



**NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh**

***Big Brothers Big Sisters and Garda Youth Diversion Projects:  
Perspectives on a Preventative Intervention***

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## **Declaration**

I, Kayleigh Murphy, certify that this thesis is my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of this work.

## **Abstract**

In recent years, measures to tackle youth crime in Ireland have moved from the punitive to the preventative, with increasing emphasis being placed on diversion and alternatives to sentencing. As a result, current policy emphasises the need for community involvement and inter-agency co-operation in youth crime prevention, as well as approaches that seek to strengthen the protective factors in young people's lives, thus protecting them from crime. Mentoring interventions which are targeted at young people who are involved in the youth justice system are increasingly being recognised as a valuable preventative tool in the area of youth offending. Foróige, through collaboration with the Irish Youth Justice Service has adapted the Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programme for the youth justice context in Ireland in a programme known as BBBS-GYDP.

This research is a qualitative study of the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme, which is designed to divert young people away from the path of offending. Through the perspectives of 41 key stakeholders including young people, their mentors, BBBS Project Officers, Senior Youth Officers and GYDP youth justice workers, this study explores the perceived value of this youth mentoring intervention.

The programme was found to have benefits for youth under four themes of social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose, mental health and well-being and the way in which the mentoring programme complements the work of the GYDP. While we were unable to assess outcomes in relation to offending behaviour, the findings are in line with theory regarding risk and protective factors relating to youth offending. It is posited here that the BBBS-GYDP mentoring intervention, through the placement of one good adult in the life of a young person, can influence the development of the young person's social ecology and strengthen their bonds with society, highlighting the value of this mentoring intervention for young people in the context of youth justice as well as in their wider social ecology.

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## **Glossary**

BBBS	Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Programme
BBBS-GYDP	Big Brothers Big Sisters-Garda Youth Diversion Projects
GYDP	Garda Youth Diversion Project
IYJS	Irish Youth Justice Service
JLO	Juvenile Liaison Officer
SYO	Senior Youth Officer (with Big Brothers Big Sisters)
YLS/CMI	Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory

# **Chapter One**

## ***Introduction***

### **1.1 Introduction**

Adolescence is a time of rapid transition and development for young people as they navigate changing social roles and experience the beginnings of change from dependency to independence (Kehily, 2007; Darling, 2005). Changes which occur at this time in life such as social, emotional and physiological developments can present challenges to youth. Though these changes are universal and occur in everyone's life, it has been argued that these developments have been made more difficult today as result of the increasing pace of social change and uncertainty which has occurred over the past twenty years (Philip & Spratt, 2007). It is believed that the nature of adolescence makes young people susceptible to involvement in offending behaviour with the result that offending among young people is relatively high compared to other age groups (Lalor et al, 2007). It is estimated that youth crime accounts for 15% of all crime in Ireland (excluding road traffic offences) (Minister for Justice and Equality, 2013). While most young people mature into adulthood and cease offending, a smaller group of young people persist with crime into later life.

Historically, the Irish youth justice system was characterised by a punitive approach which favoured the institutionalisation of young offenders. Over recent decades, however, there has been an increased emphasis on prevention, diversion and alternatives to sentencing, based on the premise that most young people will 'grow out of crime'. The Irish Youth Justice Service acknowledges that the factors that lead to crime among young people are complex and multi-faceted. As a result, current policy emphasises the need for community involvement and inter-agency co-operation in youth crime prevention, as well as approaches that seek to strengthen the protective factors in young people's lives, thus protecting them from crime (Lalor et al, 2007).

One such approach is that of youth mentoring, whereby a 'match' or friendship is made between an adult mentor and a young person who has come in contact with the law, which is designed to promote protective factors in young people's lives through social bonding and positive support (Delaney and Milne, 2002). There is evidence

from international research (Joliffe and Farrington, 2007) that mentoring for young offenders or those at risk of offending can have a positive impact on the young participants, including improved wellbeing, better relationships and increased involvement in education, training and employment. However, with such programmes being in their infancy in the justice context in Ireland, little research has been conducted in Ireland on this topic.

In 2001 Foróige, the national youth organisation, introduced the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) mentoring programme to Ireland, beginning with a pilot programme in Mayo, Roscommon and Galway. Since then the community-based BBBS programme has expanded and is currently rolled out on a national scale. A school-based strand of the programme was introduced in 2003 (Brady et al., 2012) and most recently, in 2016, a youth justice strand of the programme was developed in conjunction with the Irish Youth Justice Service. This was made available to Foróige managed Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) in 12 counties in Ireland. BBBS fits into a suite of programmes made available to young people involved in the GYDPs which have the primary aim of diverting youth away from involvement, or further involvement, in offending behaviour ‘by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects’ (Garda Community Relations Bureau, 2015).

This research is a qualitative study of the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme which is designed to divert young people away from the path of offending. Through 46 semi-structured interviews with 41 key stakeholders including young people, their mentors, BBBS Project Officers and Senior Youth Officers, GYDP youth justice workers and JLOs, this study explores the perceived value of mentoring in this new programme developed by Foróige. The focus on experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders in this study will address the gap in research studies based on the perspectives of participants in mentoring interventions for youth who have been or are at-risk of being involved in offending behaviour.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework for the Study

This study is underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. This theory, which posits the development of the individual as a contextual phenomenon arising out of the interaction between the different systems in which a person exists, presents a holistic view of the young person and recognises the influence which the interactions between a young person and wider society can have on their life. Development arises as a result of 'reciprocal interaction' and 'proximal processes' and serves to underline the ways in which interactions between the young person and their wider environment can have short-term and long-term effects on their overall development and life journey (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 38).

Reciprocal interaction is described by Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. 6) as being the interaction which occurs 'between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment'. Effectively it is the interaction between different microsystems (Ibid.). Proximal processes then are those interactions which recur over a sustained period of time drive human development. An example of reciprocal interaction would be a mother interacting with a child while the proximal process would be the mother feeding her child (Ibid). It is through these proximal processes that development occurs and the young person's capacity to participate in increasingly complex interactions develops.

This theory places the developing young person at the centre of the systems model, known as the *microsystem*, and sees the young person's development as influenced by their direct interaction with immediate social actors and social influences such as family, peer group, and school environments. The *mesosystem* refers to the interaction between the microsystems in which the young person is directly involved (Ibid.). The *exosystem* highlights the connection and interaction between two or more systems 'at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person' (Bronfenbrenner, 1988) such as the interaction between a young person's home and their parents place of work (Ibid.). This interaction can have an indirect influence on the young person. Following on from this, the *macrosystem* forms an overarching influence on the lives of those people within the systems and includes particular

aspects of social life including norms, belief systems and life course structures which according to Bronfenbrenner (1994, p. 40) ‘are embedded in each of the[se] broader systems’. The *chronosystem* represents the time aspect of society and highlights the ways in which individuals change in line with societal change and vice versa (Ibid.). It also refers to the time in which a particular experience occurs in the life of a young person and how this influences and is influenced by the individual.

**Table 1: Ecological Systems Framework**

<b>Level/System:</b>	<b>Examples of who/what present at this level:</b>
<b>Individual</b>	The person themselves who experiences the effects of the interactions between the systems.
<b>Microsystem</b>	The developing individual’s immediate environment. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/Guardians</li> <li>• Siblings</li> <li>• Teacher</li> <li>• Classroom</li> <li>• Peers</li> </ul>
<b>Mesosystem</b>	The interactions between two or more microsystems. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction between young person’s school and parents in a parent teacher meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Exosystem</b>	The interactions between two or more systems one of which does not usually include the young person but which can have an indirect effect on them. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young person’s parent and their place of work e.g. if a parent works anti-social hours this could have an effect on the young person.</li> <li>• Local community e.g. interaction between the local community development committee and local government could determine the services available to young people.</li> <li>• Friends of the young person’s parents and their interaction.</li> </ul>
<b>Macrosystem</b>	The overarching norms, belief systems and ideologies which permeate through the systems in the ecology. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Norms</li> <li>• Social Norms</li> <li>• Policy and Legislation</li> </ul>
<b>Chronosystem</b>	Significant event occurring at a particular period in someone’s life.

Mentoring, as an intervention used in the youth justice system, can be seen to fit in the ecological systems context. In this, ‘reciprocal interaction’ which forms a key component of the theory can be seen to exist in the interaction between a mentor and mentee, where the presence of a mentor in the life of a young person has been shown to lead to positive feelings and outcomes. Furthermore, a link can be drawn to the idea of proximal processes which are defined by Bronfenbrenner (1994, p. 38) as ‘enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment’ of the young person, where mentoring has been shown in previous research to produce positive outcomes over longer periods of time.

A clear link can be drawn between this theoretical framework, which highlights the contextual nature of development, and the qualitative nature of this research which, through the collection of stakeholder perspectives, effectively seeks to understand the perceived benefits of the mentoring intervention and its place in the interactions between those people who participate in it and the wider society in which they live.

As the focus of this project is on the place of mentoring in the lives of young people who have become involved in crime, the issue of risk and mentoring will also be of importance in the theoretical framework. In this, the risk factors which may influence a young person’s participation in crime will be examined in light of the Ecological Systems Theory. This will allow for a clearer picture to be developed of mentoring as an intervention in the lives of the young person, how this mentoring relationship interacts with the other processes at work in the young person’s life while also viewing this in the context of the presence of risk and the possible development of protective factors against in the life of the young person through mentoring.

### **1.3 Research Aims, Key Research Questions and Objectives**

This study aims to explore the value of a youth mentoring intervention for young people who are involved or are at-risk of involvement in the youth justice system, through the perspectives of those who participate in it. The key research questions which guide the work of this research project are:

- Is mentoring a valuable intervention for young people involved with the youth justice system?

- What are the benefits and challenges associated with this approach?
- Is this a model that is worthy of wider implementation?
- What considerations should guide future evaluations of the model?
- How can this youth mentoring intervention be understood in the context of the young people's social ecologies?

Arising from these research questions, the following objectives were also developed. These are:

- To undertake detailed semi-structured interviews with the young people, their mentors and programme staff regarding their experiences with this intervention, in terms of expectations, programme delivery and perceived outcomes
- To assess the perceived benefits and challenges associated with the provision of youth mentoring in the context of youth justice systems and to make recommendations for future delivery and evaluation of this approach.
- To explore the perceived value of the youth mentoring intervention from the perspectives of key stakeholders.
- To consider the findings of the study in relation to relevant theory in the context of youth crime, deviance and mentoring interventions.
- To understand and theorise this youth mentoring intervention in the context of the young person's social ecology.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

In line with this study's aims and objectives, this research is qualitative in nature. The central research question, to explore the perceived value of youth mentoring in the youth justice context, is addressed through the use of one-to-one semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the intervention. In order to develop a greater understanding of the processes involved in the intervention and the associated benefits and challenges a broad range of perspectives are included, with 46 interviews being carried out with 41 stakeholders. This includes 12 young people, 15 mentors, 5 BBBS Project Officers, 5 GYDP youth justice workers, 2 BBBS Senior Youth Officers and 2 Juvenile Liaison Officers. The inclusion of the young people's perspectives is of particular importance to this study as young people, like adults, have a capacity for

action and are directly impacted by social issues, norms and beliefs (Christensen and Prout, 2005). In this, it could be said that the real impact of an intervention is best understood through the thoughts and perceptions of the intended beneficiaries.

The project adopts a case-study design, which allows for the ‘intensive examination’ of a particular case or setting (Bryman, 2012). In this case the overall operation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme in conjunction with Garda Youth Diversion Projects in Ireland is explored along with the particular perspectives and experiences shared by the participants in the study. This, along with the ecological systems framework which underpins this project, creates a strong context through which the stakeholders’ perceptions of youth mentoring can be analysed and understood.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter one of this thesis presents the study background, the underpinning theoretical framework and the research aims and objectives which guide the study. Chapter two then highlights the theoretical perspectives on deviance, social bonds theory and the risk and protective factors which can influence a young person’s involvement in offending behaviour. The legislative and policy context of youth crime and justice in Ireland is also explored. Chapter three details the history of youth mentoring through to the forms in which it exists today. The benefits and challenges involved in youth mentoring are discussed and the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme and the contexts in which it exists in Ireland are detailed. Chapter four outlines the methodology which guides this study, including the theoretical and practical considerations in developing the research design and carrying out data analysis. Chapter five provides contextual information for the study and outlines the role of the GYDPs in the context of the Irish youth justice system. It also details the processes and procedures involved in the organisation of the BBBS-GYDP programme. Chapter six presents the findings of the study which emerged from the perspectives of the stakeholders in relation to the expectations and benefits of the mentoring programme. Chapter seven details the findings in relation to the challenges experienced by stakeholders as part of BBBS-GYDP. Chapter eight presents a discussion of the benefits and challenges of the mentoring intervention in line with literature in this area. It explores the theoretical basis for the mentoring intervention including a discussion

surrounding the place of the BBBS-GYDP youth mentoring programme in the young person's ecology while considering the influence which this programme can have on the risk and protective factors for a young person's involvement in crime. This is also considered in terms of the social bonds theory of deviance and crime.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the overarching aims of the project along with the research questions which guide the process. It has presented the rationale for the project accompanied by an introductory account of the existing literature in the area of deviance, youth justice and mentoring. The underlying theoretical framework has been considered. The structure of this thesis has also been outlined.

## **Chapter Two**

### ***Youth Deviance, Crime and Justice***

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In order to address the key research questions in this study and to develop an understanding of the context in which the BBBS-GYDP programme exists, this chapter begins by presenting the theoretical perspectives on deviance. It also outlines how the concept of social bonds theory links with the theoretical framework of this study. The legislation and policy framework surrounding youth in Ireland is explored, while the approach to youth crime and justice in Ireland is detailed including an outline of the preventative approach to youth crime which has developed nationally over the past twenty years. Literature critiquing approaches to youth justice and crime are also explored.

#### **2.2 Deviance**

The rates of crime, and more particularly crimes committed by young people, has been an issue of constant concern in societies internationally over the past number of centuries (Hendrick, 2015). Media and news reports often present the view that rates of crime are ever increasing, with crimes committed by young people being of particular concern (Muncie, 2015). In the public arena the idea of youth is often associated with delinquency and assumptions are made that young people participating in crime will become career criminals (Ibid.). While it is acknowledged that offending often begins in adolescence, with crimes such as robbery or drug related offences, and peaks in later adolescence it is also posited that after this rates of crime reduce rapidly (Maruna et al, 2015; Smith 2007). Rates of crime have been shown to reduce with age (Smith, 2007; Corr, 2014), with as much as 85 per cent of young people who participated in crime desisting when they reach adulthood (Maruna et al, 2015). In light of these perceptions of crime, a wide range of scholarship surrounding deviance, crime and justice has emerged along with an increased focus by policy makers on cause, reduction and prevention in the area of crime and youth crime more particularly.

From a sociological perspective, the concepts of deviance and crime can be understood as highly contextual, acquiring meaning at a societal level and as a result of the natural interaction occurring between all elements of society. From these interactions, norms emerge which not only regulate people's behaviour but are also regulated by people's behaviour. In its broadest sense, deviance can be understood as the 'violation' (p. 582) of the norms in operation in society, where a person or people's behaviour is seen as being in direct opposition to that which is considered acceptable in a particular society (Macionis and Plummer, 2012). Crime or criminal behaviour can be seen to be a particular type of deviance or deviation from a particular norm, in this case the norm of legislation as implemented by the justice system in a particular society (Ibid.). Of course, the concept of deviance is not confined to crime and can be seen in various areas of society, but the distinction here is that deviation from social norms which are further solidified by law (as in the case of crime), take on a particular significance in the functioning of society and the reproduction of its cultural norms as a result of the formal regulation of these norms.

Criminal regulation is evident in almost all aspects of society, as a means of protecting those who conform to the norms of society from those who deviate from them, while also protecting social order from the negative consequences of this deviance (Hendrick, 2015). Of course, it also attempts to stop the criminal behaviour, though the way in which this is done is also relative to the society in which it occurs. Hendrick (2015), argues that the ways in which crime is viewed by and dealt with in society has changed over the past two hundred years as perceptions of crime have changed. Theories surrounding crime and its causes have emerged from this and debate surrounding the best ways to identify the causes of crime is on-going today (Downes and Rock, 2011).

A great deal of research and a number of theories have emerged with regard to understanding deviance, its roots in society and ways in which this behaviour can be reduced. There is a classical school of thought surrounding deviance and crime which sees crime as a 'rational choice' on the part of the individual (Macionis and Plummer, 2012). Theorists, particularly during the Enlightenment period, recognised crime as actions resulting from the individuals inherent need to 'maximise their gains' matched with a belief that there would be little or no punishment as a result of them doing so

(Ibid, p. 602). In other words it is believed that people seek to achieve their wants and needs through the easiest means possible, even crime, where they are relatively certain that they will profit without facing any consequences (Clinard and Meier, 2011, p. 96). The measures which were theorised to be the antidote to this behaviour were punishments which were proportional to the crime (Ibid.; Macionis and Plummer, 2012).

Similarly, the individual positivist approach to criminal behaviour focuses on a scientific, biological analysis of the individual's tendency towards crime, as theorised by Cesare Lombroso in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Macionis and Plummer, 2012, p. 603; Muncie, 2015, p. 85). In this, a connection was drawn between the physical characteristics and personality traits of an individual and their tendency towards criminal behaviour. Lombroso, in this vein, associated features such as a thick skull, 'large jaws' (Muncie, 2015, p. 85) and 'laziness' (Lombroso, 1911 cited in Muncie, 2015), amongst many others, as characteristics which marked out those people who had a capacity to break the law. Interestingly this view, in some ways, takes the onus away from the individual in relation to their behaviour. There is a sense of the individual's behaviour as being out of his or her control, while the societal factors which may influence behaviour in some way are not addressed (Macionis and Plummer, 2012). While, of course, today it has been shown that there is no correlation between physical attributes and criminal tendencies, the approach which was taken to counteract the criminal tendencies at the time of these 'discoveries' was treatment based action (Muncie, 2015).

These theories, though novel for their time, focused particularly on the individual and their particular characteristics or tendencies as a means towards deciphering criminal behaviour. Both the classical and positivist schools failed to consider the presence of external factors such as poverty, inequality or educational attainment as having any bearing on a person's behaviour in general, criminal or otherwise. Functionalism and the associated social foundations of deviance, contrastingly, highlights the highly contextual nature of crime and its occurrence in society (Macionis and Plummer, 2012). Though it remains highly controversial in the circles of criminology, it can be used as a means towards understanding crime and deviance in a more holistic manner.

The work of Émile Durkheim can be seen to be the bedrock on which this functionalist theory was built. In his work he put forward the notion that, far from being detrimental, crime in fact served an important purpose in the organisation of society (Macionis and Plummer, p. 605). He proposed that it was by virtue of the fact that crime, or perhaps what people perceived to be crime, existed that people knew how to behave in society. As such, without deviance there could be no understanding of, or adherence to, the norms established by society. Further, he theorised that crime encouraged social cohesion and argued that crime and criminal behaviour provided a common purpose against which communities could unite (Ibid). In this sense communities were brought together in a situation where morals were shared and change could occur, albeit inadvertently, as a result of the interactions and development of those within society (Ibid.). This functionalist perspective was then adapted by various authors and, as mentioned by Downes and Rock (2007, pp. 75-77), varying views were developed and some contentious debates ensued. While the idea of functionalism may be deemed as somewhat extreme and, as mentioned, controversial, its association with the idea of the social foundations of deviance and crime, has been furthered by many in the field of criminology today.

It can be seen that functionalism, in some ways, draws on the idea of crime as a social construction, where the interaction between different levels of society leads to particular behaviours and actions. As mentioned by Downes and Rock (2007, p. 76) the main principle of functionalism is that ‘societies can...be treated as systems whose parts...should be examined not in isolation but in terms of their interrelationships and...their contribution to society in general’. Extending Durkheim’s theory that crime exists for a purpose, with the notion of social constructionism, the purpose of crime and what constitutes criminal behaviour is highly contextual and develops as a result of the various interactions and systems at play in a particular society. More precisely, it can be said that the perceptions of deviance and crime are constructed by the society in which they exist and as such can differ across societies in relation to the cultural and social norms in the time in which they exist (Macionis and Plummer, 2012).

As such, the definitions of delinquency have been addressed, but what leads to involvement in delinquent behaviour? In his work *Causes of Delinquency*, Hirschi (2002) posited a social bonds theory of involvement in deviance which built upon the

work of Bowlby (Blechman and Bopp, 2005). This theory focuses on human nature as the root of deviant behaviour. Hirschi (2002) asserts that individuals possess an inherent tendency towards deviance and the question to be asked in understanding deviance is not what makes a person engage in deviance but what stops them. This brings into question the issue of control and how it influences a person's involvement in negative behaviour or crime. He argued that what inhibits the individual from engaging in such behaviour is their *bonds* to society, the values it possesses and the institutions within it (Pratt et al, 2010). According to social bonds theory, it is when an individual's bonds to society are weak that they engage in negative behaviour, or behaviour which is deemed to be in contrast to social norms.

There are four elements which form this bond. These are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Hirschi, 2002, pp. 16-26). Hirschi (2002) acknowledges the existence of social norms and their role in controlling a person's behaviour, but with the idea of attachment in mind, it is not the norms themselves but the *attachment* that a person feels to the norms which influences behaviour. This sense of attachment can exist with a variety of social actors including family members, friends, teachers and others in the community (Blechman and Bopp, 2005). The morals which society constructs have little effect on the behaviour of a person who feels a lack of attachment to others in society. Similarly, the level of *commitment* which a person has to 'conventional behaviour' (Hirschi, 2002, p. 20) and their associated position in society controls their behaviour. If completing an action puts their status, possessions and future position in society in jeopardy a person with strong social bonds would avoid the action. Those with weak bonds to society may not consider these consequences in the same way and engage in deviant behaviour regardless. *Involvement* focuses on the belief that a person who is heavily involved in society and its associated conventional activities and interactions does not have time to become involved in deviant behaviour. Hirschi notes that this is the reasoning behind engaging young people in youth programmes which will encourage them to use their time for conventional activities and avoid deviant behaviour. *Belief* forms the final element of the social bonds theory. This proposes that it is the extent to which the individual believes in the norms held by society that controls their behaviour. If the person who has shown deviant behaviour holds different values than those held by society as whole, then that is their reason or rationale for the behaviour, they have different values than what is

considered conventional. It is clear, then, that the interactions a person has with society and the associated social actors influences the bonds which they hold with society. These bonds then determine the individual's attitude towards the norms which exist through these interactions and the behaviour which the person engages in, in response to this.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory will be drawn upon in order to develop a clearer picture of how this area of social construction and social bonds theory relates to youth crime. The systems theory, at its core, emphasises the place of interactions between the systems which exist in the life of a young person and how these influence the development and actions of the individual. From this, the risk and protective factors which may influence a young person's participation in crime will be examined in light of the ecological systems and social bonds theory.

### **2.3 Common Pathways that Lead to Youth Crime and Deviance**

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development and the social construction perspective of crime, the presence of crime and deviance in society can be understood as emerging from the interaction between the individual and different levels of society. It is these interactions, the context in which they arise and the nature of their presence in a young person's life which can lead to the young person becoming involved in crime. Society and the young person's interaction with it produces risk factors which may increase the possibility of these young people becoming involved in criminal activity (Shader, 2004). Literature in this area has highlighted how children who are exposed to a greater number of risk factors on the level of the individual, peers, family and in the wider social sphere are more likely to become involved in anti-social and offending behaviour and experience social problems in later life (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2005; Arthur, 2010; France, 2008). In light of the social bonds theory it could be said that these risk factors may weaken the bond which a young person has with their society and as such increase the risk of deviance and criminal behaviour.

Of course, not all young people who experience these risk factors will become involved in crime. The existence of protective factors in the life of a young person

have been noted as ‘moderat[ing] the effects of exposure to risk’ (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2005) and by strengthening these protective factors it is posited that one can ‘decrease the potential harmful effect of a risk factor’ (youth.gov, no date). These protective factors, like risk, can exist at the individual, peer, family and community levels and, in the context of deviance and crime, can reduce the likelihood of offending (Ibid.).

Through the lens of the ecological systems theory, risk and protective factors which have been identified in relation to youth crime and deviance, particularly at the level of the individual and microsystem, will be explored.

**Table 2: Risk and Protective Factors for Involvement in Youth Crime**

(Table adapted from Youth.gov, *Risk and Protective factors*, no date)

<b>Risk Factors</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early antisocial behavior and emotional factors such as low behavioral inhibitions</li> <li>• Poor cognitive development</li> <li>• Hyperactivity</li> </ul>	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High IQ</li> <li>• Positive social skills</li> <li>• Willingness to please adults</li> <li>• Religious and club affiliations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate or inappropriate child rearing practices</li> <li>• Home discord</li> <li>• Maltreatment and abuse</li> <li>• Large family size</li> <li>• Parental antisocial history</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Exposure to repeated family violence</li> <li>• Divorce</li> <li>• Parental psychopathology</li> <li>• Teenage parenthood</li> </ul>	Family  Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in shared activities between youth and family (including siblings and parents)</li> <li>• Providing the forum to discuss problems and issues with parents</li> <li>• Availability of economic and other resources to expose youth to multiple experiences</li> <li>• The presence of a positive adult (ally) in the family to mentor and be supportive</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high level of parent-child conflict</li> <li>• A low level of positive parental involvement</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending time with peers who engage in delinquent or risky behavior</li> <li>• Gang involvement</li> <li>• Less exposure to positive social opportunities because of bullying and rejection</li> </ul>	<p>Peer  Microsystem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and healthy friends to associate with</li> <li>• Engagement in healthy and safe activities with peers during leisure time (e.g., clubs, sports, other recreation)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor academic performance</li> <li>• Enrollment in schools that are unsafe and fail to address the academic and social and emotional needs of children and youth</li> <li>• Low commitment to school</li> <li>• Low educational aspirations</li> <li>• Poor motivation</li> <li>• Living in an impoverished neighborhood</li> <li>• Social disorganization in the community in which the youth lives</li> <li>• High crime neighborhoods</li> </ul>	<p>School/Community  Microsystem and Mesosystem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment in schools that address not only the academic needs of youth but also their social and emotional needs and learning</li> <li>• Schools that provide a safe environment</li> <li>• A community and neighborhood that promote and foster healthy activities</li> </ul>

### **2.3.1 Risk Factors**

An analysis of 96 Garda Youth Diversion Projects in Ireland undertaken by the Irish Youth Justice Service identified verbal and physical aggression, impulsivity, lower levels of social and emotional reasoning as risk factors for involvement in crime at the individual level (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009). This is reflected by Farrington (1994 & 2007 cited in Muncie, 2015) and Corr (2014) who noted impulsivity as a significant risk factor for involvement in crime. As highlighted in Table 2, hyperactivity and low behavioural inhibitions are highlighted as risk factors. Substance use (Corr, 2014) and attention problems (Farrington cited in Muncie, 2015) have also been identified as individual risk factors associated with an increased likelihood of offending. In the context of youth development, these factors are understood to be issues in and of themselves, while in the context of youth and crime, it is often when these issues are combined with other factors, such as familial problems and negative peer influence, that they begin to develop into particular risk factors for deviance and crime (IYJS, 2009).

