



“Am I the Right Person?”

Exploring educational psychologists’ assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England

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Abstract

Asylum-seeking and refugee children have a right to education in England so that they develop and thrive (UNICEF UK, 1990). At the time of writing (April 2026), there is no reference to asylum-seeking or refugee children in the SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015) or EP professional competencies (BPS, 2018; The Health and Care Professions Council, 2023), despite evidence that their needs can be significant and complex.

As a trainee EP, I find this area of practice particularly challenging but lacking in guidance. This study asks: *how should EPs assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England?*

The research drew on expertise from within and beyond the EP profession to construct principles informing EP assessment practices of asylum-seeking and refugee children. It further explored factors influencing this area of practice. It is hoped that the learning and psychological needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children can be better understood and, in turn, improve outcomes.

This study sits across pragmatism, critical realism, and critical race theory. Using a modified Delphi method and reflexive thematic analysis, the research focuses on promoting social justice for asylum-seeking and refugee children through constructing a shared understanding to be applied by EPs in assessment practice. Seven participants engaged with Delphi surveys, culminating in principles for EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Reflexive thematic analysis developed themes, illuminating underlying mechanisms understood to shape this area of EP practice. The themes are: systemic concerns; professional competency and boundaries; values and beliefs; and taking time.

The study impacts my practice and has implications for how systems and processes relating to the EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England might be improved through training and development, multidisciplinary working, anti-oppressive practices and assessment over time.

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List of Acronyms

BPS	British Psychological Society
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CR	Critical Realism / Critical Realist
CRT	Critical Race Theory
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EEWP	Education based Emotional Wellbeing Practitioner
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
NHS	National Health Service
PPCT	Process-Person-Context-Time
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy / Speech and Language Therapist
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child / Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
UN	United Nations

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study develops a set of principles to guide the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England (from hereon in referred to as ‘the principles’). These principles are supported by the construction of themes describing factors shaping this area of practice. The study takes a position which encapsulates pragmatism, critical realism (CR) and critical race theory (CRT). It aims to effect material change, promote social justice, and mitigate the perpetuation of societal racism and whiteness in EP practice and research.

Using a modified Delphi method, data were generated through two online qualitative survey rounds. An exploratory literature review informed the surveys, identified inclusion criteria for experts (generally referred to as ‘participants’ in this thesis), and constructed CRT principles to shape the research. A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was then conducted across the full body of survey data to construct themes. Findings include a set of guiding principles, alongside themes describing factors which shape this area of EP practice. The study has implications for EP practice, as well as policies and systemic processes which impact EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children accessing education in England.

1.1 Reflexivity and Reflection Boxes

As a trainee EP and a researcher, reflexivity underpins my thinking and practice.

Braun and Clarke (2022) define reflexivity as:

“...a disciplined practice of critically interrogating what we do, how and why we do it, and the impacts and influences of this on our research.”

Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 5)

Lazard and McAvoy (2020) describe it as a ‘fundamental expectation’ of qualitative research.

This study was conducted within a sociopolitical climate which heightened and amplified discourses around asylum-seeking and refugee communities. In my commitment to the qualitative paradigm and the importance of reflexivity in my approach, throughout the research process I kept a reflective research diary (**Appendix A**). This report includes reflection boxes which draw attention to how I have navigated and responded to a context which makes an already marginalised group arguably more vulnerable. Reflection boxes and research diary extracts

support the reader in understanding how my positionality has shaped and influenced the design, implementation and findings of the study, placing this thesis firmly in the qualitative research paradigm.

Reflection Box 1: The Evolving Sociopolitical Landscape

On reviewing my reflective diary (**Appendix A**), it is apparent that many entries respond to newspaper articles, political decisions or personal witnessing of racism and anti-immigration sentiment. I believe this context should be made evident in the thesis, particularly as future policy may make this area of EP work ever more challenging and affect how the findings might be applied in practice. For instance, as I write (April 2026) the UK government are announcing policy so that asylum-seeking people will not be granted permanent leave to remain, leaving children and families without settled status and with an increasingly uncertain future.

1.2 My Personal Rationale for Choosing this Research Topic

My early career involved working in areas described as ‘high deprivation’ and in contexts where the aim of learning was not about academic outcomes, but enrichment, empowerment and community cohesion. The local authorities I worked in were testing grounds for emerging government policies relating to community cohesion following a series of riots or civil unrest (Cantle, 2002). My role involved supporting schools in becoming hubs of their community. Where this worked well, I saw how a school can become a place not just for educating children, but also a community hub for parents, families and other members of society to access learning, advice, resources and social connection.

I oversaw an adult learning course for people who had newly arrived from overseas, often coming to the UK seeking asylum. The atmosphere in the classroom appeared warm and inviting, and I was struck by how broad the curriculum was. Alongside ESOL (English as a second language), sessions included advice (housing, benefits and immigration), getting to know the area and each other, and sharing foods and cultures. Learners described the course as a ‘lifeline’, a ‘sanctuary’, and a ‘joy’. They formed lasting connections and a sense of belonging.

During my first year of EP training, I asked the principal of my placement service what they felt were priority areas for research. They shared that asylum-seeking and refugee children with special educational needs (SEN) were frequently having to wait months before they could access any education in the UK. Having seen the support and sense of belonging that access to learning can have for a person newly arrived in the country, this struck me as particularly concerning. They suggested exploring the experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children with SEN from arrival to eventual placement. Since this, I have actively sought casework with asylum-seeking and refugee children.

On placement, I have undertaken casework with six asylum-seeking children. Each case has presented a complex set of challenges. Perhaps more interestingly, at times it has challenged my fieldwork supervisors. Within this casework, I have been faced with making decisions around assessment which are in opposition to the systemic expectations placed upon me. I have been asked for cognitive assessments which I have resisted because of their lack of cultural sensitivity. I have attempted to slow down statutory processes while endeavouring to hasten access to education. I have needed to consider language, trauma, cultures, histories, journeys and the immigration system. And throughout, I have tried and failed to find specific guidance to support my practice.

My question throughout the casework was: what should an EP be doing in this situation? I considered the proposal from the Principal EP about exploring experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children but worried that this was not going to give me anything concrete to move my understanding—and ultimately my practice—on. What I sought, and had failed to find at that time, was guidance from EPs who had sufficient experience, and who had developed approaches or tools for doing this work more effectively.

Throughout the research process, it has been important that the question and methodology align with my evolving practice and perspective as an EP. The research question is: How should EPs assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England?

Within this overall question, the study looks at the following:

- What are the principles that should guide EP practice when undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England?
- What factors shape the needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England, and how can EPs navigate these?

I used a modified Delphi method to construct a set of principles to guide EP needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Following this, I used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to describe factors impacting on this area of work. This methodology offered a pragmatic, iterative process to gather views and experiences, culminating in a set of principles to guide practice, alongside themes which deepen understanding of how this area of EP practice is shaped.

1.3 Philosophical Positionality

Through my experiences with casework involving asylum-seeking and refugee children, and from my discussion with the Principal EP, I conceptualise the problem as one involving ontological realism¹ with a very real array of causal mechanisms, whilst holding epistemic relativism² in how these are understood and described. Critical realism (CR) acknowledges these positions and holds social justice as a central tenet (Archer et al., 1998; DeForge & Shaw, 2012).

Alongside this I am driven to find a practical outcome—an aim which supersedes any philosophical inclination towards a particular methodology. Pragmatism prioritises the practical consequences of research over any ontological or epistemological concerns. Again, it is frequently aligned with social justice, taking the position that decisions in research should be based on ‘whatever works best’ to achieve that end (Elder-Vass, 2022; Rorty, 1982).

A key concern as a British white person without any lived experience of migration, coupled with taking the approach of asking ‘experts’ who would likely be professionals without lived experience also (**Appendix K**), was the perpetuation of whiteness and the suppression of minoritised voices in research and practice (Britton, 2019; Milner, 2020; Williams, 2020). Therefore, from the outset there is a commitment to applying principles of critical race theory (CRT) throughout the research. CRT takes an anti-essentialist position which asks that we recognise and act upon racist systems and histories privileging whiteness. It aligns with pragmatism and CR in striving for social justice and material change. From seeking to use CRT as a lens, my thinking and application of CRT evolved such that it takes a central position within the research, framing and shaping the methodology and analysis alongside pragmatism and CR.

Reflection Box 2: Understanding CRT

CRT was not a theory I knew much about before being prompted to consider it by my research supervisor. At the start of the research process, I lacked confidence in my understanding of it or how to apply it. During the planning stages, I presented my research to a group of qualitative researchers including a first draft of CRT principles. They struggled to grasp what these principles meant as I had used the phrasing found in papers rather than translating it into meaningful text for the context of this study. By being challenged in that moment to verbally articulate my personal understanding of CRT, I developed a clarity and understanding of CRT and how this can inform my personal position, practice and research.

¹ Ontology refers to the question of what is real or exists; Ontological realism asserts that reality exists independently of thought.

² Epistemology refers to what knowledge is or how we acquire it; Epistemic relativism argues that there is no absolute truth or single knowledge.

1.4 Terminology

Key terminology will be defined within the thesis as follows:

- **Asylum-seeking and refugee children.** Legally, an asylum-seeking person is someone who is ‘seeking international protection and has applied for refugee status under the convention, but whose claim has not yet been determined’ (Tudor, 2022). The 1951 Convention defines a refugee as someone who cannot return to their country of origin ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion’ (UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, 2010, p. 3). The Refugee Council use ‘person seeking asylum’ over ‘asylum-seeker’, describing the term ‘asylum-seeker’ as dehumanizing (The Refugee Council UK, 2025). The research uses the term ‘asylum-seeking and refugee children’, recognising distinctions in settled status, avoiding dehumanizing terminology, and seeking to avoid adultification by highlighting that they are children.
- **(EP) Assessment.** The terms ‘EP Assessment’ and ‘assessment’ are used interchangeably in this thesis. There is no single definition in educational psychology (Woods & Farrell, 2016), and so this study defines it as any and all activity undertaken by an EP in evaluating the strengths and needs of a child for the purpose of advising support. This definition is broad, including consultation, cognitive and standardised assessment, dynamic assessment, the gathering of child views, observation, and desk-top reviews. This work is often part of the statutory education, health and care plan (EHCP) assessment process involving tight timescales and implications described in the Code of Practice for England (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015).
- **Special Educational Needs (SEN).** This is defined according to the Code of Practice for England (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015) as follows:

‘xiii. A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

xiv. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

 - *has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or*
 - *has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions’*

(Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015, pp. 15–16)

- **Need.** In this thesis, the word ‘need’ denotes a difficulty which in some way makes access to learning and development more challenging. It is broader than SEN in that it encapsulates more than has been assessed and labelled as such.
- **Best or good practice.** Coffield and Edward (2009) distinguish between ‘best’ and ‘good’ practice, positing that the word ‘best’ supposes a single superior approach. The research allows for multiple perspectives to contribute towards a consensus view but does not aim for a single superior approach. Where appropriate, ‘good’ is used whereby participants can define this for themselves within a context. For example, ‘good practice in the assessment of strengths and needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children’.
- **Cultural competence.** ‘Cultural competence’ has been described as a tripartite model, encompassing the need to hold awareness, knowledge and skills to function effectively with culturally diverse populations (Sue & Torina, 2005). Sakata (2024) outlines ‘cultural responsive practice’. They argue that context and existing professional competencies demand that EPs engage in a reflective, ongoing process which ensures practitioners respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of diverse populations. ‘Cultural competence’ is not so much achieved, but continually strived for.
- **Anti-oppressive practice.** In defining anti-oppressive practice, Sewell (2015) describes the practices intended to rebalance unequal resources and power. In this thesis, the term encapsulates actions, decisions, and tools which aim to prevent the perpetuation of inequality and, where possible, shift the balance in the other direction. As such, groups and individuals who are marginalised and disadvantaged are not adversely affected and, if possible, become more advantaged through anti-oppressive practice.
- **Social justice.** According to Schriberg et al. (2008) social justice is closely allied to the description above of anti-oppressive practice. In their Delphi study, participants related it to power and centred the pursuit of rights and opportunities for all. In this thesis, ‘social justice’ refers to the aspiration of true equality. As with anti-oppressive practice, ‘promoting social justice’ refers to any conditions or actions (including policies, values, practices) which move towards the goal of equality for those in society who experience marginalisation or disadvantage.

- **Emergent multilingualism.** The thesis refers to processes and considerations around the acquisition of new languages (typically English in this context) as emergent multilingualism. This recognises that the label of ‘EAL’ (English as an Additional Language) or ‘English-language needs’ problematises the existence of multiple languages and their use in our society (Cunningham, 2019).
- **England or UK.** The thesis strives for accuracy when referring to the ‘England’ or ‘UK’ contexts. The devolved nations have specific policies relating to education, but immigration policies apply across the UK. Media and political sources can refer to England or the UK, and at times lack clarity. Participants were informed that the study would seek to generate guidance relevant to England, but the inclusion criteria did not stipulate where participants should be located.

1.5 Thesis Overview

Chapter One has provided an overview of why I have chosen this topic, the philosophical position shaping the research, and key terminology.

Chapter Two explores the literature surrounding the topic, looking at the sociopolitical context for asylum-seeking and refugee communities in the UK, before evaluating existing guidance and policy relevant to EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Finally, it appraises the research evidence-base for EP practice in this area. The chapter concludes by identifying the research question that the thesis seeks to address.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology. The philosophical position is described in more detail, and shown as situated across critical realism, pragmatism and critical race theory. Decisions to use a modified Delphi method and reflexive thematic analysis are explained, with details of the research design. Quality and ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter Four analyses the findings from the modified Delphi study. The analysis and discussion of data in relation to extant literature is presented as an integrated chapter. It shows the development of a set of principles to support the practice of EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Chapter Five presents the analysis and discussion of the overall RTA, again as an integrated chapter. It shows construction of four themes describing factors shaping this area of EP practice.

Chapter Six outlines the implications of the research for my practice, for other EPs, and for the wider system. It discusses the strengths and limitations of the research, with suggestions for future research in this area.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I review the wider political context and policies of the UK and England, before evaluating evidence of the impacts faced by asylum-seeking and refugee children. I appraise research on the assessment approaches of psychological and learning needs, highlighting topics of cultural competence and the ecosystemic perspective. I conclude by drawing attention to the lack of research on EP approaches to assessing asylum-seeking and refugee children's needs in England. I argue that the profession should consider carefully how to undertake this work given the complexity of individual cases and the political and systemic drivers affecting decisions.

In the UK, much of the current literature around asylum-seeking and refugee people comes in the form of newspaper articles and political commentary. Often such articles raise questions about which people should or should not be welcomed, and how they should be supported (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021). These debates shape the policies and practices within which professionals operate. For EPs much of this work involves the assessment of SEN for children who, by the nature of their history and residency status, can have a particularly wide and complex range of factors and needs impacting their learning and development.

2.2 The Political and Media Context

In exploring literature surrounding refugee and asylum-seeking people, a significant volume of writing is in the form of political debate, news reporting and social media. It seems that on a daily basis, the 'migrant crisis' makes news headlines in the UK (Beckford, 2024; Hall, 2024; Sleight, 2024; Walker & Grierson, 2025). The debates and discord surrounding the topic of migration and refugee communities are not unique to the UK or to the 21st century. Taylor and Sidhu (2012), writing from an Australian context, describe the historical and sociopolitical drivers leading to mass forced migration. They cite globalisation and imbalances existing between countries as fuelling a situation where people are displaced and seek refuge in more stable places such as Australia and the UK. They argue that post-cold war neoliberalism has resulted in wealthier nations reducing aid commitments. This undermines nation-states (such as countries in Africa and the Middle East, e.g. Nigeria and Syria) and increases imbalances. Globalisation and neoliberalism are driven by the US, the UK, and close political partners, and so the authors take the position that wealthier countries are both causing migration and demonising those who flee and seek refuge at our borders.

In the UK, political parties vie to demonstrate their understanding of how to solve the ‘immigration crisis’ (Gower et al., 2024; The Labour Party, 2024; Watson, 2026). During the summer of 2024, rioting in UK towns and cities was seen to be fuelled by misinformation and anti-immigration rhetoric shared on social media (*Timeline of how online misinformation fuelled UK riots* 2024). In the summer of 2025 ‘Operation Raise the Colours’ encouraged the display of Union Jacks and St George’s Crosses with the overt intention of displaying patriotism. Critics pointed to anti-immigration sentiment and the intimidation of ethnic minorities (Addley, 2025; Folker, 2026; Lawson & Jefford, 2025). It is important to consider the extent of media coverage and political discourse, and strength of feeling expressed. Esses et al. (2013) identify how media narratives around bogus claims, terrorism and disease lead to dehumanisation. They argue that this, in turn, fosters societal acceptance of prejudice and animosity towards immigrating populations. This can impact professional decision-making, such as how we assess the needs of asylum-seeking children.

The historical and political context, and drivers leading to migration, are rarely fully addressed in the media. Long before the events of the last two years, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) argued that educational professionals need to understand this and challenge popular misconceptions around the ‘refugee problem’. For EPs, this can impact how we might practice ethically and fairly, how we inform and shape policy, and how we might influence the communities and professionals we work alongside.

Refugee and asylum-seeking people are offered protections under the United Nations (UN). This takes the form of the UN Convention on Human Rights and the UN Refugee Agency (including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees). International laws, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, set out standards for countries to protect the rights of individuals facing forced migration. The rights of children are set out by the UN (UNICEF UK, 1990). The Equality and Human Rights Commission highlights the challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking people in the UK (Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), 2016). In recent years England’s commitment to human rights and equality through such institutions as the EHRC and the European Human Rights Council is being questioned (de Ferrer, 2023; Stacey, 2024). This perhaps reflects a move away from internationalism towards populism, again seen by some to underlie the riots of Summer 2024, the displaying of flags in Summer 2025, and the continuing problematising of immigration (Duncan et al., 2024; Watson, 2026).

Reflection Box 3: Updating the Literature Review

Daily news reporting around asylum-seeking and refugee people and policies means that this literature review—and to an extent, the research—will be out of date as soon as it is concluded. Throughout the research process, I have tried to reflect on what impact these changes in policies and public sentiment might have on practice. For instance, through supervision, I realised that families may need greater reassurance that I am welcoming of them, particularly when surrounded by flags and daily headlines suggesting otherwise. I am ever more conscious of creating a warm environment for discussion and assessment and try to mitigate where other professionals or systems may not be welcoming.

Reflection Box 4: Understanding the Colonial Legacy

This research has deepened my understanding of how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary asylum policy and practice (Refugee Action, 2026). In analysing asylum and refugee contexts, it is evident that the UK and other European nations created inequalities between countries whilst establishing systemic racial hierarchies within border controls and migration frameworks. Consequently, these policies problematise the ability of displaced individuals to seek sanctuary. Engaging with this history is important in how I interpret political rhetoric, and in turn allows me to remain committed to social justice principles when supporting children and families who are needing to escape from the consequences of the UK's colonial past.

Alongside academic reading, experiences on the course and on placement have helped me to confront how issues of race permeate EP practice, and how my position within that can feel challenged and uncomfortable. Over the three years I have begun to reflect and articulate my positionality as a white British professional. By engaging with race interest groups both on the course and in my service, I continue to engage with conversations and ideas which cause me discomfort whilst giving me the words and opportunity to express my navigation of this both professionally and personally. For instance, I have shared times where I feel I failed to be an ally or where I wish I had taken a different approach to a parent-school consultation. This 'reflexivity of discomfort' (Pillow, 2003) offers a framework to embrace, rather than alleviate or avoid, feelings of unease.

2.3 Education and Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children

There is a legal responsibility for children arriving in England seeking asylum or refuge to be enrolled in education (Ashlee & Gladwell, n.d.; Department for Education, 2024). Many children face waiting lists to access education, and schools can be directed to take them. There is a 20-day target to place unaccompanied minors in education but this is rarely met (Gladwell & Chetwynd, 2018). There is a lack of guidance or legislation referring specifically to SEN and asylum-seeking or refugee children. The British Psychological Society (BPS) developed general guidance for psychologists working within this area (Patel et al., 2018). The intersection of emergent multilingualism as a support need and asylum seeking or refugee children is considered by the Bell Foundation and other advisory services (Rosamond et al., 2003; The Bell Foundation, 2024). There is also broader guidance for schools about being inclusive (Ashlee et al., 2023) but this is limited in number and scope of publications.

There is no reference made in current SEN legislation or guidance to asylum-seeking or refugee children (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015; Department for Education & Department for Health and Social Care, 2004). The recent government White Paper setting out proposed reforms to SEND provision makes no reference either (Long et al., 2026). This is despite specific mention and support provided to service families (Ministry of Defence, 2022). This suggests recognition that there are cohorts with such distinct circumstances as to warrant special consideration. This thesis argues that asylum-seeking and refugee children have contexts which are complex and challenging, and so should also warrant special consideration.

Newly arrived children and unaccompanied minors with SEN navigate a system designed for settled children. Often assessment must be completed with a 20-week statutory deadline, making access to translation services or more involved assessment difficult. Even for children with documented medical histories and parents accustomed to the English language and processes, navigating this system can be challenging (Marsh, 2023).

The practice of assessment for EPs, then, can be seen to be shaped and influenced by political and public discourse such that we are not expected to give any specific consideration to this cohort. The next section evaluates literature showing the impacts that seeking asylum or refuge can have.

2.4 Psychological Impacts for Asylum-seeking and Refugee Children

Asylum-seeking or refugee children's learning needs have been researched and written about across Europe, the US, Australia and the UK. Although some parallels can be drawn by looking to studies from other countries, the UK context has political, historical and cultural specifics. For instance, the UK's colonial histories with Pakistan, India and the Caribbean lead to identities shaped by intergenerational migration and systemic racism. Reasons for seeking asylum can be about family reunion, or making claim to an identity imposed on their families by the UK but which is now being withheld by hostile policies (e.g. The Windrush Scandal, The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (2026)). This is then further compounded by subjecting children to SEN policies and systems in England which fail to account these complexities. As such, it becomes apparent that there is a lack of literature which speaks to the current research question.

Furthermore, the literature is dominated by discourses around trauma and language. This may reflect the predominant needs of this group but there is evidence to suggest that needs including missed education and cognitive development should also be given due attention (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021).

The causes of, and routes to, becoming an asylum-seeking person have widely reported impacts on the mental wellbeing of children (Davis, 2024; Kaplan, 2009; Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). Mental health outcomes of displaced and refugee children are worse than for longer-term settled or indigenous peers (Fazel et al., 2012), but this is shown to not be entirely attributable to expected factors of traumatic experiences in their home country or the act of fleeing. The system of processing people seeking asylum—including temporary, unstable living arrangements and a ‘hostile environment’ (Kirkup, 2012) designed to make settling particularly difficult—has, in itself, been cited as a cause of trauma (Fazel et al., 2012; Hall, 2024; Rajeev, 2024). The system in the UK holds people seeking asylum in a temporary state which limits their rights and access to resources, resulting in poverty and deprivation. Even on being granted leave to remain or refugee status, inequalities perpetuate (Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), 2016; Macdonald & Morgan, 2020). Even the right to being granted leave to remain may now be removed (Watson, 2026).

Pointing out difficulties with the system as a cause of further trauma and distress could be viewed as political. Many researchers are seemingly attracted to the topic because of a commitment to social justice for asylum-seeking and refugee people (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021). It would be impossible to isolate a single cause of trauma within this context, and perhaps facile to suggest slow or hostile processing of asylum claims is comparable to having one’s home bombed or facing life-threatening persecution. However, writers and researchers highlight that the psychological impact of fleeing a country to reach the ‘safety’ of the UK does not end on arrival. And it is important to consider that we can—and arguably should—take greater responsibility for the negative impacts our systems inflict. It is also important to note that empirical evidence in this field is lacking with respect to the UK context. For example, in their systematic literature review, Fazel et al. (2012) had one UK study out of 44, representing a sample size of $n=113$.

Both Gonsalves (1992) and Groark et al. (2011) propose that through a deeper understanding of the psychological impacts forced migration and refugee status can have, professionals are better able to anticipate, identify and support socioemotional needs. Focusing on Latin American refugee people in the US, Gonsalves (1992) applied a theoretical model from Grove and Torbiörn (1985). Although useful to draw from, the US context of people arriving from Latin America is a distinct context from this thesis’ focus, and so any parallels should be drawn with caution. The model draws on cognitive and motivational psychology to propose five stages to becoming accustomed to a new culture. Gonsalves (1992) applies this to asylum-seeking and refugee people, offering a therapeutic approach to their support on arriving in the US from Latin America. They go on to suggest that it could be beneficial to other groups in other contexts. Gonsalves (1992) describes the stages, starting with 1 — ‘Early Arrival’ — characterised by lack of awareness

of differences. Moving through stages of destabilisation (2) and growing awareness (3), the model describes reaching stage 4 ('Return to Normal Life'—where the new culture becomes familiar and routine) or stage 5 ('Decompensation'—only affecting some refugee people and characterised by overwhelm and inability to cope). The model presupposes that the 'sojourner' (asylum-seeking or refugee person in this case) should go through a predetermined process of assimilation into the new culture, and does not recognise either the individualistic nature of such a process, nor arguments for encouraging diversity and protection of individual cultures (Ward et al., 2001).

Groark et al. (2011) interviewed six unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC—children who arrive without their parents/carers) in the UK. They explored their experiences and developed themes of loss, negotiating new lives, psychological distress and the process of adjustment. The researchers argue for a holistic approach to support with careful consideration of possible trauma, advocating for professionals to aim for a 'secure base' from which a young person can build resilience and coping strategies. As a qualitative study, it is drawing from a small sample size within a specific context, and so conclusions should be considered in that light. It is, however, one of the few studies which foregrounds the voices of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Despite the lack of reference to asylum-seeking or refugee children in England's statutory guidance (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015) there is interest in how SEN and refugee status intersect. Crock et al. (2013) highlight data suggesting that there are likely millions of displaced people across the world living with some form of disability, but there is little scholarly interest or reliable statistics which speak to this specific concern. Jorgensen et al. (2021) similarly decry the lack of data and research interest in this area, pointing to the issue of over-identification of SEN among ethnically marginalised groups. They also found evidence suggesting that for some families, the physical or learning needs of a child was a key factor in their decision to leave their home country and come to the UK. This suggests that rates of SEN may be higher in asylum-seeking and refugee communities than the wider population. The lack of literature and data collection in this area speaks to the 'epistemic erasure' referred to in Rizvi (2022). They advocate for 'challenging oppressive knowledge systems' (Rizvi, 2022, p. 225) underpinned by the assertion that 'whiteness in educational research is sustained by the epistemological ignorance of race' (Rizvi, 2022, p. 226). It is difficult to critique or act on data that do not exist.

According to BPS guidance, the sense of 'otherness' that can come from being of a different culture (including language, faith, customs, appearance), alongside socioeconomic deprivation, can perpetuate poor mental health (Patel et al., 2018). Researchers such as Doikou-Avliadou and Dadatsi (2013), Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) and Caldin (2014) have turned their focus, therefore, to

the question of social integration. All three papers draw attention to the role schools can play in helping children and their families settle in their new communities. Only Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) speak directly to the UK context but they and Doikou-Avolidou and Dadatsi (2013) widen their scope beyond Asylum-seeking and refugee children to encapsulate children who have migrated for any reason. Even so, there are similarities in their findings which are useful in highlighting the important role schools can play for helping children settle and integrate.

Doikou-Avolidou and Dadatsi (2013) evaluated the effectiveness of a social-emotional learning (SEL) intervention in improving social behaviour and social position outcomes of children who recently immigrated or repatriated into Greece. They cite evidence that social competence and positive peer relationships are protective factors against poor mental health. They were interested in how a targeted intervention might support the social integration of immigrant children, with proximal benefits of improved social position and behaviour, and distal impacts on mental health. Their research showed some improvement across proximal measures but not to the degree anticipated. There are notable limitations in this research. The sample size was small ($n=7$) and identified by teachers involved in delivering the SEL programme. Changes in children's behaviour were measured via teacher-report. As a mixed-methods study, it reported quantitative results despite the small sample size. Furthermore, both the SEL programme and the research study were short, allowing insufficient time for possible impacts to materialise or to demonstrate sustainability.

In their research on behalf of The National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) explored how schools can better integrate migrant children and their families into the school community. They targeted 15 UK schools which they identified as having significant experience of supporting migrant children through interviews with experts and a review of data. They undertook interviews and focus groups with staff, families and pupils in each school, with a focus on approaches to inclusion, the reasons for choosing such approaches, and the experiences they led to. Their findings include specific measures such as advocating for careful assessment of SEN, alongside systemic recommendations such as ring-fenced budgets and specific training. Taking this qualitative approach allowed Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) to develop broad recommendations for consideration but lack detail. For instance, pertinent to this thesis, they do not describe what 'careful assessment' of SEN might include.

Much research in this area focuses on a broader 'migrant' group rather than specifically asylum-seeking and refugee communities. The impacts of migrating as an asylum-seeking or refugee person are worthy of specific attention. Caldin (2014) highlights the intersection of forced migration and disability when considering social inclusion through schools. Researching in Italy,

they highlight challenges faced by families in navigating a complex system for disability support with additional barriers experienced as refugee people, including language, culture and poverty. Their recommendations echo those of Manzoni and Rolfe (2019), advocating for systemic approaches which support the whole family but which can be driven by, and from, the 'school world'. Caldin (2014) argues that forced migration should no longer be seen as an 'emergency', responded to with ad hoc, emergency arrangements. Rather, they argue that receiving countries need to look at permanent, comprehensive changes so that refugee and asylum-seeking people are considered and supported appropriately, with disability specifically featured in legislation. Caldin's (2014) paper is a concluding statement from a two-year research project commissioned by a local government body in response to increasing immigration impacting schools in the area. The aim was to improve inclusion of disabled migrant children through exploring a similar research question to that of Manzoni and Rolfe (2019). Although similar conclusions were reached, the emphasis on wider policy in the Caldin (2014) paper may speak to the values of the researchers or different political climates and commissioners. Neither the details of questions asked, nor the responses received, are shared in either paper. Nor do the researchers share their personal positionalities.

Fox et al. (2017) explored the challenges migrant communities face when their home culture does not view disability in the same way as the culture they enter. They conducted 15 interviews with Somali parents living in the UK whose children have received an autism diagnosis. The research highlights how, in addition to language difficulties, the conflicting messages around autism in the Somali and British communities are confusing and distressing to navigate. Fox et al. (2017) suggest ways in which professionals can encourage asylum-seeking and refugee families to seek out help, understand and accept the diagnosis, and access the most appropriate support. Given the specific targeting of Somali parents, the qualitative nature of enquiry, although there is a rich description of narratives, they speak to the participants' particular contexts. The researchers were unable to recruit many fathers, and highlight that in some communities, men can find it harder than women to accept an autism diagnosis. Their sample was largely self-selecting, which may have impacted on the narratives captured.

These papers point to the complex nature of interacting factors affecting asylum-seeking and refugee communities but draw on specific contexts which do not necessarily speak to the research question of this thesis. Evidence points to the need for professionals to take a holistic approach with a systemic perspective when considering the support individuals and families might need. The next section looks at research into how education and psychology professionals should assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

2.5 Assessing the Needs of Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children

Education is often cited as critical in helping newly arrived children settle (Ashlee et al., 2023; Hall, 2024; McIntyre & Abrams, 2021). For children to thrive, educators need to understand how best to support their pupils so that they learn and progress academically and socially (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015). In the case of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this can be particularly challenging given the complexity of factors involved and a lack of tailored approaches available (Fraine & McDade, 2009).

2.5.1 English language acquisition

Language assessment has drawn significant attention from researchers (Cline & Shamsi, 2000; Girao, 2024; The Bell Foundation, n.d.). More than one in five pupils in English schools speak English alongside at least one other language (Department for Education, 2025; Sutton & Feeney, 2024). This is frequently problematised and positioned as a barrier, particularly where newly arrived children are older as they face more technical language as part of the age-appropriate curriculum and approach high-stakes examinations (Strand & Lindorff, 2021). Unsurprisingly in an English-based exam system, evidence shows positive correlations between English language proficiency and attainment (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). This correlation, though, potentially reflects a system testing English language skills before other skills or knowledge. Regardless, schools prioritise language acquisition over other considerations when offering additional support to newly arrived children or young people (McIntyre & Abrams, 2021).

Language acquisition and the development of literacy skills in the new language does not always progress as expected, leading to questions around SEN. The challenges of this are well documented in a government-funded report *‘Language needs or special needs? The assessment of learning difficulties in literacy among children learning English as an additional language: a literature review’* (Cline & Shamsi, 2000). Produced over 20 years ago, the authors reviewed literature with the aim of evaluating and recommending the best assessment approaches to determine English language versus learning needs in children experiencing difficulties in reading and writing. Targeting teachers, they focused on how to assess for specific learning difficulties in literacy without examining wider determinants of literacy success. They suggest a dichotomous distinction between the ‘problem’ being either emergent multilingualism (or ‘EAL’ as they describe it) or a specific learning difficulty. To the report’s credit, it stresses the important role that a child’s history and previous access to education might play. However, this perpetuates the deficit model in aiming to determine how far from the UK-norm a child’s educational background might be. The report ends with a list of commercially available reading assessments. Their reviews of these highlight the lack of consideration such tests have given to multilingualism. They also stress the

bias inherent in many assessment methods as they are often developed in culturally contextualised ways with non-migrant, English first-language speaking populations. The report offers some support for dynamic assessment over time. However, the discussion moves quickly onto how we diagnose specific literacy needs and dyslexia. This fails to recognise that a diagnosis may not be possible or useful, and that a more holistic approach to understanding language needs or emergent multilingualism can still offer possibilities for support intervention without needing to pathologise. They conclude by recommending assessment over time and drawing on a range of data sources.

More recently, the Bell Foundation developed advice for teachers assessing and supporting emergent multilingual learners who may have SEN (The Bell Foundation, 2024). This is a practical guide, leading practitioners from initial screening of English language skills through to a graduated response to support the learner. It maps closely to the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education & Department for Health, 2015). They recommend taking an approach which encompasses a range of data gathering exercises, including observation and parent view. It is unclear, however, how these recommendations were developed or whether they have been evaluated in practice.

Reflection Box 5: 'EAL' or 'Emergent Multilingual'

Having been introduced to arguments around the use of 'EAL' and its privileging of the dominant language (Cunningham, 2019), I have become aware of how readily educators use terminology and implement monolingual curricula and interventions with little criticality or cultural sensitivity (Cunningham & Little, 2023). I notice how Anglo-monolingualism has permeated my thinking and that of many EP colleagues.

2.5.2 Identifying SEN

Ntuli et al. (2012) investigated the identification of SEN in children who migrated to the US by early years practitioners, recognising that achievement in this group of children is lower, on average, than other children. Their research found that practitioners used assessments that they knew to be biased and which were more likely to label a child as having SEN because of this. They interviewed 10 participants from a single school district. Given the impact politics and policies can have on professional practice, applying findings to England from just one specific context in a different country can only be tentative. They were researching children who migrated and not specifically refugee or asylum-seeking children. Putting aside these limitations, it is interesting that Ntuli et al. (2012), as with Cline and Shamsi (2000), speak of cultural insensitivity and bias inherent in assessment systems being used and applied. The researchers suggest cultural responsiveness training for practitioners but fail to offer recommendations relating to the development of more suitable assessment approaches.

Fraine and McDade (2009) describe a process aiming to help school psychologists minimise the bias inherent in psychometric assessment. Their Australian study evaluates the use of a four-stage process: data-gathering (including observation and teacher assessment); a quasi 'response-to-intervention' stage; a review of progress after several weeks; and 'careful' use of psychometric standardised assessment. They argue that by combining qualitative data, dynamic assessment and testing over time with standardised data, a more accurate assessment is made. They state that psychometric testing is a systemic requirement in their locality, and so the approach they advocate is to mitigate bias, rather than avoid it. They advocate the use of non-verbal subtests of cognitive assessments and adding notes on cultural norms to adaptive behaviour scales. They recognise that further research needs to be done in developing this tool and evaluating its effectiveness, suggesting research in other countries. It is unclear what the 'systemic requirement' to use psychometrics referred to in this study amounts to, and it would be interesting to evaluate the approach without this requirement. For instance, in England, some EPs use dynamic over cognitive assessment within statutory assessments (Green & Birch, 2018).

Samadi and McConkey's (2014) study evaluates using a translated version of the Gilliam Autism Rating Scale with Iranian children, finding that it shows high validity and reliability in identifying autistic traits in this population. They used a large sample ($n=658$) aged 3 to 22 years, with rating completed by parents. The researchers conclude the test to be suitable for use with immigrant communities. However, they did not test children who have immigrated, but rather it was completed in Iran with, presumably, native language speakers assisting parents. The context was not one where families might feel unsure about what to disclose (such as a person seeking asylum may feel) or where the children are subject to factors relating to migration. It also focused on the translation of a single assessment tool into one language, tested within one cultural context, and so one should be cautious in extrapolating these findings to migrant populations or assessments more generally.

In Australia, Velasco Leon and Campbell (2020) were interested in the assessment approaches being used by school psychologists and counsellors working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students referred with learning difficulties. Citing research suggesting overrepresentation of minority groups in the special education system, they looked to assessment practices as one possible cause. Surveying 34 professionals, they developed themes including the need for specific training in working with CALD students, multidisciplinary working, and access to interpreters. Respondents highlighted the need to gather detailed histories and prioritise the use of observation and dynamic assessment over cognitive assessments. The sample was small (in terms of the quantitative data derived) and did not reflect the demographic

makeup of the professions. However, as the researchers conclude, the findings are useful as a starting point for further study. They suggest that by developing a better understanding of which assessment approaches are most suitable for use with CALD students, training can target the cultural competence of professionals.

Khawaja and Wotherspoon (2022) built upon this research in Australia by proposing an assessment framework which stresses the key role of interviewing and show how this is applied to two case studies. They conclude by suggesting interventions to better support CALD students at whole school, classroom and individual levels. The paper fails to show what the impact of this approach was on the two case studies, or the evidence behind the interventions proposed—as such, conclusions cannot be confidently extrapolated.

Although these studies (Fraine & McDade, 2009; Khawaja & Wotherspoon, 2022; Ntuli et al., 2012; Samadi & McConkey, 2014; Velasco Leon & Campbell, 2020) offer insights into how SEN might be assessed, they do not address the specific context of the asylum-seeking or refugee child in the UK, and they lack a focus on EP assessment practices within the context of SEN policies in England. The current study addresses this specific question.

2.5.3 Cultural competence

Cultural competence is central to research by Lanfranchi (2014) who found that Swiss school psychologists demonstrated less bias when choosing assessment and intervention methods than teachers. They argue that psychologists can mitigate discrimination towards students who have migrated and cultivate inclusivity and equity in education. Lanfranchi (2014) recognises that other factors related to migrant status, such as poverty, have an impact on development, achievement and behaviour. But they warn against allowing those to obscure the bias of institutional and professional systems. The methodology, sample size and results make a compelling case that psychologists make more equitable referral decisions while teachers were significantly more likely to refer a child with Kosovo-Albanian ethnicity to specialist provision. Further analysis shows how psychologists' choices of assessment were based on the individual case specifics alongside their personal professional status, rather than the ethnicity of the child. It is possible, however, that psychologists are adept at understanding possible research aims and performed differently than they might in the real world. Also, one should be cautious in applying Swiss research to England—cultural competence is surely influenced by the culture within which professionals live, train and practice. It is notable that Switzerland is a multilingual nation, and so it is unlikely that there is the monolingual bias which arguably characterises England's education system. Finally, the conclusion that Lanfranchi (2014) draws—that psychologists should have greater involvement

to improve inclusivity—overlooks the need for teachers to be better supported through training and for systems which improve the profession's cultural competence.

Sakata (2024) used a Delphi study to develop a self-reflective tool for culturally responsive EP practice. The tool is a comprehensive list of questions which challenge the practitioner to consider skills, learning and development, and structural factors. Although it signposts practitioners to supporting literature, it stops short of proposing how an EP might address an area of weakness or barriers to practicing in a culturally competent way.

For some researchers, the focus on culturally responsive practice for EPs is given to the tools of assessment. In Denmark, Nielsen and Vinner (2023) developed a cognitive assessment specifically for people who have immigrated with low literacy skills. Drawing on other cognitive assessments, they created a battery of tests comprised of those identified as 'relatively unaffected by literacy status' in previous research, including recall of pictures and digit span subtests. For a quantitative study of this nature, the sample size was small ($n=60$) and selected by educators using criteria for literacy difficulties which, by the researchers' own admission, lacks a clear definition. Also, this refers to literacy status and does not look at culture more widely.

Due and Currie (2022) completed a scoping review of competencies for mental health practitioners supporting asylum-seeking and refugee children. This highlights cultural competence, working with interpreters and other professionals, and taking holistic, strengths-based approaches. However, it does not address what one does should the situation not allow (for example, there is no interpreter), nor is it directly pertinent to EP practice.

