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Chapter 15

The relational spaces of mentoring with young people ‘at risk’

Fiona M. Smith, Matej Blazek, Donna Marie Brown and Lorraine van Blerk

Introduction

In this chapter we examine the relational spaces of emotional work in a mentoring project which deployed volunteer mentors (‘active citizens’) to complement formal structures of state engagement with vulnerable young people deemed ‘at risk’ of anti-social and criminal behaviour¹. In so doing, we explore the complexities of the kind of emotional work involved in policy-in-practice, particularly in policy interventions which might at a general level be critiqued as representing individualising neo-liberal modes of governance which ‘responsibilise’, or even stigmatise, individuals (Bowlby et al., 2014; Pykett, 2014). Criticisms argue that such policies target attention on the need to discipline what are viewed as problematic emotions and related behaviours (a particular characteristic of many policy interventions with young people, Kraftl and Blazek, 2015) while failing to address wider structural inequalities. However, by looking more closely at how emotions are embedded in wider relational practices of care, we examine how those participated both valued the emotional labour involved and insisted on the need to address some of the limitations of such models of practice. This in turn engages with wider discussions (Newman, chapter 2, this volume; Laurie and Bondi, 2005) on exploring the risks and opportunities of the apparent co-option of emotional work into the emotional, neo-liberal state by refusing any simple application of the somewhat totalising logics of neoliberalism. It instead demonstrates how other rationales and modes of practice may insist on the potential for other forms of emotional practice to emerge. This includes the recognition both of young people’s own

embodied emotional agencies and of the need for supportive structures and relations of care alongside approaches which insist on the need to address wider aspects of inequality and exclusion.

The chapter proceeds by outlining the nature of the project and situating it in relation to wider policies of 'early intervention' with young people. We develop understandings of the relational spaces of care, drawing on Bondi's (2008) discussion of the relational theory of practice which emphasises interpersonal relationships and dynamics between service providers and their clients as not just contingencies but as the core mediums of policy delivery (Hunter 2012). Following debates about young people's agency within and outside the neoliberal mainstems of both the Global North and South (Evans, 2012; Punch and Sugden, 2013; Blazek et al., 2015), we focus on viewing young people not only as 'recipients' of care (Wiles, 2011), but as active participants in the relational practices of policy delivery (Dickens and Lonie, 2013). Thus not only are the mentors and project managers participants in the emotional work of mentoring but the young people are too, alongside others in the wider networks of practice. After briefly describing the methodologies deployed in the evaluation, we examine the relational practices of the mentoring project, which involved a complex mix of more obviously 'emotional' aspects intertwined with more explicitly practical, situated activities and engagements which we argue together constitute the emotional work of mentoring. We then outline the embeddedness of these practices in wider relational networks of care and identify how the emotional work of those involved simultaneously valued the work of the project and engaged with its limitations. We therefore seek to make space, on the one hand, to acknowledge the complex impacts of neo-liberalisation (and more recently austerity) in the ways that social policy practice is framed and reframed in diverse forms of practice while simultaneously arguing that a focus on the

relational nature of emotional work might leave space for the excessive nature of practices of social justice (Griffiths, 2013), and for other models of practice, both professional and lay, as well as for the agency of the young people themselves to emerge within the complex spaces of care in work (both professional and voluntary) with young people (Blazek and Windram-Geddes, 2013; Blazek and Kraftl, 2015).

Relational practices of social policy in youth mentoring

Young people's lives have increasingly become the focus of policy interventions. Within the repertoire available, mentoring² is a widespread model of practice (Rhodes and Lowe, 2008; du Bois et al., 2002). It can be deployed on issues from informal learning to schooling (Pryce, 2012; Sandford et al., 2010) and is often targeted at young people experiencing social disadvantage or deemed 'at risk' (Moodie and Fisher, 2009). While many such programmes develop within the third sector, the project we examined, while having a precursor in the voluntary sector partner organisation's own work, is an example of a multi-agency programme working across state, third and (sometimes, though not in this case) private sectors which have emerged as part of what Jupp (2013) has called the 'thickening' of social policy interventions targeting particular population groups. As these multi-agency strategies are mobilised to develop forms of governance around the behaviours of young people, practices of mentoring are situated within wider circuits of social policy.