Risk factors have been identified at the level of the parents and close family, peers and schools (Arthur, 2010; youth.gov, no date; Farrington, 1994, 2007 cited in Muncie, 2015). These are located in the microsystem of the young person and can be seen to have a direct influence on young people, their behaviour and risk of crime and deviance. With regard to familial factors, large family size (Muncie, 2015), maltreatment, abuse and/or neglect (Arthur, 2010) the involvement of a close family member in the criminal justice system or their incarceration (IYJS, 2009; Farrington & Welsh, 2007), parental drug use (Thornton & William, 2016) and the lack of a positive relationship with either or both parents (Arthur, 2010) are all identified as risk factors. As noted in Table 2 divorce within the family and general home discord are noted as risk factors for involvement in crime.

With regard to peer influences, interaction with older friends who engage in negative behaviour is considered a risk factor at this level of the ecology (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Williams and Thornton, 2016) as is involvement in gangs and exclusion from opportunities due to bullying which is highlighted in the table above (youth.gov, no date). In the school setting, risk factors for deviance and crime include low school

attendance, attainment and performance and lack of motivation (IYJS, 2009) as is the attendance at a school which does not adequately provide for the needs of the young person (youth.gov, no date). At a community level, tolerance towards risk behaviours such as drug use and anti-social activity within the locality has been identified as risk factors (IYJS, 2009) as has general social disorganisation within with the community (See Table 2). Similarly a lack of activities and resources available to the community were highlighted (Margo and Stevens, 2008).

Familial socio-economic disadvantage has been highlighted as a risk factor for youth involvement in crime (White and Cunneen, 2015). As mentioned by Farrington and Welsh (2007), in a longitudinal study of the risk of delinquency which took place in Boston and Massachusetts, factors which are linked with low socio-economic status such as 'low family income' and 'poor housing' were connected to youth offending and offending in later life (p. 78). These are issues which can be considered in line with the microsystem where they have a direct influence on the young person through availability, or lack of, monetary resources. These issues are also significant across mesosystem and exosystem and can indirectly affect the development of risk factors in a young person's life. For example, Keegan Eamon (2001) posits that at the mesosystem level, poverty and disadvantage may negatively affect parenting practices and lead to challenges in a young person's socioemotional development and behaviour in general, both of which are risk factors for crime. Similarly, at the exosystem level living in an area of socio-economic disadvantage where there is a lack of resources made available to local communities and few participation procedures may indirectly have a negative affect the young person's social and emotional development (Keegan Eamon, 2001).

In the context of the macrosystem of the young person's ecology authors relate risk factors to the issue of social class, its interplay with other aspects of society and the way this influences and interacts with the other systems in a person's ecology. Hendrick (2015) notes that theorists in this area recognise youth crime as 'a matter of *both class and age relations*' and posit that social class is intrinsically linked to all aspects of society and is influenced by social values and norms, ideologies, policies and legislation.

### **2.3.2 Protective Factors**

Protective factors, as mentioned previously can serve to moderate the risk factors which exist in a young person's life. The way in which these protective factors present themselves in a young person's life is evident at varying levels including the individual, family, peer and community.

Protective factors which are noted as moderating the risk of youth crime at the individual level have been identified as the young person having a high IQ, positive social skills and a willingness to please adults (youth.gov, no date). This is mirrored by Farrington and Welsh (2007) who note high intelligence as being a protective factor. Low levels of dishonesty and the expression of empathy with others have also been noted as protective factors (Farrington and Ttofi, 2011, cited in Farrington et al, 2016). A higher sense of self-esteem was also noted as having an impact on risk of offending (Thornton and Williams, 2016).

At the familial level Farrington and Ttofi (2011 cited in Farrington et al, 2016) note parental supervision and small family size as being protective factors against involvement in crime. The existence of a positive relationship between the young person and his or her parents has also been noted (Margo and Stevens, 2008) as has the availability of resources to parents which can then be used to support the young person and encourage positive activities (youth.gov, no date).

In relation to school and education, the focus and quality of schools have been noted as protective factors (IYJS, 2009; Farrington and Welsh, 2007). Active engagement in the school experience and motivation to do so have also been highlighted as protective factors (Margo and Stevens, 2008). Engaging in positive relationships with peers was also noted as a protective factor (Ibid). At the community level, the availability of resources which encourage positive experience and interaction and the young person's engagement with these is posited as a protective factor against crime and deviance. These can include sports and other activities which involve goal achievement and skill development (Ibid.).

## **2.4 Policy and legislative framework surrounding children and young people in Ireland**

With the population of young people between the ages of 0 and 24 in Ireland being estimated to stand at just over 33% in 2016, it is clear that young people hold a considerable stake in the organisation of Irish society (Central Statistics Office, 2016). An increased emphasis on youth research in Ireland has, in recent years, allowed for the development of a greater insight into the lives of Irish young people. With large-scale longitudinal studies such as the *Growing Up in Ireland* study being undertaken which, through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, essentially depict the lifecourse of a young person from birth to young adulthood, we are now able to delve even deeper into patterns of youth development in the Irish context (Williams et al., 2009, p. 17). Similarly, the *State of the Nation's Children* reports which have been published biennially since 2006, combine data from various sources regarding children in Ireland and provide an overall insight into the lives of children and young people today.

Along with this, a greater emphasis has been placed on the inclusion of the opinions of youth regarding all aspects of society. Through consultations such as the *Being Young and Irish* (Lalor et al, 2012) consultation which sought the views of young people between the ages of 7 and 18 and the *Life of a Child and Young Person* report which arose as a result of a national consultation with those aged 17 to 26, there is now a greater repository of knowledge available detailing the place which young people believe they hold in Irish society. This has also led to an increased recognition of the voices of youth from all social, economic and cultural backgrounds, their views and vision of a better society and how they can play their part in making this vision a reality.

The rights and responsibilities in working with young people in Ireland are guided by a number of key pieces of legislation and policy. These include *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020*, the *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020* and the *Children Act 2001*. With the implementation of these documents, the landscape surrounding children and young people in Ireland, particularly in terms of policy, has developed and as such, a

conscious movement has been made in recent years towards making Ireland ‘one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family’ (Department of Children and Youth Affairs [DCYA], 2014).

*Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020* as a key policy document details the Irish Government’s commitments to the overall well-being and development of children and young people between the ages of 0 and 24 in Ireland, in the seven years between 2014 and 2020 (DCYA, 2014). The policy contains a number of focused goals and outcomes which not only encourage but require the collaboration of governmental departments, local government structures and external agencies in order to achieve the proposed outcomes. These outcomes aim for young people to:

1. be ‘active and healthy, with positive physical and mental well-being.’ (Ibid, p. xiv)
2. achieve ‘their full potential in all areas of learning and development.’ (Ibid.)
3. be ‘safe and protected from harm.’ (Ibid.)
4. be economically secure and have opportunities available to them. (Ibid.)
5. be ‘connected, respected and contributing to their world.’ (Ibid.)

As a policy, *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* involves three core components which, when fulfilled, aim to lead to the better outcomes, as listed above, for all children and young people in Ireland. These components are firstly the ‘transformational goals’, secondly the cross-governmental and interagency collaboration and finally the outcomes themselves. The combination of these elements are expected to act as a catalyst for change and drive the work of all stakeholders in the youth sector to improve the lives of youth in Ireland and maintain positive effects on into adulthood (DCYA, 2014).

### **2.4.1 Youth Strategy in Ireland**

As mentioned previously, there are a number of strategies currently being developed and implemented in Ireland which have been progressed in line with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, some of which have particular relevance to the context of this

research. These are the *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020* (DCYA, 2015) which will have an emphasis on outcomes for young people between the ages of 10 and 24, while *Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018* (Minister for Justice and Equality, 2013) focuses on targeting particular services towards young people who have become involved in crime (DCYA, 2014, p. 13).

The *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020*, draws on the outcomes identified in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy document and outlines the work to be done specifically in the area of services and supports provided for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 (DCYA, 2015, p. 8). Like that of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the *National Youth Strategy* seeks to make it possible for young people to ‘realise their maximum potential’ (Ibid., p. 8) through the provision of supports and services for young people and their families, schools and youth organisations. As a strategy, it extends to all young people in Ireland including those who are deemed to be at-risk and who have perhaps experienced difficulty in various aspects of their lives (Ibid., p. 8). The strategy recognises that the years between the ages of 10 and 24 are particularly important with a number of transitions occurring in the life of the young person at this time. The aims in the strategy extend to include initiatives to be implemented in primary, secondary and alternative forms of schooling along with external organisations with the aim of reaching all ages of young people (Ibid., pp. 23-33). These initiatives range from a focus on positive mental and physical health to the increased participation of young people in society.

*Tackling Youth Crime* is a particular strategy which highlights the change in discourse from punishment to prevention in the area of youth justice and youth crime. This strategy, while connected to the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy also stems from the *National Youth Justice Strategy, 2008-2010*, which was introduced as a guide and support for those working in the justice system in dealing with youth crime and those young people who were seen to require focused attention as a result of their offending behaviour (Minister for Justice and Equality, 2013).

All services and systems which have a youth focus have a connection to and are guided by the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy and its emergent strategies. This is evident across contexts and can be seen to be at work in youth organisations such as

Foróige or in programmes focused on addressing issues surrounding youth such as GYDPs. As such, while the ethos of youth organisations such as that of Foróige and programmes such as GYDPs originated in an effort to make services and supports available to young people and encourage positive development and a sense of citizenship, these features have now become firmly consolidated in the Irish context through the implementation of these policies, strategies and legislation.

The *Children Act 2001* is very closely connected to the previously discussed issue of youth crime and the *Tackling Youth Crime* strategy. This Act and its subsequent amendment in 2006, is the legislative framework guiding all actions taken in the area of youth crime and justice. It is from this Act that the Garda Youth Diversion Programme was given statutory footing and as a result allowed for the Garda Youth Diversion Projects to be developed. This will be further discussed in subsequent sections.

## **2.5 Youth Crime and Justice in Ireland**

### **2.5.1 History of Youth Crime and Justice in Ireland**

Historically, the approach taken towards youth justice in Ireland was governed by the Children Act 1908 (Lalor et al., 2007). Otherwise known as the Children's Charter, the 1908 Act was introduced in Ireland before the Irish State had been established as an independent entity (Powell et al., 2012). At this time, the age of criminal responsibility was seven years of age. Though the Act adopted a punitive approach in many cases, for example, reformatory and industrial schools were maintained under the act as methods of detention and punishment (Kilkelly, p. 200), it also made movements towards a more preventative perspective of youth justice and an increased understanding of the rights of young people in the eyes of the law (Ibid, p. 14). According to Kilkelly (2006), the Act represented an understanding of the importance of limiting custodial sentences and reducing the exposure of young people to the 'full power of the criminal justice system' (p. 25). A number of the sanctions implemented today through the *Children Act 2001* are rooted in those first implemented in the 1908 Act (Ibid., p. 25). For example, placing a young person who has been found guilty of

a crime under the supervision of a Probation Officer was implemented as a sanction under the Children Act 1908.

### **2.5.2 Children Act 2001**

The Children Act 1908 remained in place until the development of the *Children Act 2001*. This Act was gradually implemented and fully came into effect in 2007. In addition, through the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, some aspects of the *Children Act 2001* were amended. The *Children Act 2001* and its associated amendment, signalled a change in the stance which the criminal justice system took towards youth crime.

Following a review of existing youth justice services by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Irish Youth Justice Service was established in 2005 (Lalor et al., 2007; Irish Youth Justice Service, no date). The purpose of the Irish Youth Justice Service, which exists as an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, is to manage the implementation of the *Children Act 2001* and manage the various components of the youth justice system including interventions and diversion (Minister for Justice and Equality, 2013).

An increasingly preventative approach to youth crime and justice was put in place through the *Children Act*. In terms of legislating for measures to be taken on issues of youth crime, the *Act* has taken an approach which primarily lies in diverting young people who have become involved in criminal activity away from repeat offending, while also attempting to prevent criminal offending in the first place. A greater emphasis has been placed on the welfare of the young person including support for families in helping to prevent young people from participating in crime and the provision of specific, targeted youth services to these young people (Powell et al, 2013).

The provision of services to reduce the risk of offending amongst young people has been undertaken in conjunction with the Youth Work Sector in Ireland. Powell et al. (2013) argue that there is an inherent link between the *Children Act 2001* and the *Youth Work Act* implemented in the same year. They highlight the historically reformative

nature of the youth work sector and the emphasis which youth work places on support and participation in one's own development. In addition, the *Children Act 2001* has been seen to take on this reformatory type of approach to youth justice, particularly with the provision by the Irish Youth Justice Service of diversionary and other services in helping to reduce instances of offending from the outset and future cases of recidivism. Further, one of the actions in the *Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018* is to 'promote integrated approaches to youth offending through cross-sectoral cooperation and goal sharing' (Minister for Justice and Equality, 2013, p. 14). While efforts have been made to this effect in various aspects of the justice service, this has been primarily addressed through the Garda Youth Diversion Programme.

### **2.5.3 Garda Youth Diversion Programme**

The Garda Youth Diversion Programme which seeks to divert young people who have been involved in crime from re-offending, though in existence since 1962 (Garda Youth Diversion Office, 2014), was first brought into the Irish statutory framework as a result of the enactment of the *Children Act 2001* (Kilkelly, 2011). The legislation and practices surrounding the Garda Diversion Programme and its associated Garda Youth Diversion Projects is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC] which was ratified in Ireland in 1991 (Kilkelly, 2011). In this, the CRC outlines measures which need to be taken to ensure the human rights of the child are honoured in all aspects of youth justice and, in doing so, extends to diversionary forms of youth justice (Ibid). In all matters of youth justice, the young person's right to have their case addressed with dignity is highlighted (Ibid, p. 135).

In terms of a young person becoming involved in the diversionary system in Ireland, the Garda Youth Diversion Programme is the first step in the process. The responsibility for involving young people in the Programme lies with the Juvenile Liaison Officer. At the level of the Diversion Programme, if young people are found to be involved in offending or are at-risk of offending behaviour, they may be cautioned by the Gardaí or the JLO either formally or informally. If the decision is made to issue the young person with a formal caution and the young person and their family accepts that, that person will then be in the Diversion Programme. This will usually include a period of supervision of the young person by the JLO. The JLO then

assesses the needs of the young person on the YLSCMI (Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory) scale and if the young person has needs which the JLO feels warrant their being involved in the Garda Youth Diversion Project, he or she will refer the young person to the local youth justice worker and GYDP.

Over the past number of years statistics released by An Garda Síochána have highlighted a yearly reduction in the numbers of young people who are accessing the Programme. In 2015, 9,807 young people were referred to the Diversion Programme compared to 9,991 in 2014, a reduction of 184 young people referred (Garda Community Relations Bureau, 2015). In 2015, of these 9,807, 7,282 were accepted into the programme (Ibid., p. 3).

The types of offences which led to these referrals included ‘theft and related offences which accounted for 28.6% of offences, public order offences which accounted for 22.7% of offences and ‘damage to property and the environment’ which accounted for 11.3% of offences. Further, 8.1% offences were classified as ‘attempts/threats to murder, assault, harassment’ while 6.7% were associated with burglary (Ibid., p. 20). Road and traffic offences accounted for 5.9% of the total number of offences, while offences associated with drugs made up 5.2%.

#### **2.5.4 Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

Garda Youth Diversion Projects, which were first developed in 1991, come under the umbrella of the Diversion Programme and are responsible for the provision of ‘community-based, multi-agency youth crime prevention initiatives’ (Community Programmes Unit, IYJS, 2011). Garda Youth Diversion Projects are organised through community-based organisations such Foróige, Crosscare and Youth Work Ireland (Brady and Canavan, 2016) and seek to provide locally based interventions which are designed by local Gardaí and youth justice workers to address particular crime patterns in an area (Ibid). In 2015, 4,093 young people participated in GYDPs across Ireland. Further detail on the operation of GYDPs will be provided in Chapter 5 Study Context.

### **2.5.5 Critiques of Youth Justice Policy Development**

While positive developments have been acknowledged in the area of youth justice such as the reformatory and diversionary approach to young people's offending, the changes in the Irish context have also been critiqued. These critiques identify possible weaknesses in the provision of youth justice services in Ireland when considered in line with existing policy, with some comparisons made between Irish and international systems of youth justice and diversion.

Arthur (2010) argues that in contrast to strengthening the child-centred, welfare based approach to issues of youth crime and justice advocated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child the implementation of Article 42a, the now Thirty-first Amendment, of the Irish Constitution serves to weaken the protection available to young people in court proceedings relating to their own behaviour. Speaking anticipatorily, he noted how the Article, which aims to 'affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights' of the young person in all areas of life, places the best interests of the child at the centre of court proceedings related to issues of adoption and guardianship. The child-centred approach in issues of youth crime is not included in this stipulation. He notes a similar level of disregard for the interests of young offenders in the *Children Act 2001* where the sanctions placed on the young person are not considered in isolation but must be considered in line with the best interests of the victim of the crime and society as a whole, discounting the Irish commitment to child-centred practice, policy and legislation (Arthur, 2010).

This critique regarding the lack of a child-centred approach is extended to the operation of targeted youth prevention services, such as GYDPs, in Ireland. Ilan (2010) notes in his ethnographic study of GYDPs that the youth justice system in Ireland as an interventionist model places societal values on the young person as opposed to considering the specific contexts of youth when dealing with issues of youth justice. He argues that the idea of correction underpins youth justice work in Ireland and notes that the implementation of youth justice processes 'may be focussed on the concerns and values of wider society as opposed to the predicament of particularly excluded young people' (Ibid, p. 37). To further this, Corr (2014) posits that this interventionist 'targeted crime reduction' can serve to 'stigmatize' young

people participating in such services and may lead to further marginalisation of young people. This sentiment is echoed by Kelly (2012) in her assessment of similar youth justice initiative in England. Literature (Ilan, 2010; Corr, 2014) also highlights the lack of recognition of young people's perceptions of and participation in youth justice. Ilan (2014) notes that this 'downwards' (p.26) enforcement of values not only fails to understand young people and their social contexts but may encourage young people to resist this imposition of these values and engage in behaviour which reflects the social norms and values placed on them as opposed to the behaviour which the justice system, at policy level at least, seeks to encourage (Kelly, 2012).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter detailed the different theoretical approaches to the issue of deviance and crime. The social construction perspective of crime, social bonds theory and the idea of risk and protective factors were emphasised and presented in line with the ecological systems theory, which underpins this study. The policy and legislative framework surrounding children and youth in Ireland were discussed as was the approach to youth crime and justice in the Irish context.

## **Chapter Three**

### ***Youth Mentoring***

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In order to develop an understanding of the central concepts underpinning this study, this chapter addresses the historical and contemporary contexts of mentoring, its links to social support and the reported benefits associated with mentoring for young people. It also describes the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme as it exists internationally and its development in Ireland through Foróige. Mentoring in the context of the Irish youth justice system, particularly through BBBS-GYDP is also discussed.

#### **3.2 The History of Youth Mentoring**

Over the past number of decades youth mentoring, which has come to be defined as a process whereby a caring, responsible, non-parental adult builds a relationship with a young person to provide guidance, support and act as an aid in personal development has taken a prominent place in the literature surrounding the positive development of young people (Dolan & Brady, 2012; DuBois and Karcher, 2005; Keller, 2007). Where today youth mentoring is seen as being an organised component of youth programmes and initiatives, as a term, mentoring can be seen to have its roots in the ancient Greek work of *The Odyssey* (Ragins & Kram, 2008, p. 3). In this work, Homer writes of Mentor, the guide and teacher, whom Odysseus employs to act as an adviser for his son Telemachus while Odysseus goes to war at Troy (Ibid.). Thus, though millennia have passed, the term ‘mentoring’ is still one which guides an understanding of what youth mentoring has come to be today.

Youth mentoring as a practice engaged in on a more formal basis can be seen to have its roots in early twentieth century America (Baker & Maguire, 2005). At this time, as a result of the economic and social change which was occurring, extreme poverty and child labour emerged as significant issues in urban American society (Ibid.). Along with, or perhaps because of, these conditions of poverty and child labour,

juvenile delinquency was also increasingly becoming an issue at the time (Ibid.). In the 1800s young people who had committed a crime were tried and convicted as adults and, as such, were subject to the same penalties. The combination of these factors were felt to be unjust, and spurred what came to be known as the ‘child saving’ movement in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Ibid.).

This movement was organised by groups of ‘reformers’ (Platt, 2009, p. 3) who sought to help those less fortunate in society and in doing so highlighted the roots and causes of delinquent behaviour at the time. These groups aimed to bring about change in this area by acting as a voice for the movement towards the development of a more suitable court system for young people (Baker and Maguire, 2005). As a result of the philanthropic work of the Chicago Women’s Club and other women who provided donations, the juvenile court system was established in America. The establishment of this court system allowed for issues of crime committed by young people to be dealt with separately to those of adults (Platt, 2009, p. 134). With this system came the hiring of the first probation officers, who as mentioned by Baker and Maguire (2005), could be seen in many ways to be the ‘first mentors of disadvantaged youth in America’ (p. 17). The role of the probation officer, in this sense, was an extension of the role of those altruistically minded people who had helped to establish the children’s court where they had acted as a guide and guardian for those young people in the court system (Baker and Maguire, 2005). From this, as the court system developed, so too did the need for an increased number of probation officers. As this became a more regulated practice, the time which the officers had to spend with the young people reduced and once again left a void where these young people lacked a supportive figure in their lives (Ibid.).

It was at this stage that mentoring programmes and practices began to be established in a form which resemble those of today. Groups of women and altruistic individuals organised programmes to support youth who were becoming involved in the juvenile courts and the idea of mentoring relationships between a responsible, caring, non-parental adult began to take hold (Ibid.). The first formal mentoring initiative developed from this in America in 1904 by Ernest Coulter, a court clerk who saw the need for the provision of a supportive figure in the lives of the young people he met through his work in the court. A call for volunteers in New York as and Cincinnati,

led to the development of the Big Brothers initiative (Ibid.), whereby an adult would act as a figure of guidance, support and care for a young person. Similarly, an initiative developed to mentor young girls going through the juvenile justice system was developed by the Ladies of Charity in New York. This group would later come to be known as the Catholic Big Sisters of New York (Big Brothers Big Sisters, *114 Years of History*). In 1977, the two groups amalgamated to form Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, forming one of the prominent youth mentoring organisations which has become an internationally recognised programme (Ibid.) and paved the way for the further development of formal mentoring programmes.

### **3.3 Mentoring Today**

The roots of mentoring as an intervention targeted at encouraging positive change in young people's lives continues to be seen today, focused around the presence of 'one good relationship with an adult' in the lives of youth (Spencer, 2007, p. 99). Mentoring exists in various forms and settings. As a programme, it can form a part of multiple intervention services made available by an organisation or as a stand-alone programme in itself (DuBois et al, 2002, pp. 158-159). Similarly, mentoring can take place on a one-to-one basis or as part of a group. The relationship can also be peer-based in that a young person is mentored by his or her contemporaries, particularly in the context of school-based mentoring or can be adult-to-youth based relationships (Blinn-Pike, 2007).

This review will focus primarily on the one-to-one, adult-to-youth mentoring relationship but literature relating to mentoring across the contexts in which it exists will be drawn upon in an effort to understand and highlight the overall benefits and challenges associated with mentoring. From this, two forms of mentoring can be seen to exist in the context of one-to-one mentoring relationships. These are formal and informal mentoring relationships (Dolan and Brady, 2012, p 11). While the aims and objectives of mentoring in each of these settings remains the same, that is, to pair or match a young person with a caring, adult mentor who provides a level of support to the young person, the organisation of such interventions and how they emerge is what differentiates them.

As mentioned by Dubois et al. (2002) in their meta-analysis of the effects of mentoring programmes, formal mentoring relationships arise out of matches organised through a particular programme or setting and can, depending on the context, have a specific aim for the match (p. 159). This type of match usually consists of an adult volunteer who is matched with a young person through a particular programme or project. In the context of formal mentoring there is regulation surrounding the match. For instance, Big Brothers Big Sisters is a prominent example of an internationally adopted youth mentoring programme which, in order to maintain high standards and a level of universality has a number of processes, including training manuals and other materials, to ensure best practices across its programmes and throughout its matches (Dolan et al, 2011, p. 7).

By contrast, informal or natural mentoring may be thought of as more of an organic process than formal mentoring as these relationships often arise naturally within the context of the young person's own social sphere (Spencer, 2007, p. 99). They do not form part of a programme or intervention and exist as a relationship in their own right. In these types of mentoring relationships, a mentor may be a relative, a teacher, sports coach or other adult who, through contact with the young person, has an impact on his or her life (Blinn-Pike, 2007, p. 166). In this, the mentor offers guidance to the young person in the context of their relationship whether that be in relation to particular goals which the young person seeks to achieve or in their general everyday life towards their own personal development (Spencer, 2007, p. 99).

Both forms of mentoring relationship can be seen to have associated benefits but both can also be met with various challenges. As mentioned by Blinn-Pike (2007), results of analyses of formal mentoring programmes and their associated benefits have been described as 'varied', 'scant' and 'non-consistent' (p. 169), and as such, care must be taken when addressing the extent of the benefits associated with such programmes. Similarly, though research in the area of mentoring has increased, gaps in information remain (Philip et al., 2004). Nonetheless, numerous studies have been conducted in this area to assess the role which mentoring has in relation to the development of positive 'assets' which as mentioned by Dolan and Brady (2012) 'increase the healthy development and well-being of adolescents and facilitate the successful transition from childhood' (p. 15). In this, mentoring has been shown to promote positive

attributes in young people which help them to overcome the risk factors which may be present in their lives and increase protective factors, many of which are linked with the idea of social support. Similarly, there are a number of factors which may influence the effectiveness of the mentoring intervention and the benefits accrued from participation in such a programme.

### **3.4 Proven Benefits of Youth Mentoring**

A number of studies have been carried out to ascertain the particular types of benefits which can be gained by youth through participation in mentoring programmes. Youth mentoring relationships and the presence of a mentor in the life of a young person have been associated with the positive social, emotional and behavioural development of the young person, a reduction in risk behaviours and can lead to more positive outcomes in areas of mental health and education (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006; Rhodes et al, 2006; Dubois et al, 2011; Schwartz et al, 2012).

With regards to the positive social, emotional and behavioural development of young people participating in mentoring programmes, the benefits of mentoring relationships have been linked to the idea of social support (Brady & Dolan, 2012; Barrera & Bonds, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006; Philip & Spratt, 2007). As Keating et al. (2002, p. 718) posits ‘there are many theoretical reasons to expect that mentorship will help troubled youth, mostly within a social support framework’. Social support, commonly associated with emotional, concrete, esteem and perceived support, has been linked to an increase in protective factors in the life of a young person such as resilience and enhanced coping abilities with supportive relationships acting as a buffer to stress (Dolan & Brady, 2011). Literature in the area of mentoring has examined this social support theory as a means of extending and shaping our understanding of mentoring as a practice.

