. Conduct Risk Assessment.
Level 2	Applies to non-intervention research with the consent of the participants. For example, analysis of archived data, classroom observation, or questionnaires on topics that are not generally considered 'sensitive'. This research can involve children or young people, if the likelihood of risk to them is minimal. Secondary analysis of anonymous data. Survey, questionnaire or interviews outwith health or social care topics. Observation of routine/habitual behaviour. Direct observation with consent (e.g. classroom, playground).		Programme level review sufficient.	Document outcome. Provide approval number. Conduct Risk Assessment.
Level 3	Applies to novel procedures, interventions, research without consent, use of anonymous sensitive personal data, or the use of atypical participant groups. Projects in which ethical issues might require more detailed consideration but are unlikely to prove problematic. Secondary analysis of identifiable data (not health or social care related). Survey, questionnaire or interviews about health or social care behaviours and non-sensitive or non-clinical outcomes (e.g. diet, mood or well-being). Direct observation without consent (e.g. playground, parks, sports matches, public spaces) Interventions on non-sensitive or non-clinical outcomes in healthy populations Laboratory testing with sub-maximal exertion in healthy populations	For high-intensity/invasive testing procedures follow ISPEHS procedures to assess if Level 3 or 4. Any involving blood/tissue samples will be Level 4. Non-clinical mental well-being outcomes	Programme level review likely sufficient.	Document outcome. Provide approval number when confirmed. Email CAHSS research ethics (Cahss.res.ethics@ed.ac.uk) if not sure. Conduct Risk Assessment.
Level 4	Applies to research which is potentially problematic in that it may incorporate an inherent physical or emotional risk to researchers or participants; involve covert surveillance or covert data collection; or includes research studies in the NHS involving humans (patients and staff), their tissue and/or data. Secondary analysis of identifiable data (health or social care related). Survey, questionnaire or interviews about health or social care behaviours and sensitive or clinical outcomes (e.g. disordered eating or clinical depression) Interventions on sensitive or clinical outcomes or in non-healthy/atypical populations Investigation of (or possibility of disclosure about) any sensitive topic e.g. suicidal thoughts, physical or mental abuse, etc	Any protocol (laboratory or other) involving collection of bloods/tissues. Participants who are: Defined by medical condition (physical or mental) - Pregnant women - Under 5 years - Outside UK	MHSES Ethics Review and CAHSS Sponsorship Review required	Document escalation. Conduct Risk Assessment. Revise ethics application with Supervisor Email application (Ethics form + documentation) to Dr Marlies Kustatscher Marlies.Kustatscher@ed.ac.uk for review (estimated 2-4 weeks)

Notes:

1. Health in this context taken to mean any topic related to physical, social or mental health or well-being such as exercise, diet, injury, concussion, sport for development, fitness tracking, etc.
2. Social care in this context taken to mean within social care systems e.g. in nursing homes, community centres, homeless populations, working with Marie Curie staff, etc.
3. Ethics form refers to a standard ISPEHS Template we will develop (based on existing forms)
4. Ethics documentation refers to (for example) Participant information Sheet, Consent Form, Study outline/ethics application/protocol, adverts/flyers, outline of interview questions/questionnaires, etc.

Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Form



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Moray House School of Education and Sport

Participant Research Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in research on *The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People -- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland*. Jiaying Wang at the University of Edinburgh is leading this research as part of her MSc Education studies. Before you decide to take part, you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People -- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland

What is the research about?

Youth work is increasingly regarded as a significant way to promote social participation among young people. In this study, I aim to understand how youth work, as a form of informal education, supports young people in realizing their human rights. Given the Scottish Government's growing emphasis on supporting the rights and inclusion of young refugees, this research will particularly focus on this group. This research is also interested in how youth workers and young refugees understand and experience the roles of youth work in realizing human rights, and what challenges young people may face in realizing rights awareness and inclusion.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are invited to participate in this study because you are a representative of a relevant youth work agency.