The specific project discussed in this chapter was a youth mentoring project, *plusone mentoring* in Scotland (UK), which used volunteer adult mentors trained and managed through an established youth work voluntary organisation (YMCA) to work within a multi-agency partnership model with young people deemed to be at risk of offending or anti-social

behaviour (Blazek et al., 2011). It was focused primarily on aspects of youth justice policy and practice and reflected evidence from policy reviews which emphasise the value of targeted preventative and ‘pro-social’ programs in decreasing such risk, particularly in the early teenage years (Greenwood, 2008, McAra and McVie, 2010). It fits directly with the centrality of a focus on ‘early intervention’ in the devolved administration of Scotland in the UK in the fields of education, social work and criminal justice under the policy known as ‘GIRFEC’ - ‘Getting it right for every child’ (Scottish Government, 2008a, 2008b). The project discussed here sits within stated national priorities across diverse aspects of policy related to young people (Croall 2006, Scottish Government 2009, 2013, Scottish Parliament 2014, Education Scotland 2014, Sercombe 2009, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2014). In youth justice, mentoring and ‘diversion’ for specific young people sit alongside broader preventative measures including the Children’s Hearings system, efforts directed at building community capacities and utilising community wardens (Allen and Stern, 2007; Brown, 2013; Children’s Hearings Scotland, 2015), as well as more ‘carceral’ approaches (Schliehe, 2014) such as secure care units, or prison (for those over 16), within a complex arrangement of diverse criminal justice bodies and partnerships (Audit Scotland, 2011). Early intervention and prevention approaches tend to emphasise working across agencies and different sectors, with models of practice from the voluntary sector also being examined as having potential, for example, to access otherwise difficult-to-reach groups, who may be much less likely to engage with statutory agencies such as the police or social work services.

Such ‘new models’ of working are also part of an agenda of public service reform which sits within a wider framework of decreasing funding for public services and which has included such diverse moves as increasing centralisation (in the case of policing and fire and rescue

services) and increasing tendencies to ‘off-load’ what are seen as ‘soft services’ (with the implied devaluing of more emotional and caring roles) to lower cost, non-state provision, such as third sector providers (Bunt and Harris, 2010; Hamnett, 2014), although one might also point to some aspects of different political discourse in the devolved administration in Scotland (Law and Mooney, 2012). Thus it might be tempting to cite projects such as the one in this paper as an example of increasingly neo-liberal state structures in Scotland, the wider UK and elsewhere which are deploying non-state agencies, including the voluntary sector and voluntary labour, to enact practices of ‘responsibilising’ emotional governance with those whose behaviour is deemed problematic (Bowlby et al., 2014) in the context of a diminution of the state in times of austerity (Clayton et al., 2015). At the same time the targeting of measures might stigmatise some young people and overlook others (and their needs) by stepping away from ‘universalism’ towards targeted provision, as youth work and youth justice fuse (Williamson, 2009) and austerity measures contest (or even undermine) the diversity of professional youth work provision (Bradford and Cullen, 2014). In response, Tiffany (2012) calls for “‘targeting through universalism’ – making youth work and support available to all but having an eye for those who need it most’.

In order not to read off the meaning and experience of the mentoring process from such structural features and to attend to the relationality of the emotional work of mentoring in practice, however, we emphasise here the lived experiences of the doing of social policy (Jupp, 2008). Following arguments by Smith et al. (2010: 270) we argue for the importance of attending to the ‘situated, emotional and embodied’ nature of social policy as well as the importance of the ‘more-than-social’ in exploring ‘how the spaces of [social practice] function in and through myriad prosaic, complex, tangible and intangible practices, feelings and encounters’. We argue this helps us to engage critically with making the practices of

policy in action ‘more real and more credible as objects of policy and activism’ (Gibson-Graham 2008: 613; see also Askins, 2015; Conradson, 2003; Jupp, 2013) and to examine how they are central to the relational practices of care.

An explicitly ‘relational’ approach to analysis of social policy and practice (Hunter, 2012) attends to more unexpected, more contingent notions of the effects of policy, reflecting Horton and Kraftl’s (2005) argument that usefulness arises in practice. It emphasises the views and involvement of ‘recipients’ (as well as providers) of care and focuses on the emotional (that is intersubjective) and relationship work ‘however ordinary’ through which care is enacted (Bondi, 2008: 262). However, we also embed these immediate relational practices in wider relational networks, considering how socio-material geographies of young people’s lives and their (not always unproblematic) relationships to their families, ‘communities’, institutional support and links from mentoring to broader multi-agency interventions all potentially impact on their experience of the mentoring project, arguing that these emphatically social networks are also ‘agents of care’ (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

