Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

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Navigating Trauma-Informed Education: Teacher Reflections from a London Secondary School

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Student declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Key Terms and Abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation
Trauma-informed Practice	TIP
Trauma-informed Education	TIE
Trauma-informed Approach	TIA
Adverse Childhood Experience	ACE
Educational Psychologist	EP
Trainee Educational Psychologist	TEP
Special Educational Needs and Disability	SEND
Education, Health, and Care Plan	ECHP
Local Authority	LA
Continuing Professional Development	CPD
Initial Teacher Training	ITT
Senior Leadership Team	SLT
Social Emotional Mental Health	SEMH
Self-Efficacy	SE
Burnout	
Teacher Stress	
Emotional Labour	
Teacher Identity	
Reflexive Thematic Analysis	RTA
Department for Education	DfE
Special Educational Needs Code of Practice	SEND CoP
Working Together to Safeguard Children	WTSC
Keeping Children Safe in Education	KCSIE

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Abstract

There is a growing interest in trauma-informed approaches (TIAs) within education, particularly in response to the increasing needs of children and young people affected by adversity. As such, the dominant narrative in the literature has largely been focused on student outcomes, with limited attention given to the experiences, needs, and wellbeing of the teachers and school professionals responsible for embedding and sustaining these approaches. In response, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of staff navigating trauma-informed approaches within the high-pressure context of a secondary school.

Guided by interpretivist and social constructivist perspectives, the study sought to understand how participants made sense of and engaged with TIAs in their everyday professional roles. A qualitative methodology was employed, involving semi-structured interviews and lesson observations with six participants from a London secondary school. Participants were engaged in a borough-wide trauma-informed pilot. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings suggested that participants experienced TIAs as an ongoing journey, both emotionally demanding and professionally meaningful. Engaging with TIAs led to renewed professional identity and a strengthened sense of purpose. This was underpinned by expanded knowledge and a shared relational language. Informal, peer-led coaching relationships were identified as a significant mechanism for sustaining trauma-informed values. These also supported staff wellbeing as they offered spaces for shared reflection and mutual accountability.

These findings highlight the importance of recognising and supporting the emotional and relational labour required to embed trauma-informed approaches. The study contributes to the growing literature by reframing TIAs as beneficial not only for students, but also for the professionals who support them. It also underscores the need for systemic structures that sustain this work over time.

Impact Statement

This research offers a timely and contextually grounded contribution to the growing field of trauma-informed education. By centring the lived experiences and evolving reflections of teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school, the study provides new insights into the emotional, relational and systemic dimension of trauma-informed approaches (TIAs) in education. The findings point to implications for educational practice and policy. Additionally, it has direct implications on the role of Educational Psychologists in England in sustaining this work.

The study highlights that when intentionally and consistently embedded, trauma-informed approaches not only support students, but can also contribute positively to the professional identity and wellbeing of teachers and other school professionals. This study also suggests a critical reframe for TIAs as relational practices that may foster reflective engagement, emotional regulation, and meaningful connection among staff. Consequently, this might help to mitigate stress and renew a sense of purpose. This study contributes to the growing body of research elucidating how trauma-informed approaches influence teacher self-efficacy and classroom dynamics over time.

A notable discovery was the role of informal, teacher-led peer coaching in sustaining trauma-informed approaches. These interactions provided space for reflective and relational collegiate communication, fostering accountability and growth. This is an area which remains underexplored within the trauma-informed literature.

This insight may inform future professional development models which empower on-the-ground collaborative and embedded learning. The study also highlights the co-existing experience of emotional demand and reward when engaging with TIAs. This further underscores the complexities of these approaches, elucidating the need for this work to be better supported within education.

Findings from the study also suggest that there is value in sustained and layered support in embedding TIAs. This layered support may mean ongoing involvement through initial training, to ongoing observation, and continuous reflective supervision. Educational Psychologists are well positioned to facilitate this process, and such finding may have direct implications on service delivery and whole-school initiatives. Locally, this research may feed into ongoing borough-wide trauma-informed work, informing training and policy around teacher support and wellbeing as well as school culture.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Impact of Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

In recent years, educators, local governments, and in some cases national governments, have increasingly recognised the impact that trauma and adverse experiences can have on children and young people (CYP) (Oral et al., 2016). Trauma not only has the potential to impact the cognitive development of CYP, but also their ability to regulate their emotional states, and their ability to form and maintain secure relational attachments (Perry, 2006; van der Kolk, 2014). Further research has also demonstrated a strong link between these traumatic experiences and the long-term effects on emotional, social, and cognitive development (Felitti et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2020). These early and persistent traumatic events might be better understood as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The CDC (2024) highlights that ACEs which are intrinsically linked to trauma, might include racism, neglect, abuse, exposure to instability, and parental incarcerations among several other adverse experiences.

Importantly, the impacts of such experiences are not only felt within the home environment, but also within school settings (Alisic, 2012; Berger, 2019). Children and young people with one or more ACEs are at risk of poorer academic performance and outcomes as well as higher rates of behavioural challenges (Blodgett and Lanigan, 2018; Perfect et al., 2016; Smith, 2018). As a response, governments within the UK, specifically Scotland and Wales, have enacted policies which address and support the impacts of ACEs and trauma on CYP within schools by advocating for the use of trauma-informed approaches (Hayes, 2020).

According to a systematic review of school-wide trauma-informed approaches by Avery et al. (2020), the implementation of school-based initiatives aimed at addressing student's exposure to ACEs and trauma has increased notably over the past decade. As awareness of ACEs and trauma and their associated impacts has grown, many educational settings have begun adopting trauma-informed approaches (TIAs) (Chafouleas et al., 2016; The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017).

While ACEs and trauma are often discussed together, it is important to distinguish between them. ACEs refer to specific forms of adversity experienced during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. These have been linked to a range of negative outcomes across the lifespan (Felitti et al., 1998). Trauma, however, is a broader and more dynamic construct. According to the UK Trauma Council (2023), trauma refers to the way some distressing events are so extreme or intense that they overwhelm a person's ability to cope, resulting in a lasting negative impact. These events are often beyond an individual's control and can include abuse, violence, accidents, medical trauma, racism, and systemic discrimination. The impact of trauma is shaped not only by the event itself but also by the wider socio-political and relational context in which it occurs. While ACEs can be traumatic, not all traumatic experiences are captured by the ACEs framework. In this thesis, trauma will be used as a more encompassing term that reflects the relational, psychological, contextual, and developmental dimensions of distress, particularly within school settings. ACEs will be referenced when engaging with literature or policy frameworks that use that specific model.

1.2 Trauma-Informed Approaches in Education

According to Brunzell et al., (2021, 2022) educational-based trauma informed approaches are multi-layered practices which involve:

- An awareness of the impact of trauma on development, relational attachment, learning, and behaviour.
- A relational and strengths-based pedagogy.
- Specific strategies to support regulation, engagement, and academic growth.

This thesis uses the term TIAs to refer broadly to both the overarching principles and day-to-day practices associated with trauma-informed education. These approaches are designed to explicitly support children and young people who have experienced trauma, providing strategic frameworks for schools to respond effectively (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2016). While it may not be possible for school professionals to know the personal history of every student, TIAs focus on creating nurturing and relational environments that acknowledge the widespread prevalence of ACEs and trauma (SAMHSA, 2014).

Underpinned by relational principles, TIAs are centred on developing and fostering emotional and psychological safety (White & McCallum, 2020). This sense of safety is cultivated through consistency, empowerment, and healthy adult-student relationships (Chidley & Stringer, 2020). Trauma-informed approaches have increasingly influenced school culture and practice globally, emphasising inclusive relationships and support which is more holistic than conventional behaviourist or academically centred models of education (Thomas et al., 2019).

While educational settings have engaged with trauma-informed initiatives, embedding these values in day-to-day practice requires more than policy changes. Shifts in school ethos and practices, while backed by policy and structural changes, are determined by how authentically and effectively teachers and frontline school staff engage with these initiatives (Weare, 2015).

1.3 Teacher Wellbeing and Systemic Pressures

Year after year the role of the teachers and frontline school staff have become increasingly demanding, as highlighted in the most recent Teacher Wellbeing Index report (Education Support, 2024). This report found that 78% of education professionals reported high levels of stress with 63% identifying increasing challenging behaviour from students as a key factor negatively impacting their mental health. In addition, 70% of staff cited difficult interactions with parents as a source of strain (Education Support, 2024).

These figures reflect the intensifying emotional and relational demands being placed on school staff, which may intersect with the expectations of relational TIAs (Burrow et al. 2020; Kariou et al., 2021; Education Support, 2024).

Simultaneously, teachers and other school professionals' experience systemic pressures, such as funding cuts, rising pupil needs, accountability measures, and safeguarding responsibilities.

This has created an environment in which many educators experience chronic stress and exhaustion (Allen et al., 2020; Education Support, 2024).

While trauma-informed approaches promote relational connection and understanding, it may unintentionally place further emotional strain on educators who are already working under significant pressure (Southall, 2023). These dynamics present important questions with regards to the personal and professional impact of trauma-informed practice on those delivering it. Southall (2023) notes that such approaches often require deep emotional engagement which can be taxing for educators. This is particularly so when it is embedded into daily classroom practice.

1.4 Gaps in the Literature

Although there is a growing body of literature supporting trauma-informed strategies at a whole-school level, relatively little attention has been given to the voices and experiences of teachers and frontline school staff themselves. Much of the existing research is centred on outcomes for children and young people (e.g., behaviour or attainment) or the structural aspects of implementation (e.g., multi-tiered system approaches) (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar 2019). However, understanding how teachers perceive, experience, and engage with trauma-informed approaches within their own contexts has not been extensively explored (Chafouleas et al., 2016).

Within the UK, trauma-informed education remains a developing area of research and practice (L'Estrange & Howard, 2022; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014), particularly when compared to more established systems in the United States and Australia. Even more so, studies that focus on teacher voice considering TIAs remain limited, and this gap is particularly evident in the UK context.

1.5 Researcher Motivation and Positionality

My interest in trauma-informed education is grounded in my personal, educational, and professional experiences. My lived experiences and previous work in community settings have provided me with a window into the experiences of children and young people impacted by adversity. Additionally, undertaking the professional doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology alongside my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) within a London borough has deepened my understanding of the challenges faced not only by children and young people, but also by the school professionals who support them. Over the past two years I have worked closely with school staff navigating some of the more challenging aspects of trauma, namely the emotional and relational demands they experience.

As I encountered an increasing number of students with trauma backgrounds, it became increasingly evident that addressing trauma on a case-by-case basis was often less effective than supporting the school professionals around these students. This further fuelled my commitment to better understanding how school professionals engage with trauma-informed approaches in practice, particularly in emotionally and systemically complex educational settings.

This study is situated within the borough where I work as a TEP and within the context of a borough-wide initiative led by the local authority's Virtual School, in collaboration with the borough's Educational Psychology Service (EPS). This initiative was aimed to support the embedding of whole-school trauma-informed approaches.

As part of the initial pilot, six secondary schools within the borough voluntarily opted into the programme and received free, bespoke training and support.

Each participating school completed the Attachment Research Community (ARC) trauma-informed audit which informed the design and creation of tailored, whole-school training for the academic year 2023 – 2024.The school selected for this research was one of the six pilot schools and had completed the full cycle of training at the time of data collection. My familiarity with both the school as well as the wider borough initiative offered a valuable opportunity to explore how teachers and school professionals engaged with trauma-informed approaches over time.

I was further motivated to undertake this research as a way of informing how Educational Psychologists might support and sustain this work following the conclusion of the pilot phase. In light of the EPS's ongoing involvement in schools across the borough, and the trusted relationships EPs often build with school professionals, I believe EPs are well placed to support the long-term embedding of trauma-informed approaches. By focussing on the lived experiences of school professionals within one pilot trauma-informed school, this study seeks to offer valuable insights that may inform how EPs might contribute to sustaining this work.

1.6 Theoretical Framework: Bronfenbrenner's PPCT Model

The context in which teachers operate is a valuable consideration, as their experiences are influenced by a range of intersecting factors such as geographical location, school setting and culture, school demographics, and access to professional support and training. These factors, in conjunction with individual characteristics and professional histories, influence how teachers engage with TIAs.

Therefore, in consideration of such complexities, this study draws on Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The PPCT model highlights the dynamic interactions (process) between individuals (persons) and their multi-layered environments (context) over time. This model offers a lens through which to explore how teachers and frontline school staff engage with TIAs. Furthermore, the PPCT model promotes the exploration of how their engagement is shaped by their school systems, wider educational policy, as well as their personal beliefs, identities, and evolving professional experiences.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model outlines four essential components:

Proximal Processes	• The interactions between individuals and their environment.
Person Characteristics	• An individuals' disposition, experiences, and identities.
Context	• The nested systems of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.
Time	• This includes both developmental time and historical context.

Table 1. Summary of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)

This ecological framework supports the study's social constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology by emphasising that teachers' realities are co-constructed through their ongoing, situated interactions with these multiple systems over time. This model enables an exploration of how TIAs are experienced not only at the individual level, but also in relation to broader organisational, cultural, and policy-level influences.

By adopting this model, the research is better able to account for the complexity of participants' lived experiences. It recognises that teachers' engagement with TIAs is influenced by their person histories, professional experiences and identities, and evolving relationship within their school communities (e.g., process and person). Their experiences are also shaped by institutional norms, leadership practices and national policy (e.g., context and time). This is particularly pertinent in secondary school settings where the relational and emotional labour demanded by TIAs often intersects with competing demands, accountability pressures, and structural or systemic expectations.

1.7 Research Questions

This study explores the following central research question:

How do teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experience and engage with trauma-informed training and approaches over time?

This question is elaborated upon by the following sub-questions:

- How do the perceived benefits and challenges of trauma-informed training evolve over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How do the emotional and professional impacts of engaging with trauma-informed approaches shift over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How does the integration of trauma-informed approaches into everyday practice develop over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How do teachers and school professionals perceive and experience the systemic factors that enable or constrain trauma-informed approaches over time?

By focusing on teachers and other school professionals' voices, this research offers a nuanced and contextually grounded contribution to the trauma-informed education literature. It, therefore, offers implications for training, support, and professional development within schools.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 presents a review of the existing literature on trauma-informed approaches, teacher experiences and wellbeing, and systemic factors within education. Chapter 3 then outlines the methodology, including the research design, data collection and subsequent analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 provides a detailed account of the findings from each phase of the study. Chapter 6 discusses these findings in relation to existing literature and theory. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the study, highlighting contributions to the field, implications for educational psychology practice, and directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Trauma-Informed Education: Origins and Key Principles

As introduced in Chapter 1, increasing awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and their overlap with broader trauma has significantly shaped the development of trauma-informed approaches within education. Influential work by Felitti et al. (1998) demonstrated a strong relationship between childhood trauma and a range of long-term health and behavioural outcomes.

These findings were a catalyst for widespread interest in how public institutions, including schools, could better respond to the needs of trauma-affected individuals (Edwards et al., 2019). More recent UK-based studies (Hughes et al., 2020) have highlighted similar patterns, reinforcing the need for educational systems to adapt in ways that are developmentally sensitive and relationally safe. Within the UK Bellis et al., (2014) estimated that 47% of the population have experienced 1 or more ACEs. Furthermore, Lester et al., (2020) highlight the prevalence of young people experiencing a wide range of ACEs, including but not limited to abuse, neglect, violence, parental incarceration, and being care experienced.

Building on the definitions discussed in the introduction, this study adopts a nuanced understanding of trauma as both individually experienced and contextually situated. Trauma is seen as an overwhelming experience, often shaped by socio-cultural and systemic factors.