Having somebody to talk to and share important personal information, mentors taking time to listen to their mentee and showing their mentee a level of care have all been associated with the provision of emotional support within the mentoring context (Dolan and Brady, 2012; Rhodes et al, 2006). Positive effects on the emotional well-being of the young person have been found to emerge from the supportive environment

which can be provided by the mentor (DuBois et al, 2011). In this, the presence of a mentor, may provide a ‘model of effective adult communication’ (Ibid, p. 62) and as such aid the young person in developing a level of understanding and control of their emotions. Tolan et al (2014), in their recent meta-analysis, found that mentoring programmes which emphasised ‘emotional support’ and ‘advocacy’ had stronger effects in the areas of substance use, aggression and education. Similarly, in the Randomised Control Trial of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ireland, it was found that those young people who experienced the support of a mentor had higher levels of hope than those without (Dolan et al, 2011). This has been linked by Dolan et al. (2011) to a growing body of research which posits that increased levels of hope in a young person may lead to decreased levels of emotional distress and higher levels of satisfaction (Ibid. p. 90).

Formal mentoring programmes have also been associated with the provision of support in the form of ‘practical acts of assistance’ or concrete support (Brady et al, 2015). The benefits of this type of support through mentoring have been associated with an improvement in young people’s educational attainment and attitude towards education. A recent study of the Le Chéile mentoring programme found that at the beginning of the mentoring programme, 48% of young people were not engaged in education at all (O’Dwyer, 2017). This figure reduced to 15% at the end of the programme. 50% of mentees attributed their change in attitude towards education to the mentoring programme. A number of young people who participated in the study mentioned particularly the practical help that their mentors had given them to get back into education or progress further in education (Ibid.). Similarly, Grossman and Tierney (1998) in their impact study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme found that those who participated in the mentoring programme were less likely to skip class, had higher grades and were more positive about their education than those in the control group.

Improvements in a young person’s sense of confidence and self-esteem have also been noted as benefits of mentoring and have been linked with the provision of esteem support which is described as the way in which a person shows affection and care to another (Brady et al, 2015). In the context of mentoring, this type of support is noted particularly where the young person feels they are held in high esteem by their mentor

(Dolan & Brady, 2012). Dubois et al (2011) in their meta-analysis of 73 mentoring studies found positive effects in relation to self-esteem. Spencer and Rhodes (2005) also highlight the link between the mentoring relationship and enhanced self-esteem and note the way in which improved self-esteem can lead to other positive effects for the young person including improved academic performance (p. 124).

The importance of a perceived sense of social support has also been noted in the literature (Bal et al, 2003). In this, the belief that support is available can have a similar positive effect for an individual as tangible support which they experience. The value of this perceived support has been noted even if it is the case that a supportive relationship does not exist (Dolan and Brady, 2012) and is also relevant in terms of understanding a young person's perception of mentoring. For example in a Randomised Control Trial of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ireland, it was found that young people being mentored showed an increase in perceived social support (Dolan et al. 2011). This was found not only in terms of the support offered by the mentor but also in an increased sense of support coming from parents, siblings and friends along with an improvement in these relationships (Ibid, p. 91). This is linked to findings in Grossman and Tierney's (1998) impact study where young people who were involved in the BBBS mentoring programme experienced more positive relationships with their peers. A similar effect was also found in the young people's relationships with their parents or guardians. DuBois et al's (2011) most recent meta-analysis surrounding the effectiveness of mentoring programmes for youth reiterates this. They highlight how the presence of a mentor in the life of a young person can lead to the development of better, more positive relationships for the young person with other adults.

In terms of the influence of mentoring on risk behaviours, an impact study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America mentoring programme found that mentored young people were almost 45.8% less likely to begin using drugs than those in the control group (Tierney et al., 2000, p. 22). Similarly, those young people who were matched with a mentor were 27.4% less likely than the control group to begin using alcohol (Tierney et al., 2000, p. 22). A similar finding was reported by Rhodes et al (2005) whereby reduction in youth's substance use was significantly associated with mentoring.

A study carried out in Washington in the United States by Herrera, DuBois and Grossman (2013) looked at how mentoring impacts on the lives of youth experiencing different levels of risk, including those at higher risk. Overall, the youth who participated in this study were deemed to be of higher risk in that they experienced a greater number of risk factors than average on a personal level or environmental level but all participants had not necessarily engaged in high risk behaviour such as crime or drug use (Ibid. p. 3). From this study it was found that, while mentored higher risk youth did not necessarily change their behaviour as a result of the intervention, they showed ‘fewer depressive symptoms’ compared to the comparison group (Ibid. p. 63). They also had better relations with their peers, improved academic performance and more positive attitudes towards their education (Ibid.). Interestingly, though generally mentoring seemed to have similar positive effects for youth across risk levels, those youth who experienced high levels of individual risk as opposed to environmental risk experienced a greater number of benefits across measures (Ibid., p. 65). Further to this, mentoring was shown to encourage the most ‘meaningful’ developments when the young person experienced one type of risk, that is, either individual or environmental (Ibid. p. 65).

### **3.5 Mentoring in the Context of Deviance and Youth Justice**

With regards to youth considered to be at high-risk, a recent meta-analysis of 46 studies of mentoring programmes (Tolan et al., 2014) has shown that mentoring has positive effects for young people at risk of delinquency in the areas of aggression, drug use and academic performance (Tolan et al., 2014, p. 198). In the Irish context, a recent study by Le Chéile reported an average of a 28% reduction in young people’s offending and anti-social behaviour over the course of their participation in the Le Chéile mentoring programme with 49% of mentors and co-ordinators attributing this reduction to the mentoring programme (O’Dwyer, 2017).

Similarly, an Australian study (Delaney and Milne, 2002) of the ‘One2One’ mentoring programme for young offenders, found that participants who had partaken in the mentoring intervention for six months or more reduced their offending while participating in the project. Improvements were reported by the young people themselves, their families and the authorities in terms of community involvement,

greater self-esteem and reduced offending (Ibid). In research carried out by Joliffe and Farrington (2007) for the Swedish Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), eighteen studies on the impact of mentoring interventions for young offenders or youth at risk of offending were examined. The findings of half of the studies reviewed indicated that participation in mentoring programmes reduced reoffending by between 4% and 10%.

An evaluation of a group of mentoring programmes entitled *Mentoring Plus* in the United Kingdom, focused predominantly on at-risk youth. The types of risk behaviours accounted for in this study included involvement in youth crime where 93% of the participants had been involved in crime at least once while, in the year preceding programme participation, the participant group were six times more likely to be involved in persistent crime than the comparison group (Shiner et al, 2004, p. 16). Other behaviours included drug use where 72% of the participants had used drugs previously in their lives (Ibid., p. 19). This evaluation found that during the year in which the mentoring programme was in operation, the numbers of young people who had been involved in persistent offending reduced by a third (Ibid., p. 61). Though similar reductions in offending behaviour were reported both by participating and non-participating youth it was posited in the study that programmes of this nature are inherently difficult to implement and as such, in line with the findings, youth risk and offending should not be considered an area where 'nothing works' (Ibid., p. 71).

### **3.6 Factors Which Influence the Effectiveness of Mentoring Interventions**

There are a number factors which influence the effectiveness of the mentoring intervention in promoting positive outcomes for young people (DuBois et al, 2002; DuBois et al, 2011; Rhodes & DuBois, 2006). Those which are most commonly addressed in the mentoring literature can be categorised under four broad headings. These are: the characteristics of the young person; the characteristics of the mentor; the features of the mentoring relationship and the organisation of the particular mentoring programme.

In relation to the characteristics of the young person, DuBois et al (2002), in their meta-analysis of the effectiveness of youth mentoring programmes, highlight the

background of the young person as an influencing factor. In their analysis, they recognised the fact that young people who were considered at-risk, particularly those experiencing lower levels of risk at an environmental level, derived greater benefits from mentoring programmes (p. 189). They qualified their view of ‘risk’, in this sense, to mean risks associated with their social sphere such as socio-economic disadvantage as opposed to risks at an individual level (Ibid., p. 190). Interestingly, DuBois et al. (2011), highlight a development in this area in particular where, in their most recent meta-analysis of 73 evaluations of mentoring programmes, mentoring interventions were found to have an increased positive impact on those young people experiencing individually based risk such as ‘academic failure’ (p. 76). Though they maintained that mentoring programmes prove most effective in cases where the young person is experiencing lower levels of environmentally based risk, it was found that mentoring programmes which were targeted at young people who were experiencing particular individual difficulties such as involvement in crime or ‘discipline problems’ displayed more positive effects than they had in their previous analysis nine years earlier (Ibid., p. 76). Similarly, both meta-analyses highlight the fact that young people who are exposed to lower levels of risk on both an individual and environmental level experience more positive effects as a result of the mentoring intervention (DuBois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011).

In relation to the characteristics of the mentoring relationship itself, the length of time for which a mentor is present in the life of a young person has been associated with the effectiveness of the mentoring intervention (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Spencer, 2006; Philip and Spratt, 2007). Similarly, the regularity of contact between the mentor and the mentee has been highlighted as an influential factor in what is perceived as effective mentoring (Keller, 2005, p. 90). While the longevity of the mentoring relationship has been identified as a key factor in promoting positive outcomes in youth mentoring, the quality of relationships also has a key role. In this, characteristics of the relationship such as closeness and a ‘strong emotional connection’ with a mentor (Spencer, 2006), have been highlighted as important factors. Similarly, as mentioned by Rhodes & DuBois (2006), a sense of trust is of distinct importance in a mentoring relationship. Further, in terms of the characteristics of the mentoring programme, it has been noted that the combination of mentoring interventions with other youth

programmes may be more effective (Philip & Spratt, 2007, p. 56; Tolan et al., 2014, p. 198).

While it is important to understand the benefits of mentoring for young people, it is also necessary to take the challenges involved in the provision of mentoring into account. A number of challenges have been identified throughout the mentoring literature.

Maintaining the quality of programmes has been identified as a key consideration in relation to youth mentoring (Miller, 2007) particularly with the increase in the number of mentoring programmes being made available to young people. In this, it has been highlighted that the maintenance of good practice across mentoring programmes is of utmost importance (Ibid. p. 307). Of course, in the sense that the contexts in which mentoring programmes are implemented and the purpose of these programmes may differ, the definition of best practice may be difficult to pinpoint. Care must be taken in all programmes to ensure that the mentoring programme brings no harm to the young person (Keller, 2007; Liabo et al., 2005). As an extension of this, the proper training of mentors, the maintenance of contact between the programme co-ordinator and mentor and consistent evaluation of the progress of mentoring matches are critical in developing and maintaining positive mentoring relationships between the young person and his or her mentor.

### **3.7 Youth Mentoring in Ireland**

Youth mentoring programmes are provided by a number of youth organisations and services in a range of contexts in Ireland. The Youth Advocacy Programme (YAP) provides a one-to-one mentoring service whereby paid adult mentors act as a support for youth who are deemed to be at a higher level of risk (Brady and Dolan, 2007). Le Chéile, a voluntary organisation established in line with the *Children Act 2001* provides a one-to-one youth mentoring for young people who are involved in the Probationary Service in Ireland (Henihan and Alexander, 2017). With regard to the focus of this study, BBBS-GYDP is organised and implemented by Foróige. In order to provide a contextual basis for later discussion in this study, this youth organisation, its affiliation with BBBS and the contexts in which it exists in Ireland will be detailed.

### **3.7.1 Foróige**

Foróige is a national youth organisation which was founded in 1952. Originally known as Macra na Tuaithe, it originated with a predominantly rural focus and became a youth branch of the rural community organisation Macra na Feirme (sons of the farm) (Foróige, 2002). As it developed, the scope of the work done by the organisation broadened to include youth from all backgrounds and, from this, Macra na Tuaithe became known as Foróige in 1981. This change highlighted the development of the organisation and promoted its inclusive nature with the view to encouraging young people from both rural and urban backgrounds to participate (Foróige, no date, b). Foróige, as a term, is an amalgamation of the Irish words Forbairt na hÓige meaning ‘the development of youth’ and as such highlights the overall objective of Foróige as an organisation (Foróige, 2002).

Since its inception as Macra na Tuaithe, Foróige has had a youth-centred approach to community and has taken on a particular role in organising extra-curricular youth activities. Having expanded to provide youth services across rural and urban Ireland, Foróige aims to provide young people with the opportunity to play a part in their own personal development as well as the development of their community as a whole (Foróige, 2002). Between volunteer-led youth clubs and staff-led projects, Foróige provides a wide range of programmes, projects and services to young people between the ages of 10 and 18 (and in some cases up to the age of 21) (Foróige, 2015, p. 8). These include local Foróige Clubs and Youth Cafés. Foróige also provides targeted projects aimed at those who are experiencing, or are at-risk of experiencing, particular issues such as substance abuse and involvement in crime. Many of the initiatives provided by Foróige are open to all young people while some, such as the targeted programmes, are only accessible through a referral process. These localised community initiatives, both general and targeted, often make a variety of programmes available to those young people who participate and can include programmes in the areas of citizenship and leadership, community and diversity, drug education and sexual education.

Operating in 26 counties across Ireland this youth organisation currently works with over 50,000 young people. Across all of the programmes made available to young

people through Foróige, there is an emphasis on personal development and participation in all aspects of their work (Dolan, 2006).

### **3.7.2 Big Brothers Big Sisters**

As mentioned previously, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) as a community-based mentoring programme, evolved in America from two separate mentoring initiatives developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Baker and Maguire, 2005, McGill, 1997). The initiatives sought to provide young people who were involved in the juvenile justice system with caring, adult guides (Platt, 2009). These novel initiatives, which had developed independently and expanded their efforts to working with youth outside of the sphere of juvenile justice, were amalgamated in 1977 to form Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the youth mentoring programme (McGill, 1997). Over a century on, the organisational aspects of the mentoring intervention may have taken a different form but the objective remains the same, that is to match a young person with a responsible, caring adult volunteer who will take on the role of providing social support in the life of a young person who may lack this in some aspects of their lives (Brady et al, 2005).

As a result of the amalgamation of services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America began to expand and has now developed programmes to provide mentoring services to children ‘facing adversity’ between the ages of 6 and 18 in a variety of contexts (Big Brother Big Sisters, c). This can include community-based mentoring, mentoring for those who come from military families, school-based mentoring, and mentoring for children with incarcerated parents (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, b). BBBS of America have also developed an initiative which sees matches being made between young people and members of the police force in America in a programme called ‘Bigs in Blue’ (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, a).

Today, Big Brothers Big Sisters programmes have reached all 50 states of America and in 1998 the organisation developed their international base through BBBS International (Dolan et al, 2011; McGill, 1997). From this, the programme has expanded by bringing this formal youth mentoring initiative to 14 other countries and

territories around the world including Ireland (Big Brothers Big Sisters International, b).

Big Brothers Big Sisters International functions on the basis that all Big Brothers Big Sisters programmes internationally are approved by the central organisation, given permission to use the BBBS logo and all International Affiliates are obliged to adhere to the regulations and practices implemented by BBBS International (Big Brothers Big Sisters International, 2014; Dolan et al, 2011). These practices include regulation surrounding case management, the recruitment of mentors, the engagement of young people in the programme and all associated actions within the programme (Big Brothers Big Sisters International, 2014). It is from this development of an international base that Big Brothers Big Sisters was translated to the Irish context and established itself as a mentoring intervention in Ireland.

### **3.7.3 Big Brothers Big Sisters in Ireland**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ireland is organised and operated through Foróige. Foróige became an 'International Affiliate' of Big Brothers Big Sisters in 2001 after the need for the development of a programme in the area of individual social support was recognised in their Neighbourhood Youth Projects (Dolan et al, 2011; Brady et al, 2005). Mentoring was highlighted as a possible option as a programme which would provide individual youth support. Research was carried out in the area of youth mentoring and the types of programmes available which matched the ethos and objectives of Foróige's work were identified (Brady et al, 2005). After a number of meetings with Big Brothers Big Sisters International personnel and the Executive Director of the programme, it was decided that Big Brothers Big Sisters was the correct programme to be adopted by Foróige as it fell in line with the values of the organisation, particularly in terms of the importance placed on volunteer-led youth work (Brady et al, 2005).

From this, Big Brothers Big Sisters was integrated into Foróige's programme of work in 2001. It began as a pilot programme and was funded by the HSE, which was then the Western Health Board (Ibid.). The pilot programme was implemented in 3 counties (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon) in the West of Ireland. As an intervention,

it has been adapted slightly to suit the Irish context and the work remit of Foróige. The age requirement for young people to become involved in BBBS Ireland is between the ages of 10 and 18 (Brady et al., 2005), as this is the age group which Foróige provides services for. This differs slightly from the American model which caters for young people between the ages of 6 and 18 (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, c). Like that of the American model, it was first implemented as a community-based programme and on the basis that all young people who were put forward for participation must be willing to participate. Similarly, there must be a level of need for the intervention for the young person to take part. This is considered on an individual basis in line with the young person's personal circumstances which may include issues such as cultural or economic disadvantage or low-self-esteem (Brady et al., 2005). Within the programme, volunteers and young people are matched for 12 months and meet weekly for one to hours during that year. Matches are made on a same-gender basis, i.e. males are paired with males and females are paired with females.

In 2005, the pilot BBBS programme was subject to an evaluation (Brady et al, 2005). This evaluation, in which 26 mentees and 29 mentors participated, showcased the implementation of the pilot programme and explored the attitudes and opinions of those who participated in it. The programme was identified by researchers as being well-suited to the Irish context, with mentors, mentees and staff, in a majority of cases, acknowledging the positive relationships that had been developed between the mentees and the mentors as a result of the programme (Ibid.). From this, the programme developed and in 2006 Foróige had made 160 BBBS matches between adult volunteers and young people (Dolan et al, 2011, p. 8).

In 2009 the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme in Ireland underwent a large-scale evaluation in the form of a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) (Dolan et al., 2011). The objectives of the study were three-fold. The RCT primarily sought to undertake a study of the impact of the programme on the development of youth over two years while also looking at 'programme implementation' (Ibid, p. 1) and the views of stakeholders with regard to the processes involved in the programme such as matching young people with mentors (Ibid.). To do this, the study compared young people between the ages of 10 and 14 who were members of Foróige and matched with a

mentor through the BBBS programme to those young people who were members of Foróige but were not matched with a mentor.

As a result of this study, it was found that those young people who were matched with a mentor showed higher levels of hope and had a greater feeling of support from adults than those who were not matched (Dolan et al. 2011). Similarly, parents of the matched young people highlighted a greater level of pro-social behaviour in their children (Ibid.). As such, the BBBS mentoring intervention provided by Foróige was shown to have a number of benefits in the Irish context and with its adherence to best practice protocols as assigned by BBBS International has broadened its scope and expanded its work to include the organisation of school-based mentoring programmes. Similarly, through their work in organising a number of Garda Youth Diversion Projects across Ireland, Foróige have also developed a BBBS programme in conjunction with the Irish Youth Justice Service in a programme known as Big Brothers Big Sisters – Garda Youth Diversion Projects. As a result, the numbers of young people participating in the range of BBBS programmes has increased. For example, in 2013 Foróige engaged 2,834 young people across their Big Brothers Big Sisters programmes. In this, 400 young people were participating in the community-based Big Brothers Big Sisters Programme, while 2,434 were participating in the school-based mentoring programme (BBBS Project Officer Personal Correspondence), signalling a large increase in participation from the 160 matches which had been made by 2006 (Dolan et al. 2011, p. 8).

### **3.7.4 Big Brothers Big Sisters-Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

While BBBS programmes which have a connection to juvenile justice are seen today as an extension and widening of the BBBS initiative, it is interesting to note that the history of BBBS is firmly rooted in the area of juvenile delinquency and youth justice. In this, it can be seen that through the provision of mentoring interventions for those young people who have become involved in, or are at-risk of becoming involved in youth crime, BBBS are extending the work of their founders.

The BBBS-GYDP programme which is the focus of this study, can be seen as a new iteration of the traditional BBBS focus on youth involvement in crime. Stemming

from the connection between the Irish Youth Justice Service, the Garda Youth Diversion Projects and Foróige this programme is targeted at those young people who have come in contact with the juvenile justice system. The programme seeks to match a young person who has been involved in crime or who is at-risk of becoming involved in crime, with a kind, caring adult. The aim, in line with the objectives of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, is to help young people move away from crime and recidivism. The details of the programme will be described in full in Chapter 5, Study Context.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter detailed the origins of youth mentoring and its development into a practice used across youth programmes today. The different forms of youth mentoring were discussed in line with the literature surrounding the benefits and challenges involved in youth mentoring. Mentoring as it exists in the youth justice context was also described. Mentoring as a programme and practice in Ireland was outlined, particularly the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme which operates through Foróige. An overview of the Big Brothers Bigs Sisters-Garda Youth Diversion Projects programme, which is the focus of this study, was also provided.

## **Chapter Four**

### ***Methodology***

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter and the chapters thereafter this research aims to explore the value of a mentoring intervention for young people in the context of the youth justice system in Ireland. This chapter will discuss the theoretical and practical considerations which were taken into account when developing the research design. It will also address the recruitment of participants along with the ethical issues which were of concern, particularly in recruiting young people to participate in this study.

#### **4.2 Purpose of the Research**

As mentioned previously mentoring programmes for youth considered to be at-risk have been shown to produce a range of positive outcomes. Studies have documented increases in young people's perceived sense of support and greater levels of self-esteem through participation in youth mentoring programmes (Dolan et al., 2011; Delaney and Milne, 2002). A reduction in the likelihood of uptake of alcohol and drug use, reduced chance of displaying acts of violence by hitting someone (Tierney and Grossman, 2000) and a reduction in offending (Shiner et al., 2004; Delaney and Milne, 2002; Joliffe and Farrington, 2007) are also examples of positive outcomes emerging from young people's participation in such programmes.

These studies highlight the advantages of the implementation of youth mentoring programmes in the case of at-risk and higher risk youth, but few document the particular perspectives of the young people and other stakeholders who have participated in the programmes. To address this gap in knowledge, this project focused on developing an in-depth understanding of the perceived value of the BBBS mentoring programme in the context of the youth justice system in Ireland through the exploration of stakeholder perspectives, particularly around the benefits and challenges associated with the programme. To do this, a qualitative approach to the exploration of the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme was adopted in this study.

This study came about as result of a funding application to the Irish Research Council through the Enterprise Partnership Scheme and was conducted as part of a partnership approach between Foróige and the National University of Ireland. The work of the researcher was overseen by an Academic Supervisor based in NUI Galway and an Enterprise Mentor based in Foróige.

#### **4.2.1 Research Questions**

This study aims to explore the value of a youth mentoring intervention for young people who are involved or are at-risk of involvement in the youth justice system, through the perspectives of those who participate in it. The following research questions were developed to guide this research process.

- Is mentoring a valuable intervention for young people involved with the youth justice system?
- What are the benefits and challenges associated with this approach?
- Is this a model that is worthy of wider implementation?
- What considerations should guide future evaluations of the model?

Arising from these research questions, the following objectives were also developed.

- To undertake a case study of how the BBBS youth mentoring programme is provided in the context of Garda Youth Diversion in Ireland.
- To undertake detailed semi-structured interviews with the young people, their mentors and programme staff regarding their experiences with this intervention, in terms of expectations, programme delivery and perceived outcomes.
- To explore the perceived value of the youth mentoring intervention from the perspectives of key stakeholders.
- To assess the perceived benefits and challenges associated with the provision of youth mentoring in the context of youth justice systems and to make recommendations for future delivery and evaluation of this approach.

In line with these central research questions and objectives, a literature search was undertaken in the area of youth mentoring, deviance, youth crime and youth justice. Through this search key underlying principles began to emerge in relation to the relationship between youth mentoring and young people's risk of involvement in offending behaviour. The key areas which emerged were that of risk, social support and social bonds theory. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory, which explores the influences on the development of the young person, was also identified as being particularly pertinent to this study.

From this the theoretical framework began to be developed. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note 'research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project' (cited in Maxwell, 2009, p. 214) and it was decided, in conjunction with my research supervisor, that a fifth research question should be added to reflect this. The following question was added to the existing research questions.

- How can this youth mentoring intervention be understood in the context of the young people's social ecologies?

To mirror this two research objectives were also included.

- To consider the findings of the study in relation to relevant theory in the context of youth crime, deviance and mentoring interventions.
- To understand and theorise this youth mentoring intervention in the context of the young person's social ecology.

### **4.3 Research Design**

Qualitative research allows for the collection of 'subjective' data, stemming from the perspectives and experiences of individuals (Macionis and Plummer, 2012). It is often described as 'inductive' 'interpretivist' and 'constructionist' and emphasises the understanding 'of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world' by the people who participate in it (Bryman, 2016). In line with the ecological systems theory which underpins this project and its emphasis on human development

through social interaction across systems, a social constructionist perspective was adopted in undertaking this study. Social constructionism posits that human beings create their social environment through social processes driven by human interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Social environment and social order do not exist in and of themselves but are ‘a human product, or, more precisely, an ongoing human production’ (Ibid, p. 69). A guiding understanding of this perspective which was found to be particularly relevant to this research was Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) statement regarding social phenomena. They say if ‘the integration of an institutional order can be understood only in terms of the 'knowledge' that its members have of it, it follows that the analysis of such 'knowledge' will be essential for an analysis of the institutional order in question’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp. 82-83). As the aim of this research is to understand the perceived value of a particular phenomenon, that of the BBBS-GYDP social intervention, the content of this project is steeped in the constructionist perspective.

From this, an inductive approach to research was also taken. As May (2011) notes, this inductive approach is ‘driven by empirical interests’ (p. 32) and involves a cyclical process of ‘data collection and interpretation’ (Mabry, 2008, p. 224). Within the inductive framing of qualitative research, emphasis is placed on the data or ‘specific observations’ from which theory can be developed (Macionis and Plummer, 2012, p. 72). In line with the epistemological framework and the research aims and objectives which guided this research process, it was decided that semi-structured qualitative interviews with stakeholders would be used to explore this social intervention. As mentioned by Bryman (2016), semi-structured interviews, which are guided by a list of general concepts or questions to be broached in the interview, allow for the perspectives of participants to be explored in greater detail. The interview can be flexible and guided, to an extent, by the participants and the issues and topics which emerge. With an emphasis on the participant’s point of view, the data can be analysed inductively. The data gathered in the interview process would be used to develop a case study.