Methodologies in the research with *plusone mentoring*

plusone mentoring, which was launched in September 2009 in three pilot areas in Scotland, aimed to develop an early intervention approach by offering mentoring to young people (mainly aged 8-14) identified as being at high risk of offending or anti-social behaviour, using volunteer adult mentors trained and managed through local YMCA centres and working in a multi-agency partnership. The Violence Reduction Unit of the Scottish Police (VRU) and the three local authorities in which the project was introduced provided two years of funding from September 2009. The project’s Oversight Group consisted of representatives

of the VRU, the Association of Directors of Social Work in Scotland and YMCA Scotland. The project has subsequently developed and expanded to cover, by 2015, ten local areas in Scotland, but we focus here only on evidence from the Scottish Government funded evaluation of the first phase of the project, which we conducted from January to May 2011 (Blazek et al., 2011).

Once assessed as 'at risk' in relation to a number of factors (such as parenting difficulties, existing hostile or violent behaviour, criminal or anti-social behaviour, and substance misuse) young people were referred to the project by local multi-agency panels, consisting of representatives of the police, social work, education, community mental health teams and others. They were then offered one-on-one mentoring by volunteers who were recruited, trained, supervised and supported by local YMCA-based project managers. Participation by young people and their families was entirely voluntary. If they agreed, the young person was matched with an adult volunteer mentor who then met them for one session per week³. Around eighty mentors were trained in this first phase by the YMCA. Training emphasised the youth work ethos of the project which utilised a young person-centred youth work approach drawing on common principles such as 'young people choose to participate; the work builds from where young people are and the young person and youth worker are partners in the learning process' (Education Scotland, 2014: 4). There was stress on the need to offer long-term commitment to the young person over a time-scale of a year or more (addressing critiques about the short-term nature of many interventions – Grossman and Rhodes, 2002; Judge, 2015) and the aim was ultimately to enable the young person to become independent of the mentoring process.

Evaluation of the project utilised a mixed methodology that sought to put the young people's perspectives at the centre of the research (Barker, 2008; van Blerk and Kesby, 2009). It involved semi-structured interviews with young people, largely in informal settings where the young person would normally have been mentored or in the YMCA centres, interviews with adult volunteer mentors, the three programme managers and with those on the Oversight Group and local Referral Groups. Relevant documentation was also reviewed, including referral forms for the young people, reports of mentoring sessions, training materials for mentors and the policy materials from local Referral Groups. The research received ethical clearance from the University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee and was developed in accordance with ethical guidelines for working with young people (Alderson and Morrow, 2011), using informed consent and age-appropriate information for the participants. We do not, here, name any of the pilot areas, but they were publicised by the project in their own materials. As a result we omit any details that would allow individual young people or their mentors to be identified which means that some potentially useful contextual material (for example the age or gender of the young person) is absent. The tight timetable of the evaluation and the need to avoid disruption to the often fragile process of developing the mentoring relationship meant techniques such as ethnography or more participatory methods were not adopted.

Participating in the emotional work of the mentoring relationship

From the outset volunteer mentors were trained to develop a relationship with the young person they mentored based on key youth-work related principles (partnership with the young person, the young person's voluntary participation, progressive empowerment, an informal and friendly atmosphere). This relational work was seen as connecting to three phases of

mentoring - 'The beginning: developing rapport and building trust'; 'Developing the relationship: working together to reach goals'; 'Ending, re-defining and evaluating' (mentor training pack). Thus from the outset we see a complex mix of emphasis on more explicitly 'emotional' aspects ('rapport' 'trust'), the work of developing a relationship ('working together') and a more strategic sense of 'goals' (though they are ones to be developed in partnership with the young person). Programme managers talked about the importance of getting the 'match' between mentor and mentee right from the start. This might include aspects of similarity in a demographic sense, but more typically whether they would 'get on' or had shared interests.

Focusing on the importance of the work in the first few weeks, young people and mentors talked about an initial 'breakthrough' as the relationship began to evolve. There were discussions from both of how the relationship might change, often involving the young person being more willing to engage with the mentor, even if, in the context of the complex set of issues some of the young people faced, these changes might be relatively small-scale (a young person being willing to talk a bit more, to look the mentor in the eye as they talked, or showing signs of increased personal care, such as having brushed their teeth). Thus any 'breakthrough' moment could be, as mentors and project managers stressed, something very undramatic, although some young people also mentioned that the changes were apparent to themselves or to others such as their teachers or families. Mentors and project managers emphasised the need for sustained engagement and 'patience':

You need to be patient. You need to be committed. You cannot judge but must try to understand instead ... That's how you can make a difference with the young person (Mentor interview).