Mercieca (2009) addresses the question of EP competence, but not specifically concerning asylum-seeking or refugee children. They problematise the expert model, arguing for a curious, 'not-knowing' position. In doing so, they suggest that psychologists are better able to navigate complexity in casework. Through uncertainty, they claim possibilities remain open to exploration. However, details of how or what to explore are not addressed.

2.5.4 Ecosystemic perspectives

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) gives the practitioner a stimulus for what to explore. It is a model applied across health and social care as it incorporates biological and psychological perspectives, as well as the social context (Crawford, 2020).

The model organises nested systems of influence around the child. These include the proximal microsystem (e.g. family, peers, school) and move outwards to the more distal macrosystem (e.g.

laws, culture, the economy). The mesosystem refers to the interconnectedness of factors in the microsystem (e.g. the school-parent relationship). The model supports the conceptualisation of factors influencing development and outcomes for a child. A development of the model—PPCT (person-process-context-time)—includes the dimension of time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Both EST and PPCT are complex and descriptive, making it challenging to apply in practice. Both fail to address causal mechanisms, with power dynamics and causes of oppression notable examples pertinent to asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Literature applying an ecosystemic perspective identifies threats and protective factors, processes and interconnections, and points of possible intervention. Paat (2013) argues that by not working ecosystemically, we arrive at an incomplete representation of the unique context for immigrant families. By applying PPCT, Paat shows that one can identify targeted interventions, such as supporting preferred pathways for assimilation or facilitating improved parent-school communications. Mayer (2022) applies PPCT to early years childcare for asylum-seeking children in Israel. They use it to demonstrate the impact of lack of policy and support for a vulnerable group facing intersectional marginalisation, and how those factors manifest in poor-quality community-led childcare provision.

Arakelyan and Ager (2021) and Crawford (2020) map EST to the refugee context, showing how a range of issues including race discrimination, time (for example, of processing applications), physical resources (such as housing) and family context (including separation or cohesion) might impact wellbeing. Through this analysis, opportunities for intervention and support can be highlighted and prioritised, offering a framework for professionals (particularly in a multidisciplinary context) to co-ordinate and align their work.

Although there are useful parallels, none of these papers apply EST or PPCT to education specifically. Hart (2009) does this by drawing on a vignette of individual casework and literature to understand the impact of trauma on education. The article offers suggestions for interventions around trauma in education. The use of a vignette and a review of literature requires consideration of the author's perspective and the quality of the literature used.

Papers discussing EST and PPCT primarily review existing literature, with Mayer (2022) and Hart (2009) each having an interaction with single cases. Only Hart (2009) speaks from a UK or an EP perspective, which is particularly important given the contextual nature of the ecosystemic model under discussion. The papers offer insights into questions to be asked by assessment, but not the approaches to answering them.

Bringing ecosystemic thinking together with other theories begins to address the question of what to explore and how to do it. Systemic factors such as experiences of trauma (ongoing and historical), cultural adaptation (or acculturation) and the impacts of political contexts feature in many studies. When these are considered alongside practitioner values and competencies, we begin to develop an understanding of how EPs might approach this area of work.

For instance, studies cite trauma as particularly pertinent to the asylum-seeking or refugee experience (Crawley, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2013; van Os et al., 2020). They advocate for exploring histories with sensitivity and a therapeutic approach. The process of adaptation to a new culture is also frequently referred to in the literature. Sam and Berry (2010) provide a model of acculturation which describes degrees and impacts of cultural adaptation. Røn Larsen (2024) and Mercieca and Mercieca (2022) consider how EPs might navigate political contexts and find space for socially just practice in casework.

These papers offer perspectives to inform general approaches, but they fall short of giving guidance specific to EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

2.6 Rationale for the Research

The literature suggests that EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children should carefully consider the appropriateness of different approaches and tools. However, there is a lack of guidance or appropriate tools identified within the literature which can be applied to EPs practising in England. The literature points suggests a need for EPs to develop specific understanding and cultural competence to effectively support asylum-seeking and refugee communities. However, existing assessment tools and approaches—alongside working and living within a politically ‘hostile’ context—might lead to biased practices and conclusions. This study speaks to this concern by developing a set of principles to inform practice, and by exploring the factors shaping EP assessment in this context.

2.7 Research Question

The research question is:

How should EPs assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England?

Within this overall question, the study explores the following:

- What are the principles that should guide EP practice when undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England?

- What factors shape the needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England, and how can EPs navigate these?

Reflection Box 6: Developing the Research Question

Agee (2009) argues that developing and refining research questions is an iterative and reflective process in qualitative research. My question has developed as my expectations of what I would find evolved. My original questions were:

- What should EPs consider when undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England?
- What approaches are considered good practice for EPs to use to assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England?
- How should EPs communicate the needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England?

I expected the reporting of assessment outcomes to be a central concern. This was not reflected in the data. I also considered it important to ask about 'good' practice, but as the research progressed, this term was not used or needed - the findings became less about specific practices and more about values, professional considerations and systemic factors.

Within the qualitative paradigm, the research question helps to clarify the purpose of the research and situate it within the broader literature (Agee, 2009). My experience during the research process has been that the research question has helped develop my thinking, supported my construction of themes and principles, and supported by evaluation of the study's implication.

Reflection Box 7: England or UK

When recruiting to the study, I did not stipulate to participants that they should be based in England (**Appendix H**). The aim of developing principles for EPs in England was communicated through the Participant Information Sheet (**Appendix I**). This recognises that views from outside the England context are valuable, but that the construction of principles might reflect the English education systems and policies. In fact, the final principles do not explicitly refer to England but are contextualised within the UK immigration context. This is further discussed as a limitation of the research in **Section 6.4**.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter situates the thesis within the philosophical positions of critical realism (CR), pragmatism, and critical race theory (CRT). The research was initially positioned within a CR concern for how structural mechanisms lead to a specific problem—that of how we undertake educational psychological needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. The chapter shows that the concern shifted towards a more pragmatic focus on how to materially improve assessment practices. The chapter describes how the application of CRT principles evolved from just providing a lens to that of being a central tenet of the research design and outcomes.

The chapter outlines the chosen methodology which uses a modified Delphi method to develop a set of principles, and reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to consider overarching themes.

3.2 Philosophical Positioning

This research aims to make material change to the experiences and outcomes of asylum-seeking and refugee children undergoing EP assessment in England. At its heart is a commitment to improving outcomes for a group in society that are one of the most marginalised. The philosophical paradigms of pragmatism and CR, and the principles of CRT align in their shared commitment to promoting social justice, while offering complementary underpinnings for key methodological decisions.

Pragmatism focuses on practical outcomes over metaphysical or theoretical concerns. For some, pragmatism involves rejecting concerns about epistemological positions and describes knowledge as a learnt response to external influences. For many pragmatists, these learnt responses are not representative of reality and may or may not represent 'truth' (Elder-Vass, 2022). Truth is viewed as mutable and contextual, determined by historical circumstance, becoming that which benefits us (Rorty, 1982).

Pragmatists have differed in how they view the ontological basis of the paradigm, with some arguing that reality is in a state of flux, and others rejecting the need for ontological positioning altogether (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). Dewey (1910) and Rorty (1982) see our experience and knowledge of the world as being intertwined and the focal point of interest for research and discussion, with questions of reality being inconsequential, or even unanswerable (Morgan, 2014).

Pragmatism demands that methodological decisions are shaped by our current understanding of the world and with the aim of creating new knowledge resulting in material change. It does not prescribe a methodological approach, but rather argues that the method and design should be shaped by focusing on what would work best for the particular question being asked (Elder-Vass, 2022; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This methodological pluralism reflects the pluralism found in many of the assumptions and schools of thought within the philosophy—a frequently cited criticism (DeForge & Shaw, 2012).

The pragmatist rejection of the need for epistemological and ontological considerations is attractive in its simplicity, but this leaves us with a philosophical vacuum when making decisions relating to the treatment of data (or knowledge). I argue that research requires some view of the nature of reality and so there will necessarily be an ontological assumption—better to acknowledge and critique this than to ignore it. CR is frequently coupled with pragmatism as it aligns with the axiological view of pragmatism that research should strive for social justice (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). Furthermore, it offers the otherwise pragmatist researcher an ontological and epistemological clarity (Archer et al., 1998; Lawani, 2020).

This research adopts a CR philosophy in acknowledging the existence of causal mechanisms, and differentiating between the ‘real’ (ontological realism) and relative truth (epistemic relativism) (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). In other words, I take the position that EPs are practising within a real context with constraints and drivers impacting their work. The research does not strive to identify ‘best’ practice given the relative way individuals come to understand this over time and within contexts. I commit to pragmatism in prioritising material change in practice, and CR in exploring underlying mechanisms.

CRT is defined by Bhopal (2023) as:

‘[centring] racism as an endemic aspect of society that works because of, rather than despite the existence of, White privilege’

(Bhopal, 2023, p. 123)

Endeavouring to address racism ‘head on’ (Charura & Clyburn, 2023, p. 1), this research initially adopted CRT as a lens. As it progressed, CRT took a central position in shaping the methodology and the findings. Aligning with pragmatism and CR, CRT foregrounds material social change and necessitates a methodology which seeks to address issues of whiteness and the marginalisation of narratives (Graham et al., 2011). My positionality as a white researcher with no personal experience of migration is problematic, as is the sidelining of lived experience and seeking ‘expert’ opinion. The risk is that whiteness and societal privilege are perpetuated, contradicting

the aim of social justice. It is recognised that this cannot be entirely ameliorated, but through explicitly applying principles of CRT, the participants and I are continually prompted to reflect on, and be held accountable for, our positionalities.

Reflection Box 8: Wrestling with Philosophy

CRT has shifted in my research. I had not anticipated the extent to which it would make sense of methodological decisions, analyses and findings. For instance, where I felt unease about having to take a particular route (e.g. not researching directly with asylum-seeking or refugee children), CRT articulated to me the reason for this unease and challenged me to consider my rationale for this.

The philosophical positioning of this research has been important in driving my decisions and understanding how it relates to the wider world. Therefore, it was important to me that I understood how three perspectives all seemed to speak to the direction I was taking. I wanted to draw out how the perspectives align and overlap, and in doing so, better articulate how the current study is shaped by all three.

The research is situated across three philosophical paradigms and is positioned such that it reflects their commonalities. The following illustrates how these each manifest within the research.

3.2.1 *What matters is that which changes*

The research prioritises findings which lead to real-world improvements. Pragmatism foregrounds practical consequences over ontological concerns (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). CR can be described as an approach whereby a societal problem is identified, causal structural factors are uncovered, and a positive alternative is proposed (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). CRT understands the societal problem as being that of racism, and a structural cause to be white supremacy mediated by mechanisms such as economic determinism and grand narratives (Graham et al., 2011; Savas, 2013). Taking a position in research which foregrounds material change within a professional qualification can, Kaushik and Walsh (2019) argue, support the development of evidence-based practice. Such real-world changes speak to the political activism and social justice prioritised by CRT (Chadderton, 2013).

Methodologically, pragmatism argues for a ‘whatever works best’ approach, whereas CR suggests that qualitative methods allow for a deeper understanding of mechanisms, while quantitative methods can test out these mechanisms (Lawani, 2020). CRT aligns most closely with pragmatism in this respect, arguing for the examination and remedying of unequal outcomes rather than endeavouring to change individuals’ beliefs.

This research seeks to inform professional practice so that ultimately (although not tested within this research) outcomes for asylum-seeking and refugee children are improved. By developing guidance for practitioners, and by applying principles of CRT throughout, it engages directly at a

point of possible change. The use of RTA to consider factors impacting on this area of work aligns with the CR pursuit of understanding underlying mechanisms in society.

3.2.2 We should seek to understand perceptions and experience

The research seeks views and experiences as a way of generating a shared knowledge of the issue. This means that the site of investigation is the experiencing and interpreting of events. Taking a CR position, it acknowledges that although there is a reality, the actual (events) can only be known and understood at the point of experience (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). Drawing from pragmatism, it prioritises experience in real-world contexts over the positivist pursuit of ‘truth’. Pragmatism argues that ‘real’ and ‘truth’ are labels which can be functionally useful but should not be the endeavour of research (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Elder-Vass, 2022).

CRT takes an anti-essentialist stance, pointing to the unique intersectionality of individual narratives (Savas, 2013). It calls for the foregrounding of global majority narratives as counternarratives to the prevailing whiteness of accepted knowledge (Chadderton, 2013; Graham et al., 2011). Hearing the voices of asylum-seeking and refugee families is important. However, material change to the assessment outcomes for asylum-seeking and refugee children is more readily possible through intervention at the point of professional practice. This research focuses on finding ways of improving this through a set of guiding principles for EPs.

3.2.3 Research and knowledge construction is iterative and changing

CRT asks for ongoing reflection—understanding our histories and continually questioning ourselves and the structures surrounding us (Graham et al., 2011; Savas, 2013). It does not reach a conclusion but rather is a perpetual process of striving towards greater social justice (Chadderton, 2013). CR points to the relationship between the individual and social world as being a dialectical, iterative process of change (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Elder-Vass, 2022). Pragmatism asks that we accept knowledge as tentative and that we move from states of belief, through the unsettled ‘not knowing’ (Elder-Vass, 2022). Inquiry is the attempt to arrive at a settled state of belief again (DeForge & Shaw, 2012).

This research is concerned with understanding the problem within a contemporary context. By seeking personal narratives and opinions, it prompts participants to situate their claims within their own experiences and context, before using this data to develop a shared understanding—or knowledge—of effective practice. It does not claim to find a ‘best’ practice, but rather a set of principles which inform. The Delphi method, followed by RTA, make explicit the iterative and changing nature of knowledge construction.

3.2.4 Research should promote social justice

CR makes claims to being emancipatory and socialist in its history, arguing that research should uncover fallacies which serve the interests of dominant societal groups (Elder-Vass, 2022).

Pragmatism values research which has consequences for people's lives, with a particular focus on promoting social justice (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). CRT demands practical change and shows that existing liberal structures, policies and laws do not go far enough to address racism (Savas, 2013). It argues that other perspectives are necessarily racist given the whiteness of their histories and existing power structures (Chadderton, 2013) and challenges research to centre social justice more overtly.

By focusing on asylum-seeking and refugee children, the research is concerned with improving outcomes for a marginalised group who face significant disadvantage, and which are overlooked in much of the existing research and policy literature.

3.2.5 Philosophical tensions

There are points of tension between these three positions impacting on the study:

My positionality

As a white researcher with no personal experience of migration, the research presents a contradiction to CRT in contributing to the prevailing whiteness of accepted knowledge (Chadderton, 2013; Graham et al., 2011). The research seeks to mitigate this through transparent application of CRT principles and honest reflection, but ultimately this tension remains.

Recruitment

The research seeks 'expert' knowledge and failed to recruit asylum-seeking and refugee participants. This aligns with pragmatism in looking to the point at which change is most easily impacted—i.e. with those in a position of power (professionals). This fails to address social injustice in the field of research or foreground marginalised perspectives.

The complex intersectionality of the asylum-seeking and refugee children this study seeks to support makes this a challenging commitment. To address the research question from a position of lived experience would entail having specific experiences of migration and EP assessment. Often, children and families undergo a single EP assessment, navigating a process that lacks transparency.

Exploratory literature review

To develop the first Delphi survey, an exploratory literature review further perpetuated whiteness in this research. To align more closely with CRT, a focus group discussion with asylum-seeking and refugee participants was considered, but the pragmatic decision was taken to conduct a desk-top exercise (for reasons of time and resource).

3.3 Overview of Research Stages

The research methodology includes a modified Delphi study and an RTA. Within the Delphi study, there is an exploratory literature review, a Round One Survey with RTA, and a Round Two Survey.

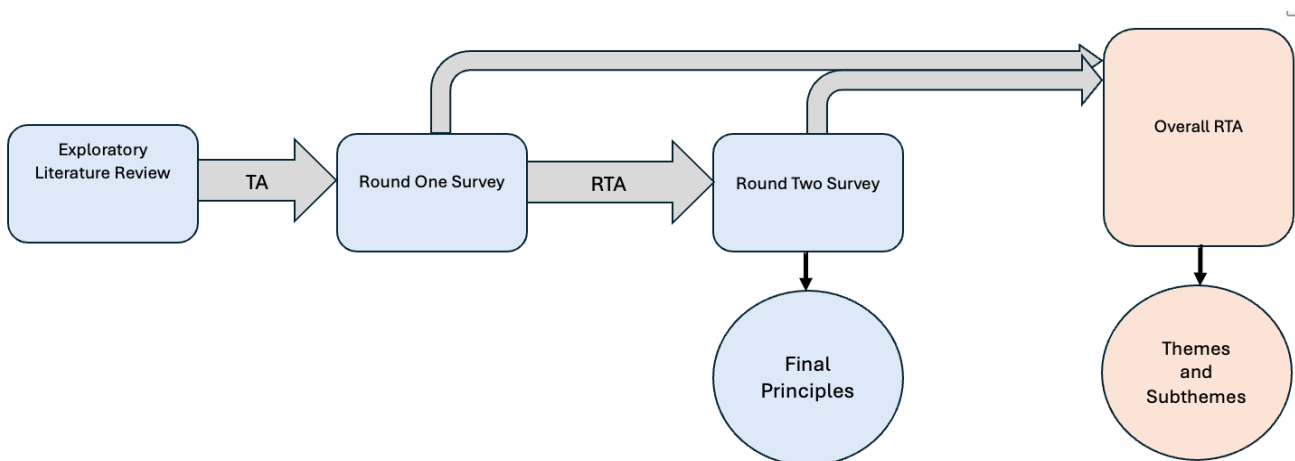
Following the Delphi study, the data from the surveys were analysed through RTA to develop overall themes.

Figure 1 shows stages of the research, along with signposting to the sections of the thesis associated with each.

Figure 1

Research Stages

	Research Stage	Described in:
Delphi study	Exploratory Literature Review and analysis	Section 3.5 Exploratory Literature Review
	Round One Survey	Section 4.2 Round One Analysis
	Round Two Survey	Section 4.3 Round Two Analysis
	Final principles	Section 4.4 Final Principles
Overall RTA	Overall RTA of combined data set	Chapter 5: Overall Analysis and Discussion



3.4 The Delphi Method

The stimulus for this research was the suggestion that I explore the phenomenology of the asylum-seeking or refugee child with SEN. Through casework experience my focus shifted from asking ‘what does it feel like?’ to ‘how can this be better?’, or even ‘how can I be better?’. I considered larger-scale, quantitative approaches to gather data on the practices and outcomes of EP assessment, but feared this would answer the ‘what’ but not the ‘why’ of how EPs practise. I was concerned that such an approach would lack depth and nuance in how EP assessment is shaped, oversimplifying a complex topic (van Zyl et al., 2023). I also considered interviews or focus groups with EPs. I rejected interviews as I was concerned that I would only be able to capture the views of two or three participants and that this might lead to perspectives from very specific contexts. I had practical concerns about gathering EPs together for focus groups, as well as a concern that this may lead to some views dominating (Baillie, 2019)

The Delphi method aligns with the pluralistic and outcome focus of pragmatism, with particular usefulness in working with groups towards finding solutions (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Participants give views independently, while also having opportunities to consider the views of the wider group as rounds of opinion-gathering progress. It is completed asynchronously so that participants can respond within a flexible timeframe. The approach also allows for participants to apply findings immediately, offering ‘timely action towards meaningful change’ (Greason, 2018, p. 7).

The Delphi method refers to participants as ‘experts’ deemed to have the knowledge and experience to offer informed contributions (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Skulmoski et al., 2007). In this research, ‘experts’ are termed ‘participants’, and inclusion criteria were set through an exploratory literature review that considered the research questions in light of CRT. For instance, the research aimed to prioritise marginalised voices and/or professionals with personal experience of asylum-seeking (Delgado et al., 2017).

This study uses a qualitative, modified Delphi approach. It is qualitative in asking for narratives and experiences. Ranking questions are used, but these merely offer ordinal insight to preferences, rather than giving data relating to magnitude. The approach is modified in using an ‘on-the-go’ recruitment strategy, whereby participants were recruited between rounds (Boel et al., 2021).

Delphi studies typically involve a qualitative first round survey (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009). In this study, using qualitative survey questions allowed participants to share experiences and their

positionality in alignment with CRT and CR. The method of analysis for Round One was reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and this supported the aim of generating themes which align with the principles of CRT. The Round Two survey was developed from these themes and participants generated a shared understanding of a set of principles to guide EP practice. In Round Two, participants were still encouraged to share narratives around their experiences. A further question in this round recognised the sociopolitical context by asking participants to speak to how their practice was being influenced by nationwide events indicative of a rise in nationalistic sentiment (Addley, 2025; Lawson & Jefford, 2025). Final principles were drafted from Round Two responses, and participants had opportunity to review these before they were finalised.

Referring to the combined philosophical perspectives outlined in **Sections 3.2.1-3.2.4**, this methodology can be seen to align in the following ways:

- The focus is on reaching a set of principles that can be directly implemented into EP practice (i.e. driving *change*) (Greason, 2018) with the aim of improving assessment and, in turn, outcomes.
- The questions ask participants to provide narratives and draw on their personal and professional *experiences and perspectives*. The data sought is rich and nuanced, encompassing participants' values and beliefs, as well as retelling of events.
- The process is *iterative* within the methodology, but also beyond the scope of this study. The Round Two survey built on Round One, with participants being asked to consider what has come before to inform their further contributions. The addition of a question in Round Two relating to current events recognises that there is an *evolution in knowledge*—it is not static—influenced by external realities. The aim of the study is to find principles which guide and inform, rather than a fixed set of steps—recognising that practice and our knowledge about practice, evolves and grows on previous experiences and *changing contexts*.
- The research focuses on improving assessment practices of EPs so that asylum-seeking and refugee children are better supported in accessing and progressing in education. It seeks to address a *systemic injustice* first articulated by a Principal EP and borne out in the literature review in **Chapter 2** of this thesis.

There are limitations in using the Delphi method for this research. Firstly, the process demands a high degree of engagement from participants, with high drop-out rates often seen between rounds (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019). In this study, participant numbers were low but relatively stable between each round. To mitigate reduced participation rates, participants were informed of what was expected from the outset, and the design allowed for further recruitment between rounds.

Boel et al. (2021) supports this ‘on-the-go’ recruitment approach, arguing that it leads to better representation of opinions and reduces the chance of a false consensus. Secondly, small sample sizes and the targeting of ‘expert’ views means that findings are not broadly generalisable (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019). This research recognises that findings are a consensus view from a group of professionals, with the aim of informing EP practice. The initial survey and findings are situated within the extant literature so that readers can evaluate where and how it aligns with a broader understanding of the topic.

3.5 Exploratory Literature Review

An exploratory literature review provides a primary understanding from which the Delphi method can build (Fathullah et al., 2023). Where a topic has controversies or lacks evidence, this stage can reduce the number of rounds needed and gives a theoretical structure to the surveys while retaining an exploratory nature (Furtado et al., 2024). Here it generated questions for Round One of the Delphi surveys (Istiko et al., 2024; Snyder, 2019), defined the target population (‘experts’), and developed a list of CRT principles to shape survey design, responses, and analysis. This approach aligns with pragmatism in recognising that the first round, although primarily qualitative in nature, should still have a structure which leads towards a consensus of principles. An entirely open-ended survey risked responses not fully addressing the research question, or participants feeling unsure where to start in such a broad topic. It aligns with CR in having search and review criteria which recognise that context conditions should be considered, and accepts that these criteria are constructed and applied by the researcher.

An exploratory literature review was chosen over a more comprehensive systemic literature review as the methodology for this study sits within the qualitative paradigm. This recognises the presence of the researcher and the way I interact with the researched (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). An exploratory approach recognised my positionality and the pragmatic aims of the research, allowing for an iteration of discovery and further searching.

Another approach considered was to seek the views of asylum-seeking and refugee people to shape the survey. I consulted with a qualitative researcher group³ who raised concerns about engaging a marginalised group without any direct reward to them for their time, and that recruitment would be particularly challenging within the timescales available.

The exploratory literature review sought answers to the following questions:

³ The group is part of a longitudinal, multi-strand health research study based in the local area of my placement. The qualitative researcher group meets quarterly to share ideas and discuss issues around qualitative research.

1. What existing guidance is there to inform EP assessment practice relating to the research question?
2. Who should the research target as 'experts' on the Delphi group?
3. What are the principles of CRT in relation to conducting research on this topic?

Appendix B shows the search terms used. In summary the terms "asylum-seeker", "assessment", "guidance", "SEN" and "educational psychologist" formed the bases of searches for questions 1 and 2, and "critical race theory", "framework", "research" and "educational psychologist" formed the bases of searches for question 3. Results from database searches (StarPlus, Scopus and PubMed) were evaluated, with books and reviews removed from the list. A further search was conducted using government and organisation sites (e.g. gov.uk and The Bell Foundation) for questions 1 and 2 using the same search terms described above and a separate grey literature list was generated. This resulted in 275 papers. These were evaluated for how 'useful' they were to answering the questions.

Table 1 summarises the numbers of papers and ratings for 'usefulness'.

For Q1 and Q2, 'usefulness' was defined according to the following criteria:

- The paper is accessible in English;
- Needs assessment of asylum-seeking or refugee people is described and evaluated – this might be educational, psychological, social or health;
- The context of the paper is not too dissimilar to the current England context;
- The study is not too specific in scope;
- The paper is published and peer-reviewed.

Examples of rejected papers include:

- a small study on deaf children in a particular school;
- a description of community-based participatory research methods;
- master theses;
- a discussion of language development in people who were not asylum-seeking or refugee people.

For Q3, 'usefulness' was defined according to the following criteria:

- The paper sets out principles or criteria to describe CRT for research;
- The paper describes CRT within an education context;

- The paper applies CRT to allied professional practice (i.e. education, psychology, health or social work).

Reflection Box 9: Defining ‘usefulness’

The looseness of this term was only brought to my attention upon completion of the Delphi study. On reflection, it was a term I had used when sifting and sorting through the literature with little confusion over what I meant—I just had not articulated it. The meaning shifted slightly as the search progressed—for instance, initially I was seeking specific EP tools and approaches to assessment, but I found that there was a lack of evidence for this. Therefore, I accessed evidence from related professional fields (such as social work). This iterative approach provided a broader perspective which informed the definition of ‘expert’.

Table 1

Results of Exploratory Literature Search

Literature review research question	Useful	Partially useful	Rejected - Irrelevant	Rejected – Too specific	Rejected – not published	Total papers
EP assessment practices (Q1 and Q2)	33	13	7	2	2	57
CRT (Q3)	7	1	-	-	-	8

Appendix B shows the list of papers and rating of usefulness for Q1 and Q2.

For Q1 and Q2, papers were reviewed and coded (**Appendices B and C**), prioritising the ‘useful’ papers first. At the point where new codes ceased to be generated, the review was stopped (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024; Snyder, 2019). For instance, papers were evaluated for their reference to approaches of needs assessment including the following codes:

- Assessment of native language competence;
- Assessment over time;
- Dynamic assessment;
- Ecosystemic approach

Coding was applied when papers explicitly referred to an approach. For example, Patel et al. (2018, p. 41) which states that approaches such as dynamic assessment are more valid than others. Coding was also applied where an approach was described, but perhaps not with the specific terminology. For example, I understood the approaches described by Khawaja and Howard (2020) and Nielsen and Vinner (2023) as ecosystemic perspectives.

Following coding, I developed possible questions and considered whether codes gave any indication of how the research should define ‘experts’ (**Appendix D**). For example, to explore

dynamic assessment, the question proposed was ‘Do you use dynamic assessment? If so, how?’. I shared the coding and analysis, along with the developed questions with my research supervisors. We discussed any questions which seemed to duplicate or lacked clarity, arriving at a final set of questions.

This was used to shape Round One of the Delphi surveys (**Appendix J**) and inform a targeted recruitment process (as described in **Appendix G** and **section 3.6**).

For Q3 (What are the principles of CRT in relation to conducting research on this topic?) the high degree of consensus and the low number of papers allowed for a more direct construction of principles (see **Appendix C** - codebook - and **Appendix F** - development of CRT principles).

Table 2 shows how papers generated specific codes, leading to principles or impacting on the methodology. For instance, the principle ‘Racism is pervasive’ was developed from coding in three papers Daftary (2018); Chadderton (2013); Boutin-Foster (2022).

Table 2

Relationship between literature, codes and impact on research

Code	Papers	Principle or impact on methodology
Whiteness is a tangible commodity with significant value	Daftary (2018) National Association of School Psychologists (2021)	Whiteness has value
CRT does not posit that all White individuals are racist and all racially minoritized individuals are oppressed CRT is not an attempt to make people feel negative about their own race	Daftary (2018) National Association of School Psychologists (2021)	No race is superior to any other CRT does not generalise experiences
CRT does not imply that one race is superior or inferior to another	Daftary (2018) National Association of School Psychologists (2021)	No race is superior to any other
CRT calls for the foregrounding of the unique voice of colour and the need for counternarratives	Daftary (2018)	CRT does not generalise experiences. CRT demands that we listen to diverse voices
Intersectionality supports anti-essentialism so that no two people experience the world in the same way	Daftary (2018)	CRT does not generalise experiences CRT demands that we reject the idea that people are defined by inherent ‘essences’ CRT demands that we acknowledge individual differences
Racism is so pervasive that it is considered normal and so is often unnoticed	Daftary (2018) Chadderton (2013); Boutin-Foster (2022)	Racism is pervasive

Code	Papers	Principle or impact on methodology
Anti-oppressive practice demands that we assess the use of race-based algorithms and ask how racism is impacting on professional interactions	Daftary (2018) National Association of School Psychologists (2021) Boutin-Foster (2022)	Racism is pervasive Laws don't go far enough CRT demands that we look for bias in systems
Liberal policies and laws do not go far enough as they only address overt forms of racism	Daftary (2018)	Laws don't go far enough
CRT demands that self-awareness and reflection is ongoing	Daftary (2018)	CRT demands that engage in ongoing reflection
CRT demands that we remain aware of and critical of racist histories	Daftary (2018)	CRT demands that we question racist histories
CRT highlights the influence of structural determinism	Daftary (2018) Graham et al. (2011)	Racism is pervasive Laws don't go far enough CRT demands that we look for bias in systems
Race inequality supports the interests of the dominant group in society	Daftary (2018) Graham et al. (2011)	Whiteness has value
The dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times	Daftary (2018) Graham et al. (2011)	Whiteness has value Racism is pervasive CRT demands that: • self-awareness and reflection is ongoing. • we remain aware of, and critical of, racist histories.
Narrative grounds topics to a specific place and moment shared from a personal vantage point	Daftary (2018)	CRT demands that we: • Listen to diverse voices • Acknowledge individual differences
Anti-oppressive practice asks that we call out behaviours which perpetuate racism	Daftary (2018) National Association of School Psychologists (2021) Boutin-Foster (2022)	Laws don't go far enough Racism is pervasive CRT demands that we look for bias in systems
Racism is permanent	Daftary (2018) Chadderton (2013); Boutin-Foster (2022)	Racism is pervasive
CRT focuses on examining and remedying disparate outcomes rather than changing individuals' beliefs	Daftary (2018) Graham et al. (2011)	Aligns with pragmatism
Race is a social construct but CRT does not deny the real implications race has on lives	Daftary (2018) Graham et al. (2011)	Aligns with CR
Social justice is central to CRT	Daftary (2018) Graham et al. (2011)	Aligns with CR
It is important to acknowledge and make transparent our own privileges and marginalised identities	Daftary (2018) National Association of School	Embedded within the methodology

Code	Papers	Principle or impact on methodology
	Psychologists (2021)	
Questions specific to racialisation should be asked throughout research	Daftary (2018)	Embedded within the methodology

An initial draft of the CRT principles was shared at a qualitative researcher group (see **footnote 3**). Presenting these led to feedback from the group that the language and ideas were inaccessible and I was asked in the moment to explain using my own words and interpretation. In doing so, I was able to clarify how CRT was being positioned within this study and how I, the researcher, was responding to CRT and using this to shape the research. This discussion led to a final version using more accessible language (**Figure 2** and **Reflection Box 10**). The CRT principles were then explicitly shared within the surveys and applied to subsequent stages of the research design and analysis.

Figure 2

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other Racism is pervasive Whiteness has value CRT does not generalise experiences Laws don't go far enough	CRT demands that we: • Engage in ongoing reflection • Question racist histories • Look for bias in systems • Listen to diverse voices • Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences' • Acknowledge individual differences
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Reflection Box 10: Being 'Allowed' to Speak of CRT

As described in Reflection Box 2, this experience clarified my understanding of CRT. The discussion also helped me reflect on why I struggled to use my own words, and that I was feeling uncomfortable in doing so as a white researcher. I came to realise that if my research was to be positioned in this way, I would need to accept the challenges of addressing what CRT would mean for *me* in *my* research, and navigate the discomfort, the conflicts, and the limitations in doing so.

Using an exploratory literature review in this research has its limitations. The traditional Delphi method does not prescribe how this first step should be undertaken, and so choosing a literature review (rather than, say, a focus group) is the choice of the researcher, thus reflecting my own positionality (Hasson et al., 2025). Given the recognition within this study that there is a bias towards certain epistemologies and methodologies within the literature (Rizvi, 2022), this perpetuates the problem. Furthermore, the definition and application of the definition for 'usefulness', and that the review ceased at the point at which I perceived 'saturation', are subjective decisions (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024).

Reflection Box 11: Reaching 'Saturation'

When I began the analysis, I anticipated a full review of all the literature identified. It was apparent at a relatively early stage that rather than generating new codes, I was adding to existing ones. I noticed that some codes had much higher numbers of references identified, and I became concerned that this might suggest a level of 'importance'. Conscious that this might reflect biases within the research base towards types of research, certain topics, or the positionalities of researchers, I chose to avoid any ranking of codes.

3.6 Participants

Recruitment was targeted in response to the exploratory literature review (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009; Skulmoski et al., 2007). **Appendix D** shows how codes indicated inclusion criteria. For example, the code 'Draw on expertise of other professionals' indicated the targeting of allied professionals; the code 'Importance of professional sharing cultural background' indicated the targeting of asylum-seeking and refugee people, as well as professionals who share culture, ethnicity or race with asylum-seeking and refugee communities. The principles of CRT informed the criteria (having lived experience), as well as contacts and networks (targeting those working directly with people from asylum-seeking and refugee communities).

Participants needed to be aged 18 years or over and satisfy at least one of these criteria:

- An assistant, trainee or qualified Educational Psychologist with experience of working with asylum-seeking or refugee children;
- A professional or volunteer with experience of supporting asylum-seeking or refugee people (e.g. psychologist, SALT, social worker, advice worker, EEWP)
- An academic or researcher in this field;
- Have personal experience of seeking asylum or refuge.

Recruitment was targeted through professional contacts, snowball sampling and social media pages (**Appendices G and H**). The poster, accompanied by text, was developed to email or post, and clarified the inclusion criteria along with an overview of what would be expected of participants. It included a link and QR code to the Round One survey.

The first round was primarily qualitative in nature, and so the smaller sample size (as shown in **Table 3**) still generated a rich data set (Malterud et al., 2016).

Participants were asked to review the Participant Information Sheet (**Appendix I**) and give consent at the beginning of each survey round.

Participant data for each Delphi round is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3*Participant Data*

Participant	Inclusion criteria identified	Positionality	Rounds
1	Educational Psychologist*	White British British citizen	1 and 2
2	Health professional**	White British UK citizen	1 and 2
3	Educational Psychologist	White British UK resident (born here)	1 and 2
4	Mental Health professional	White European Migrant Settled status Originates from country which is predominantly white and culturally similar to UK Raised in lower socioeconomic household and area	1
5	Educational Psychologist Social work professional	White British British citizen Lived overseas for 2 years “white middle aged European heterosexual cis gender male. Working class background, acquired middle class/professional status. Atheist” One parent from Black Country [Midlands], other Kent One parent care-experienced	1
6	Educational Psychologist Education background Academic/researcher Volunteer	White British British National	1 and 2
7	Educational Psychologist	Mixed race – Arabic and White British British national	2

*including trainee, main grade, assistant, senior, principal, lecturer/supervisor of trainees

**including primary care, public health, outreach

At the end of each round, participants gave consent to be contacted for further rounds, including a review of the final principles. Of the six participants who completed the Round One survey, two did not complete Round Two. There was an additional participant recruited to Round Two. All seven participants were sent the final principles for review. From this, two gave feedback—both were positive about the final principles, and one asked if they could use them in EP service training.

In both rounds, participants were asked to consider their positionalities in light of the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS model (Burnham & Nolte, 2019). I shared my own as an example but also to make clear my own positionality to participants (**Appendix K**). During Round One, three answered this question, whereas no participants shared this for Round Two. Responses describe

journeys, race and ethnicity, class, gender and education as contributing factors to their sense of privilege.

Although it has not been formally gathered, anecdotal reasons for participants either not participating at all, or not completing both rounds include: inaccessibility of the survey (many organisations including councils and the NHS, do not allow access to Google Forms); feeling a lack of 'expertise'; the time commitment required.

The recruitment process allowed for self-selection against the recruitment criteria. I considered asking for a level of experience for professionals but felt this would not recognise the different ways an individual may gain experience across personal and professional contexts. This was borne out as two participants answered from experiences gained in previous roles. I also considered asking for experience of migration more broadly, rather than of asylum-seeking or being a refugee. However, migration encapsulates a broad array of experiences.

Reflection Box 12: Migration or Asylum-seeking

This distinction was brought to my attention early in the research process (**Appendix A**). I encountered academic writing where researchers made claims about their 'insider' position (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) because they had migrated, or where the research conflated asylum-seeking and refugee status with migration status. I wanted the experience of asylum-seeking or refugee status to be foregrounded and distinct.

This recruitment process aligns with the philosophical positioning of the study in seeking the perceptions and experiences of voices not only from the EP profession and asylum-seeking or refugee experienced people, but from allied professionals who view the topic from a different position. In recruiting participants throughout the rounds and acknowledging previous roles, it recognises the iterative, evolving nature of knowledge creation.

3.7 Survey Design and analysis

Round One was developed from the codes of the exploratory literature review (as shown in **Appendices C-F**). **Appendix C** is the codebook from the analysis, listing all codes grouped under themes which became sections of the survey:

1. Professional skills, knowledge and experiences
2. Working with other professionals
3. Approaches to needs assessment
4. Understanding histories and journeys
5. Cultural considerations
6. Impact of status
7. Understanding trauma

8. Working with communities.

Appendix D shows how for each theme, possible questions were developed. For instance, in the theme 'Impact of status', the code 'Asylum-seeking and refugee families face discrimination when accessing services' led to the proposed question 'From your experiences, have you witnessed any of the following....?' (and goes on to lists aspects relating to other codes in that theme).

Appendix E shows two further iterations of survey development. A version of the questions, underpinned by the coding and theme development which generated them, was shared with research supervisors (as described in **section 3.5**) leading to revisions. These revisions and the final version of the survey are shown in **Appendix J**.

The questions were primarily qualitative in nature, although respondents were also asked rating questions using a Likert scale (Ogden et al., 2016). The Likert scales were used to show preferences for different approaches.

The survey was shaped by the philosophical positioning of the research in several ways. The use of Likert scales aligned with the pragmatic position in recognising this as a more direct route to reaching a consensus view on the importance of different assessment approaches. Nevertheless, much of the survey sought narratives, perceptions and experiences through open-ended questions. The survey also made clear to participants that this was a first round of an iterative construction of a shared understanding.

CRT informed the Round One Delphi survey in the following ways:

- Participants were explicitly informed that CRT would be shaping the research and that this would include the foregrounding of views and voices which speak to these principles (Savas, 2013).
- Participants were introduced to CRT principles and they were displayed at the start of each section to remind participants that they should consider these in their responses (Chadderton, 2013; Graham et al., 2011);
- Participants were not asked to identify their race or ethnicity against a list, but rather describe this on their own terms, recognising intersectionality and the social constructionist nature of race and ethnicity categorisation (Chadderton, 2013).
- Participants were invited to consider their own positionalities (Savas, 2013). I described my own and offered the model of Social GRRRAACCEESSS as a framework for them to reflect on theirs (Burnham & Nolte, 2019). It was important to understand the positionalities of

participants so that voices and experiences could be foregrounded, and so that the research could be transparent in whose voices were contributing to the construction of knowledge (Rizvi, 2022).

- Questions included subjects such as cultural competence and anti-racist practices, directly asking participants to speak to these concerns.
- Participants were asked at the end to offer any further suggestions for recruitment and to share how CRT may have shaped their thoughts and responses to the survey.

Qualitative responses to Round One were analysed using RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Alongside RTA, the Likert scale questions were analysed to construct a list of approaches in order of preference (Ogden et al., 2016).