Trauma disrupts an individual’s sense of safety and impairs self-regulatory and relational capacities critical for learning (Brunzell et al., 2015; SAMHSA, 2014; UK Trauma Council, 2023). These occurrences, importantly, impact a child's emotional and cognitive development and their engagement with learning.

The neurobiological effects of trauma have also been widely documented. Early and cumulative adversity disrupts brain development and hi-jacks the normal processes of stress regulation (van der Kolk, 2003). Early and sustained exposure to traumatic experiences, therefore, interfere with the foundational processes of brain development.

Teicher and Samson (2016) explain that early trauma can impair emotional regulation and executive functioning which are thinking skill essential for classroom learning and positive behaviour. Children affected by trauma may present with a range of specific difficulties including poorer attention, disruptive behaviours, hyperactivity and impulsivity, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, low self-esteem, and low self-concept (Berger, 2019). These insights have driving forces for trauma-informed education. TIAs contrast traditional disciplinary approaches as they offer reframe through a lens of understanding rather than attempted control.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) has played a foundational role in establishing what TIAs entail. SAMHSA’s framework is widely adopted and centred around the "Four Rs": realising the prevalence of trauma, recognising its impact, responding appropriately, and resisting re-traumatisation.

When adopted in educational settings, these principles are reflected in how schools value safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity. Trauma-informed education challenges punitive or deficit-based perceptions of behaviour management. Instead, they promote cultures of care, predictability, and mutual respect (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Brunzell, Waters, and Stokes (2016; 2022) have contributed significantly to demonstrating how these principles function at the classroom level. Their framework emphasises the importance of supporting students across three overlapping domains: connection, regulation, and growth. This demonstrates how students impacted by trauma often experience dysregulation and challenges with forming healthy attachments to peers and adults.

The teacher's role becomes pivotal in not just delivering content but also modelling co-regulation, establishing safe boundaries, and fostering restorative interactions (Lester et al., 2020). This perspective is supported by Stokes' (2022) who emphasise the importance of educator responsiveness and relational attunement in creating emotionally safe learning environments.

These approaches require a shift in both classroom practices, perceptions held and relational dynamics. Trauma-informed pedagogy requires shifts in mindset, not just strategies. It encourages educators to consider "what happened to this student?" rather than "what is wrong with them?" (Brunzell, 2021).

This shift supports a move from individualised and deficit-driven models to more systemic, inclusive understandings of behaviour. Importantly, TIAs aligns with UK policies like the Equality Act (2010) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DH, 2015) as they advocate for proactive and equitable practice.

In the UK, the Early Intervention Foundation (Asmussen et al., 2020) and others have advocated for the use of TIAs across services, including schools. While still gaining traction this shift represents a broader societal recognition of the impact of trauma and the ethical demand to create systems that respond with care. Within education, this shift is supported by organisations such as the National Education Union (NEU). They provide guidance and resources for implementing trauma-informed practices and advocate for emotionally safe, inclusive school environments (Education Support, 2024).

However, as TIE continues to gain traction, there is also growing concern about the demands placed on staff (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016; Education Support 2024) and how schools are equipped, resourced, and trained to implement these principles effectively (Education Support, 2024).Trauma-informed education is most effective and impactful when it is implemented through a whole-school approach. This approach ideally must involve each level of leadership, teaching and support staff, as well as non-teaching members of the school. This is vital as all are involved in the co-construction of a trauma-aware culture.

While any training on TIAs are beneficial, one-off training sessions are limiting. Instead, this model embeds trauma-informed values within the everyday ethos, routines, policies. This has a direct impact on relational norms of the school community (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016; Brunzell et al., 2022). A whole-school trauma-informed culture seeks to ensure psychological and relational safety across all levels of school functioning, and this further informs the curriculum design, behaviour policies, wider communication styles, and staff wellbeing support (Thomas et al., 2019; Little & Maunder, 2022).

Such frameworks require not only the championing at the leadership level, but as mentioned their success depends on how they are enacted through day-to-day relationships with students. Teachers, who maintain regular, direct contact with pupils, play a central role in modelling and sustaining trauma-informed values in practice (O'Toole & Dobutowitsch, 2023). Through their everyday interactions, they create relational safety, maintain emotional regulation, and interpret student behaviour through a trauma-informed lens.

As Oehlberg (2008) notes, the teacher’s consistent presence and emotional attunement are essential for students recovering from trauma to feel secure and supported. As such, exploring their experiences, challenges, and reflections are essential to evaluating how trauma-informed approaches and frameworks function in practice (Luthar & Mendes, 2020).

2.2 The Role of Teachers in Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma-informed approaches rely not only on school policies or whole-school initiatives, but on how these are enacted through everyday classroom interactions (Ellis & Tod, 2018). Teachers are often one of the most consistent adult presences in the lives of children and young people, positioning them as reliable figures who might promote safety, stability, and relational connection within trauma-informed frameworks (Berger & Samuel, 2020; Brunzell et al., 2016; Ellis & Tod, 2018).

As teachers maintain this critical role in trauma-informed schools, they are tasked with recognising and responding to the needs of students who experience trauma (Brown et al., 2022; Trivedi & Harrison, 2022).Teachers may also act as trauma ‘first responders,’ serving as the initial point of contact for students experiencing distress and often forming a crucial bridge between families, clinical and mental health services, and the school (Alisic et al., 2012).

Some studies suggest that when teachers perceive a student’s behaviour as intentional or within the child’s control, they are more likely to adopt punitive responses rather than proactive or supportive strategies, which can oppose trauma-informed values (Harvest, 2018). Teachers may find themselves navigating the shift from previously held perspectives of certain behaviours being ‘defiant,’ to considering them signs of emotional dysregulation and as an indication that a need is not being met.

Trauma-informed frameworks encourage the understanding of behaviour as communication, often shaped by an unmet emotional or psychological need (Brunzell et al., 2016; Ellis & Tod, 2018). Teachers are well positioned to interpret such behaviours through a relational and developmental lens. As such, the implementation of trauma-informed practices is inevitably mediated through the perceptions, values, emotional labour, and capacities of individual educators (Hargreaves, 2000).

However, increasingly there is more research in examining the pressures placed on teachers working in emotionally demanding environments. Green et al. (2017) note that workplace stress within the teaching profession is among the highest across all sectors, with teachers now experiencing twice the average rate of workplace stress. One contributing factor toward teacher stress is the experience of challenging and disruptive behaviour from students, which has been consistently linked to reduced teacher wellbeing (Ruttledge, 2022). Educators engaging with trauma-informed practices frequently encounter complex pupil behaviours, including emotional dysregulation, anxiety, hypervigilance, and withdrawal (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017).

These presentations often require teachers to adopt more flexible, relational, and emotionally attuned approaches to classroom management (Berger, 2019; Wang et al., 2020). Teachers must not only recognise and respond to student distress, but also manage their own emotional responses, often in the absence of immediate physical or emotional support (Ko et al., 2008).

Interestingly, studies have shown that teachers operating within trauma-informed settings may be at increased risk of secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; James & Freeze, 2006). Kariou et al. (2021) highlight the compounding impact and emotional toll of sustained emotional labour. If unacknowledged or unsupported, this can contribute to burnout and a reduced sense of professional efficacy. Additionally, the quality of the teacher-student relationships has been linked to teacher wellbeing (Aldrup et al., 2018). Research indicates that while these supportive connections act as a protective factor, there are also notable risk factors.

Furthermore, broader systemic pressures such as intense performance monitoring, staff and resource shortages further exacerbate negative teacher wellbeing. These factors strain teachers' capacity to manage the complexities of their role (DfE, 2018; Lloyd, 2018). Even with such challenges, many school professionals describe trauma-informed work as deeply meaningful. Brunzell et al., (2022) suggest that relationally focused practices work to support the development of teacher identity. This is done through cultivating empathy, reflection, and relational resilience.

Research by Stokes and Brunzell (2019) echo this as they argue that reflective practices coupled with a relational focus can promote the longevity of teacher engagement with trauma-informed environments. For teachers, such work likely aligns with their values and may enhance a sense of purpose and their intrinsic motivation (Mary & Antony, 2022).

Despite these positive attributes, educator engagement with trauma-informed training does not necessarily translate to TIE. Shifts in teacher pedagogy or the degree to which these principles transform daily practice are significantly influenced by existing beliefs and perceptions, engagement with training, teacher self-efficacy, and follow-up support (Lowry et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Evans et al., (2019) suggest that even when teachers have engaged with trauma-informed training, they may also be confronted with tensions between relational TIAs and systemic pressures to meet behavioural and academic targets. Additionally, when schools lack systemic frameworks which consider and support teacher wellbeing, these tensions can be magnified. Viac & Fraser (2020) suggest that without such frameworks in place, the sustainability of any educational reform, such as TIAs, will be limited.

Instead, school must consider and prioritise ongoing support, transparency regarding in-practice expectations, and sufficient time for reflection. Without such considerations, O'Toole & Dobutowitsch (2023) suggest that trauma-informed practice is at risk of either becoming emotionally depleting or superficial.

Educators maintain a central role in advocating, supporting and consistently enacting TIAs within schools (Luthar & Mendes, 2020). Importantly, they are the primary point of daily contact with students and as research suggests, maintain several roles, first-responder, caregiver, and curriculum deliverer (Alisic et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2022; Lester et al., 2020).

With such complex and central roles in navigating emotionally charged interactions while maintaining educational environments conducive to learning, the professional and emotional support of educators is essential (Berger & Samuel, 2020). Therefore, understanding how teachers perceive TIAs, how they are impacted by the implementation of TIA, is critical to evaluating the on-the-ground impact and sustainability of these approaches (Brunzell et al., 2022; Southall, 2023).

2.3 Teacher Wellbeing and Emotional Labour

Teachers in trauma-informed schools often feel that their work is deeply meaningful and professionally rewarding. However, this does not shield them from the significant emotional demands of their role (Brunzell et al., 2016). In recent years, the narrative around teacher wellbeing has experienced a renewed urgency. Research and national reports suggest a worsening reality of staff mental health, emotional exhaustion, and teacher attrition (Education Support, 2023, 2024).

Specifically, in England this has been evidenced by several waves of industrial strike actions where teachers have voiced frustrations with working conditions, long hours, and a lack of support (Education support, 2024; Roberts, 2024).

These issues not only have an impact on teacher wellbeing, but also on the sustainability of TIE. Central to trauma-informed practices are care and connection. However, this demands further emotional capacities on educators, many who might be working in under-resourced and pressurised environments (Allen et al., 2020; Ravalier & Walsh, 2018).

One of the more notable consequences of continuous and unsupported emotional labour amongst educators is teacher burnout. This can be characterised by emotional exhaustion, detachment, and reduced self-efficacy (Aloe et al., 2014). When educators experience burnout, this has a profound impact which is not only individually experienced, but which also ripples into the classroom (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Empirical research aligns with this experience as Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, and Reinke (2018) highlight that teacher profiles, characterised by varying degrees of burnout, stress, self-efficacy, and coping are all associated with differences in student engagement and outcomes. This further points to the systemic consequences of teacher wellness. When educators experience burnout or what might be described as emotional disunity, they may find it more difficult to maintain a regulated and relational trauma-informed practices in the classroom (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Consequently, the classroom environment may lack a sense of safety and consistency that all students benefit from (Braun et al., 2020; Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Supporting teachers when engaging with TIE is also important as these approaches intersect with experiences of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress. As teachers are repeatedly exposed to dysregulated behaviour and challenging trauma narratives, the teachers' own emotional and psychological wellbeing are impacted (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020). Education Support (2024) found that over half of teachers report feeling emotionally exhausted on a weekly basis. This is a figure that has continued to rise annually.

Furthermore, researcher supports the understanding that while teachers attempt to engage with TIE and navigate adapting these approaches through sustained relational work, they are also met with compounding emotional costs stemming from wider institutional or systemic pressures (Allen et al., 2020; Ravalier & Walsh, 2018; Southall, 2023). These pressures might include the burden of administrative responsibilities, complying with school-wide policy, challenging classroom behaviour, or even the broader expectation placed on teachers (Ghasemi, 2025).

Even with such pressures to consider, those engaging with TIE are met with the emotional labour of projecting and modelling calmness, safety, empathetic responses, and regulation (Hargreaves, 2000). However, when teachers struggle with the emotional demands of their classrooms, their capacity to support an environment of safety and regulation may be compromised (Porges, 2011; Siegel, 2012).

In contrast, when educators are regulated, their capacity to create calm and safe environments which support vulnerable students, increases. They are able to aid students in finding an emotional balance through co-regulation and empathetic relational approaches. Spilt et al., (2011) suggest that such attuned teacher-student relationships might protect against teacher stress. However, and importantly, it places those teachers in emotionally vulnerable positions as they are emotionally invested. Southall, (2023) further supports this, arguing that the relational and emotional demands of trauma-informed work may blur the lines between professional responsibilities and personal values.

Relational practices may blur professional boundaries, and consequently, teachers may internalise student struggles as personal shortcomings (Birchall, 2021). As Jerrim & Sims (2021) suggests, educators may be most impacted by these dynamics when they are operating in settings with limited resources, high workloads, and insufficient support. This might be characterised as staffing shortages, increased staff attrition, lack of access to specialist support, and tedious bureaucratic processes and procedures (Allen et al., 2020).

Teachers are often tasked to meet behavioural and academic targets (Perryman, 2006; Perryman & Calvert, 2020), while simultaneously supporting student with complex needs. At times this is despite not receiving adequate training or supervision (Viac & Fraser, 2020). These tensions and dynamics likely maintain a negative and compounding impact on relational and trauma-informed approaches (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2024). Teachers adopting TIA likely have a deep commitment to supporting students.

However, as incongruencies between institutional constraints and school-wide initiatives exists, teachers are limited in their ability to act in authentic and relationally safe ways. This may lead to a sense of emotional dissonance (Stanforth & Rose, 2020). This emotional and professional conflict might then undermine their wellbeing and lead to confusion regarding their role.

Irrespective of some of the more challenging aspects of engaging with TIE, some teachers report that trauma-informed work provides opportunities for connection and personal growth (Brunzell et al., 2016; Lowry et al., 2022; Southall, 2023).

While demanding, the emotional labour involved in these approaches can also work to strengthen and reinforce teachers' sense of purpose, their personal-professional value, and their dedication to ethical and equitable practice (Spilt et al., 2011).

Interestingly, Luthar and Mendes (2020), argue that the sustainability of trauma-informed education depends not only on teacher resilience, but on the collective care structures within the school. Support such as peer reflection, teacher support groups, peer supervision, access to mental health resources, and staff wellbeing policies are all effective and targeted components which help to mitigate emotional fatigue. This type of support works to enhance teacher wellbeing (Sohail et al., 2023; Viac & Fraser, 2020). Supporting teacher wellbeing must go beyond reactive solutions for individual teachers. Meaningful and sustainable support must be enacted at a systemic level and be holistic (Goldberg et al., 2019).

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) have compiled data observing teacher attrition trends, particularly since the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a notable trend in the increase of teachers intending on leaving the profession as well as teachers resigning from their roles (Scott, 2025). Education Support (2023) note a direct correlation between poor teacher wellbeing and the rising rates of teacher attrition. In the 2023 report, unmanageable emotional and workload demands are the primary contributing factors. The adoption of trauma-informed approaches at a systemic level, attends to and supports the wellbeing of those responsible for delivering these approaches.

Additionally, teacher wellbeing is supported through the re-evaluation of professional values and strengthened beliefs in their roles as relational practitioner. Brunzell et al., (2016) note that their model of trauma-informed support, trauma-informed positive education (TIPE), supports the recovery and development of students. Additionally, they note that when teachers engage with and implement TIPE, it cultivates emotional and professional growth. This was further supported in subsequent research and practitioner guidance (Brunzell et al., 2019; Brunzell & Norrish, 2021), which explored how strength-based, trauma-informed approaches contribute to teachers' sense of professional wellbeing and self-efficacy.