Do I need to take part?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you wish to withdraw, you can do so at any time without providing any reason. Additionally, if you choose to withdraw, you will have the option to request that any data already collected from you be deleted.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part, then you will be invited to an interview with the researcher. This interview will be conducted online (e.g. via Microsoft Teams) at a time that is convenient to you. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your perspectives on youth work, with a particular focus on the role of youth work in supporting the realization of human rights, especially for

young refugees. With your permission, the interview will be recorded, but you can choose to keep your camera off if you wish. We anticipate that it will last around 45 minutes.

What will happen to the information collected?

The interview recordings will be transcribed into text and anonymised (i.e. any identifying information would be removed). After transcription, the recordings will be destroyed. The transcriptions will be stored in a password-protected folder on secure University of Edinburgh servers, and any personal information that we have collected from you (e.g. name, email address) will be stored in a separate password-protected folder. All data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Law.

The data will be used for the completion of an MSc dissertation, and potentially in future research activities (e.g. publication, presentations). In any presentation of the results, your data will be referred to by a pseudonym rather than by your name, and I will ensure that there are no details included that could potentially identify you.

If the data is not required for future research activities, I will store the data for 40 days after the final exam board. The data will then be destroyed. If the findings are deemed to be appropriate for future research activities, then the anonymised data and consent forms will be retained for up to five years.

What are the potential risks?

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, we think that there is a small risk that you may feel uncomfortable sharing views or be afraid that your identity might be inferred. These risks will be managed by ensuring strict confidentiality, anonymising data at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, your participation is voluntary, and you can skip any questions that you don't want to answer.

What are the potential benefits?

You may benefit indirectly from reflecting on your professional experiences and perspectives. Moreover, your participation may help improve youth work in Scotland and better enable young people to realize their human rights.

Please feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions: JIAYING WANG [s2624155@ed.ac.uk]. There will also be an opportunity at the start of your interview to ask any further questions that you may have about the research.

Contact information

If you have any questions about the research, my contact details are: JIAYING WANG [s2624155@ed.ac.uk] and my supervisor's contact details are: COLIN MORRISON [colin.morrison@ed.ac.uk]

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, please contact: OMAR KAISSI [omar.kaissi@ed.ac.uk]

For general information about how we use your data, please go to:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research>

Please now complete the Participant Consent Form to indicate whether you will or will not be willing to participate in the study.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
**Moray House School of
Education and Sport**

Participant Consent Form

Study Title: *The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People – with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland*

Please Initial
Box

1 I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study.

2 I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction.

3 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

4 I understand that my personal data and my anonymised data will be stored as detailed in the information sheet.

5 I understand that my anonymised data will be used in MSc dissertation thesis and may be used in future academic publications or presentations.

6 I agree to take part in this study.

Name of person giving consent: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name of person taking consent: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____



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Participant Research Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in research on *The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People -- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland*. Jiaying Wang at the University of Edinburgh is leading this research as part of her MSc Education studies. Before you decide to take part, you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People -- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland

What is the research about?

Youth work is increasingly regarded as a significant way to promote social participation among young people. In this study, I aim to understand how youth work, as a form of informal education, supports young people in realizing their human rights. Given the Scottish Government's growing emphasis on supporting the rights and inclusion of young refugees, this research will particularly focus on this group. This research is also interested in how youth workers and young refugees understand and experience the roles of youth work in realizing human rights, and what challenges young people may face in realizing rights awareness and inclusion.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are invited to participate in this study because you are a youth worker from a relevant youth work agency.

Do I need to take part?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you wish to withdraw, you can do so at any time without providing any reason. Additionally, if you choose to withdraw, you will have the option to request that any data already collected from you be deleted.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part, then you will be invited to complete an online survey. This survey will be conducted online (e.g. via Microsoft Forms) at a time that is convenient to you. The survey will ask a series of questions about your experiences in youth work, focusing on your understanding of the role of youth workers in promoting human rights and supporting young people, particularly young refugees, in realizing their rights. If necessary, follow-up questions might be asked via email to better understand your responses.

What will happen to the information collected?

The responses to the online survey will be kept anonymous. The responses will be stored in a password-protected folder on secure University of Edinburgh servers, and any personal information

that we have collected from you (e.g. name, email address) will be stored in a separate password-protected folder. All data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Law.