The outcomes of these analyses informed Round Two of the Delphi survey (**Appendices M and N**). A discussion in supervision about the changing sociopolitical context and extensive commentary regarding racism and asylum-seeking and refugee people led to the reflection that I was feeling a need to modify my own practice (**Appendix A**). Therefore, I included an additional question asking participants for their experiences.

Participants in Round One were asked if they would be willing to be contacted again for Round Two (all did), and so these were emailed directly. Further recruitment was undertaken using the same channels as Round One (**Appendix G**).

In Round Two (**Appendix N**), following further opportunity for participants to share their positionality, the list of principles was stated in rank order and participants were asked to indicate agreement with the ordering, with opportunity to elaborate. Participants were then asked to review the more detailed descriptions of each principle and indicate their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale and give further narrative explanation. Analysis of this round focused on ensuring that the principles were drafted to reflect levels of agreement and qualitative responses.

All participants indicated they would like to review the draft principles before finalisation. Two responded (both positively), including one participant requesting to use the principles in staff training within their service. No further amendments were suggested and so the final principles were agreed.

Braun et al. (2021) describe qualitative online surveys as underutilised, pointing to the range and flexibility of questioning and, therefore, data that this method can incorporate. They reject the

criticism that the data is necessarily less rich than from other qualitative means. In this study, it allowed participants to offer their views without influence or concern from others (as might happen in a focus group), giving autonomy in how they conceptualise and articulate the issues and their own perspectives (Baillie, 2019). Limitations of the survey design in this study are that it was not piloted (due to time constraints), it was presented in English, and the first Round was lengthy to read and respond to.

3.8 Overall Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Following the completion of the Delphi study, qualitative data sets from both surveys was combined so that an RTA could be completed following the procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013). Aligning with CR, the aim of this stage was to reflect the rich nature of the data offered by participants, to capture the nuances, contradictions and tensions which are simplified through the Delphi process, and to construct an understanding of underlying mechanisms (Braun et al., 2021). A further aim was to mitigate the risk of participants feeling their contributions were lost through the consensus process.

The process for the full RTA is described in detail in section 5.2, but in summary followed these stages (Braun & Clarke, 2022):

1. **Familiarisation.** This involved reading through the data and recording initial reflections. At this stage, I was not trying to code, but rather getting to know the perspectives and ideas, and thinking about any latent meanings which may have not been noticed through the Delphi study.
2. **Generating codes.** A further reading involved noting codes for the text which seemed pertinent to the research questions. Initially this was completed comprehensively before being reviewed to ensure clarity of meaning and avoiding duplication.
3. **Searching for themes.** Codes were grouped into distinct subthemes, rather than having codes across more than one subtheme. This ensured that the subthemes were distinct from each other, but also that there was a clarity to the coding. Where I found that I wanted to assign a code to more than one subtheme, I reviewed the code to either separate it into different codes with meanings that sat in the distinct subthemes, or I clarified the meaning of the single code. For instance, initially the assessment of UASC featured across several codes. Participants, however, referred to this area of practice in specific terms and so I modified this to a code and a subtheme of its' own.

Although I was proactively referring to CRT throughout my reflections, I checked the subthemes against the CRT principles constructed for the surveys.

4. **Defining and naming themes.** There were different iterations of groupings and wordings as I constructed an arrangement of themes and subthemes which reflected their cross-cutting and overlapping nature.

Reflection Box 13: Meaning-making

This stage of analysis felt very different to the analyses undertaken during the Delphi process. There was greater consideration of latent meanings, and I noticed implicit commonalities across the data. For instance, I interpreted a sense of concern about lack of expertise or certainty from some participants. I reflected that many EPs only encounter casework with asylum-seeking or refugee children occasionally, and that this makes it challenging to develop practice in this area. Coding and the construction of themes also became descriptions of views and ideas, rather than needing to lead to a guiding principle. This allowed for nuance and uncertainty. For example, the theme 'Values and Beliefs' includes the subtheme 'awareness of own positionality'. This is a potentially confusing statement to include in guidance without the background understanding and work this would entail. However, I identified this as a recurring theme across many of the responses.

The following points critically evaluate the application of RTA in this qualitative study by addressing considerations outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021):

- Thematic analysis can be approached in myriad ways, so it is important to be specific about how and why data capture, coding, theme construction and so on is undertaken. In this study, the coding and theme construction was completed by just one researcher, with minimal supervisory involvement. This misses the opportunity for alternative perspectives and positionalities.
- This is my third research project using RTA and so I am familiar with the approach. Still, I returned to key papers and texts to refresh my understanding.
- RTA is methodologically aligned with online surveys (Braun et al., 2021). The surveys were designed as part of a Delphi study, however, and this may have influenced how they were shaped and responded to.
- RTA should be evaluated and situated within the philosophical positioning of the research. In this case, the reflexive aspect of the approach allowed for explicit consideration of my positionality and the application of CRT. Constructing themes interpreting underlying mechanisms aligns with CR.
- There is a risk in RTA that *description* is mistaken for *interpretation*, that *topics* are mistaken for *themes*, and that codes and themes are conflated. Having another researcher review the codes and themes could have mitigated this risk.

- RTA demands that researchers are active, transparent and situated within the analysis and construction of themes. Throughout the process, the use of supervision and reflections supports the transparency of my influence and shows my active engagement with the data in constructing themes.

3.9 Data Collection and Storage

The surveys were created using Google Forms, allowing storage on the university's secure drive. Anybody with a link and access to Google was able to complete the surveys. Some organisations restrict access to Google, and this caused difficulty for one participant that I know of. As many public sector organisations restrict employees from accessing Google applications, others (not known to me) may have tried and failed to access the survey. I attempted to access a university-supported alternative (Qualtrics) and despite allowing for this in the ethics application (**Appendix R**) and data management plan (**Appendix S**), this required a lengthy process to apply and gain access which would have significantly delayed the research. This was not feasible within the current study, but I would ensure this was in place were the research to be repeated.

Data were collected for Round One over a twelve-week period in Summer 2025 (the extended number of weeks was because it spanned July and August when many are on leave). Round Two was collected over a five-week period in Autumn 2025. Participants were informed that they could not withdraw after specific dates for each round as at these points data would be anonymised and analysed (**Appendix I**).

3.10 Quality

This study sits firmly within the qualitative paradigm, and so any evaluation of quality recognises that the methodology and claims are aligned with this. Kuper et al. (2008) offer questions which recognise that this is an interpretative, reflective process. **Sections 3.10.1 – 3.10.4** outline my reflections in response to their questions as a rigorous evaluation of the study's methodology.

3.10.1 *Is the sample aligned with the research question?*

The research asks how EPs should assess asylum-seeking and refugee children. Although the views of asylum-seeking and refugee people were sought, this was alongside a recognition that those with experience of assessing would be able to speak to the specifics of different approaches. The study would have greatly benefitted from the experiences and perspectives of asylum-seeking and refugee people, but the constraints of time and resource made this difficult.

3.10.2 Was the data collected appropriately?

As described previously, focus groups and interviews were considered and rejected (see **Section 3.4**). The use of Google Forms was a probable barrier for some (explained in **Section 3.9**). Participants were given many weeks to respond to each round so that they could give time and consideration to their responses. Participants were informed of how their data would be stored and their rights to withdraw (**Appendix I**).

3.10.3 Was analysis appropriate?

The study used RTA between Delphi rounds, as well as an overall RTA to construct overarching themes. The RTA approach and the iterative nature of this (moving through Delphi rounds to the overall RTA) aligns with the philosophical positioning of the research in being focused on a practical outcome (developing a set of principles for practice), recognising the iterative and changing nature of knowledge, and foregrounding experiences and perspectives.

3.10.4 Does it have implications for my own context?

The principles are directly applicable to my professional context as discussed in **Chapter 6**. The study recognises the sociopolitical landscape in the development of survey questions and the construction of themes.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Sheffield's Ethics Committee as shown in **Appendices R and T**.

The topic of asylum-seeking and refugees is not without controversy (Beckford, 2024; Duncan et al., 2024; Sleigh, 2024). During this research, media and political attention was significant, with ongoing hostility towards this group in society (BBC, 2025; Taylor, 2025; Walker & Grierson, 2025). This context, as well as the consideration of CRT when they responded, risked participants feeling conflicted, guilty or despairing. Personal contexts may have made it a particularly sensitive subject for some. The risk of triggering negative emotions was communicated clearly when they agreed to participate. At each stage of involvement, participants were able to withdraw and signposted to support (**Appendix I**). For instance, in case of feeling helpless, participants were signposted to opportunities for positive action, such as supporting charities, or other acts including information-sharing and awareness-raising in their organisations.

It was communicated to participants that although it was hoped that the research would generate impactful guidance, it may have failed in this endeavour. However, participants were alerted to the personal impacts of participating, regardless of wider implications (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019).

Participants were able to withdraw but were informed that at critical points (such as at analysis) their responses would be retained within the data set. For both survey rounds, participants re-affirmed consent. Data were collected, anonymised and stored according to the university's guidelines (**Appendix S**). Participants were informed of this when they agreed to take part.

Charura and Clyburn (2023) argue that social justice research necessitates the inclusion of voices of those with lived experiences of marginalisation, stating “no research on us, or about us, or to represent without us!” (Charura & Clyburn, 2023, p. 14). To directly address the question posed in this research, this would involve research with asylum-seeking and refugee children who experience EP assessment. To encapsulate the heterogeneity of this group, the research would have needed to engage with a significant sample size and have given time and space for participants to engage fully with, and respond to, the research question (O’Sullivan et al., 2023). The original question I wanted to pursue was that of understanding the impact of EP assessment approaches on asylum-seeking and refugee children. This would suggest a longitudinal approach beyond the timescales available. Without the reflections and post-assessment narratives of this group, or the positivist pre/post data to draw upon - alongside wanting the research to lead to material change—the question became one that demanded experience and knowledge of approaches to assessment. This would likely need to come from professionals working within, or allied to, the field. A continuing concern was to mitigate perpetuating whiteness in educational psychology (Williams, 2020) and in aiming to apply a CRT lens to the process and outcomes, the participant criteria was kept relatively open, actively seeking views from those with lived experiences and asking for rich, narrative responses (Chadderton, 2013; Graham et al., 2011).

Chapter 4: Delphi Study Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the development of principles for EP assessment practices of asylum-seeking and refugee children using a modified Delphi method. This stage of the research addresses the first part of the research question: What are the principles that should guide EP practice when undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England?

Combining the analysis and discussion in this chapter allows for a more authentic telling of the iterative nature of data collection and analysis, reflecting how my positionality and evolving knowledge interacted with the research process. Quoted extracts from surveys illustrate the analysis and are presented as written (without corrections) to preserve authenticity and flow.

Reflection Box 14: Structuring the Discussion

Initially I had planned to separate the findings from the discussion. This felt artificial — i.e. stating a finding without recognising my interpretative input and contextualising it within the literature did not truly reflect the process. The iterative cycle of forming questions, gathering data and then using this to inform further questions, involves consideration of the literature reviewed and my professional and academic understanding of the subject matter.

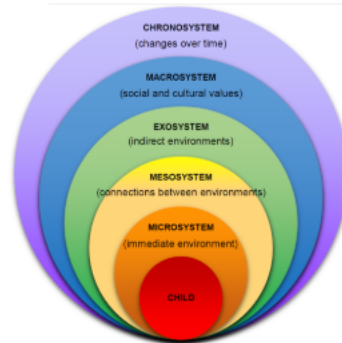
4.2 Round One Analysis

The process for developing questions for the Round One survey is described in **Section 3.5**, with the Round One survey shown in **Appendix J**. It asked participants to rate the importance of different approaches and tools drawn from the exploratory literature review. For each, participants were given brief overviews and then asked to rate their importance using a 5-point Likert scale - 5 indicating 'extremely important' and 1 'not at all'. **Figure 3** shows an example of this type of question. The average ratings are shown in **Table 4**.

Figure 3*Example Rating Question from Round One Survey*

How important is it that an ecosystemic view is taken when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

In other words, how much should assessment consider and address wider factors such as family, school, environment, culture, and so on?



1 2 3 4 5

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Table 4*Average Ratings for Round One Approaches and Tools*

Approach or Tool Rating Question	Average Rating Using a 5-point Likert Scale*
How important is it that assessment is carried out in a child's native language?	5.00
How useful are interpreters [...]**?	5.00
How important is it that assessment is carried out over time?	4.00
How important is it that a response to intervention approach is taken?	4.50
How important are dynamic assessment approaches [...]?	4.50
How important is it that an ecosystemic view is taken [...]?	5.00
How important is it that the approach [...] is hypothesis-driven?	3.50
How important is it that the approach [...] includes the child's views?	5.00
When gathering the views of [...] children, how important is it that they do this without their parent present?	3.50
How useful are cognitive and standardised assessments [...]?	2.00
How useful are language assessments [...]?	3.00
How useful are non-verbal assessments [...]?	3.50
How important is a strengths-based approach [...]?	4.50

*where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'extremely'

**Questions are shortened here for brevity.

The use of the child's native language and capturing child views were both rated most important, alongside taking an ecosystemic view and using interpreters. Of least importance was the use of cognitive and standardised assessments. These ratings reflect the research of Velasco Leon and Campbell (2020) and Khawaja and Wotherspoon (2022) who advocate for interviewing, observation or dynamic assessment, with the aim of gathering a more holistic view of the child over using potentially biased cognitive assessments.

Much of the survey asked for open-ended qualitative responses. For each tool or approach, participants were asked to elaborate and encouraged to offer narrative illustrations to enrich their responses (as shown in **Figure 3**). Participants' responses gave insight into their interpretation of the approach or tool, as well as how this might, or might not, be applied specifically to asylum-seeking and refugee children. For example:

"I take this approach with all children - it feels equally important"

Participant 1

"I think consideration of the wider systems within which a child lives is crucial: for a refugee family the extent to which stress affects the child's presentation will be significant, as will background worries about what is happening in the country of origin: other family members in danger or missing for example. The wider systems in the receiving country will also be very significant, and will be unfamiliar: a further source of stress which can contribute to a child not presenting at their most able."

Participant 5

These qualitative responses also indicated where a participant might not have felt able to answer, allowing a more sensitive interpretation than just rating questions:

"Can't answer that - seems EP specific."

Participant 2

Alongside tools and approaches, there were qualitative questions on other areas drawn from the exploratory literature review. For example, under the topic of 'Professional Skills, Knowledge and Experience', one question asked 'Do you think it is helpful or important for professionals to have similar cultural backgrounds to refugee or asylum-seeking communities? Why or why not?'

Questions encouraged rich and reflective answers, such as:

"Not necessarily. I think while some understanding of a persons culture can be helpful, I don't think it is substantially important. I work with people from so many different counties seeking asylum that I develop knowledge mainly from people that I work with. In many cases people I have worked with expressly state that they do not want to work with someone from the same cultural background. They have fled a country for a reason and sometimes people from the same background can be triggering. I think being non

judgemental, humble, asking and listening with respect and empathy is the most important thing.”

Participant 2

A further question— ‘Should professionals have specific understanding of a child’s home country or culture? Why or why not? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer’—sought narratives and experiences:

“In one lesson [...] children from ASR backgrounds were asked to study WW1 poetry [...] which included thinking about the sensory aspects of conflict. For children who had fled conflict and experienced significant trauma, I feel that teachers etc. need to be supported to be more aware of potentially distressing risks such as these.”

Participant 6

Qualitative responses were analysed using RTA. I recorded reflexive points in my research diary. The following entry explains my decision to analyse all qualitative data from this round as a single data set:

“Thinking about coding - whether it’s worth coding within the themes/sections of the questionnaire. Decided not to do this - to code it as one data set as some points may cross over.”

Extract from research diary

This decision is supported by Braun et al. (2021). It allowed for a different organisational structure of the topics should that be appropriate for Round Two.

Coding and theme development was initially analysed at a semantic level, but further readings and iterations of the process incorporated latent interpretations:

“As I read through, it is becoming more apparent that assumptions and routine practices can cause problems, and that the ‘not knowing’ is important [...] Perhaps the guidance is around how do you develop and maintain that curiosity and self-reflection [...] rather than which tools should you use?”

Extract from research diary

This reflection echoes the position of Mercieca (2009), advocating for a non-expert position.

Although there was a high degree of consensus, differences in view or nuance were captured and incorporated into the coding, themes and eventual questions for Round Two. For instance, responses to the question about whether children should be away from parents/carers when giving their views were complex:

“Depends on the situation, and I'm not sure this can be answered or even known before meeting the child. Having a parent/carer present may help the child feel more at ease and able to interact comfortably. I would ideally ask the child themselves what they prefer, which is what I do when I do any home visit.”

Participant 3

“Finding out any child's view without their parents/carers present is important, especially when there is not absolutely reliable information about who their parents are (possibility of being trafficked, for example) and whether social care and safeguarding need to be involved. Opportunity for disclosure of information without fear of parents is an entitlement for all children.”

Participant 5

The analysis recognised that this approach would need to be carefully considered and that Round Two should reflect this:

“Will code each opposing point and then this in itself [becomes] a theme [.....] and so can be a direct question for round 2.”

Extract from research diary

Table 5 shows how contradictory codes were interpreted within the theme, and how this was developed into a question, using the example of capturing child voice without parents/carers present.

Table 5

Example of Question Development for Round Two – Capturing Child Views

Codes	Theme	Question for Round Two	Example response from Round One to support understanding in Round Two
Assessments should include opportunity for the child to give views without parents present Capturing child views is always important It may not be appropriate to capture child views without parents present	Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present.	Capturing child views Principle: Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present. <i>How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')</i> <i>Do you have any more thoughts on this?</i> <i>Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?</i>	<i>I have mixed feelings about this- for some it might really help them feel safer and able to engage, however, on the other hand they might not feel able to be honest when their parent/ caregiver is present.</i>

Codes and themes were reviewed using CRT principles. This foregrounded two themes—anti-oppressive practice and cultural competence:

“In particular, being aware of our ‘whiteness’ and all of the assumptions we might make because of our positions. This feels like an important emerging theme [...]”

Extract from research diary

Data relating to this was detailed and nuanced. Within these themes, curiosity and self-reflection are encouraged, along with a commitment to anti-essentialism:

“I would be conscious of various factors which may influence how a child engaged in a cognitive and standardised assessment, including some less obvious factors such as whether their home language(s) are left-right or vice-versa, and various other cultural aspects (memory, language processing, visuo-spatial processes etc.) which may impact on how they approach and 'perform' in this kind of assessment.”

Participant 6

“Having an open mind and inclusive mentality, and challenging my thinking when I recognise I am being judgmental or making assumptions.”

Participant 3

“...it is also important to recognise that there is no such thing as a single 'English', 'Spanish' or whatever culture, and avoid generalisations or 'cultural heuristics (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005) and resorting to a "cookbook model of multicultural practice" (p.689) which draws upon a list of beliefs and behaviours characteristic of a certain group of people, thus ignoring within-group and individual variations.”

Participant 3

Codes including ‘being aware of Westernised perspectives’ and ‘recognising that cultures are diverse and nuanced’ speak directly to CRT principles.

Applying CRT highlighted a conflict in approaching the question of acculturation. The developed theme reflects this by holding two perspectives in mind—that acculturation can support feelings of belonging, but it is also problematic where it suggests that asylum-seeking and refugee people *need* to adopt the prevailing culture. This is shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6

Example of Question Development for Round Two – Acculturation

Codes	Theme	Question for Round Two	Example response from Round One to support understanding in Round Two
Acculturation affected by financial, health and other family factors Acculturation is a choice, not a need Cultural differences - lack of prior formal education Cultural differences - sleeping, eating and other domestic arrangements Cultural differences - social norms and acceptability Cultural differences - views on disability Cultural differences - views on education	Acculturation is not a need, but rather a choice. However, if an AS&R child is wanting to fit into the prevailing culture in their school or community, it may be hindered by factors such as financial barriers, health barriers or family. Professionals should be mindful of possible cultural differences as part of practicing in a culturally competent way. These may include: • Prior education (e.g. not formal) and views on education • Sleeping, eating and other domestic arrangements • Social norms and acceptability • Views on disability	Acculturation Principle: Acculturation should not be viewed as a need, but rather a choice. However, if an AS&R child is wanting to assimilate into the prevailing culture in their school or community, it may be hindered by factors such as financial barriers, health barriers or family. Professionals should be mindful of possible cultural differences as part of practicing in a culturally competent way. These may include: - Prior education (e.g. not formal) and views on education - Sleeping, eating and other domestic arrangements - Social norms and acceptability - Views on disability How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely') Do you have any more thoughts on this? Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?	<i>I think an AS or R child needs lots of information about the culture(s) in which they find themselves, so that they can decide for themselves the extent to which they want to assimilate into the host/dominant culture(s).</i>

Themes and proposed questions for Round Two were discussed in supervision. I reflected on the changing sociopolitical context and extensive media commentary regarding racism and asylum-

seeking and refugee people (Addley, 2025; Lawson & Jefford, 2025). This led to the reflection that professionally I was feeling a need to modify my practice (**Appendix A**). I included an additional question in Round Two asking participants to reflect on their own practice considering recent events and the sociopolitical climate.

4.3 Round Two Analysis

Round Two presented the outcomes of Round One analysis and asked for levels of agreement and further commentary. Following further opportunity for participants to share their positionality (which had no responses this time), the list of principles was stated in rank order (**Figure 4**) derived from Round One results shown in **Table 4**. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement to the ordering, with opportunity to elaborate on their response.

Figure 4

Ranked Approaches for Round Two

1. It is carried out in a child's **native language**
2. (joint) An **ecosystemic** view is taken
2. (joint) It includes the **child's views**
3. **Interpreters** are used
4. It is **strengths-based**
5. A **response to intervention** approach is taken
6. It is carried out **over time**
7. **Dynamic or play-based** assessment is used
8. It is **hypothesis-driven**
9. (joint) Children are able to share their **views without a parent present**
9. (joint) **Non-verbal approaches** are used
10. **Language assessments** are used (including any/all languages a child speaks)
11. **Cognitive, diagnostic or standardised** approaches are used

Three agreed with the order, two did not. This prioritisation exercise was intended to show where any principles might be eliminated, as well as ensure a consensus view of which should be

retained and highlighted in the final draft. Where two participants disagreed with the ordering, their comments explaining why indicated relatively minor differences. For instance, a slight reordering of the top three principles. As such, their preferences and explanations were combined with other qualitative data in the analysis for this round. One participant suggested an addition of ‘sensitive exploration of trauma’ which was also incorporated into the final draft principles (**Appendix O**).

Following this, more detailed principles were offered for participants to indicate their level of agreement with each, using a five-point Likert scale alongside any further comments. In line with CRT principles, participants were encouraged to draw on narrative examples where possible. **Table 7** shows the average ratings indicating level of agreement with each principle, where 1 is ‘not at all’ and 5 is ‘completely’.

Table 7

Average Agreement Ratings with Principles in Round Two

Proposed Principle	Average Rating Using a 5-point Likert Scale*
Working alongside communities	5.00
Working with, and supporting, parents	5.00
Reporting outcomes	5.00
Mitigating systemic oppression	5.00
Supporting acculturation	5.00
Anti-oppressive practice	5.00
Taking a strengths-based approach	5.00
Special consideration of UASC	4.80
Cultural competence	4.60
Cognitive/standardised or dynamic/play-based assessments	4.60
Assessment over time	4.60
Understanding histories	4.40
Taking an ecosystemic perspective	4.40
Capturing child views	4.20
Overcoming English language needs as a barrier to assessment	4.00
Language assessments	3.80

**where 1 is ‘not at all’ and 5 is ‘extremely’*

Language assessments received the lowest level of agreement, with qualitative responses describing concern about needing time and specialist expertise to carry this out properly, and that assessment tools can be biased.

“Language assessments can be biased in design and may not represent true ability or understanding. Particularly standardised assessments developed for English speaking populations”

Overcoming English language needs as a barrier to using specific tools (by using an interpreter or non-verbal tools) was also rated lower than others. Participants expressed concern about using a standardised assessment via an interpreter as this would be challenging and potentially inaccurate.

"I find most standardised assessments very challenging with asylum seekers so I imagine that would be the case with asylum seeker children. Functional assessments / skills are more accurate in my view which may be better assessed through play."

Participant 2

This reflects extant literature which points to potential bias in many assessment tools (Cline & Shamsi, 2000; Ntuli et al., 2012).

The additional question regarding the heightened sociopolitical context was answered by three participants. Responses included increasing anti-oppressive practices such as showing curiosity with schools about any tensions or events they've experienced and showing greater commitment to advocating for families (e.g. by insisting on interpreters in consultation).

"I think we will have to become even stronger advocates for the asylum seeker and refugee children and families we work with, and may need to fight for basic services such as interpreters which is already a huge issue. And continue to model support for these children and families to all the schools we work with, and offer a strong and alternative narrative of welcome."

Participant 3

For this round, the analysis focused on ensuring that principles were drafted to reflect levels of agreement and qualitative responses. This did not necessitate RTA, but rather a process of editing as shown in **Appendix O** and the example in **Table 8**.

Table 8 shows how the principle relating to capturing child views presented to participants in Round Two was modified to reflect responses.

Table 8

Example of Amendments to Principle from Round Two survey – Capturing Child Views

Principle Proposed amendments in blue	Participant Comments
Capturing child views Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present as they may feel more able to speak openly. Factors to consider are: The child's preferences – they may not feel comfortable speaking alone with you The family's culture and/or expectations The availability of space and time (for example, if the assessment takes place in single room accommodation, this might not be possible)	<i>I can see that sometimes the child may feel genuinely more comfortable and able to share their views when their parent/carer is present. So although it may sometimes be helpful to gather their views without the parent/carer, I don't think it's automatically the case that this is preferable. This may also be impacted by whether the family come from a more individualistic or collective culture and society. Again, a really complex consideration I know!</i> <i>I'm not sure that a child's views have to be sought without parents being present. Surely, the child should be given the choice as to how they want to share their views regarding presence or absence of parents, in the same way we would allow them to choose who they feel most comfortable working with to share those views.</i> <i>Easier to facilitate if the child is in a school setting. If in an immigration hotel / accommodation this may be more difficult as families are often restricted to a single room and may not like to leave the room.</i>

4.4 Final Principles

The principles were drafted and sent to participants to ratify or comment on – no further amendments were suggested. The final principles are shown in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5*Final Principles*

Guidance for Educational Psychologists Assessing Asylum-seeking and Refugee Children

1 Overall approach

1.1 Strive for anti-oppressive practice

EPs should prioritise anti-oppressive practice.

When assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this involves:

- Challenging oppressive practice of other professionals – this might be pre-emptively stating your position on this at the start of a process.
- Knowing the limits of your own expertise and making effective use of other professionals (e.g. interpreters)
- Child or family perspective-taking
- Creating a safe space for families to talk openly and developing trust
- Being reflective and self-critical of our own assumptions
- Accessing specific training which may be targeted or form part of wider training around anti-racism and socially-just practice
- Accessing specialist supervision

1.2 Strive for cultural competence

EPs should endeavour to practice with cultural competence.

When assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this involves:

- Seeking to gain a broad knowledge of a child's geopolitical context whilst avoiding assumptions and recognising that cultures are diverse and nuanced
- Being aware that a professional sharing the culture of a AS&R may help but it can also cause difficulty
- Being curious and open to learning about a person's culture
- Considering cultural differences in communication (e.g. gestures)
- Learning about and recognising cultural events
- Being aware and critical of Westernised perspectives (e.g. of literacy or mental health)

It can be supported by:

- Diversity in professional teams
- Being part of a multidisciplinary team
- Being able to challenge cultural incompetence with sensitivity and by offering practical solutions
- Recognition that developing cultural competence is a life-long journey and avoiding complacency as individuals and across teams

1.3 Take a strengths-based approach

Being strengths-based is particularly important for the following reasons:

- It can make schools and other professionals or organisations more accepting;
- It is hopeful in the face of significant adversity;
- There are potential strengths which are not so readily recognised within the prevailing culture (e.g. multilingualism, resilience, practical skills)

2 The assessment process

2.1 Prioritise dynamic and play-based assessments

There are a number of concerns regarding cognitive and standardised assessments including inherent bias, other factors affecting results (such as lack of prior education) and the risk of children feeling over-assessed.

Using subtests of cognitive assessments can help to explore a particular hypothesis and can be used dynamically.

Play-based and dynamic approaches instead can feel less intimidating and avoid labels.

2.2 Assess over time

Settings should be taking a graduated approach to assessing and supporting need. Any EP assessment should form part of this so that short-term difficulties are contextualized and understood. This can be supported by an initial baseline assessment which is reviewed after an agreed timeframe.

The risk of assessing over time, however, is that families may leave the area before the assessment is completed. This can happen unexpectedly and at short notice. It is important settings and EPs pass information on in such cases.

2.3 Prioritise the voice of the child

Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present as they may feel more able to speak openly.

Factors to consider are:

- The child's preferences — they may not feel comfortable speaking alone with you
- The family's culture and/or expectations
- The availability of space and time (for example, if the assessment takes place in single room accommodation, this might not be possible)

2.4 Overcome use of English language as barrier to assessment

Using interpreters can make the assessment process more accurate where the use of English language is a barrier, but EPs should be mindful that translation is not always accurate and so can impact on the quality of what is gathered.

Using friends, family or other people from a community can be less intimidating than professional interpreters but may also bring other difficulties, such as the personal interests of friends or family, or fear of judgement within the family or community.

Interpreters can support not only with language, but also aide cultural competence and understanding. It may be a crucial way of giving the child a voice.

Dynamic assessment and other non-verbal tools can be helpful and may highlight other strengths in communication (other than verbal). However, even non-verbal assessments usually rely on verbal instructions to some extent and may not be culturally appropriate.

2.5 Use language assessments with care

English language acquisition takes time. Although an English language assessment may be useful for pinpointing where targeted support might be needed, caution should be taking in making judgements based on this.

Language (including all languages spoken by the child) might best be assessed through parent consultation initially and by a school or setting over time. However, if there is a language need in the child's first language, exploration alongside a speech and language specialist might help provide guidance to settings.

2.6 Consider how to report outcomes

Assessment outcomes should be reported without the use of jargon. Aim to use plain, unambiguous English which can be translated straightforwardly. Where possible, arrangements should be made to translate report outcomes into the family's home language.

Visuals may be useful in supporting accessibility.

Where possible, outcomes should be fed back to parents face-to-face.

Assessment outcomes should be strengths-based and have the future child in mind.

3 The child's context

3.1 Work ecosystemically

Taking an ecosystemic approach is essential given the range of factors which may affect asylum-seeking and refugee children. Think through beforehand what you might want to explore about past and present contexts is important, and perhaps use a checklist specific to the asylum-seeking and refugee experience.

Care needs to be taken to consider possible trauma or fear over 'officials' asking lots of questions. Where possible, relationships and trust should be developed first.

An example question might be 'Is there anything about your experiences in coming here that you feel I should know to help me understand your child's needs?'

3.2 Carefully consider if, and how, to understand a child's history

Understanding the history of an asylum-seeking or refugee child can be important to understanding present needs, but this should be approached very sensitively and at a time when you feel ready and able to respond appropriately.

EPs typically do not have the time to build the trust needed to avoid possible re-traumatisation, and so it might not be appropriate to explore this.

If it *is* considered appropriate to explore this, supervision and reviewing resources on trauma-informed practice* before you undertake this aspect of the work may help prepare.

Questions should focus on understanding relevant information only and aim to avoid duplicating what has already been shared.

It *may be* useful to understand the following:

- Prior experience of education
- Friendships and family
- The journey here (including any significant events)
- Other traumatic events
- Where they lived (including temporarily) and what they have lost or left behind
- When they were happiest.

This process might begin with a parent consultation, but it is useful to engage the child also.

*Resources which may be helpful include:

https://www.acorneducationandcare.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/08/OFG_TIP_A4_Leaflet_v5.pdf

<https://livesonhold.org>

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200413-Talking-With-Resettled-Refugees.pdf>

3.3 Work with, and support, parents

EPs should be mindful of parent support needs, and the potential for sign-posting or ensuring other professionals are aware.

In particular, consider:

- Their understanding of their rights and ability to advocate (e.g. giving informed consent)
- Their mental health and wellbeing;
- Their understanding of communications, and school or SEND systems;
- Their English language needs.

3.4 Consider the specific needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children (UASC)

EPs should be aware of specific considerations for the assessment of UASC, including:

- Their journey – the reasons for, and experience of, travelling alone. This may be a source of ongoing distress.
- Loss – of family, home, culture, and possible bereavement. This may include a sense of guilt. If they are not in touch with family, there may be significant worry.
- Their legal or settled status may be sensitive and stressful. Their current home or living arrangements may be difficult.
- Their health or medical needs.
- Their aspirations and hopes are important to explore and understand.

It is useful to understand these factors to pass on to carers or other key adults, but questioning should not cause further distress. They need to be ready and willing to interact with you. As such, the EP may not be the right person for exploring these experiences and it may be better for this to be with a trusted adult later in the child's life, once settled.

4 The wider context

4.1 Seek to work alongside communities

Working more closely with communities has the potential to increase understanding, particularly through hearing lived experiences.

This might include local authority-wide guidance and strategies to support anti-racist and inclusive practice, alongside initiatives which can foster greater community inclusion and cohesion.

4.2 Consider acculturation with care

Acculturation should not be viewed as a need, but rather a choice.

However, if an AS&R child is wanting to assimilate into the prevailing culture in their school or community, this should be supported but it may be hindered by factors such as financial barriers, health barriers or family.

Professionals should be mindful of possible cultural differences as part of practicing in a culturally competent way. These may include:

- Prior education (e.g. not formal) and views on education
- Sleeping, eating and other domestic arrangements
- Social norms and acceptability
- Views on disability

4.3 Aim to recognise and mitigate systemic oppression

EPs need to be aware of systemic oppression faced by AS&R families.

This may include:

- A lack of financial support in the education system for AS&R children
- The psychological impact of unsettled status
- English-only forms and processes, along with systemic and financial barriers to accessing interpretation services
- Access to free health services – either it being denied or not communicated
- Digital access – making it difficult to navigate systems which are largely online (e.g. applying for school places)
- The asylum processing system
- Housing – inadequate and/or insecure
- Unsettled status affecting assessment completion due to uncertainty and risk of movement – In turn this may affect a school's commitment to taking a graduated response
- Ongoing trauma from facing intersectional discrimination in UK – this may come from people from the same culture/country
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are particularly vulnerable in face of authority or bureaucracy

In countering systemic oppression:

- Professionals need to stay curious, draw on other professional expertise (e.g. interpreters, seeking perspectives of AS&R families, being reflective)
 - Education can offer stability and safety to children given unsettled status
-

Despite reaching a shared set of principles, there continued to be aspects where participants either held different views from each other or were undecided as individuals: the gathering of histories (and risk of traumatisation); and acculturation. The principles reflect the nuance of these and propose a careful, reflective approach to these aspects of assessment. The following sections describe these in more detail and within the context of extant literature.

4.4.1 Histories and re-traumatisation

Responses highlight a concern that by exploring histories, EPs risk retraumatising children:

“I would be extremely apprehensive about asking a CYP about their journey to the UK, and don't feel it would be justified in terms of information gathered vs. potential distress caused in the vast majority of cases [...] I feel that the risk of retraumatisation is too great.”

Participant 6

Support for this is found in Due and Currie (2022) who drew on two studies where this was highlighted. However, they also cite other studies advocating for such discussions with children. Crawley (2010) argues that by not addressing possible trauma, professionals risk at best seeming not to care, and at worst, colluding with the harm that has taken place, a sentiment echoed by Rousseau et al. (2013). For some children, they have experiences and views that place them in a different position to the ‘childlike’ status others might have, with responsibilities and past lives following a developmental progress arguably at odds with our expectations in England. Our avoidance of exploring histories and experiences risks robbing asylum-seeking and refugee children of respect and agency (Crawley, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2013; van Os et al., 2020).

Participants in the study expressed the view that EPs are not best placed to have discussions about histories through lack of training and time.

“[writing about exploring histories] Is this the appropriate time? Am i the appropriate person? Do i have the capacity of skills to follow up any needs that might be identified through the sharing of such information?”

Participant 3

Rousseau et al. (2013) describe the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the mental wellbeing of asylum-seeking and refugee children, arguing that *all* professionals are part of a therapeutic alliance where any involvement should involve psychosocial support. Within a potentially hostile, racially charged environment, professionals should perhaps assume a level of trauma and not shy away from hearing and responding therapeutically to it.

Hart (2009) cites schools as appropriate places for therapeutic work to happen as they are more easily accessible than other institutions, particularly where families or communities perceive mental ill-health as stigmatising. Hart (2009) goes on to position the EP as a possible preventative role for further traumatising.

The skills and attributes highlighted in studies align with those identified in this research—building trust, using non-verbal methods, employing interpreters, using empathic listening, and showing cultural sensitivity (Hart, 2009; Rousseau et al., 2013; van Os et al., 2020). And by exploring histories, there is greater opportunity to take the strengths-based approach highlighted in this study, in elucidating strengths (Crawley, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2013).

4.4.2 Acculturation

Participants expressed concern around acculturation—the degree of free choice compared with professional encouragement and support:

“I think an AS or R child needs lots of information about the culture(s) in which they find themselves, so that they can decide for themselves the extent to which they want to assimilate into the host/dominant culture(s).”

Participant 3

“... without acculturation there are potentially many issues. I believe it should be supported and encouraged.”

Participant 2

Models of acculturation make distinctions between integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation to describe the extent and nature of cultural adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Evidence suggests that integration (where an individual’s home culture and their new culture are both engaged with) leads to more positive outcomes (Sam & Berry, 2010; Ward et al., 2001).

There is currently no requirement for EPs to have a theoretical understanding of acculturation (BPS, 2018; The Health and Care Professions Council, 2023) and so reticence to actively encourage this from some participants may reflect a lack of engagement with acculturation research. Factors affecting successful acculturation include those which are of particular pertinence to EP practice—ontogenetic development and individual differences (such as language and social communication) (Sam & Berry, 2010; Ward et al., 2001)—and so this omission in training is notable.

Chapter 5: Overall Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the application of RTA to the qualitative data generated in the Delphi study. It describes how themes and subthemes are constructed and situates these within the extant literature.

As with **Chapter 4**, analysis and discussion are integrated to better reflect the iterative process of knowledge construction inherent to RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

5.2 RTA Process

In the process of analysing and developing the Delphi survey rounds and principles, I reflected that there were perspectives and meanings which were not captured in the final version. One reflection early in the process of analysing Round One illustrates this:

“I’m struck by the insightfulness of the non-EP respondent. In particular, their open, curious stance as opposed to gaining expertise with respect to cultures and histories. I wonder if this speaks to EPs feeling a pressure to learn and to ‘know’ – despite the non-expert, not-knowing rhetoric [...] As I read through, it is becoming more apparent that assumptions and routine practices can cause problems, and that the ‘not knowing’ is important.”

Extract from research diary

Reflection Box 15: Deciding to Complete an Overall RTA

I had not originally intended to undertake any further analysis beyond the Delphi surveys. However, at the point that I was finalising the principles, I was also beginning to apply them to my practice. I reflected that the principles alone were useful for developing prompts and planning my approach, but they did not address some of the difficulties and conflicts which occur as part of completing this complex area of casework. In placement supervision, we talked through different dilemmas, and I recognised many of the points raised had been described by participants in my research. However, these nuances had been amalgamated into the consensus of the final principles. I wanted these considerations, conflicts and dilemmas to be presented within this thesis.

This RTA speaks to the second part of the research question: What factors shape the needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England, and how can EPs navigate these?

The qualitative data across the two surveys were combined into a single data set (Braun et al., 2021). From here, the analysis followed the process described by Braun and Clarke (2022).

5.2.1 Familiarisation

The data had already been interrogated for each round. However, as this analysis was for a different purpose, I chose to complete a further reading of the data which focused on latent meaning, and with reference to the CRT position. For instance, to a question about assessment over time, Participant 2 responded:

“Asylum seekers are often moved elsewhere in the country ‘dispersed’ at very short notice, sometimes within the day”

Participant 2

In Round Two, this was coded as evidence of a difficulty in taking an assessment-over-time approach. In this reading, further interpretations were construed relating to the use of the word ‘disperse’—suggesting a de-humanising process contributing to systemic oppression—and the description of a very precarious, unsettled context within which people are living. This connected to other ideas around values and beliefs, as well as systemic oppression. Viewed through the lens of CRT, this points to the pervasiveness of racial bias within society, and a legal system which fails to protect a minoritised group.

5.2.2 Generating initial codes

Coding was comprehensive—virtually all the text was assigned to at least one code. This reflects the written nature of the data, meaning there was little that could be deemed superfluous to the topic. This comprehensive coding of written responses supports transparency and rigour as there is less interpretation or extraction required. Codes were checked for duplication and clarity—ensuring that each code identified a unique and specific idea. This resulted in a final list of 96 codes (**Appendix P**).