Teachers' experiences with these trauma-informed models inevitably shape how they come to interpret their capacity as relational practitioners, but also their evolving role identity. In the following section, these key elements with be explored in greater depth.

2.4 Teacher Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity

Teacher self-efficacy refers to an educator's belief in their capacity to manage challenges and support learning effectively (Bandura, 1997; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). This concept is particularly relevant as it helps explain how some teachers maintain a sense of confidence despite high emotional demands. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in supporting teachers while they navigate and consistently engage with trauma-informed approaches. Importantly, it mediates and influences instructional choices, classroom management, as well as the emotional resilience that teachers draw from when faced with dysregulated students and systemic pressures.

Research by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) align with this understanding of the importance of teacher self-efficacy. However, they add that contextual such as the school environment, and relational factors such as leadership support and interpersonal dynamics with student, further influence an overall sense of self-efficacy.

Within trauma-informed settings, there is often a reciprocal relationship that exists between TIAs and teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can either be developed and enhanced or challenged. Research by Brunzell, Waters, and Stokes (2015, 2016) notes that engaging with a strengths-based trauma-informed framework offers meaningful ways of working which support self-efficacy. Consequently, teachers with a greater sense of self-efficacy are more likely to adapt and consistently apply trauma-informed practices (Berger et al., 2020). In a similar vein, Alisic (2012) points out that teachers who feel confident in their ability to respond to trauma-exposed students report an increased willingness to engage with emotionally complex situations.

Additionally, they also persist with relational approaches, even when facing challenging situations. When educators feel supported and adequately resourced to understand trauma and adopt relational, strength-based approaches, they often report a sense of increased confidence and motivation (Brunzell et al., 2022; Christian-Brandt et al., 2020).

Consistent engagement with TIA, likely leads to positive shifts in student behaviour or improved engagement following trauma-informed strategies. These observable changes have a direct impact on their belief in their ability to impact learning. This succession then reinforces positive teacher wellbeing (Collie et al., 2012).

Inversely, if teachers feel emotionally overwhelmed, undertrained, under-resourced, or unsupported, their self-efficacy may diminish. This may potentially lead to experiences of burnout or turning away from relational pedagogy (Education Support, 2023; Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022).

Further considerations should be taken regarding teachers' pre-existing beliefs about their capabilities as well, as these will likely influence how they initially engage with trauma-informed training. These pre-existing beliefs will subsequently impact the application of trauma-informed classroom practices (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). McIntyre, Backer, and Overstreet (2019) support this as they note that teacher self-efficacy likely serves as a moderator.

Those holding stronger beliefs in their ability to support students are more likely to perceive trauma-informed interventions as both feasible and effective. This implies that varying baselines of self-efficacy might influence how teachers approach professional developments as well as their overall willingness to adopt and sustain TIA over time (Bilbrey et al., 2022). Similarly, Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, and Reinke (2018) demonstrate that teacher stress, burnout, self-efficacy, and professional wellbeing are interrelated factors which collectively impact teacher overall wellbeing and student outcomes. Their work elucidates the importance of institutional structures which are proactively supporting teacher self-efficacy.

Furthermore, this suggests that when such support is non-existent or lacking, that the emotional and practical challenges of TIAs might be amplified.

As discussed in the previous section, TIAs places a noticeable emotional demand on teachers as they must be emotionally responsive and support co-regulation. This calls for teachers to engage both cognitive and emotionally. Teachers who have the innate belief in their ability to manage heightened moments, have the internal resources to de-escalate challenging and dysregulated behaviour. They are also more likely to effectively build trusting teacher-student relationships and persist with TIA (Brown, 2012; Brown et al., 2022). However, a lack of institutional support or challenges with students threaten to erode a sense of capacity over time (Ferguson, 2022; Stanforth & Rose, 2018). Alongside self-efficacy, teacher's evolving sense of professional identity is central to understanding how trauma-informed work is supported or resisted. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) describe teacher identity as a complex, dynamic, and contextually shaped construct. It is not only influenced by internal reflections, but also external experiences and expectations. Trauma-informed settings have the potential to deeply and profoundly impact teacher identity formation.

Trauma-informed engagement calls teachers towards a shift in their professional self-concept, from more of a traditional role which focuses on curriculum delivery to one that also encompasses emotional attunement and relational safeguarding (Brunzell et al., 2022; Litte & Maunder, 2022). Brunzell et al., (2022) argues that as educators ground their work in empathy and care that they experience a deepened sense of meaning regarding their work. This inclination toward relational and empathetic care, naturally encourages a more reflective way of practicing.

Consequently, such reflective processes may prompt growth as teachers are drawn to re-evaluate their purpose and values within the profession (Southall et al., 2023).

While trauma-informed approaches are becoming more common in initial teacher training, many teachers only encounter trauma-informed principals and approaches well into their professional careers (L'Estrange & Howard, 2022). Boylan et al., (2023) suggest that while there is a growing interest in trauma-informed education during initial teacher education in the UK, is not yet common or standard practice.

L'Estrange & Howard (2022) further highlight that one of the more systemic barriers are the prevailing school practices, sometimes being in direct opposition to trauma-informed pedagogy. As teachers begin their trauma-informed journey after engaging with supplemental trainings, tensions in their professional identity can also arise. This might be due to teachers feeling torn between relational intentions and institutional or systemic dynamics (Avery et al., 2020).

Day and Gu (2007) further highlight that sustained commitment to such approaches is dependent on the alignment of personal values and professional roles. Additionally, they argue that teachers engage daily in work that holds deep moral and ethical significance. When personal convictions and institutional priorities do not align, this may create an intense identity-related tension.

Furthermore, teachers often exist within systems which prioritise performative or bureaucratic outcomes over emotionally responsive practices (Boylan et al., 2023). Southall (2023) suggests that this may result in a form of identity dissonance as teacher seek to re-evaluate their practice, becoming more effective trauma-informed practitioners.

Moreover, when trauma-informed practices are promoted without sufficient support structures, Thomas et al., (2019) note that tensions are particularly pronounced for teachers. Teachers might internalise a sense of failure when they are unable to meet the emotional needs of students or when trauma-informed strategies do not yield immediate improvements (Berger, 2019; Ruttledge, 2022; Thomas et al., 2019).

Without reflective support from colleagues or other professionals, these experiences may result in withdrawal, emotional fatigue, or a narrowing of their professional identity (Birchall, 2021; Luthar & Mendes, 2020). Yet, when teachers are supported to explore and their evolving roles are affirmed, the transformation of their identity can be empowering.

Research has suggested that through engagement with relational practice, teachers can experience improved role clarity, confidence, as well as vocational satisfaction (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Brunzell et al., 2022; Chidley & Stringer, 2022). This further aligns with Bandura's (1997) concept of mastery experiences, where success in emotionally complex situations can work to support and fortify self-efficacy.

Additionally, Bilbrey et al., (2024) highlight that teachers who more readily reflect on the relational and emotional aspects of their work, often experience a renewed sense of purpose as they continue to align with the values of TIE. Therefore, to support teacher self-efficacy and professional identity in trauma-informed settings requires significantly more than training (Chafouleas et al., 2016), and how teachers initially engage with such approaches is an important consideration.

Research from L'Estrange and Howard (2022) suggest that exposure to TI frameworks during initial teacher training enhances early-career teachers' self-efficacy while strengthening their commitment to relational practices. Embedding TIAs into initial teacher education can play a vital role in shaping teachers' confidence and sense of readiness to not only meet the educational needs, but also the emotional and relational needs of their students.

However, as Mcintyre, Baker, and Overstreet (2019) point out, the effectiveness of such training or pre-service preparation may hinge on individual teachers' baseline levels of self-efficacy. Teachers with sufficient confidence are more likely to engage meaningfully with TIA from the outset (Cherry & Froustis, 2022). Furthermore, when pre-service teachers receive training which is trauma-informed and grounded in emotionally responsive pedagogy, they are better positioned to develop the emotional resilience and reflective capacities needed. This in turn supports the sustainability of TIAs in day-to-day practice (Brunzell, 2021; White & McCallum, 2020).

To support teachers who are trauma-informed practitioners, Brunzell et al., (2021) notes that ongoing reflective practices, access to supportive professional communities, and the validation of emotional labour are needed. As trauma-informed education continues to expand in the UK (Cherry & Froustic, 2022), it is vital that policy and leadership recognise the relational role of teachers. In addition to being the practitioners who implement the strategies in the classroom, they are professionals whose identity and efficacy are constantly being shaped through their engagement with TIA and their emotional experiences (Alisic, 2012; Lasky, 2005; Lowry et al., 2022, Saunders, 2012).

2.5 Trauma-Informed CPD and Training

Implementing trauma-informed education within an educational setting successfully requires contextually sensitive training as well as ongoing professional development which supports teachers both intellectually as well as emotionally (Brunzell et al., 2019, 2020, 2022; Perry & Daniels, 2016).

Trauma-informed sessions run the risk of feeling generic or like tick-box exercises, particularly when they lack the space needed for reflection. Research findings suggest that without adequate training and support, TIAs risks being reduced to surface-level behaviour management strategies rather than the intended integrated frameworks for relational pedagogy (Brunzell et al., 2016; Lyon et al., 2018). As Berger and Samuel (2020) emphasise, when training is an emotionally attuned CPD, it promotes educators to reflect on their practice.

Additionally, it supports both their own professional growth as well as the long-term wellbeing of students. Trauma-informed CPD must go beyond a knowledge-giving session where presenters provide information on trauma and classroom strategies. It requires safe, reflective, contextually sensitive spaces where participants are able to process their own experiences. They must be spaces which allow professionals to consider and explore the implications of trauma-informed approaches in their specific context (Stokes & Brunzell, 2019). Hoover et al., (2018) support this claim, emphasising that emotionally safe training environments are essential, particularly when dealing with sensitive or triggering material.

In establishing and fostering training environments characterised by these elements, it allows for teachers to engage with authentic self-reflection of their own beliefs. They are able to consider their current practice and commit toward impactful relational forms of practice (Brunzell et al., 2021; L'Estrange & Howard 2022). As SAMHSA (2023) highlights, these conditions allow for teachers to engage with authentic self-reflection of their own beliefs and how that impacts upon their current wellbeing and practice.

As training facilitators encourage participants to reflect deeply and vulnerably, emotionally attuned training also acknowledges that teachers and school professionals may be brought into contact with their own past trauma. Stokes and Brunzell (2019) caution that emotionally reflective spaces can leave teachers feeling emotionally exposed, especially when their own past experiences resonate with the training content. Without emotionally sensitive facilitation, this process may risk re-traumatisation or be emotionally overwhelming.

Importantly, relational containment and follow-up support must be embedded within the training process (Brunzell et al., 2020, 2022). When considering continual professional development, researchers Joyce and Showers (2003) suggest that there are five essential components: theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching. Further research considering trauma-informed training aligns with this five-part model, indicating that in order for trauma-informed CPD to be effective, it requires a pedagogical model which includes coaching, modelling, feedback, and opportunities for ongoing reflection on practice (Dorado et al., 2026; MacLochlainn et al., 2022; White & McCallum, 2020).

Many trauma-informed frameworks consider these components, and they are echoed in the whole-school audit and coaching approaches advocated by organisations such as the Attachment Research Community (White & McCallum, 2020).

Whole-school models of trauma-informed training are increasingly regarded as best practice (Arvidson et al., 2011). This is primarily to ensure consistency of training, practice, and TI language across the school environment (Dorado et al., 2016). Whole-school trauma-informed approaches promote a shared understanding among all staff with the aim of embedding TIAs into the culture, leadership, and daily practices of the school community (Chafouleas et al., 2016; Herrenkohl et al., 2019). Such approaches often begin with a baseline assessment of audit, such as the ARC framework. This helps to consider contextual factors and tailor subsequent CPD content for the specific needs of the school setting. Additionally, these approaches also view schools as relational systems. This means that teacher training is connected to the school's leadership, policies, and overall culture (MacLochlainn et al., 2022).

CPD in the context of such frameworks are seen as one element of an ongoing transformation of their relational journey. While vital to this journey, trauma-informed CPD faces several barriers. Wassink-de Stigter et al., (2022) note that implementation is often constrained by time, funding, teacher attrition, leadership changes, even conflicting school priorities. Not only that, but teachers may also experience emotional fatigue, particularly when TI training raises unresolved personal traumas or calls into question familiar classroom norms or routines (Berger & Samuel, 2020). Emotional fatigue may be a greater burden in under-resourced schools.

Sustaining such practices may feel like an additional burden rather than a supportive framework (Brunzell et al., 2020). This highlights the importance that TI CPD must be designed and delivered with care to ensure that it raises awareness and actively fosters teacher wellbeing and confidence (Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022).

Research also suggests that to positively influence teacher efficacy, identity, and wellbeing following CPD, teachers must consistently integrate TI CPD materials as well as engage in coaching or peer learning (Brunzell et al., 2022; Perry & Daniels, 2016). This training scaffolding is ideally responsive to the realities of school life. When this happens, teacher report increased confidence in handling student dysregulation, a deeper empathy for their students, and a revitalised sense of professional identity and purpose (Brunzell et al., 2020; McIntyre et al., 2019; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019; White & McCallum, 2020).

Furthermore, Brunzell et al., (2022) highlight that trauma-informed trainings can lead to meaningful shifts in teacher identity as it generally encourages reflection of their emotional responses, what they value, and their role as educators. However, it is important to support teachers where they are in their trauma-informed journey.

As mentioned in section 2.4, teacher self-efficacy can influence how training is received and adopted. Emotional and relational scaffolding must be considered at all stages, pre-training audits, training, and practice integration (McIntyre et al., 2019). This points to the importance of differentiating training approaches, considering a wide spectrum of emotional and professional starting points.

For CPD to support meaningful change it needs to be ecologically sound and rooted in the day-to-day experiences of school life, not just theory. In the absence of strategic and intentional follow-up after CPD, the training material risks fading into the background amidst the many demands of their roles.

If trauma-informed education is to be more than a conceptual framework, CPD must establish a pathway toward systemic and cultural shifts within a school setting. It must equip teachers with knowledge as well as relational insights and emotional regulation strategies needed to gradually integrate trauma-informed practices authentically. Lastly, valuing, prioritising, and embedding TI CPD within broader systems of school support, such as peer dialogue, coaching and leadership accountability, is central to achieving this aim.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature and Rationale for Present Study

Despite the growing interest in trauma-informed education, important questions remain relatively unexplored, particularly in relation to teachers' lived experiences and how they engage with such approaches daily. This study aims to address five areas which are linked to the preceding sections of the literature review. This also directly informs the rationale for this research. Firstly, despite the increased interest in trauma-informed approaches in education, there remains a limited exploration of the lived experience and voice of teachers adopting these practices. Outcomes at the programme or institutional level are often the focus of studies (Brunzell et al., 2016; White & McCallum, 2020), however, few address teachers' own interpretations, challenges, and reflections.

Additionally, there remains a notable lack of UK-based studies that highlight teacher voice, and fewer aiming to capture the reflections of secondary staff navigating the demands of TI work. As such, this study aims to offer a more contextualised and authentic account of trauma-informed engagement from the ground up. This is accomplished by centring the voices of teachers in one London secondary school.