### **4.3.1 Case Study**

Case studies are used in qualitative research to gain ‘a deep understanding of particular instances of phenomena’ (Mabry, 2008, p. 214). In line with the research questions and the aim of this project to gain the particular perspectives of those participating in and organising the BBBS-GYDP programme it was decided that a case study would be the most suitable in terms of presenting these perceptions. A case study would allow for the inclusion of the greatest number of perspectives while also acknowledging the interaction between stakeholders. From the social constructionist perspective ‘the organism and even more, the self cannot be adequately understood apart from the particular social context in which they are shaped’ (Berger and Luckmann, p. 68). In this sense, through presenting this information in its given context, it was felt that the case study would allow for the inclusion of rich detail which would enable the ‘intensive examination’ (Bryman, 2012) of the BBBS-GYDP intervention as it exists through the worldview of participants’

## **4.4 Research Methodology**

### **4.4.1 Literature Review**

When compiling the funding application to the Irish Research Council Enterprise Partnership Scheme for this project a literature search was undertaken in the areas of youth mentoring and mentoring for at-risk and high risk youth in order to gain a preliminary understanding of the existing state of the field. The international and national branches of Big Brothers Big Sisters were explored as were the associated research studies which had been carried out in the area of BBBS mentoring and its connection with youth justice systems more particularly. Literature searches were also conducted in the area of youth crime and youth justice.

A search for relevant books and articles was carried out using the university’s library catalogue along with databases made available to students. The databases which were explored were Academic Search Complete (EBSCOhost), Scopus, JSTOR and Science Direct. Key research studies, concepts and authors were identified and the literature examined. The theoretical basis of mentoring interventions was also

explored and the information was compiled and drawn upon in a short literature review. This was also used to guide the development of the preliminary theoretical framework for this study.

When the study began in January 2017, this literature review and bank of resources was built upon through further in-depth literature searches. The links which had been identified between the field of mentoring, youth crime, deviance and youth justice systems were explored in more detail as was the Irish perspective and experience in these areas. The key authors identified previously were explored and the key concepts developed including the ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework for this study. The emergent literature was then developed into two literature review chapters along with the findings chapter where it is explored in line with the data which was collected and analysed in this study.

#### **4.4.2 Sampling Framework**

Purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling was used in this study. This type of sampling was necessary as the BBBS-GYDP programme is still in its formative stages and does not have the number of participants and has not yet expanded geographically to the extent which would allow for probability sampling.

Another factor which influenced the sampling framework was that there was strict criteria for the inclusion of young people in the BBBS-GYDP programme when it was first implemented. As a result the number of young people becoming involved in the programme and the number of volunteers who could become involved in the programme was lower than expected for the first period of the programme. This criteria was then widened to include a greater number of young people, which allowed for a greater number of matches to be made as part of the programme. At the time of planning for data collection in this research study, there were fewer matches made due to the delays arising from this change in criteria and as such there was a smaller number of potential participants.

Also, as this study explores a voluntary programme there are a number of variables which effected the recruitment of participants. The voluntary nature of the programme

meant that this study relied firstly on young people wanting to become involved in BBBS-GYDP and secondly their being involved in the programme for a period of time before participation in the research. Also, as in any study, it relied on the participant's agreement to participate in the research. With these factors in mind and in order to gain as many match perspectives as possible, participation was open to all Littles and Bigs involved in the BBBS-GYDP programme across Ireland. In order to gain a contextual perspective of the programme, its organisation and management BBBS staff, GYDP staff, JLOs and BBBS Senior Youth Officers were also invited to participate. The number of potential participants in these roles was also limited as the programme is still being developed and there are a limited number of people who work with the BBBS programme in the context of GYDPs.

Recruitment was carried out through BBBS Project Officers who worked exclusively with the BBBS-GYDP programme. The Senior Youth Officers who have responsibility for the organisation of the BBBS programme in Ireland contacted these Project Officers and informed them about the programme. Project Officers were then contacted by the researcher. Information sheets and consent forms were forwarded for the potential participants who Project Officers identified as being willing and suitable for participation in the research. They were identified on the basis of willingness to take part, length of time being matched as part of the programme and the young people's personal circumstances at the time in which the research was taking place.

#### **4.4.3 Data Collection**

A total of 46 semi-structured interviews were conducted between June and November 2017. In line with the aims of the research an interview guide was devised for each participant type which would focus on the perspectives of the participant in their particular role in the programme. Due to organisational and logistical considerations BBBS GYDP is divided into 5 regions nationally, each of which has a member of staff who manages that region. In order to reach longer-running matches, fieldwork took place in all five regions and eight counties in total. It had been planned that 15 complete matches (Big and Little) would be included. A total of 15 volunteers participated in interviews but three young people decided not to participate. Therefore

12 complete matches participated. Similarly, where it had been planned that three Juvenile Liaison Officers would participate, only two were available. Five BBBS staff, five GYDP staff and two Senior Youth Officers also participated. These interviews were conducted both in person and over the phone and all interviews were recorded using two electronic recording devices with one acting as a back-up in case of a fault in one recording. Face-to-face interviews took place in participant's homes, the GYDPs and local cafés and restaurants in order to accommodate for participants' schedules.

**Table 3: Number of Research Participants by Participant Type**

<b>Participant Type</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
Little (Young Person/Mentee)	12
Big (Mentor)	15
BBBS Project Officer	5
GYDP youth justice worker	5
Juvenile Liaison Officer	2
Senior Youth Officer	2
<b>Total Number of Participants</b>	<b>41</b>

It was decided in consultation with my Academic Supervisor and Enterprise Mentor to conduct follow-up interviews with staff members, both Project Officers and youth justice workers, in a number of research areas so as to include the time perspective, which is central to the Ecological Systems Theory, in the Project. This allowed for an insight into the matches who participated in the first rounds of fieldwork a number of months on. This amounted to 5 interviews which were conducted over the phone.

Data collection was planned to take place between April and September 2017. It was envisioned that the appropriate number of matches would have developed a relationship over a number of months before being involved in the recruitment process for this project. Due to the aforementioned organisational issues and in order to allow for matches to develop a relationship the time-frame for completion of fieldwork was extended and ended in November 2017 as opposed to the end of September 2017.

At the time of meeting of interview the length of time for which the Bigs and Littles had been matched varied between 6 weeks and 12 months and a wide variety of

perspectives and experiences of Big Brothers Big Sisters were documented in this process. There were 8 male and 7 female matches. In terms of the full matches who participated in this research, 5 were male matches and 7 were female matches.

#### **4.4.3.1 Review of Interview Process with Young People**

After conducting three interviews with young people the interview method was reviewed. It was decided that in order to make the interview setting more comfortable and more conducive to gathering responses which were rich in detail, to include a creative method within the interview. After a review of the options available in including a creative method it was decided that a rating scale card exercise would be used. To do this I created cards (see Appendix 8) which had statements such as ‘I can rely on my mentor’ and rating cards which included emojis and rating words (i.e. ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Not Sure’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’). When conducting interviews with young people I introduced this rating scale exercise after addressing the topics listed on the interview guides. I would read out a statement card and the young person was invited to rate their agreement with it using the cards, by holding it up or speaking their level of agreement. This allowed and encouraged young people to share new information but also expand upon topics which they had already mentioned.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis**

Transcription and analysis of the data collected was carried out concurrently with the fieldwork and not in the post-fieldwork stage as originally planned. Interview recordings were given an identifying code and transcribed in full. They were double-checked for accuracy and anonymised, so that no identifying information including names, place names, local landmarks and businesses was included. The anonymised transcripts were uploaded into NVivo the qualitative data analysis software. In line with the inductive approach of this study, Braun and Clarke’s six step process of thematic analysis was employed in the analysis of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

This approach allows for the inductive coding of data whereby the coding is ‘data-driven’ and emphasises the importance of the development of themes from the data as

opposed to placing themes onto the data (Ibid., p. 12). This analytic method was deemed the most appropriate in line with the aims and objectives of the study where the programme would be explored through the accounts of the research participants. Though it is true that the epistemological and theoretical background of this research had been developed prior to data analysis, as Braun and Clarke say ‘researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum’ (p. 12). In this, every effort was made to stay true to the data in this process of thematic analysis and if prior research and knowledge in this area affected the coding process it was unintentional.

To begin the process of analysis the anonymised transcripts were reviewed in order to become more familiarised with the data. Using NVivo, the preliminary stage of coding or ‘open coding’ then began, whereby all topics emerging in the data were noted and named. These topics were reviewed and those which were similar were brought together to form themes. These preliminary themes were then named and ordered in terms of prevalence in the data set. Any sub-themes within these sets were identified and the connections within themes and between themes were explored. A comprehensive report of the findings was then written up which explored the dominant themes in the data. The findings were also included in discussion of the BBBS-GYDP programme in line with the existing literature and theoretical framework.

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations**

As this study involved young people in the research process an ethical application was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee in the National University of Ireland, Galway. This application was submitted to the committee for consideration in December 2016. Full ethical approval for the project was granted in April 2017 (see Appendix 1), prior to the commencement of data collection. When preparing this application a number of possible ethical issues were considered, particularly that of the inclusion of young people in the study.

The manner and extent to which young people should be included in research is a topic which has been subject to debate (Black and Busch, 2015; Kennan and Dolan, 2017). Historically young people’s views have been absent from research, though more

inclusive attitudes are emerging (Black and Busch, 2015). The decision to include young people in this research is widely guided by the aforementioned constructionist perspective where like adults children ‘must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live’ (James and Prout, 2014, p. 7). Similarly as mentioned in a publication by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs:

‘Research with, and for, children is necessary because knowing about children and their lives and understanding the child’s perspective are key to protecting, promoting, and supporting their health and well-being (Department of Children and Youth Affairs Working Group on Research Ethics, 2012, p. 1)

It was felt that as a youth-based programme, the inclusion of the voice of the young person in this study would add to the understanding of the BBBS-GYDP programme and as such may prove beneficial to young people participating in it by informing Foróige of the benefits, challenges and value of the youth-based programme. Before data collection began the ethical implications involved in the inclusion of young people under the age of 18 were examined.

All potential participants including young people were provided with an Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendices 2-7) describing the study and what would be involved in participation in a research interview. The researcher’s contact details were included and she was contactable if any queries arose. The forms highlighted that participation in the study was voluntary and that the participant could decide not to participate at any time without explanation. All information would remain confidential, unless information was shared which implied that a young person was at-risk of harm. Information Sheets and Consent Form were also provided to the parents of the young people. Both a parent and young person’s signed Consent Form were required for the young person to participate.

Due to the nature of the BBBS-GYDP programme there was a possibility that the participants, particularly the young people under the age of 18, may experience uncomfortable emotions or become upset when speaking about their experiences during the interview. A Distressed Persons Protocol was developed, which would be

followed if a participant became upset during an interview, to determine the best course of action for the particular participant and outlined the options and support that would be available to them. During the interview Foróige staff, who knew the young people, were also available to provide support if necessary.

In the presentation of findings, case vignettes have not been used to ensure that participants cannot be identified. Instead, thematic analysis has been used.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented in detail the theoretical underpinnings of this research study. It also outlined the theoretical and practical considerations involved in developing the research design. The sampling framework and data collection method and associated rationale were discussed as were the ethical considerations in completing this study. The thesis moves onto the context of the study which provides greater detail of the GYDPs and BBBS-GYDP programme.

## **Chapter Five**

### ***Study Context***

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Before looking specifically at experiences of mentoring this chapter provides an insight into the work of the GYDPs as a means towards understanding the context in which a young person becomes involved in the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme. Compiled primarily from the accounts of the youth justice workers and JLOs who participated in the research, it begins by giving an account of the role of the GYDPs, the procedure for involving young people in the projects and the factors which effect the work of the youth justice workers. This is followed by an overview of the BBBS-GYDP programme and the admission procedures involved which is primarily composed of the accounts of the Senior Youth Officers and BBBS staff who participated in the research.

#### **5.2 Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

Garda Youth Diversion Projects are youth prevention initiatives organised in conjunction with the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and are administered by the Irish Youth Justice Service. The first two Garda Youth Diversion Projects were established in Dublin in 1991 (Community Programmes Unit, IYJS, 2011). Since then Projects have been established by community-based organisations across Ireland such as Youth Work Ireland, Crosscare and other independent youth organisations (Brady and Canavan, 2016). As of 2015 there were 101 Garda Youth Diversion Projects in operation with ten other locations pinpointed for the future development of GYDPs (Garda Community Relations Bureau, 2015). In 2015, 4,093 young people participated in the GYDPs across Ireland. 75% of these participants were male and 25% were female.

Foróige, Ireland's largest youth organisation, is responsible for 41 of the Diversion Projects. In this Foróige organise and run a number of targeted youth programmes aimed specifically at those young people who have been referred to the Diversion

Projects due to involvement or risk of involvement in criminal activity. The locations of the Foróige managed GYDPs are detailed in the map below.

**Figure 1: Locations of Foróige Managed GYDPs in Ireland**



As a diversionary system, the Garda Youth Diversion Projects aim to reduce the offending behaviour or the risk of offending of young people through the provision of programmes and support, to help young people move away from the path to offending

(Community Programmes Unit, IYJS, 2011). They also aim to divert young people away from involvement in the courts. One JLO notes

‘you want them to progress you know. You want them to learn from their mistakes that’s what the diversion programme is there for, it’s a different format rather than going to court and getting a conviction that they get this chance in life and I ask them to take that chance and run and it’s nice when you do see young person maybe there was a bit on the wrong path and you do you see them pulling up their socks getting on the right track and seeing, seeing them doing well again you know’

The GYDPs do this through the provision of programmes and support. As one youth justice worker said ‘the more support structures we have around to move them on to...or to progress them on with the better because there’s, it’s reducing the opportunities for them or the chances of them participating in crime or anti-social behaviour’ (R3 I2 G).

### **5.2.1 Referral and Admission Procedures for the GYDPs**

Involvement in the Garda Youth Diversion Projects generally stems from a young person’s entry into the Diversion Programme as a result of a **formal caution**. A formal caution is given if the young person has been found to be directly involved in offending behaviour. As part of the Diversion Programme, a young person meets with a Juvenile Liaison Officer who is responsible for monitoring their behaviour over the course of their time in the Programme. During this time, if it is believed that a young person would benefit from participation in the Garda Youth Diversion Project, the JLO has the option to refer them to the GYDP. This is known as a **primary referral** to the Project. A primary referral may also be given to a young person who is cautioned informally. Generally an informal caution does not include a period of JLO supervision for the young person, but depending on their level of risk as ascertained through their YLSCMI scale score (see Section 2.5.3), they may be referred for inclusion in the GYDP.

Young people can also be referred to the GYDP through a **secondary referral**. This referral can be made by others who are concerned about the young person and their behaviour such as parents or other family members, teachers, social workers and HSE staff who feel the young people may benefit from participation in the Project. Young

people who recognise their own behaviour as problematic or who feel that they require support can also refer themselves to participate. In 2015

At this stage, the referral goes to a body known as the **Referral Assessment Committee** which includes youth justice workers, the Juvenile Liaison Officers, a community Garda and probation officer. This group meets and discusses the suitability of the referred young person's participation in the Project. It is at this stage that it is decided whether or not the young person should be put forward for involvement in the Project.

This highlights the needs-led approach to the work of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects where only those young people who have the appropriate level of need or risk will be included in the Project. At this stage, the young person may be under a period of supervision with the JLO while also being involved in the GYDPs. In general JLO referrals are given priority as these deal primarily with young people who have already been involved in offending behaviour where the project could be used to 'assist in the JLO supervision of the young people'.

If the young person is referred to the GYDP, they will be assigned a youth justice worker. At this early stage of the young person's involvement in the Project, part of the role of the youth justice worker involves meeting with the young person and their family to ensure that the young person wants to participate in the Project. At this time the worker will also gain consent for the young person to participate in the risk assessment which is a requirement of the Project. The outcome of the risk assessment will further determine the young person's suitability for participation in the Project. In terms of the young people who participate in the Projects, the youth justice workers deal primarily with young people who measure at the mid-range of risk or need on the scale. The scale score will highlight to the workers what kind of intervention the young people require and how they should approach their work with the young person.

### **5.2.2 The Role of the GYDPs**

The development of skills and challenging attitudes is a key aspect of the work of GYDPs in helping to divert young people away from the part of offending. When the

young people begin participation in the GYDP, the work done can involve a mixture of individual one-on-one sessions with the youth justice worker, with particular group activities and programmes made available to the young person as appropriate. The types of programmes made available include those which address the behaviour of the young people and include anger management, drugs and alcohol programmes. These are addressed through the Foróige developed Real U and A Life of Choices programmes. Experience in practical skills is also offered in the areas of cookery, photography, electronics, mechanics and others. This provision of supports and services by GYDPs extends beyond diverting young people away from offending behaviour by providing young people with the opportunity to develop a sense of purpose and direction in their life. For example, it was reported that one young person who had participated in cookery classes through the GYDP had gone on to become a chef (R3 I2 G).

The role of the youth justice worker can also include the provision of support to the family with regard to the young person's needs. Communication between the youth justice worker and the young person's family is maintained regarding the young person's behaviour at home and in school and the services, programmes and supports available to the young person are discussed. In cases where a family has no prior experience of interaction with the Gardaí or the youth justice system, the GYDPs are able to step in and provide support to these families who are uncertain of the situation.

If the youth justice workers feel it necessary, there can also be elements of inter-agency work involved in the GYDPs. In this, the worker may work with schools, social workers, external organisations such as the Springboard TUSLA programme, or local resource centres in the provision of particular programmes or supports which they may feel would be of benefit to the young people. Similarly, if the young people have needs which the youth justice workers feel they are not able to provide for through the GYDP, they can also refer the young people onto other services or advise them to avail of services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

As the young person participates in the programmes and projects available through the GYDP they will be assessed again at a later stage and this will then be compared with the first measure to see if there have been changes in the young person and/or their

behaviour. This will then determine if further programmes should be carried out with the young person or if the worker should start the transition period out of the Project with the young person.

### **5.2.3 Factors Which Affect the Work of a Youth Justice Worker**

Youth justice workers highlighted how the young person's personal, family and community circumstances can present a challenge in their work. Young people that become involved in the programmes can live in difficult circumstances with chaotic family lives, drug and alcohol related issues and few familial supports available to them. The workers noted that while they can provide support and help in challenging and changing attitudes this can be difficult if these views are not upheld in the families and social circles of the young person.

The development of a trusting relationship with the young person is also key to the work of the youth justice worker. This allows for honesty and a space where the young person can go if they feel they may get into further trouble or are experiencing other issues. As one youth justice worker said:

‘...the young people know...they're breaking the law and...they have moments of clarity or they have moments of honesty and vulnerability where they're like you know I don't want to do this with my life anymore’ (R2 I3 G)

Meeting with the justice worker in the GYDP also gives the young person the opportunity to share their personal experiences, allowing the worker to get to know them and what supports and programme should be made available. One youth justice worker gave an example of the importance of knowing the young person before recommending the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme to them:

‘for him, one of the things for him was that he had a big brother, but his big brother died and then I'm saying do you want a Big Brother and he's going no. So yeah, you need to know an awful lot more about a young person then before you start suggesting that they do you know this’ (R1 I1 G)

The flexibility of the GYDPs in working with the young person allows them to ‘meet the young person where they're at’ (R3 I2 G). For example there are programmes such as Real U and a Life of Choices which work well in a group setting while some issues may be better addressed on a one-to-one basis. There is also a branch of research, noted by one youth justice worker, which suggests that that if the young person is at

less risk of re-offending, group work may lead them to make negative linkages with others who are at-risk of offending or who are engaged in offending behaviour (R5 I2 G).

### **5.3 The BBBS-GYDP Programme**

As mentioned previously Foróige, in conjunction with the Irish Youth Justice Service, is one of the community-based organisations responsible for the management of GYDPs. It is through this connection between Foróige and the IYJS that the BBBS-GYDP initiative came into being. In 2014/2015 the IYJS was allocated funding to provide a mentoring service across GYDPs (IYJS, 2015). GYDPs were given the option as to what organisation would provide this service. Foróige and the BBBS programme were chosen to provide this mentoring service in Foróige managed GYDPs. The BBBS programme was adapted to fit the IYJS context particularly around the criteria for involving youth in the programme. This branch of BBBS became known as BBBS-GYDP. The focus of this programme, as mentioned by one Senior Youth Officer, is ‘on deterring them from either further engaging in criminal behaviour...getting involved in any other kind of anti-social behaviour and trying to steer them towards the more positive choices in life’ (SYO 1).

Today BBBS-GYDP is implemented through 32 GYDPs across 12 counties in Ireland. These counties are Donegal, Dublin, Louth, Monaghan, Meath, Wicklow, Laois, Kildare, Longford, Offaly, Galway and Cork. The programme is administered by five Project Officers who are responsible for the recruitment of young people and volunteers and forming matches. Two Senior Youth Officers are responsible for the overall implementation of the BBBS programme at a national level. As of October 2017 there were 44 matches in place as part of the BBBS-GYDP programme.

#### **5.3.1 Referral and Admission Procedures for the BBBS-GYDP**

Young people become involved in BBBS-GYDP through their participation in the Garda Youth Diversion Programme or through a Project. If a JLO or youth justice worker feels that a young person would benefit from mentoring, he or she can refer the young person to the local BBBS-GYDP programme. This referral is usually made

after discussion with the young person and his or her parent or guardian as to what the programme is and why it might be a positive experience for them. If the young person and guardian agree to their participation in the programme, the youth justice worker or JLO contacts the local BBBS Project Officer and a referral is made.

At this stage there are certain processes involved on the part of the BBBS Project Officer as they have an initial meeting or information session with the young person and his or her family. The core concept driving the work of the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme in any context is the fact that the young person must want to participate in the programme. The young person's willingness to participate can be established through the meetings. Also, the needs of the young person must be suitable for the volunteer led intervention. Having spoken to the youth justice worker, the BBBS Project Officer will receive the referral of the young person and will then go on to meet with them and his or her parent or guardian. This allows the BBBS staff to gain a good understanding of the young person, their wants and needs, while also making sure that they know what they are getting involved in. At this stage the BBBS staff must gain consent from a parent or guardian for the young person's participation in the programme.

Two separate interviews are then held with the young person and their parent or guardian. These meetings will not only determine the needs of the young person but also the type of volunteer that they would be best matched with in terms of similar interests or what the young person needs in a volunteer. At this time the BBBS Project Officer will visit the young person's home to ensure that this is a safe space for the volunteer to pick up and drop off the young person for meetings. At this stage in the process, the Project Officer reviews the young person's application process to ensure that they are suitable for the programme. If it is decided that the young person is eligible to participate and if there is a suitable volunteer available for the young person to meet with and both the volunteer and the young person are happy to proceed they will then have their first meeting with the BBBS Project Officer present. If all parties including the young person, the volunteer and the parent or guardian are happy with the arrangement the match proceeds from there.

### **5.3.2 Recruitment of Volunteers**

In line with the BBBS International standards there is an intensive screening process involved in recruiting new volunteers to the BBBS-GYDP programme. Potential volunteers register their interest through an enquiry form and are contacted by the local BBBS Project Officer. An information session is scheduled and the application process and BBBS programme is explained to the potential volunteer. If they wish to apply the volunteers fills out the application form and provides the details of three references. They also begin the Garda Vetting process. The Project Officer contacts the referees and ensures the volunteer receives clearance in the Vetting process before proceeding to interview stage. An in-depth interview is conducted with the volunteer and a home visit is conducted as the home can be used for match meetings after being matched for three months, where another adult is appointed to be present at all meetings. The Project Officer must meet this appointed person and they must also be vetted. At this stage if the Project Officer feels that the volunteer is suitable to participate as a mentor in the BBBS-GYDP programme, child protection and BBBS training will be provided to the volunteer. This includes what to expect from the programme and the match, their responsibilities as a volunteer and advice for match meetings. The Project Officer will then begin the matching process if a suitable young person is waiting to be matched.

### **5.3.3 Match Monitoring and Review**

Matches are monitored by the Project Officer for the length of the programme. He or she acts as the point of contact if the young person, his or her parents or the volunteer has any questions or queries throughout the course of the match. When the young person has been matched with his or her mentor, the Project Officer will contact the young person, their parent or guardian and the mentor to review the first two weeks. If there are any issues which need to be addressed they are brought to the Project Officer's attention and managed accordingly. After this there is a monthly review of the match which is carried out over the phone with the young person and their mentor. A face-to-face meeting is also organised every three months. The first six months of the match are focused on relationship building. At the six month stage a case plan is developed for the match, where goals and objectives are set by all parties involved in

the match to address the particular needs of the young person. At the nine month stage the Project Officer will discuss match closure with the young person and the mentor. If the young person is eligible to remain with the programme and the volunteer is happy to do so, the match may remain in place for an extra year. If not, steps are taken in preparing the match for closure at the year's end.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an insight into the role of the GYDPs in the youth justice context in Ireland. It has provided an overview of the referral and admission procedures and the factors which affect the work of the youth justice workers in the provision of this diversionary initiative. An overview of the BBBS-GYDP programme has been included with an outline of the admission, recruitment and monitoring procedures involved in the matches.

## Chapter Six

### *Perceived Benefits of the BBBS-GYDP Programme*

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In order to present a comprehensive insight into the BBBS-GYDP programme this chapter documents the findings of this study in relation to the perceived benefits of the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme. These findings are presented for each stakeholder type under the themes which emerged from analysis of the data. These are social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose, the way in which the mentoring programme complements the work of the GYDP and the perception of positive effects on young people's mental health from their participation in the programme. Throughout the analysis, young people are often referred to as 'Littles', 'Little Brother' or 'Little Sister' and mentors as 'Bigs', 'Big Brother' or 'Big Sister' which is the terminology used in the programme.

A key point to note is that in the interest of avoiding the stigmatisation of the young people who are participating in BBBS, in the majority of cases the volunteers are not made aware that the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme that they are participating in is in any way differentiated from the core BBBS programme. In this, it is also highlighted that at a programmatic level, the BBBS staff do not want to make the volunteers feel that they are different or separate from other volunteers on the programme. While the volunteers most certainly mentioned a number of key benefits that they have observed for the young person arising from participation in BBBS, only a small number of Bigs mentioned the reduction in offending specifically as an aim or outcome.

#### **6.2 Young People's Perspectives**

Interestingly, in a general sense the young people who were participating in BBBS expressed very little in terms of expectations of the programme. They did not seem to know what to expect, didn't expect anything or focused on negative perceptions of how they expected to feel when they met with their mentor. For example one

participant expected it to be ‘so uncomfortable’ while she also expected her mentor to ‘come in a big suit’ (R2 I5 L3) a factor which ties in with the idea put forward by one youth justice worker that young people are used to the formal intervention type service coming into their lives. Similarly, another young person mentioned how he ‘just thought it was going to be meetings’ (R4 I2 L1). More generally the young people reported that when the programme was first mentioned to them, it was something that ‘they might as well just do’ (R1 I6 L2) that will ‘pass the time’ (R1 I9 L3).

When speaking about the benefits of the programme the young people referred to the support they received from their Big and being able to do things with their mentor as positive aspects of the programme. The particular benefits spoken about by the young people are documented here under the themes of social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose and mental health and well-being.

### **6.2.1 Social Relationships and Support**

Many young people spoke about the feeling of support they experienced from their mentors along with the development of the relationship and going out and doing things with their Big as being of benefit to them.

One of the key aspects of the relationship which was mentioned by ten of the young people was the idea of being able to get out of the house and do something new or do something different. In one case the Little mentioned that if they weren’t meeting with their mentor they would be ‘lying in the house...doing nothing’ (R1 I6 L2), while another young person said that it’s something to do because she ‘actually doesn’t go out at all’ (R2 I5 L3). Another young person described it as ‘something to do since I do nothing anyways’ (R3 I4 L1). One young person visited Croke Park with their Big, another tried new sports with their Big, whilst another young person had taken up swimming, which she hadn’t been confident at before but now loves.