5.2.3 Searching for subthemes

Codes were grouped into subthemes. The first iteration of this had codes crossing subthemes. As the intention was to generate subthemes reflecting a single, specific idea, it was important that they were distinct from each other in this respect. A second iteration ensured that codes only mapped to a single subtheme, resulting in a greater number of subthemes. One code—‘Assessing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children requires specific considerations’—became a subtheme of its’ own. This highlights the unique context and set of considerations described by participants:

“...the professional needs to take into account potential or known traumatic separation or bereavement, as well as the trauma of having travelled alone with the fear and vulnerability that entails.”

Participant 5

“What are their current circumstances? Are they settled in a foster placement? To what extent are they capable of and wish to interact with me? Need to give them information about my role to help them decide if they want to meet me, or if they would rather work with me through a trusted adult. Their view[s] are very important, and they may have question[s] they want to ask. What are their hopes?”

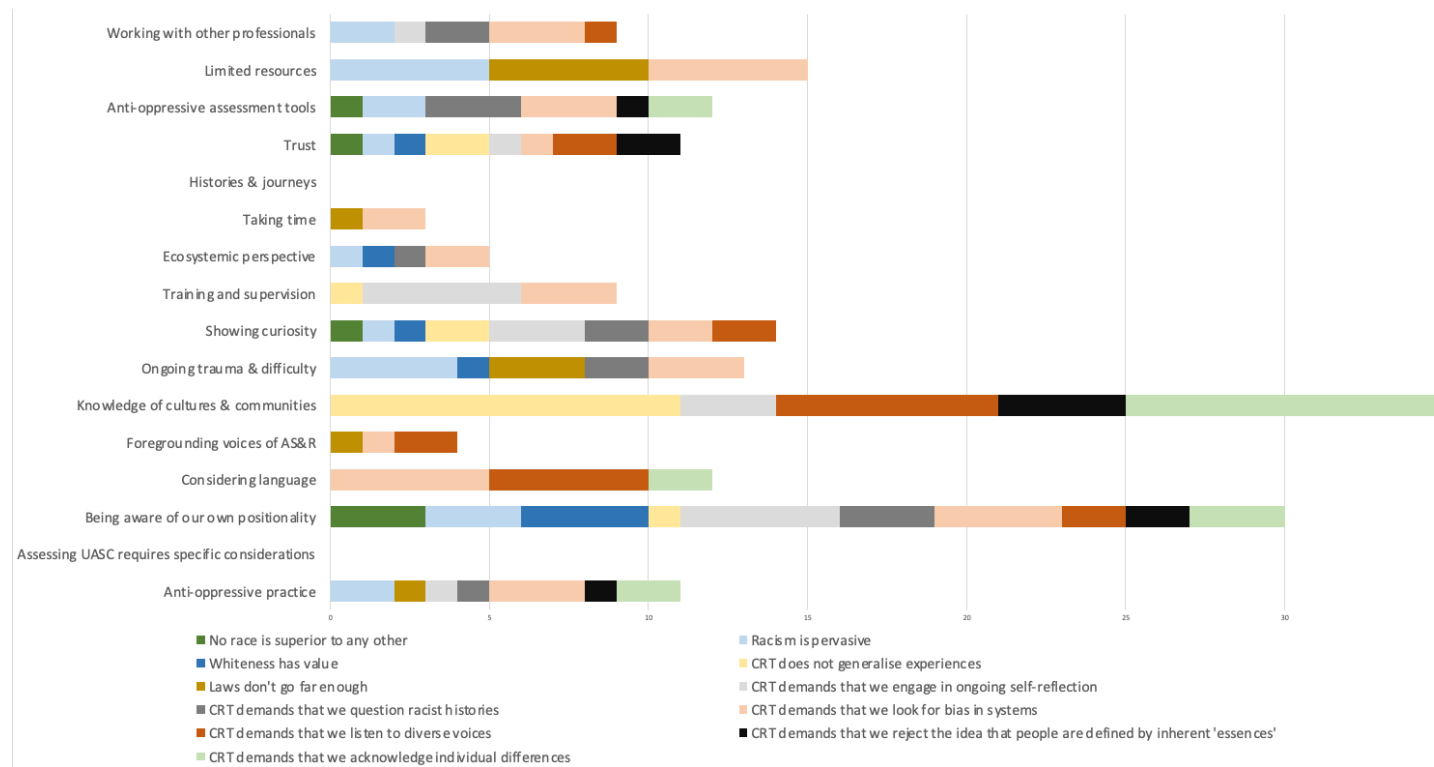
Participant 3

“Age, culture, why, are their family safe, what are their medical / health needs / why did they come -what would a good future look like for them.”

Participant 2

5.2.4 Reviewing subthemes

Following the development of subthemes, the codes were mapped against the principles of CRT (**Appendix Q** and **Figure 6**). This demonstrates the extent to which the codes can be seen to support CRT principles, with over two-thirds (68 out of 98 codes) reflecting CRT in some way. 14 out of 16 subthemes speak to principles of CRT with all CRT principles used in this study being reflected. The chart in **Figure 6** shows the subthemes along the vertical y axis, with the number of codes mapping to CRT principles along the horizontal x axis. The key below the graph indicates each CRT principle. For instance, for subtheme ‘Taking time’, there were two codes reflecting the principle ‘CRT demands that we look for bias in the system, and one for ‘Laws don’t go far enough’.

Figure 6*Number of Times CRT Principles Map to Subthemes*

Two subthemes— ‘Histories and journeys’ and ‘Assessing UASC’—did not reference CRT principles. In the subtheme of histories and journeys, the codes were relating to the sensitivity and caution needed by practitioners, and importance of understanding this aspect of a child’s background. The subtheme about the assessment of UASC refers to the specific nature of this context. In neither case do codes nor participant comments speak directly to issues of race.

5.2.5 Defining and naming themes

The first iteration of themes was developed by grouping subthemes. This failed to recognise the cross-cutting nature of some subthemes (such as ‘Anti-oppressive practice’), or the contradictions and complexity of other subthemes (such as ‘Considering language’). A second iteration involved looking again at the data and seeking to construct overarching themes. Four themes were constructed:

Theme: Systemic concerns

Theme: Professional competence and boundaries

Theme: Values and beliefs

Theme: Taking time

The latter two themes underpinned many of the subthemes of the other two themes.

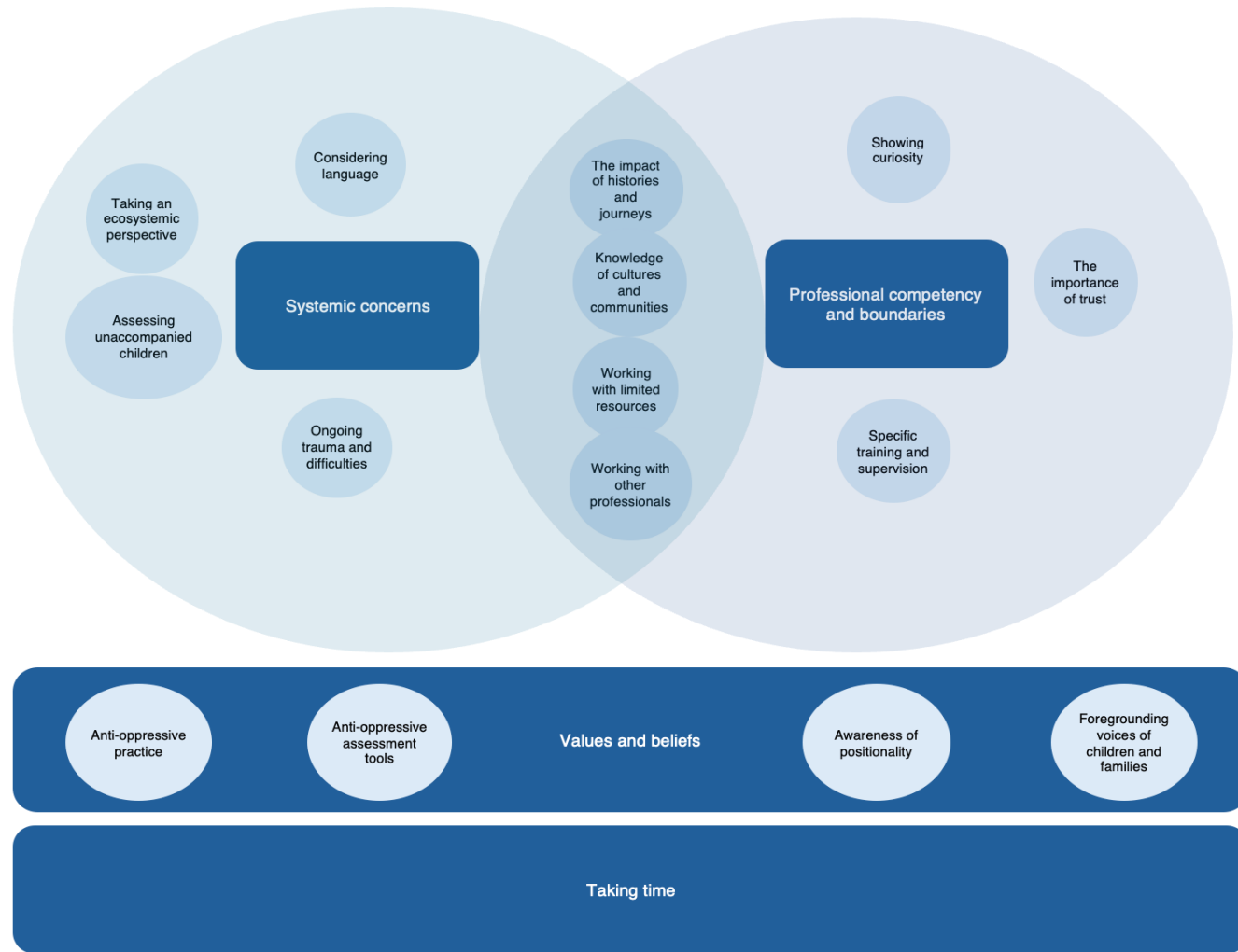
Having identified themes, subthemes were mapped against them (**Figure 7**).

The thematic map shows how theme ‘Systemic concerns’, and theme ‘Professional competency and boundaries’ are understood to be largely distinct but have notable overlapping subthemes: The impact of histories and journeys; Knowledge of cultures and communities; Working with limited resources; and Working with other professionals.

Theme ‘Values and beliefs’ is seen to underpin how systemic concerns are understood and responded to, and to shape our understanding of professional competencies and boundaries.

Theme ‘Taking time’ was explicit and implicit across the data set. It was constructed as a distinct theme but is presented here to show how it has implications for how values and beliefs are enacted and how EPs practice competently within professional boundaries. The theme ‘Taking time’ is also interpreted as a key systemic concern.

Figure 7
Thematic Map



The map shows the degree to which subthemes such as ‘The impact of history and journeys’ have implications across themes, as illustrated by this response:

*“I think we need to be very, very careful around seeking information about asylum-seeking and refugee experiences. **[Professional competency and boundaries]**. From my understanding, by the time a child and their family get to the point of interacting with the education system here, they are likely to have come across many, many people in official positions with power and authority regarding their status here, and so may assume that we are more of the same. **[Systemic concerns]**. I wonder if the best approach is to ask a very general question to the parents/carers (and child?), such as 'is there anything about your experiences in coming here that you feel i need to know to help me understand your child's needs?'. **[Values and Beliefs]** Further exploration of asylum seeking and refugee experience - where relevant- may have to wait for the building up of a relationship of trust over time between family and professional.”*

[Professional competency and boundaries]

Participant 3

The thematic map also shows where a subtheme such as ‘Anti-oppressive practice’ speaks primarily to the values and beliefs of the professional:

“I think it can be difficult within EPSs to address systemic racism and oppressive practice, even when these are ostensibly being considered. I feel that there is likely to be a range of understandings and levels of experience with these issues within the staff and EPS structure, and that it is perhaps too easy for services to feel they are addressing these issues, whilst actually they may be unaware of what they don't know. I think this is a real challenge for the EP profession currently.”

Participant 6

Sections 5.3-5.6 describe the themes as constructed meanings in answer to the research question. They are illustrated by extracts from the data and evaluated considering extant literature.

5.3 Theme: Systemic Concerns

Thinking and practising systemically was viewed as particularly important when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Participants described how different this might be compared with other groups:

“I think consideration of the wider systems within which a child lives is crucial: for a refugee family the extent to which stress affects the child's presentation will be significant, as will background worries about what is happening in the country of origin: other family members in danger or missing for example. The wider systems in the receiving country will also be very significant, and will be unfamiliar: a further source of stress which can contribute to a child not presenting at their most able.”

Participant 5

Participants argued that working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children warrants unique considerations and care:

“Age, culture, why, are their family safe, what are their medical / health needs / why did they come -what would a good future look like for them.”

Participant 2

“What are their current circumstances? Are they settled in a foster placement? To what extent are they capable of and wish to interact with me? [.....] What are their hopes?”

Participant 3

Descriptions of thinking systemically included developing knowledge of cultures and histories, seen by some participants as an important part of the assessment process in understanding presenting and potential needs. It was recognised that having arrived in the UK, children frequently face ongoing trauma through standards of living, prejudice, and continuing events in their home country.

“Some UASC I worked with were placed in independent accommodation in deprived areas where a lot of (white) people were very anti immigration so they experienced a lot of hostility in their street when they were meant to come here to feel safe after having been in all sorts of hostile environments in their 'home' country and on their journeys.”

Participant 4

Participants offered a more pragmatic rationale for working systemically as limitations in resources and professional boundaries necessitates interacting with other professionals, particularly where basic needs (such as social and health) are concerned.

“Sometimes we become aware of AS&R children with additional needs through the health service, where a family has presented with a health need and the health professional has become aware of a child who is not yet attending school. In these cases, the health professionals information is a really helpful starting point for our work [...] It also meant we did not ask the same questions they had already answered.”

Participant 3

Alongside systemic concerns of oppression, histories, and cultural contexts, taking an ecosystemic perspective was rated as very important in this area of EP practice, reflecting the extant literature (Arakelyan & Ager, 2021; Crawford, 2020; Hart, 2009; Mayer, 2022; Paat, 2013). Time was frequently cited by participants as a limited—but necessary—resource, aligning more closely with the later PPCT model (outlined in **Chapter 2**). Pertinent to EP practice in particular, the inclusion of time (the ‘chronosystem’) encapsulates ontogenesis (developmental) considerations and life events (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Applying the PPCT model highlights influencing factors such as a child’s age and developmental stage, time of migration, and the significance of other life events. This was not addressed directly by participants, nor was there any reference to other individual differences, such as gender. The literature suggests that these are important for EPs to consider in assessment as it has implications for a child’s wellbeing and outcomes (Arakelyan & Ager, 2021). Paat

(2013) highlights the importance of life events and how these might interact with child development to support or hinder assimilation and outcomes. The consideration of individual differences and child development are clearly addressed within existing competencies for EPs (The Health and Care Professions Council, 2023) and so perhaps participants view these as a constant consideration in all casework and so did not raise these specifically.

Literature shows how applying ecosystemic models can help to conceptualise the impact of intersectional disadvantages. Mayer (2022), in her analysis of early years childcare in Israel, uses the PPCT model to develop an understanding around why families might resort to using less than adequate childcare in this context. For EPs, this systemic understanding can encourage empathy, as well as point to possibilities for intervention.

Other examples from the fields of social and healthcare show how mapping EST to the context of asylum-seeking or refugee contexts has implications for EP practice. Arakelyan and Ager (2021) and Crawford (2020) show that it can inform the questions and hypotheses we pursue, the formulations we develop and the partnerships we foster. For example, by considering race discrimination, housing, or time taken for processing asylum applications, EPs can better understand the wellbeing of the child and their family and draw on other professionals where appropriate.

Hart (2009) speaks specifically to the work of EPs in their paper centring on a case study of a 13-year-old refugee child. The author illustrates the use of interactionist, ecosystemic perspectives, alongside social cognitive theory, to understand the multiple effects of trauma on education and wellbeing. The paper explores past and ongoing causes of trauma (such as dispersal policies) and through this, they are able to identify potential therapies and school-based interventions. Hart (2009) argues that school-based interventions are of particular importance, as for many families there is a stigma attached to accessing mental-wellbeing support. Hart suggests that in-school provision can mitigate fear of social judgement.

In summary, this theme speaks to the particular importance of systemic approaches and array of systemic concerns which are specific to the EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

5.4 Theme: Professional Competency and Boundaries

Participants felt that working with asylum-seeking and refugee children requires specific knowledges, training and supervision:

“There are particular issues, especially relating to asylum seekers that are important to know and be aware of.”

Participant 2

It was recognised that EP training does not necessarily include this as a topic, and that supervisors may lack specific experience or knowledge to supervise effectively.

Participants described the need for EPs to develop their knowledge of cultures whilst remaining curious. They also talked about the importance of developing trust given the sensitivity many children and families may feel around sharing their histories or journeys. Participants were divided about how well-equipped (in terms of skills and time) we can be in asking about histories given the risk of re-traumatising children and families.

“I think we also need to be aware that the EP may not be the right person for exploring the reasons for the child's journey, their travelling experiences etc. This may be work for a trusted adult later in the child's life, once settled in education and building relationships and sense of belonging.”

Participant 3

An understanding of professional boundaries was viewed as essential to effective practice, partly reflecting the short-term involvement EPs often have with families. An important consideration, therefore, is how EPs work effectively with other professionals:

“I often worked with social workers, CAMHS, at times had contact with solicitors and also worked with schools and colleges. When everyone was able to dedicate time and attend joint meetings I think it was very valuable to hear other professional's perspectives and roles, as it really showed what a complex experience a UASC has.”

Participant 4

Extant literature identifying professional competencies for EPs supporting asylum-seeking and refugee children aligns closely with the findings of this study. Alongside cultural competence, working with interpreters and other professionals, and taking holistic, strengths-based approaches, Due and Currie (2022) identify ‘seeking feedback’ which was not found in the current study, however.

Benuto et al. (2019), in their work on cultural competency training, highlighted supervision as a critical element of the training process. This reflects the current study in suggesting the need for specialist supervision for this area of work:

“...when I worked in a UASC specific mental health context I fought for clinical supervision as my role did not have any sort of psychological supervision. My manager supervision consisted of looking at numbers, reports and funding requirements etc [...] I felt that when I accessed

clinical supervision [...] I felt much better in myself, and about myself at work and it gave me a safe space to explore some of my feelings and professional identity”

Participant 4

“I think it would be reasonable to expect any service to have a senior, specialist senior or senior practitioner EP who has particular knowledge in this area (likely presentation, relevant legislation and policy) who can offer supervision...”

Participant 5

Mercieca (2009) offers a different perspective, but one which perhaps reflects some of the hesitancy and uncertainty of some participant responses in the current study. Through the narrative of a specific referral to an EP from a school, Mercieca (2009) illustrates the power of taking a ‘not knowing’ position when casework is complex. Their description of how complexity can lead one to feelings of incompetence resonates with those of the participants of this study:

“Main challenge i think is connected to the concept of 'I don't know what I don't know', and trying to find a way of finding out what I don't know. How do i find out if there are cultural values and norms that i don't know about and that are important to the CYP and family and that need to be included in my assessment?”

Participant 5

Rather than interpret ‘not knowing’ as a training need, Mercieca (2009) advocates for accepting this as an appropriate position, thus creating time and space for greater reflection and exploration of alternative possibilities. They talk about the pressure of ‘urgency’, a pressure from within, and the ‘gap’ that is left when choosing not to use tools such as standardised assessments which offer a sense of assurance. In the current study, language assessments generated hesitancy and lack of certainty from participants:

“If it is felt that there is a language and communication need, a language assessment in the child's first language could be informative. In English it would depend on the purpose and the child's level of English. if it is to identify how to support the development of their english this could be useful. Otherwise need to be very cautious - it can take at seven years or more for a learner to reach a level of english needed for academic learning.”

Participant 3

“In some ways they [language assessments] can be useful to understand what specifics they might struggle with, however, if they are still at early stages of learning then this would not be as valuable.”

Participant 4

A ‘wait and see’, assessment-over-time approach was viewed as an ideal, but there was acknowledgement that the system (e.g. rehousing of families) often did not allow for this. Mercieca

(2009) suggests ‘befriending uncertainty’ (p.179) whereby EPs leave space to keep alive alternative hypotheses and revisit them as appropriate.

As discussed earlier, participants expressed significant concern about uncovering past trauma. One participant questioned ‘Am I the right person?’. Alongside this, there was a consensus that EPs would benefit from more specialist training in this area and that a lack of time constrains the assessment process:

“Trainees, in my view, should be aware of the legislative frameworks and history that lead to work in this area being necessary and also should be made aware of the rights framework that underpins this necessity too.”

Participant 5

“The risk is also that families will move on before the assessment is complete.”

Participant 1

Literature suggests these may be connected (Due & Currie, 2022; Mercieca, 2009), with the resulting sense that professionals are unable to work confidently in this area without being boundaried in what they offer. This, however, risks what Rousseau et al. (2013) term collusion and denial of past trauma. They argue that all professionals should provide psychosocial support and empathic listening to asylum-seeking and refugee children. Perhaps EPs should be encouraging agency and voice—‘finding space for the unchildlike child’ (Crawley, 2010, p. 168)—when supporting children who have experienced so much.

In summary, this theme describes the need for training and supervision, alongside identifying skills (such as cultural competence) EPs need to assess asylum-seeking and refugee children competently. It also points to the need for trauma-informed approaches and taking a non-expert position.

5.5 Theme: Values and Beliefs

The values of participants are explicitly and implicitly described as underpinning professional practice. There is recognition that asylum-seeking and refugee children face a level of disadvantage which warrants specific consideration:

“The whole asylum process feels discriminatory. Inhumane.

No additional funding for CYP in schools - despite level of need. School staff can therefore feel less inclined to provide quality support.

Parents not knowing SEN systems and not being supported to understand how to access educational support.

SEN forms provided only in English.

Some schools reluctant to follow SEN graduated response due to likelihood of families moving away.

Deterioration of parental mental health due to living arrangements, living with uncertainty and managing children's needs without outside support.

Accessing an interpreter requires EPs to provide 3 quotes to finance in the council."

Participant 1

"[NHS] Charging - patient taking her 6 year old to hospital for an appt and being turned away as she was chargeable.

Patient being removed from a waiting list as staff thought he was chargeable - he wasn't. delayed treatment by 6 months and only found out that he had been removed through me following up the referral.

No recourse to public funds impact - poverty and desperation. Parents access to medicines.

No recourse, no HC2 certificate = no medicine.

Participant 2

"One of the UASC I worked with shared that they would prefer to go back 'home' as they had found this compounding of discriminatory experiences more difficult than being 'home' surrounded by family with the same religious beliefs [...] as they would at least then felt safe and supported within their group despite continued threats. The problem was that they had applied for asylum and were not allowed to leave until their claim was processed..."

Participant 4

These experiences reflect the literature in describing ongoing trauma (Fazel et al., 2012; Rajeev, 2024).

The sense here is that EPs are working in a societal context with systems which cause more harm.

Participants were asked to consider their positionality and cite their responses considering CRT.

When asked about this explicitly, responses were mixed—some engaging with CRT and giving detailed descriptions of their own positions, others either not answering or stating that having CRT prompts did not impact on their contributions.

"I don't think it [CRT principles] did [impact on my responses] really. It was good to read through though - to know how values align."

Participant 1

"I think in general it helps me be aware of the danger of generalisations, the importance of lived experience, and conscious of systemic biases, and i think this is reflected in my responses."

Participant 3

However, aspects of social justice and CRT, as well as the impacts of policies and political climates, were evident throughout the analysis.

Anti-oppressive practice and tools were described, and participants highlighted the need for this to be a pro-active, reflective and continuing endeavour:

"I ask schools in planning meetings how they are supporting children who may have been affected by the social tensions / riots / attacks and am working with two EPs in my service to

develop some resources to share with schools on anti-racist practice and considering how to develop this further.”

Participant 7

Specific values, such as foregrounding the voices of asylum-seeking and refugee families, closely align with CRT, whilst reflecting much of the EP profession’s ‘non-expert’ position (Wagner, 2008):

“Best to listen, be non judgemental and ask. They are the expert in their culture. Just be humble to ask and listen”

Participant 2

This suggests that this area of work might be inherently political and values-driven. Mercieca and Mercieca (2022) ask that EPs recognise where we might feel unease, and that we see this as where we may be encountering a systemic threat to social justice. In the current study, participants expressed concern about lack of time and resource, or reticence about using certain types of assessment, which speak to a concern for a fairer, more just, assessment process.

“I would never use a cognitive or standardised assessment with a child who was new to the country. There are lots of resources to support dynamic assessment of need...”

Participant 7

Røn Larsen (2024) talks about working in the Danish system which shares many features of the UK system. They describe bringing politics into the ‘everyday’ of EP work as an exercise in damage limitation. From this perspective, the work becomes a series of mitigations against a system which demands us to write reports regardless of whether this will have a positive impact on the child. Røn Larsen (2024) describes EPs engaging in ‘corridor work’ as a way of trying to redress this – finding small openings for change through conversations which might not relate directly to the current assessment or report, but which one hopes will lead to a shift in a more socially-just direction. Mercieca and Mercieca (2022) similarly suggest that EPs find small opportunities to question and reconsider whether the system is just, as well as reflect on our own positionalities and biases.

CRT offers a more explicit and intentioned approach to practicing in a socially-just way when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Biddanda et al. (2018); Williams et al. (2021) and Jenkins et al. (2018) view social justice as being a continuum from a level of awareness through to direct action (or anti-racist practice). Awareness includes that of personal positionality and, in the current study, our proximity to whiteness (Williams et al., 2021). Participants in this study were able to describe their own privilege and how this self-reflection supports their ongoing work towards anti-oppressive practice. Again, the recognition that whiteness holds value in society aligns with CRT:

“Using the Social Graces model to reflect on my own experiences always makes me realise and re-realise how immensely privilege I am in almost every way in today’s society. Mostly by the ‘accident’ of having been born a white subject of a rich developed country.”

Participant 3

Some were also able to share examples of action to redress injustice, including challenging other professionals or choosing culturally responsive assessment approaches (Jenkins et al., 2018).

Anti-oppressive practice was seen as a central consideration when selecting tools and approaches to assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Participants recognised that this made some tests inappropriate:

“[Standardised assessments] might be used formatively or dynamically, but most are not standardised on this population (in fact, are any?) so i don't think i would ever use them according to the creator's guidelines. You cannot know what would really be tested - eg hypervigilance arising from traumatic experiences may impact performance, and if this was reported formally this could 'label' the child very unhelpfully.”

Participant 3

Aligning with CRT, participants highlighted the importance of giving voice to families, centring this in the assessment process and ensuring that professionals remain open and curious to avoid making assumptions.

Language was a key consideration, both in terms of assessing the English language skills for children, but also in ensuring children and families could communicate effectively with professionals. It was generally felt that this was not straightforward within the constraints of limited resources (e.g. for translation services) and timescales (e.g. needing to complete assessments within statutory deadlines):

“I have gone with a parent to the school to speak with the head about her child as I brought an interpreter. The school had only used google translate and my patient really wanted to tell the school what her son had experienced. This went very well and improved schools understanding of her son. I know schools are pressed for finances but sometimes google translate is nowhere near enough for the school / parent to communicate.”

Participant 2

Whereas some research has endeavoured to offer specific competencies or approaches to socially-just practice, Tervalon and Murray-Gacia (1998) and Prendeville and Kinsella (2022) foreground ways of thinking over specific skills or actions. They argue for approaches which draw on reflexivity and a continual self-awareness and questioning. Prendeville and Kinsella (2022) suggest a framework of Valued-based Practice which supports practitioners in aligning their decision-making with values as well as facts. Tervalon and Murray-Gacia (1998) call for ‘cultural humility’ over competence, proposing

an ongoing commitment to curiosity over knowledge. These echo the current study's findings around curiosity and awareness of one's own positionality as well as Mercieca (2009).

This theme, then, describes how EPs have a sociopolitical awareness and navigate their practice as a reflection of the context and their own values and beliefs.

5.6 Theme: Taking Time

Time was viewed as an important dimension. Participants described the need for children to have time to settle into new settings, as well as their new home. They point to how the pressure to assess quickly and at an early stage (as often required by statutory and school placement processes) undermines effective assessment. The status of being an asylum-seeking or refugee family amplifies this pressure:

"Asylum seekers are often moved elsewhere in the country 'dispersed' at very short notice, sometimes within the day."

Participant 2

Participants talked about the importance of developing trust, particularly if EPs are to explore histories and journeys. Limitations in time were viewed as a key barrier to this, meaning potentially important aspects of understanding are missed:

"I think in our role we are unlikely to ever spend enough time getting to know a CYP to build enough trust for it to be appropriate to ask about their journey, and so personally I wouldn't do this."

Participant 6

Participants referred to the need for time and the concern that there is a lack of it to assess effectively throughout the survey questions. This reflects the literature (Arakelyan & Ager, 2021; Crawford, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2018; Mercieca, 2009; Mercieca & Mercieca, 2022; Røn Larsen, 2024; van Os et al., 2020).

The rationale for needing assessment over time, or increased time for involvement, is explained within this study and the wider literature with a high degree of agreement between voices. It is broadly agreed that children who have newly arrived in a country will be facing significant change and have likely experienced traumatic, or at least unsettling, events (Fazel et al., 2012; Rousseau et al., 2013). In the early stages of settling it is also likely that the child and their family are facing a range of difficulties relating to housing, finances, language, and home office processes (Crawford, 2020; The Refugee Council UK, 2025). Starting at a new school is a significant change and will likely involve an asylum-seeking or refugee child navigating a new culture and language each day. A child may not yet be

accessing education and may have no previous experience of doing so. With so many changing and exceptional factors, the complexity involved points to the need for assessment which can account for this, but which also allows time for a child to adapt. The EP is faced with the decision to either find a way to extend the assessment (or return to it), or to heavily caveat their formulation (Jenkins et al., 2018; Mercieca, 2009).

Alongside a 'wait and see' approach, participants and the literature point to the need for time to build trust so that children and families can share traumatic information in a psychologically supported way (Due & Currie, 2022; Hoyne & Cunningham, 2018; van Os et al., 2020):

I think we need to be very, very careful around seeking information about asylum-seeking and refugee experiences. [...] Further exploration of asylum seeking and refugee experience - where relevant- may have to wait for the building up of a relationship of trust over time between family and professional."

Participant 3

Within the current context in England, EPs rarely have opportunity to dedicate time for assessment beyond a single involvement, making the building of trust or offering therapeutic casework unlikely (Hooper et al., 2024):

"I think it's important to assess over time, although I usually have chance for just one home visit and this relies a lot on consultation with parents to get an idea of need. Many of the children I assess at home (or at school) when newly arrived in the UK have very significant needs and go on to statutory assessment, and I have asked that they are allocated to me for this work so I have a second opportunity to assess them and meet the family, which constitutes a form of assessment over time."

Participant 5

A further barrier is the nature of asylum processing in the UK which means often families are moved to other localities at short or no notice (Jorgensen, 2025). This creates an increased sense of urgency even if the assessment is not subject to statutory timescales, making it difficult to navigate the dual pressures of needing time to assess effectively against the risk of incomplete assessment:

"I've only had experience of completing the assessment within a short time period. I would much prefer to do this over time but it hasn't been possible..."

Participant 1

In summary, the need to take time is evident across the data and the literature concerning EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. It highlights that the nature of the work is particularly complex and the child's needs will evolve, and yet systemic pressures mean that EP assessment is needed too soon and following too brief an involvement.

Reflection Box 16: Consistency of Views

Since completing data collection and analysis for this thesis, I have continued to work with other professionals in supporting asylum-seeking and refugee children. I am struck by how consistently these themes are raised with different professionals sharing these views. And yet I and others feel frustrated by the pervasive nature of systemic oppression, from lack of specific training for EPs through to statutory timescales. It offers validation for my findings but also a sense of frustration that, nevertheless, the problems persist.

The analyses and discussion illustrate how the intersectionality of SEN, race and asylum status can compound the experiences of marginalisation and oppression for children in the UK. For many EPs, the nature of this specific context can mean that it is rarely encountered in practice, but the challenges of assessment can be significant, unexpected and highly idiosyncratic. The risk is that asylum-seeking and refugee children are assessed in ways which lead to inappropriate placement with the wrong level and nature of support. For instance, assessing a child when they have newly arrived may result in there being such significant language or behavioural needs that they are placed in a specialist setting. The current and planned SEN systems in England do not take proper account of the potential for children's needs to change significantly, and so the placement is sustained even if the needs change.

As alluded to above, EPs may not have many opportunities to work with children and families who are asylum-seeking or refugees. Finding participants (even without using the term 'experts') was challenging in this study, and likely reflects how infrequently many encounter such cases. The intersectional vulnerabilities of asylum-seeking and refugee children and professional values of promoting inclusion and social justice (BPS, 2018; The Health and Care Professions Council, 2023) demand that EPs approach this work with care and are supported to assess in ways which lead to better outcomes for children. This study brings together guidance and a theoretical understanding to support the profession and individual EPs in developing better assessment practices for asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Chapter 6: Implications and Evaluation

6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews the outcomes of the study considering the research question and evaluates the implications for professional practice and the system. It goes on to discuss the strengths and limitations of the research, before describing ways in which this research could be further developed.

6.2 Summary of Findings

The research question asks: How should EPs assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England?

Within this overall question, the study looked at the following: What are the principles that should guide EP practice when undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England? A set of principles was developed through a Delphi methodology summarised below (and detailed in **Figure 5**):

1. Overall Approach
 - 1.1 Strive for anti-oppressive practice
 - 1.2 Strive for cultural competence
 - 1.3 Take a strengths-based approach
- 2 The Assessment Process
 - 2.1 Prioritise dynamic and play-based assessments
 - 2.2 Assess over time
 - 2.3 Prioritise the voice of the child
 - 2.4 Overcome English language as a barrier to assessment
 - 2.5 Use language assessments with care
 - 2.6 Consider how to report outcomes
- 3 The Child's Context
 - 3.1 Work ecosystemically
 - 3.2 Carefully consider if, and how, to understand a child's history
 - 3.3 Work with, and support, parents
 - 3.4 Consider the specific needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)
- 4 The Wider Context
 - 4.1 Seek to work alongside communities
 - 4.2 Consider acculturation with care
 - 4.3 Aim to recognise and mitigate systemic oppression

These principles reflect the literature and the tenets of CRT in foregrounding anti-oppressive, culturally competent practices. The principles also recognise the complexities inherent in exploring histories and journeys and supporting acculturation.

The study also asked: What factors shape the needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children within the current context in England, and how can EPs navigate these? Using RTA, the following themes were constructed:

Theme: Systemic concerns

Theme: Professional competence and boundaries

Theme: Values and beliefs

Theme: Taking time

Themes overlap and interrelate but are shown to be understood distinctly and within the context of extant literature.

Systemic concerns - speaks primarily to Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), illustrated by a body of evidence demonstrating how it can be applied in context (Arakelyan & Ager, 2021; Crawford, 2020; Hart, 2009; Mayer, 2022; Paat, 2013).

Professional competence and boundaries - addresses the question of cultural competence (Due & Currie, 2022) as well as curiosity and taking a 'not knowing' position (Mercieca, 2009). This theme also reflects concern around exploring trauma in casework with an argument for EPs accepting a responsibility for taking a therapeutic approach (Crawley, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2013).

Values and beliefs - situates this area of EP practice within a sociopolitical context which demands that EPs work from a social justice perspective (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2022). Research shows practice can align with CRT through anti-oppressive practice, and by retaining reflexivity and cultural humility in our approach (Biddanda et al., 2018; Jenkins et al., 2018; Prendeville & Kinsella, 2022; Tervalon & Murray-Gacia, 1998; Williams et al., 2021).

Taking time – highlights time as a recurring factor throughout the findings of this study and the extant literature. It describes the value of being able to take time to assess (Fazel et al., 2012; Rousseau et al., 2013), how this allows for a more trauma-informed approach (Due & Currie, 2022; Hoyne & Cunningham, 2018; van Os et al., 2020). It also points to systemic pressures which work against doing so (Hooper et al., 2024; Jorgensen, 2025).

6.3 Implications

The philosophical position of this research sets out a commitment to draw on people's perceptions and experiences with the aim of promoting socially-just change as part of an iterative process of research and knowledge construction. Exploring the implications, alongside recognising the strengths and limitations of the study, illustrates where this is achieved and where it is lacking.

6.3.1 Implications for my practice

A key driver for this research, and central to the completion of a doctoral thesis as part of EP training, is that my own practice is informed. The following sets out how my practice has developed because of the research findings.

Language

I now see the importance of effective interpretation during consultation and hold the view that by not having this in place, I perpetuate a racist systemic barrier. This is now the first step in my planning for assessment, and I endeavour to have face-to-face interpretation where possible. I allow extra time in consultation to ensure translation is as accurate as possible. This is a skill that I am developing but by slowing down the process and taking time to check, meanings are clarified. I have yet to use interpreters for 1:1 work with children.

My advice around English language learning for children has shifted emphasis. Although communication is still positioned as important, I no longer use the term 'EAL' as this suggests it is a support need in and of itself. Rather, I describe the need for effective communication and language to access the curriculum. I stress the value of multilingualism, with suggestions for how this is a strength within the classroom. Where other professionals turn quickly to 'EAL' as the 'main problem' (which happens often) I challenge this.

Acculturation

Models of acculturation have supported my understanding of the complexities and nuances within this for families and children. My advice now talks about celebrating cultures and viewing a child's cultural differences as an asset within the classroom.

Using dynamic and play-based assessment

I have yet to encounter a situation in casework with asylum-seeking or refugee children where a standardised or cognitive assessment would be appropriate. Even dynamic or play-based assessment methods have needed to be interpreted carefully where language is involved or where a child has not

encountered toys or puzzles before. I am careful in my advice to point out where such factors are affecting how a child can access learning and recommend a 'wait and see' approach.

Working with other professionals

I am developing my work with key professionals in my local authority area who support asylum-seeking and refugee children. Through regular discussions about our own positions and values, professional boundaries and perspectives, there is an increasing understanding about how we can work more effectively and offer improved assessment and support to families and children.

Finding and making time in the process

Through multidisciplinary working, there are opportunities to slow the assessment process. The time pressure related to the statutory process is already mitigated in other areas of work within my service, and here there is an opportunity to follow a similar procedure. This would allow a child to access a specialist setting for a short time (a few weeks or months) before a needs assessment for an EHCP is completed.

Communicating my values

I am more confident and assured in taking an anti-oppressive approach in my work, and clearer in my reasons to others for such decisions. I have found, when talking with other professionals about my concerns around systemic racism, there is a high degree of agreement and understanding. By opening that space, it perhaps allows others to voice concerns that they have previously felt uncomfortable about.

My consultations and advice prioritise strengths-based narratives. For instance, alongside recommending that schools celebrate and learn about cultural differences, I advocate for multilingualism as an opportunity and strength, and I consider other experiences (such as navigating new environments or taking greater responsibility in the family) in my assessment and advice.

Reflection Box 17: Theory, Perspective and Values

When the principles were finalised, I developed a checklist and an assessment proforma incorporating them to support my practice. In fact, this was the prompt for realising that there was much more to consider in the data of the research than can be captured within a set of principles (hence the overall RTA). Although the checklist and proforma are useful aides-mémoire, I do not view them as important advances to my practice. Rather, the perspectives, values and intent which underpin them are where the development in my practice lies.

6.3.2 Implications for the profession

The research points to how the EP profession is challenged by this area of work, and from this the following considerations arise:

Advocating and promoting social justice

The findings and literature show that when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, EPs are challenged to navigate the complexity of pressures whilst holding true to social justice principles. By making these discussions explicit within the profession, there is opportunity to share and develop ways of thinking and working which can better meet social justice aims. This research is arguably a step in that direction. The research will be presented to my service and presented at the 2026 Association of Educational Psychologists' conference. I plan to submit a paper to journals, with the particular goal of publishing it in the Association of Educational Psychologists' journal 'Education Psychology in Practice' as it is widely read and cited by the profession.

Training, development and supervision

The research has highlighted a need for specialist training and supervision for EPs in supporting and assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. There is opportunity to include this in training courses, offering opportunity to address existing competencies such as 'recognise the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice and practise in a non-discriminatory and inclusive manner' (The Health and Care Professions Council, 2023) or 'Challenge views and actions judged potentially harmful to the child/young person' (BPS, 2018). It could also be part of a continuing professional development programme. Training might include consideration of the following:

- Sociopolitical context and policy, including the impact of colonialism and racialised policies and systems;
- Trauma-informed and culturally competent practice—how that looks within this context (e.g. how to explore histories and journeys, sitting with 'not 'knowing' and remaining curious);
- Ecosystemic contexts, including local processes, agencies, and partners;
- Debates and considerations around language and multilingualism;
- Models of acculturation;
- Anti-oppressive assessment tools and approaches;
- Signposting to specialist supervision and resources.