Second, although teacher wellbeing has been addressed in some literature, this is typically framed in terms of stress mitigation or burnout prevention. There is less focus on the emotional consequences and shifts in identity that may occur when educators engage with trauma-informed frameworks (Naegeli Costa et al., 2021; Southall, 2023). This study aims to build on the themes discussed in section 2.3 and 2.4 by exploring the emotional and reflective processes teachers experience. This includes how their professional identity may shift as they adopt and integrate relational and emotionally responsive practices into their work. Third, much of the existing research is either a quantitative design or cross-sectional in nature. This offers limited insight into how trauma-informed practice is experienced and developed over time.

Research is yet to sufficiently capture the evolution of teacher reflections and experiences following trauma-informed training and that transition to everyday practice. To explore change over time, this study uses a longitudinal design in which two rounds of interviews and in-school observations took place across two academic years. This approach was implemented as the aim was to understand first impressions following training as well as how ideas were engaged with, challenged, or adapted in daily practice.

Fourth, many trauma-informed frameworks assume systemic readiness, but there has been limited inquiry into how contextual and structural factors influence the enactment of associated practices. Issues such as limited resources, high emotional demands, competing priorities, and lack of leadership support are often superficially acknowledged (Herrenkohl et al., 2019). This study prioritised the day-today realities within one school. This elucidates how institutional dynamics and school culture mediates teachers' engagement with trauma-informed approaches. Finally, teacher readiness and self-efficacy are underexplored as dynamic constructs with trauma-informed literature. While some research acknowledges their importance, self-efficacy is often regarded as a fixed trait rather than an evolving intrinsic belief shaped by training, support and relational experiences (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; McIntyre et al., 2019).

This study explores how teachers' sense of confidence and readiness develops through engagement with trauma-informed CPD. It also aims to examine how emotional, relational, and systemic factors either support or hinder that development. Together, these gaps highlight a need for in-depth, longitudinal, teacher-focused research.

By addressing the emotional, relational, and systemic complexities of trauma-informed education, this study aims to contribute nuanced and contextually grounded insights to the field. Additionally, it aims to prioritise how teachers navigate, reflect on, and adopt trauma-informed approaches over time. Ultimately, this study seeks to capture the lived tensions of applying TI values and approaches in real schools highlighting the interplay between emotional demands, personal values, and institutional expectations. In doing so, this study contributes teacher-based insights that is often missing in the literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the approach undertaken to explore how teachers and school professionals experience trauma-informed practice, including the use of interviews, observations, and reflexive analysis. It also details how the researcher role shaped the research process. The study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, recognising that meaning is co-constructed between researcher and participants (Elliot & Timulak, 2005). The chapter begins by discussing the research paradigm, including its ontological and epistemological positioning. Following this, the research design is described, highlighting the use of semi-structured interviews and lesson observations to explore how teachers and other school professionals experience and engage with trauma-informed training and practice.

This chapter also outlines participant recruitment and the procedural aspects of data collection, including the design and transcription of interviews, the development of an observation proforma, and lesson observations, as well as the process of member checking. It then describes the six-phase thematic analysis process used to analyse the data. Reflexivity and positionality are explored to acknowledge the role of the researcher in shaping the study's interpretations. Finally, the chapter considers the ethical issues relevant to this research.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study is anchored within an interpretivist paradigm, seeking to understand and interpret the ways individuals construct meanings from their experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Interpretivism recognises the inherent complexity, subjectivity, and variability of social reality, positing that reality is co-constructed through individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and interactions within particular contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This was especially relevant in this study, where participants made sense of trauma-informed training in unique ways shaped by their role, experiences, previous trainings, and perceptions of their school context. This paradigm emphasises the personal and subjective dimensions of their professional and emotional journeys with TIAs.

Following Crotty's (1998) model, an interpretivist epistemology guides the theoretical perspective of social constructivism, emphasising that knowledge arises through subjective experiences, interactions, and context-specific interpretations. This perspective aligns with the selection of qualitative methodologies, particularly semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis. It positions these as congruent methods to gain comprehensive and nuanced insights into teachers and other school professionals' lived experiences with trauma-informed engagement (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2010). The interpretivist paradigm was ultimately chosen to allow for a deeper, contextually rich exploration of individual perspectives, which informed subsequent broader inquiries.

3.2.1 Philosophical Positioning

This study is grounded in a social constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology. Together, these positions reflect the belief that reality is co-constructed through human interactions, shaped by personal, cultural, social, and contextual factors (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). These assumptions support the use of qualitative methods that prioritise the unique perspectives of participants and the contextual nature of meaning-making. Guba and Lincoln (1994) highlight the value of recognising multiple subjective realities to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of social phenomena. Accordingly, this study acknowledges and values each participant's contribution in exploring the complex, situated experience of engaging with trauma-informed approaches. It also recognises that research is shaped by the values and perspective of the researcher, a point explored further in the Reflexivity and Positionality section (3.6).

3.2.2 Ontology: Social Constructivism

Social constructivism proposes that reality is continually interpreted and reconstructed through social interactions and shared cultural meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Crotty, 1998). This ontological stance is especially relevant to the study's aim: to explore how teachers and school professionals make sense of trauma-informed approaches within their particular roles and contexts. Constructivism affirms that meaning making is a dynamic, evolving process shaped by culture, relationships, and professional identity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2.3 Epistemology: Interpretivism

Interpretivism asserts that knowledge is co-created through dialogue between researcher and participant, influenced by context, reflexivity, and positionality (Berger, 2015; Schwandt, 2000). This approach prioritises the complexity of subjective experience and enables an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives. It supports a design focused on rich, contextualised accounts of practice, with interpretive rigour maintained through transparency and ongoing reflexive engagement (Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Lin, 1998). The principles of interpretivism underpin the study's design, data collection, and thematic analysis (see Sections 3.3 and 3.5).

3.2.4 Methodological Alignment

The methodological choices in this study were intentionally aligned with its ontological and epistemological foundations. This further aligned with the selection of semi-structured interviews which were chosen for their flexibility, allowing participants the freedom to express their experiences and perspectives openly. It also enabled the researcher to remain responsive to new and relevant issues introduced by participants during the interviews.

Lesson observations complemented the interviews by offering a window into how trauma-informed approaches were engaged with in the classroom. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021, 2022), was specifically selected as the analytic approach for this study.

This method aligns with the interpretivist emphasis on meaning-making, researcher subjectivity, and contextual interpretation. RTA enabled the generation of themes that were co-constructed through iterative engagement with the data and supported by member checking. Importantly, this grounded the analysis in participants' experiences. The combination of interviews and observations thus offered comprehensive insights into the nuances of teacher experiences.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Theoretical Framework: Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

To support and deepen the study's ontological and epistemological positioning, this research draws on Bronfenbrenner & Morris's (2006) bioecological model of human development, also known as the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model, as seen in Figure 1. This framework conceptualises human development as arising from dynamic and reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environments across time. It offers a helpful lens to explore teachers' experiences of trauma-informed education.

The model comprises of four interrelated components:

- **Proximal Processes**: These are the sustained, everyday interactions between individuals and their environment that drive development. In this study these included classroom relationships, peer coaching, and informal staff dialogues. Through these relational interactions TIAs are internalised, enacted, and reshaped.

- **Personal Characteristics**: These refer to the identities, histories, natural dispositions, and emotional resources each participant brings to their professional roles. These characteristics shaped how they interpreted and enacted TIAs.
- **Context**: This encompasses the multi-layered system in which participants were situated, from classroom and leadership dynamics to local authority policy and broader sociocultural discourses. These directly and indirectly influence both the individual and their developmental processes.
- **Time**: Time operates on multiple levels (e.g., daily interaction, academic year, career life course, educational reform) showing how change unfolds for individual participants and within wider systems.

The PPCT model, therefore, guided this study to consider the relational, contextual, and temporal dimensions of school professionals' engagement with TIAs. It also informed the decision to collect data across three time points, in order to capture the evolving nature of teacher engagement over time.

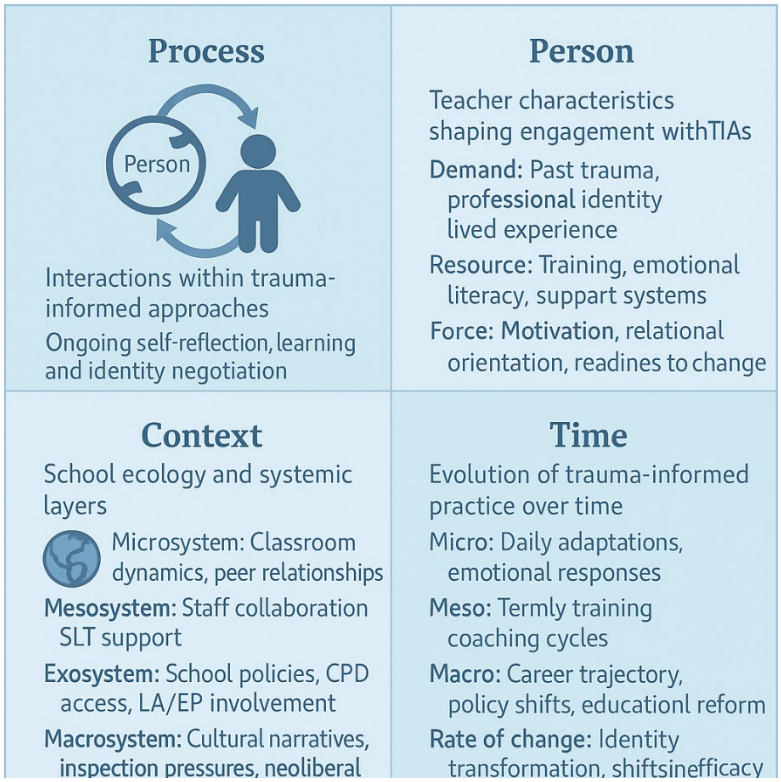

Image 1: *Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) – Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model*

Furthermore, this ecological approach complements the study's social constructivist ontology by emphasising that individuals do not exist in isolation; rather, their understandings and practices are continuously shaped and influenced by interactions with their environments. Additionally, the interpretivist epistemology which underpins this research aligns with Bronfenbrenner's focus on the interplay between personal meaning-making and external influence. It recognising that knowledge is co-constructed within, and in response to these interconnected systems.

Applying this model enabled a more nuanced and systemically aware exploration of the data. It guided my attention to participants' personal experiences and relational perspectives as well as to the broader organisational, cultural, and structural contexts within which these experiences were situated. The model was particularly useful in drawing my attention to tensions between individual and systemic expectations.

It was also valuable as a framework for understanding how participants made sense of trauma-informed training in relation to their professional roles, emotional resources, and the broader institutional structures they worked within. Rather than serving as a rigid structure, the PPCT model functioned as a conceptual scaffold that supported my interpretation of teachers' accounts. The model did not determine codes or themes but sensitised the researcher to relational and contextual dimensions during interpretation. It allowed for a more integrated approach to understanding how trauma-informed approaches are enacted at the individual level, and influenced, at times constrained, by broader systemic conditions. In this way, the model aligns with the study's aim to capture the complexity of teachers and other school professionals lived experiences within a specific school setting.

3.3.2 Study Design and Rationale

This section explores how the theoretical and philosophical positions of the study translated into practical decisions pertaining to the study design, setting, and participant engagement. In doing so, it provides a bridge between the conceptual framework and the concrete methods used to generate data.

A temporally sensitive qualitative approach was adopted to capture shifts in understanding, perceptions, and practice over time. This aligns with the principles of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR), which explores how experiences unfold and meaning evolves through time (Neale, 2018). As Saldaña (2003) notes, time itself becomes a form of data in longitudinal inquiry. This supported an exploration of how participants' meaning-making developed over time through reflection and professional engagement. Two rounds of interviews conducted across two academic years, with supplemental embedded observations, allowed for this depth of inquiry.

Data collection comprised semi-structured interviews conducted across two academic years: the first in summer term 2024 and the second in spring term 2025. Lesson observations took place in winter term 2024, strategically scheduled between the two interview phases. While Young et al., (1992) propose that longitudinal research typically involves data collection intervals spaced at least one year apart, the structure of this study, although slightly shorter, remains consistent with the core aims of QLR.

The sequencing of phases enabled exploration of participants' early reflections on trauma-informed approaches, followed by a deeper understanding of how their perceptions and practices developed over time. The design also allowed for consideration of how participants engaged with trauma-informed approaches in their day-to-day work, how their language developed or evolved, and how reflective dialogue with colleagues shaped their interpretations. In this way, data collection was attuned to the dynamic, embedded, and relational nature of trauma-informed approaches within the school context.

By returning to the same participants and referencing earlier conversations and classroom practice, it was possible to co-construct meaning and revisit themes in greater depth. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of teacher perspectives.

This elucidated how individual and systemic factors were interconnected and how these interactions influenced their experiences with trauma-informed approaches. This design demonstrates a deliberate effort to stay methodologically coherent and rigorous, while also remaining flexible enough to reflect the study's interpretivist stance. Particularly, its emphasis was on co-constructing meaning, acknowledging subjectivity, and elevating the voices of participants involved. The iterative nature of data collection and analysis ensured that developing insights could inform the research process in an ongoing, responsive manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010).

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Two rounds of interviews with the same participants were conducted to explore how perceptions and practices developed over time. Returning to participants allowed provisional themes to be revisited and deepened, supporting a richer understanding of their engagement with trauma-informed approaches. This iterative design aligns with the study's interpretivist stance, valuing subjectivity, co-construction of meaning, and participant voice (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their suitability in eliciting in-depth, individualised narratives. This method aligns with the interpretivist and social constructivist foundations of the study by facilitating open-ended, dialogic engagement (Brinkmann, 2013; Kvale & Brinkman, 2018). The flexible structure enabled the researcher to explore unanticipated themes while ensuring consistency across key topics. This method was also appropriate given the emotionally layered nature of trauma-informed work. It offered a reflective space for participants to speak openly about complex personal and professional experiences within the real-world school setting.

Collecting data at three time points supported the study's broader aim to explore how trauma-informed engagement evolved, capturing temporal shifts in understanding and practice.

3.3.4 Lesson Observations

Lesson observations were incorporated as a supplementary method to enrich the study's exploration of trauma-informed approaches within the classroom. This decision was grounded in the interpretivist aim of gaining a richer, more nuanced understanding of participants' engagement with TIAs. While interviews offered insight into teachers' subjective reflections, lesson observations provided a contextual lens through which the researcher interpreted how trauma-informed principles were expressed in real-time classroom interactions.

Rather than serving to verify findings, the integration of multiple data sources deepened interpretive insight and supported a more contextualised understanding of what trauma-informed education looked like in action (Flick, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This approach aligns with the study's interpretivist stance, which values contextual and relational forms of knowledge. Observations provided a window into participants interpersonal skills, classroom climate and dynamics, and relational strategies enacted. These are all elements central to trauma-informed education, but likely difficult to thoroughly articulate in interviews alone. Additionally, this method supported the study's broader aim in capturing lived experiences as situated within a specific setting. This further complements the theoretical framework offered by Bronfenbrenner and Morris' PPCT model.

Including observations also reflects the study's axiological position on relational engagement. Observing classroom interactions further contributed to data richness, but it also supported the development of rapport and a sense of trust. It provided a sense of continuity between research phases as well as enhanced the relational and ethical integrity of the overall design.

3.3.5 School Context and Case Selection

This study focused on a single secondary school that participated in a local authority Virtual School trauma-informed pilot involving six schools. The school's commitment to trauma-informed education predated the study and was revealed through grassroots staff initiatives prior to the formal pilot. One member of staff had engaged independently with Polyvagal Theory and developed an 'engaged classroom' initiative.

This garnered support from several senior leaders. While the previous headteacher was not directly involved, he was supportive of this direction.