In nearly all cases, having someone to talk to was seen as an important aspect of BBBS for the young people. As one young person said

‘we’re like good enough friends now so like I’m close with her, like closer to her than I would be with most other people I talk to in school. So I could tell her stuff that I wouldn’t be able to tell other people’. (R5 I6 L1)

While some of the young people said that it was someone to talk to in a general sense, others highlighted situations where they particularly benefitted from having their mentor in their lives. One young person explained that there had been an incident at home and that during this time she was able to contact her Big who came to help her straight away and stayed with her for some time to make sure she was okay. This young person also highlighted the fact that she could text her Big with any problem and ‘she comes and sorts it’ (R2 I5 L3). Many young people said that they felt reassured that there was someone who was there for them if they needed it, someone they could rely on (R3 I8 L4).

As an extension of this, eight young people highlighted a sense of trust as being a key factor in their relationship. The knowledge that they could talk to their Big without any information being passed on to another person was reiterated by a number of young people. For one young person, this confidentiality and trusting relationship with a Big who they could talk to was the part of Big Brothers Big Sisters that they most enjoyed about the programme as a whole (R1 I5 L1). Another young person also mentioned how it can be good to have someone that you can trust that isn’t your parents and that she trusts her mentor ‘a lot’ (R5 I6 L1). Similarly, another young person explained how she had a very close circle of friends but due to different commitments and where she lived, she was not always able see them. Having her Big in her life gave her something to look forward as she said ‘I have something to look forward to, so I don’t have to go home and sit down on my own’. Similarly, this young person struggled with trust due to past issues with a friend passing on information and gossiping. As a result she found it difficult to develop relationships but she went on to say that she trusted her mentor (R3 I8 L4).

I get it hard to take to people like, like to trust people because...I used to have a best friend then everything that I said was repeated to people so I find it hard to...trust people so. But I actually get on with Aisling [mentor], I do trust her like, I do like her’. (R3 I8 L4)

Similarly another young person noted how she found meeting new people difficult but that her mentor was helping her with this.

‘it’s just that I really hate getting to know new people, it just scares me, I don’t know why...but Michelle keeps trying to make me to get to know new people, so she’s trying to help me with that as well’. (R5 I5 L2)

Another young person highlighted how his Big was a support in a difficult time where he had a fight with his parents and he took it badly. In this situation being able to meet with his Big shortly after was an example of a time where he felt supported by his Big (R4 I2 L1).

Other ways in which the young people felt the benefit of support was in terms of their education. This is explored in the section regarding sense of direction and purpose.

### **6.2.2 Sense of Direction and Purpose**

In many cases the young people reported that their Big helped them to develop a sense of direction or purpose particularly in the area of education. When asked if there were examples of how she felt her Big supported her, one young person who had been out of mainstream education mentioned school specifically saying her Big had ‘tried her hardest...to get me back in.’ (R3 I4 L1). When asked further if she had helped her think about a college degree that she mentioned previously she replied that her Big had told her what subjects she needed to do to get into college and how long she would have to study for. She mentioned that before her Big told her she hadn’t known any of the requirements regarding college courses (R3 I4 L1). Similarly another Little who had recently started a new course mentioned how her Big always offered to help her with her course (R3 I8 L4).

One Little recognised how she was lucky that she had gotten a second chance where ‘some people don’t get that chance’ (R5 I4 L2). In this she noted how, through BBBS, she had had the opportunity to have a new experience. This person also said that her Big helped her when she was applying for places in schools and also offered to drive and accompany her to interviews if she needed (R5 I4 L2).

Interestingly, one Little mentioned the idea of diversion as being a benefit of BBBS. In this she mentioned how ‘it’s practically to keep you off the streets like and it does like because she’d talk to you about it. She does knock a bit of sense into you.’ (R2

I4 L1). Another young person mentioned how the GYDPs in particular were ‘actually very good at keeping people out of trouble’ (R2 I9 L2). Similarly, one young person noted how his temper has calmed down somewhat since meeting his Big (R4 I2 L1). In this he described how he used to ‘flip over nothing’ but now ‘it’s not as bad’ and he ‘hit[s] less walls too so, less holes around the house’ (R4 I2 L1).

When asked if he noticed any differences in his life since he began meeting with his Big, one Little emphasised the way in which his attitude towards education has changed. He explained

‘I used to be bold in school like, there a couple of months back like but...he’s a good influence...he’s in college now and...he’s getting all these tests and passing them and stuff...then he’s telling me if I stay in school I get my Junior Cert. He also knows about the army and he’s like the school is the best thing going, one education is better than no education. Because without that education you won’t go far in life and you won’t get the good jobs and the good money’ (R2 I9 L2).

He went on to say that his mentor ‘has been putting good thoughts’ into his head regarding the importance of education and thinking about the future.

### **6.2.3 Mental Health and Well-Being**

A key aspect of Big Brothers Big Sisters that was reiterated by ten young people was the fact that they enjoy meeting with their mentor, it was ‘good craic’ (R1 I5 L1). Two young people also reported feeling happier since they started meeting with their Big (R1 I5 L1, R2 I5 L3).

In two cases it seems that BBBS acted as an escape for the young people. One young person was in the process of preparing for school exams. In this she felt the benefit of meeting with her Big as she was able to take time out from studying when she felt stressed (R1 I9 L3). Another young person spoke of how meeting with her Big was a ‘relief’ where she could see someone different (R3 I8 L4). Similarly, another Little highlighted how the time spent with his Big was a period where he could get out of the house ‘away from the boys’ that was time just for himself where he could relax (R4 I2 L1). This was reiterated by another young person who described his time with his mentor as ‘a break away’ (R2 I9 L2).

One Little mentioned particularly how she has more confidence since meeting with her Big. She gave the example of learning how to swim as an example of this.

Yeah, I've gotten more confident in myself...I didn't really like going swimming before just because I wasn't really good at it, but Michelle taught me that you don't have to be good just to, just to do stuff like, you just try your best'. (R5 I4 L2)

### **6.3 Big's Perspectives**

The chapter now move on to explore the perspectives of mentors regarding their experiences of the BBBS-GYDP programme under the theme of social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose and mental health and well-being.

#### **6.3.1 Social Relationships and Support**

Nine mentors said that they see their role as being someone that the Little could talk to, someone with whom they could share things. As one mentor said

'guidance and support is kind of what I've ended up with, do you know, I was kind of an ear for her, somebody for her to talk to then a lot of the time because I don't think she has many other positive role models in her life that she can...sit down and chat stuff...through...without anybody that has an agenda do you know'. (R2 I6 B3)

Within this a number of mentors noted how this was something which developed over time as the young person grew more comfortable with them and was a part of building a bond with them. Often this would lead to the young people beginning to share much deeper information regarding issues they may have in the home or information about their past with two Bigs noting that this kind of sharing occurred quite early in the match (R3 I5 B2, R2 I1 B1). One mentor said

'there have been one or two conversations that my Little proactively...brought into the conversation about...family circumstances of his...nothing terrible or sinister or whatever but things that were I think quite serious for him...and the fact that he felt confident enough to be able to bring it to the table was, was good'. (R2 I1 B1)

One mentor mentioned how her Little feels that she can talk to her without any of the information being passed on to anyone else particularly where the young person lacks this trusting relationship elsewhere in her life (R2 I6 B3). The mentor said that this young person can feel quite isolated in the home and so by meeting with her, she believes that the young person feels a sense of respite. In another case, one Big noted

how her Little knew very few people in the town in which she lived. She also had just had a baby and does not get out of the house very often. The Big felt that she has been able to provide an outlet for the young person where they can get out and go for something to eat (R4 I6 B2). Similarly, another Big said that he has provided support to his Little particularly in cases where his family have been ‘on top of him’ and the young person has been frustrated. He has been able to collect the young person for their meeting and do something together to get the young person out of the house (R4 I3 B1).

One mentor mentioned the way in which the young person now shares with him things that he gets excited about and talks about his hopes and dreams for the future,

‘you can see maybe in...how he speaks to me and he gets kind of excited about certain topics, you know he’s not really afraid to...show stuff that he’s passionate about you know...stuff like that he wants to do when he’s older...stuff that he might be maybe embarrassed telling his friends about’.  
(R2 I4 B2)

He attributed this to the young person feeling that he could trust him as he says ‘he feels he can trust me with stuff like that, you know, that I’m not going to tell anybody or judge him or anything like that’ (R2 I4 B2). Similarly, in terms of providing support around the young person’s hopes for the future, one Big noted how she supported her Little when she was applying for a place in a school. The young person found out that she had not received the place that she had hoped for and during this time the Big was able to meet with her and discuss what was happening. She also contacted Foróige to find out more about the situation. In this, the Big highlighted how she believed that the young person felt that she had support on her side through her mentor (R5 I5 B2).

One mentor also mentioned how as a result of the fact of he and his Little having very similar backgrounds he had been able to offer advice to his Little particularly in the area of education where he would have struggled himself. In this, he has been able to offer his Little an insight into the opportunities that are available to him and reassure him from experience that there are alternative options (R1 I4 B1).

### **6.3.2 Sense of Direction and Purpose**

A number of Bigs mentioned how, through their participation in BBBS, they have been able to help their Little in terms of their education while also being able to help them think about the future. Six mentors mentioned the fact that they had provided support to the young person in terms of their education. One mentor mentioned the fact that his Little would come to him for advice about particular situations in school. He went on to highlight that since meeting with him, he has been told that his Little's attitude towards school has improved

‘Because he had always come to me for advice too... At the start, he'd say ‘oh this teacher was annoying me’ or something like that or ‘this person was annoying me, what would you do?’ And I would say oh, do this here or do that there. He goes ‘that's what I'll try’. Do you know what I mean? And that's exactly what he done. He, he trusted me and my advice’. (R1 I7 B2)

Similarly, one Big said that hoped he would be able to support his Little in his education as he is currently in education himself. In this, he has offered to help the young person with his homework and anything else he may need in terms of education (R2 I4 B2).

Five mentors mentioned the way in which they supported their Little in researching information about their chosen course or career. One mentor, as part of their meeting time, brought their Little to the library to research a career path that he is interested in (R2 I4 B2), while another gave the Little ideas for a course which she felt the young person might be interested in pursuing when she was struggling to decide what to do (R3 I7 B4). Another Big noted that he and his Little had a shared love of horses. In this instance the young person was considering working in the racing industry and as the Big was employed in this area he was able to bring the young person to a racing yard and give him practical experience with horses while also introducing to others who worked in the industry (R3 I5 B2). Similarly, another Big noted how his Little was interested in joining the ambulance service. As this Big worked with the ambulance service he was able to give his Little an insight into that work. He said

‘he's very much at the stage where he wants to look at where he wants to go with his future and the different job opportunities and...I'm involved in so much ...I can actually take him to see these different things so he was...talking about interest in maybe the ambulance service and I actually

work with the ambulance service, I was able to...give him a very, very good insight and experience that’.

Another mentor mentioned how she supported her Little in completing her Leaving Cert exams. In this, as mentioned previously the young person was the first in her family to complete these exams in a number of years and the Big supported her in this while also helping her to explore college options after the exams (R2 I6 B3).

### **6.3.2 Mental Health and Well-Being**

Bigs who participated in this research project also noted a number of factors relating to the development of the positive mental health of the young people they met with. Six mentors noted increases in the level of confidence of their Little. One mentor in particular mentioned the confidence that the Little had developed as a result of the shared learning which had come into play in the relationship. In this, the young person and the Big had similar interests but also had individual skills or talents. The Big and the Little began to teach each other these skills and this, it is noted by the Big, helped the Little’s confidence to evolve as he was able to teach his mentor something (R1 I4 B1).

Another mentor said that one of the aims he had when he started working with the young person was to help him develop his confidence particularly through finding out more about what the young person was interested in and sharing in these activities with him. He noted an increase in the young person’s confidence level and provided a particular example of this in the young person being willing to participate in this research, particularly when he volunteered to speak first. As the mentor said ‘he just jumped up off the seat and then, that’s not Jamie like. That’s not the Jamie that I met’ (R1 I7 B2).

One Big noticed how the young person spending time in his company was making him more confident. As he said

‘You might have to do a lot of talking like I have to do at the moment or you might have to do a lot of listening, whichever the child needs. My little is getting much more confident with every week that goes by, with me, in my company. So, you know what I mean we’re able to have a bit of a giggle now and that’s what it’s all about, it’s, it’s all about that’. (R3 I6 B3)

One Big also mentioned how her Little has become more willing to try new things and, as in the previous example, used the young person's participation in this research as an example. She noted how the young person was very nervous about participating in an interview for the project as she can be uncomfortable with new people and places, but as the mentor noted she has become more confident in this and she participated in the research (R5 I5 B2).

Another mentor highlighted how his favourite thing about being a mentor is seeing the young person happy. He describes their meeting time as a time where they can meet up and the Little doesn't feel under pressure to impress anyone and doesn't get involved in confrontation, as the mentor says 'just seeing him smile, happy' where he may be confrontational in other areas of his life (R4 I3 B1).

#### **6.4 BBBS Project Officers Perspectives**

The chapter now move on to explore the perspectives of BBBS Project Officers regarding their experiences of the BBBS-GYDP programme under the theme of social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose and mental health and well-being.

##### **6.4.1 Social Relationships and Support**

One of the key benefits for young people which was identified by respondents emerged is the development of relationships and the emerging sense of support for the young people participating in BBBS-GYDP. All BBBS Project Officers said that they see the Bigs supporting the young people in a variety of ways from being a person that the young person can talk to, to being someone who can provide consistency in their life.

In particular, BBBS staff said that the home lives of the young people may be difficult and that the presence of the Big in their life may help to alleviate some of these difficulties. For example, one BBBS Project Officer noted one case where the young person's father was deceased and his mother was ill and his mentor was able to act as a support to him.

‘he would have no male role model in his life, his Dad is deceased... Mum has MS, so I suppose it’s somebody to go out and do these things with him... mum obviously isn’t fit to do that because of her illness and then you know dad is, is not available so it’s having that positive male role model who brings him to things, supports him, goes along to football matches, they do, do a variety of things. Big into their cars and motorbikes. So that was why they were matched’. (R3 I3 P)

One Project Officer also mentioned the way that Big Brothers Big Sisters provides young people with time that’s just for them, where ‘they can be themselves’. She said that young people spend a great deal of time in group settings and ‘they try to fit in the group and by maybe not being themselves’ (R5 I3 P). She believe that the BBBS programme gives them time away from that to build a relationship with one person where they can do different things and try new things (R5 I3 P).

During a follow up interview, one Project Officer spoke of how one young person has had ‘a sounding board’ in his Big, somebody who he can meet with to talk things through ‘if he’s not feeling well’. As a result, the Project Officer notes that the young person’s behaviour has improved at home and at school.

‘So in terms of his own behaviour in the house for example that’s improved, so in his school it’s improved, so, you know, so it’s, so there is less likely that he’s going to go down the road of misbehaving’. (Follow Up R1 I3 P)

Similarly, within another follow up interview, it was noted that one young person had experienced familial changes in the number of months between the initial interview and follow up. Some of the young person’s siblings had been taken into care while the young person remained in the family home. The Project Officer reported how the Big in this match has been supporting the young person during this time, being able to take her away from her home environment and allowing her to relax and ‘be a kid again’ particularly where she had not been ‘shielded’ from the situation ‘enough’ (Follow Up R3 I3 P).

#### **6.4.2 Sense of Direction and Purpose**

In many cases, the BBBS staff spoke about how they had observed Bigs helping their mentees to develop a sense of direction in their lives. This came in a number of forms. Four BBBS Project Officers mentioned the Big supporting their Littles in education or helping them to find courses or employment that they were interested in (R1 I3 P,

R2 I2 P, R3 I3 P, R5 I3 P). Another Project Officer spoke of a Little who had taken up swimming as her mentor had been teaching her and she now wants to be a lifeguard. As she said

‘it’s great that she got this aspiration of doing something with the skill that the volunteer taught her and she’s actually teaching em, other like the sister and the friends how to swim or try to teach them’ (R5 I3 P).

In one case, a young person was the first person in her family to complete the Leaving Cert in a number of generations and the Big had supported her in doing this (R2 I2 P). A similar situation occurred in another match, where the young person was supported by her Big in returning to education though this Project Officer does highlight that the GYDP had been working on this issue as well (R5 I3 P). One Project Officer shared the example in an initial interview of how the Big in one match had been supporting the young person in returning to education after she had been out of ‘mainstream education’ for a period of time (R3 I3 P). During the follow up interview she said that the young person is now working towards completing the Leaving Cert Applied and has only missed one day of school in this time, ‘which is amazing for her’ (Follow Up R3 I3 P). Another BBBS Project Officer highlighted how one Little has aspirations to join the army when he finishes school and the Big was supporting him in this by bringing him to the library to research this career choice where the young person’s family ‘wouldn’t necessarily have access to’ this information (Follow Up R2 I2 P).

Another benefit which was mentioned by BBBS staff was that of the Little making more positive choices. One Project Officer highlighted how one young person became more proactive in his own life after beginning to meet with his Big. She mentioned how the youth justice worker had noted that the Little would be far more energetic and ‘in great form’ when attending the Project and he was attending because ‘he wanted to be there’ even though he had disengaged from all other services previously (R4 I4 P). His mother had also highlighted to the BBBS Project Officer how he had started to dress better and was far more social. The BBBS Project Officer said

‘his mother said that he started getting more concerned about his appearance, so he was dressing better, he was going out, he was meeting his friends...do you know the whiff of him walking out the door, do you know’. (R4 I4 P)

### **6.4.3 Mental Health and Well-Being**

Another area in which the BBBS programme was seen to be of benefit to young people was in terms of their mental health. Four programme staff noted developments in young people's sense of confidence and self-esteem through participation in BBBS.

One Project Officer mentioned how one young person with whom she works has developed a greater sense of confidence since beginning to meet with her Big. In this the Project Officer noted how when she originally met with the young person she was very shy but now when she speaks with her on the phone she can hear her sense of confidence. She said that 'hearing confidence in someone is amazing' (R4 I4 P). Similarly, another Project Officer mentioned how one Little's confidence has improved from a point where the Big had originally noted that the young person would look at the ground when he was talking to him but now he looks at him in the eye (R1 I3 P). This was reiterated in the follow up interview with this Project Officer.

'he's growing in confidence. I even notice when I'm speaking to, to Jamie, he's like, he's like a different child. You know, he's, eye contact, you know, he's can look you in the eye and have a conversation with you'. (Follow Up R1 I3 P)

Similarly, this Project Officer also mentioned a case where one of the hopes for the relationship had been that the young person would be able to develop in confidence. He reported that the young person's confidence has grown to a point where she feels more comfortable in being herself with the Big, particularly in terms of sharing her sense of humour (Follow Up R1 I3 P).

Another Project Officer mentioned how she has seen changes in young people's confidence from meetings before they were matched with a Big to three months into the match, where they are more positive about the programme and they start 'putting forward their ideas for activities' (R3 I3 P).

During a follow up interview, another Project Officer mentioned how a young person's behaviour has pointed towards him gaining confidence throughout the course of the match. In this, she notes that the Big had mentioned the young person telling 'outlandish' stories that 'couldn't be true' but as the match has developed this has

occurred less frequently. Similarly, the Big has highlighted to the Project Officer that the young person is more outgoing and participates in activities outside of the match. For example, while on work experience the young person started to spend time with his workmates outside of the workplace playing pool after work, which ‘is something he probably wouldn’t have done before’ (Follow Up R2 I2 P).

#### **6.4.4 BBBS complementing the work of the GYDP**

One BBBS Project Officer mentioned how one young person participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme had a number of issues around drug use. He was receiving a number of supports through the Garda Youth Diversion Projects but a number of weeks into his participation in BBBS he disengaged from some of these supports. However, he continued meeting with his mentor. She expressed the view that the very fact that the young person continued their engagement with the BBBS programme and regularly met with his Big indicated a benefit of the programme to the Little (R2 I3 P).

Similarly, in another area one young person had disengaged from all services in the Garda Youth Diversion Projects prior to participating in the BBBS programme. After meeting with his Big the young person began to re-engage in the Project

‘that’s something that the youth justice worker said, she said ‘jeez, she said ‘he came in the door and he had just so much energy and he was in great, in great form’...and he wanted to be there and that...was something that was amazing because he had gone so much the other way...where he didn’t leave the house’.

Though the match only continued for six months, it ended on a positive note as the young person felt that it was time for the match to come to an end as his official period of engagement with the Project had ended (R4 I4 P).

BBBS was also highlighted by two Project Officers as being of benefit to young people as a transitional piece where the young person was coming to the end of their time with the GYDP. These Project Officers noted how the BBBS programme had been successfully used in each of the individual cases as a transitional support where the Bigs were there to ensure that supports were not taken away from the young people all at once (Follow Up R2 I2 P, Follow Up R3 I3 P).

## **6.5 GYDP Youth Justice Worker Perspectives**

The perspectives of GYDP youth justice workers are now explored under the headings of social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose and how the BBBS programme complements the work of the GYDP.

### **6.5.1 Social Relationships and Support**

Four youth justice workers said that participation in BBBS offered the young people that they work with an extra source of support. One worker drew on a particular example of a young person relying on their mentor at a particularly difficult time at home. In this, though the situation brought with it issues surrounding the type of support that the mentor could provide and setting boundaries around that for the future, the youth justice worker saw particular benefits in this by saying ‘the lovely thing and the really important thing was that...the young person...spoke with somebody... You know and did something about her situation.’ (R2 I3 G).

Similarly, another worker expressed the view that BBBS can offer the young people the support that they may need but that the Garda Youth Diversion Project cannot offer to them, particularly to the extent that they need it (R3 I2 G). This was highlighted by another worker who found that when the young person began meeting with her Big, the feedback that she was giving to the workers about the match were largely based around areas that the GYDP had been working on with the young person. This could be seen where the Big was encouraging the Little in education, while they were also doing activities together such as swimming. This was considered to be positive by the justice worker as one of the primary reasons for referral was so that the young person would have the opportunity to get out of the house (R5 I2 G).

In another case a youth justice worker mentioned how one young person with whom she worked had experienced family issues and had been attending counselling around this issue. The worker highlighted how counselling ‘kind of works and it doesn’t’ and in this case the young person, through having a mentor, had someone who was there for her that was someone positive to talk to where she didn’t have to be ‘pigeon-holed’ into counselling (Follow Up R1 I1 G).

### **6.5.2 Sense of Direction and Purpose**

One youth justice worker highlighted in a follow up interview how during the time in which one young person has been meeting with his Big, his attitude has changed in terms of his own behaviour in school and towards his family. She highlighted how the difference she has noticed in him has been ‘unbelievable’ as the Big had been able to challenge the young person on his behaviour and share his own experiences. The youth justice worker said that the young person is now in a place where he has questioned the behaviour of his peer who is also participating in the GYDP. His peer had gotten into trouble at school and the Little questioned this

‘he was like ‘why would you do something like that, that’s silly like’, you know, so...I think they feel more empowered as well when...the Big Brother is there or they’ve been listening to you know his experiences or he’s been mentoring in such a positive way and saying ‘well, you know when I was in school I did silly things, but now I regret it’. (Follow Up R1 I1 G).

Another youth justice worker also noted the way in which the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme can encourage the young person to commit to something by taking a level of responsibility in the match (R4 I7 G). Having to make a commitment to meeting with their Big and helping to decide the meeting times gives the young people a sense of structure in their lives where they may lack it in other areas (R4 I7 G).

### **6.5.3 BBBS complementing the work of the GYDP**

Three GYDP youth justice workers noted during the initial interviews how BBBS in the context of the Garda Youth Diversion Project had complemented their work by acting as a transitional programme to support a young person as they begin to reduce their interaction with the youth justice workers and the programmes offered by the GYDPs in general. One youth justice worker gave the example of a young person who continued to require support in different aspects of his life but no longer needed support around his ‘criminogenic needs’. From this, the worker put forward the idea of the young person becoming involved in BBBS with the opportunity being available for the young person to re-join the Project if needed. The young person and his family agreed to this and since the young person has been meeting their Big, there has been no request for the young person to re-join the Project. As the worker said ‘I haven’t had any phone calls from them... which is essentially what I want.’ (R3 I2 G) A factor

which was of particular importance to the worker was the fact that the young person was matched with a mentor who had similar interests and that they understood each other well. He was therefore happy to put forward the idea of reducing the young person's time with the Project.

Similarly, another youth justice worker saw BBBS as a transitional support in the initial interview though her opinion of this changed in the follow up interview where she noted that the matches that have worked best have been those which have 'worked alongside' the GYDP. She noted that this has been the case particularly where the young person may be waiting for some time to be matched with a volunteer and they decide not to participate as a result (Follow Up R1 II G).

## **6.6 Senior Youth Officers Perspectives**

Though the Senior Youth Officers who participated in this research have both personally managed matches as part of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the nature of their work in their capacity as SYO is primarily operational and as such their perspectives brought different insights into the benefits of BBBS for young people than those of the other stakeholders. Two key areas in which they noted potential benefits for the young people who participate in the programme were in having a sense of direction and purpose and a sense of support.

### **6.6.1 Social Relationships and Support**

Both Senior Youth Officers mentioned the young person being provided with support as being a benefit of BBBS along with the development of a positive social relationship in the life of the young person where through 'the support and guidance and the enjoyment of spending time with their Big Brother or Big Sister...that they see maybe a different way in life or a different perspective' (SYO 1).

One SYO mentioned the importance of the voluntary nature of BBBS in terms of the provision of support by the Big to the young person they are matched with. In this, she highlights how one young person, during a speech at an event, emphasised the importance of the fact that the volunteer was not a professional. The young person

spoke about how she had dealt with various professionals such as social workers and other agencies and the fact that her Big was just there to be a friend to her was what she enjoyed most about the programme. The development of the friendship and the volunteer's lack of emphasis on the goals and aims for the young person was particularly significant to her (SYO 1).

Similarly, another SYO spoke of a young man who had experienced immense difficulty in life and had started to move down the path of offending. His Big had been supporting him by just being there helped him to look at his options in life (SYO 2).

### **6.6.2 Sense of Direction and Purpose**

Both Senior Youth Officers mentioned the part that Big Brothers Big Sisters had to play in helping young people to develop a sense of direction and purpose. They also, in some cases, link this with the diversion of young people away from the path of offending. One SYO mentioned how she had witnessed first-hand how BBBS could have an impact on a young person in this way. She shared an example of

‘a young person whose dad was in jail, whose mum was a heroine user and... he was ended up living with his grandfather in a kind of informal situation and... he would have been responsible for a long time with the... care and support of his younger siblings and you know... he would have... been robbing... different items around the area, bikes and that kind of thing and... he was matched up to, to a Big Brother and... he said that just having someone who believed in him em, was the biggest factor for him... that he was heading down the wrong path and just having someone there who took an interest in him and who believed that he could do something more with his life... and who was there for him to talk through those kind of options’.