Given the infrequent nature of this work for many in the profession and the lack of research speaking specifically to this area of practice, it is important to consider how EPs can access 'expertise' and supervision beyond their service. This can be encouraged through special interest groups and the plans for dissemination mentioned above.

Forming multidisciplinary teams

The systemic and complex nature of the asylum-seeking and refugee experience often necessitates a range of professional support for the child and their family. Multidisciplinary teams (which need not be formalised beyond effective partnership working) allow EPs to work more confidently within their area of competency without losing sight of important factors, such as housing, community or economic hardship. This approach is supported by the ‘experts at hand’ model currently in development (Long et al., 2026).

6.3.3 Implications for the system

It is challenging to consider this in a context where the current sociopolitical environment around asylum-seeking and refugee communities makes opportunities for positive change seem beyond the EP professional’s reach. However, taking inspiration from Røn Larsen (2024), the following offer small windows of opportunity:

Shifting the focus in schools

As mentioned above, my advice now shifts the narrative: from EAL to multilingualism, from problematising cultural difference to celebrating it. Schools arguably hold a unique position in being able to create communities of inclusion and belonging that goes beyond acceptance towards valuing the contributions of all children with all their experiences, strengths and perspectives.

Reviewing processes

As well as taking opportunities to contribute to reviews and consultations on policies, there are small ways for EPs to shift how assessment processes look locally. For instance, the 20-week target for an EHCA only starts once a formal application is made, and a panel agrees to assess. All children have a right to education in the UK regardless of any assessment or EHCP. There is an opportunity, therefore, to work within these parameters in ways that can slow down the process and allow for better assessment and outcomes, rather than systematically disadvantaging asylum-seeking and refugee children by applying policies unilaterally.

Reflection Box 18: Changing Society

I am torn between wanting to describe all the ways in which I think the system could be improved and the reality of what is possible or probable. The recent SEND White Paper (Long et al., 2026) failed to mention asylum-seeking and refugee children, and it remains to be seen whether special considerations remain for other groups (e.g. armed forces and defence families). The political climate gives little room for discussions about how to improve the lives for asylum-seeking and refugee people, and so it seems that for now, working locally towards more socially just practice offers most hope for change.

6.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

The research is positioned within the qualitative paradigm with a philosophical position centred on promoting social justice, making material change, and engaging with an iterative construction of knowledge while foregrounding perceptions and experiences. The following evaluates the strengths and limitations of the research with reference to each of these.

What matters is that which changes

Strengths. The research was successful in producing a set of principles offering practical guidance to EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. This has led to changes in my practice, and potentially the practice of the participants and others engaging with the research. The use of the Delphi method was a choice rooted in the intent to produce a consensus view from defined ‘experts’, and the final principles were produced following a transparent and systematic gathering and interpretation of opinion.

Limitations. It is not evident in the research that outcomes for children and families are materially improved from this research. The methodology does not allow for comparison or testing of this, nor does it go so far as to consider the interpretation and implementation of the principles in practice. The principles are not a prescriptive process or tool and so the use of them depends on practitioners engaging at a more conceptual and values-based level. Arguably, areas such as strengths-based approaches and cultural competence would need to align with a practitioner’s existing perspectives to be readily and effectively adopted into practice.

We should seek to understand perceptions and experience

Strengths. The survey asked for primarily qualitative responses and actively sought narratives, perceptions and experiences. The resulting data set was rich and nuanced as a result. There was a high degree of consensus between participants, and views were supported by the literature. Where there were differences in opinion, these reflected areas of practice which are more controversial and require deeper contextual consideration—again, this is supported by the literature. A further RTA was conducted to ensure that through the Delphi process of consensus-finding, the research did not lose sight of the theory and debates behind the principles.

Limitations. The research would have been improved by a sample which better reflected the definition of ‘experts’ constructed from the exploratory literature review. Specifically, the sample lacked the voices of those with direct, lived experience of asylum-seeking or being a refugee person. Had the sample been broader and larger in number, a greater range of views and perspectives would either have offered further validation to the consensus reached or offered valuable alternative perspectives.

This could have been addressed by having a recruitment strategy which engaged with community groups. The research accepted but could not mitigate my own positionality as a white researcher, or those positionalities of the participants. Furthermore, some professionals may have excluded themselves from the research as their experience of this area of work is relatively limited compared with assessment of other groups. Finally, the research did not stipulate that participants should be working in England, meaning some responses may reflect a different context to that which the principles seek to address.

A notable barrier to participation was the use of Google Forms. As described in **section 3.9**, many NHS and local authority organisations do not allow employees access to Google Forms. Despite having ethical approval to use Qualtrics, the university processes for accessing this were protracted and not feasible within the time allowed for this study.

Research and knowledge construction is iterative and changing

Strengths. Using the Delphi method ensured that within the research there was an iterative approach to constructing knowledge, from an exploratory literature review, through two survey rounds, and final ratification step. The overall RTA constructed themes which enrich the findings of the study. At each stage, I used a transparent, reflexive approach so that findings can be evaluated and understood within the context of its construction.

Limitations. An exploratory literature review was undertaken to construct the first survey. A systematic literature review would have offered a more comprehensive evaluation of the literature and may have led to a different first round of questions. Through the Delphi surveys, the construction of knowledge was asynchronous and involved my interpretation at each stage of analysis. The use of focus groups would have given opportunity for knowledge construction in real time, with participants being able to respond to new ideas or perspectives in the moment. The construction of knowledge would have been more dynamic and potentially could have led to different findings. The use of a written survey may have led to shorter responses and depended on participants' ability to communicate effectively in this way. Finally, the iterative process is not complete as the principles have not been evaluated in practice.

Research should promote social justice

Strengths. The research seeks to address concerns regarding the whiteness of the profession and the researcher positionality through the application of CRT as an explicit lens. Participants were asked to engage directly with CRT and the findings were shown to align closely. The research acknowledged the sociopolitical context, particularly in asking participants to speak to this in the second survey.

Limitations. The surveys demanded a commitment of time to complete, were in English and relied on IT accessibility. These limited access to some participants, potentially impacting inequitably. Using interviews or translated materials, alongside ensuring I could use survey software which allowed full access, would have mitigated this. Interviews may have involved less time commitment and been more accessible for some. As mentioned, the findings have yet to be applied and evaluated in a way which shows any direct change in outcomes or whether this change promotes social justice.

6.5 Future Research

Research which applies the principles in practice and evaluates their impact would significantly improve our understanding of the current study. It could include the direct experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee families, offering a deeper description of the different contexts and factors involved in this area of work.

Given the movement of families between Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, research which evaluates the principles across those different contexts would be beneficial.

Further research could consider the ways in which settings can better support asylum-seeking and refugee children with SEN. This might look at how to draw from the principles from this study (such as acculturation considerations) to develop a framework of support which is strengths-based and anti-oppressive.

6.6 Final Thoughts

This research has begun to answer my initial concern of how I can be a better EP when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. It does not offer a definitive checklist or process, but as I encounter more cases in this area, participant quotes, the principles and themes manifest in myriad ways and underpin my formulations, decision, approach and advice. It is reassuring to read others' perspectives which mirror my own in finding the work complex, nuanced and important. Above all, it has energised and inspired me to look for opportunities to develop my practice and improve the systems surrounding this area of work.

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Appendix A: Extracts from My Research Diary

21st September 2024 – Defining the thesis

Talking to [friend's name] yesterday about wanting to find useful knowledge but not minimise the voice of refugees / asylum-seekers. He asked what my actual thesis is:

- 1 – current assessment approaches are not culturally / linguistically / developmentally / educationally appropriate for new arrivals
- 2 – systemic factors (12 week timescale for stat etc) mean that CYP are labelled 'SEN' too early and using inappropriate tools – including pressure of uncertain residency leading to hiding or exaggerating need?

13th February 2025 - Positionality

From attending Xxxx Seminar on research with Asylum-seeking and Refugee CYP

Really interesting how similar EP experiences are to my own – that although there is significant heterogeneity, there's a real commonality in how difficult assessment is in this sphere – e.g. fear if not yet settled, language, trauma

Also 'insider-outsider'. What right do I have to do this research? But what right to have not to do it? Can you ever really be an insider?

17th March 2025 - CRT

Reading Bradbury (2019) paper and thinking about my justification of 'outsider' research. Talking to peer the other day and they questioned why I feel it necessary to use CRT lens. This paper articulates why – I am imbued with white privilege, as is the profession. There is an argument that all researchers should apply this given the whiteness of research.

6th May 2025 – Exploratory Literature Review Coding

Having started by coding every statement that's relevant, and thinking I could take those that crop up most, I realise that my aim is actually to capture any and all possibly relevant points at this stage – and so I can look for novel points to add, rather than coding everything. This is an easy shift – only 5 papers in and I won't change what I've done already as long as I remember to ignore numbers of times a point has come up.

11th June 2025 – Presentation to Quality Research Interest Group

Really useful having to explain CRT principles in plain English. Highlighted my anxiety about using my own words to explain this.

Feedback on insider-outsider position also useful – as an EP I am an insider in this case and this was viewed as an important consideration.

16th June 2025 – Refugee Week Event in a School

CYP keen to share experiences, culture etc.

[various descriptions of personal journeys and experiences]

My reflections:

- How unique their contexts are and how little I know about geopolitics, routes etc
- That I want to share their stories
- Makes me wonder about the students who weren't at the event
- Policies – e.g. 'only 50 families selected to come into UK from [home country] – we were 39'

13th September 2025 – Sociopolitical Events

Huge far-right protest in London following Charlie Kirk killing, and noticing this week all the flags on my way to work. Feel useless, helpless, sick at the thought of what people think and how that will make asylum-seekers / refugees feel. Research suddenly feels both relevant and futile.

27th September 2025 – Thesis Supervision on Philosophical Position

CRT – beginning to see my engagement with CRT as a journey. Initially I viewed it as a tool or ‘bolt on’ way of justifying my decisions whilst wanting to be socially just. I’m now seeing a deeper integration of it in how I research (and engage more generally in work). When I think about participants and recruitment, and reading survey responses, I am seeing how I want to foreground experiences in light of this. If I had started the research with this position, would it look different? Pragmatism (‘making a difference’) is still a central value for me – not sure how I would this if doing 1st person qual research – but I am nearer to this view than I was. Maybe this is a key recommendation or next step? – apply the principles to practice and ask CYP/families about their experiences.

31st October 2025 – Thesis Supervision and the Sociopolitical Context

*Talked about the political context we now operate in. Considered:
How do we ensure families feel safe with us? (It’s no longer a ‘given’).
We can’t assume other professionals think as I do (‘mask of kindness’ – supervisor).
Can’t ignore this in the research, but nor should I state a political position.
Agreed to describe how things are changing and ask an open question about how this might be affecting their practice [in Round Two].*

26th January 2026 – Thesis Supervision on Theme Development

*Highlighted points of disagreement between ppts:
Histories
Language assessment
Child view
All relating to trauma and time / extent of involvement (not being enough)*

*Overarching themes –
professional competence – lack of exposure to this area of work, alongside lack of training and guidance;
I wonder if some reticence to ask about histories relates to fear of what you might hear
Lack of lived experience in the profession*

Appendix B: Extracts from Exploratory Literature Review Process

Question	Concept	Keyword alternatives	Search term
1	asylum-seeker	refugee	"asylum-seeker" OR "refugee" OR "immigrant" OR "new arrival" OR "displaced" OR "unaccompanied minor" OR "stateless"
		immigrant	
		new arrival	
		displaced	
		stateless	
		unaccompanied minor	
	assessment	needs assessment	"assessment" OR "consultation" OR "evaluation"
		consultation	
		evaluation	
	guidance	principles	"guidance" OR "recommendations" OR "guidelines" OR "practice"
		recommendations	
		guidelines	
		good practice	
		best practice	
	SEN	special educational needs	"SEN" OR "special educational needs" OR "learning needs" OR "needs" OR "educational needs" OR "disability" OR "difficulty"
		learning needs	
		needs	
		educational needs	
		disability	
		difficulty	
	educational psychologist	EP	"educational psychologist" OR "EP" OR "school counsellor" OR "psychologist" OR "teacher" OR "school"
		school counsellor	
		psychologist	
		teacher	
		school	
		approach	
		practice	

Grey Literature Sources

what	who	where
The Ecological Approach to the Assessment of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children	national children's bureau	https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/arc_1_1ecologicalapproach.pdf
Needs assessment for refugee emergencies (NARE)	UNHCR	https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/refugee-coordination-model/needs-assessment-refugee-emergencies-nare

what	who	where
Needs Assessment and Planning for Asylum Seeking and Refugee Young People: A good practice note	national children's bureau	https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/arc_1_4needsassesspracnote.pdf
Welcoming Refugee and Asylum Seeking Learners	Bell Foundation	https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/resources/guidance/schools-and-leaders/welcoming-refugee-and-asylum-seeking-learners/
Children and young people seeking asylum and refugees - guidance for paediatricians	Royal College of Paediatrics and Children's Health	https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/refugee-asylum-seeking-children-young-people-guidance-paediatricians
Screening and Assessment	NCTSN	https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma/screening-and-assessment
Guidelines for psychologists working with refugees and asylum seekers in the UK: Extended version	BPS	https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/report-guideline/bpsrep.2018.inf300b
SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years	government	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Search for Q1 using StarPlus database on 22/03/2025

search terms	no of hits
"asylum-seeker" and "assessment" and "SEN" and "educational psychologist" and "guidance"	0
all search terms	267
excluding books and reviews	239
including education assessment, children, psychosocial - visual search of titles and library summary	31

Usefulness*	Paper
2	Blundell, H., Milligan, R., Norris, S. L., & Garner, P. (2019). WHO guidance for refugees in camps: systematic review. <i>BMJ Open</i> , 9(9), e027094–e027094. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-027094
1	Khawaja, N. G., & Wotherspoon, J. (2022). Learning challenges of culturally and linguistically diverse students: A framework for psychological assessment. <i>Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools</i> , 32(2), 254–267. https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2022.2
3	Oppenheim, C. E., Axelrod, K., Menyongai, J., Chukwuezi, B., Tam, A., Henderson, D. C., & Borba, C. P. C. (2019). The HEAAL Project: Applying Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Methodology in a Health and Mental Health Needs Assessment with an African Immigrant and Refugee Faith Community in Lowell, Massachusetts. <i>Journal of Public Health Management and Practice</i> , 25(1), E1–E6. https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000000707
1	Khawaja, N. G., & Howard, G. (2020). Assessing educational difficulties of students from refugee backgrounds: a case study approach. <i>Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools</i> , 30(2), 97–111. https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2020.2

Usefulness*	Paper
1	Birman, D., Beehler, S., Harris, E. M., Everson, M. L., Batia, K., Liautaud, J., Frazier, S., Atkins, M., Blanton, S., Buwalda, J., Fogg, L., & Cappella, E. (2008). International Family, Adult, and Child Enhancement Services (FACES): A Community-Based Comprehensive Services Model for Refugee Children in Resettlement. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i> , 78(1), 121–132. https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.78.1.121
2	Hollifield, M., Warner, T. D., Krakow, B., Jenkins, J., & Westermeyer, J. (2009). The Range of Symptoms in Refugees of War: The New Mexico Refugee Symptom Checklist-121. <i>The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease</i> , 197(2), 117–125. https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0b013e31819642dc
1	Brady, J. A., Lee, C. S., Cardeli, E., Winer, J., & Burke, P. J. (2021). Refugee and Immigrant Core Stressors Toolkit to Care for Newly Arrived Children in a School Nursing Setting. <i>The Journal of School Nursing</i> , 37(6), 523–531. https://doi.org/10.1177/10598405211045688
1	Lorek, A., Ehntholt, K., Nesbitt, A., Wey, E., Githinji, C., Rossor, E., & Wickramasinghe, R. (2009). The mental and physical health difficulties of children held within a British immigration detention center: A pilot study. <i>Child Abuse & Neglect</i> , 33(9), 573–585. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.10.005
3	Cole, E., & Akamatsu, C. T. (2000). Meeting the psychoeducational needs of deaf immigrant and refugee children. <i>Canadian Journal of School Psychology</i> , 16(1), 1.
1	Upvall, M. J., & Bost, M. L. (2007). Developing cultural competence in nursing students through their experiences with a refugee population. <i>The Journal of Nursing Education</i> , 46(8), 380–383. https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20070801-08
1	Ahmad, F., Shakya, Y., Li, J., Khoaja, K., Norman, C. D., Lou, W., Abuelaish, I., & Ahmadzi, H. M. (2012). A pilot with computer-assisted psychosocial risk -assessment for refugees. <i>BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making</i> , 12(1), 71–71. https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6947-12-71
2	Sudhinaraset, M., Ling, I., To, T. M., Melo, J., & Quach, T. (2017). Dreams deferred: Contextualizing the health and psychosocial needs of undocumented Asian and Pacific Islander young adults in Northern California. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i> (1982), 184, 144–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.05.024
2	Fuhr, D. C., Acarturk, C., McGrath, M., Ilkkursun, Z., Sondorp, E., Sijbrandij, M., Ventevogel, P., Cuijpers, P., McKee, M., & Roberts, B. (2019). Treatment gap and mental health service use among Syrian refugees in Sultanbeyli, Istanbul: a cross-sectional survey. <i>Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences</i> , 29, e70–e70. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796019000660
1	Strekalova, E., & Hoot, J. L. (2008). What is special about special needs of refugee children? Guidelines for teachers. In <i>Multicultural education (San Francisco, Calif.)</i> (Vol. 16, Number 1, pp. 21–24). Caddo Gap Press.
1	Ataro Adere, A., Dababnah, S., & Habayeb, S. (2024). Identifying Needs of Ethiopian and Eritrean American Parents of Autistic Children. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> , 54(10), 3899–3907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-023-06102-7
3	Toppelberg, C. O., Hollinshead, M. O., Collins, B. A., & Nieto-Castañón, A. (2013). Cross-Sectional Study of Unmet Mental Health Need in 5- to 7-Year Old Latino Children in the United States: Do Teachers and Parents Make a Difference in Service Utilization? <i>School Mental Health</i> , 5(2), 59–69. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-012-9089-6
1	Chimento, A., Nelki, J., Dutton, C., & Hughes, G. (2011). School-based mental health service for refugee and asylum seeking children: multi-agency working, lessons for good practice. <i>Journal of Public Mental Health</i> , 10(3), 164–177. https://doi.org/10.1108/17465721111175047
1	Cole, E. (1998). Immigrant and Refugee Children: Challenges and Opportunities for Education and Mental Health Services. <i>Canadian Journal of School Psychology</i> , 14(1), 36–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/082957359801400104
1	Tanaka, A. (2013). Assessment of the Psychosocial Development of Children Attending Nursery Schools in Karen Refugee Camps in Thailand. <i>International Journal of Early Childhood</i> , 45(3), 279–305. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-012-0077-7
3	Hannah, J. (1999). Refugee students at college and university: improving access and support. <i>International Review of Education</i> , 45(2), 153–166.
1	Kaprielian-Churchill, I. (1996). Refugees and education in Canadian schools. <i>International Review of Education</i> , 42(4), 349–365. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00601096
1	Orozco, G. L. (2007). Reaching out to immigrant students and families: a task for counselors in the schools. In <i>Counseling and Human Development</i> (Vol. 39, Number 7, p. 1). Love Publishing Co.
2	Lennon, J. C., Labao, A., & Hassan, I. (2019). Commentary on Translational Impact: Improving Communication and Advocacy for Disadvantaged Populations Through Educational Reform. <i>Translational Issues in Psychological Science</i> , 5(3), 292–293. https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000203
3	Nguyen, M. N.-A. (1996). <i>Needs assessment of Vietnamese youth in South Bay</i> . ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
3	Sideridis, G. D. (2007). International Approaches to Learning Disabilities: More Alike or More Different? <i>Learning Disabilities Research and Practice</i> , 22(3), 210–215. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5826.2007.00249.x
2	Boateng, G. O., Wachter, K., Schuster, R. C., Burgess, T. L., & Bunn, M. (2024). A Scoping Review of Instruments Used in Measuring Social Support among Refugees in Resettlement. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> , 21(6), 805. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21060805
3	Kim, H. (2023). <i>Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Their Language Development, Assessment, and Support in the Public Education System</i> . ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
1	Ephraim, D. (2002). Rorschach Trauma Assessment of Survivors of Torture and State Violence. <i>Rorschachiana</i> , 25(1), 58–76. https://doi.org/10.1027/1192-5604.25.1.58
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Usefulness*	Paper
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1	Kaplan, I. (2009). Effects of trauma and the refugee experience on psychological assessment processes and interpretation. <i>Australian Psychologist</i> , 44(1), 6-15. https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060802575715

*1 = useful, 2 = partially useful, 3 = not useful

From Literature Review at start of research

Usefulness*	Paper
3	Dunn, T. J., Browne, A., Haworth, S., Wurie, F., & Campos-Matos, I. (2021). Service Evaluation of the English Refugee Health Information System: Considerations and Recommendations for Effective Resettlement. <i>Int J Environ Res Public Health</i> , 18(19). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph181910331
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1	Parada, H., Perez Gonzalez, L., Rampersaud, M., & Escobar Olivo, V. (2023). "Parents don't know they have the option to say no": the experiences of Caribbean and Latin American parents navigating special education in Ontario. <i>Race Ethnicity and Education</i> , 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2023.2255837
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*1 = useful, 2 = partially useful, 3 = not useful

Appendix C: Codebook for Exploratory Literature Review

Code	Sources	References
1 Professional skills, knowledge and experiences	0	0
Importance of professional sharing cultural background	1	1
Knowledge of policy and legislation	1	4
Lack of specific training for professionals	1	3
Need for professionals to gain suitable experience	1	1
Understanding of home country, politics and cultures	4	5
Value of specialist supervision	1	1
2 Working with other professionals	0	0
Challenges of systems and professionals not understanding AS and R status and people	1	1
Draw on expertise of other professionals	2	4
Integration of services	1	1
Lack of cultural competence in other professionals e.g. teachers	1	1
Risk of over assessment of AS and R children	1	1
3 Approaches to needs assessment	0	0
Assessment of native language competence	2	2
Assessment over time	4	7
Be cautious when drawing conclusions	2	2
Complexity of needs and vulnerabilities	4	14
Consideration of non-intellective causes of cognitive difficulties is important	1	1
Dynamic assessment	3	3
Ecological approach	6	11
Have a plan or approach to overcoming communication and language difficulties	1	1
Importance of being hypothesis-driven	2	4
Importance of comprehensive psychological assessment	1	1
importance of consultation	4	5
Importance of interviews	4	4
Importance of observations	3	3
importance of speaking with children without adults as may fear upsetting them	1	1
Issues with cognitive and standardised assessment tools	2	3
Language is a key barrier to AS and R children	3	7
Language versus cognitive needs	5	8
Need for different approaches for AS and R children	2	9
Need for highly individualised, bespoke approaches	1	1
Need to prioritise needs because there are multiple	1	1
Non-verbal assessment tools are useful	4	5
Response to intervention	2	2
Some cognitive assessment can be useful	3	5
Strengths-based approach	4	4
Unlikely to ascertain underlying causes of academic difficulties	2	2
Use of cognitive assessments to identify need, but not guide intervention	1	1
Use of interpretation services	5	12
Use of standardised testing	1	2
Use of technology	1	1
4 Understanding histories and journeys	0	0
Care in probing about traumatic histories	1	1
Challenges in getting history	4	9
Consideration of the journey	6	10
Disruption to, or lack of, schooling	1	1
Families coming to UK because child has needs	1	1
Impact of attachment (insecure or disrupted)	1	1
Impacts of refugee camps	1	1
Physical health impacts	1	1
Pre-immigration experiences	6	13

Code	Sources	References
Prevalence of bereavement	2	2
Separation from family	2	2
Unique considerations for unaccompanied minors	1	1
5 Cultural considerations	0	0
Acculturation factors are important to consider	1	1
Anti-oppressive practice	1	1
Challenges for parents being involved with education of their child	1	1
Cognitive strengths not recognised in western countries e.g. relating to sourcing and planning meals	1	1
Cultural competence and sensitivity	6	16
Cultural difference in valuing of individual over group achievement	1	1
Cultural differences in health expectations	5	8
Differences in help-seeking	1	1
Differences in values and beliefs (e.g. sexuality)	1	1
Differing sources of support - e.g. religion, family, community	1	1
Differing understandings of neurodiversity	1	1
Importance of appropriate consent	3	4
Lack of cognitive experiences valued in Western assessment	1	1
Some communities have less knowledge around neurodiversity	1	1
Stigma around disabilities and neurodiversity	1	1
6 Impact of status	0	0
AS and R children should be evaluated for extra support with consideration of how recently they've arrived	1	1
AS and R families face discrimination when accessing services	1	1
Child taking on responsibilities because of better language	1	1
Consideration of unsettled status	5	10
Difficulties of navigating systems in the UK	4	6
Fear of sharing needs in case it impacts on status	1	1
Impact of a hostile environment	1	13
Impact of current status on mental health	3	6
Importance of how we speak of AS and R children	1	2
Importance of seeing 'children' not 'refugees'	1	1
Intersectionality compounds discriminatory experiences - .g. being black and an immigrant	1	1
Lack of social support networks	1	3
Low expectations of AS and R children	2	3
Parents understanding rights e.g. under SEN legislation	1	1
Potential for EHCPs to label and 'other' rather than support	1	1
Reports need to be detailed and give context to any results	1	1
Seeing migrant status as SEN is problematic	1	1
Supporting parents to be able to advocate and be heard	1	1
Systemic barriers faced by AS and R people	5	7
7 Understanding trauma	0	0
Difficulties with emotional regulation	1	1
Impact of family's capacity to nurture and support	1	1
Impact of history on mental health	6	12
Impact of trauma on development	1	2
Impact of trauma on willingness to share	1	1
Importance of trauma-informed practice	2	3
Intergenerational impacts	3	4
Psychosocial impacts	1	1
Safeguarding and child protection (e.g. FGM)	1	1
Trauma versus neurodevelopmental conditions	4	4
8 Working with communities	0	0
Engaging with community	1	1
importance of education in settling	2	6

Code	Sources	References
Interventions for social integration	1	2
Lack of information available in community languages	1	1
Value of group based interventions	1	1
CRT 1 Acknowledging white privilege	0	0
CRT does not imply that one race is superior or inferior to another	1	1
CRT does not posit that all White individuals are racist and all racially minoritized individuals are oppressed	1	1
CRT is not an attempt to make people feel negative about their own race	1	1
Whiteness is a tangible commodity with significant value	1	1
CRT 2 Racism and power in society	0	0
CRT highlights the influence of structural determinism	1	1
Race inequality supports the interests of the dominant group in society	1	1
The dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times	1	1
CRT 3 The importance of individual and collective narratives and voice	0	0
CRT calls for the foregrounding of the unique voice of colour and the need for counternarratives	1	1
Intersectionality supports anti-essentialism so that no two people experience the world in the same way	1	1
Narrative grounds topics to a specific place and moment shared from a personal vantage point	1	1
CRT 4 Racism is pervasive and normalised	0	0
Anti-oppressive practice asks that we call out behaviours which perpetuate racism	1	1
Racism is permanent	1	1
Racism is so pervasive that it is considered normal and so is often unnoticed	1	1
CRT 5 CRT demands practical change	0	0
Anti-oppressive practice demands that we assess the use of race-based algorithms and ask how racism is impacting on professional interactions	1	1
CRT focuses on examining and remedying disparate outcomes rather than changing individuals' beliefs	1	1
Liberal policies and laws do not go far enough as they only address overt forms of racism	1	1
Race is a social construct but CRT does not deny the real implications race has on lives	1	1
Social justice is central to CRT	1	1
CRT 6 The importance of ongoing critical reflection	0	0
CRT demands that self-awareness and reflection is ongoing	1	1
CRT demands that we remain aware of and critical of racist histories	1	1
It is important to acknowledge and make transparent our own privileges and marginalised identities	1	1
Questions specific to racialisation should be asked throughout research	1	1

Appendix D: Applying Exploratory Literature Review Themes to Round One Survey

Theme	Possible questions or principles	Indicator of 'expert'
1 Professional skills, knowledge and experiences		
Importance of professional sharing cultural background	How important is it that professionals share cultural backgrounds with asylum-seeking or refugee people? What benefits or draw backs would there be to having professionals with close cultural links working as part of multidisciplinary teams?	Professionals who share culture, ethnicity or race with asylum-seeking and refugee communities. Asylum-seeking and refugee people.
Knowledge of policy and legislation	In what ways does the policy and legislation relating to asylum-seeking and refugee communities affect your practice? In what ways should the policy and legislation relating to asylum-seeking and refugee communities affect your / EP practice?	EPs working with asylum-seeking and refugee communities. Allied professionals working with asylum-seeking and refugee communities (e.g. social workers, legal professionals, advice workers, charity support workers).
Lack of specific training for professionals	In your experience, is EP training sufficient to work effectively with asylum-seeking and refugee children? Describe the experiences that are the basis of this answer.	Lecturers and fieldwork supervisors of EPs. Principal EPs.
Need for professionals to gain suitable experience	Should EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children have specific experience? If not, why not? If so, how might they gain this?	
Understanding of home country, politics and cultures	Should EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children have specific knowledge of their home country, politics and/or culture? If not, why not? If so, how might EPs gain this?	
Value of specialist supervision	Should EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children have access to specialist supervision? If not, why not? If so, what that might involve?	EP supervisors and specialist senior EPs
2 Working with other professionals		
Challenges of systems and professionals not understanding AS and R status and people	Can you describe any experiences you have had of systems or professional not having an adequate understanding of asylum-seeking and refugee people? What impact did this have?	Nursery, School and College staff
Draw on expertise of other professionals	Can you describe multi-disciplinary working in the support of asylum-seeking and refugee children? What were the benefits and draw-backs?	Allied professions – health, social care, other advice and support professionals
Integration of services	Do services integrate successfully or are there gaps or areas of duplication?	
Lack of cultural competence in other professionals e.g. teachers	Can you think of any examples where you witnessed a lack of cultural competence?	

Theme	Possible questions or principles	Indicator of 'expert'
Risk of over assessment of AS and R children	Is there a risk that children are over-assessed?	
3 Approaches to needs assessment		
Assessment of native language competence	How important is the assessment of a child's competence in their native language? How do you do this?	
Assessment over time	How important is assessment over time? How do you do this?	
Be cautious when drawing conclusions	How cautious are you in drawing conclusions? How do you ensure conclusions are drawn cautiously?	
Complexity of needs and vulnerabilities	How do you account for the complexity of needs and vulnerabilities?	
Consideration of non-intellective causes of cognitive difficulties is important	What factors might impact on a child's cognitive difficulties?	
Dynamic assessment	Do you use dynamic assessment? If so, how?	
Ecological approach	How important is it that you take an ecological approach to assessment? How do you do this?	
Have a plan or approach to overcoming communication and language difficulties	How do you overcome communication and language difficulties in assessment and consultation?	
Importance of being hypothesis-driven	How important is it that assessment is hypothesis-driven?	
Importance of comprehensive psychological assessment	How important is it that psychological assessment is comprehensive? How do you achieve this?	
importance of consultation	How important is consultation? Why?	
Importance of interviews	How important are interviews or capturing pupil views? Why?	
Importance of observations	How important is observation? Why?	
importance of speaking with children without adults as may fear upsetting them	Do you try to speak with children without their parents present? Why?	
Issues with cognitive and standardised assessment tools	Do you use cognitive and/or standardised assessment tools? If so, which and with what purpose?	
Language is a key barrier to AS and R children		
Language versus cognitive needs	How do you determine whether a child has a cognitive rather than language need?	
Need for different approaches for AS and R children	Are your assessment approaches for asylum-seeking and refugee children different to other work? In what way? Why?	

Theme	Possible questions or principles	Indicator of 'expert'
Need for highly individualised, bespoke approaches		
Need to prioritise needs because there are multiple		
Non-verbal assessment tools are useful	Do you make use of non-verbal assessment tools? If so, what do you use?	
Response to intervention	Do you build in a response to intervention approach? How do you do this?	
Some cognitive assessment can be useful		
Strengths-based approach	How important is a strengths-based approach? How do you do this?	
Unlikely to ascertain underlying causes of academic difficulties		
Use of cognitive assessments to identify need, but not guide intervention		
Use of interpretation services	Do you use interpretation services? How? What are the benefits and draw-backs?	
Use of standardised testing		
Use of technology	Do you use technology in assessment? How?	
4 Understanding histories and journeys		
Care in probing about traumatic histories	How do you explore the child and family's histories?	
Challenges in getting history	What aspects of a child's history do you think are important for assessment? Why?	
Consideration of the journey	What aspects of a child's journey do you think are important for assessment? Why?	
Disruption to, or lack of, schooling		
Families coming to UK because child has needs		
Impact of attachment (insecure or disrupted)		
Impacts of refugee camps		
Physical health impacts	How do you evaluate the health of a child and how this might impact?	
Pre-immigration experiences		
Prevalence of bereavement		

Theme	Possible questions or principles	Indicator of 'expert'
Separation from family		
Unique considerations for unaccompanied minors	What specific considerations are there when assessing the needs of unaccompanied minors?	
5 Cultural considerations		
Acculturation factors are important to consider	What acculturation factors should be considered? How do you assess this?	
Anti-oppressive practice	Describe any steps you take towards anti-oppressive practice. Are there any steps you would like to take but don't? Why?	
Challenges for parents being involved with education of their child	How do you support parents to engage with their child's education? Are there specific difficulties in this respect for asylum-seeking and refugee parents?	
Cognitive strengths not recognised in western countries e.g. relating to sourcing and planning meals	Have you any experience of children having cognitive strengths which are not recognised in western cultures? Describe what these are and how you would approach this in assessment.	
Cultural competence and sensitivity	Describe any steps you take towards culturally sensitive or competent practice. Are there any steps you would like to take but don't? Why?	
Cultural difference in valuing of individual over group achievement	What cultural differences have you noticed when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children? How has this impacted on the assessment? Suggestions include: Valuing group over individual achievement Health expectation Help-seeking behaviours Faith, spirituality, values, beliefs Understandings of neurodiversity and disability	
Cultural differences in health expectations		
Differences in help-seeking		
Differences in values and beliefs (e.g. sexuality)		
Differing sources of support - e.g. religion, family, community		
Differing understandings of neurodiversity		
Importance of appropriate consent	Describe any differences in attaining appropriate consent.	
Lack of cognitive experiences valued in Western assessment		
Some communities have less knowledge around neurodiversity		
Stigma around disabilities and neurodiversity		

Theme	Possible questions or principles	Indicator of 'expert'
6 Impact of status		
AS and R children should be evaluated for extra support with consideration of how recently they've arrived	How do you assess the impact of the child's immigration status? For example, do you consider the following: how recently they've arrived unsettled status Lack of social support networks Low expectations	
AS and R families face discrimination when accessing services	From your experiences, have you witnessed any of the following? discrimination when accessing services Child taking on responsibilities because of better language Fear of sharing needs in case it impacts on status Impact of a hostile environment Intersectionality compounds discriminatory experiences Systemic barriers Describe how this has manifested in your work and the impact it had on families, children and the assessment.	
Child taking on responsibilities because of better language		
Consideration of unsettled status		
Difficulties of navigating systems in the UK		
Fear of sharing needs in case it impacts on status		
Impact of a hostile environment		
Impact of current status on mental health		
Importance of how we speak of AS and R children		
Importance of seeing 'children' not 'refugees'		
Intersectionality compounds discriminatory experiences - .g. being black and an immigrant		
Lack of social support networks		
Low expectations of AS and R children		
Parents understanding rights e.g. under SEN legislation	How do you support parents in understanding and advocating for their rights e.g. under SEN legislation?	
Potential for EHCPs to label and 'other' rather than support	Are there differences in how you write or communicate assessment outcomes? Describe why and what these differences are.	

Theme	Possible questions or principles	Indicator of 'expert'
Reports need to be detailed and give context to any results		
Seeing migrant status as SEN is problematic		
Supporting parents to be able to advocate and be heard		
Systemic barriers faced by AS and R people		
7 Understanding trauma		
Difficulties with emotional regulation	How should assessment consider trauma? For example: Do you evaluate intergenerational trauma? Have you experiences of ongoing trauma? What impacts of trauma have you observed in children? Is your practice trauma-informed? And if so, how?	
Impact of family's capacity to nurture and support		
Impact of history on mental health		
Impact of trauma on development		
Impact of trauma on willingness to share		
Importance of trauma-informed practice		
Intergenerational impacts		
Psychosocial impacts		
Safeguarding and child protection (e.g. FGM)		
Trauma versus neurodevelopmental conditions		
8 Working with communities		
Engaging with community	Do you engage with communities as part of this work? If so, how? What are the benefits? What are the barriers?	
importance of education in settling		
Interventions for social integration		
Lack of information available in community languages		
Value of group based interventions		

Appendix E: Round One Survey Question Development

Section	Version 1	Revisions
Personal Data	As per ethics	
	This research considers personal experiences and positionality to be important and relevant to any findings. As such, you are asked to consider your own privileges and disadvantages and how this informs your answers. It might help to reflect using Social GRRRAAACCEEESSS (Burnham & Roper-Hall, 1993) - LIST It is important to also consider intersectionality (where these areas might compound disadvantage or privilege). You can keep these reflections private or you can share these here:	
1 Professional Skills, Knowledge and Experience	How important is it that professionals share cultural backgrounds with asylum-seeking or refugee people?	How important is it that professionals share cultural backgrounds with asylum-seeking or refugee people? Can you think of any examples where you witnessed a lack of cultural competence? How did you respond? What might you have done differently?
	What benefits or draw backs would there be to having professionals with close cultural links working as part of multi-disciplinary teams?	
	In what ways does the policy and legislation relating to asylum-seeking and refugee communities affect your practice?	In what ways does the policy and legislation relating to asylum-seeking and refugee communities affect your practice? Should this affect your practice?
	In what ways should the policy and legislation relating to asylum-seeking and refugee communities affect your / EP practice?	
	In your experience, is EP training sufficient to work effectively with asylum-seeking and refugee children? Describe the experiences that are the basis of this answer.	In your experience, is EP training sufficient to work effectively with asylum-seeking and refugee children? Should they have specific experience of working in this area? Should they have an understanding of a child's home country or culture? Should EPs working with asylum-seeking and refugee children have access to specialist supervision? Describe the experiences that are the basis of this answer.
	Should EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children have specific experience? If not, why not? If so, how might they gain this?	Describe any steps you take towards anti-oppressive practice. Are there any steps you would like to take but don't? Why?
	Should EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children have specific knowledge of their home country, politics and/or culture? If not, why not? If so, how might EPs gain this?	
	Should EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children have access to specialist supervision? If not, why not? If so, what that might involve?	
2 Working with Other Professionals	Can you describe any experiences you have had of systems or professional not having an adequate understanding of asylum-seeking and refugee people? What impact did this have?	
	Can you describe multi-disciplinary working in the support of asylum-seeking and refugee children? What were the benefits and draw-backs?	Can you describe multi-disciplinary working in the support of asylum-seeking and refugee children? What

Section	Version 1	Revisions
		were the benefits and draw-backs? Do services integrate successfully or are there gaps or areas of duplication? What benefits or draw backs would there be to having professionals with close cultural links working as part of multi-disciplinary teams? Is there a risk that children are over-assessed? If so, what are the implications of this?
	Do services integrate successfully or are there gaps or areas of duplication?	
	Can you think of any examples where you witnessed a lack of cultural competence? How did you respond? What might you have done differently?	Do you engage with communities as part of this work? If so, how? What are the benefits? What are the barriers?
	Is there a risk that children are over-assessed? If so, what are the implications of this?	
3 Approaches to Needs Assessment	How important is the assessment of a child's competence in their native language? How do you do this?	The following is a list of needs assessment approaches and practices. Indicate on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is extremely, how important each is in your assessment of asylum-seeking or refugee children. Where possible, explain your responses.
	How important is assessment over time? How do you do this?	Assessment in a child's native language
	How cautious are you in drawing conclusions? How do you ensure conclusions are drawn cautiously?	Assessment over time e.g. response to intervention
	How do you account for the complexity of needs and vulnerabilities?	Use of dynamic assessment
	What factors might impact on a child's cognitive difficulties?	Ecosystemic thinking
	Do you use dynamic assessment? If so, how?	Being hypothesis-driven
	How important is it that you take an ecological approach to assessment? How do you do this?	Comprehensive assessment
	How do you overcome communication and language difficulties in assessment and consultation?	Capturing child views
	How important is it that assessment is hypothesis-driven?	Speaking to the child without their parents being present
	How important is it that psychological assessment is comprehensive? How do you achieve this? How do you avoid over-assessment by you and other professionals?	Cognitive assessment
	How do you use consultation and how important is it? Why?	Standardised assessment
	How do you capture pupil views? Why this way?	Language assessment
	Do you use a framework or particular approach for observation? Why this way?	Use of non-verbal assessment tools
	Do you try to speak with children without their parents present? Why?	Being strengths-based
	Do you use cognitive and/or standardised assessment tools? If so, which and with what purpose?	Use of interpreters
	How do you determine whether a child has a cognitive rather than language need?	
	Are your assessment approaches for asylum-seeking and refugee children different to other work? In what way? Why?	
	Do you make use of non-verbal assessment tools? If so, what do you use?	