A new headteacher was appointed in 2023, and although leadership transition often disrupts developmental work, the trauma-informed momentum was sustained. When the local authority offered free whole-school training for the 2023 – 2024 academic year, the new headteacher endorsed the initiative. This enabled the school to continue along its existing trajectory.

The pilot was delivered in partnership with the Attachment Research Community (ARC), whose established trauma-informed audit process guided participating schools through structured development. As part of the pilot, schools were offered the opportunity to work toward ARC accreditation, which recognises their commitment to supporting vulnerable students through trauma-informed policy and practice. All six schools involved in the pilot completed the ARC audit, received training, and developed a school-specific action plan aligned with the ARC ‘Bronze’ award level.

However, the school selected for this study was actively pursuing the more advanced ‘Silver’ award. This level requires schools not only to embed trauma-informed approaches throughout the organisation, but also to implement a school-led research project and submit a case study to ARC. Although the research project undertaken by the school was unrelated to this study, their pursuit of ‘Silver’ status indicated a deeper institutional commitment to trauma-informed development. The diagram below outlines the school’s engagement with the Virtual School pilot and ARC accreditation process.

It highlights the key stages that shaped the school's trauma-informed development and contextualised participant's experience.

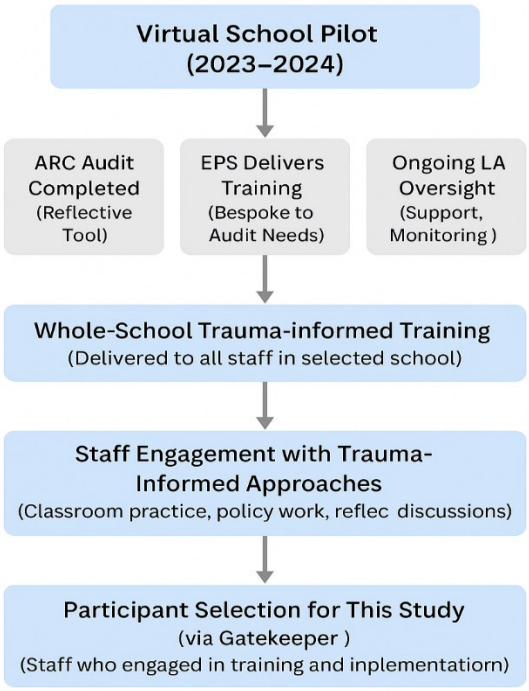

Figure 2. *Overview of the school's engagement in the Virtual School Trauma-Informed Pilot and ARC accreditation process.*

This enthusiastic level of engagement positioned the school as an information-rich case (Patton, 2015a), offering insight into how trauma-informed approaches were being interpreted and embedded beyond initial training. While several schools were involved in the wider initiative, this school was selected for its distinctive position within the pilot and its apparent readiness for deeper reflection and engagement among staff. Focussing on a single school allowed for an in-depth exploration of how trauma-informed approaches were perceived, interpreted, adapted, and enacted over time within a specific institutional ecology.

While this limits transferability and generalisability to other settings, the depth of data collected across multiple phases, methods, and participants supports a nuanced and contextually grounded understanding of trauma-informed engagement in practice. This decision aligns with qualitative research principles which prioritise rich, contextual meaning-making over broad generalisations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.3.6 Participant Recruitment and Sampling Strategy

Participants were recruited from a London secondary school involved in a trauma-informed pilot project led by the local authority's Virtual School. While the recruitment approach reflected key features of purposive sampling, namely, selecting participants with direct experience of the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015), the researcher did not independently select participants. Instead, recruitment was facilitated by a senior leader within the school who acted as the gatekeeper and who also participated in the study.

This individual was well positioned for this role due to his leadership responsibilities within the school and his close involvement with the Virtual School pilot. This included acting as the primary liaison between the school and the pilot organisers. The gatekeeper identified colleagues who had participated in the whole-school trauma-informed training and who might be willing to take part in the study. Once initial expressions of interest were secured, these individuals were contacted directly by the researcher via their school email addresses.

This approach helped preserve the voluntary nature of participation, allowing staff members to make informed decision about their involvement without undue pressure. The final sample comprised six participants. These participants represented a range of professional roles within the school, including subject teaching, safeguarding, pastoral care, and leadership. This diversity of roles allowed for a range of professional reflections and perspectives on how trauma-informed approaches were understood and applied within the school context.

Table 1. Participant Pseudonyms, Roles, and Research Phase Participation

Participant Pseudonym	Role	Research Phase Participation
Liam	Subject Teacher: History	Phase 1 Interview, Observation, Phase 2 Interview
Hannah	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead & Inclusion Coordinator	Phase 1 Interview only
Bethany	Subject Teacher: Art & Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator	Phase 1 Interview, Observation, Phase 2 Interview
Frederick	Subject Teacher: Music	Phase 1 Interview, Observation, Phase 2 Interview
Martin	Subject Teacher: Art & Art Department Head	Phase 1 Interview, Observation, Phase 2 Interview
Edward	Assistant Head Teacher & Subject Teacher: Modern Foreign Language Teacher	Phase 1 Interview, Observation, Phase 2 Interview

Table 1. *Table of participants listed by pseudonym, role within the school and their participation in the study.*

The decision to engage with a small, focused sample reflects the study's commitment to exploring lived experiences in depth and is consistent with qualitative research principles (Patton, 2015a). The collection of data across multiple time points also justified this focused approach, allowing for sustained engagement and the development of trust and rapport. Each participant's voice contributed to the thematic framework developed through the study. This sample's size and composition were, therefore, viewed as appropriate to the interpretivist and relational focus of the research.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

3.4.1 Designing the Initial Interview Schedule

The design of the initial schedule was guided by the overarching research aim: to explore how do teachers and school professionals experience and engage with trauma-informed approaches within a secondary school context. The initial interview schedule was developed to align with the study's initial research question and conceptual framework. It was informed by a review of the trauma-informed education literature, implementation science, and contextual models of school systems and teacher development. The questions were then piloted with a small group of educational psychologists and trainee educational psychologists, whose feedback helped refine the phrasing and sequence to ensure clarity, accessibility, and alignment with the aims of the study.

Piloting interview schedules is recognised as good practice in qualitative research, helping to enhance the quality and trustworthiness of the instrument before formal data collection begins (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). The initial section of the schedule focuses on participants' understanding and experiences of trauma-informed approaches. The questions developed sought to explore how participants defined the concept of trauma-informed, their reflections on the training they received, and attempted to uncover how their day-to-day practice may have shifted.

These were all influenced by literature on trauma-informed implementation (Fixen et al., 2005, 2019) and the role of teacher perceptions and responsibility in trauma-informed settings (Brunzell, Waters, & Stokes, 2016; Jennings, 2015). A second set of questions focused on the underlying mechanisms and challenges of implementation, drawing on systems-level insights. These included prompts considering leadership support, policy alignment, staff development, and buy-in. These are areas frequently cited as influencing the success of trauma-informed work in schools (Chafouleas et al., 2016; Herman et al., 2018; White & McCallum, 2020).

The third section explored the contextual factors which was guided by Bronfenbrenner and Morris's PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). This included questions about how the wider school culture, community demographics, behaviour policies, and social dynamics shaped participants' use and interpretation of trauma-informed approaches.

The schedule concluded with open-ended questions inviting reflections while ensuring that there was space for participants to raise any additional experiences or insights (Tracy, 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This structure ensured both consistency across interviews and the flexibility to follow participant-led narratives. Additionally, the interview schedule was reviewed by an educational psychologist and three trainee educational psychologists.

Feedback focused on language clarity, flow, and prompting questions. Minor revisions were made in response to the feedback. The final version of the initial interview schedule is included in ***Appendix A***.

3.4.2 Designing the Second Round Interview Schedule

Following the first round of data collection and an update meeting with academic supervisors in December 2024, the project's focus was slightly refined. While the initial emphasis had been on the implementation of trauma-informed approaches, feedback suggested that "implementation" as a concept required a broader institution scope than was feasible within the remit of this professional doctoral study. Consequently, the study's title and research questions were adjusted to focus more explicitly on the lived experiences of teachers and school professionals engaging with trauma-informed approaches.

The second-round interview schedule was therefore shaped by both the refined aims of the research and the themes identified during initial data analysis. For example, earlier questions about how participants enacted specific trauma-informed strategies in their classrooms were revised to explore how participants made sense of the emotional and professional impact of trauma-informed training over time. Classroom observations provided a contextual lens through which participants' earlier reflections could be revisited and further interpreted (McKechnie, 2008). These observational insights were integrated into the second-round interview schedule, offering participants an opportunity to reflect on their practice in relation to specific classroom moments. This approach aligned with the study's emphasis on contextually embedded meaning-making and supported a deeper, situated exploration of participants' evolving perspectives.

The interview schedule retained a flexible semi-structured format but placed a greater emphasis on participants' reflections over time, evolving perspectives, and perceived personal or professional impacts of engaging with trauma-informed approaches. The structure and content of the second-round interview schedule were directly informed by the initial coding framework developed during the first phase of data analysis. Early codes and provisional themes such as '*emotional and relational aspects',* '*teacher wellbeing and support'*, and *'trauma-informed practice in action'* highlighted key areas of significance for the participants. This guided the thematic focus of the final interview schedule and supported the development of targeted prompts for each thematic section.

Observational data was integrated to support context-specific discussions, with examples from each lesson embedded within each participant's interview.

This prompted each participant to critically reflect on specific aspects of their practice as well as consider how their actions aligned with TIAs.

Rather than serving as validation, observational prompts were used to stimulate deeper participant reflection and co-construction of meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018). Furthermore, this supported the study's aims of enriching interpretive insights by contextualising and deepening participants' narratives. This iterative development of the schedule reflects the study's qualitative underpinnings and commitment to remaining responsive to participants' evolving perceptions and experiences. A copy of the final schedule is included in ***Appendix B***.

3.4.3 Conducting the Interviews

The initial round of interviews were conducted shortly after participants completed the whole-school trauma-informed training. The final interview phase took place approximately six to seven months later, following the lesson observation phase. Interviews were conducted either in person or online via Microsoft Teams, depending on participant availability and preference. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. Transcription was completed using Microsoft Word's inbuilt transcription tool and subsequently reviewed and edited manually to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the original audio.

This process involved repeated listening, correction of unclear phrasing, and formatting for clarity during the analysis. Throughout the interview process, attention was given to building rapport and creating a psychologically safe space for participants to express their views openly and honestly.

This was supported, for example, by allowing them to sit where and how they felt most comfortable in the space, and interviews were conducted in quiet, private spaces or with headphones when online, to maintain confidentiality. This consideration was particularly important given the emotionally sensitive nature of trauma-informed practice and the potential personal relevance of the topics discussed.

Interviews were guided by open-ended questions which supported reflective dialogue and encouraged participants to explore their experiences in relation to their context. This flexible structure supported remaining responsive to unanticipated but relevant areas of interest. Participants were encouraged to speak to both their initial engagement with trauma-informed training and how they enacted these approaches in their daily practice.

Immediately after each interview, reflective notes were recorded to capture contextual information, non-verbal cues, and the researcher's own emotional and cognitive responses. These reflections informed minor adaptations to the interview process across the study. This further contributed to the refinement of the final interview schedule and supported the overall analytical process.

3.4.4 Designing the Observation Pro Forma

The observation pro forma was developed to support a structured yet flexible approach to recording classroom practices. This was with a particular focus on identifying elements of trauma-informed approaches in practice.

The design was informed by existing literature on trauma-informed education (Brunzell, 2021; Brunzell et al., 2016; Chafouleas et al., 2016; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014).

Additionally, frameworks relating to teacher self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and signs of occupational stress in educational settings (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings & Siegel, 2019) informed the design of the pro forma.

The pro forma was divided into three main sections: structured observation fields, reflective notes, and a classroom mapping tool. The first section included focus area such as evidence of trauma-informed approaches in action (e.g., use of relational language, emotional regulation strategies), teacher-student interactions, indicators of self-efficacy, and potential signs of frustration or stress. These areas were selected to align with the study's research questions and coding framework from the initial round of analysis.

The second section provided space for detailed reflective notes. This supported the documenting of non-verbal cues, environmental dynamics, and initial interpretations. To maintain consistency with the study's interpretivist approach, the form included prompts to guide reflection while discouraging evaluative or judgemental language. In line with recommendations for qualitative classroom-based research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018), observational notes were written with an emphasis on observable behaviour and language.

The third section included a template for recording the classroom layout and teacher positioning. This enabled the layout of each classroom to be accurately documented for each lesson observation.

It also allowed attention to be given to how environmental factors might interact with trauma-informed approaches (e.g., visibility, movement, physical proximity).

Additional prompts in this section of the pro forma encouraged attention to seating arrangements, classroom atmosphere, and any other contextual features which might have been relevant to student and teacher engagement.

The pro forma was reviewed and discussed in supervision with both the academic and educational psychologist research supervisors. This prompted minor revisions to the language, layout, and focus areas before it was used in lesson observation with participants. A final version of the observation pro forma is included in ***Appendix C.***

3.4.5 Conducting the Lesson Observations

Lesson observations were conducted in December 2024 and January 2025, shortly before the second round of interviews. These interviews took place in the final week of January and the first week of February 2025. This sequencing was intentional, designed to maintain momentum in the research process and ensure that lessons remained fresh in participants' minds during follow-up interviews. Although participants were informed that the observations were non-evaluative, each requested a follow-up conversation to discuss what had been observed. These debrief discussions were initiated by the researcher lasting two to five minutes following the observations. Participants were again ensured that it was not an evaluation of their practice, however, observational data would be reflected upon in the upcoming interview. These debrief discussions formed part of a transparent and ethical research process.

Each observation was organised collaboratively between the researcher and participant and was based on mutual availability. As five of the six participants held teaching roles, five observations were conducted. Each took place during a typical lesson within the participant's subject area: two in art, one in music, one in history, and one in modern foreign language. Observations lasted for the full duration of the lesson (approximately 45 – 55 minutes).

In advance of each visit, it was agreed that the researcher would adopt a passive observer role, and arrangements were made for the researcher to be seated as discreetly as possible in a back corner of the classroom. This was done to minimise disruptions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Observations were recorded using the structured pro forma developed (see Appendix C), with notes typed directly onto a laptop. While the pro forma provided a useful structure, flexibility was required in practice. The researcher alternated between periods of note-taking and attentive observation. This supported a responsiveness to the dynamic of classroom interactions. Additionally, reflective notes were written immediately following each observation to capture contextual factors, research reactions, and potential influences on the observed lesson.

Particular attention was given to reflexivity throughout the process. In each lesson, students were observed interacting briefly with the researcher. These interactions were noted on the pro forma, along with reflections on how the research's presence may have influenced the behaviour of both students and staff.

3.4.6 Member Checking

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, member checking was incorporated as a collaborative and reflexive validation strategy. Following each interview, participants were provided with a written summary of the initial interpretation of their interview, including representative quotes. These summaries included a concise overview of key points raised.

The aim of this process was not to seek consensus, but rather to offer participants an opportunity to clarify or expand on the ways their words were being interpreted (Birt et al., 2016). This approach allowed participants to retain a sense of agency in shaping how their experiences were represented.

All participant engaged with the member checking process. While most confirmed the accuracy of the summaries provided, several offered minor clarifications or additional reflections. These were then integrated into the ongoing analysis. As such, member checking contributed to the iterative nature of the research and supported the development of themes that were grounded in participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Feedback was integrated into the analysis where relevant, either by amending interpretations or noting alternative perspectives. A sample member checking summary is included in ***Appendix D*** to illustrate the format and content shard with participants.