She went on to say that

‘he called into us a few weeks ago and he said... ‘the Big Brother Big Sister programme changed my life’... he did a PLC course and now he’s doing an apprenticeship I think in carpentry... so I mean for someone... who came from where he was coming from like it’s just, it’s an amazing achievement, you know... his match went on for two years but... he actually even told me he met up with his Big Brother... last month... even though he’s now 20’. (SYO 2)

Similarly, another SYO mentioned how through her work she has heard a number of young people highlight how the relationship with their Big Brother or Big Sister helped to divert them away from the path of offending

‘we had a number of young people speak about Big Brother Big Sister kind of publically or for video pieces...who have been JLO cautioned or...on that road...and who have said that their friendship with their Big Brother Big Sister did make the difference in them choosing not to go down that road...which is phenomenal to hear you know’. (SYO 1).

### **6.7 JLO Perspective**

The role of the JLO is to administer cautions, both formal and informal, if a young person is found to be engaged in offending behaviour, or is at risk thereof. If, along with the caution, a supervision order is put in place they take on the role of monitoring the behaviour of the young person over a period of time. The JLO can also refer young people onto the GYDP and BBBS-GYDP. Within their role, and due to the developing nature of the BBBS-GYDP programme, the JLOs who participated in the research have limited experience with the programme, though positive feedback was noted. The JLOs spoke of the potential of the programme to be of benefit to a young person particularly in the context of the work of the GYDPs.

In particular the JLOs noted the potential for the BBBS-GYDP programme to provide a young person with one supportive adult, particularly those young people who may be experiencing difficulties in their lives. They describe the programme as a way of introducing

‘somebody of character that’s going to give them good advice, you know, some people unfortunately are born into circumstances and maybe born into families of criminality and that’s all they know, eh, that’s what’s expected of them...they know that’s what’s expected of them, they know that that’s what their mum or dad or brother or sister or somebody expects of them and sometimes it’s hard for them to break that cycle and if we can get them into a mentoring programme where somebody’s who’s going to teach them correct way to do things and give them good advice...[they would] definitely benefit and you’d hope it’d reduce re-offending anyway if not totally stamp it out’. (R1 I2 J)

This was reiterated by the second JLO who noted the importance of having one supportive adult in a young person’s life.

‘Like some of these kids you have to look, you’re looking at them and...where they’ve come from, they’re great to be as good as they are and...you know this theory where...a child’s resilience is all they need...this stuck with me for some reason that all they need, if a child can assign themselves to or latch on to one positive adult. So, in Big Brother Big Sister

if you can provide that one positive influence it may not move the world but it can certainly won't do any harm.' (R4 I1 J)

This JLO also noted that the measurement of success is not the same for each young person who takes part in programmes such as this. She spoke of one young person who was 'a difficult child' but in terms of the programme she said 'it's amazing how well that's worked' as he is still participating in the programme (R4 I1 J). She also noted how one of the young people that she had worked with who was also involved in BBBS-GYDP had gone through 'a very bad spell of re-offending' (R4 I1 J) but he had remained engaged in the GYDP, which to her was a sign of success. This falls in line with the benefits mentioned by other stakeholders who noted that BBBS complemented the work of the GYDPs. One JLO also mentioned the potential for introducing the programme to a young person where there is no GYDP group setting for them to become involved in or where the young person would not be suitable for involvement in a group setting. Though this would rely on resources being available.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided detail of perspectives of the key stakeholders regarding the perceived benefits of the BBBS-GYDP for young people. The findings were derived from the key themes which emerged from data analysis. These were social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose, mental health and well-being and BBBS complementing the work of GYDPs. The challenges involved in BBBS-GYDP, as identified by stakeholders, will be detailed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Seven**

### ***Perceived Challenges of the BBBS-GYDP Programme***

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In order to address the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme as a whole, this chapter explores the stakeholders perceptions of challenges associated with the programme. As with Chapter six, the challenges are addressed in turn through the perspectives of each stakeholder type with areas of insight ranging from inclusion criteria to young people's willingness to become involved in the programme.

#### **7.2 Young People's Perspectives**

It is interesting to note that very few challenges were mentioned by the Littles regarding their experience with Big Brothers Big Sisters. One young person mentioned her annoyance that she was not able to become friends with her Big Sister on Facebook (R3 I8 L4). Another Little also mentioned this in the context of this restriction making it more difficult to contact her Big as she and her parents rarely had credit to text her Big (R5 I6 L1). One Little also noted the difficulty in balancing her own work schedule with that of her Big in order to find time to meet (R3 I8 L4). While similarly she also mentioned their lack of transport, as neither the big or the little can drive, as having an impact on their meetings. One young person noted how he and his Big had not met for a period of time due his moving in with his father (R1 I5 L1). Another Little had recently had a baby, and spoke of the challenges involved in finding somebody to mind the baby which made it difficult to find time for her and her mentor to do things together (R4 I5 L2).

#### **7.3 Bigs Perspectives**

The volunteers who participate in BBBS as Bigs highlighted a number of obstacles which they have faced in their time volunteering with the programme.

### **7.3.1 Finding Things to Do and Restrictions in Activities**

One challenge which was mentioned by eight Bigs was that of finding things to do with the young person. The activities available to the match can be limited in terms of location, while one Big also mentioned how coming into the winter months it will be more difficult to find activities to do as businesses close early (R2 I7 B4). Similarly, one Big mentioned how his Little was reticent about meeting or doing activities with him in his local town due to the possibility that he would have to explain to his friends who his Big was. This, accompanied with the Littles lack of interest in activity based meetings such as the cinema, led them to having many driving based meetings. As the Big said ‘he’s not into doing stuff like you know, you know when I mean stuff, you know, he just wants to get away’ (R4 I3 B1).

Two Bigs (R1 I7 B2, R3 I5 B2) mentioned the limitations which Foróige and Big Brother Big Sister policy has brought to their opportunities to do particular activities such as go-karting or horse riding. As one Big said

‘Do you know, the hardest part about it is wondering what to do every week. That’s the biggest, because you are kind of limited like insurance wise, like you can’t go go-karting and stuff. That’s not a huge deal but it’s something that we would have loved to do’. (R1 I7 B2)

One of the Bigs who struggled with this aspect of the programme also found it difficult to explain to their Little that there were activities that they could not do, particularly ones which the Big had freely available to him such as riding quadbikes (R3 I5 B2). As an extension of this, two Bigs said that for them, the rule which prohibited the young people from visiting their home until a number of months into the match was somewhat difficult because there was so little choice for other things to do as a match. While they understood the necessity of having such a rule in place, it was problematic for them due to the fact that there was difficulty in finding activities to do.

### **7.3.2 Logistics of Meeting and Balancing Workload**

Six Bigs noted the difficulties involved in balancing their own schedule of work and family life with their commitments to the young person. While in many cases those who experienced this difficulty recognised the flexibility which the programme has, it

remained as one of the biggest challenges. In this, two Bigs mentioned how their work rota can be sporadic and can change regularly leading to difficulties in being able to schedule a particular time for meeting with their Little (R1 I4 B1, R2 I6 B3). Similarly, one Big noted how her work involved a great deal of travel and how this led to her not always being able to meet her Little on a weekly basis. This brought with it an extra challenge where though she and her Little had been meeting for five months, due to her being away from time to time and her Little being away for a month during the summer, she still felt that the development of the relationship may be behind in terms of where other matches are at, at the five month mark (R5 I1 B1).

Similarly, in terms of the logistics of meeting, one Big mentioned how the time it takes to get from her own home to collect her Little and the return journey extends the meeting time which needs to be allowed for in the week, which can be difficult in terms of work and family life. While she enjoys meeting with her Little, it is difficult to allocate time for travel and the activity with the young person, which can take three to four hours altogether (R2 I6 B3). Another Big mentioned the difficulties involved in communicating with his Little due to the Little not having a phone. The Big said that he communicated with the Little primarily through his father and due to miscommunication or messages regarding meetings not being passed on, a number of meetings had been missed (R2 I4 B2).

### **7.3.3 Little's Circumstances**

Big Brother Big Sisters volunteers also mentioned the young person's personal or family circumstances as being a challenge. In one particular case, the match had been put on hold for a period of time due to a young person moving between foster and parent care (R1 I4 B1). While in another situation the young person was living in care and the Big was not able to pick the young person up at their home due to another resident taking a dislike to him (R3 I5 B2). These proved to be somewhat logistical issues facing the volunteers where they either had to postpone meeting for a period of time in the first instance or arrange alternative locations for pick-up in the second.

Similarly, the young people's struggles at home also posed some challenges for the Bigs. One young person had been having difficulties in the home and had relied on

her mentor for support. While the Big felt that she supported her Little during these difficult times, she highlighted that it was sometimes emotionally difficult to go to the match meetings knowing what she was facing and how the Little was dealing with these issues. She also noted that she felt guilty dropping the young person home after their meeting knowing what she was going to be facing, while also feeling upset at times when leaving the Little.

‘that’s the thing that I find difficult with it is almost guilty leaving her do you know and that. I know the situation she’s going back in [unclear at 9:34] to and it, there is nobody else coming for the next couple of days to do anything like that with her and that.’ (R2 I6 B3)

When discussing this in a follow up interview, the Project Officer who was responsible for the match noted that the match had since stopped meeting and while it was not formally closed it seemed that that may be the next step involved in the process.

In terms of supporting her Little to get an education, one Big expressed the view that there are challenges involved where there may be a lack of support from the young person’s family, particularly the Little’s father. This young person had ‘drifted out’ of the school system a short time after the match began meeting and the Big had hoped to have an influence on encouraging the young person to go back to education. She encountered difficulty where the young person’s mother wanted the young person to have an education but her father was making it ‘incredibly difficult’ for her and the Big to influence this (R3 I1 B1).

Similarly, though it was not mentioned in terms of a challenge, one Big mentioned how when he meets with his Little’s father, he feels that everything that is said by the father is negative, though he concedes that the Little’s parents may be ‘frustrated’ with their son’s behaviour.

‘I’d meet the dad you know most times I’d go up and collect him...I would chat to him and stuff like, but you know...it’s negative, everything that comes out of him is negative. There’s never a good thing. There’s never a good story, you know. But I suppose they’re frustrated’ (R4 I3 B1)

When talking about the young person’s future and the opportunity he has to ‘make it’ and ‘apply himself to anything he wants to do’ he highlighted that he needs to be supported at home and questioned if that support was available to him (R4 I3 B1).

For one Big, the Little with whom she was matched visited family abroad for a month during the summer leading to a period where the match was unable to meet. This coupled with the fact that, as mentioned previously, the Bigs work requires her to travel regularly, put a certain amount of strain on the relationship in its early stages (R5 I1 B1).

#### **7.3.4 BBBS Being Slow to Start**

Two Bigs mentioned how the length of the process involved in matching them with a Little was challenging for them (R2 I4 B2, R5 I1 B1). One Big highlighted how she signed up to participate in Big Brothers Big Sisters when she knew she would have a year to commit to it as she was just beginning a Master's degree in college. She mentioned that while the initial process involved in terms of the formal application and interviewing occurred quite quickly, being matched with her Little took some time, where she signed up in August or September and was not matched until the following May (R5 I1 B1). This brought with it another challenge where she received a job offer three months into the match and due to the nature of the work and the travel involved she realised that she was going to be unable to spend as much time with her Little as she had planned (R5 I1 B1). To combat this, she printed a calendar for her Little which showed the dates where she wouldn't be able to meet with her and while it was not an 'ideal' situation, the Little agreed to it (R5 I1 B1). Another Big mentioned how he had applied to participate in BBBS a year and a half to two years ago and was not matched until June of this year. This was due to a number of factors including the Garda Vetting process taking a long period of time and the Christmas and summer periods making it difficult to put matches in place (R2 I4 B2).

#### **7.3.5 The Role of the Big and Understanding Boundaries**

Another area which three Bigs spoke of as challenging was in developing an understanding and dealing with issues surrounding boundaries within the relationship. One Big highlighted that there is a certain level of pressure involved in terms of the support and guidance she felt that she could offer her Little particularly in terms of providing her with the 'right information and not...leading her astray' (R3 I7 B4). She felt that knowing the issues she could address with the Little and 'knowing your

boundaries' of when to broach a subject or discuss something further was something which she had to navigate. She also highlighted how getting used to the young person and their background was also something to be considered.

Similarly, in relation to a previously mentioned match, in which the Big had found the young person's circumstances emotionally challenging, this Big also mentioned the way in which she felt that boundaries had also become an issue within the relationship. She highlighted how the young person had disclosed sensitive information to her and had made phone calls to her at 1 o' clock in the morning which led her to feel that they 'just had to put the boundaries back into place around it' (R2 I6 B3).

Another Big alluded to some of the Little's behaviours that he had not necessarily experienced personally but had picked up through conversation. In this he mentioned behaviours that he mightn't 'think are healthy, maybe' but he felt that it wasn't his place to broach such issues, particularly as he had not witnessed them himself (R2 I4 B2).

Similarly, one Big mentioned how at one of their match meetings, her Little had dressed somewhat provocatively. This had made the Big uncomfortable but she was unsure as to what her role was in terms of broaching the subject with the Little. She wondered if she should mention it at all as she was nervous of crossing a boundary in the relationship (R5 I1 B1) particularly as there was an emphasis on the non-judgemental aspect of the relationship during the BBBS training. She said that she found it helpful to discuss this issue with the BBBS Project Officer.

One Big also experienced difficulty in navigating communication and contact with the Little's family. In one case, the young person's father contacted her directly by phone and while she does not consider this to be a major challenge she did feel that in this situation that the father was 'over-stepping'. She felt that in terms of Big Brothers Big Sisters at a programmatic level, the focus is on the match and their relationship as she says 'I suppose we were told about in the beginning your contact is with the Little and it's not with the parents' (R5 I5 B2). She also described another day when dropping the Little home after a meeting the young person's family were in the house, including an uncle and her parents. She highlights the ambiguity in this situation where she was

uncertain as to whether she should stay and talk with the family or if she should leave. She mentioned that it may be helpful to have more training in this area.

#### **7.4 BBBS Project Officers Perspectives**

The BBBS Project Officers also highlighted a number of challenges associated with the programme, which will now be reviewed.

##### **7.4.1 Young People's Interest and Familial Support**

One challenge expressed by two BBBS Project Officers related to the recruitment of young people to the programme. While the programme is voluntary for all young people, they said that young people often don't realise that it is something that they may enjoy and benefit from so there is a need to encourage young people who are reluctant to give it a try. In one particular case, a young person's uncertainty about the programme and the difficulty that was involved in 'sell[ing] the programme' to him was highlighted. On his referral to the programme, the young person's JLO and youth justice worker had both tried to encourage him to participate as he had disengaged from all the other services being provided to him. On speaking with the BBBS Project Officer and after a great deal of encouragement to 'give it a go', he agreed to participate and went on to be a 'really, really good match' (R4 I4 P).

One Project Officer expressed the view that those young people who may not 'buy into' the programme are sometimes those who need it the most, though in this he draws on the voluntary nature of the programme and highlights how the programme is 'not for everyone' (R1 I3 P). Similarly, this Project Officer also mentioned the importance of the support of the family in the match. He asserts that the family's support even on a basic level such as ensuring the young person is ready to meet with the volunteer, 'can make a massive difference' to the match (R1 I3 P). Though he goes on to say that this level of support does not always happen (R1 I3 P).

Similarly, the support of the young person's family can also cross a line in terms of involvement in the match or in their contact with the volunteer. For example, during a follow-up interview with one BBBS Project Officer, it was mentioned how the

Little's parent had asked the volunteer if she could give the volunteer's phone number to the school which her son attended so that the principal could discuss how things were going for the Little. At a programmatic level, the BBBS Project Officer member highlighted how this was not recommended by BBBS and so she has placed herself as the contact person with the school in terms of discussing the Little's experience of Big Brothers Big Sisters with them (Follow Up R2 I2 P).

Further, one Project Officer highlights how even when the young person does participate in the programme, not every Little responds well to the programme, or other difficulties may occur where the match faces challenges in building the relationship and it does not work out (R5 I3 P).

#### **7.4.2 Location of Matches and Meetings**

Two Big Brothers Big Sisters Project Officer mentioned the difficulty involved in the logistics of meeting due to the geographical location of some of the programme participants and the distances that Bigs may have to travel to meet with their Littles. In this, as part of the programme it is recommended that matches spend approximately an hour to two hours together a week. It is highlighted by two BBBS Project Officer that this, along with the distance that the Big would be willing to travel and time they could devote to the match, would be a consideration when matching volunteers with young people. As one Project Officer said, in her particular area 'you'll have a young person in one end of the county and then you'll have a volunteer at the other end of the county' which can be challenging in terms of making matches (R4 I4 P). Balancing the logistics of a potential match but also ensuring that those who are being matched with location in mind have common interests can present its own challenges for this Project Officer (R4 I4 P). One Project Officer believes that a level of flexibility can be employed in terms of the length of time for which the matches meet to allow for a situation where the Big has further to travel. As she says 'maybe if you do an activity that takes three or four hours one week, that maybe the next week maybe it's just a quick catch up' (R2 I2 P).

### **7.4.3 Limited Referral Pool of Young People**

Due to the targeted nature of this programme, all young people who participate in the Garda Youth Diversion Project of Big Brothers Big Sisters must have been either referred by the JLO or Garda Youth Diversion Project due to their behaviour or the risk of them becoming involved in offending behaviour. Two BBBS Project Officers mentioned this limited referral pool as being a challenge which they encounter in their work at an organisational and programmatic level. The targeted nature of the programme and the subsequent smaller number of referrals presented a slight challenge in terms of matching the young person with a Big. Furthermore, due to the targeted nature of the programme another BBBS Project Officer emphasised the importance of good quality matches and making sure you're 'putting the right person with the right person'.

### **7.4.4 Recruiting and Supporting Volunteers and Monitoring the Matches**

A key issue which was raised by a number of BBBS Project Officers is that of recruiting volunteers. While there are a number of recruitment campaigns in place, particularly on Facebook, in order to recruit volunteers for the programme, the BBBS Project Officer highlight the difficulties involved in having volunteers apply but also ensuring that these volunteers are suitable for the programme and that there are young people with whom they can be matched. One Project Officer mentioned how in order to develop eight matches, he may have to process thirty volunteers (R1 I3 P). He also mentioned that while potential volunteers may click the Facebook link to say they are interested in volunteering, when it comes to filling out the application form and going through the application processes, they may not be as forthcoming (R1 I3 P). He highlights how he may be in contact with the potential volunteers to request their application form, and while they say that they will send it on, it never arrives.

More particularly, there is a greater number of male Littles being referred to the programme than females. This, coupled with the fact that in practice more females apply to become part of the programme, creates a difficulty for the BBBS Project Officer who have to work around this mismatch. Similarly, this BBBS Project Officer

also mentioned the requirement for ‘strong volunteers’ who would be able to work with the higher levels of need of the young people who participate in the programme.

One Project Officer also spoke of the difficulty involved in volunteers believing that they have time to commit to the programme but due to other commitments they are unable to participate (R1 I3 P).

#### **7.4.5 Big’s and Little’s Circumstances**

Four Big Brothers Big Sisters Project Officers spoke of the young people’s circumstances as being a challenge that they have encountered during their time working with BBBS, particularly as they are working with young people who have higher levels of need or who are considered to be at-risk. For example, one Big Brothers Big Sisters Project Officer said that there had been a high level of intensity involved in one match from the beginning of the relationship. In this case, the young person had been experiencing difficulties in the home and though the BBBS Project Officer felt that the Big was supporting the young person in this, she acknowledged the ‘difficult’ aspects involved in this. In the follow up interview, this Project Officer member noted that in the period between interviews, the match had taken a break in meeting for a considerable period of time as the Big had been experiencing health problems. Also the BBBS Project Officer had been unable to contact the Big in any way for a number of months and as a result it seems that the match will be formally closed (Follow Up R2 I2 P).

Similarly, one young person who was participating in BBBS had run away from his foster home to live with his father which led to the match being put on hold for a period of time, though at the time of initial interview the match was meeting regularly. Though this was not mentioned explicitly as a challenge by the Project Officer, it caused some disruption in the course of the match. Further to this, at the time of follow-up interview with one BBBS Project Officer, it was revealed that this match had ceased meeting as the Little had moved away (Follow Up of R1 I3 P).

## **7.5 GYDP Youth Justice Workers Perspectives**

The challenges identified by the GYDP Youth Justice workers are now discussed.

### **7.5.1 Young People's Circumstances**

As mentioned previously by a number of stakeholders, the young people's familial and personal circumstances can prove to be challenging in the context of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects and the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme more particularly. In a follow up interview with one youth justice worker, it was highlighted that while the young people may actively engage with their GYDP and BBBS for a period of time, the chaotic nature of their lives and the uncertainty that surround them can mean that something can happen which sets them back. According to this respondent, while the young people engage with the Projects and programmes, this is a short time out of their week and they may still be living in a situation where there are drug issues, they may be dealing with drug debt themselves or may be victims of neglect which in many ways can negate the 'pro-social' work of the Project (Follow Up R3 I3 G).

Within this, the young person's family can be uncertain of the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme and the processes it involves, particularly that of the home visit. This was highlighted as a challenge by two Garda Youth Diversion Project workers (R4 I7 G, Follow Up of R1 I1 G), who work closely with the families of the young people and who witness the uncertainty they have around the BBBS programme and staff members. This can be seen where it can be difficult for the BBBS Project Officer to make initial contact with the families and subsequently where the families are worried about them visiting their homes (Follow Up R1 I1 G). One youth justice worker mentioned an example of how, while a young person wanted to participate in the programme they were inhibited from becoming involved as the BBBS Project Officer was unable to make contact with his parents by phone or in writing. The justice worker also notes a situation where she has had to contact the parent herself and give them the contact information of the BBBS Project Officer so that they would know who the person was as they would not answer the phone to unknown numbers. This makes it difficult for the Big Brothers Big Sisters staff to begin the recruitment process and

match the young people with a volunteer, particularly where the young person wants to participate (Follow Up R1 I1 G).

## **7.6 Senior Youth Officer Perspectives**

As previously mentioned, the role of the Senior Youth Officer is primarily operational and as such the perspectives of these participants differ slightly to those who are directly involved in or who have contact with the match. The two areas which were primarily highlighted by both Senior Youth Officers as challenges was that of the logistical factors involved in the organisation of the BBBS-GYDP programme nationally along with the development of the referral criteria in the recruitment of young people to the programme.

### **7.6.1 Logistics of Organising the Programme**

The difficulties involved in the logistics of the BBBS-GYDP programme lie in the geographical spread of the programme coupled with the number of staff members working across these areas. In this, both SYOs mention the fact that a number of Project Officers have a wide number of counties to manage where matches are developed and monitored. For example, one full time Project Officer covers five counties, while another part-time Project Officer covers three counties.

While one SYO acknowledges that this issue has been improved, another mentions how the way in which it operates at the moment is the best possible situation with regard to the funding they have for the programme. As such, while it is a necessary part of the programme, particularly in terms of providing the programme to a larger number of young people, it does present difficulties in terms of long periods of driving and dealing with the practicalities of travel for the BBBS Project Officers.

### **7.6.2 The Referral Criteria and Recruitment of Littles and Bigs**

This issue, as mentioned by both Senior Youth Officers, was one which arose quite early in the development of the programme and though it has since been resolved, remains as a critical feature of the BBBS-GYDP programme. In this, the criteria for

young people to be referred to the programme, as originally decided upon by the Irish Youth Justice Service and the Association of Garda Sergeants, was seen to be somewhat limiting in the context of Big Brothers Big Sisters. The original criteria allowed only young people who had been formally cautioned to participate in Big Brothers Big Sisters through the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. This presented difficulty as, according to one SYO, the number of young people who were becoming involved in GYDPs was decreasing and as a result there were not as many young people who were eligible or suitable to participate in the programme (SYO 1). One SYO also mentioned the fact that this criteria inhibited young people who they would like to participate in the programme from participating (SYO 2). Furthermore, a large number of formally cautioned youth were male. This, coupled with the lack of male volunteers in the programme, created another issue (SYO 1), though this is an issue which is still common to both the core and the BBBS-GYDP programme (SYO 2).

To combat these issues, through discussion with the IYJS and the Association of Garda Sergeants, the referral criteria for the programme was widened to include young people who were informally cautioned as well as those who were deemed to be at-risk of offending behaviour and as such the number of young people eligible for the programme was increased.

### **7.7 JLO Perspectives**

As mentioned previously due to the early stage of development of the BBBS-GYDP programme, JLOs had limited direct experience of the programme at the time this research was conducted. One JLO noted how involvement in the mentoring programme can be ‘hard to sell’ to the young people as can engagement with the GYDP more generally (R1 I2 J). He spoke of how the young people often don’t feel that they need support or a mentor, though the JLO and youth justice workers can see that it may be of benefit. As he says

‘They think they’re 100%, they think they’re perfect, ‘that’s not for me’ and ‘that’s for other people, not for me’ and it’s trying...to tell them that yes this would be good for you’. (R1 I2 J)

Another JLO spoke of how it takes time to identify young people that would be suitable for the programme and engaging them in it. This causes difficulty as time is

a limited resource within her role and within the role of the BBBS Project Officer whom she notes is ‘thinly spread’ in terms of her workload (R4 I1 J). She also noted the voluntary nature of the programme as potentially being a challenge. She says

‘I know...what they have to go through is very stringent and the forms they have to fill and all the rest but my idea of expecting people to do a job that they’re not getting paid for, you get a better return...if they were getting paid’. (R4 I1 J)

She also spoke of the challenge involved in recruiting volunteers and having enough male volunteers to match the young people with as the ‘majority of referrals would be male...but the majority of volunteers would be female’ (R4 I1 J). While she also noted the other variables which need to be considered when recruiting participants to the programme and making matches as ‘you’re trying to get people who have interests or...that might match up or might click in with the young people as well...and locations and all the rest’ (R4 I1 J).

## **7.8 Conclusion**

This chapter detailed the key challenges identified by stakeholders with regard to the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme. Challenges were outlined across stakeholder type, with key themes being highlighted which emerged from the thematic analysis of the data. The benefits and challenges associated with programme will be discussed in the next chapter in line with the theoretical framework for the study and literature in the area of mentoring, deviance and youth justice.

## **Chapter Eight**

### ***Discussion***

#### **8.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, literature the area of youth crime, deviance, justice and mentoring will be revisited briefly so as to provide context for the discussion. The findings of this research will be discussed in relation to how the youth mentoring programme was received by stakeholders. The benefits of the mentoring intervention for young people identified under the key themes of social support and relationships, sense of direction and purpose and mental health being will be discussed with reference to the literature. The challenges involved in the BBBS-GYDP programme as identified by stakeholders will also be detailed in relation to relevant research. The theoretical underpinnings of the mentoring intervention will then be discussed in relation to young people's social ecologies, the risk and protective factors which can lead to involvement in youth crime and the social bonds theory as a means of understanding the place of this mentoring intervention in the context of youth crime and deviance.