The data will be used for the completion of an MSc dissertation, and potentially in future research activities (e.g. publication, presentations). In any presentation of the results, your data will be referred to by a pseudonym rather than by your name, and I will ensure that there are no details included that could potentially identify you.

If the data is not required for future research activities, I will store the data until 40 days after the final exam board. The data will then be destroyed. If the findings are deemed to be appropriate for future research activities, then the anonymised data and consent forms will be retained for up to five years.

What are the potential risks?

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, we think that there is a small risk that you may feel uncomfortable sharing views or be afraid that your identity might be inferred. These risks will be managed by ensuring strict confidentiality, anonymising data at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, your participation is voluntary, and you can skip any questions that you don't want to answer.

What are the potential benefits?

You may benefit indirectly from reflecting on your professional experiences and perspectives. Moreover, your participation may help improve youth work in Scotland and better enable young people to realize their human rights.

Please feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions: JIAYING WANG [s2624155@ed.ac.uk]. There will also be an opportunity at the start of your interview to ask any further questions that you may have about the research.

Contact information

If you have any questions about the research, my contact details are: JIAYING WANG [s2624155@ed.ac.uk] and my supervisor's contact details are: COLIN MORRISON [colin.morrison@ed.ac.uk]

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, please contact: OMAR KAISSI [omar.kaissi@ed.ac.uk]

For general information about how we use your data, please go to:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research>

Please now complete the Participant Consent Form to indicate whether you will or will not be willing to participate in the study.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
**Moray House School of
Education and Sport**

Participant Consent Form

Study Title: *The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People – with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland*

Please Initial
Box

1 I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study.

2 I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction.

3 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

4 I understand that my personal data and my anonymised data will be stored as detailed in the information sheet.

5 I understand that my anonymised data will be used in MSc dissertation thesis and may be used in future academic publications or presentations.

6 I agree to take part in this study.

Name of person giving consent: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name of person taking consent: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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Participant Research Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in research on *The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People -- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland*. Jiaying Wang at the University of Edinburgh is leading this research as part of her MSc Education studies. Before you decide to take part, you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People -- with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland

What is the research about?

Youth work is increasingly regarded as a significant way to promote social participation among young people. In this study, I aim to understand how youth work, as a form of informal education, supports young people in realizing their human rights. Given the Scottish Government's growing emphasis on supporting the rights and inclusion of young refugees, this research will particularly focus on this group. This research is also interested in how youth workers and young refugees understand and experience the roles of youth work in realizing human rights, and what challenges young people may face in realizing rights awareness and inclusion.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a young person who is known to youth work agencies, aged between 16 and 18 years old, and are or have been a refugee.

Do I need to take part?

Taking part in this study is your choice. If you decide to stop taking part in this study, you can do that at any time and you don't need to give any reason. If you quit the study, you can also ask us to delete any information that we have already collected from you.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part, then you will be invited to complete an online survey. This survey will be conducted online (for example, using Microsoft Forms) at a time that is convenient to you. You will be supported by a youth worker whom you know to complete this survey. In this survey, you will be asked about your understanding of human rights and the influence of youth work on your experiences. If we need to ask more questions later, your youth worker will contact and support you.

What will happen to the information collected?

Your answers will be kept safe in a password-protected folder on secure University of Edinburgh servers. Any personal information that we have collected from you (like your name, email address) will be stored separately and safely. All information will be handled according to Data Protection Law.

The information will be used to complete a Master's dissertation, and it might also be used in future research activities (like publications or presentations). In any presentation of the results, your answers will be referred to by a made-up name (a pseudonym) rather than by your real name, and I will ensure that there are no details that could identify you are included.

If the data is not required for future research activities, I will store the information until 40 days after the final exam board and then delete it. If the findings are needed for future research activities, then the anonymised data and consent forms will be safely kept for up to five years.

What are the potential risks?

There are small risks in taking part. You might feel uncomfortable when thinking about your refugee experiences or talking about human rights. If this happens, you can skip any question you do not want to answer, or you can stop at any time. Your youth worker will be there to support you.