The process was designed to develop this patient engagement and the on-going engagement of the young person in the second stage of mentoring which, using an informal and friendly atmosphere, aimed to help the young person be able to identify goals for themselves and to address some often quite practical ways they and the mentor might 'work together' to achieve them. Despite formal definitions of mentoring as a 'systemic intervention' (Keller, 2005) and the multi-agency structures through which young people were referred to the project, few talked in any explicit way about the programme as an 'intervention' scheme. Although some family members mentioned this, the young people instead talked about their mentors 'helping them', mentioning aspects such as emotional problems, social relationships or educational issues and stressing the importance of having an adult who would 'listen', would be 'here for me' and would support them in a non-judgemental way.

Mentors were regarded as different from parents or other adult family members (though some saw similarities with relationships to people such as their social workers) and the young people sometimes referred to them as 'friends'. Other studies confirm that 'friendship' is a key way young people make sense of the mentoring relationship (Philip et al., 2004), while Askins (2015) reports how adults engaged in a 'befriending' scheme very quickly moved towards using the term of 'friends' rather than 'befrienders/befriendees' to describe their relationship. However, the young people were also aware that this was not the same as other friendships - sometimes being very positive that it was 'different' from their friendships with their peer groups, mentioning the value of 'mature' intergenerational support. Added to this was the importance of the mentor being reliable and trustworthy, particularly since a number of the young people stated that they had few friends and/or felt social or emotional support was missing in their home life, and given the wider vulnerabilities affecting the young people

on the programme and which were often key factors in their referral to it. At the same time, the mentoring project had clear distinctions to non-mentoring based friendships and although this was a 'voluntary relationship' which the young people were free to end at any time (Bowlby, 2011: 607) (which did sometimes happen) it was mediated by a prior commitment by the volunteer mentor to be willing to undertake mentoring for normally at least twelve months, something explained to the young people and their families at the outset. Thus the sense of trying to find a suitable way to describe the relationship with the mentor – like a social worker, like a friend, but an adult and not like their peers – is perhaps an accurate description of the distinctive and negotiated nature of the relationship offered by mentoring for the young people. To support this and in recognition of the particular nature of that relational encounter there was on-going close support and supervision by local programme managers, emphasis on the need for adherence to child protection practices and to appropriate forms of conduct with the young people.

It is clear, therefore, that the 'remarkable and the unremarkable (Meth, 2008: 41) was present in the emotional work of the mentoring relationship which formed a core element to how the social policy 'intervention' might be delivered. However, this relational work was also fundamentally practical and active, engaging young people in what youth justice approaches term 'diversionary activities' (McAra and McVie, 2010) and what others might describe as a type of informal education (Mills and Kraftl, 2014). Mentors were given clear guidance that they were not qualified to offer behavioural counselling or other therapeutic roles. Rather changes in emotional, behavioural and social skills were to be developed through practical approaches and embodied experience where the mentoring relationship was at the centre of a number of spaces and networks of support for the young people. Mentoring explicitly happened outside the young person's home space, in sites which they often already knew

(football pitches, cafes, parks, leisure spaces and (rarely) the YMCA centres) and usually suggested by the young person. The relational process of mentoring drew such ordinary sites and spaces into the emotional work of the project as informal 'transitory spaces of care' (Johnsen et al., 2005), using them as sites of 'co-presence' in which different practical activities could take place while the face-to-face, embodied meetings facilitated the development of the mentoring relationship. These places together with 'seemingly mundane acts' (Staeheli et al., 2012: 630) - having a chat, playing football, going for a walk - were central to the practical interventions of the project.

The high incidence of chaotic or problematic family circumstances among the assessed risk factors which initially led to the young people being referred to the project meant being out of their everyday spaces was viewed positively by some of the young people. On a practical level, being involved with their mentor was also a key means by which the young people might access activities and spaces that they might otherwise find difficult to access due to an absence of opportunities for leisure time activities in their home area, meaning the activities with their mentor were their only options. Alternatively young people might have been unable to access activities due to lack of confidence, lack of friends to go with them, tight family finances, or limited family support. Those for which this was particularly the case were more likely to make suggestions that mentoring should happen more frequently than once a week. In contrast those who valued more the emotional-relational aspect of the mentoring, or who placed more emphasis on using the mentoring process to find ways of addressing particular problems, were less likely to ask for additional sessions, although the distinction is not a clear-cut one.