3.5 Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021, 2022), was selected due to its alignment with interpretivist and constructivist principles. This approach acknowledges the researcher's active role in meaning-making and is particularly well-suited to exploring lived experiences. Braun and Clarke (2022) describe six iterative, non-linear phases: familiarisation, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme naming, and reporting. Each phase in this study was undertaken with attention to reflexivity, theoretical coherence, and contextual sensitivity. Themes were understood as patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept, rather than as topic summaries or surface-level categories.

3.5.1 Familiarisation with Data and Coding

Following each interview and lesson observation, I engaged in repeated listening to the audio recordings while editing the transcripts. Once completed, I reread the full transcripts and documented preliminary reflections in my research journal. This immersion supported early analytical thinking and sensitisation to patterns within the data. Coding was carried out using Excel, with data-driven codes developed inductively and grounded in participants' language (e.g., "teacher stress," "behaviour as communication"). These initial codes were then interpreted and clustered into early conceptual groupings, which informed the development of provisional themes.

These codes did not aim to represent fixed categories but served as starting points for analytic interpretation. Conceptual grouping was an iterative and creative process, grounded in participant meaning but shaped through researcher reflexivity.

Through this iterative process, some of these groupings were refined and reconceptualised as fully developed themes. An example of this process, including how participant quotes were organised and interpreted, is provided in **Appendix F**. Additionally, an excerpt from an annotated transcript is included in **Appendix G** to illustrate how reflexivity supported early meaning-making. Observation data were transcribed using a structured pro forma and subsequently coded using the same inductive process as the interviews. Codes from the observations were integrated into the broader coding framework, contributing to the development of conceptual groups and theme generation as shown in **Appendix E.**

3.5.2 Searching for Themes

Following the generation of initial codes across the dataset, I engaged in a process of visual and tactile clustering to explore conceptual patterns. Each code was physically transcribed onto an index card and physically arranged according to similarity of meaning or thematic resonance. This method enabled a flexible and responsive approach to the conceptual grouping of codes, generated through iterative interpretations. Conceptual categories were reviewed, re-labelled and reorganised throughout the process.

Figure 3 presents a snapshot of this clustering process, showing how related codes were categorised together to form broader conceptual groupings. These conceptual groupings became the foundation for the initial thematic development.

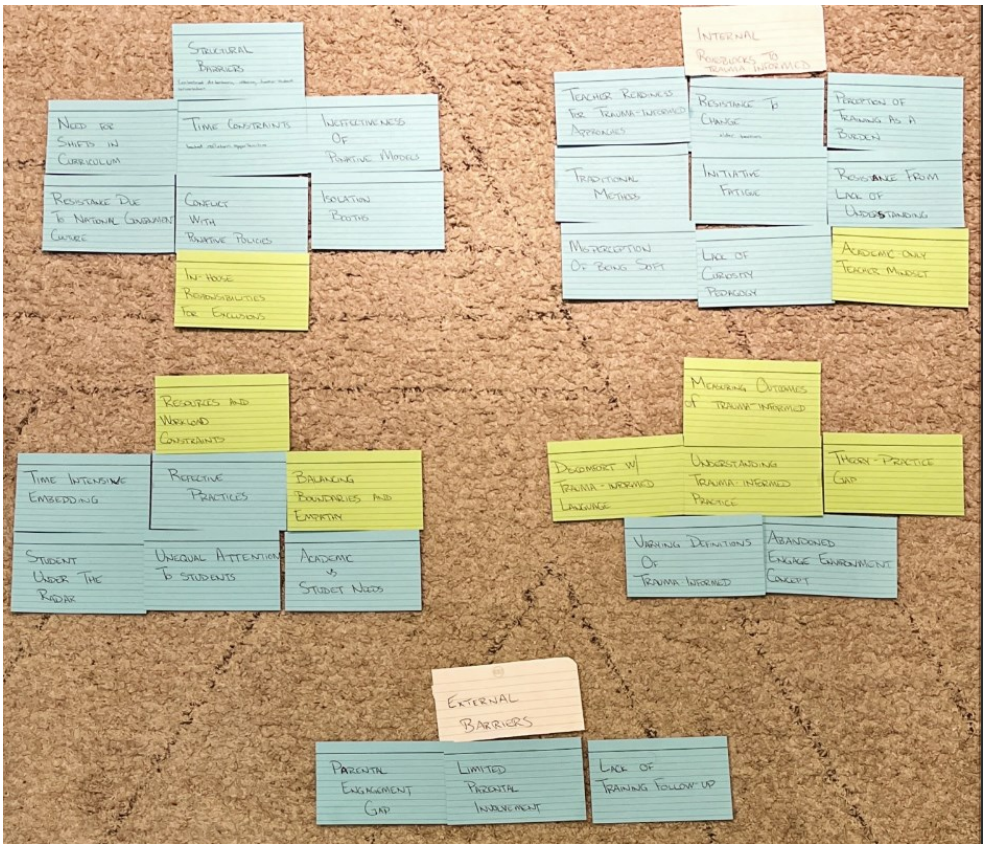

Figure 3. *Physical clustering of initial codes using index cards. Related codes were grouped together to explore developed conceptual groupings and provisional themes.*

The physical clustering of codes supported the next step of developing a thematic map. This further explored how the conceptual group related to one another and how they might align with broader thematic categories. This visual mapping process helped clarify both overlaps and distinctions between developing concepts. It was instrumental in refining the structure of the final themes and sub-themes.

Figure 4 presents a thematic diagram which illustrates the movement from clustered conceptual groups (green) to broader provisional themes (blue). The arrows represent interpretive links between the ideas which show how different aspects of participant experiences intersected.

For example, the category of leadership support intersected with both emotional impact of trauma-informed work and the practical enactment of TIAs. This conceptual mapping stage supported critical reflections on the coherence and interrelationships of developing themes. This ensured they were not only grounded in the data, but also relevant to the research aims and questions.

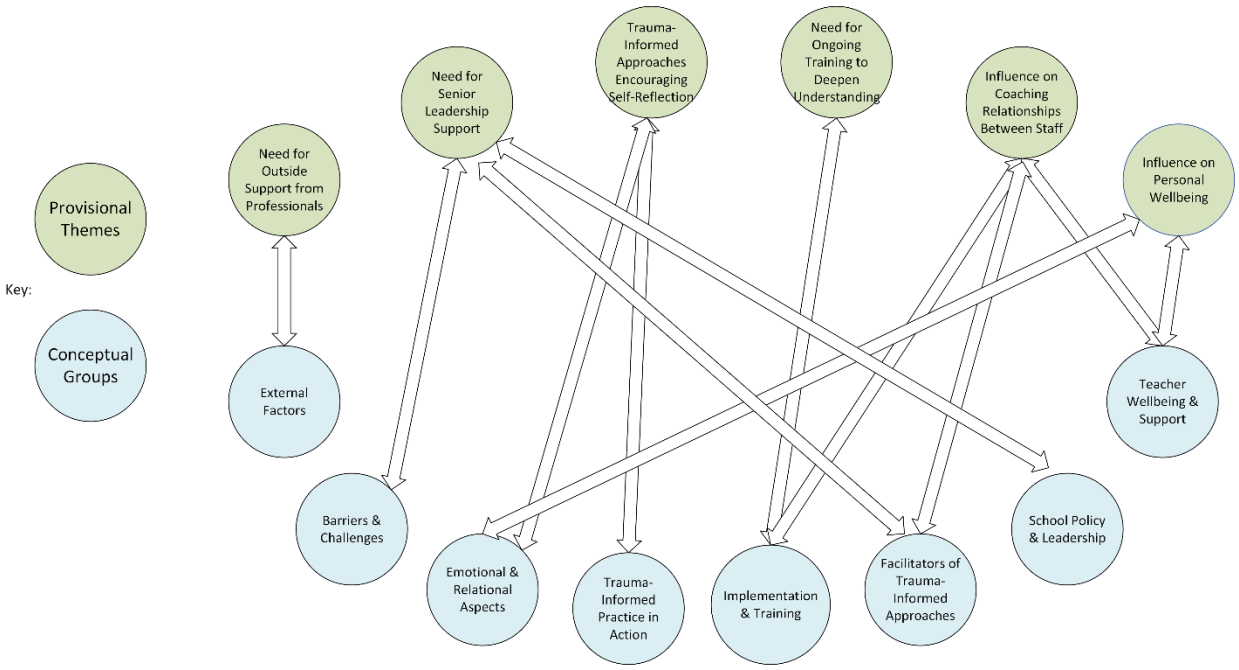

Figure 4. *Thematic mapping of conceptual groups to provisional themes. Arrows indicate conceptual relationships between key thematic domains identified during analysis*

3.5.3 Reviewing and Refining Themes

Initial themes developed from the first round of interviews and the clustering process were reviewed iteratively throughout the analysis. After clustering, the quotes associated with each initial code were revisited in their original transcript context to ensure alignment with the developing thematic structure. Themes were conceptualised as patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept (Braun & Clarke, 2022), rather than broad topic summaries or categorical groupings. This review process continued following the coding of the lesson observation data, which offered additional insights into how trauma-informed approaches were enacted in practice. Observation data were not used to validate interview findings, but rather to enrich interpretive depth by situating participants' narratives within the classroom context.

This supported reflective dialogue between the data sources, helping to interrogate assumptions and deepen my understanding of participants' professional realities. For example, observed behaviours such as "use of playfulness" and "calm and regulated communication" provided concrete illustrations of relational approaches described in interviews (see Figure 5).

Participant	Observation	Code	Conceptual Group	Notes
LAR-O	Engaging in small gestures like tossing highlighters to students instead of walking them around to each table or passing them along. There was a sense of playfulness.	Use of Playfulness	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Fosters trust, creating an emotionally safe environment through playful, low-pressure interactions.
LAR-O	There is use of affirming language - 'great answer,' 'I like what I'm hearing X.'	Affirming Language	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Reinforces positive student engagement, contributing to emotional regulation.
LAR-O	Calmly speaking, but using tone and volume well to communicate tasks and expectations.	Calm and Regulated Communication	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Models emotional regulation, reinforcing a safe and structured environment.
LAR-O	Students asking teacher questions and seem more conversational as they are not always using the phrase 'sir' before asking their question.	Relational Communication	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Reflects relational safety and mutual respect in teacher-student dynamics.
LAR-O	Walking around the room – interacting with students when providing instruction.	Proactive Engagement	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Highlights active teaching presence, supporting engagement and classroom management.
LAR-O	When they are talking when they shouldn't be – he simply calls their name to get their attention.	Subtle Behaviour Management	Behaviour Management	Demonstrates non-punitive, relationship-focused methods of managing behaviour.

Figure 5. *Sample of coded lesson observation data. Entries were interpretively analysed to explore how trauma-informed approaches were enacted in context and resonated with developing themes.*

These insights informed further refinement of sub-themes, particularly by helping to clarify the relational and emotional dimensions of trauma-informed pedagogy. This process reflected the study's interpretivist commitment to understanding meaning as contextually situated and co-constructed through researcher interpretation.

A final round of theme refinement took place following the coding of the final round of interviews, which also followed a similar analytical procedure. At this stage, provisional themes were evaluated for clarity, distinctiveness, and relevance to the research aims. Sub-themes were developed by clustering related conceptual groups, and these were grouped into broader, final themes. Each of these final themes are comprised four sub-themes. This structure was judged to best capture the complexity and coherence of participants' experiences.

3.5.4 Defining and Naming Themes

Once candidate themes were reviewed and refined, each theme was carefully named to reflect its central conceptual meaning. Theme names were crafted to reflect not only participants' language but also the interpretive meaning constructed through researcher reflexivity and theoretical engagement. The aim was to ensure each theme was distinct yet interconnected to form a coherent narrative across the data set.

Final theme definitions, as well as the structure and interrelation between overarching themes and sub-themes, are presented in **Chapter 4 (Findings)**. Reflexivity was actively maintained throughout this phase via journaling and member checking (see ***Appendix I***). These practices contributed to the coherence and interpretive integrity of the thematic structure, helping ensure that developing insights remained reflexively grounding in participants' perspectives and the broader context of the study.

3.6 Reflexivity and Positionality

3.6.1 Researcher Positionality

As a doctoral student and trainee educational psychologist in a London borough, my academic and professional background has shaped my understanding of trauma-informed education. These experiences influenced my engagement with participants and my interpretation of the findings. However, I remained open to diverse perspectives and aware that the relevance of trauma-informed approaches varies across contexts (Holmes, 2020). Reflexivity was essential for identifying how my assumptions might influence the research process (Finlay, 2002).

Throughout the study, I kept a reflexive journal to record evolving thoughts, potential biases, and reflections following interviews (see Appendix I). Field notes also captured contextual factors such as interview format, timing, and setting, as these could affect rapport and the quality of dialogue. I remained aware that my presence during classroom observations, including where I sat and how I took notes, might influence dynamics. Interpreting observation data cautiously helped to account for this co-constructed research context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

To further support reflexivity, I engaged in regular supervision and peer debriefing, offering space to reflect on how my role may have influenced participants' responses (see Appendix J). These reflections also informed my approach to questioning, helping me adapt to minimise perceived power imbalances

3.6.2 Personal Reflexivity

My personal background also shaped my engagement with this study. As an African American male in my thirties with lived experience of ACEs, I bring a strong appreciation for trauma-informed approaches. My international experiences and work with disadvantaged young people have influenced my values, as has my current position of relative educational privilege. As a parent of school-aged children in London, I also bring insights into school systems. While this enhanced my empathy for teachers, I remained cautious not to over-identify or make assumptions. Caetano (2014) notes that reflexivity is shaped by both internal dialogue and broader cultural and systemic influences.

In this study, reflexivity was informed by personal and professional experiences, including my identity as a trainee EP and my awareness and lived experiences of systemic inequality. Acknowledging these influences helped ensure that my engagement with the data remained critically aware and balanced between insider knowledge and openness to participants' voices.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018) and received full ethical approval from the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee (see ***Appendix K***). Ethical integrity was prioritised throughout the research process, with particular attention paid to informed consent, confidentiality, participant welfare, and data protection. Participants were provided with an information sheet detailing the purpose of the study, the research aims, the voluntary nature of participation, procedures for data collection (including interviews and observations), confidentiality measures, and plans for data use and dissemination. Refer to ***Appendix L*** for participant information sheets related to semi-structured interviews and observations, and ***Appendix M f****or participant consent form for each phase of the research.*

This document also detailed my role and institutional affiliation to support transparency and informed decision-making. Written consent was obtained for each phase of the research: initial interview, classroom observation, and final interview. To preserve anonymity, all participants were assigned pseudonyms, and any identifying features within transcripts or observation notes were removed or altered.

Data were stored securely on an encrypted, password-protected device and in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018), ensuring that participants' information remained confidential and protected throughout the study. In recognition of the emotionally sensitive nature of the research topic, trauma-informed education ethical sensitivity was applied in interactions with participants. Opportunities to pause or withdraw from the research were emphasised throughout, and care was taken to create a safe and respectful environment during interviews (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001).

Ethical reflection was ongoing throughout the study, aligning with qualitative research standards where ethics extend beyond following procedures to encompass relational and reflexive dimensions that are continuously negotiated throughout the research process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, member checking was incorporated as a collaborative validation process. Participants were provided with a written summary of my initial interpretation of their interview, including representative quotes. This summary was not intended to seek consensus but to offer participants an opportunity to clarify or expand on the ways their words were being interpreted (Birt et al., 2016).

Feedback was integrated into the analysis where relevant. This step reflected the collaborative and ethical stance underpinning the research. The role of the gatekeeper was also considered, particularly as the they were a senior member of staff who enabled access to the research site and participants. Their authority within the school may have led some staff to feel pressure to participate or to respond in a particular way.