Youth crime and deviance has been an issue of constant societal concern for centuries, but the way in which these issues are understood and dealt with have changed (Hendrick, 2015). Historically young people were subject to the same punitive measures as adults in issues of crime (Baker & Maguire, 2005). Today, a developing understanding of youth and evidence supporting the fact that the majority of young people grow out of crime, has allowed for alternative measures to be established, moving from punitive to preventative and from punishment to support (Maruna et al, 2015; Smith, 2007). With the implementation of the Children Act 2001, the legislation and policy landscape surrounding issues of youth justice in Ireland has become increasingly focused on prevention and diversion from crime (Kilkelly, 2006), though there are a number of critiques of this approach which have been given consideration. The development of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme through the Irish Youth Justice Service, has made alternatives to sentencing available to youth and, in doing so, aims to provide support to reduce and prevent further offending.

Rooted in the youth justice system of early twentieth century America, youth mentoring as it exists today is found primarily in two different forms, informal and formal (Baker and Maguire, 2005; Dolan & Brady, 2012). Though the emergence and organisation of these forms of mentoring differ, the objective remains the same, to match or pair a young person with a caring, adult mentor who can provide a level of support to the young person (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Mentoring, as it is explored in this study, focuses on the formal youth mentoring programme known as Big Brothers Big Sisters. Big Brothers Big Sisters, under the management of Foróige, came to Ireland in 2001. More recently, as a result of the emerging justice policy and Foróige's connections with the IYJS, a mentoring programme to be provided in Foróige managed GYDPs was developed. The BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme, which is the focus of this study, is very much located in policy efforts to tackle youth crime through supportive and preventative interventions. As part of the GYDPs it is provided as part of a suite of programmes made available to youth, which aim to reduce and prevent further instances of youth offending. It can be understood as aiming to strengthen and enhance the social ecology of the young person by introducing a supportive adult into their lives. It can also be understood in the context of the pathways associated with youth crime, particularly in terms of the existence of risk and protective factors in the life of a young person and the social bonds theory, all of which will be discussed further in this chapter.

## **8.2 Discussion of Findings**

The aim of this study was to explore, through the perspectives of key stakeholders, the value of this BBBS youth mentoring programme as it exists in the context of the youth justice system in Ireland. In this chapter we reflect on the key findings emerging from the study and discuss the significance of these findings in relation to existing research, policy and practice. This initiative is at an early stage of development, so no definitive findings in relation to outcomes can be made. However, four key findings emerge from the study in relation to the value of this intervention, the benefits and challenges associated with it and the theoretical grounding of the intervention. These will be discussed in further detail throughout this chapter.

### **8.3 Stakeholders Responses to the Programme**

The Big Brothers Big Sisters-Garda Youth Diversion Projects mentoring programme has been well received by young people, mentors, BBBS Project Officers, youth justice workers and JLOs. While young people have been slow to engage with the programme, those who did so spoke positively of their experiences. Volunteers have come forward to act as informal mentors to the young people and have found the experience rewarding. At a programmatic level, the initiative has been seen to complement the work of GYDPs and the objectives of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme. Operationally, considerable progress has been made in developing structures and processes including refinement of referral criteria and co-operation between the Irish Youth Justice Service, the Diversion Programme and Foróige.

In relation to the BBBS-GYDP programme complementing the work of the GYDP, a number of youth justice workers noted it as a positive intervention to have available to them as a one-on-one support, where the GYDP was not able to provide this consistently in a one-to-one context. This falls in line with research in the area which posits that youth mentoring interventions are effective where they are made available along with other programmes (Philip and Spratt, 2007; Tolan et al, 2014). In some cases the mentoring relationships developed through BBBS were also noted to focus on the issues which were being addressed by the youth justice workers; the programme can therefore be seen as providing informal support to the work of the GYDPs.

In relation to the operation of this mentoring programme in the context of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects, progress has been made with regard to recruitment of young people to the programme. When this programme was first established, the eligibility criteria for young people was restricted, allowing only those who had been formally cautioned by the JLO to be involved. This greatly restricted the number of young people who were eligible to participate in the BBBS-GYDP programme and so progress in terms of developing matches was slow in the early stages of the programme. Since then, through the positive partnership between the IYJS and Foróige, the criteria have been widened and the processes involved in the organisation of the programme have been refined. As a result, the numbers of young people involved in the programme have increased. Stakeholders' perceptions of this change

were positive, though some still identify the recruitment criteria as being somewhat challenging.

#### **8.4 Perceived Benefits of the BBBS-GYDP Programme**

Across all stakeholders, the initiative was seen to have benefits for young people. The key themes which emerged were: social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose and perceptions of the positive effects of mentoring on the young person's mental health and well-being. The key findings in relation to these themes will now be discussed.

##### **8.4.1 Social Relationships and Support**

The development of relationships and a sense of support was a key theme identified across stakeholder perspectives in this study. Benefits such as having someone to talk to that you can trust and having somebody to do things with were associated with the development of the mentor-mentee relationship and in line with mentoring and social support literature are examples of concrete support (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Particular benefits were also noted in terms of the mentor being a support for the young person in times of trouble or when they were in the process of taking exams in school. For a number of young people the meetings with their mentor acted as an escape and 'relief', where they could have time just for themselves away from their peers, families and stresses of life. The importance of such a relationship was also noted by Project Officers and youth justice workers who highlighted the 'chaotic' nature of some of the young people's lives. This was found to correspond with literature in the area of social support theory where it has been noted that supportive relationships can act as a 'buffer to stress' and lead to increased coping capabilities (Dolan and Brady, 2012).

The youth mentoring literature also highlights a positive association between the presence of a mentor in a young person's life and their development of positive relationships with other adults (DuBois et al, 2011). This is reflected in this study where young people were noted by other stakeholders to have experienced improvements in relationships in the home since beginning with the programme. They were getting along much better with their siblings and parents and their approach to

home life was more positive. Project Officers linked this to the mentors acting as a good influence and role model for their mentee.

Young people also noted how they felt that their mentor was there for them, they could rely on them and that they could talk to them when they might not be able to talk to others. One young person said that if her mentor thought something was wrong with her, she would persist until she found out what it was (R2 I5 L3). This can be linked to the idea of perceived social support which has been highlighted as being of benefit to youth in other mentoring studies. In a recent Randomised Control Trial of the BBBS programme in Ireland, a perceived sense of social support was one of the key benefits highlighted in the report and was linked to an increased sense of support from other adults and higher levels of hope and efficacy for the future (Dolan et al., 2011).

#### **8.4.2 Sense of Direction and Purpose**

Young people developing a sense of direction and purpose and being aided in this pursuit by their mentor emerged as a finding of this research. Mentors helping mentees in their education and exploring their options for the future was discussed as a benefit across stakeholders while developing and sharing skills was also highlighted as a key aspect of mentoring relationships.

Mentors' willingness to help and encourage their mentees, in the area of education particularly, was highlighted as important in this study. This connection between mentor support and education has been highlighted in the literature where Tolan et al (2014) found that mentoring relationships which emphasise advocacy are associated with stronger effects in the area of education. This type of support and advocacy was evident across a number of matches where young people were supported by their mentors either in pursuing further education returning to education after being out of it for a period of time. This mirrors a recent study of the Le Chéile mentoring programme which found that at the beginning of the mentoring programme 48 percent of mentees were not engaged in education at all. By the end of the mentoring programme this had reduced to 15 percent with half of the young people associating their return to education with the presence of their mentor in their life.

Changes in mentees' attitude towards education were also documented by stakeholders in this study. It was noted by stakeholders that previously some young people had negative attitudes towards education and engaged in negative behaviour in school. An improvement in attitude towards school was identified by a number of stakeholders in the programme with the support of the mentor being noted as a contributing factor. One young person explained how his mentor was 'putting good thoughts' in his head particularly around the value of education and how he would get a job in the future. A reduction in school days missed by young people and improved behaviour in school were highlighted as particular benefits. This is linked to the findings of an impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters in America which found that young people who were participating in the mentoring programme were more positive toward education and were less likely to skip class (Tierney and Grossman, 1998).

Benefits were also documented for young people in terms of trying new things with their mentor and learning new skills. One young person had learned how to swim with her mentor, something which she had never enjoyed before as she felt that she 'wasn't really good at it' (R5 I4 L2). She associated this new skill directly with an increased level of confidence. Mentors also noted that teaching each other skills and encouraging the Littles to share things they were interested was something which was emphasised in the mentoring relationship, helping to improve the Little's confidence. This corresponds with research in this area which notes that young people's skills and sense of 'personal competence' can be developed through the supportive social experiences involved in mentoring programmes and the mentoring relationship (Keller, 2007, p. 39).

### **8.4.3 Mental Health and Well-Being**

In relation to the mental health and well-being of young people, in the context of the mentoring literature, it has been noted that the presence of a 'caring adult' in the life of a young person can prove beneficial in their emotional development (Dolan & Brady, 2012, p. 9). In terms of research relating to young people's well-being more widely, the support of 'one good adult' in the life of the young person has been highlighted in a recent Irish study (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2012) as being 'one of the strongest predictors' of positive mental health in young people. Findings to this effect

are identified in this study where a number young people said that they would be bored if they didn't have their Big, an issue which one Project Officer connected to the development of ill mental health in some of the young people she works with. Two young people who participated in the study noted feeling happier since meeting with their Big. Other young people noted an increase in confidence as did a number of key stakeholders. One BBBS staff member highlighted how a young person whom she was working with had been very quiet and shy before beginning the BBBS programme, a number of months on her confidence had grown to such an extent that the staff member could hear confidence in the young person's voice when she spoke with her on the phone. This is in line with the existing literature in the area of mentoring which highlights the positive effects that youth mentoring relationships can have on self-esteem (DuBois et al, 2011).

Mentoring relationships have also been linked with the placement of a 'model of effective adult communication' in the life of a young person which can have positive connotations for the young person's emotional development particularly in helping them to understand and control their emotions (DuBois et al, 2011, p. 62). This form of emotional support being provided in the mentoring context has been associated with reduced aggression (Tolan et al, 2014) and is evident in one of the mentoring relationships in this study whereby one young person noted how he does not lose his temper as easily now that he meets with his mentor (R4 I2 L1).

### **8.5 Perceived Challenges of the BBBS-GYDP Programme**

A range of challenges were also identified by stakeholders. The challenges identified in this study varied by the stakeholder's role in the mentoring programme. Challenges were noted at a programmatic level in terms of the recruitment of young people and volunteers, while difficulties which arose in matches were also addressed. The primary challenges identified by stakeholders will be discussed here with reference to relevant literature surrounding theory and practice.

At a programmatic level, the challenges identified by the Project Officers, Senior Youth Officers and youth justice workers included the recruitment of suitable volunteers. This difficulty stemmed from the large number of male mentees and the

lack of adult male volunteers seeking to participate in the programme, meaning that the demand outweighed the supply. Participants in this study associated this challenge with the nature of the BBBS-GYDP programme, where the majority of young people with whom they work are males as it is primarily male youth who become involved in, or are at-risk of becoming involved, offending behaviour. This is a challenge which is not confined to the BBBS-GYDP programme. It was also noted by an SYO as being an issue in the core BBBS programme. Research in the area of mentoring has reported that the recruitment of male volunteers pose a challenge across mentoring programmes in a number of contexts (Campbell, 2007, Philip and Spratt, 2007). A report on the JUMP mentoring programme for young offenders noted that 62.8 percent of their volunteers were female (Novotney et al, 2000). O' Dwyer (2017) also flagged the recruitment of male volunteers as a concern in an evaluation of the Le Chéile mentoring programme for young offenders in Ireland.

Similarly, as the programme works with young people who are considered to have a higher level of need, ensuring the recruitment of strong, high-quality volunteers can pose a challenge in this programme. To combat this, and ensure that those volunteers who are recruited are of high-quality and committed volunteers, the BBBS Service Delivery Manual and best practice guidelines are strictly adhered to in terms of the recruitment and screening of volunteers, as is the case in all BBBS strands. This has been noted in this study as well as in studies relating to the core BBBS programme in Ireland and internationally (Dolan et al, 2011; Tierney & Grossman, 1998). Similarly, in some cases young people's personal circumstances were also identified as a challenge. The chaotic nature of the lives of some of the young people and the disorder that this brought to the match at times was identified as a challenge by stakeholders, particularly mentors. This was noted in terms of contact and meetings with mentees being sporadic, with mentees sometimes missing meetings. It has been highlighted that, as the programme is voluntary, when recruiting young people it should be ensured that young people want to participate and are willing to commit to the programme and that a contract outlining this commitment should be signed by all parties involved including parents or guardians of the young person (Dolan et al, 2011). The provision of effective and ongoing training and support has also been noted as a method of combatting this difficulty (Henihan & Alexander, 2017; Miller, 2007).

Closely related to this were the difficulties identified in relation to the volunteer's personal circumstances. These focused mainly on the challenge of the volunteer balancing their own workload and social lives whilst also making time for BBBS. To address this, and avoid early closure of the match, it has been noted in the mentoring literature that appropriate screening measures should be used when recruiting volunteers so as to ascertain their motivations for involvement in BBBS and the time they are willing to commit to the programme (Miller, 2007). While no match had officially closed due to this difficulty, there was a possibility of one match closing due to the volunteer's personal circumstances. As in line with BBBS policies and practices, it was noted that the appropriate procedure would be followed in closing the match so as to avoid upsetting either participant. The opportunity to be matched with another mentor would also be offered to the young person.

Particular difficulties were also identified for matches based in rural areas, in terms of the logistics of match meetings. The distance between matches created difficulties for mentors in particular where travel time between their home and the young person's home took away from the time available to them for their meeting and the mentors spare time for themselves. Challenges were also encountered in finding things to do as a match, whereby in some areas there was a lack of activities and facilities available. This challenge was also documented in the Randomised Control Trial of BBBS in Ireland (Dolan et al, 2011) where lack of available facilities in rural areas was identified as an issue.

As the benefits and challenges associated with this youth mentoring programme have been outlined, the theoretical basis for the intervention will now be discussed.

## **8.6 The Theoretical Basis of the Mentoring Intervention**

While we were unable to assess outcomes in relation to offending behaviour, the findings are in line with theory regarding risk and protective factors relating to youth offending. The BBBS-GYDP mentoring intervention has a sound theoretical basis and has links with social bonds theory, while also highlighting the importance of one good adult in the life of a young person. It can also be seen to have an influence across a young person's social ecology, particularly in terms of the home and school settings.

### 8.6.1 Risk and Protective Factors and the Social Ecology

The presence of a mentor in the life of the young person through the BBBS-GYDP programme can be seen to influence and strengthen their social ecology. While the mentoring relationship, and many of its associated benefits such as having someone to talk to and do things with, can be located in the microsystem of the young person's ecology, it is posited in this study that the effects of the mentoring intervention can be seen to influence the wider spheres of the young person's ecology. It is argued here that the risk and protective factors for involvement in youth crime can be situated within this ecological systems framework and can be influenced by the placement of this mentoring intervention in the young person's ecology. Risk factors are considered to be those factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in youth crime, while protective factors are those which 'moderat[ing] the effects of exposure to risk' (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2005).

To depict this the table from Chapter two, outlining common risk and protective factors associated with youth deviance and crime, has been adapted to include the risk and protective factors which relate to the ecologies of the young people who participated in this study.

**Table 4: Risk and Protective Factors for Involvement in Youth Crime - BBBS-GYDP Study**

(Table adapted from Youth.gov, *Risk and Protective factors*, no date)

<b>Risk Factors</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antisocial behaviour</li> <li>• Angry emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Low levels of confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>• Illicit substance use</li> </ul>	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• More positive, happier</li> <li>• Positive skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate child rearing practices</li> <li>• Family discord</li> <li>• Teenage parenthood</li> </ul>	Family and Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of resources and contacts to expose youth to multiple experiences and opportunities</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent-child conflict</li> <li>• Difficulties within the home</li> </ul>	Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presence of a positive adult (ally) within or outside the family to mentor and be supportive</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending time with peers who engage in negative or deviant behaviour</li> <li>• Gang involvement</li> <li>• Experience of bullying and social exclusion</li> </ul>	Peer Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending time with positive friends</li> <li>• Engagement in positive and safe activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor academic motivation</li> <li>• Poor academic performance</li> <li>• Low commitment to education</li> <li>• Few educational goals</li> <li>• Residence in high crime communities</li> </ul>	School/Community Microsystem and Mesosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment in schools and courses that address needs of the young person</li> <li>• Positive communities which encourage healthy activities</li> </ul>

When developing an understanding of the BBBS-GYDP youth mentoring intervention in the context of young people's social ecologies, it is important to consider the dual role of the mentor. It is posited here, that the mentor and the mentoring relationship can be seen to be located in the microsystem of the young person's ecology and as highlighted in Table 4 above, the existence of this relationship may be considered a protective factor in itself. However, in accordance with the findings of the study, it is argued that the role and influence of the mentoring relationship on the risk and protective factors for involvement in crime are evident in the wider spheres of a young person's ecology. The way in which these factors are influenced by the placement of the mentoring relationship in the life of the young person will be discussed below.

In the context of the research findings, anti-social behaviour, angry emotional outbursts and low levels of confidence and self-esteem were identified as risk factors at the level of the individual. One young person noted his tendency to 'flip over nothing' (R4 I2 L1), while another spoke of her lack of confidence before meeting

with her Big (R5 I4 L2). A BBBS Project Officer noted a young person's illicit substance use as a factor which led to his involvement in the youth justice system and the mentoring programme.

In line with Table 4 protective factors were also identified at the level of the individual and can be seen to be influenced by the existence of the mentor in the young people's social ecology. These included reports of young people feeling more confident (R5 I4 L1) and happier within themselves. This can be linked to the presence of the mentor in the life of the young person, and the emotional support they provided them with. It can also be seen to link to other levels of the social ecology, particularly the community, whereby the mentor made opportunities available for the young people in terms of learning new skills such as swimming in one case, where one young person linked her emerging sense of confidence with the skill she learned.

At the family level of the ecology which for ease of reference is posited here to include the mentor, and in line with Table 4, risk factors were identified in terms of difficulties and discord within the home, parent-child conflict, teenage parenthood and inadequate child rearing practices whereby one young person noted how she lacked a role model in her life who would tell her right from wrong (R5 I4 L2).

In terms of the protective factors at this level, the presence of an emotional support in the form of a mentor was identified in the findings. The presence of this positive support was highlighted across stakeholders and was related to the positive social, emotional and moral development of the young person. The availability of resources was also evident as a protective factor at this level of the ecology while it can also be linked to the community level where young people had the opportunity to visit new places and try new things with their mentor. In this, they were exposed to more experiences such as new sports (R2 I8 L1). This can also be linked to the study findings, and the wider community level, in relation to the young people's increased sense of direction and purpose whereby the mentor made resources and contacts available to the young people which would help them in future employment opportunities.

A number of risk factors were identified in this study in relation to young people's engagement with peers. These included spending time with peers who are involved in deviant or criminal behaviour and gangs. One young person also drew attention to her experience of bullying as being one which led to her becoming involved in BBBS-GYDP (R3 I8 L4).

Protective factors that were identified at this level were spending time with positive friends and engagement in positive and safe activities. As the BBBS-GYDP takes place in the context of Foróige managed GYDPs, young people who participate in BBBS may concurrently participate in group based-work. In two cases, young people were meeting their mentors through GYDPs as well as through BBBS as the mentors also volunteered with these Projects. In this, as volunteers, the mentors not only supported the young person on an individual level but also enabled their engagement with other peers and participation in positive activities through the projects. This highlights the influence of the mentoring intervention across the young person's ecology from individual to peer.

Risk factors relating to the school and community level in this study were identified as poor academic motivation and performance, low levels of commitment, few educational goals and residence in a high crime neighbourhood. These were noted across a number of stakeholders and were widely associated with non-attendance in education.

The protective factors in this area included enrolment in schools and courses which provided for the needs of young people. This was particularly relevant for a number of young people who were returning to education and were supported by their mentor in ensuring they chose the course which would be most fulfilling for them. The support provided in this context also helped to build up the young people's sense of self-esteem as the mentor believed in them, while helping to make more opportunities available to them in the future. A protective factor was also identified with regards to positive communities which encourage healthy activities. Mentors in this sense often brought their mentees out into the community, as mentioned previously doing new activities and encouraging them to meet new people. This can be seen to extend the role of the mentor past the micro-system and into the mesosystem.

As such, it can be seen that the BBBS-GYDP mentoring intervention, as it exists in the young person's ecology, has a role in strengthening a young person's ecology, while also enhancing the protective factors and combatting some of the risks associated with involvement in crime.

### **8.6.2 Social Bonds Theory**

To further this, the ecological framework theory as discussed in connection with risk and protective factors for involvement in youth crime is also linked to Hirschi's social bonds theory. It is posited here that the mentoring relationship and its influences on the young person's social ecology strengthens the young person's bonds with society, which in line with this theory, may serve to reduce the likelihood of a young person's deviant behaviour.

Hirschi's (2002) social bonds theory, which deals with the issue of social control, posits that all humans have an inherent tendency towards deviance and while many perspectives of crime seek to understand what influences a person to become involved in deviant behaviour the focus should instead be on what stops the young person from becoming involved in such behaviour. Hirschi argued that what inhibits the individual from engaging in negative behaviour is their bonds to society, the values it possesses and the institutions within it (Pratt et al, 2010). When a person's bonds with society are weak, they become more likely to engage in deviant or negative behaviour. There are four key components of these social bonds. These are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Hirschi, 2002, p. 16-26). Each of these components will be discussed in relation to the BBBS-GYDP programme.

In relation to the attachment aspect of the social bond, Hirschi (2002) posits that individuals who have a strong level of attachment to others in society are less likely to become involved in deviance and crime. It is argued here that the placement of a mentor in the life of a young person, in the microsystem of their ecology, can be seen to have an effect on this sense of attachment. This is evident in the support provided by the mentor to the young person along with the sense of trust which the mentee places in the mentor. Young people who participated in the study also noted that they could rely on their mentor, highlighting a particular type of connection between

mentor and mentee. It could also be said that through the mentoring programme, mentors, in line with the ecological systems framework, created connections across the young person's ecology. In helping the young person to develop a more positive attitude to school while also influencing their mentee's family relationships, it is argued here that mentors help to build a young person's sense of attachment to society, not only through their own relationship but also by influencing the young person's relationship with other social actors.

In relation to the commitment element of this bond, Hirschi (2002) notes that a person's behaviour is controlled by the level of commitment which a person has to 'conventional behaviour' and their associated position in society (p.20). When considered in the context of this mentoring intervention, it could be said that through meeting with their mentor and being supported and encouraged in educational achievement and goal attainment their sense of direction and purpose is increased, as detailed in the findings, enhancing their level of commitment to conventional norms in the area of education and future possibilities. The mentors influence, in this sense, extends across the microsystem in the young person's ecology, in terms of education and future employment opportunities. It could also be said that the sense of commitment the young person feels towards their mentor, their relationship and the opportunities it presents, is impetus in itself to adhere to conventional norms and may increase their bond with society.

The involvement element of Hirschi's (2002) theory builds upon the idea that if an individual does not have enough time to consider deviant action, due to involvement with conventional behaviour, they will be less likely to become involved in deviant behaviour. In this light, the converse may also be true. A person through boredom, or lack of involvement in conventional activity, may be more likely to move towards deviance. In relation to this study, this element of the bond can be connected to the assertion by a number of young people that they had nothing to do, or would be bored if they did not meet with their mentor. It is posited here that meeting with their mentor, not only gave the young people something to do which would be considered to be conventional and in line with social norms, but also that it increased their interest in these conventional activities which they could participate in, in their own time. When this is linked with the trust and the sense of support which the young people felt with

their mentors, it could be seen as an example of a strong social bond being developed, particularly in the context of the microsystem of the young person's social ecology.

In relation to the final element of the social bonds theory, that of belief, Hirschi (2002) posits that it is the extent to which the individual believes in the norms held by society that controls their behaviour. Young people may ignore common societal values and display behaviour contrary to the norms of wider society due to the values held in their particular social circle and expressed by their families, where there is a prevalent disregard for the law. In relation to this study the mentor, through the mentoring relationship, may be seen to challenge this behaviour in the young person at the macrosystem level of the ecology, by providing them with insight into alternative pathways and beliefs available to them in line with more conventional norms, through support in education and encouraging a sense of confidence and self-worth.

As such, when considered in line with the findings of this research project, the BBBS-GYDP mentoring intervention can influence the development of the young person's social ecology and strengthen their bonds with society, which, as noted by Hirschi (2002), may reduce the likelihood of involvement in deviant behaviour. However, it is important to note that as highlighted in the literature and documented by a number of stakeholders in this study, young people have varied life experiences and can have very difficult lives. As such, the mentoring intervention, which is the focus of this study, should not be considered as a panacea which will have the same level of influence across ecologies.

### **8.7 Considerations to Guide Future Evaluations of the Model?**

This study focused on the importance of gaining the stakeholder's own perceptions of Big Brothers Big Sisters in the context of Garda Youth Diversion Projects and the place that this intervention holds in the lives of the young people at whom it is targeted. While the qualitative perspective is of immense importance, with regard to future evaluations of the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme, a number of factors should be considered in order to broaden the knowledge base surrounding this type of intervention.

A longitudinal mixed methods study would be very effective in the area of BBBS-GYDP where qualitative interviews could be carried out so as to gain an insight into the pre-match expectations of stakeholders which could then be compared with post-match perceptions. This, undertaken in conjunction with quantitative measures, may be used to develop a robust and all-round understanding of the effects of mentoring. Following the example of the Randomised Control Trial of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Programme in Ireland would also prove to be beneficial. In this, it may be helpful to negotiate access to monitoring data or the YLS/CMI scale scoring information used by GYDPs in order to gain an insight into the background of the young person on a 'risk' level, where the reasons for referral to the GYDPs and BBBS vary from risk of offending to repeat offending behaviour.

Similarly, on an internal basis there could be a level of self-evaluation on a programmatic level within Big Brothers Big Sisters, where, if feasible, the BBBS staff members could make use of YLS/CMI risk evaluation in their own right. This could be carried out at the beginning of the relationship before the young person is matched followed by repeat assessment at the end of the match and the level of risk could be compared to assess the effects of the mentoring programme on the level of risk.

Within this study, a number of matches who participated and others who were discussed throughout this report were at-risk of coming to a premature close. As mentioned by Dolan, Canavan and Brady (2008) 'little is known about the downside of mentoring for example, when matches fail or end early'. In this sense, there would be merit in undertaking an examination of what happens when a match ends prematurely before the programme year is up, the perceptions of stakeholders and the precise processes which occur in these situations. This would be of particular benefit in understanding mentoring interventions as a whole and the impact of match duration on young people and stakeholder's perceptions of this.

