

Interview Schedule

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

Outlining interview aims: This research study aims to better understand school staff (leaders, teachers and all other staff) experiences of COVID-19, with a specific focus on identifying protective factors perceived to sustain staff wellbeing and mental health during this time.

Outlining interview process: 'This interview will ask you three main questions about your experiences during this time to contribute to the study, although your contribution will be fully anonymised. Anything you say remains confidential, unless I feel there is a risk to yourself or anyone else, as outlined in the information sheets. Before we start and when we finish we will do a short check in to check how you are feeling and enable you to ask any questions. After the first two questions we will also pause to reflect and check you wish to continue. Remember you are free to withdraw for any reason at any time. If you would like to pause or stop the interview, would it be ok to say 'stop please' or raise your hand like this, so that I know you need to pause or stop? (or develop another strategy). Do you have any questions before we start?'

Mood measure: Explain that before and after the interview, participants will be asked to reflect on how they feel their mood is on a scale of 1-10 (1 being lowest and 10 being highest). This is to check that the interview itself does not negatively affect mood and provide support or adjust the study if necessary. 'How would you say your mood is today, before the interview on a scale from 1-10?'

Item prompt: Prior to the interview, participants were invited to bring an item that represented sustaining school staff wellbeing during the pandemic. This is an opportunity to share the item if participants want to and to describe it. It could be a photo, drawing or object.

Questions: 1) What changes have school staff experienced as a result of COVID-19 pandemic in their own lives, in the school climate or their professional role? (Prompts: How does that compare with your normal role? What has that been like for you? Can you tell me more about how that worked?)

2) What has the impact of these changes been on school staff mental health and wellbeing and what are the underlying mechanisms? (Prompts: What has been the impact of that for you / your colleagues? Can you explain more about that? What do you think has been behind that? What was the cause / what has contributed to that?)

Pause: Check wellbeing of participants: 'How are you doing? Are you happy with the questions so far? Is there anything you'd like to ask or that you're concerned about?'

3) What factors do school staff perceive to have sustained or improved wellbeing during the pandemic? (Prompts: What has helped you or your colleagues to adapt to these changes? What has helped you or your colleagues to cope with these changes? Have the strategies to sustain your wellbeing been familiar or new strategies? Do you think you would continue to draw on these factors beyond the pandemic? Could any factors that may have sustained or improved school staff wellbeing have been improved or increased? How?)

Is there anything else you would like to share with me that is relevant to the study but we haven't covered?

Mood mitigation:

Participants are asked to reflect on how they feel their mood is following the interview on a scale of 1-10 (1 being lowest and 10 being highest). If mood is the same or better move on to ending. If there is a suggestion mood is now lower, direct participants to support and / or contact relevant authorities as indicated in risk management and distress protocol documents.



'That brings us to the end of the interview. How did you find taking part? How does the rest of the day look for you (or alternative informal conversation as a bridge to topic outside the interview)'

Ending: 'Many thanks for taking the time to be interviewed as part of the study. The recording of the interview will be sent to a University approved supplier for transcription and will be transcribed fully verbatim. All identifiers will be removed and the anonymised version will be sent back to you to check for clarity and further removal of any non-obvious identifiers. You can also still wish to withdraw your data during this period (a period of 10 days). After this time, data analysis will begin, and data can no longer be withdrawn. The findings of analysis will also be shared for you and your comments and feedback invited. Remember the free and confidential support websites and telephone lines provided on the information sheet (Education Support and Samaritans) are available 24/7 if you feel you need them. Any further questions? Thanks again and we will be in touch soon. Take care and goodbye'