To address this, all participants were reminded that their involvement was entirely voluntary, confidential, and would not impact their professional standing. While the gatekeeper facilitated contact, they were not privy to any data from other participants. Additionally, conducting lesson observation raised considerations of the potential impact on the classroom dynamics. Care was taken to minimise disruption by positioning myself at the back of the room, out of the line of sight, and avoiding any behaviour that might draw undue attention. This approach was aimed at reducing the influence of my presence.

3.8 Chapter Summary

Rooted in an interpretivist paradigm, the research was guided by a commitment to exploring participants' lived experiences and co-constructing meaning through an iterative, relational, and ethically grounded approach. The use of semi-structured interviews and lesson observations allowed for a nuanced and contextually embedded understanding of teachers' experiences with TIAs.

The multi-phase design supported the development of rapport and the tracking of evolving perspectives, while RTA provided a structured yet flexible method for identifying meaningful patterns within the data.

Participant voices were centred throughout, and ethical sensitivity was maintained at every stage, from recruitment and informed consent through to member checking and dissemination. Reflexivity, positionality, and analytical coherence were interwoven into the research process, acknowledging the influence of my identity and values.

This approach helped me capture the emotional and practical complexities that teachers face as they try to integrate trauma-informed approaches in day-to-day school life. The following chapter presents the findings that were developed through this process.

Chapter 4 Findings: Evolving Engagement with Trauma-Informed Education – Teacher Reflections and Practice

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the first set of findings from the study, focusing on how teachers in a London secondary school experience and engage with trauma-informed approaches in practice. These findings address the primary research question:

> **How do teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experience and engage with trauma-informed training and approaches over time?**

This overarching question is elaborated upon by the following sub-questions:

- How do the perceived benefits and challenges of trauma-informed training evolve over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How do the emotional and professional impacts of engaging with trauma-informed approaches shift over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How does the integration of TIAs into everyday practice develop over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How do teachers and school professionals perceive and experience the systemic factors that enable or constrain trauma-informed approach over time?

The findings are presented across two chapters. **Chapter 4** explores themes related to staff engagement with trauma-informed training, the perceived emotional and professional impacts of that engagement, and the evolving integration of trauma-informed approaches into everyday teaching practice. This chapter also highlights the shifts in professional identity that occurred throughout this process. **Chapter 5** moves beyond the individual to examine the broader structural and systemic conditions that shape how trauma-informed approaches are supported or constrained within the school context.

Together, these chapters follow a narrative arc that begins with exposure to trauma-informed training and the knowledge shared through that process. The chapters then explore the emotional and professional impacts of this engagement, how it shapes the integration of trauma-informed approaches, and the broader systemic context in which such practice is situated. This narrative directly aligns with the study's four research questions and underpins the structure of the findings and discussion chapter.

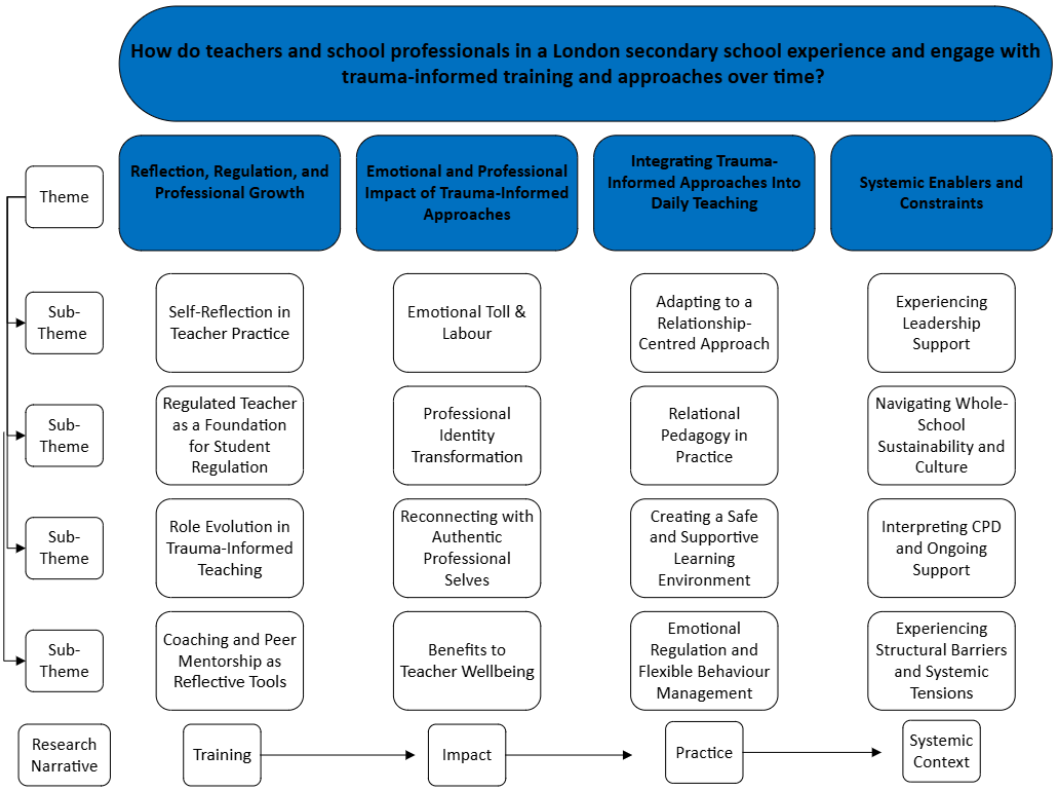

Figure 6*: Overviews of findings chapter 4 and 5, themes, and subthemes.*

Figure 6 above presents a visual overview of the themes and sub-themes identified through reflexive thematic analysis.

This chapter presents three key themes and their associated sub-themes:

- **4.2 Theme One: Reflection, Regulation, and Professional Growth**
- **4.3 Theme Two: Emotional and Professional Impact**
- **4.4 Theme Three: Integrating Trauma-Informed Approaches into Daily Teaching**
- **4.5 Theme Four: Systemic Enablers and Constraints**

The findings chapter is supported by direct quotes from all participants involved. All interview quotes are attributed to participants using pseudonyms, with references to either the initial interview (I) or final interview (F) alongside corresponding line numbers (e.g., *Liam, I, 123*).

4.2 Theme One: Reflection, Regulation, and Professional Growth

As teachers implemented trauma-informed strategies in their classrooms, many described an evolving awareness of their own behaviours, emotional responses, and professional practice. Trauma-informed engagement did not merely shape how participants supported students; it prompted deeper personal and professional reflection, influencing their decision-making, interactions, and understanding of their role. This theme captures how trauma-informed education encouraged teachers to critically examine their assumptions, reconsider established routines and adapt their practice in response to student needs and relational dynamics.

Participants reflected on how TIAs reshaped their classroom strategies and how their own emotional regulation became a vital component of their professional growth. This reflective stance was evident across interviews and observed lessons, underscoring the reciprocal nature of trauma-informed approach; teachers were not only supporting students but also developing heightened self-awareness and intentionality. The theme is explored through the following four sub-themes.

4.2.1 Sub-Theme One: Self-Reflection in Teacher Practice

Participants discussed the ongoing impact of engaging with trauma-informed approaches. They noted that the training and other trauma-informed related resources prompted them to consider and integrate regular self-reflection into their daily routines.

> *“I do sometimes find I'm reflecting back on situations from the past and thinking, 'Oh, I see that a bit differently now. Maybe I would have done something differently.'”*
> *(Frederick, F, 256- 257)*

Importantly, participants’ reflections extended beyond the student–teacher relationship. TIAs encouraged them to think more broadly about their interactions with colleagues and the wider school community.

> *“It’s about the conversation, providing the opportunity for conversation on these kind of things with staff, which has broadened my perspective of matters in themselves... it has been the cause of conversation that has been profitable.*
> (Frederick, F, 487- 490)

These reflections were often supported through coaching and mentoring relationships. Participants highlighted how being observed or observing colleagues prompted introspection, particularly around how seemingly small decisions in the classroom could impact student experiences.

“In the lesson yesterday, a boy asked my colleague a question, and I sit there thinking, "come on that's a bit silly" ...and although it seemed a sort of silly question...I thought...my colleague just answered in a calm, kind way. And then the boy said, Oh, that's interesting or something. And that was it. And I thought, oh, well, maybe he needed that gentle, patient little answer.”

(Frederick, F, 258-266)

Reflective practice was also perceived as a positive by-product of trauma-informed engagement, often contributing to a shared professional learning culture.

For some, this reflective process extended beyond the school environment into their personal lives. Participants noted engaging with TIA even influenced how they parented and supported their own families. Edward described how such approaches prompted a reassessment of his values and priorities, particularly around emotional wellbeing.

“Emotionally is very, very interesting for me, and the reason why is I've completely adapted my own parenting style as a result of the training that I've received, the literature that I've read. And I'm now more mindful of my own children... it's just made me realise the importance of mental health more than academic grades.” (Edward, F, 235–242)

Similarly, Liam described how the training reinforced aspects of his existing practice, affirming the value of his approach and encouraging further reflection.

“I think it sort of reinforces that what I’ve been doing is good...” (Liam, F, 216–217)

This deliberate and often personal process of self-assessment, supported by engagement with trauma-informed literature and dialogue with colleagues, appeared to deepen participants' understanding and application of TIAs.

> *“...to be aware of the things highlighted in each book and to be more and more deeply thinking about them and how they would impact on classroom practice and so on, I find is profoundly important and helpful.” (Frederick, F, 60–62)*

4.2.2 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Self-Reflection in Teacher Practice

The data highlights how trauma-informed education prompted participants to engage in sustained self-reflection that spanned both professional and personal domains. Teachers described how TIAs encouraged them to reconsider past interactions, reframe current classroom dynamics, and adapt future responses. This reflection was not limited to the teacher–student relationship, but extended to interactions with colleagues and family, influencing participants' broader identities and values.

Whether affirming existing practices or prompting change, reflection was positioned as an ongoing, iterative process that deepened participants' understanding of trauma-informed approaches and enhanced their sense of professional agency.

4.2.3 Sub-Theme Two: Regulated Teacher as a Foundation for Student Regulation

While participants alluded to the concept of the ‘Regulated Adult’ during the first round of interviews, it became a central point of discussion during the second round. As teachers deepened their engagement with trauma-informed education, many reflected on the realisation that their own emotional regulation was integral to creating a safe classroom environment. To a greater degree, they also realised their own emotional state had a direct influence on student behaviour, engagement, and readiness to learn.

Across multiple interviews, participants described a growing self-awareness of their role in modelling calm, reflective responses to challenging dynamics. This awareness was not solely a result of the training, but through the cumulative process of reflecting on their practice, engaging with colleagues, and in some cases, interacting with an external observer (the researcher). This facilitated opportunities to revisit and refine their thinking. As Frederick shared:

> *"...oh yeah, I’m really enjoying this conversation for that very reason...look, we're not perfect. We can't do everything perfectly...But actually, we need somebody outside who, in a friendly, supportive way, is giving a little bit of a mirror to encourage, but also to point out things... that needs working out...”*
>
> *(Frederick, F, 337–343)*

This quote reflects the value participants placed on opportunities for self-examination, especially in the context of emotionally demanding work.

One concept that particularly resonated with participants was the idea that the teacher's emotional state sets the tone for the classroom. As Bethany explained:

> *"I think it might be one of the things that sticks out the most... one part of the trainings... the regulated adult…a dysregulated child will hopefully always get to regulated child... a dysregulated adult and even a regulated child... you can end up with a dysregulated child...that...emphasises the importance... of the teacher in the classroom for... setting that safe space..." (Bethany, F, 471–475)*

Here, Bethany emphasised the relational and regulatory function of the teacher, not simply as a source of authority, but as an emotional anchor. This recognition supported a deepening ownership and effort to remain calm and grounded, even when faced with unpredictable or challenging behaviour.

Martin spoke to this dynamic in more introspective terms, linking regulation with inner stillness and the need to actively cultivate emotional awareness:

> *"I realise that my work is to work on the stillness in me."*
> *(Martin, F, 258)*

For Martin, regulation was framed as an ongoing internal process, one that demanded attention to personal patterns, unquestioned assumptions or beliefs, and triggers.

His phrasing implies a deeper, almost meditative commitment to being fully present in the classroom. However, maintaining this regulated state was not without difficulty.

Participants openly discussed the personal and professional stressors that could undermine their ability to remain emotionally grounded. These included individual life experiences, school pressures, and the challenge of navigating trauma-informed values within inconsistent school systems.

Frederick spoke candidly about how his own experiences of trauma may have influenced his relationships at work:

> *"...when I was describing this or that regard to my personal challenges...a colleague suddenly looked back...and said, perhaps you've experienced some trauma yourself in life... I reflected...and I thought, well...yes...and yes, maybe that has impacted on my relationship with another colleague for various reason in a way that I didn't fully grasp." (Frederick, F, 408–416)*

This reflection illustrates the emotional complexity of trauma-informed teaching, where the interplay of personal history and professional responsibilities are brought to the foreground.

In other cases, the source of strain was external, such as changes in student demographics or perceived shifts in students' social-emotional skills. Bethany described this challenge in relation to a Year 7 cohort:

> *"Yeah. I think with year seven...I've actually noticed, as the year sevens have gone on, like in terms of cohort's social and emotional skills, I've noticed that they have struggled more in recent years...they...really struggle with social interaction..." (Bethany, F, 190–194)*

Maintaining composure and consistency in the face of this kind of behaviour required both emotional labour and adaptability. Edward further identified a unique challenge in being one of the few staff members committed to TIAs.

The emotional toll of advocating for practice changes among colleagues, some of whom were resistant, was considerable:

> *“Stress levels in dealing with children are no longer there. For me, it’s dealing with the adults is where the stress comes... some of them can’t be bothered to adapt their style... what about the shame and the trauma that boy experiences... we can all change a little bit to make ourselves, to make the school better.” (Edward, F, 285–298)*

Despite these challenges, participants described several strategies that helped them sustain their own regulation. Some relied on peer networks and internal support systems within the school:

> *“Well, there are people that I could go and speak to. We do have a wellbeing coordinator... but obviously, outside of school, I have the practice of meditation, I'll walk, I study...” (Martin, F, 277–281)*

Others described the importance of preparing themselves emotionally before stepping into the classroom. This mental preparation, they explained, allowed them to be more present and responsive to student needs. Martin, again, reflected on the fluid nature of intention and how it must shift in response to students’ states:

“So, the idea of intention being something that I sit, and I make a decision about something... is useful outside of the classroom when you're reflecting... But I think when we're in the classroom situation, we have to be wholly present ...so sometimes we have to let go of our own intentions... the kid is dysregulated, I have to give up my intention at that moment... to be present... to adapt.” (Martin, F, 127–133)

This articulation captures the responsive essence of trauma-informed teaching. Rather than adhering rigidly to plans or expectations, participants described the importance of flexibility, presence, and self-awareness as cornerstones of effective trauma-informed engagement.

4.2.4 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Regulated Teacher as a Foundation for Student Regulation

This sub-theme illustrates how participants increasingly recognised the pivotal role their own emotional regulation played in supporting student wellbeing and behaviour. Through reflection, training, and experience, teachers came to a more nuanced understanding that embodying calmness and adaptability helped foster a sense of safety and trust in the classroom.

While they acknowledged the challenges involved, including systemic pressures, resistant colleagues, and personal stressors, they also demonstrated a commitment to cultivating their own emotional resilience. Strategies such as mindfulness and peer support were highlighted as important tools in this process.

In essence, the participants' engagement with trauma-informed approaches were as much about internal transformation as it was about external application.

