

Information Sheet

Exploring school staff mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Who is carrying out this research?

Dr. Josie Maitland, a Research Fellow employed by the University of Brighton and funded by the ESRC (Economic Social Research Council) is the Principal Investigator. Josie's research interests are in mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff, especially in whole school approaches to promoting mental health and resilience. Josie can be contacted directly using the details at the end of this information sheet.

What is the purpose of the research?

In this research, we hope to learn more about staff experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular we aim to understand the impact on staff mental health and wellbeing. We aim to identify protective factors that may have helped to sustain or improve wellbeing during this time by interviewing a range of school staff of varying roles and from varying school types about their experiences.

Research aims: a) Explore school staff experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including identifying perceived impact on staff MHW b) Identify 'protective factors' that staff perceive to have sustained or improved their wellbeing during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research questions: 1) What changes have school staff experienced as a result of COVID-19 pandemic either in their own lives, in the school climate or their professional role? 2) What has the impact of these changes been on school staff MHW and what are the underlying mechanisms? 3) What factors do school staff perceive to have sustained or improved wellbeing during the pandemic?

Invitation

You are being asked if you would like to take part in the research study. You are being asked if you are happy to give consent to participate in an interview that is expected to last around 30-45 minutes. Data from these interviews will be used to create anonymous transcripts, which will be analysed to identify key findings from the research.

The interview

The interview will be around 30-45 minutes and take place over Skype. You will be able to choose between audio only or video and audio for the interview, however, whichever option you choose, only audio will be recorded. The recording will be made using a portable audio recorder placed next to the computer rather than directly over Skype to increase security.

Questions (above) will be sent to you beforehand to enable you to think about your responses in advance if you wish. You will need to find a comfortable space with secure internet connection where you will be undisturbed. At the start and end of the interview we will check in to see how you are feeling to ensure that the process is positive and you feel well supported. We will also pause half way through the interview to check if you are happy to continue. In addition, at the start of the interview a strategy will be agreed for you to be able to pause or stop the interview at any time and for any reason.

Inclusion

Inclusion criteria is that you are a member of school staff, employed by a school in the UK and having worked during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We are seeking a range of roles (school leaders, teachers, pastoral staff and support staff), school types (Early Years, Primary, Secondary, SEND, Alternative Provision/PRU and FE) from across the UK. Participants will **not** be selected if they could be considered to meet *exclusion criteria* of potential distress being

caused or exacerbated by participating in the interviews, or if the research team are not satisfied fully informed consent has been given.

What is consent?

Giving informed consent to take part in this research means that you understand why the research is being done, why you have been asked to be involved, and that you are giving your permission to take part. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Please contact Dr. Josie Maitland (contact details at the end of this sheet) if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information about. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Do I have to give consent?

No. It is completely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to give consent, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can still decide at any time that you want to withdraw from the interview for any reason.

Are there any risks of taking part?

The aim of these interviews is both to improve our understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school staff, as well as identify factors that may have sustained staff wellbeing and mental health. The interviews will be intended to be an enjoyable, useful and potentially cathartic experience for the participants as well as provide an opportunity to contribute to current understanding and potentially inform future policy, research or practice. However, it is possible that you might find thinking about your experiences during this time quite difficult, especially if you are currently or have previously experienced tough times in your personal life. For this reason we ask that if you think that based on the aims of the study and the research questions (provided at the start of this sheet) you think that taking part might cause you any distress, that you do not proceed any further. However, the details of two confidential support services are included in the attached Interview Procedure Guidance. For most people, the interviews will be a positive and interesting chance to share their views.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

These interviews are a chance for school staff to be listened to about their experiences and share ideas that they have about how protecting staff wellbeing and mental health. The results of this study will make an important contribution to our understanding of school staff experiences during this time and may influence policy, research and practice.

Will my contribution to the study be kept confidential?

For our written report, everything you say in the interview will be anonymised. That means that what you say will not be linked to your name or your school, so that apart from the researcher, no-one will be able to identify you. The only time this will not be the case is if the researcher believes that you or someone you have referred to may be at risk. If the researcher is worried about your safety or the safety of someone else, relevant authorities will be informed. All the information provided to us will be kept in locked draws or on computers protected by passwords. Anonymised information may be used for the production of writing about the research, illustrations based on key findings, or doing presentations about the research. This will require written consent on the consent form. Only the research team will be able to see this information until it is ready to share. It will be ready to share when we have made sure personal information has been taken out (and checked this with you). Audio files will be deleted at the end of the study (October 2020) and fully anonymised transcripts will be made available to other researchers who may find it useful and retained for 10 years.

For more information about how the University of Brighton gathers and uses data in research, please visit:

www.brighton.ac.uk/about-us/statistics-and-legal/privacy/index.aspx. If you have concerns about how your data is being collected or managed, or if your query is not answered by the information available, please contact Rachel Page, Head of Data Compliance: dataprotection@brighton.ac.uk.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study may be published in research journals, journalistic articles, on online forums, be presented to other researchers, or shared at conferences, training or professional meetings. You will not be identified in any of these by name or by school.

What if I have a question or there is a problem?

Should you have any questions at all about the research or any problem with the research please contact the Principal Investigator of this study: Dr. Josie Maitland. Email: j.maitland3@brighton.ac.uk Tel: 01273 64 4539

This research study has been reviewed and approved the University of Brighton's Ethics Review Panel. If you wish to speak to an independent point of contact, please contact either Rachel Page, head of Data Compliance: dataprotection@brighton.ac.uk or Lucy Redhead, Chair of the Life, Health and Physical Sciences Cross Research Ethics Committee: L.Redhead@brighton.ac.uk Tel: 01273 644 539

What should I do next?

If you have read all the information so far, have no further questions and wish to take part, please send a completed consent form and answers to the questions included in the Interview Procedure Guidelines to: j.maitland3@brighton.ac.uk. The research team will be in touch to arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time should you meet the inclusion criteria.