All of the young people reported some value in the activities they undertook, but there was a sense from some that, while they saw benefits, they also recognised the limitations of the scheme, particularly because, despite perhaps increasing their own improved personal resilience, the mentoring scheme itself could not address wider structural problems: ‘in our neighbourhood [...] there is nothing else you can do there, nowhere to go’ (interview with young person). Clearly the young person articulates here what is a more general critique of mentoring and other interventions focused primarily on the individual, namely that while the young people may be removed temporally from their everyday environment during the mentoring process (and may value this), wider structural problems such as poor public service provision and the conditions which lead to anti-social behaviour are outside the scope of the intervention (Tiffany, 2012). But it is perhaps too tempting, as critical social science researchers, to dismiss the potential value of such work and to miss careful attention to the relational emotional work developed in this kind of practice which many of the young people indicated they felt to have been helpful in at least some ways and it is important not to dismiss the potential value of more individually-focused forms of social policy, as expressed by the young people, in the context of wider critiques. Furthermore, when analysing how the relational work of mentoring progressed in the project, we would argue that a narrow focus on the individual one-on-one encounters also misses the significance of wider networks of care which are important in the overall emotional work of the project.

Embedding mentoring in wider relational networks of care

Recognising wider networks of care is important for understanding the situatedness of practices of care and of mentoring in particular and moving away from a close focus on the direct mentor-mentee relationship, significant though this may be (Keller, 2005; Bowlby,

2011). Asked to outline what they expected when they signed up for mentoring, one young person referred to the fact that it was mainly their mum who thought about it and that the role of the programme manager from the local centre coming to their house to explain was important. That everyday management of the project was based in the local YMCA centres made some difference as to whether the families of the young people referred to the project were open to them taking part as it was perceived to have a more positive image among some, particularly compared to what were reported as negative experiences of some statutory agencies (police, schools or social work, for example, though by no means uniformly). Although opinions varied considerably, the YMCA was seen as providing opportunities by some families and young people rather than being an agency which could apply sanctions to the young people and their families. At the same time, although this points to the positive contribution of non-statutory/voluntary sector organisations in providing this kind of care, rather than centring any voluntary/paid work binary it is worth noting the key role of local (paid) project managers (based in the YMCA) in facilitating and maintaining the mentoring process through developing other relationships. In particular, relationships with the young people's families were very important, especially since 'parenting difficulties' were themselves the factor with the highest average 'risk' in the assessments used for referral to the project (Blazek et al., 2011: 20-21). Also, despite the mentoring taking place outside their homes, families and other aspects of the young people's everyday lives were a key factor in the emotional, relational work of mentoring. This might include seeing that mentoring might alter family relationships ('learning how to talk to my mum'), situations where other siblings asked if they could get mentoring too (even sometimes threatening to misbehave if they did not) and evidence from the schools in one area which reported that the young people were not experiencing stigma for their participation but rather envy from their peers at them getting to participate in the activities.

These wider connections were, however, not incidental to the process (although often the specific outcomes were not directly intended ones). Evidence from the referral process, mentors, programme managers and interviews with the young people themselves indicated that many of the young people who were referred struggled in everyday social relationships, including family, school and community, as well as in relationships with other professionals and statutory agencies. Therefore a central element of the mentoring relationship was to provide practical advice and help to mediate and facilitate engagement between the young person and other institutions or groups (school or college, sports clubs, and so on). This could involve efforts from the volunteers beyond the one hour mentoring sessions, for example accompanying a young person on the way to college for the first few weeks of their studies. Mentors and programme managers also mediated and networked with other institutions such as a young person's school after they had been expelled or had dropped out due to bullying, or helping a young person wrongly accused of antisocial behaviour in his community by his peers in order to develop a way to counteract the accusations. In this context, the role of the mentor (and programme manager) as people with more 'formal' positions in relation to the young person could be key, as could the reputation and position of the YMCA within the local multi-agency partnerships. Thus aspects of the mentoring programme explicitly recognised the need to work to facilitate connections and engagements between the young person and a range of spaces and activities beyond the more 'transitory' but recurring spaces of mentoring.