What are the potential benefits?

This online survey can provide you with a chance to share your views, which might help improve youth work to better support refugees in the future.

Please feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions: JIAYING WANG [s2624155@ed.ac.uk]. There will also be an opportunity at the start of your interview to ask any further questions that you may have about the research.

Contact information

If you have any questions about the research, my contact details are: JIAYING WANG [s2624155@ed.ac.uk] and my supervisor's contact details are: COLIN MORRISON [colin.morrison@ed.ac.uk]

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, please contact: OMAR KAISSI [omar.kaissi@ed.ac.uk]

For general information about how we use your data, please go to:

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Please now complete the Participant Consent Form to indicate whether you will or will not be willing to participate in the study.



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Participant Consent Form

Study Title: *The Role of Youth Work in the Realization of the Human Rights of Young People – with a Focus on Young Refugees in Scotland*

Please Initial
Box

1 I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study.

2 I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction.

3 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

4 I understand that my personal data and my anonymised data will be stored as detailed in the information sheet.

5 I understand that my anonymised data will be used in MSc dissertation thesis and may be used in future academic publications or presentations.

6 I agree to take part in this study.

Name of person giving consent: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name of person taking consent: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 3: Ethics Approval Letter



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Moray House School of
Education and Sport

Academic Services Teaching Office
Thomson's Land 1.01
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 4400

education.school@ed.ac.uk
www.ed.ac.uk/education

12th May 2025

FAO Jiaying Wang

Dear Jiaying,

Ethics Application: Title: **The role of Youth Work in the realization of the human rights of young people in Scotland, with a focus on young refugees.**

Your Ethics Application has been approved, and it has been submitted to the Turnitin repository.

A standard condition of this ethical approval is that you are required to let your supervisor Dr Colin Morrison know of any significant deviation from your original research plan.

You should also inform your supervisor if there are any unexpected results or events once the research is underway that raise questions about the safety of the research.

Before starting your data collection, you must ensure that you have full approval from your supervisor for the project (design, method).

Good luck with your project.

Your sincerely,

Dr Colin Morrison



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
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Academic Services Teaching Office
Thomson's Land 1.01
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 4400

education.school@ed.ac.uk
www.ed.ac.uk/education

16th June 2025

FAO Jiaying Wang

Dear Jiaying,

Ethics Application: Title: **The role of Youth Work in the realization of the human rights of young people in Scotland, with a focus on young refugees.**

Regarding: New youth worker survey

This letter is to approve the additional youth worker survey that you have developed and seek to share with potential participants.

As previously stated in your original approval, a standard condition of this ethical approval is that you are required to let your supervisor Dr Colin Morrison know of any significant further deviation or if there are any unexpected results or events once the research is underway that raise questions about the safety of the research.

Good luck with your project.

Your sincerely,

Dr Colin Morrison

Appendix 4: Interview and Online Survey Questions

Survey Questions (Youth workers)

Background

1. How many years have you worked in youth work?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1–3 years
 - More than 3 years
2. What is your current position in youth work? Can you describe your main responsibilities?
3. Have you ever been involved in youth work projects related to young refugees or that have involved young refugees?
 - Yes, as a lead or core team member
 - Yes, as a volunteer
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
4. In what types of settings do you primarily work with young people? (Tick as many as apply)
 - Community
 - School
 - Refugee shelter
 - Online platform
 - Other (please specify) _____

Youth Work and Young People's Rights

5. In your own words, how do you understand the concept of “human rights”, especially in the context of working with young people?
6. Based on your work experience, how do you think youth work can help realize the human rights of young people?

7. What challenges have you encountered when trying to support the realization of young people's human rights through youth work?

Youth Work and Young Refugees

8. Can you describe the youth work practice you are involved in with young refugees?
9. Based on your work experience, how do you think youth work can help realize the human rights of young people who are refugees?
10. What challenges have you encountered when trying to support the realization of young refugees' human rights through youth work?
11. Has working with young refugees required you to adapt your youth work practice in any way? If so, how?
12. What areas of youth work support for young refugees do you find lacking in the current environment?
13. If you could offer advice to policymakers, what improvements would you most like to see? This could be in terms of policy, partnerships, or resources to strengthen the role of youth work and the realization of the human rights of young refugees.