Section	Version 1	Revisions
	Do you build in a response to intervention approach? How do you do this?	
	How important is a strengths-based approach? How do you do this?	
	Do you use interpretation services? How? What are the benefits and draw-backs?	
	Do you use technology in assessment? How?	
4 Understanding of Histories and Journeys	How do you explore the child and family's histories?	How and why might EPs explore the child and family's histories? What aspects of a child's history do you think are important for assessment? Why?
	What aspects of a child's history do you think are important for assessment? Why?	
	What aspects of a child's journey do you think are important for assessment? Why?	What aspects of a child's journey do you think are important for assessment? Why?
	How do you evaluate the health of a child and how this might impact?	
	What specific considerations are there when assessing the needs of unaccompanied minors?	What specific considerations are there when assessing the needs of unaccompanied minors?
5 Cultural Considerations	What acculturation factors should be considered? How do you assess this?	What acculturation factors should be considered? How do you assess this?
	Describe any steps you take towards anti-oppressive practice. Are there any steps you would like to take but don't? Why?	
	How do you support parents to engage with their child's education? Are there specific difficulties in this respect for asylum-seeking and refugee parents?	How do you support parents to engage with their child's education? Are there specific difficulties in this respect for asylum-seeking and refugee parents?
	Have you any experience of children having cognitive strengths which are not recognised in western cultures? Describe what these are and how you would approach this in assessment.	
	Describe any steps you take towards culturally sensitive or competent practice. Are there any steps you would like to take but don't? Why?	
	What cultural differences have you noticed when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children? How has this impacted on the assessment? Suggestions include: Valuing group over individual achievement Health expectation Help-seeking behaviours Faith, spirituality, values, beliefs Understandings of neurodiversity and disability	What cultural differences have you noticed when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children? How has this impacted on the assessment? Suggestions include: Valuing group over individual achievement Health expectation Help-seeking behaviours Faith, spirituality, values, beliefs Understandings of neurodiversity and disability
	Describe any differences in attaining appropriate consent.	Describe any differences in attaining appropriate consent.
6 The Impact of Status	How do you assess the impact of the child's immigration status? For example, do you consider the following: how recently they've arrived unsettled status Lack of social support networks Low expectations	
	From your experiences, have you witnessed any of the following? Impact of a hostile environment Intersectionality compounds discriminatory experiences Systemic barriers Describe how this has manifested in your work	From your experiences, have you witnessed any of the following? Impact of a hostile environment Intersectionality compounds discriminatory experiences Systemic barriers Describe how this has manifested in

Section	Version 1	Revisions
	and the impact it had on families, children and the assessment.	your work and the impact it had on families, children and the assessment.
	How do you support parents in understanding and advocating for their rights e.g. under SEN legislation?	How do you support parents in understanding and advocating for their rights e.g. under SEN legislation?
	Are there differences in how you write or communicate assessment outcomes? Describe why and what these differences are.	Are there differences in how you write or communicate assessment outcomes? Describe why and what these differences are.
7 Understanding Trauma	How should assessment consider trauma? For example: Do you evaluate intergenerational trauma? Have you experiences of ongoing trauma? What impacts of trauma have you observed in children? Is your practice trauma-informed? And if so, how?	
8 Working with Communities	Do you engage with communities as part of this work? If so, how? What are the benefits? What are the barriers?	
Preparing for Round Two	What have I missed?	
	Who should I be asking?	
	How should I be asking?	
	Reflections on CRT	
	Do you consent to being contacted for Round Two?	

Appendix F: CRT Principles Development

Codes	Version 1	Version 2 (shared with Qualitative Researchers network group)
Whiteness is a tangible commodity with significant value	•Whiteness is a tangible commodity with significant value.	Whiteness has value: Being white provides advantages in society.
CRT does not posit that all White individuals are racist and all racially minoritized individuals are oppressed	•Racism is so pervasive that it is considered normal and so is often unnoticed.	Racism is so pervasive: it can be considered 'normal' or inevitable, and so is often unnoticed.
CRT does not imply that one race is superior or inferior to another	•Liberal policies and laws do not go far enough as they only address overt forms of racism.	Laws don't go far enough: Current anti-racism laws are insufficient because they only deal with obvious, intentional acts of racism, not the deeper, systemic issues.
CRT calls for the foregrounding of the unique voice of colour and the need for counternarratives	CRT and anti-oppressive practice demands that:	<i>CRT and anti-oppressive practice demands that:</i>
Intersectionality supports anti-essentialism so that no two people experience the world in the same way	•self-awareness and reflection is ongoing.	We engage in ongoing self-reflection: We should constantly examine our own biases and beliefs.
Racism is so pervasive that it is considered normal and so is often unnoticed	•we remain aware of, and critical of, racist histories.	We question racist histories: It's important to be understand and be critical of how historical racism still affects today's society.
Anti-oppressive practice demands that we assess the use of race-based algorithms and ask how racism is impacting on professional interactions	•we assess the use of race-based algorithms and ask how racism is impacting on professional interactions.	We look for bias in systems: We should assess how racism shows up in professional settings, such as policies, practices, tools and technology we use.
CRT focuses on examining and remedying disparate outcomes rather than changing individuals' beliefs	CRT calls for:	We listen to diverse voices: We should foreground the unique perspectives and counternarratives of racially minoritised people.
Liberal policies and laws do not go far enough as they only address overt forms of racism	•the foregrounding of the unique voice of colour and the need for counternarratives.	We reject the idea that people are defined by inherent essences: Identity, meaning and characteristics are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by context, power dynamics, and histories.
CRT demands that self-awareness and reflection is ongoing	•Anti-essentialism as supported by intersectionality so that no two people experience the world in the same way.	We acknowledge individual differences: Intersectionality is used to understand that everyone's experience is shaped by a unique combination of their identities (race, gender, class, etc.).
CRT demands that we remain aware of and critical of racist histories	CRT does not:	
	•Posit that all White individuals are racist and all racially minoritized individuals are oppressed.	CRT does not generalise experiences: Not all white people are racist and not all racially minoritised people are oppressed
	•Imply that one race is superior or inferior to another.	CRT does not claim at one race is superior to any other.

Appendix G: Recruitment Strategy

Where		When
Networks	Qualitative Research interest group	At presentation and follow-up for each round
	National INA EP interest group	At meeting and follow up for each round
	Refugee Education UK Professional group	At meeting and follow up for each round
Social media	LinkedIn	Post every week during recruitment phase for each round
	BlueSky	Post every week during recruitment phase for each round
	Threads	Post every week during recruitment phase for each round
	Facebook – specific pages / groups and general	Post every week during recruitment phase for each round
Contacts	Within local authority (EPS and allied teams)	Email for each round
	Course contacts – Masters and doctorate	WhatsApp each round
	School and local organisation contacts who have expressed interest	Contact once, with one follow up as deadline approaches for each round
Snowball	Asking participants to share / signpost	During recruitment and at the end of each survey

Join the Conversation



University of
Sheffield

Researching what works in learning
needs assessments of asylum-seeking
and refugee children

What it involves:

Contribution to a Delphi Study via
an online survey



Who can participate:



- ✓ Assistant, Trainee and Qualified Educational Psychologists with experience of working with asylum-seeking or refugee children
- ✓ Asylum-seeking or refugee experienced people aged 18+ years
- ✓ Other professionals and volunteers supporting asylum-seeking and refugee children
- ✓ Academics and researchers in this field

What will it achieve?

Through sharing our experiences and expertise, the research aims to generate guidance for EPs assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.



Access more information using the QR code
above or contact swatson5@sheffield.ac.uk

I am conducting doctoral research on Educational Psychologists' assessment practice of asylum-seeking and refugee children. This is with The University of Sheffield towards the qualification of Doctor of Educational and Child Psychologist. I have attached a poster to this email and a link to the survey is here: <https://forms.gle/eNhqNoQRzGSmfJJB9>

To participate, you need to be aged 18 years or over and either:

- An assistant, trainee or qualified Educational Psychologist with experience of working with asylum-seeking or refugee children;
- A professional or volunteer with experience of supporting asylum-seeking or refugees (e.g. psychologist, SALT, social worker, advice worker, EEWP)
- An academic or researcher in this field;
- Have personal experience of seeking asylum or as a refugee.

I would be really grateful if you would participate, but also if you could share this with any colleagues or networks who may be interested.

If you would like further information or clarification, please contact me at swatson5@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet



Educational Psychologist (EP) Assessment Practices with Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children Participant Information

You are invited to take part in a research project about how educational psychologists (EP) assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England. Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me (details below) if there is anything you don't understand or if you would like more information. Take time in deciding whether or not you want to take part.

What is the project's purpose

This research is being done to fulfil the requirements of a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology professional qualification at the University of Sheffield. The researcher (Sarah Watson) is currently a Trainee EP and is scheduled to complete her qualification in Summer 2026, at which point she will be qualified to register and practice as an EP.

The research aims to identify good practice and considerations for EPs undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children in England. EPs are guided in their practice by the SEND Code of Practice, alongside further information and requirements from the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP). Guidance exists from independent research and via these organisations around assessing special educational needs, practicing with cultural competence and general psychology practice when supporting asylum-seeking and refugee people. However, there is a lack of specific guidance on how educational psychologist should assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

The research will use a Delphi approach - a series of online surveys which draw on the knowledge of interested people to reach a consensus view of what a set of guidelines for EPs might look like. There will be two 'rounds' of surveys, followed by a final opportunity for further feedback on a draft document. The surveys and feedback will be conducted between July 2025 and March 2026.

Why have I been chosen?

A literature review was used to identify who the 'experts' might be within this area of research. An 'expert' is anyone with knowledge and/or experience of the issues who can give an informed opinion of any proposed guidelines. You have been approached because of your profession, research interest or life experiences. No individual participant is expected to have an answer or opinion for every question, but you are considered to have a valuable insight into the topic which can contribute to the wider discussion.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be sent this information sheet at each round of the survey and you can save it to refer to as and when you wish.

You do not have to participate in every round, and you can withdraw from the research at any point up to the point at which the data is analysed (see specific dates below). Should you choose to withdraw or not choose not to participate in later rounds, you do not have to give a reason and there will be no negative consequences. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact Sarah Watson at:

Swatson5@sheffield.ac.uk

Taking part in this research is voluntary and will not create a legally binding agreement or any form of employment with the University of Sheffield.

What do I have to do if I take part?

The research uses the Delphi method. This means that through a series of online surveys, participant offer their views on a topic with the aim of reaching a consensus. This research will involve two 'rounds' (surveys) plus a final opportunity for feedback on the guidelines (consensus) reached. Although participants can respond in all rounds, this is not necessary and does not undermine the contributions made.

The first round will be an online survey which will ask a series of questions about how EPs might assess or approach their work with asylum-seeking and refugee children. The questions will be largely open-ended so that as full a range of ideas and opinions can be gathered. Participants may find they cannot answer some questions, and that is fine – it will not diminish the contribution they can make.

Example questions in Round One might be:

What specific considerations are there when assessing the needs of unaccompanied minors?

What aspects of a child's history do you think are important for assessment? Why?

Responses from the first round will be analysed with themes generated alongside draft guidelines and any further questions. The round two survey will give participants an opportunity to read through themes and guidelines generated from round one and comment. Participants who answer in round one will also be sent their individual responses to this so that they can compare their initial views with that of the emerging consensus view. It is anticipated that the survey for round two will include a greater number of closed questions (e.g. rating on scale the importance of a particular guideline).

Example questions in Round Two might be:

Rate the importance of the following from 1-10:

- *Gathering a comprehensive developmental history*
- *Using qualified interpreters in consultations*
- *Working in a multidisciplinary team to assess needs and support families*

It is hoped that following the second round, a draft set of guidelines will be developed. This will be sent to all participants for any further feedback or comments before it is finalised.

For each survey and feedback stage, participants will be given at least 2 weeks to respond. It is difficult to predict how long it will take to complete each survey but participants are able to decide how much and to what extent they answer the questions.

Table 1. Stages of participation in research

Stage	Nature of participation
Recruitment and Consent	Participants will decide whether or not to participate in Round One. If agreeing to participate, they will read and sign the consent form (sent online as part of the Round One Survey).
Round One Survey 13th July 2025 - 1st October 2025 Date of analysis - 2nd October 2025	Participants are given a minimum of two weeks to respond to the Round One Survey.
Further Recruitment and Consent	Further recruitment of participants identified through the Round One Survey will be conducted. All participants (regardless of previous involvement) will decide whether or not to participate in Round Two. If agreeing to participate, they will read and sign the consent form (sent online as part of the Round Two Survey).
Round Two Survey 14th November 2025 - 19th December 2025 Date of analysis - 20th December 2025	Participants are given a minimum of two weeks to respond to the Round Two Survey.
Further Recruitment and Consent	Further recruitment of participants identified through the Round Two Survey will be conducted. All participants (regardless of previous involvement) will decide whether or not to participate in Final Feedback. If agreeing to participate, they will read and sign the consent form (sent online as part of the Final Feedback form).
Final Feedback	Participants are given a minimum of two weeks to respond to the Final Feedback form.

The research is endeavouring to improve the experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee people. Educational psychology has a problem of perpetuating bias through culturally insensitive practices, prejudicial assessment tools and endemic whiteness (as described by Antony Williams' 2020 editorial 'The Whiteness of Educational Psychology: Colonialism, Post-Colonialism and Racialisation in the Theory, Training and Practice of Educational Psychology'). The research seeks to address this by applying the principles of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to the research design, administration and analysis. Participants will be asked to consider their responses in light of the following principles:

- **No race is superior to any other.**
- **Racism is pervasive:** it can be considered 'normal' or inevitable, and so is often unnoticed.
- **Whiteness has value:** Being white provides advantages in society.
- **CRT does not generalise experiences:** Not all white people are racist and not all racially minoritised people are oppressed
- **Laws don't go far enough:** Current anti-racism laws are insufficient because they only deal with obvious, intentional acts of racism, not the deeper, systemic issues.
- **CRT demands that we:**

- **Engage in ongoing self-reflection:** We should constantly examine our own biases and beliefs.
- **Question racist histories:** It's important to be understand and be critical of how historical racism still affects today's society.
- **Look for bias in systems:** We should assess how racism shows up in professional settings, such as policies, practices, tools and technology we use.
- **Listen to diverse voices:** We should foreground the unique perspectives and counternarratives of racially minoritised people.
- **Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences':** Identity, meaning and characteristics are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by context, power dynamics, and histories.
- **Acknowledge individual differences:** Intersectionality is used to understand that everyone's experience is shaped by a unique combination of their identities (race, gender, class, etc.).

At the stage of analysis, the researcher will be using the above principles to evaluate themes as they are constructed. Should a theme appear to contradict this position, in consultation with research supervisors, it will not appear in subsequent rounds, but would be discussed in the research thesis.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is possible that when answering questions, you will feel discomfort or upset about the subject. It may cause you to reflect on difficult experiences or question your personal practices or values. It is important, therefore, that you look after your wellbeing. This might include missing out a question or choosing not to share something in particular. It is also possible to seek emotional support, either through existing networks and relationships, or through organisation such as these:

www.mind.org.uk

www.samaritans.org

www.qwell.io

The research may also generate feelings of wanting to help asylum-seeking and refugee communities in some way. The following organisations are possible avenues for this:

www.refugee-action.org.uk

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

www.redcross.org.uk

www.reuk.org

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although there are no immediate benefits for taking part in the project, it is hoped that the work will generate a useful set of guidelines which practitioners can apply to their own work. Furthermore, the researcher is keen to disseminate and share findings and so would be happy to consider presenting the outcomes of the research to organisations or interest groups.

If you are a community researcher and would like a letter of commendation for your participation, I would be happy to complete this for you. If there is an aspect of the research process or outcomes you would like to understand better, I would also be happy to facilitate this.

Will taking part in this project be kept confidential?

As a participant, you will be asked to provide personal data. The University of Sheffield takes the processing of your data particularly seriously. All research at the University involving human participants is subject to extremely rigorous scrutiny and must be sanctioned by the University Research Ethics procedures.

All your personal data will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher and their supervisors. However, in cases where there is a concern regarding safeguarding or criminal activity, the researcher may be obliged to report this to the relevant authorities.

Data protection

Personal data (such as name, race and ethnicity, gender, occupation, age) will only be retained for the time necessary to fulfil the qualification (anticipated to be completed in Summer 2026). All reporting of findings will include anonymised data only and will be retained by the University for three years.

The research is carried out 'in the public interest' in accordance with data protection legislation. Further information can be found in here: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>

Some of your data collected during the research is defined in the legislation as more sensitive (information about race and ethnicity), so we need to let you know that the use of this data is necessary 'for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific research purposes or statistical purposes'.

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

What happens to the results of the research?

It is anticipated that the results of this research will be published in Summer 2026. As a participant, you can consent to being contacted at this time to have the publication sent to you directly.

It is hoped that the research will be of sufficient interest to the EP profession (and allied professionals) that it may be published in reputable journals, as well as shared through networks and conferences.

All findings will be anonymised, with no personal, identifiable data included.

Who has ethically approved this project?

This project has been ethically approved by the School of Education at the University of Sheffield.

What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research or report a concern or incident?

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the research or if you feel that you have been exploited, abused or harmed as a result of taking part in the research, please contact Dr Sabine Little at s.little@ac.uk. If you feel your complaint has not been handled in a satisfactory way you can contact the Head of the School of Education, Professor Rebecca Lawthom at r.lawthom@sheffield.ac.uk. If your complaint is about how your personal data has been handled, you can find information about how to raise a complaint here:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>

Contact for further information

Sarah Watson (Researcher) at swatson5@sheffield.ac.uk

Dr. Sabine Little (Research Supervisor) at s.little@sheffield.ac.uk

Dr. Aisha McLean (Research Supervisor) at aisha.mclean@sheffield.ac.uk

Please retain this electronic document should you choose to participate. Thank you

Appendix J: Round One Survey Questions

Educational Psychologists' (EPs') Assessment Practices with Asylum- seeking and Refugee Children: Round 1

Please read the following Participant Information Sheet before agreeing to take part in this research.

Click here for a copy:

[Participant Information Sheet](#)

Once you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and given your email address, please answer the following questions with 'Yes' or 'No'. By answering 'Yes' to all of the questions, you are agreeing to participate in Round 1 only.

Please note: you are consenting to Round 1 only, and you will be asked to consent again should you wish to participate in any further rounds.

* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email address

I have read and understood the project information sheet linked to above and/or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you answer No to this question please do not fill out the rest of the form until you understand what taking part in the project will mean.) *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I have been given the chance to ask questions about the project. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include the completion of this survey (and I may choose whether or not to participate in further rounds). *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand that I can withdraw from the research/study at any time. I understand that I do not have to give any reasons for this and there will be no negative consequences if I choose to withdraw. *

If I choose to withdraw it will not be possible to remove the research data I have contributed to Round 1 of the Delphi Survey if I withdraw after 24/10/2025.

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand my personal details such as name and email address etc. will not be seen by anyone outside the project.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs.

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

Critical Race Theory (CRT)



As described in the Participant Information Sheet, this research asks that you consider your responses in light of critical race theory (outlined below).

It is important to note that in asking that participants are reflective about their own and others' biases, it is not intended to evoke feelings of personal shame. Rather, it recognises that the nature of racism means that it is often hidden within systems and practices, cultures and societies. CRT asks that we become aware of that and seek to address it.

- **No race is superior to any other.**
- **Racism is pervasive:** it can be considered normal or inevitable, and so is often unnoticed.
- **Whiteness has value:** Being white provides advantages in society.
- **CRT does not generalise experiences:** Not all white people are racist and not all racially minoritised people are oppressed
- **Laws don't go far enough:** Current anti-racism laws are insufficient because they only deal with obvious, intentional acts of racism, not the deeper, systemic issues.
- **CRT demands that we:**
 - **Engage in ongoing self-reflection:** We should constantly examine our own biases and beliefs.
 - **Question racist histories:** It's important to be understand and be critical of how historical racism still affects today's society.
 - **Look for bias in systems:** We should assess how racism shows up in professional settings, such as policies, practices, tools and technology we use.
 - **Listen to diverse voices:** We should seek out the unique perspectives and counter-narratives of racially minoritised people.
 - **Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences':** Identity, meaning and characteristics are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by context, power dynamics, and histories.
 - **Acknowledge individual differences:** Intersectionality is used to understand that everyone's experience is shaped by a unique combination of their identities (race, gender, class, etc.).

A summary of these will be visible on each section so that you can refer to them throughout.

After section 2 Continue to next section ▼

Section 3 of 10

Guidance on how to complete the questions



You have been approached to participate in this research because you have experiences or knowledge which can contribute to a better understanding of how Educational Psychologists can assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

The research is seeking the views of a broad range of people, and so it may be that you feel unable to comment on some of the following questions. If you do not have knowledge or experiences which allow you to answer a question, you can leave it unanswered. This does not undermine or diminish your contribution - it is an anticipated outcome of asking a broader range of people.

Even so, please do not assume you have no contribution to make to a section or question - it might be that you can offer a differing view or insight which might otherwise not be captured.

You may also find that you have more to say for some questions than others. Again, this is anticipated. However, to ensure that you give time and attention to the questions you feel most able to contribute to, I have listed the sections here:

1. (Consent)
2. (Critical Race Theory Principles)
3. (Guidance on how to complete the questions)
4. Personal information
5. Professional Skills, Knowledge and Experience
6. Working with Other Professionals and Communities
7. Approaches to Needs Assessment
8. Understanding Histories and Journeys
9. Settling in the UK
10. Preparing for Round 2

This round is seeking rich, narrative descriptions, so please share any personal observations and experiences you have. However, please avoid giving information which makes any individual people or organisations identifiable. Should this happen, it will be anonymised for analysis.

Throughout the research, the term 'asylum-seeking and refugee children' is used. The research takes the position that the action of asylum-seeking or the status of being a refugee are secondary to them being children.

The term 'children' is used to mean any person up to the age of 25 (as covered by EP practice as the SEN Code of Conduct). The research takes the position that the term 'children' underlines the legal and moral responsibilities of society to protect and support children with SEN up the age of 25.

er section 3 Continue to next section ▼

Section 4 of 10

Personal information



This section asks you to give information which will help in understanding the backgrounds of participants and evaluate the research sample.

As the research considers personal experiences and positionality to be important and relevant to any findings, you are also asked to consider your own privileges and disadvantages and how this informs your answers.

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
Racism is pervasive
Whiteness has value
CRT does not generalise experiences
Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

What is your role or experience in relation to asylum-seeking or refugee communities? (You can select more than one)

- ☐ Educational psychologist - 'EP' (including trainee, maingrade, assistant, senior, principal, lecturer/supervi...
- ☐ Psychology - other than Educational Psychology
- ☐ Mental health
- ☐ Health (including primary care, public health, outreach)
- ☐ Social work
- ☐ Education (including teacher, senior leader, support)
- ☐ Academic / researcher
- ☐ Local or central government (including housing, education access/placement, advice)
- ☐ Third sector (including family support worker, financial/rights advice)
- ☐ Law (including legal advice, solicitor, advocate)
- ☐ Asylum-seeking person (currently or previously)
- ☐ Refugee (currently or previously)
- ☐ Migrant (currently or previously)
- ☐ Other:

Describe your race and/or ethnicity.

Short-answer text

.....

Describe your nationality and immigration / residency status in the UK

Short-answer text

.....

You are asked to consider your own privileges and disadvantages and how this informs your answers.

It might help to reflect using Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham & Roper-Hall, 1993) - see the visual below for a list of personal characteristics.

It is important to also consider intersectionality (where these areas might compound disadvantage or privilege).

For transparency, the researcher has completed a positionality statement which can be read here: [Researcher Positionality Statement](#)

You can keep these reflections private or you can share these here:



Long-answer text

Section 5 of 10

Professional Skills, Knowledge and Experience



This section asks your views on the skills knowledge and experience' which you think are important for professionals who are supporting and assessing asylum-seeking and refugee children.

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

Do you think it is helpful or important for professionals to have similar cultural backgrounds to refugee or asylum-seeking communities? Why or why not?

Long-answer text

Can you give an example of when cultural differences caused a problem or misunderstanding in a professional setting? What did you do to address the situation? If you had a chance to go back, what would you do differently to handle it better?

Long-answer text

Should professionals have specific understanding of a child's home country or culture? Why or why not? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Describe any steps you take towards anti-oppressive practice.

Are there any steps you would like to take but don't? Why?

Long-answer text

In what ways do policy and legislation relating to asylum-seeking and refugee communities affect professional practice? Should this affect professional practice? Why or why not? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

In your experience, is EP training sufficient to work effectively with asylum-seeking and refugee children? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Should trainees have to gain specific experience of working in this area? Why or why not?

Long-answer text

Should EPs working with asylum-seeking and refugee children have access to specialist supervision? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Section 6 of 10

Working with Other Professionals and Communities



These questions ask about how different professionals might collaborate to ensure that there is an effective holistic approach to understanding and supporting the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

Can you describe an experience of multi-disciplinary working in the support of asylum-seeking and refugee children? What were the benefits and draw-backs?

Long-answer text

What benefits or draw backs would there be to having professionals with close cultural links working as part of multi-disciplinary teams? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Is there a risk that children are over-assessed? If so, what are the implications of this? Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Do you engage with communities as part of this work? If so, how? What are the benefits? What are the barriers?

Long-answer text

Section 7 of 10

Approaches to Needs Assessment



This section is looking more closely at the tools and approaches EPs use to assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children. If you are not an EP, you may find some of these more difficult to answer. However, it is worth having a look through the questions as there are some approaches which are common to different experiences or professional fields.

The following is a list of assessment approaches and practices. Indicate on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is extremely, how important each is in the assessment of asylum-seeking or refugee children. Try to think specifically about asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Where possible, explain your responses and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

How important is it that assessment is carried out in a child's native language?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How useful are interpreters when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

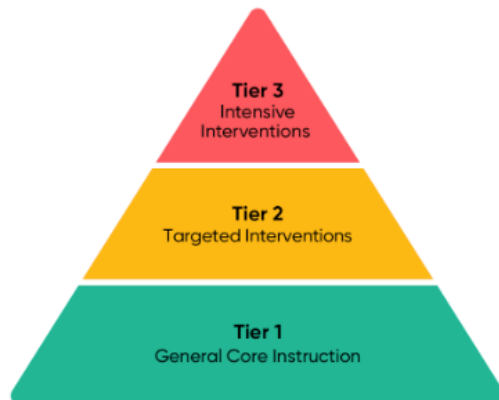
How important is it that assessment is carried out over time?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How important is it that a response to intervention approach is taken?



1 2 3 4 5

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How important are dynamic assessment approaches in assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely

If you use dynamic assessment approaches, which do you use and why?

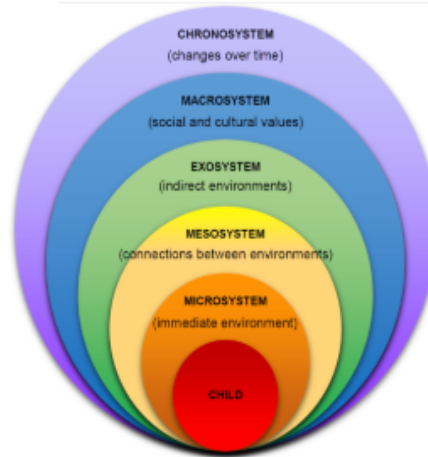
Why might you **not** use dynamic assessment?

Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How important is it that an ecosystemic view is taken when assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

In other words, how much should assessment consider and address wider factors such as family, school, environment, culture, and so on?



	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

.....

How important is it that the approach for assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children is hypothesis-driven?

In other words, how important is it that the EP uses a process of generating and testing hypotheses for assessment?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How important is it that the approach for assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children includes the child's views?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

When gathering the views of asylum-seeking and refugee children, how important is it that they do this without their parent/carer present?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How useful are cognitive and standardised assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How useful are language assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How useful are non-verbal assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How important is a strengths-based approach when assessing of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

Have you any experience of asylum-seeking and refugee children having strengths or skills which are not recognised or typically valued in the UK? Describe what these are and how you would approach this in assessment.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Extremely

If possible, explain your previous response and describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

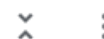
Long-answer text

Are there any other tools, approaches or considerations that you think are particularly useful or important when assessing asylum-seeking and refugee children?

Long-answer text

Section 8 of 10

Understanding Histories and Journeys



These questions explore how the assessment and support of asylum-seeking or refugee children might take account of the child's history or the journey taken to arrive in the UK.

CRT Principles

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 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

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- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

How and why might EPs explore the child and family's histories? What aspects of a child's history do you think are important for assessment? Why?

Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

What aspects of a child's journey do you think are important for assessment? Why?

Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

What specific considerations are there when assessing the needs of unaccompanied minors?

Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Section 9 of 10

Settling in the UK



These questions ask you to consider how cultures and immigration status might impact on EP assessment practices.

CRT Principles

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 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

What acculturation factors should be considered in the assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children? How do you assess this?

Acculturation refers to assimilation into a different (often dominant) culture.

Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

How do you support parents of asylum and refugee children to engage with their child's education?

How do you support parents in understanding and advocating for their rights e.g. under SEN legislation?

Are there specific challenges in this respect for asylum-seeking and refugee parents?

Describe any experiences that are the basis of this answer.

Long-answer text

Have you witnessed any of the following with regards to asylum-seeking and refugee people?

Impact of a hostile environment

Intersectionality compounding discriminatory experiences

Systemic barriers

Describe any experiences and the impact it had on families and children. How might that need to be considered by EPs in their assessment practices?

Long-answer text

Are there differences in how an EP should write or communicate the assessment outcomes of asylum-seeking and refugee children?

Describe why and what these differences are.

Long-answer text

Section 10 of 10

Preparing for Round 2



This final section is about informing Round 2 of the research.

The responses to this (Round 1) survey will be analysed with the aim of generating a shared understanding of principles and practices for EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Round 2 will ask participants to rate the importance of these.

Answering the following questions does not commit you to participating in Round 2. Whether you wish to or not, it is useful to gather views on who should be invited to participate and what further ideas should be considered which have not been addressed in Round 1.

CRT Principles

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Racism is pervasive
Whiteness has value
CRT does not generalise experiences
Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

What questions or topics were missed in this round?

Long-answer text

Is there anybody that should be included in Round 2 and how might they be contacted?

If you prefer, you can pass on the contact email for this research, along with a copy of the Participant Information Sheet.

The email is swatson5@sheffield.ac.uk

Long-answer text

How did CRT impact on your responses, if it all?

Long-answer text

Round 2 should be a quicker survey to complete as it will primarily ask participants to rate different principles and approaches.

*

Do you consent to being contacted for Round 2?

Indicating 'yes' at this stage does not mean you are consenting to participation in Round 2. At this stage, you are consenting to be contacted to participate.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Appendix K: Positionality Statements

Researcher

I am a Year 2/3 Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am educated to Masters level, and will attain a doctoral level qualification when I graduate. I was the first in my family to attend university, and both of parents left education before the age of 16. I grew up in rural Wales in a working-class household.

I am 48-49 years old and White British (Welsh). My parents and siblings were also White British, as are my husband and two children. I am monolingual (English-speaking) and have lived in the UK since birth, only leaving the UK for travel. I have no experience of being racially minoritised or migration.

I am a cisgender female and heterosexual. I have experienced misogyny but not experienced discrimination because of my sexuality. Much of my career has been working in female-dominated sectors (education) but my first degree was in a male-dominated field. Here I experienced discrimination and bias as the only female on the course.

Much of my career has involved working in urban, multicultural and economically deprived areas. I have professional experience of teaching, as well as working on community projects around multiculturalism and community cohesion. As a trainee, my placement is in a city region with City of Sanctuary status. I have experience of assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Participant 5

I'm a white middle aged European heterosexual cis gender male. Working class background, acquired middle class/professional status. Atheist, no engagement with religion/spirituality although interest in both relating to culture. (Very nearly) always employed, ability? Um, always in the top handful of kids in my year at school until 'A' levels then suddenly appeared to have none. Education? comprehensive school in (upper) working class community, university regarded as something that extremely clever (i.e. not you) people got to do. Degree from polytechnic I achieved didn't count. Geography? Bristolian, so conveniently outside the north/south divide but intensely aware Londoners laughed up their working or middle class sleeves at us. One parent from black country, other from Kent although he grew up in care so my sense of Bristolian origin up for debate. Only had the accent when socially expedient in primary school, code switching unconsciously done.

Participant 4

The main thing I think influences my thinking is coming from another country myself has made me reflect on how different cultures and countries that are close to each other and both predominantly white are, which has put things in a broader context when working with people from other countries where cultures are much more different. If I found it difficult to adapt to social norms in a culture that is considered very similar to the one I come from, how will people from very different countries and cultures feel? I also think about class as I grew up in a council estate equivalent with my parent never having worked, and I am very aware of how my experience at home and my views on work have been shaped by this, even if it is shaped very differently for others growing up in a similar environment.

Participant 3

using the Social Graces model to reflect on my own experiences always makes me realise and re-realise how immensely privilege I am in almost every way in today's society. Mostly by the 'accident' of having been born a white subject of a rich developed country. Even those privileges that I have gained through hard work such as education, employment and class have also been influenced significantly by the accident of my birth: I am aware that, statistically, it is easier for a white person in England to secure work than for people of other racial identities, and that people from 'ethnic minorities' are less likely to have access to good education and third-level education.

Appendix L: Extracts from Round One RTA Codebook and Themes

Code / Theme (in bold) – Approaches to Needs Assessment	Sources	References
Assessing language	0	0
Language assessment by school over time is more useful than relying on a standalone EP assessment	1	1
Language assessment is not useful in the early stages of settling in the UK	1	1
Language assessment to support the development of English might help to identify targeted support needs	1	2
Language assessments are extremely useful	1	1
Language can be assessed through parent consultation initially	1	1
Need to be cautious in assessing language acquisition as it can take make years	1	1
Assessment over time	0	0
A graduated approach is preferable to a snapshot assessment	1	1
Assessment over time is preferred but not possible	1	2
Assessment over time risks family moving on before completion	1	1
Assessment over time should be part of a graduated response to account for short-term difficulties	1	4
School can insist on standardised, formalised assessments, rather than taking graduated approach	1	1
Some professionals find ways to assess over time (e.g. doing initial visit then picking up statutory case)	1	1
Being hypothesis-driven	0	0
Being hypothesis driven is important in all casework	1	3
Hypothesising too soon might be problematic	1	1
Capturing child views	0	0
Assessments should include opportunity for the child to give views without parents present	1	5
Capturing child views is always important	1	5
It may not be appropriate to capture child views without parents present	1	3
Diagnostic, cognitive and standardised assessments are not suitable	0	0
A subtest of a cognitive assessment might help test a hypothesis	1	2
Cog assessments can be used dynamically to explore cognitive skills	1	1
DA is useful if CYP lacks prior educational experiences	1	1
DA might feel more positive about assessment as it is like a game	1	1
Play-based assessment is useful	1	2
play-based or dynamic assessment can help to avoid the child feeling over-assessed	1	1
Play-based assessment - magnetic fish game - very useful	1	1
Rtl important as response can be unexpected	1	1
Standardised assessments are inaccessible to many AS&R	1	2
Standardised assessments are not reliable because of significant other factors (such as trauma)	1	2

Code / Theme (in bold) – Approaches to Needs Assessment	Sources	References
Standardised assessments are not suitable due to biases	1	4
Standardised assessments could inappropriately label a CYP	1	1
There is a risk that AS&R children are over-assessed	1	5
Overcoming English language needs as barrier to assessment	0	0
DA may still be hampered by language difficulties (ie explaining the activity)	1	1
Dynamic assessment can help where language is a barrier	1	2
Dynamic assessment is preferable to non-verbal assessments	1	1
In-person interpretation is very useful	1	2
Interpreters can aide cultural sensitivity	1	1
It is most useful if the interpreter is another professional	1	1
Non-verbal assessment can help test a hypothesis	1	1
Non-verbal assessment might point to a strength which can be built on	1	1
Non-verbal assessments might be useful, but care should be taken to ensure they are culturally appropriate	1	1
Non-verbal play-based dynamic assessment is useful	1	1
Some feel less safe using interpreters	1	2
Some prefer to use family/friends for interpreting	1	2
Use of native language avoids confusing English language needs with other needs	1	2
Use of native language avoids issues of using standardised assessments inappropriately (e.g. with interpreter)	1	1
Use of native language is about giving voice to CYP	1	3
Use of native language ensures accurate understanding	1	2
Using interpreters from a small community can cause difficulty	1	3
Using interpreters from a small community can help with engagement and trust	1	1
Taking a strengths-based approach	0	0
A strength-based approach is important to counteract all the difficulty they face	1	1
AS&R can have specific strengths - multilingualism, resilience etc	1	2
AS&R CYP may have strengths which are not valued or readily recognised in the UK	1	1
Identifying strengths is helpful for parents too	1	1
Strength-based approaches particularly important for AS&R CYP	1	1
Taking a strengths-based approach can make a school more accepting	1	1
Taking a strengths-based approach can give ideas for opportunities for CYP to show what they can do	1	1
Taking an ecosystemic perspective	0	0
Consultation key questions checklist is helpful (ref. York)	1	1
It's important to think ecosystemically in all casework	1	3
The ecosystemic factors can be unusual and have considerable impact	1	6
Trauma is important to consider	1	1

Appendix M: Example process of Round Two Question Development

Code	Round 2 statement or question	Examples/quotes
Theme: Assessing language		
Language assessment by school over time is more useful than relying on a standalone EP assessment	Language acquisition takes time. Although it may be useful to ascertain where targeted support might be needed, caution should be taken in making any judgements based on language assessment. Assessment of language might best be assessed through parent consultation initially and by school over time.	<i>it would depend on the purpose and the child's level of English. if it is to identify how to support the development of their English this could be useful.</i>
Language assessment is not useful in the early stages of settling in the UK		<i>In some ways they can be useful to understand what specifics they might struggle with,</i>
Language assessment to support the development of English might help to identify targeted support needs		<i>assessments completed over time by schools would be very helpful.</i>
Language assessments are extremely useful		<i>I haven't completed any. I gather information from parents</i>
Language can be assessed through parent consultation initially		<i>Language assessments are extremely useful if they are valid.</i>
Need to be cautious in assessing language acquisition as it can take make years		<i>it can take at seven years or more for a learner to reach a level of English needed for academic learning.</i>
Theme: Assessment over time		
A graduated approach is preferable to a snapshot assessment	Settings should be taking a graduated approach to assessing and supporting need. Any EP assessment should form part of this so that any short-term difficulties are contextualized and understood. The risk of this, however, is that families may leave the area before the assessment is completed.	One participant explained that many of the children they assess when newly arrived in the UK have very significant needs and go on to statutory assessment, and they ask that that they are allocated the work so that they have a second opportunity to assess them and meet the family, which constitutes a form of assessment over time.
Assessment over time is preferred but not possible		
Assessment over time risks family moving on before completion		
Assessment over time should be part of a graduated response to account for short-term difficulties		
School can insist on standardised, formalised assessments, rather than taking graduated approach		
Some professionals find ways to assess over time (e.g. doing initial visit then picking up statutory case)		
Theme: Being hypothesis-driven		
Being hypothesis driven is important in all casework	No responses seem to be saying that this should be treated differently to other casework – so leave this out. The one comment about it being too soon went on to describe a hypothesis-driven approach anyway	
Hypothesising too soon might be problematic		
Theme: Capturing child views		
Assessments should include opportunity for the child to give views without parents present	Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be	<i>I have mixed feelings about this- for some it might really help them feel</i>