With regard to the study of deviance and youth crime in general, in line with previous discussions surrounding risk factors for involvement in youth crime and deviance, an insight into the backgrounds of those young people coming into conflict with the law has proven vital. An understanding of the lives of these young people along with the type of crimes they become involved in is crucial in developing a holistic

understanding of movements towards criminal behaviour in general. More precisely, in the context of the risk factor prevention paradigm proposed by Farrington (2000), the availability of data is also crucial in identifying those factors and helping to prevent or alleviate them with a view to reducing crime but also the negative effects of it within the young person's life.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

This chapter briefly revisited the literature and policy context in relation to deviance, youth justice and mentoring. It went on to outline how the mentoring intervention has been received by stakeholders with the findings in relation to the benefits and challenges of the programme also being discussed with reference to the existing literature. With reference to the study findings, the theoretical basis of this intervention was explored in the context of the ecological systems theory and the risk and protective factors for the involvement in youth crime. Hirschi's social bonds theory was also detailed in relation to the study findings as a means of understanding the place of this youth mentoring intervention in influencing a young person's involvement in deviant behaviour.

## **Chapter Nine**

### ***Conclusion***

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarises the thesis as a whole and reflects on the overall structure and processes involved in the study. It presents a summary of the findings of the study and notes points for consideration in the future delivery of this youth mentoring intervention.

#### **9.2 Research Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this study was to explore, through the perspectives of key stakeholders, the value of a youth mentoring intervention for young people who are involved, or at-risk of involvement, in the youth justice system in Ireland. The key research questions guiding this study were:

- Is mentoring a valuable intervention for young people involved with the youth justice system?
- What are the benefits and challenges associated with this approach?
- Is this a model that is worthy of wider implementation?
- What considerations should guide future evaluations of the model?
- How can this youth mentoring intervention be understood in the context of the young people's social ecologies?

The objectives of the study were to

- To undertake detailed semi-structured interviews with the young people, their mentors and programme staff regarding their experiences with this intervention, in terms of expectations, programme delivery and perceived outcomes
- To assess the perceived benefits and challenges associated with the provision of youth mentoring in the context of youth justice systems and to make recommendations for future delivery and evaluation of this approach.
- To explore the perceived value of the youth mentoring intervention from the perspectives of key stakeholders.

- To consider the findings of the study in relation to relevant theory in the context of youth crime, deviance and mentoring interventions.
- To understand and theorise this youth mentoring intervention in the context of the young person's social ecology.

### **9.3 Thesis Structure**

This thesis began by presenting the background to the study, the underpinning theoretical framework and the research aims and objectives which guided the study. The second chapter then highlighted the theoretical perspectives on deviance, social bonds theory and the risk and protective factors which can influence a young person's involvement in offending behaviour. The legislative and policy context of youth crime and justice in Ireland was also explored. The third chapter detailed the history of youth mentoring through to the forms in which it exists today. The benefits and challenges involved in youth mentoring were discussed and the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme and the contexts in which it exists in Ireland were detailed. The fourth chapter outlined the methodology which guided this study, including the theoretical and practical considerations which were taken into account when developing the research design and carrying out data analysis. Chapter five provided contextual information for the study and outlined the role of the GYDPs in the context of the Irish youth justice system. It also detailed the processes and procedures involved in the organisation of the BBBS-GYDP programme. The sixth chapter presented the findings of the study which emerged from the perspectives of the stakeholders in relation to the expectations and benefits of the mentoring programme. Chapter seven detailed the findings in relation to the challenges experienced by stakeholders as part of BBBS-GYDP. Chapter eight presented a discussion of the benefits and challenges of the mentoring intervention in line with literature in this area. It also explored the theoretical basis for the study including a discussion surrounding the place of the BBBS-GYDP youth mentoring programme in the young person's ecology while considering the influence which this programme can have on the risk and protective factors for a young person's involvement in crime. This was also considered in terms of the social bonds theory of deviance and crime.

#### **9.4 Merits and Limitations of the Research**

This study took on a qualitative approach in exploring the perspectives of stakeholders in the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme, addressing a gap in research studies based on the perspectives of participants in mentoring interventions for youth who have been or are at-risk of being involved in offending behaviour. The inclusion of the young people who participate in the mentoring programme in this research is also of merit. It has been said that ‘understanding the child’s perspectives are key to protecting promoting and supporting their health and well-being’ (Department of Children and Youth Affairs Working Group on Research Ethics, 2012, p.1), however young people’s perspectives are often omitted from research. The inclusion of their voice in this study added the youth perspective to this research and added to the understanding of the BBBS-GYDP programme.

As this programme is still in its formative stages and due to the timeframe of the study, this study focused on the perspectives of 41 key stakeholders, including 12 full matches who participated in the research. This could be considered to be a limitation of the research though, at present, the programme has not yet expanded geographically or involved the number of participants which would allow for a larger scale study to take place.

#### **9.5 Summary of Research Findings**

Over the past number of decades, the measures being implemented to tackle youth crime in Ireland have moved from the punitive to the preventative, with increasing emphasis being placed on diversion and alternatives to sentencing. As a result, current policy emphasises the need for community involvement and inter-agency co-operation in youth crime prevention, as well as approaches that seek to strengthen the protective factors in young people’s lives, thus protecting them from crime. One such approach is that of the BBBS-GYDP youth mentoring programme which aims to divert young people away from involvement or further involvement in crime.

This research comprised a qualitative investigation of the value of the BBBS-GYDP youth mentoring intervention in the context of the youth justice system in Ireland,

through the perspectives of key stakeholders in the intervention. The findings were derived from the key themes which emerged from analysis of research interviews. These themes were social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose, mental health and well-being and the way in which the BBBS complements the work of GYDPs.

In line with the theoretical framework for this study, these findings were considered in the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and were explored in relation to theory regarding risk and protective factors for the involvement in youth crime. As a means of developing an understanding of the place of this mentoring intervention in influencing a young person's involvement in crime Hirschi's social bonds theory was also detailed in this context.

Through discussion of the findings of this research project, it is posited here that the BBBS-GYDP mentoring intervention, through the placement of one good adult in the life of a young person, can influence the development of the young person's social ecology and strengthen their bonds with society. This as noted by Hirschi (2002), may reduce the likelihood of involvement in deviant behaviour, highlighting the value of this mentoring intervention for young people in the context of youth justice as well as in their wider social ecology. However it is important to note that, as highlighted previously, young people have varied life experiences and can have very difficult lives. As such, the mentoring intervention, which is the focus of this study, should not be considered as a panacea which will have the same level of influence across ecologies.

## **9.6 Considerations for Future Programme Delivery and Concluding Remarks**

The Big Brothers Big Sisters-Garda Youth Diversion Projects youth mentoring programme has been well received by young people, mentors, BBBS Project Officers, GYDP youth justice workers and JLOs. The initiative has been seen to complement the work of GYDPs and the objectives of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme. Progress has also been made in developing structures and processes including refinement of referral criteria and co-operation between the Irish Youth Justice Service, the Diversion Programme and Foróige. Perceived benefits have been

identified by stakeholders in the area of social relationships and support, sense of direction and purpose and mental health and well-being. These findings are in line with theory regarding risk and protective factors for youth crime and have links with social bonds theory, while also highlighting the importance of one good adult in the life of a young person. It can also be seen to have an influence across a young person's social ecology, particularly in terms of the home and school settings. To conclude, as a result of these findings, it is recommended that through the ongoing co-operation between the IYJS, GYDPs and Foróige, the BBBS-GYDP mentoring programme should be continued.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Statement of Ethical Approval from NUI Galway, Research Ethics Committee



Leas-Uachtarán  
um Thaighde

Vice President  
for Research

3 April 2017

Ref: **17-Jan-11**

Kayleigh Murphy  
UNESCO Child and Family Centre  
NUI Galway

Dear Ms Murphy,

**Re: 'Big Brothers Big Sisters and Garda Youth Diversion Projects: Perspectives on a Preventative Intervention.'**

I write to you regarding the above proposal which was submitted for Ethical review. Having reviewed your response to my letter, I am pleased to inform you that your proposal has been granted **APPROVAL**.

All NUI Galway Research Ethic Committee approval is given subject to the Principal Investigator submitting annual and final statements of compliance. The first statement is due on or before 3 April 2018.

See annual and final statement of compliance forms below. Section 7 of the REC's Standard Operating Procedures gives further details, and also outlines other instances where you are required to report to the REC.

Yours sincerely

Allyn Fives  
Chair, Research Ethics Committee

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Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Young People



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Information Sheet for Young People



You have been asked if you would like to take part in a research project about mentoring for young people. Researchers in NUI Galway would like to hear about your experience of having a mentor through the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme. Please read this sheet which will give you more information about the project. You should only agree to participate once you are happy that you know why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Why should I take part?



Hearing your opinions is very important in helping to improve services that are available to you and other young people.

What will I have to do?



If you agree to take part, you will be asked to meet with the researcher. She will ask you questions about your experiences of mentoring, what was good and bad and how you feel it affected your life. We would like you to be honest and tell us how you really feel about it all. The meeting should last half an hour or so.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. If you decide to take part now but later decide that you don't want to, you can change your mind at any time. You don't have to give a reason. Or, if there is a question you don't want to answer during the interview, you don't have to.

Could anything bad happen if I take part?

During the interview you may have some uncomfortable feelings or emotions. If this happens you should tell the interviewer and the interview can be stopped. The researcher will ask if you want to continue with the interview. If you decide not to continue, that is okay.

Will anyone know what I said or that they were my answers?

Your name and what you say will not be shared with anyone and no-one will know you took part in the project.

If you or your parent have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you can contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway or by email at [ethics@nuigalway.ie](mailto:ethics@nuigalway.ie)

But, if you tell us something about how you or another young person is at risk of harm or has been harmed in the past, we have to pass the information on to TUSLA as part of our responsibility for child protection under Children First 2011 Guidelines.

How will you record what I say?



The interview will be recorded on an electronic recorder and will be deleted after the study is over.

Who is the researcher?

The project researcher is Kayleigh Murphy.

You can contact Kayleigh at (086) 2025252 or by email at [k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie](mailto:k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie).

You can also ask your parent/guardian to do this for you.



What do I do?

When you have read this sheet, talk about it with your parent/guardian. If you are happy that you know what the research is about and what you are being asked to do, you may decide that you want to take part. If so, please read through the Consent Form and sign it if you are happy to do so. Your parent/guardian must also sign their Consent Form to show that they are happy for you to take part in this research study. The meeting should last approximately 30 minutes or so.



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Project  
Consent Form for Young People



If you have read the Information Sheet and you and your parent or guardian agree for you to take part in this project, please tick the boxes below.

If you have any questions or worries about any part of the study you can contact Kayleigh Murphy, the project researcher, at (086) 2025252 or by e-mail at k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie.

Please tick the boxes and fill in the details below if you agree to take part in the study.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

		Please tick:	
		 YES	 NO
	I have enough information about the research and I was able to ask questions about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I understand that what I say will be recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I know that my name and personal information will not be shared with anyone and no-one will know that I took part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I am happy for the things that I say to be used in research, for writing a report and telling other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I understand that taking part means talking with the researcher and nothing more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I understand that the researcher will have to tell someone if I, or someone I know, is being hurt or is at-risk of being hurt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I understand that I can choose to stop taking part at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I agree to take part in the research project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Parents



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Information Sheet for Parents and Guardians



Your child is being invited to take part in a research study on mentoring for young people. Researchers in NUI Galway would like to hear about your child's experience of being mentored as part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme. Please read this sheet which will give you more information about the research. It is very important that you know what the study is about and what it will involve before you decide whether or not you want your child to take part. The Consent Form should not be signed if your child does not wish to take part.

Why should my child take part?

Hearing the opinions of your child is very important in helping to improve services which are available to them.

Does my child have to take part?

No. It is up to you and your child to decide if you would like him/her to take part.

Are there any risks to taking part?

Your child may experience some uncomfortable feelings and emotions when talking about their experiences with the researcher. If your child does become upset they should let the researcher know and the researcher can stop and ask if the young person wants to continue. If they decide not to continue with the interview, that is okay.

Everything your child says will be kept confidential as far as possible. You, your child's and any other names and personal details will not be shared with anyone. No-one will be identifiable by any of the information you share.

What happens if a concern about a risk to a child is talked about during the interview?

In the case of your child sharing information which implies that he/she or another child may be at risk of harm, we are obliged to pass the information on to TUSLA as part of our responsibility for child protection under Children First 2011 Guidelines.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you can contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway or by email at [ethics@nuigalway.ie](mailto:ethics@nuigalway.ie).

How will the information be collected and stored?

The interview will be recorded on an electronic recorder and will be destroyed when the study is over.

Will anyone know that they were my child's answers?

No, the information will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Who is the researcher?

The project researcher is Kayleigh Murphy.

You can contact Kayleigh at (086) 2025252 or by email at [k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie](mailto:k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie).

What if I am not happy with the research?

We will do our best to make sure that your child does not get upset or uncomfortable during the research study. If you are not happy with the research you can talk to the researcher.

What do I do now?

If you and your child agree for him or her to take part, you should read through the Consent Forms and sign them. The researcher will then arrange to talk to your child about their experience of being mentored through the Big Brothers Big Sisters programme. The meeting should last approximately 30 minutes or so.



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Consent Form for Parents and Guardians



If you agree for your child to take part in the study on mentoring for children and young people you must tick the boxes below. Please read the Information Sheet before you agree for your child to take part in the research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of the study you can contact Kayleigh, the Project Researcher at (086) 2025252 or via e-mail at k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie.

Please tick the boxes below if you agree to the following:

Please tick:	Yes	No
I have read the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have enough information about the research and I was able to ask questions about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my child does not have to take part and can leave at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that all personal details will remain confidential and no-one will know that my child took part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the researcher will have to tell someone if my child, or someone mentioned by my child, is being hurt or is at-risk of being hurt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The participation of my child in the study is voluntary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the things that my child says to be used in the research, for writing a report and telling other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for my child to take part in the interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4: Mentors Information Sheet and Consent Form



### Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study Information Sheet for Mentors



You are being invited to take part in a research study on the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme. This sheet will give you more information about the project. Please take as much time as you need to read it.

It is very important that you know what the study is about before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in the study. You should only agree to participate once you are happy that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Read this sheet through and if you are happy to take part please fill in and sign the Consent Form.

So what's this all about?

You have been asked if you would like to take part in a research study about the Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programme.

Researchers in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway would like to hear about your experience and perceptions of being a mentor to a young person as part of this programme. We want to gain an insight into how people who participate in the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme feel that they benefit from taking part.

Why should I take part?

Hearing your opinions is very important in helping to improve the services, such as this mentoring programme, which are made available to young people. By sharing your experience of being a mentor to a young person, your opinions will be accounted for. This will hopefully lead to better services being provided to young people and increased support being provided to you and other mentors in such programmes.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. If you agree to take part now but later decide that you do not want to take part you can change your mind at any time. You don't have to give a reason for not wanting to take part and whether you take part or not will not affect any of the services or support you receive.

What happens if I don't want to answer a question?

You don't have to answer. If you choose not to answer a question or talk about a particular topic you can tell the researcher and they will move on to the next question. You can also stop the interview at any time.

Could anything bad happen if I take part?

Everything you say will be kept confidential as far as possible. Your name and any of your personal details will not be shared with anyone and no-one will be able to identify you. But, if you tell us something about a child/young person that indicates they were harmed or are at risk of harm we have to pass that information on as part of our responsibility for child protection under Children First 2011 Guidelines.

During the interview you may have some uncomfortable feelings or emotions or you may become upset. If this happens you should tell the interviewer and the interview can be stopped at any time. The researcher will ask if you want to continue with the interview. If you decide not to continue, that is OK. Not taking part will not affect any of the services provided to the young person or the support provided to you in your role as mentor.

How will the information be collected and stored?

The interview will be recorded on an electronic recorder. This will be stored safely and no-one will have access to the recorder other than the

researcher. The recording will be destroyed afterwards.

Will anyone know they were my answers?  
No, the information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You won't be identified in the research study.

Who is the researcher?  
The project researcher is Kayleigh Murphy.

You can contact Kayleigh about the project by phone at (086) 2025252 or by email at [k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie](mailto:k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie).

What if I am not happy about the research?  
We will do our best to make sure that you do not get upset or uncomfortable during the research study. If you are not happy with the research you can talk to the researcher.

What do I do now?  
Please read this information sheet carefully. If you are happy that you know what the research is about and what is being asked of you, you may decide that you want to participate. If so, please read through the Consent Form and sign it if you are happy to do so.

If you agree to take part you will be asked to meet with the researcher. She will ask you questions about your experiences of being a mentor to a young person. We would like you to be honest and tell us how you really feel about it all. The meeting should last for 30 minutes or so.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway or by email at [ethics@nuigalway.ie](mailto:ethics@nuigalway.ie).



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Consent Form for Mentors

If you agree to take part in the study on mentoring for children and young people you must tick the boxes and fill in the details below. Please read the Information Sheet before you agree to take part in the research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of the study you can contact Kayleigh, the Project Researcher at (086) 2025252 or via e-mail at k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie.

Please tick the boxes and fill in the details below if you agree to take part in the study.

Please tick:	Yes	No
I have read the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have enough information about the research and I was able to ask questions about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that what I say will be recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my name and personal details will be kept confidential and that no-one will know that I took part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy for the things that I say to be used in the research, for writing a report and telling other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part means talking with the researcher and nothing more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can opt out at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 5: Programme Staff Information Sheet and Consent Form



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Information Sheet for  
Programme Staff



You are being invited to take part in a research study on the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme. This sheet will give you more information about the project. Please take as much time as you need to read it.

It is very important that you know what the study is about before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in the study. You should only agree to participate once you are happy that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Read this sheet through and if you are happy to take part please fill in and sign the Consent Form.

So what's this all about?

You have been asked if you would like to take part in a research study about the Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programme. Researchers in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway would like to hear about your experience and perceptions of working with this programme. We want to gain an insight into how young people who participate in the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme feel that they benefit from participating.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. If you agree to take part now but later decide that you no longer want to take part you can change your mind at any time. You don't have to give a reason for not wanting to take part.

What if I don't want to answer a question?

You don't have to answer. If you choose not to answer a question or talk about a particular topic you can tell the researcher and they will move on to the next question. You can also stop the interview at any time.

Could anything bad happen if I take part?

Everything you say will be kept confidential as far as possible. Your name and any of your personal details will not be shared with anyone and no-one will be able to identify you. If you tell us something about a child or young person that indicates that the young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, we are obliged to

pass that information on as part of our responsibility for child protection under Children First 2011 Guidelines.

If you become upset or experience uncomfortable feelings or emotions while speaking with the researcher you should tell the researcher and the interview can be stopped. The researcher will ask if you want to continue with the interview. If you decide not to continue, that is perfectly fine.

How will the information be collected and stored?

The interview will be recorded on an electronic recorder. This will be stored safely and no-one will have access to the recorder other than the researcher. The recording will be destroyed afterwards.

Will anyone know they were my answers?

No, the information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You won't be identified in the research study.

Who is the researcher?

The project researcher is Kayleigh Murphy.

You can contact Kayleigh about the project by phone at (086) 2025252 or by email at [k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie](mailto:k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie).

What if I am not happy about the research?

We will do our best to make sure that you do not get upset or uncomfortable during the



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Consent Form for Programme Staff

If you agree to take part in the study on mentoring for children and young people you must tick the boxes and fill in the details below. Please read the Information Sheet before you agree to take part in the research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of the study you can contact Kayleigh, the Project Researcher at (086) 2025252 or via e-mail at k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie.

Please tick the boxes and fill in the details below if you agree to take part in the study.

Please tick:	Yes	No
I have read the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have enough information about the research and I was able to ask questions about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that what I say will be recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my name and personal details will be kept confidential and that no-one will know that I took part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy for the things that I say to be used in the research, for writing a report and telling other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part means talking with the researcher and nothing more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can opt out at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6: GYDP Staff Information Sheet and Consent Forms



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Information Sheet for  
Garda Youth Diversion Project Staff



You are being invited to take part in a research study on the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme which operates in conjunction with Garda Youth Diversion Projects. This sheet will give you more information about the study. Please take as much time as you need to read it.

It is very important that you know what the study is about before you decide whether or not you would like to take part. You should only agree to participate once you are happy that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Read this sheet through and if you are happy to take part please fill in and sign the Consent Form.

So what's this all about?

You have been asked if you would like to take part in a research study about the Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programme which is run in conjunction with Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Researchers in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway would like to hear about your experience and perceptions of working with Garda Youth Diversion Projects and the associated benefits and challenges. We also want to gain an insight into your perceptions of the potential benefits, challenges and overall value of youth mentoring in the context of youth justice and your experiences, if any, of the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. If you agree to take part now but later decide that you no longer want to take part you can change your mind at any time. You don't have to give a reason for not wanting to take part.

What if I don't want to answer a question?

You don't have to answer. If you choose not to answer a question or talk about a particular topic you can tell the researcher and they will move on to the next question. You can also stop the interview at any time.

Could anything bad happen if I take part?

Everything you say will be kept confidential as far as possible. Your name and any of your personal details will not be shared with anyone

and no-one will be able to identify you. If you tell us something about a child or young person that indicates that the young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, we are obliged to pass that information on as part of our responsibility for child protection under Children First 2011 Guidelines.

If you become upset or experience uncomfortable feelings or emotions while speaking with the researcher you should tell the researcher and the interview can be stopped. The researcher will ask if you want to continue with the interview. If you decide not to continue, that is perfectly fine.

How will the information be collected and stored?

The interview will be recorded on an electronic recorder. This will be stored safely and no-one will have access to the recorder other than the researcher. The recording will be destroyed afterwards.

Will anyone know they were my answers?

No, the information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You won't be identified in the research study.

Who is the researcher?

The project researcher is Kayleigh Murphy.

You can contact Kayleigh about the project by phone at (086) 2025252 or by email at [k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie](mailto:k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie).

What if I am not happy about the research?

We will do our best to make sure that you do not get upset or uncomfortable during the research study. If you are not happy with the research you can talk to the researcher.

What do I do now?

Once you have read this information sheet, if you are happy that you understand what the study is about and what is being asked of you, you may decide to participate. If so, please read through the Consent Form and sign it if you are happy to do so.

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to meet with the researcher. She will ask you about your experience of working with Garda Youth Diversion Projects. We would like you to be honest and tell us how you really feel about it all. The meeting should last 40 minutes or so.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway or by email at [ethics@nuiagalway.ie](mailto:ethics@nuiagalway.ie).



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Consent Form for GYDP Staff

If you agree to take part in the study on mentoring for children and young people you must tick the boxes and fill in the details below. Please read the Information Sheet before you agree to take part in the research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of the study you can contact Kayleigh, the Project Researcher at (086) 2025252 or via e-mail at k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie.

Please tick the boxes and fill in the details below if you agree to take part in the study.

Please tick:	Yes	No
I have read the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have enough information about the research and I was able to ask questions about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that what I say will be recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my name and personal details will be kept confidential and that no-one will know that I took part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy for the things that I say to be used in the research, for writing a report and telling other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part means talking with the researcher and nothing more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can opt out at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 7: Senior Youth Officer Information Sheet and Consent Form



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Information Sheet for Senior Youth Officers



You are being invited to take part in a research study on the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme. This sheet will give you more information about the project. Please take as much time as you need to read it.

It is very important that you know what the study is about before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in the study. You should only agree to participate once you are happy that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Read this sheet through and if you are happy to take part please fill in and sign the Consent Form.

So what's this all about?

You have been asked if you would like to take part in a research study about the Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programme. Researchers in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway would like to hear about your experience and perceptions of working with this programme. We want to gain an insight into how young people who participate in the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme feel that they benefit from participating.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. If you agree to take part now but later decide that you no longer want to take part you can change your mind at any time. You don't have to give a reason for not wanting to take part.

What if I don't want to answer a question?

You don't have to answer. If you choose not to answer a question or talk about a particular topic you can tell the researcher and they will move on to the next question. You can also stop the interview at any time.

Could anything bad happen if I take part?

Everything you say will be kept confidential as far as possible. Your name and any of your personal details will not be shared with anyone and no-one will be able to identify you. If you tell us something about a child or young person that indicates that the young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, we are obliged to pass that information on as part of our

responsibility for child protection under Children First 2011 Guidelines.

If you become upset or experience uncomfortable feelings or emotions while speaking with the researcher you should tell the researcher and the interview can be stopped. The researcher will ask if you want to continue with the interview. If you decide not to continue, that is perfectly fine.

How will the information be collected and stored?

The interview will be recorded on an electronic recorder. This will be stored safely and no-one will have access to the recorder other than the researcher. The recording will be destroyed afterwards.

Will anyone know they were my answers?

No, the information will be kept confidential and anonymous. You won't be identified in the research study.

Who is the researcher?

The project researcher is Kayleigh Murphy.

You can contact Kayleigh about the project by phone at (086) 2025252 or by email at [k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie](mailto:k.murphy38@nuigalway.ie).

What if I am not happy about the research?

We will do our best to make sure that you do not get upset or uncomfortable during the research study. If you are not happy with the research you can talk to the researcher.

What do I do now?

Once you have read this information sheet, if you are happy that you understand what the study is about and what is being asked of you, you may decide to participate. If so, please read through the Consent Form and sign it if you are happy to do so.

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to meet with the researcher. She will ask you about your experience of working with Big Brothers Big Sisters. We would like you to be honest and tell us how you really feel about it all. The meeting should last 40 minutes or so.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway or by email at [ethics@nuiagalway.ie](mailto:ethics@nuiagalway.ie).



Big Brothers Big Sisters Research Study  
Consent Form for Senior Youth Officers

If you agree to take part in the study on mentoring for children and young people you must tick the boxes and fill in the details below. Please read the Information Sheet before you agree to take part in the research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of the study you can contact Kayleigh, the Project Researcher at (086) 2025252 or via e-mail at kmurphy38@nuigalway.ie.

Please tick the boxes and fill in the details below if you agree to take part in the study.

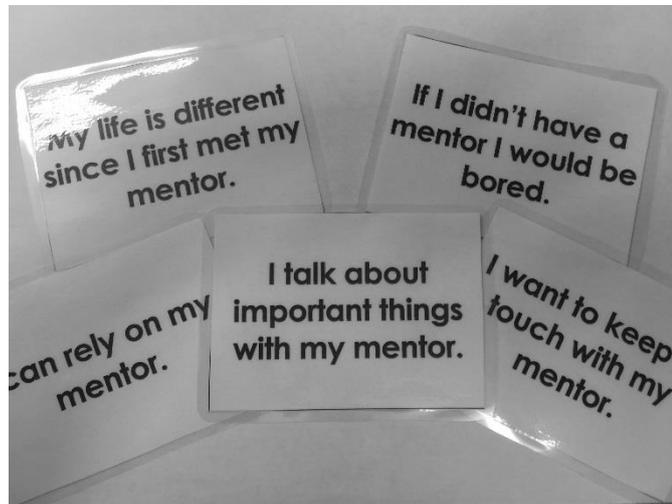
Please tick:	Yes	No
I have read the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have enough information about the research and I was able to ask questions about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that what I say will be recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my name and personal details will be kept confidential and that no-one will know that I took part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy for the things that I say to be used in the research, for writing a report and telling other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part means talking with the researcher and nothing more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can opt out at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 8: Data Collection Method Young People



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