In terms of thinking about mentoring as a process in which emotional work develops in reciprocal forms (i.e. considering mentoring not only as characterised by 'asymmetric' relationships (Korf, 2007) in which the adult mentor provides care and the young person is

the recipient – although the power relations of mentoring and other forms of care need to be kept clearly in mind (Bondi, 2008)) we can also consider how those such as the volunteer mentors might benefit something from the mentoring process too. In that way recipients of care might not only be figured as ‘vulnerable’ in the sense of ‘fragility or weakness’ (Wiles, 2011, p. 573) but rather they might be viewed as bringing their own contributions to the mentoring process too, emphasising ideas about the active participation and emotional work involved for all those in the mentoring process. Interestingly the project explicitly set out to foreground that there would be benefits for volunteers that, in typical policy terms, might ‘build capacity’ in their communities (though this was perhaps rather loosely specified). Mentors were slightly more specific about what they felt they gained. For some it was experience to equip them for future career development in fields such as social work, education or community and youth work. Thus skills, experience and understanding developed within the relational practices of mentoring might inform future work (either paid or voluntary). Others emphasised that their motivations were driven more by altruism (‘giving back’) or commitments to social justice (‘doing something for the young people’).

Across all mentors, however, there was evidence not only that they entered the mentoring experience with particular motivations, in some cases relatively strategic ones, but that engagement in the project had developed their understanding of and their capacity to work with young people at risk (Roberts and Devine, 2004) including in ways which would not otherwise have been accessible to them through training or their own life experiences: ‘ I began to see better what some young people experience and especially how incredibly difficult some of those things they encounter are. It’s something I have not experienced myself, something I’m not sure how I would’ve responded to’ (interview with mentor). Thus it becomes possible to consider how the experience may be one which is at least potentially

transformative in some ways for the adult volunteers and not only for the young people. While any parallel with the reciprocal relations of friendship would be overdrawn, this does suggest possibilities for a 'transformative politics of encounter' (Askins, 2015) which exist (even) within practices which also sit within wider networks of the neoliberal state and which suggest possibilities for alternative and diverse modes of emotional work.

That said, it remains important to consider how the immediate and proximate emotional and relational work of mentoring remains situated within the broader aims of programme providers and statutory funders, and, ultimately, national-scale frameworks of youth justice and child protection. The extent to which young people were aware of this was not explored in the evaluation and would be an interesting question in future research. There also remains scope for future consideration of how young people's engagements in such projects might be 'up-scaled' to consider how schemes such as this 'implicate' young people within wider political structures and relations (Hopkins and Alexander, 2010). At a more local scale, there is some evidence of the possibilities of connecting between changes at the local/interpersonal level and wider social processes. Brown's (2013) study of community wardens, for example, indicates examples of where attitudes towards young people had changed in their local communities. However, the scaling up between the individual and wider issues remains a key tension of such work.

There are also questions about how efforts to support young people and build capacity and skills in working with young people in a project such as this is sustained into longer term change for the young people, the volunteers and in relation to wider policy goals. This is particularly the case in the context of sometimes enabling, but often (increasingly) challenging institutional and financial conditions under which social policies and practices

are being reshaped in conditions of neo-liberalism and austerity (Clayton et al, 2015). We acknowledge the real limitations of such programmes in relation to wider structural inequalities in availability of and access to facilities by young people, the ways on-going (and often intensifying) impacts of deprivation and austerity affect this, and the constant need to examine the power relations which underpin and shape interventions in the lives of young people. Likewise attending closely to young people's individual experiences still entails the risk of either decontextualizing them or seeing them as 'the prompt for [only] a particular policy or practical intervention' (Kraftl and Blazek, 2015: 297). However, we have sought here to outline a wider relational approach to the emotional work of social policy-in-practice. In so doing we concur with arguments that (re)connecting young people's lives with the realm of social policy requires a shift from considering the 'outcomes' of 'interventions' towards understanding young people as neither the 'recipients' of care nor as 'problems' to be solved but rather as active participants co-constructing the relational emotional work of policy in practice.

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² We use here the term 'mentoring' as it is used by the project evaluated. While terms such as 'befriending' and 'buddying' are often deployed relatively interchangeably in practice, the specific nature of the relationships developed and the approaches to intervention/ social care varies considerably even where similar terms are used.

³ Some referrals were deemed inappropriate for *plusone mentoring* and were passed to other agencies and in thirteen of the ninety-six referrals in this phase the young people or their families declined the offer of mentoring.