Code	Round 2 statement or question	Examples/quotes
Capturing child views is always important	given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present.	safer and able to engage, however, on the other hand they might not feel able to be honest when their parent/ caregiver is present.
It may not be appropriate to capture child views without parents present		
Theme: Diagnostic, cognitive and standardised assessments are not suitable		
A subtest of a cognitive assessment might help test a hypothesis	Assessment should be approached with caution. There are a number of concerns with using diagnostic and standardised assessments, including inherent bias, other factors affecting results (such as lack of prior education) and the risk of children feeling over-assessed. Play-based and dynamic approaches can feel less intimidating and avoid labels. Using subtests of cognitive assessments can help to explore a particular hypothesis, and can be used dynamically.	Non-verbal parts of standardised procedures can sometimes demonstrate ability not easily identifiable otherwise, responses to Matrices type problems for example. activities from cognitive assessments dynamically that explore thinking skills, visual perception and so on but that do not require language. I've used colouring activities, play dough, tracing letters, shapes, games, photos/card sorts and toys that the CYP already has. play based assessment in general and the magnetic fishing game in particular. You cannot know what would really be tested - e.g. hypervigilance arising from traumatic experiences may impact performance, and if this was reported formally this could 'label' the child very unhelpfully. I would be conscious of various factors which may influence how a child engaged in a cognitive and standardised assessment, including some less obvious factors such as whether their home language(s) are left-right or vice-versa, and various other cultural aspects (memory, language processing, visuo-spatial processes etc.) which may impact on how they approach and 'perform' in this kind of assessment. When children are living within a system that seems so inhumane, ensuring that they feel safe and treated as children (through care, playfulness and empathy) becomes priority.
Cog assessments can be used dynamically to explore cognitive skills		
DA is useful if CYP lacks prior educational experiences		
DA might feel more positive about assessment as it is like a game		
Play-based assessment is useful		
play-based or dynamic assessment can help to avoid the child feeling over-assessed		
Play based assessment - magnetic fish game - very useful		
Taking a response to intervention approach is important as response can be unexpected		
Standardised assessments are inaccessible to many AS&R		
Standardised assessments are not reliable because of significant other factors (such as trauma)		
Standardised assessments are not suitable due to biases		
Standardised assessments could inappropriately label a CYP		
There is a risk that AS&R children are over-assessed		

Code	Round 2 statement or question	Examples/quotes
		<i>I did see some UASC who had so many involvements from different professionals over lots of different fears where I felt like they needed their basic needs met before further assessments should take place, as they might potentially 'diagnose' an issue that stems from a place of unmet basic needs rather than something else.</i>
Theme: Overcoming English language needs as barrier to assessment		
DA may still be hampered by language difficulties (ie explaining the activity)	Using interpreters can make the assessment process more accurate where English language is a barrier. Using friends or family or other people from a community can be less intimidating for some, but may also bring other difficulties. Interpreters can support not only with language, but also aide cultural competence and understanding. It may be a crucial way of giving the child a voice. Dynamic assessment and other non-verbal tools can be helpful, and may highlight other strengths in communication (other than verbal). However, even non-verbal assessments usually rely on verbal instructions to some extent, and may not be culturally appropriate.	<i>I might use language-light activities such as Rush Hour or Complex Figure Drawing</i>
Dynamic assessment can help where language is a barrier		<i>they interpret questions hopefully with cultural sensitivity rather than simply translating, and can provide better context.</i>
Dynamic assessment is preferable to non-verbal assessments		<i>I think these can be more useful as they reduce the reliance on language, but whether they are culturally appropriate and whether there are any underlying assumptions of skills of children of a certain age that are not true for the child in question would be a serious consideration.</i>
In-person interpretation is very useful		<i>In my experience this can be tricky when working with interpreters who may also have seen the UASC in another context such as Home Office appointments or religious places.</i>
Interpreters can aide cultural sensitivity		<i>t other times it has not supported the working relationship at all and it was clear that there were some conversations being had that were not just interpreting for the purpose of the meeting. As I did not speak their language, I did not know what was happening so it was difficult for me to fully understand. However, it was clear that some UASC had a very difficult time in some of these extended conversations, and some told me that they were told off which was not part of the conversation that was meant to be interpreted by the interpreter.</i>
It is most useful if the interpreter is another professional		
Non-verbal assessment can help test a hypothesis		
Non-verbal assessment might point to a strength which can be built on		
Non-verbal assessments might be useful, but care should be taken to ensure they are culturally appropriate		
Non-verbal play-based dynamic assessment is useful		
Some feel less safe using interpreters		
Some prefer to use family or friends for interpreting		
Use of native language avoids confusing English language needs with other needs		
Use of native language avoids issues of using standardised assessments inappropriately (e.g. with interpreter)		
Use of native language is about giving voice to CYP		
Use of native language ensures accurate understanding		
Using interpreters from a small community can cause difficulty		
Using interpreters from a small community can help with engagement and trust		

Code	Round 2 statement or question	Examples/quotes
Theme: Taking a strengths-based approach		
A strength-based approach is important to counteract all the difficulty they face	Being strengths-based is particularly important for the following reasons: It can make schools and other more accepting; it is hopeful in the face of significant adversity; there are potentially strengths which are not so readily recognised in our culture (e.g. multilingualism, resilience, practical skills)	<i>they are already experiencing so much negativity in so many areas of their lives, it is important to be one of the people who can give them something positive about themselves to cherish</i>
AS&R can have specific strengths - multilingualism, resilience etc		<i>I sometimes reflected that the ASR children often had navigated complex and extremely challenging situations, and yet they were still being assessed (in schools) in traditional ways, such as on how they responded, in exam conditions, to a question about Macbeth. potential school often feels unsure about including a child with SEN from abroad so any positives to which attention can be drawn are very helpful</i>
AS&R CYP may have strengths which are not valued or readily recognised in the UK		
Identifying strengths is helpful for parents too		
Strength-based approaches particularly important for AS&R CYP		
Taking a strengths-based approach can make a school more accepting		
Taking a strengths-based approach can give ideas for opportunities for CYP to show what they can do		<i>Not in AS & R children, but with another child who was newly arrived in country, who showed strength with visual perception which might not otherwise have been noticed, so this was used to give him breaks from language-based learning and showcase this strength to build his confidence.</i>
Theme: Taking an ecosystemic perspective		
Consultation key questions checklist is helpful (ref. York)	Ecosystemic approach is vital in considering the particular factors which may affect asylum-seeking and refugee children. Thinking through beforehand what you might want to explore about past and present contexts is important, and perhaps having a checklist specific to the asylum-seeking and refugee experience.	<i>key questions during consultations with parents - my colleague and I have produced a bit of a checklist for other EPs.</i>
It's important to think ecosystemically in all casework		<i>Some of the UASC I worked with had quite unsuitable living environments provided by the home office, and some of their social and cultural values were so different to some of the other children I saw, that without this information I would not have been able to support them very well as I would not have a helpful understanding of their world and how this impacts on them.</i>
The ecosystemic factors can be unusual and have considerable impact		
Trauma is important to consider		
		<i>There are also likely to be factors in an ASR child's life which may be particularly impactful, for example, asylum processes, care system, trying to understand/ integrate into a different culture etc.</i>

Code	Round 2 statement or question	Examples/quotes
		<i>A child who came to the UK during the Covid pandemic, had already been out of school for several months when he arrived, had no English, was out of school here for 18 months because schools were saying 'couldn't meet need' or they needed officially translated documents of his needs from his country of origin...he had been out of a routine for a long time, couldn't go out unaccompanied because of this additional needs, and so it was vital that all this was understood as impacting his presentation which once settled in an educational setting and with his needs met was very, very different and far less challenging.</i>

Appendix N: Round Two Survey Questions

Section 1 of 10

Educational Psychologists' (EPs') Assessment Practices with Asylum-seeking and Refugee Children: Round 2



Please read the following Participant Information Sheet before agreeing to take part in this research.

Click here for a copy:

[Participant Information Sheet](#)

Once you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and given your email address, please answer the following questions with 'Yes' or 'No'. By answering 'Yes' to all of the questions, you are agreeing to participate in Round 2 only.

Email *

Valid email address

This form is collecting email addresses. [Change settings](#)

I have read and understood the project information sheet linked to above and/or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you answer No to this question please do not fill out the rest of the form until you understand what taking part in the project will mean.) *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I have been given the chance to ask questions about the project. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include the completion of this survey (and I may choose whether or not to participate in further rounds). *

☐ Yes

☐ No

I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

*

I understand that I can withdraw from the research/study at any time. I understand that I do not have to give any reasons for this and there will be no negative consequences if I choose to withdraw.

If I choose to withdraw it will not be possible to remove the research data I have contributed to Round 2 of the Delphi Survey if I withdraw after 20/12/2025.

☐ Yes

☐ No

*

I understand my personal details such as name and email address etc. will not be seen by anyone outside the project.

☐ Yes

☐ No

*

I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Critical Race Theory (CRT)



As described in the Participant Information Sheet, this research asks that you consider your responses in light of critical race theory (outlined below).

It is important to note that in asking that participants are reflective about their own and others' biases, it is not intended to evoke feelings of personal shame. Rather, it recognises that the nature of racism means that it is often hidden within systems and practices, cultures and societies. CRT asks that we become aware of that and seek to address it.

- **No race is superior to any other.**
 - **Racism is pervasive:** it can be considered normal or inevitable, and so is often unnoticed.
 - **Whiteness has value:** Being white provides advantages in society.
 - **CRT does not generalise experiences:** Not all white people are racist and not all racially minoritised people are oppressed
 - **Laws don't go far enough:** Current anti-racism laws are insufficient because they only deal with obvious, intentional acts of racism, not the deeper, systemic issues.
 - **CRT demands that we:**
 - **Engage in ongoing self-reflection:** We should constantly examine our own biases and beliefs.
 - **Question racist histories:** It's important to be understand and be critical of how historical racism still affects today's society.
 - **Look for bias in systems:** We should assess how racism shows up in professional settings, such as policies, practices, tools and technology we use.
 - **Listen to diverse voices:** We should seek out the unique perspectives and counter-narratives of racially minoritised people.
 - **Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences':** Identity, meaning and characteristics are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by context, power dynamics, and histories.
-
- **Acknowledge individual differences:** Intersectionality is used to understand that everyone's experience is shaped by a unique combination of their identities (race, gender, class, etc.).

A summary of these will be visible on each section so that you can refer to them throughout.

Section 3 of 10

Guidance on how to complete the questions



Thank you for agreeing to participating in Round 2 of this Delphi Study. In Round 1, participants gave rich, detailed information which, through analysis, has led to a set of principles around the EP assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

This round asks you to reflect on these and indicate the degree to which you agree with each. It is hoped that this can be completed quickly should you prefer. However, should you want to understand where each of the principles has developed from, there are information boxes showing some example quotes from Round 1. (These can be skipped if you are pushed for time).

When reading the responses to Round 1, I found that responses including narratives and specific case examples to be particularly powerful. Therefore, I invite you to share more if these if you wish, but only if you feel you have time and more to share.

After section 3 Continue to next section



Section 4 of 10

Personal information



Note: if you completed this in round 1, and there are no changes, you can skip these questions.

This section asks you to give information which will help in understanding the backgrounds of participants and evaluate the research sample.

As the research considers personal experiences and positionality to be important and relevant to any findings, you are also asked to consider your own privileges and disadvantages and how this informs your answers.

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

What is your role or experience in relation to asylum-seeking or refugee communities? (You can select more than one)

- ☐ Educational psychologist - 'EP' (including trainee, maingrade, assistant, senior, principal, lecturer/supervi...
- ☐ Psychology - other than Educational Psychology
- ☐ Mental health
- ☐ Health (including primary care, public health, outreach)
- ☐ Social work
- ☐ Education (including teacher, senior leader, support)
- ☐ Academic / researcher
- ☐ Local or central government (including housing, education access/placement, advice)
- ☐ Third sector (including family support worker, financial/rights advice)
- ☐ Law (including legal advice, solicitor, advocate)
- ☐ Asylum-seeking person (currently or previously)
- ☐ Refugee (currently or previously)
- ☐ Migrant (currently or previously)
- ☐ Other:

Describe your race and/or ethnicity.

Short-answer text

.....

Describe your nationality and immigration / residency status in the UK

Short-answer text

.....

You are asked to consider your own privileges and disadvantages and how this informs your answers.

It might help to reflect using Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham & Roper-Hall, 1993) - see the visual below for a list of personal characteristics.

It is important to also consider intersectionality (where these areas might compound disadvantage or privilege).

For transparency, the researcher has completed a positionality statement which can be read here: [Researcher Positionality Statement](#)

You can keep these reflections private or you can share these here:



Long-answer text

Approaches to Needs Assessment



For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
Racism is pervasive
Whiteness has value
CRT does not generalise experiences
Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

In Round 1 participants rated **the usefulness of different approaches**. The following lists them in order from most useful to least:

1. It is carried out in a child's **native language**
2. (joint) An **ecosystemic** view is taken
2. (joint) It includes the **child's views**
3. **Interpreters** are used
4. It is **strengths-based**
5. A **response to intervention** approach is taken
6. It is carried out **over time**
7. **Dynamic or play-based** assessment is used
8. It is **hypothesis-driven**
9. (joint) Children are able to share their **views without a parent present**
9. (joint) **Non-verbal approaches** are used
10. **Language assessments** are used (including any/all languages a child speaks)
11. **Cognitive, diagnostic or standardised** approaches are used

Do you agree with this ordering?

1. yes
2. No

If you said no, what would you change?

Long-answer text

.....

Is there anything else you would add?

Long-answer text

.....



Language Assessments

Principle: English language acquisition takes time. Although a language assessment may be useful for pinpointing where targeted support might be needed, caution should be taking in making any judgements based on this.

Language (including all languages spoken by the child) might best be assessed through parent consultation initially and by a school or setting over time.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1

2

3

4

5



Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Assessment over time

Principle: Settings should be taking a graduated approach to assessing and supporting need. Any EP assessment should form part of this so that any short-term difficulties are contextualized and understood. The risk of this, however, is that families may leave the area before the assessment is completed.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1	2	3	4	5
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Capturing child views

Principle: Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1



2



3



4



5



Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Cognitive and standardised assessments or dynamic/play-based assessments

Principle: There are a number of concerns regarding cognitive and standardised assessments including inherent bias, other factors affecting results (such as lack of prior education) and the risk of children feeling over-assessed. Using subtests of cognitive assessments can help to explore a particular hypothesis, and can be used dynamically. Play-based and dynamic approaches instead can feel less intimidating and avoid labels.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1

2

3

4

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Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text



Overcoming English language needs as barrier to assessment

Principle: Using interpreters can make the assessment process more accurate where English language is a barrier. Using friends, family or other people from a community can be less intimidating for some, but may also bring other difficulties. Interpreters can support not only with language, but also aide cultural competence and understanding. It may be a crucial way of giving the child a voice. Dynamic assessment and other non-verbal tools can be helpful, and may highlight other strengths in communication (other than verbal). However, even non-verbal assessments usually rely on verbal instructions to some extent, and may not be culturally appropriate.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1

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Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Taking a strengths-based approach

Principle: Being strengths-based is particularly important for the following reasons:

- It can make schools and other more accepting;
- It is hopeful in the face of significant adversity;
- There are potential strengths which are not so readily recognised in our culture (e.g. multilingualism, resilience, practical skills)

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1	2	3	4	5
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

*

Taking an ecosystemic perspective

Principle: This is essential given the range of factors which may affect asylum-seeking and refugee children. Thinking through beforehand what you might want to explore about past and present contexts is important, and perhaps having a checklist specific to the asylum-seeking and refugee experience.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1

2

3

4

5



Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Section 6 of 10

Professional Skills, Knowledge and Experience



For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
Racism is pervasive
Whiteness has value
CRT does not generalise experiences
Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

Anti-oppressive practice

Principle: EPs should prioritise anti-oppressive practice. When assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this involves:

- Challenging oppressive practice of other professionals – this might be pre-emptively stating your position on this at the start of a process.
- Knowing the limits of your own expertise and making effective use of other professionals (e.g. interpreters)
- Child or family perspective-taking
- Creating a safe space for families to talk openly and developing trust
- Being reflective and self-critical of our own assumptions
- Accessing specific training which may be targeted or form part of wider training around anti-racism and socially-just practice
- Accessing specialist supervision

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1	2	3	4	5
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Cultural competence

Principle: EPs should practice with cultural competence. When assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this involves:

- A broad knowledge of a child's geopolitical context
- Avoiding assumptions and recognising that cultures are diverse and nuanced
- Being aware that a professional sharing the culture of a AS&R may help but it can also cause difficulty
- Being curious and open to learning about a person's culture
- Considering cultural differences in communication (e.g. gestures)
- Learning about and recognising cultural events
- Being aware and critical of Westernised perspectives (e.g. of literacy or mental health)

It can be supported by:

- Diversity in professional teams
- Being part of a multidisciplinary team
- Being able to challenge cultural incompetence with sensitivity and by offering practical solutions

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1	2	3	4	5
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text



Systemic oppression

Principle: EPs need to be aware of systemic oppression faced by AS&R families. This may include:

- A lack of financial support in the education system for AS&R children
- The psychological impact of unsettled status
- English-only forms and processes, along with systemic and financial barriers to accessing interpretation services
- Access to free health services – either it being denied or not communicated
- The asylum processing system
- Housing – inadequate and/or insecure
- Unsettled status affecting assessment completion due to uncertainty and risk of movement
 - In turn this may affect a school's commitment to taking a graduated response
- Ongoing trauma from facing intersectional discrimination in UK – this may come from people from the same culture/country
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are particularly vulnerable in face of authority or bureaucracy

In countering systemic oppression:

- professionals need to stay curious, draw on other professional expertise (e.g. interpreters, seeking perspectives of AS&R families, being reflective)
- Education can offer stability and safety to children given unsettled status

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1	2	3	4	5
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Section 7 of 10

Settling in the UK



For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences



Acculturation

Principle: Acculturation should not be viewed as a need, but rather a choice. However, if an AS&R child is wanting to assimilate into the prevailing culture in their school or community, it may be hindered by factors such as financial barriers, health barriers or family.

Professionals should be mindful of possible cultural differences as part of practicing in a culturally competent way. These may include:

- Prior education (e.g. not formal) and views on education
- Sleeping, eating and other domestic arrangements
- Social norms and acceptability
- Views on disability

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1	2	3	4	5
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

*

Reporting outcomes

Principle: Assessment outcomes should be reported without use of jargon and using plain, unambiguous English which can be translated straightforwardly (and the should be translated into the family's home language). Visuals are useful in supporting this. Where possible, it should be fed back to parents face-to-face. Assessment outcomes should be strengths-based and have the future child in mind.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

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Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

*

Working with and supporting parents

Principle: EPs should be mindful of parent support needs, and the potential for sign-posting or ensuring other professionals are aware. In particular, consider:

- Their understanding of their rights and ability to advocate (e.g. giving informed consent)
- Their mental health and wellbeing;
- Their understanding of communications and school or SEND systems;
- Their language needs.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

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Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

After section 7 Continue to next section

Section 8 of 10

Understanding Histories and Journeys



For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other	CRT demands that we:
Racism is pervasive	
Whiteness has value	
CRT does not generalise experiences	
Laws don't go far enough	
	- Engage in ongoing reflection - Question racist histories - Look for bias in systems - Listen to diverse voices - Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences' - Acknowledge individual differences

Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children (UASC)

Principle: EPs should be aware of specific considerations for the assessment of UASC:

- Their journey – the reasons for, and experience of, travelling alone. This may be a source of ongoing distress.
- Loss – of family, home, culture, and possible bereavement. This may include a sense of guilt. If they are not in touch with family, there may be significant worry.
- It is useful to understand these factors to pass on to carers or other key adults, but questioning should not cause further distress.
- Their legal or settled status may be sensitive and stressful. Their current home or living arrangements may be difficult.
- Their health or medical needs.
- They need to be ready and willing to interact with you.
- Their aspirations and hopes are important to explore and understand.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

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4



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Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Understanding histories

Principle: Understanding the history of an asylum-seeking or refugee child can be important to understanding present needs, but this should be approached very sensitively and at a time when you feel ready and able to respond appropriately. If possible, supervision before you undertake this aspect of the work may help prepare.

Questions should focus on understanding relevant information only and aim to avoid duplicating what has already been shared. It may be useful to understand the following:

- Prior experience of education
- Friendships and family
- The journey here (including any significant events)
- Other traumatic events
- Where they lived (including temporarily) and what they have lost or left behind
- When they were happiest.

This process might begin with a parent consultation, but it is useful to engage the child also.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')



Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text



Working alongside communities

Principle: Working more closely with communities has the potential to increase understanding, particularly through hearing lived experiences.

For definitions of key terms, please refer to [key definitions](#)

For key extracts from Round 1 which have informed this round, please refer to [extracts for round 1 responses](#)

How much do you agree with this? (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'completely')

1

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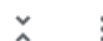
Do you have any more thoughts on this?

Do you have any further examples of experiences that you can share?

Long-answer text

Section 9 of 10

Addendum - Recognising the current context



Description (optional)

Political discussion and media attention surrounding asylum-seeking and refugee people has seemingly intensified in recent months. Alongside increasing community tensions around what it means to be 'British' or to have a right to live in the UK, it means that the context in which we are working is changing.

Do you think your practice has changed in response to increasing tension and discord around asylum-seeking and refugee people in the UK? If so, how? Do you foresee changes in the future?

Long-answer text

Section 10 of 10

Final Comments



Description (optional)

CRT Principles

No race is superior to any other
 Racism is pervasive
 Whiteness has value
 CRT does not generalise experiences
 Laws don't go far enough

CRT demands that we:

- Engage in ongoing reflection
- Question racist histories
- Look for bias in systems
- Listen to diverse voices
- Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences'
- Acknowledge individual differences

How did CRT impact on your responses, if at all?

Long-answer text

It is anticipated that on completion of this round, there will be a final set of principles to guide EP practice in the assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. *

Would you like to receive a final copy of these principles, (with the opportunity to comment if you wish)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

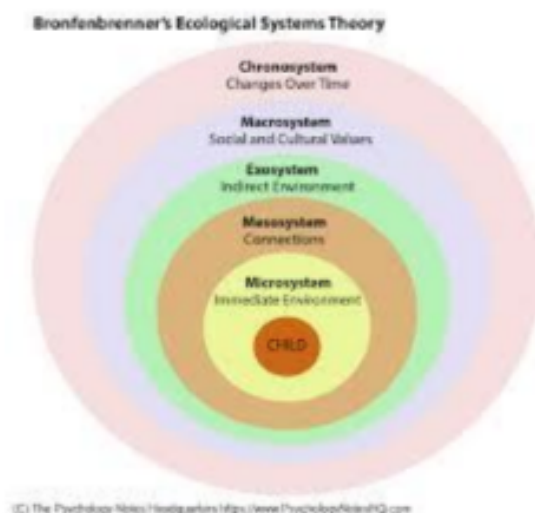
Key definitions

A child's native language

This refers to the language most spoken by the child at home or perhaps the first language they learnt.

An ecosystemic view

This is referring to Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic Theory which also considers factors outside of the individual.



Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Strengths-based approach

An positive psychology approach which focuses on strengths and protective factors in order to mitigate areas of need.

Climie, E., & Henley, L. (2016). A renewed focus on strengths-based assessment in schools. *British Journal of Special Education*, 43(2), 108-121.

Response to intervention approach

A tiered approach to support:



D.W. Barnett et al (2004) *Response to intervention*. *Journal of Special Education*. 38(2): 66-79

Assessment over time

This might refer to 'assess-plan-do-review' or other longer-term evaluations beyond that which is typically allowed for in statutory assessments in England.

Dynamic assessment

Dynamic assessment includes guidance, prompts and feedback, focusing on how the child responds to support and interaction with adult guidance.

Lidz, C. S. (1991). *Practitioner's guide to dynamic assessment*. Guilford Press.

Montoya-Fernández, C., Losada-Puente, L., Gómez-Barreto, I. M., & Gil-Madróna, P. (2024).

Play-based assessment

Play-based assessment involves observing a child during play to understand their abilities in areas such as social interaction or problem-solving.

Developmental play-based assessment in early childhood education: a systematic review. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 32(5), 788-813.

Hypothesis-driven approach

Starting with informed ideas or 'guess' which is then explored or 'tested out'.

Cognitive, diagnostic or standardised approaches are used

Tests which target specific skills, abilities or functions and produce a score or judgement which compares individual performance against the wider population.

Bradley-Johnson, S. (2001). Cognitive assessment for the youngest children: A critical review of tests. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 19(1), 19-44.

Ellingsen, K. M. (2016). Standardized assessment of cognitive development: Instruments and issues. In *Early childhood assessment in school and clinical child psychology* (pp. 25-49). New York, NY: Springer New York.

Extracts for Round 1 Responses

Language Assessments

Round 1 participants said:

If it is to identify how to support the development of their English this could be useful.

In some ways they can be useful to understand what specifics they might struggle with.

Assessments completed over time by schools would be very helpful.

I gather information from parents

Language assessments are extremely useful if they are valid.

It can take at seven years or more for a learner to reach a level of English needed for academic learning.

Assessment over time

Round 1 participants said:

Many of the children I assess when newly arrived in the UK have very significant needs and go on to statutory assessment, and I ask that that I am allocated the work so that I have a second opportunity to assess them and meet the family, which constitutes a form of assessment over time.

Capturing child views

Round 1 participants said:

I have mixed feelings about this- for some it might really help them feel safer and able to engage, however, on the other hand they might not feel able to be honest when their parent/ caregiver is present.

Cognitive and standardised assessments or dynamic/play-based assessments

Round 1 participants said:

Non verbal parts of standardised procedures can sometimes demonstrate ability not easily identifiable otherwise, responses to Matrices type problems for example.

I use activities from cognitive assessments dynamically that explore thinking skills, visual perception and so on but that do not require language.

I've used colouring activities, play dough, tracing letters, shapes, games, photos/card sorts and toys that the CYP already has.

I usually use some play based assessment in a dynamic format, as response to mediation gives a good idea of how and how quickly a child learns without the need for verbal explanation. I'm thinking about a large magnetic fishing game I often use, which can give a good idea of cognitive and fine motor skills and also (particularly when a sibling is available to manage a paired game with) interaction. I might not use dynamic assessment if I don't think they are able to engage with assessment of any kind, in which case observation and parent consultation will be valuable.

You cannot know what would really be tested [with a cognitive assessment] - e.g. hypervigilance arising from traumatic experiences may impact performance, and if this was reported formally this could 'label' the child very unhelpfully.

I would be conscious of various factors which may influence how a child engaged in a cognitive and standardised assessment, including some less obvious factors such as whether their home language(s) are left-right or vice-versa, and various other cultural aspects (memory, language processing, visuo-spatial processes etc.) which may impact on how they approach and 'perform' in this kind of assessment.

When children are living within a system that seems so inhumane, ensuring that they feel safe and treated as children (through care, playfulness and empathy) becomes priority.

I did see some UASC who had so many involvements from different professionals over lots of different fears where I felt like they needed their basic needs met before further assessments

should take place, as they might potentially 'diagnose' an issue that stems from a place of unmet basic needs rather than something else.

Overcoming English language needs as barrier to assessment

Round 1 participants said:

I might use language-light activities such as Rush Hour or Complex Figure Drawing

[A professional interpreter would] interpret questions hopefully with cultural sensitivity rather than simply translating, and can provide better context.

I think [non-verbal assessments] can be more useful as they reduce the reliance on language, but whether they are culturally appropriate and whether there are any underlying assumptions of skills of children of a certain age that are not true for the child in question would be a serious consideration.

In my experience [it] can be tricky when working with interpreters who may also have seen the UASC in another context such as Home Office appointments or religious places.

At other times [using the local community to interpret] has not supported the working relationship at all and it was clear that there were some conversations being had that were not just interpreting for the purpose of the meeting. As I did not speak their language, I did not know what was happening so it was difficult for me to fully understand. However, it was clear that some UASC had a very difficult time in some of these extended conversations, and some told me that they were told off which was not part of the conversation that was meant to be interpreted by the interpreter.

Taking a strengths-based approach

Round 1 participants said:

They are already experiencing so much negativity in so many areas of their lives, it is important to be one of the people who can give them something positive about themselves to cherish

I sometimes reflected that the ASR children often had navigated complex and extremely challenging situations, and yet they were still being assessed (in schools) in traditional ways, such as on how they responded, in exam conditions, to a question about Macbeth. potential school often feels unsure about including a child with SEN from abroad so any positives to which attention can be drawn are very helpful

Not in AS & R children, but with another child who was newly arrived in country, who showed strength with visual perception which might not otherwise have been noticed, so this was used to give him breaks from language-based learning and showcase this strength to build his confidence.

Taking an ecosystemic perspective

Round 1 participants said:

[I have] key questions during consultations with parents - my colleague and I have produced a bit of a checklist for other EPs.

Some of the UASC I worked with had quite unsuitable living environments provided by the home office, and some of their social and cultural values were so different to some of the other children I saw, that without this information I would not have been able to support them very well as I would not have a helpful understanding of their world and how this impacts on them.

There are also likely to be factors in an ASR child's life which may be particularly impactful, for example, asylum processes, care system, trying to understand/ integrate into a different culture etc.

A child who came to the UK during the Covid pandemic, had already been out of school for several months when he arrived, had no English, was out of school here for 18 months because schools were saying 'couldn't meet need' or they needed officially translated documents of his needs from his country of origin...he had been out of a routine for a long time, couldn't go out unaccompanied because of this additional needs, and so it was vital that all this was understood as impacting his presentation which once settled in an educational setting and with his needs met was very, very different and far less challenging.

Anti-oppressive practice

Round 1 participants said:

Revisiting the social graces in supervision.

practical issues such as interpreters and translations. We can get an interpreter for an education, health and care needs assessment, but for other work schools have to supply the interpreter and don't have the money to do this, and have to rely on members of staff who may be able to interpret. In addition, reports are never translated into the client's first language, and Google translate while it can be useful in some situations is often unreliable.

Having an open mind and inclusive mentality, and challenging my thinking when I recognise I am being judgmental or making assumptions.

I try to be mindful of the cultures of people I am working with and considerate regarding times of visits, for example avoiding Fridays for home visits to muslim families.

They are likely to already have met many other professionals, often in an authoritarian role, asking many questions about personal circumstances and experiences, and so may be wary of us seeing us in a similar light. This makes explaining our role clearly even more important than it already is.

I initially found it important to have supervision straight after my initial assessment visits to the contingency hotel - as a bit of a de-brief. Vicarious trauma is a risk.

We have both Anti-Racism and International New Arrivals special interest groups in our service, and both offer supervision, which is well used, and also raises awareness of the importance we give to this aspect of supervision.

I think there could be an argument for this because of the risk of secondary trauma. Hearing some of the UASC stories, I found it very difficult to manage my own emotions in a way that still made me a helpful professional for them.

I think it would be reasonable to expect any service to have a senior, specialist senior or senior practitioner EP who has particular knowledge in this area (likely presentation, relevant legislation and policy) who can offer supervision, perhaps at a more informal peer supervision level.

Trainees, in my view, should be aware of the legislative frameworks and history that lead to work in this area being necessary and also should be made aware of the rights framework that underpins this necessity too.

I think more focus should be given in training to provide trainees some understanding of the factors which may impact a child's context who has an asylum-seeking and refugee background.

I want to start asking schools and colleges more directly about how they enact anti-racist practice, and support specific cohorts of CYP.

I don't think EP training sufficiently addresses systemic racism as a topic/ concept, and it has a greater responsibility to do so. I think having an understanding of this, and the western-centric models of psychology/mental-health are a relevant area of understanding for working with asylum-seeking and refugee children.

Cultural competence

Round 1 participants said:

I think there are many benefits from having a culturally diverse MDT, more languages spoken in the team, more cultural understanding.

Community Cohesion Team members, [...] were often able to inform me regarding development expectations and child care practices within communities.

For example, my question 'When did the child first walk?' meant 'When did they take their very first independent steps?' I was informed it was understood to mean 'When did the child walk a reasonable distance independently, i.e. to the local shop?' I might be told three years old, which I regarded as delayed while actually the development was usual.

However, as I said earlier some people I work with do not want to see someone from their own cultural background i.e. I worked with someone who fled a country because he was found out to be gay. He was fearful of people from that country.

A woman I worked with changed religion from her family. She did not want to be around people from her culture as she said they would question her why she changed religion, she reported even a consultant questioned her about this! To her being asked about this was threatening as she was reportedly jailed and nearly killed for her change of faith, hence fleeing to seek asylum.

A client may feel more at ease if they are comfortable with that person, and have a shared language, culture and or life experiences, and be able to share information and hopes and views more easily.

Best to listen, be non judgemental and ask. They are the expert in their culture. Just be humble to ask and listen. For example it is important to be aware that in some cultures a child not to look at an adult who is talking to them is a sign of respect, so we shouldn't demand 'look at me when I'm talking to you' as we sometimes still hear in schools.

It can also be important to be aware of what is going on in a child's country of origin, eg if there is civil war or persecution, so that we know there might be experience of trauma, or a need for careful choice of interpreters when these are needed.

Non verbal communication - I made a hand gesture for good luck while working with an interpreter. The interpreter and patient looked somewhat shocked though I didn't quite catch it at the time. The interpreter explained afterwards that the sign I meant, fingers crossed for good luck, means penis in their culture! I have avoided non verbal communication signs since then!

it is also important to recognise that there is no such thing as a single 'English', 'Spanish' or whatever culture, and avoid generalisations or 'cultural heuristics (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005)

and resorting to a "cookbook model of multicultural practice" (p.689) which draws upon a list of beliefs and behaviours characteristic of a certain group of people, thus ignoring within-group and individual variations.

I was also pushed to increase attendance for my mental health project but this had been pushed during ramadan, and when classes or sessions would start quite early. Considering cultural practices and UASC who were practicing muslims it was not fair to expect them to travel early, probably after they have only just eaten their last meal of the night and attend a class

Many years ago when working in a library I went into a dark store room and before I could find a light switch I tripped over someone. It was a muslim colleague, praying. I did not realise the room was used for prayers. I was mortified and apologetic. I can't think what else I might have done, there was no notice on the door letting people know the room might be used for prayers.

I found it helpful to learn more about different countries, ethnic groups, religions and cultures when I worked with UASC as it helps provide some context. For example around food habits

Rather embarrassingly, I made an assumption that an asylum seeking parent could read. The interpreter had to remind me to check. The parent wasn't able to read or write. I felt awful for making this assumption and trying my best to avoid all assumptions has been key to all my work in this area ever since. I always remember to sensitively ask parents now.

I have found that the consideration of mental health support for some children with AS&R backgrounds has taken a western perspective, and not been aware of alternative understandings of MHWB and how these can be supported.

Simple differences such as knowing whether writing is left to right, or right to left, and whether the script is the same or different to English etc., feel to me to be key pieces of information that can be relevant for understanding how a child may experience learning in UK education, and what kind of support/ adjustments will be helpful.

I also think it may sometimes be helpful for the EP working with a particular CYP or family to have a similar cultural background, as this may facilitate communication and understanding, however this too is a complex issue.

In many cases people I have worked with expressly state that they do not want to work with someone from the same cultural background. They have fled a country for a reason and sometimes people from the same background can be triggering

Many R&AS families have fled conflict, and the EP of 'similar cultural background' may have come from an opposing side in the conflict.

Systemic oppression

Round 1 participants said:

Intersectionality of ethnicity and poverty have certainly been implied in the situations I have witnessed.

Some of the young people I worked with left their 'home' country because of sexual orientation or religious belief that made it unsafe for them to stay where they were, which when they moved here still continued at a different level as some of the other UASC may have some of those beliefs that their sexual orientation or religious belief were not okay, on top of discrimination from people from the UK on this but also on their skin colour, language use and simply by fleeing their country which some people in the UK are not very kind about.

One of the UASC I worked with shared that they would prefer to go back 'home' as they had found this compounding of discriminatory experiences more difficult than being 'home' surrounded by family with the same religious beliefs (note this UASC did not have a sexual orientation reason for leaving) as they would at least then felt safe and supported within their group despite continued threats.

People were very anti immigration so they experienced a lot of hostility in their street when they were meant to come here to feel safe after

Having been in all sorts of hostile environments in their 'home' country and on their journeys.

Accessing an interpreter requires EPs to provide 3 quotes to finance in the council.

SEN forms provided only in English.

I recently attended a session run by two women who are seeking asylum and they shared their experiences with us, explaining that their 'status' is the most dominant thought in their minds day after day.

Asylum seeking and refugee children are likely to be living in particular kinds of accommodation and can move to a different local authority at the apparent whim of the home office.

It makes you realise how important it is for their children to be settled in school as soon as possible, as this gives shape to the day and security for the children as well as space for parents to continue the battle to remain in this country and be accepted.

NHS Charging - patient taking her 6 year old to hospital for an appt and being turned away as she was chargeable. Patient being removed from a waiting list as staff thought he was chargeable - he wasn't. delayed treatment by 6 months and only found out that he had been removed through me following up the referral.

I think it is important to be aware of how immensely complicated and challenging it is for anyone to claim asylum and receive refugee status in this country, and to understand the way this can dominate a person's life and leave limited/little thinking space for other matters.

In my opinion, which is based mainly on working with asylum seeking CYP, living conditions in contingency hotels are not adequate and deny children of their rights (particularly related to play). Allowing private housing companies to move families to a different part of the UK with limited warning - even if their children have just settled, is inhumane. Providing limited information and housing families in temporary accommodation for years, effects well-being, parent mental health, physical health and does not encourage integration. Many of the policies and legislation are barriers that increase experiences of lived trauma.

I offer a safe space for individuals to share their views, frustrations and experiences. I challenge practice in schools. I question directors in the council around current practice and ways forward. I work to empower voice and action. I've completed action research to capture the voices of asylum seeking families (parents, children and young people) - this is currently contributing towards the development of guidance for schools in the local area. The action

research took part in schools and the local community - links were made with local charities. I try to learn as much as possible to understand lived experiences alongside the different systemic issues that are faced.

Patients are sent a bill for secondary NHS care and have to prove whey they are not chargeable, a lengthy, complicated, bureaucratic ridden process and in English language. The evidence required is so stringent and grossly unfair in my view. Many English people would struggle to meet the bureaucratic requirements. How is an asylum seeker meant to. Charging is a massive issue for many asylum seekers accessing healthcare but many social / health care workers know very little about it.

I think there may be a risk judgements are made. i.e. I attended a social services training on child neglect and a stated risk factor was being a child of an asylum seeker! I challenged this as it appeared prejudiced.

For example UASC being challenged on part of their story in a different interview which they had not mentioned in their first interview when they were fully sleep deprived, had just experienced an incomprehensible amount of traumatic experiences which impact majorly on memory and recall etc, which then formed the basis of some children not getting leave to remain by the time they reached 18.

This affects my practice in that I will try to complete an assessment as quickly as I can so a school place or EHCP can be obtained and present a reason for staying put. So my response to children in this category is likely to be different and I think there is some justification in this.

Parents not being able to access services because of working hours, for example (if working not asylum seeking) and not feeling confident with claiming entitlements either.

Acculturation

Round 1 participants said:

I think an AS or R child needs lots of information about the culture(s) in which they find themselves, so that they can decide for themselves the extent to which they want to assimilate into the host/dominant culture(s).

Many didn't have experience of formal education so did not have the same foundational knowledge or understanding of expectations and found it very difficult to sit for so much of the day

Some would eat at very different times or get up at different times like in many cultures,

A rule around not making eye contact with elders was taken as the child being very rude at school and this got them into a lot of trouble, but in their culture it is very rude to make eye contact with a person older than you so he thought he was being polite and was so confused.

Food and clothing needs/differences (eg Halal and covering arms and legs - PE kit).

I've worked with children who need basic information on how to respond to authority in British schools and how to manage oneself in mixed gender environments.

Working with and supporting parents

Round 1 participants said:

Be considerate of any difficulties parents may have in accessing services because of working hours or other commitments (e.g. other interviews and processes)

Ensure that LAs provide information regarding SEND in various languages, and consider the different cultural aspects which may need consideration.

Signpost to independent parental support services,

Culture/language specific support organisations have been useful for signposting parents to.

Ensure that information is provided in accessible ways, including language, as well as if parents may not be literate in their first language(s).

Deterioration of parental mental health due to living arrangements, living with uncertainty and managing children's needs without outside support.

Also need to be aware of the parents' needs (see earlier answer) and the extent to which they have the mental space and financial resources and language abilities to engage with their child's education (eg travel to meetings at school).

Our education system can seem a labyrinth to people who have not grown up in it, and even to those who have, and even more so the SEN systems.

Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children (UASC)

Round 1 participants said:

What would a good future look like for them.

What are their hopes?

Need to give them information about my role to help them decide if they want to meet me, or if they would rather work with me through a trusted adult.

I think my focus would be on trauma and the impact of this on their mental health, emotional regulation and capacity to engage in learning.

Understanding histories

Round 1 participants said:

It is helpful to understand their journey and background to consider what support might be most helpful, for example if they have fled from having been captured by someone in their family in an extremist group, or whether they are still in touch with their family in the country they fled, and whether they had an expectation put upon them to support their family or whether their family have passed away or contact has been lost and they might be attempting to find family through The Red Cross.

One family I worked with described their daughter (SLD/PMLD) laughing at the gunfire she heard on the road to Kabul airport while her family tried to leave after the US withdrew from Afghanistan: she appeared to think it was fireworks.

Avoiding potential re-traumatisation/ triggering discussions would be my primary concern here. Is this the appropriate time? Am i the appropriate person? Do i have the capacity of skills to follow up any needs that might be identified through the sharing of such information?