Are there any additional thoughts or perspectives you would like to share?

Additional Survey Questions (Youth workers)

1. How many years have you worked in youth work?
2. What is your current position in youth work? Can you describe your main responsibilities?
3. In what types of settings do you primarily work with young people? (Tick as many as apply)
4. In your own words, how do you understand the concept of “human rights”, especially in the context of working with young people?
5. Based on your work experience, how do you think youth work can help realize the human rights of young people?
6. What challenges have you encountered when trying to support the realization of young people’s human rights through youth work?
7. Have you ever been involved in youth work projects related to young refugees or that have involved young refugees? If yes, please describe this work, and tell us how do you think youth work can help realize the human rights of young people who are refugees? If no, leave blank.
8. If you could offer advice to policymakers, what improvements would you most like to see in terms of the role of youth work and the realisation of young people’s rights? This could be in terms of policy, partnerships, or resources to strengthen the role of youth work and the realization of human rights.

Interview Questions (Representatives of youth work agency)

To get us started, can you tell me about your role in (name of organization)?

↳ These questions are about Youth Work

- a. How do you define youth work?
- b. What does meaningful youth participation look like?
- c. To what extent do you feel youth workers have the autonomy to support meaningful youth participation in programme planning and decision-making?

↳ These questions are about Youth Work and human rights

- a. In your view, what human rights should young people be entitled to?
- b. What role do you think youth work has in promoting or realizing young people's human rights?
- c. Which rights are most frequently mentioned or most often overlooked in youth work practice?
- d. What are the main challenges youth work/ youth workers face in promoting the realization of human rights for young people?
- e. Are there positive, innovative, or creative ways that youth work adapts to or addresses these challenges?

↳ These questions are about Youth Work and the human rights of young refugees

- a. What role do you think youth work has in promoting or realizing young refugees' human rights?
- b. Do young refugees face different circumstances in the realization of their rights compared to local Scottish youth? Can you give any examples?
- c. What are the main challenges youth work/ youth workers face in promoting the realization of human rights for young refugees?
- d. Are there positive, innovative, or creative ways that youth work adapts to or addresses these challenges?

↳ At the national level/ Youth Work and the rights of young refugees

- a. What improvements do you think are needed in terms of policy, partnerships, or resources to strengthen the role of youth work in realizing the rights of young refugees?
- b. If you could offer advice to policymakers, what improvements would you most like to see?

|| Are there any additional thoughts or perspectives you would like to share?

Survey Questions (Young Refugees)

Background

1. How long have you lived in Scotland?
 - Less than a year
 - 1-3 years
 - More than 3 years
2. Are you currently or have you ever been involved in any youth organization, program, or activity?
 - Yes
 - No

Understanding and Experiences of Human Rights

These questions are about you and your human rights.

3. People talk about human rights. When you think of human rights, what does this mean to you?
4. Do you think your human rights are respected and fulfilled in Scotland? Why?
5. Can you share an example of a time when your human rights have been respected in Scotland?
6. Can you share an example of a time when your human rights have NOT been respected in Scotland?

The Role of Youth Work

These questions are about the kinds of youth work you have been involved in, and how youth work supports young people to understand and have their rights.

7. Tell us about the youth work, youth clubs, or youth programs you are involved in. You don't have to mention names or places, just tell us a bit about what you do, what you enjoy, or what you get from being part of it.
8. Can you tell us if youth workers have helped you understand your human rights?
9. If yes, can you explain what rights they help with?
10. Can you tell us if youth workers have helped you fulfil (that means have and experience) your human rights?
11. If yes, how do they do this – how do the youth workers help you fulfil your rights?
12. If you had the opportunity to advise youth workers and youth organizations about what they can do to help young refugees in Scotland understand and have their rights, what would you suggest?
- 13. Are there any additional thoughts or perspectives you would like to share as a young person in Scotland?**