Guided drawing, building up a 'comic strip' with a child on their own can be useful in finding out their construction of their history.

Educational experience is important. A number of more high level needs children I have worked with did not go to school before coming to the UK, in spite of being well over school starting age.

It is always the 'so what?' of the information that is important- what will i do with this information?

I think the length of their journey, whether they travelled alone or perhaps partially alone and some of their experiences en route help contextualise and understand their trauma.

When they were at their happiest, what did life look like?

Working alongside communities

EPs from Round 1 are currently engaged in the following:

Action research within AS&R communities

Delivering training in the community, including a targeted parenting programme

Working with schools on a whole-school approach to welcoming and supporting newly arrived children

Attending a charity-run advice drop-in

Appendix O: Development of Draft Principles following Round Two

Principle	Average rating	Participant Comments
Proposed amendments in red Language Assessments English language acquisition takes time. Although a language assessment may be useful for pinpointing where targeted support might be needed, caution should be taking in making any judgements based on this. Language (including all languages spoken by the child) might best be assessed through parent consultation initially and by a school or setting over time. However, if there is a language need in the child's first language, exploration alongside a speech and language specialist might help provide guidance to settings.	3.8	<i>I agree with the first part of this principle, but don't really agree entirely with the second part. I think if there is a need in the child's native language, some exploration of this could be carried out by the EP and/or by SaLT, and with the child (through interpreters), and need not be limited to parent consultation. EP exploration could provide guidance for settings in terms of provision and using the graduated response to deepen understanding over time.</i> <i>Language assessments can be biased in design and may not represent true ability or understanding. Particularly standardised assessments developed for English speaking populations</i>
Assessment over time Settings should be taking a graduated approach to assessing and supporting need. Any EP assessment should form part of this so that any short-term difficulties are contextualized and understood. This can be supported by an initial baseline assessment which is reviewed after an agreed timeframe. The risk of this, however, is that families may leave the area before the assessment is completed. This can happen unexpectedly and at short notice. It is important settings and EPs pass information on in such cases.	4.6	<i>I agree with this as it enables a holistic picture however it could be supported through an initial baseline assessment and reviewed by following up after an agreed timeframe (e.g. six weeks) to allow for a more holistic understanding and to mitigate against movement between schools / local authorities.</i> <i>I think it is the school and EP's joint responsibility to ensure passing on of information to the next setting if the family leaves the area, even if assessment is unfinished.</i> <i>Asylum seekers are often moved elsewhere in the country 'dispersed' at very short notice, sometimes within the day.</i> <i>I'm not sure on my answer to this. (I've put 3 as it requires an answer.)</i>
Capturing child views Capturing the views of the child is important and consideration should be given to how the child can share their views without parents/carers being present as they may feel more able to speak openly. Factors to consider are: The child's preferences – they may not feel comfortable speaking alone with you The family's culture and/or expectations The availability of space and time (for example, if the assessment takes place in single room accommodation, this might not be possible)	4.2	<i>I can see that sometimes the child may feel genuinely more comfortable and able to share their views when their parent/carer is present. So although it may sometimes be helpful to gather their views without the parent/carer, I don't think it's automatically the case that this is preferable. This may also be impacted by whether the family come from a more individualistic or collective culture and society. Again, a really complex consideration I know!</i> <i>I'm not sure that a child's views have to be sought without parents being present. Surely, the child should be given the choice as to how they want to share their views regarding</i>

Principle Proposed amendments in red	Average rating	Participant Comments
		presence or absence of parents, in the same way we would allow them to choose who they feel most comfortable working with to share those views. Easier to facilitate if the child is in a school setting. If in an immigration hotel / accommodation this may be more difficult as families are often restricted to a single room and may not like to leave the room.
Cognitive and standardised assessments or dynamic/play-based assessments There are a number of concerns regarding cognitive and standardised assessments including inherent bias, other factors affecting results (such as lack of prior education) and the risk of children feeling over-assessed. Using subtests of cognitive assessments can help to explore a particular hypothesis, and can be used dynamically. Play-based and dynamic approaches instead can feel less intimidating and avoid labels.	4.6	I certainly agree that inherent bias and other factors affecting results are significant concerns regarding cognitive and standardised assessments. I don't feel this would be an appropriate tool to use, at all, for CYP with ASR backgrounds. I can see that some of the subtests could potentially be used dynamically, and play-based assessments more so, though again I would be thinking the (T)EP would need to bear in mind various factors which may impact on their interpretations and conclusions from these kinds of assessments too. I think that being aware of any particular cultural/ linguistic aspects of the child's background could support the (T)EP to best mitigate this. I think the (T)EP having as much understanding as possible about the linguistic, cultural and educational culture of the child's home country/ context is important for any assessment, and understanding the child's behaviours/ responses etc. I would never use a cognitive or standardised assessment with a child who was new to the country. There are lots of resources to support dynamic assessment of need / response to mediation / aptitude for learning
Overcoming English language needs as barrier to assessment Using interpreters can make the assessment process more accurate where English language is a barrier, but EPs should be mindful that translation is not always accurate and so can impact on the quality of what is gathered. Using friends, family or other people from a community can be less intimidating for some, but may also bring other difficulties. Interpreters can support not only with language, but also aide cultural competence and understanding. It may be a crucial way of giving the child a voice. Dynamic assessment and other non-verbal tools can be helpful, and may highlight other strengths in communication (other than verbal). However, even non-verbal assessments usually rely on verbal instructions to some extent, and may not be culturally appropriate.	4.0	I haven't used an interpreter for assessment or direct work with a child but I know from work in a previous role that translation is not always accurate and that could therefore impact on the quality and accuracy of the assessment or views gathered I find most standardised assessments very challenging with asylum seekers so I imagine that would be the case with asylum seeker children. Functional assessments / skills are more accurate in my view which may be better assessed through play. I'm not sure on my answer to this. (I've put 3 as it requires an answer.)
Taking a strengths-based approach Principle: Being strengths-based is particularly important for the following reasons:	5.0	

Principle Proposed amendments in red	Average rating	Participant Comments
- It can make schools and other more accepting; - It is hopeful in the face of significant adversity; - There are potential strengths which are not so readily recognised in our culture (e.g. multilingualism, resilience, practical skills)		
Taking an ecosystemic perspective Principle: This is essential given the range of factors which may affect asylum-seeking and refugee children. Thinking through beforehand what you might want to explore about past and present contexts is important, and perhaps having a checklist specific to the asylum-seeking and refugee experience. Care needs to be taken to consider possible trauma or fear over 'officials' asking lots of questions. Where possible, relationships and trust should be developed first. An example question might be 'Is there anything about your experiences in coming here that you feel I should know to help me understand your child's needs?'	4.4	<i>I think we need to be very, very careful around seeking information about asylum-seeking and refugee experiences. From my understanding, by the time a child and their family get to the point of interacting with the education system here, they are likely to have come across many, many people in official positions with power and authority regarding their status here, and so may assume that we are more of the same. I wonder if the best approach is to ask a very general question to the parents/carers (and child?), such as 'is there anything about your experiences in coming here that you feel i need to know to help me understand your child's needs?'. Further exploration of asylum seeking and refugee experience - where relevant- may have to wait for the building up of a relationship of trust over time between family and professional.</i> <i>I'm not sure on my answer to this. (I've put 3 as it requires an answer.)</i>
Anti-oppressive practice Principle: EPs should prioritise anti-oppressive practice. When assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this involves: - Challenging oppressive practice of other professionals – this might be pre-emptively stating your position on this at the start of a process. - Knowing the limits of your own expertise and making effective use of other professionals (e.g. interpreters) - Child or family perspective-taking - Creating a safe space for families to talk openly and developing trust - Being reflective and self-critical of our own assumptions - Accessing specific training which may be targeted or form part of wider training around anti-racism and socially-just practice - Accessing specialist supervision	5.0	
Acculturation Principle: Acculturation should not be viewed as a need, but rather a choice. However, if an AS&R child is wanting to assimilate into the prevailing culture in their school or community, this should be supported but it may be hindered by factors such as financial barriers, health barriers or family. Professionals should be mindful of possible cultural differences as part of practicing in a culturally competent way. These may include: - Prior education (e.g. not formal) and views on education - Sleeping, eating and other domestic arrangements - Social norms and acceptability - Views on disability	5.0	<i>However, without acculturation there are potentially many issues. I believe it should be supported and encouraged.</i>

Principle Proposed amendments in red	Average rating	Participant Comments
Cultural competence Principle: EPs should practice with cultural competence. When assessing the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee children, this involves: - A broad knowledge of a child's geopolitical context - Avoiding assumptions and recognising that cultures are diverse and nuanced - Seeking to gain a broad knowledge of a child's geopolitical context whilst avoiding assumptions and recognising that cultures are diverse and nuanced - Being aware that a professional sharing the culture of a AS&R may help but it can also cause difficulty - Being curious and open to learning about a person's culture - Considering cultural differences in communication (e.g. gestures) - Learning about and recognising cultural events - Being aware and critical of Westernised perspectives (e.g. of literacy or mental health) It can be supported by: - Diversity in professional teams - Being part of a multidisciplinary team - Being able to challenge cultural incompetence with sensitivity and by offering practical solutions - recognition that developing cultural competence is a life-long journey and avoiding complacency as individuals and across teams	4.6	<i>There is too much in this one principle for me to give a single rating. For example, 'EPs should practise with cultural competence'. I think CC is an on-going process not a finite 'skill'. I'm not sure to what extent the two first points are compatible - A broad knowledge of a child's geopolitical context' and '- Avoiding assumptions and recognising that cultures are diverse and nuanced'. I wonder if an additional point needs to be added to 'it can be supported by', around developing cultural competence as a life-long journey?</i> <i>I think it can be difficult within EPSs to address systemic racism and oppressive practice, even when these are ostensibly being considered. I feel that there is likely to be a range of understandings and levels of experience with these issues within the staff and EPS structure, and that it is perhaps too easy for services to feel they are addressing these issues, whilst actually they may be unaware of what they don't know. I think this is a real challenge for the EP profession currently.</i> <i>A specialist teacher made negative comments about the home country of a young person seeking asylum that I was working with and it made me feel uncomfortable. She is well thought of in the local authority and I didn't know how to address this. Understanding of cultural practises is hugely important. I would appreciate further support on how to challenge generalisations and biases sensitively</i>
Systemic oppression Principle: EPs need to be aware of systemic oppression faced by AS&R families. This may include: - A lack of financial support in the education system for AS&R children - The psychological impact of unsettled status - English-only forms and processes, along with systemic and financial barriers to accessing interpretation services - Access to free health services – either it being denied or not communicated - Digital access - making it difficult to navigate systems which are largely online (e.g. applying for school places) - The asylum processing system - Housing – inadequate and/or insecure - Unsettled status affecting assessment completion due to uncertainty and risk of movement – In turn this may affect a school's commitment to taking a graduated response - Ongoing trauma from facing intersectional discrimination in UK – this may come from people from the same culture/country - Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are particularly vulnerable in face of authority or bureaucracy	5.0	<i>I was in the middle of a statutory assessment for a young person who was blind and had experienced significant trauma. She was moved to another local authority, meaning the assessment process would likely need to start again and this would impact upon her future access to education at a crucial stage in her learning - year nine, about to select options. She had accessed a limited curriculum in her home country and was doing some excellent gap filling to catch up and prepare her for GCSEs. The timing of this move was incredibly disappointing and deleterious to her progress. The LA she is moving to have a reputation for not assessing as readily and it is also in an area that experiences significant racism. She moved from our local authority which is a city of sanctuary. The school had worked</i>

Principle Proposed amendments in red	Average rating	Participant Comments
In countering systemic oppression: - professionals need to stay curious, draw on other professional expertise (e.g. interpreters, seeking perspectives of AS&R families, being reflective) - Education can offer stability and safety to children given unsettled status		<i>really hard with a range of professionals to understand and meet her needs, including her traumatic experiences. This whole process has been very deflating and upsetting.</i> <i>There is also a problem with most information and systems around asylum seeking processes and finding school places, health care, being digital, and many asylum seekers experience digital poverty, which makes access to these systems very challenging.</i> <i>I have experienced social services training that stated being a child of an asylum seeker / refugee made neglect more likely. This was training!!! I challenged this at the time.</i>
Reporting outcomes Principle: Assessment outcomes should be reported without use of jargon and using plain, unambiguous English which can be translated straightforwardly (and the should be translated into the family's home language). Visuals are may be useful in supporting this. Where possible, it should be fed back to parents face-to-face. Assessment outcomes should be strengths-based and have the future child in mind.	5.0	<i>Homework should also be translated and explained.</i> <i>I agree with this entirely in theory. I am conscious however of the workload of (T)EPs and wonder how realistic this would be in all services, mainly around feeding back face-to-face. That said, in principle I entirely agree this should be done.</i> <i>Visuals may be useful in supporting assessment outcomes, not always as assessment outcomes are sometimes abstract rather than concrete.</i> <i>Completely agree. Can't bear professional jargon which excludes our clients.</i>
Working with and supporting parents Principle: EPs should be mindful of parent support needs, and the potential for sign-posting or ensuring other professionals are aware. In particular, consider: - Their understanding of their rights and ability to advocate (e.g. giving informed consent) - Their mental health and wellbeing; - Their understanding of communications and school or SEND systems; - Their language needs.	5.0	
Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children (UASC) Principle: EPs should be aware of specific considerations for the assessment of UASC: - Their journey – the reasons for, and experience of, travelling alone. This may be a source of ongoing distress. - Loss – of family, home, culture, and possible bereavement. This may include a sense of guilt. If they are not in touch with family, there may be significant worry. - It is useful to understand these factors to pass on to carers or other key adults, but questioning should not cause further distress. - Their legal or settled status may be sensitive and stressful. Their current home or living arrangements may be difficult. - Their health or medical needs.	4.8	<i>I'm not sure what support there is from social care but that could be considered too?</i> <i>I think we also need to be aware that the EP may not be the right person for exploring the reasons for the child's journey, their travelling experiences etc. This may be work for a trusted adult later in the child's life, once settled in education and building relationships and sense of belonging. Our job may be to help them find</i>

Principle Proposed amendments in red	Average rating	Participant Comments
- They need to be ready and willing to interact with you. - Their aspirations and hopes are important to explore and understand. - The EP may not be the right person for exploring these experiences and it may be better for this to be with a trusted adult later in the child's life, once settled.		<i>security through an established school placement.</i> <i>Completely agree.</i>
Understanding histories Principle: Understanding the history of an asylum-seeking or refugee child can be important to understanding present needs, but this should be approached very sensitively and at a time when you feel ready and able to respond appropriately. However, EPs typically do not have the time to build the trust needed to avoid possible re-traumatisation, and so it might not be appropriate to explore this. If it is considered appropriate to explore this, supervision and reviewing resources on trauma-informed practice* before you undertake this aspect of the work may help prepare. Questions should focus on understanding relevant information only and aim to avoid duplicating what has already been shared. It may be may be useful to understand the following: - Prior experience of education - Friendships and family - The journey here (including any significant events) - Other traumatic events - Where they lived (including temporarily) and what they have lost or left behind - When they were happiest. This process might begin with a parent consultation, but it is useful to engage the child also. *Resources which may be helpful include: https://www.acorneducationandcare.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/08/OFG_TIP_A4_Leaflet_v5.pdf https://livesonhold.org https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200413-Talking-With-Resettled-Refugees.pdf	4.4	<i>Some resources or guidance would be very helpful to consider how to approach this sensitively</i> <i>I would be extremely apprehensive about asking a CYP about their journey to the UK, and don't feel it would be justified in terms of information gathered vs. potential distress caused in the vast majority of cases. I think in our role we are unlikely to ever spend enough time getting to know a CYP to build enough trust for it to be appropriate to ask about their journey, and so personally I wouldn't do this. I feel that the risk of re-traumatisation is too great, and I don't think there is much to be gained from gathering further details around this; we can probably assume it was challenging and there was likely to be potential trauma involved without needing to be told this from them.</i> <i>I think we need to stress the 'may be useful' to understand the listed aspects.</i> <i>Completely agree. Children may have been schooled to a higher standard than we would expect a the same age here, also they may have had no schooling at all and be unable to read / write in their own language. It is important to ask and not make assumptions.</i>
Working alongside communities Principle: Working more closely with communities has the potential to increase understanding, particularly through hearing lived experiences. This might include local authority-wide guidance and strategies to support anti-racist and inclusive practice, alongside initiatives which can foster greater community inclusion and cohesion.	5.0	<i>LA wide guidance / strategies to support anti-racist / inclusive practice. Initiatives to support inclusive communities - e.g. coffee mornings, advice surgeries etc in the community</i>

Appendix P: Overall RTA Codes and Subthemes

Code or Subtheme (in bold)	References
Anti-oppressive practice	13
Anti-oppressive practice includes challenging systems and policies	5
Systemic oppression impacts on professional practice	6
The degree of acculturation should be a choice	2
Assessing unaccompanied children requires specific considerations	5
Being aware of our own positionality	23
CRT did not impact on participants responses	4
CRT impacted on responses	3
Cultural competence is an ongoing, reflective process	3
Experience of being an immigrant raises awareness of white privilege	2
Having an awareness of own privilege is important	1
It is important to avoid assumptions stemming from our own cultural experiences	7
It is important to recognise the impact of white privilege in society	1
The EP profession should reflect the communities we work with	2
Considering language	27
A known professional interpreter may be useful or cause difficulty	1
A language assessment in the child's home language might help identify a need	3
Another professional who can interpret is beneficial over a professional interpreter	1
Assessment should be conducted in the child's preferred language	6
English language assessments can help give an understanding of any specific gaps	1
Interpretation can be inaccurate	1
Interpretation is best carried out in-person	1
Interpreters can help with cultural understandings	1
Outcomes should be communicated face-to-face	2
Outcomes should be communicated using the family's preferred language	1
Outcomes should be reported using accessible language	4
Some families may prefer someone they know to interpret than an unfamiliar professional	3
Some families would prefer no interpreter than having somebody unfamiliar do it	2
Foregrounding the voices of AS&R children and their families	19
Anti-oppressive practice includes foregrounding the voices of AS&R people	6
Gathering child views are important	5
Giving opportunity for children to speak away from their parents might be appropriate in some cases	4
It is important children have opportunity to share their views without their parents present	4

Code or Subtheme (in bold)	References
Knowledge of cultures and communities	52
Anti-oppressive practice includes consideration of cultural norms	4
Cultures are individual and nuanced so should not be generalised	3
Curiosity about a person's culture is important	7
Having an understanding of a child's home country is useful	5
Intersectionality and unique positionalities of individuals is important to recognise	3
Knowledge of a person's culture can develop through working with them	2
Sharing a cultural background might cause difficulties	2
Sharing a cultural background with CYP is helpful	5
Sharing a cultural background with CYP is not essential	3
Skills are more important than sharing a culture with CYP	2
Sometimes cultural conflict (within and between) might cause difficulty	4
There are cultural differences that professionals should be aware of	3
Working more closely with communities would be beneficial but is challenging	5
Working with communities is important	4
Ongoing trauma and difficulty	13
Communities can be hostile	3
Families may find barriers to acculturation	1
Many AS&R families face ongoing trauma in the UK	2
The asylum process is discriminatory	7
Showing curiosity	11
Anti-oppressive practice includes remaining curious and checking own biases	5
Anti-oppressive practice includes showing curiosity and effective listening skills	5
Showing curiosity can feel uncomfortable	1
Specific training and supervision	28
Anti-oppressive practice involves confidence and experience	2
Even among experts, there is a lack of experience to draw on	9
Specialist supervision is important	5
Specific training on this is important	4
There is no specific inclusion of this area on EP training courses	3
This area could be part of a wider topic of training	2
Training in this area can be self-directed	1
Training may happen within some services	2
Taking an ecosystemic perspective	14
Anti-oppressive practice includes taking an ecosystemic perspective	3
Taking an ecosystemic perspective is important	6
Wider support for parents should be considered	5

Code or Subtheme (in bold)	References
Taking time	21
A thorough assessment process is useful	1
Assessment needs to be carried out over time	8
Assessment needs to take place in the school environment	3
Assessment over time is preferable but not often possible	2
Assessment over time risks families relocating	3
English language skills can be assessed by schools over time	4
The impact of histories and journeys	22
Taking a child's history requires care and sensitivity	11
Taking and understanding a child's history is important	11
The importance of trust	9
Anti-oppressive practice includes informed empathy	1
Anti-oppressive practice includes offering a safe space	1
AS&R children may be particularly cautious of unfamiliar professionals	1
Endeavouring to understand the cultural background of a child can help develop trust	2
Trust is important and can be developed regardless of cultural background	4
Using anti-oppressive assessment tools	31
A strengths-based approach is important	4
Assessment should consider whether basic needs are being met before looking for other difficulties	1
Being hypothesis-driven is important	4
Being hypothesis-driven might not be appropriate	2
Cognitive and standardised assessments should be avoided	10
Play-based and dynamic approaches can help develop a sense of safety and trust	1
Play-based and dynamic assessment approaches are useful	8
Standardised assessments do not account for English as a new language or using interpreters	1
Working with limited resources	13
Anti-oppressive practice is not always possible because of limitations in time and resources	1
Schools struggle to support AS&R children effectively	3
The current system does not allow for best practice	6
The system can work against an effective assessment	1
There is a lack of resource in the system to support families properly	2
Working with other professionals	28
Anti-oppressive practice includes drawing on other professionals	4
Anti-oppressive practice includes challenging other professionals	5

Code or Subtheme (in bold)	References
Challenging bias from other professionals can be difficult	4
Culturally diverse multidisciplinary teams are beneficial	4
Multidisciplinary working is desirable but does not happen	1
Multidisciplinary working is not necessary	1
Support for parents can come from other professionals	1
There are significant benefits to multidisciplinary working in this area	6
There is potential for multidisciplinary working in this area	2

Appendix Q: Extract from Mapping Subthemes Against CRT Principles

1. **No race is superior to any other.**
2. **Racism is pervasive:** it can be considered normal or inevitable, and so is often unnoticed.
3. **Whiteness has value:** Being white provides advantages in society.
4. **CRT does not generalise experiences:** Not all white people are racist and not all racially minoritised people are oppressed
5. **Laws don't go far enough:** Current anti-racism laws are insufficient because they only deal with obvious, intentional acts of racism, not the deeper, systemic issues.
6. **CRT demands that we:**
 - a. **Engage in ongoing self-reflection:** We should constantly examine our own biases and beliefs.
 - b. **Question racist histories:** It's important to be understand and be critical of how historical racism still affects today's society.
 - c. **Look for bias in systems:** We should assess how racism shows up in professional settings, such as policies, practices, tools and technology we use.
 - d. **Listen to diverse voices:** We should seek out the unique perspectives and counter-narratives of racially minoritised people.
 - e. **Reject the idea that people are defined by inherent 'essences':** Identity, meaning and characteristics are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by context, power dynamics, and histories.
 - f. **Acknowledge individual differences:** Intersectionality is used to understand that everyone's experience is shaped by a unique combination of their identities (race, gender, class, etc.).

	1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	6c	6d	6e	6f
Subtheme: Anti-oppressive practice											
Anti-oppressive practice includes challenging systems and policies					•			•			
Systemic oppression impacts on professional practice		•				•		•		•	•
The degree of acculturation should be a choice		•					•	•			•
Subtheme: Assessing unaccompanied children requires specific considerations											
Subtheme: Being aware of our own positionality											
CRT did not impact on participants responses											
CRT impacted on responses						•	•	•			•
Cultural competence is an ongoing, reflective process	•			•		•			•	•	•
Experience of being an immigrant raises awareness of white privilege			•	•		•				•	•
Having an awareness of own privilege is important		•	•			•					
It is important to avoid assumptions stemming from our own cultural experiences		•	•	•		•	•	•			
It is important to recognise the impact of white privilege in society	•	•	•				•	•			
The EP profession should reflect the communities we work with	•							•	•		

Appendix R: Ethics Submission



Application 067213

Section A: Applicant details

Date application started:
Sat 22 March 2025 at 10:29

First name:
Sarah Jane Louise

Last name:
Watson

Email:
swatson5@sheffield.ac.uk

Programme name:
DEdCPsy

Module name:
Thesis
Last updated:
28/04/2025

Department:
School of Education

Applying as:
Postgraduate research

Research project title:
EP assessment practices with asylum-seeking and refugee children: A Delphi Study

Please provide details of how your project has been academically reviewed
• Supervisor feedback

Similar applications:
- not entered -

Section B: Basic information

Supervisor

Name

Email

Sabine Little

s.little@sheffield.ac.uk

Proposed project duration

Start date (of data collection):
Sun 1 June 2025

Anticipated end date (of project)
Wed 1 July 2026

3: Project code (where applicable)

Project externally funded?
No

Project code

- not entered -

Suitability

Takes place outside UK?

No

Involves NHS?

Yes

Health and/or social care human-interventional study?

No

ESRC funded?

No

Likely to lead to publication in a peer-reviewed journal?

Yes

Led by another UK institution?

No

Involves human tissue?

No

Clinical trial or a medical device study?

No

Involves social care services provided by a local authority?

Yes

Is social care research requiring review via the University Research Ethics Procedure

Yes

Involves adults who lack the capacity to consent?

No

Involves research on groups that are on the Home Office list of 'Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations'?

No

Indicators of risk

Involves potentially vulnerable participants?

No

Involves potentially highly sensitive topics?

Yes

Section C: Summary of research

1. Aims & Objectives

The aim of the research is to identify good practice and considerations for Educational Psychologists undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee children.

The objectives are to:

- identify what EPs need to consider when undertaking needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee CYP within the current context in England.

- understand which approaches are considered good practice for EPs use to assess the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee CYP within the current context in England.

- explore how EPs should communicate the needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee CYP within the current context in England.

- develop guidance for EPs when completing the needs assessments of asylum-seeking and refugee CYP within the current context in England.

3. Personal Safety

Have you completed your departmental risk assessment procedures, if appropriate?

Not Applicable

Raises personal safety issues?

No

Although literature and discussions around asylum-seeking and refugee children can be distressing, I encounter these issues as part of my working practices as an EP when undertaking casework with displaced children. As such, I access regular (at least weekly) supervision where any concerns can be shared.

Section D: About the participants

1. Potential Participants

Participants will be over 18 and will be professionals working in educational psychology or related fields, researchers (including community researchers who have already undertaken research training with Born in Bradford) and asylum-seeking/refugee community representatives.

The literature review and existing membership of research and professional networks will identify possible participants. Sampling will be targeted and purposive and will include snowball sampling (Skolimski et al., 2007). There will be criteria by which participants will be prioritised should there be greater interest than can be accommodated in Round One, alongside the inclusion criteria. In particular, the lens of CRT will be used to consider the whether the sample will perpetuate bias in EP practice or suppress the voices of those most affected in asylum seeking communities. Participants not selected for Round One will be invited to participate in Round Two.

2. Recruiting Potential Participants

Initial recruitment will be via professional and community networks. Having spoken informally to researchers, allied professionals and EPs, it is evident that there is a keen interest in this area of research. The challenge will be in recruiting the voices identified as needed through the literature review.

The research will use targeted sampling initially to recruit participants, based on the findings of the literature review. Snowball and opportunistic sampling will help to ensure that a broad range of expertise and interests are represented. The sample will be evaluated through a CRT lens. This may result in further recruitment or an approach to analysis which foregrounds the voices of some participants. This would be made transparent to participants, who would be fully informed of the CRT lens being applied and how this might impact on findings.

Participants will be approached via their professional emails. In the case of community voices (for example, trained community researchers) they will initially be contacted through the organisations representing them.

2.1. Advertising methods

Will the study be advertised using the volunteer lists for staff or students maintained by IT Services? No

- not entered -

3. Consent

Will informed consent be obtained from the participants? (i.e. the proposed process) Yes

Yes. The attached PIS will form the start of each survey round. Participants will be required to give consent each time, regardless of prior consent.

4. Payment

Will financial/in kind payments be offered to participants? No

5. Potential Harm to Participants

What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to the participants?

Although the topic can be distressing, participants are not being asked to reflect on specific traumatic experiences, but rather assessment practices and considerations. Most or all participants will be professionals with limited/no personal experience of displacement. As such, the potential risk of distress is low.

How will this be managed to ensure appropriate protection and well-being of the participants?

2. Methodology

Phase 1: Explore current perceptions of assessment practice and identify 'experts'

A literature review will seek to answer three questions: what existing guidance is there to inform EP assessment practice? Who should the research target as 'experts' on the Delphi Group? What principles of CRT can offer a lens through which to evaluate each stage of the research?

Through a literature review, the first phase will identify key areas of consideration. This would involve identifying literature search terms, reviewing the literature for suitability, and also evaluating it with respect to critical race theory and culturally competent practice. From the literature that is found suitable, a first draft of possible principles/guidelines, or questions would be drawn up for the first round of the Delphi Group.

A second part of the literature review would involve ascertaining 'experts' who would have the interest and the critical insight to offer informed opinion on all or some aspects of the guidelines. Again, this would be evaluated through the lens of critical race theory.

The third part would aim to develop a set of principles or protocol which can guide each stage of the research design and delivery. For instance, it will be used to evaluate the survey question design and the analysis. It will also be shared with participants to assist their understanding of how CRT can be applied to their own thinking when answering the survey.

The Round One questionnaire and the make-up of the panel (i.e. roles, protected characteristics, interests) will be presented at a qualitative researchers interest group. The group is within the local authority area I work and is comprised of experienced and early career researchers with an interest in methodology of this kind. Feedback will be sought and used to make any amendments as appropriate.

Phase 2: Establish the Delphi Group

A key feature of the Delphi Method is that it offers people the opportunity to offer their views in a flexible, anonymous format. Although anonymous, data will be requested to ensure that the research is transparent and that the group reflects the findings of the literature review in comprising the desired expertise. This evaluation will consider key questions raised by CRT – e.g. are the voices most impacted being adequately heard and foregrounded?

The experts (hereon in referred to as 'participants') respond to questionnaires asynchronously. The research will use targeted sampling initially to recruit participants, based on the findings of Phase 1. Snowball and opportunistic sampling will help to ensure that a broad range of expertise and interests are represented. The sample will be evaluated through a CRT lens. This may result in further recruitment or an approach to analysis which foregrounds the voices of some participants. This would be made transparent to participants, who would be fully informed of the CRT lens being applied and how this might impact on findings.

Participant information sheets will be used to ensure that they understand the nature, scope and possible impacts of the research. It will highlight a commitment to CRT, including a clear statement and set of principles (protocol) which will be developed from the literature review and adopted through the research process.

Phase 3: Delphi Group Round One.

Online questionnaires would be sent to participants, with a set timescale in which to respond (e.g. 2 weeks). At this stage, the questions would likely be largely qualitative, aiming to give participants the opportunity to offer a broad range of opinions. Any proposed guidelines might include a quantitative question asking participants to rate its importance (using a Likert Scale), as well as asking for comments.

Alongside asking about possible practice guidelines, it will gather views on the systemic challenges and considerations faced within this sphere.

The questionnaire would ask participants to consider their responses with reference to CRT in the form of prompts or specific questions. They will be referred to the principles or protocol of CRT being adopted by the research. It would also allow participants not to comment on questions which they felt unable to contribute to.

The questionnaire will also ask participants to recommend any further voices which should contribute to a second round.

Phase 4: Delphi Group Round One analysis and preparation of Round Two

Responses will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis for qualitative responses. The analysis would be conducted through a CRT lens, so that contributions are weighted according to pre-established criteria.

An overall summary will be produced, which will aim to begin to look like a complete set of guidelines. Alongside this, individual reports will be produced so that participants will be able to refer back to their previous thoughts and comments when contributing in the second round.

There will be further recruitment of participants to the second round in response to suggestions, either from round one or through supervision. The sample size will be determined by the balance of qualitative verses qualitative nature of the questions.

Phase 5: Delphi Group Round Two

This will be similar to Round One in that the questionnaire will be online and there will be a timeframe in which participants can respond. Participants will be presented with the reports outlined above, and again asked for feedback. This will likely be primarily quantitative with the aim of moving towards a final set of guidelines, but there will continue to be opportunities for comment and new insights. Participants will be reminded to consider their responses through a CRT lens, with clear questions and comments to aide this.

Phase 6: Delphi Group Round Two analysis

A second analysis of responses will aim to produce a final set of guidelines along with a summary of the systemic challenges and considerations within this sphere.

Phase 7: Delphi Group final comments and evaluation

A final draft document will be sent to participants for further comment. It is anticipated that at this stage, the document would represent a broadly consensus view and that additional comments may reinforce certain aspects, but that there will be little that is 'new'. If it does generate new data, a decision would be made (through supervision) as to the importance of this, and it would be incorporated as appropriate.

Although the risk is low, the PIS and end of survey will signpost participants to avenues for emotional support. As there is a possibility that participants may become more conscious of the issues and feel a need to do something constructive or take action. It will also offer ways in which participants can do this.

Organisations for signposting will include:

www.mind.org.uk

www.samartians.org

www.qwell.io

www.refugee-action.org.uk

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

www.adrossa.org.uk

www.reuk.org

6. Potential harm to others who may be affected by the research activities

Which other people, if any, may be affected by the research activities, beyond the participants and the research team?

It is possible that participants may disclose identifiable information about individuals and communities.

The research risks perpetuating whiteness in educational psychology practice.

What is the potential for harm to these people?

The harm to individuals being named would be that they are included in research which they have not given consent to. The researcher and people accessing the research would have personal knowledge of them which they are unaware of.

More broadly, the perpetuation of whiteness in educational psychology risks confining harm to communities and individuals who are not part of the global white minority.

How will this be managed to ensure appropriate safeguarding of these people?

Participants will be reminded to avoid giving information which identifies individuals or specific communities (e.g. a particular school or neighbourhood). Where a disclosure is made, that response will be returned to the participant to amend.

One aim of the literature review is to construct a set of principles for each stage of the research in light of critical race theory. The literature review is not yet complete and so examples of what these principles might be are:

1 - assessment practices proposed by participants should explicitly include any data or critique regarding its use with different races and cultures.

2 - The researcher and participants will be required to hold in mind that no individual can be adequately identified by membership in a single group. As such, when evaluating the participant group membership, for example, the researcher will gather personal data which gives a rich picture of the voices being heard, and will consider the range and prominence of those voice.

7. Reporting of safeguarding concerns or incidents

What arrangements will be in place for participants, and any other people external to the University who are involved in, or affected by, the research, to enable reporting of incidents or concerns?

The researcher maintains appropriate safeguarding training and awareness through university and placement service.

Participants will be informed that any concerns (such as disclosure of information suggesting serious malpractice) will be shared with the university's DSL/DSC, and escalated as and if appropriate.

Who will be the Designated Safeguarding Contact(s)?

The research supervisors will be the DSCs - in the first instance one would be contacted, but should they be unavailable, the other will be asked to respond.

How will reported incidents or concerns be handled and escalated?

A written record of the concern including times, nature of the concern, details, will be shared with the DSC who will then escalate via the DSL for the university. Any actions and outcomes would be communicated with the researcher as appropriate.

Section E: Personal data

1. Use of personal data

Will any personal data be processed or accessed as part of the project?

Yes

Will any 'special category' personal data be processed or accessed as part of the project?

Yes

Provide the number of people whose personal data you expect to process or access.
20

Approximate number of people with special category personal data
20

2. Managing personal data

Which organisation(s) will act as data controller(s) of the personal data?
University of Sheffield only

Who will have access to the personal data?
See attached data management plan

What measures, processes and/or agreements will be put in place to manage the personal data?
See data management plan

Will all identifiable personal data in digital or physical format be destroyed within a defined period after the project has ended?
Yes

When will the identifiable personal data be destroyed?
See data management plan

3. Third-party services

Will any external third-party services not provided by the University be used to process or access personal data during the project?
No

4. Security of computers, devices and software

Will personal data be processed or accessed on any computers or devices that are not managed by the University of Sheffield?
Yes

Will all computers and devices that are not managed by the University of Sheffield be secured in accordance with the IT Code of Connection?
Yes

Will any software not approved by the University of Sheffield be used to process or access data?
No

Will any software be written or developed in order to process or access the personal data?
No

Section F: Supporting documentation

Information & Consent

Participant information sheets relevant to project?
Yes

Document 1152245 (Version 1)
PIS

All versions

Consent forms relevant to project?
Yes

Document 1152246 (Version 1)
Consent form

All versions

Additional Documentation

Document 1152247 (Version 1)
Example survey

All versions

Document 1152345 (Version 1)
Data Management Plan

All versions

External Documentation

- not entered -

Section G: Declaration

Signed by:
- not entered -
Date signed:
- not entered -

Official notes

- not entered -

Appendix S: Data Management Plan

Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline

Title: EP assessment practices with asylum-seeking and refugee children: A Delphi Study

Creator: Sarah Watson

Data Manager: Sarah Watson

Affiliation: The University of Sheffield

Template: Postgraduate Research DMP (The University of Sheffield)

Project abstract:

A study to identify good practice and key considerations for educational psychologists undertaking needs assessment of asylum-seeking and refugee children. The research uses a systematic literature review to identify suitable participants and questions for two rounds of Delphi surveys which will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. From this, a guidance document will be produced for a final round of feedback from participants. The research process, including recruitment, survey design and analysis, will be informed by critical race theory, with participants being guided on how to consider issues of whiteness in EP practice when responding in each round.

ID: 176576

Last modified: 28-04-2025

EP assessment practices with asylum-seeking and refugee children: A Delphi Study

Defining your data

- Data collected will be entirely digital via online surveys. This will include personal data of participants (name, gender, race and ethnicity, occupation, years of experience) and responses to survey questions about their own work practices and their thoughts around this.
- An online survey application (e.g. Qualtrics) will be used. Setting will be checked (with IT Support) to ensure that no unnecessary details are collected. Three rounds of survey will be issued - the earliest date would be June 2025, and the latest would be June 2026.
- This data will be exported and saved as an Excel spreadsheet.
- The spreadsheet would likely be maximum 1MB.
- Analysis will be conducted via nVivo, and again exported to an Excel spreadsheet (one per round).
- This spreadsheet will likely be no more than 1MB also.
- No pre-existing datasets are being used.

Looking after data during your research

- Data will be stored on my university X: drive, accessed via VPN.
- Material such as consent forms and a participant pseudonymisation key will be stored in a discrete encrypted folder on the X: drive.
- Participants will be issued a number and their responses will be further identified by the round number (i.e. R1, R2 etc). Roman numerals will be used to identify questions within each round (and so, for example, '3R2iv' would refer to participant 3's response to the 4th question in the round 2 survey).
- Each Excel spreadsheet would be named by the round and whether it's raw responses or the analysis. So, for example, 'R2responses' and 'R2analysis' would refer to the spreadsheets for round 2's responses and analysis respectively.
- The above naming structure will be listed in a README file.
- No physical data will be collected.

Storing data after your research

- On successful completion of the Viva, and having disseminated research findings to participants, personal identifiable data will be removed from the data set.
- Anonymised data will be kept on the X: drive as fixed-term storage for 12 months after my graduation. My research supervisors will be responsible for this.
- The anonymised data set (analysed and summary data, survey materials) will be saved to the university repository ORDA (by me) and retained for 10 years.

Sharing data after your research

- Analysed data and other material placed in ORDA will be made openly available under [Creative Commons](#) licence. Data in ORDA will be assigned a DOI, which can be included in a data availability statement in my thesis and other publications, enabling access to the available data.

Putting your plan into practice

- I am responsible for the data management plan, with supervision from my two research supervisors.
- My research supervisors will request research storage on the X: drive and ensure that it is deleted 12 months after my graduation from the programme.
- The project is short (one year) and so will only require supervision oversight to ensure the plan is followed. It should only need reviewing should the methodology significantly change, in which case a new ethics submission would be required, along with an amended data management plan.
- No further actions are required.

Appendix T: Ethics Approval Letter



Downloaded: 27/06/2025
Approved: 12/06/2025

Sarah Jane Louise Watson
Registration number: 230108213
School of Education
Programme: DEdCPsy

Dear Sarah Jane Louise

PROJECT TITLE: Educational psychologist (EP) assessment practices with asylum-seeking and refugee children: A Delphi Study
APPLICATION: Reference Number 067213

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 12/06/2025 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 067213 (form submission date: 30/05/2025); (expected project end date: 01/07/2026).
- Participant information sheet 1152245 version 4 (30/05/2025).
- Participant consent form 1152246 version 2 (30/04/2025).

The reviewers have left the following comments regarding the application:

Well done Sarah, this is really clear now, and I can see what an exciting and well-designed project this is. Can you just add Rebecca Lawthom's contact details and your supervisors too, to the Consent form, before you send them out. Good luck! Penny

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Hargreaves
Ethics Admin
School of Education

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research-services/ethics-integrity/policy>
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066!/file/GRIPPpolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Admin (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.