4.2.5 Sub-Theme Three: Role Evolution in Trauma-Informed Teaching

Teachers in this study reflected on how engaging with trauma-informed education influenced their approach to teaching. For some, TIAs reinforced their pre-existing teaching practices, while for others, it prompted a shift in how they outworked their role. Participants described moving away from traditional disciplinary models towards relational, student-centred approaches that emphasised mentorship and individualised support. This evolution was not uniform across participants, as prior experiences, training, and personal dispositions influenced the extent to which TIAs reshaped their professional practice.

Some teachers expressed that TIAs validated and reinforced their long-standing approach to teaching rather than fundamentally shifting their day-to-day practice. Liam, for example, noted that his teaching style, which prioritised routines, and a relational approach, had already aligned with this framework:

> *"...I think it'd be that I hadn't had to change my practice too much. Therefore, my sort of identity as a teacher...was always that kind of person who ... likes routines, who is...welcoming... So again, I think it's sort of reinforces what I've been doing is good, and so couldn't say it's... led to much of a change…"*
>
> *(Liam, F, 214- 218)*

For Liam, trauma-informed training affirmed his existing practices rather than necessitating an alteration to his methods.

His mentor during teacher training had previously advised him that teachers could either adopt a punitive, authoritarian stance or use disappointment and relational strategies to manage behaviour.

He recalled:

> *"My mentor at the time was like, there's two types of teachers...one to, like, shout from the screen at the kids and there are ones that act disappointed. She was like I think the disappointed one will work better for you." (Liam, F, 225- 228)*

This highlights how teachers and school professionals may have varying dispositions to classroom management which is based on their training. For some participants, this transformation also included a greater awareness of the emotional weight of teaching and the impact of relationships on their own professional fulfilment. For Frederick, role evolution was tied to mentorship.

While he viewed trauma-informed education as having begun to influence his classroom practices and teaching identity, he also recognised its role in fostering deeper professional discussions with colleagues. These conversations encouraged him to consider his role in mentoring younger teachers:

> *"...talking about it has opened up interaction with colleagues, which has been very helpful...but I'm wondering whether these things will go on to have more impact...I think having more understanding of these things now than I used to, and gaining confidence in talking with colleagues may well then lead to me being more confident in the sense of actually significantly being able to help younger colleagues in the future..." (Frederick, F, 497- 519)*

As he gained confidence in trauma-informed approaches, he saw the potential for using his experience to support newer teachers.

4.2.6 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Role Evolution in Trauma-Informed Teaching

This sub-theme highlights how trauma-informed education prompted teachers to reflect on and reconfigure their professional practices. While some found affirmation in their long-standing relational practices, others experienced a more significant shift towards mentorship and emotional leadership.

Through interpretive analysis, a shared recognition was constructed: that effective trauma-informed approaches rely on strong relational foundations and a willingness to adapt. For several participants, this also involved a growing sense of responsibility to guide and support colleagues, suggesting that role evolution extended beyond the classroom and into wider school culture.

4.2.7 Sub-Theme Four: Coaching and Peer Mentorship as Reflective Tools

Engaging with trauma-informed education is not a solitary process; instead, it is deeply influenced by collaborative reflection and learning. Participants highlighted the critical role of professional relationships in shaping their understanding and application of TIAs. These experiences were not only opportunities for skill development, they also contributed to how participants perceived themselves as educators. Through professional dialogue and shared reflection, teachers described feeling more confident, supported, and grounded in their evolving identities as trauma-informed practitioners.

Bethany went on to describe how exposure to different ideas from continuous coaching influenced her teaching, demonstrating how new strategies were seamlessly integrated into her practice:

> *"So yeah, that was really interesting. And especially like the kind of the fidgeting thing. Ah okay, that's like a different perspective... if I've seen kids that are fidgeting, I was like, Okay, maybe it's actually to do, maybe with their need for movement, and so maybe I've responded to that differently since that training...brain breaks, I've now introduced that into lessons after that training."*
>
> *(Bethany, F, 34–39)*

This direct line between professional input and classroom implementation was clearly observed during a Year 7 art lesson. As students began to show signs of dysregulation, Bethany employed movement-based activities and subtle co-regulation strategies to re-engage them.

Rather than resorting to punitive measures, she maintained connection and calm, demonstrating an active application of the training she had received. This moment illustrates how trauma-informed CPD shaped her in-the-moment teaching and contributed to her growth as a relational, adaptive practitioner.

Informal conversations within departments were also cited as a key mechanism for keeping trauma-informed approaches at the forefront. Bethany described how consistent peer discussions served as a form of reinforcement when formal training opportunities were scarce:

> *"…in the school, you've just got so many things that you're juggling... maybe it hasn't been kept in people's minds... Maybe because it's something we talk about as a department; it's maybe more on our radar." (Bethany, I, 352–356)*

This suggests that departmental culture of practice-based dialogue can play a crucial role in sustaining trauma-informed engagement, particularly in contexts where school-wide emphasis may wane over time. Beyond formal training, participants emphasised the value of peer mentorship as a way to deepen their understanding of trauma-informed approaches.

Martin advocated for peer coaching as a powerful tool for embedding these approaches, noting that static training alone was insufficient:

> *"Well, my view is, this is where coaching comes in... Equally with the training, the best type of training is coaching in that sense. If this is going to work, someone needs to be able to work with those teachers to help them reflect in practice. It's all about their reflection in practice." (Martin, F, 103–111)*

For Martin, leading trauma-informed initiatives involved more than just discussing theoretical frameworks, it required demonstrating their application:

> *“And so, the training has come through discussion, so we call it a dialogic approach. So, it's through dialog...so even so as subject leader...in a sense, the leading for me is to give the conceptual and intellectual framework for that. Yeah, this is why we're doing this. Can I show that it actually works?” (Martin, I, 308–311)*

Frederick provided a concrete example of how mentorship played a pivotal role in his professional development.

He described his experience of observing a colleague who modelled trauma-informed teaching, explaining how this experience reshaped and expanded his understanding:

> *"What I do know is that my interaction with a colleague over the last year has brought me into contact with what I found was a very pragmatic, sensible teacher...This teacher experienced a way of dealing with the matter, rather than merely thinking there's some theory, which we now have to take in and somehow change all our practices." (Frederick, F, 135–138)*

Beyond simply watching his colleague, Frederick actively engaged in reflective practice, recording observations, and discussing them afterwards. He explained that this colleague had invited him to observe a lesson as part of a coaching process.

He was encouraged to critically reflect on his own practice in light of what he had seen. This exchange highlights the iterative and relational nature of trauma-informed professional development, where learning happens through lived experience, guided reflection, and thoughtful mentorship.

While Frederick valued coaching, he contrasted external input with the relational strength of in-house coaching, noting that peer-led professional dialogue was more attuned to the school’s culture and community:

> *“But the thing is, there is a sense of community as well as the interaction of individuals in that context... there is something that can occur in that context, which I don't think can occur if you have somebody coming from outside... I think each could have their place, but I would rather have the interaction with colleagues developed and nobody coming from outside than the other way around.”* (Frederick, F, 350–358)

For Frederick, while external expertise had value, particularly in offering new perspectives, he ultimately placed greater importance on internally sustained professional relationships. These, he suggested, offered a more authentic and embedded model of support.

4.2.8 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Coaching and Mentorship as Identity-Shaping Factors

These findings suggest that coaching and mentorship serve as crucial mechanisms for supporting teachers in their trauma-informed journey. Participants expressed that their evolving professional practices were shaped not just by formal training but by continuous dialogue with colleagues, observational learning, and opportunities for structured reflection. Through peer observation and reciprocal support, teachers developed a more nuanced understanding of TIAs.

Coaching and mentorship were not only sources of pedagogical insight but also spaces for affirmation and professional growth. This reinforces the idea that trauma-informed education is not a static framework but a dynamic and collaborative process.

4.2.9 Theme One Summary: Reflection, Regulation, and Professional Growth.

Theme one highlights how engagement with TIAs can be a catalyst for personal and professional growth among teachers and school professionals. Participants described how training and reflective practice deepened their self-awareness and encouraged emotional regulation.

As they adopted TIAs, many moved away from rigid disciplinary models towards more relational and adaptive approaches. They placed greater emphasis on student wellbeing, modelling and mentorships, as well as authentic teacher-student relationships.

Across the sub-themes, participants emphasised the importance of self-reflection as a foundation for adapting practice and modelling regulation in the classroom. The recognition that a teacher's emotional state directly impacts student regulation was central to this process. Participants also described how their roles evolved, not only in how they taught but in how they supported colleagues and in how they contributed to a broader professional culture of learning. Through interpretive analysis, coaching and peer mentorship were identified as key mechanisms through which reflection and regulation were sustained, and practice development was supported.

From a bioecological perspective, these internal developments reflect the 'person' component of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model which highlights how individual characteristics such as disposition and reflective capacity interact with relational and environmental processes over time. Theme one relates to two of the study's sub-questions:

- How do the perceived benefits and challenges of trauma-informed training evolve over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How do the emotional and professional impacts of engaging with trauma-informed approaches shift over time for teachers and school professionals?

The theme illustrates how engagement with TIAs influences everyday practices and evolving roles.

4.3 Theme Two: Emotional and Professional Impact of Trauma-Informed Approaches

Participants reflected on how shifts in their role identity required a deeper sense of emotional attunement and adaptability. Collegiate dialogue served to uncover what many found to be meaningful and rewarding growth, while also acknowledging the emotional toll of supporting students with a range of needs. Sustained trauma-informed engagement required not only professional support but also strategies for self-care and resilience to shield against the negative impacts of emotional labour. This theme is explored through the following sub-themes:

- **4.3.1 Emotional Toll and Labour**
- **4.3.2 Professional Identity Transformation**
- **4.3.3 Reconnecting with Authentic Professional Selves**
- **4.3.4 Benefits to Teacher Wellbeing**

4.3.1 Sub-Theme One: Emotional Toll and Labour

Participants acknowledged the weight of balancing emotional regulation, relational teaching, and systemic pressures, all of which contributed to an ongoing risk of emotional exhaustion. Many reflected on the importance of their own wellbeing in being able to engage with and sustain trauma-informed approaches.

Like the students they teach and interact with, staff also carry their own personal and emotional burdens. Edward reflected on the broader wellbeing needs within the school, noting:

> *"But also, with the staff as well, because, you know, we've got, like in any environment, we've got staff who are going through divorce, lost family members, they've got their own mental health and wellbeing needs. And it's trying to do a bigger piece of work around how we how we support the mental health and wellbeing of the school community." (Edward, I, 93–96)*

Hannah echoed this sentiment, emphasising that teachers are not immune to personal hardships:

> *"You know, the teachers are human too. I know you don't think it, but you know, they've got money worries, and they've got sick relatives, and they've got little ones that kept them up all night." (Hannah, I, 854–856)*

Frederick, meanwhile, shared how engaging in trauma-informed teaching led him to reflect on his own past experiences and how it impacted his professional experiences:

> *"Yeah, that certain, what you might call traumatic experiences, whatever they may be, can lead to a situation which a person becomes, as it were, stuck in one of the states...which actually, to some extent, I know myself... in a situation which reminds me of something that didn't go quite well in the past, or whatever. Then suddenly you feel that freezing up..." (Frederick, I, 546–550)*

These examples suggest that engaging with TIA makes their internal and personal experiences more salient, often inviting teachers to examine their own histories. This sometimes amplifies their emotional load within the school context.

While teachers and school professionals had access to and were equipped with theoretical frameworks and practical strategies, they noted that intellectual knowledge alone could not fully prepare them for the lived emotional demands of classroom interactions.

Bethany spoke to the limits of influence that teachers sometimes feel, highlighting a recurring frustration in engaging with trauma-informed approaches:

> *"Challenging, because you know, you can do what you can to kind of set up the environment, but you can't control their choices"(Bethany, F, 268–269)*

Her reflection underscores a key challenge in trauma-informed education, even when actively striving to be relational practitioners, student behaviour and outcomes remain outside a teacher's control. Bethany described how the pressure to maintain the appearance of control and meet expectations could lead to persistent stress:

"So maybe especially if you're a younger teacher as well, like, you know, you do think like... I have to control... what will people outside this class think, Oh, actually, anytime in your teaching career, like you think, if someone walks past this class now, they hear this, they can think that I'm a bad teacher because I haven't got my class under control." (Bethany, I, 612–615)

This internalised pressure reflects a broader challenge in education, teachers must balance trauma-informed relational practices with external expectations around behaviour management and control.

The emotional labour involved in maintaining a trauma-informed classroom can also make it difficult for teachers to disengage at the end of the day. For some, the emotional labour did not end when the school day did. Frederick described how this pressure extended beyond the school day. In one instance, he aimed to remain regulated during a difficult classroom situation but later realised he had reacted more harshly than intended. He carried the emotional weight of the incident well into the evening, meticulously crafting an email home and reflecting how it might have been avoided. He elaborated on the lingering emotional toll it had on him:

“I was a little bit snappier and harsher. And I sent him out… he later refused to come back, didn’t talk to me all day… and I sent an email home, took me ages, and I thought… If only I’d been slightly less abrupt in the first place…Anyway, I think we sorted it out…it wasn’t quite comfortable this morning, but he was back to taking register for me, I was back to talking with him… we’re sort of getting it back. (Frederick, F, 94 – 111)

His account highlights the emotional labour involved in striving to uphold trauma-informed approaches, particularly when situational stress challenges a teacher's own regulation.

Frederick's experience also shows the repair work involved in rebuilding relationships, a process that can be both emotionally taxing and professionally meaningful. TIAs, while grounded in care, necessitates ongoing effort, reflection, and emotional resilience.

At a systemic level, participants described how TIAs are often misunderstood or framed as 'extra work.' Martin explained the resistance some staff expressed, especially when relational approaches were seen as a shift away from the more familiar, often traditional models of classroom management:

> *"Trauma-informed in education is a bit of a flavour of the month. The difficulty is that's now creating opposition…" (Martin, I, 430 – 432)*

He went on to reflect on how this perception of trauma-informed education as an 'add-on' can make it feel burdensome to some staff rather than it being an integrated support framework, especially within the wider context and considering the weight that teacher's carry:

> *"You got teachers here that are then feeling that they're on it. You're then saying we want you to do some extra work, but in a way you're kind of not…You're just trying to say, no, actually, what we're trying to do is, is ground it [your practice] in the experience, but maybe give you a language and some tools, yeah, to be able to work with." (Martin, I, 448–451)*

This perspective highlights the tension between the promise of trauma-informed education and the realities of a system that often frames it as an additional demand rather than a culturally embedded practice.

Martin further reflected that teaching, by its nature, can be an isolating profession, which can add to the emotional strain:

> *"So, the real structural problems... is... that I think teaching as a profession is often described as quite lonely in the sense that you go into the classroom on your own. You very rarely work with others... So even in a department, you might say...we're a small, close-knit department... but you go into the classroom on your own." (Martin, I, 720–723)*

The solitary nature of teaching means that many of the emotional challenges teachers face are managed independently, without consistent peer support or shared problem-solving. This isolation can contribute to distress, particularly when educators feel they are carrying the weight of trauma-informed work alone.

Some participants described how their stress shifted from student-related challenges to tensions with colleagues and senior leadership. They reflected on the emotional toll of navigating interpersonal dynamics within the staff body and noted that these relationships, rather than student behaviour, at times were the primary source of stress.

Participants also described a misalignment between their trauma-informed values and the direction of the school following a leadership change.

They expressed concern that relational, trauma-informed approaches, once championed within the school, had lost momentum under the current leadership. This perceived de-prioritisation contributed to feelings of emotional dissonance and fatigue, as efforts to embed TIAs were no longer institutionally supported.

4.3.2 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Emotional Toll & Labour

Trauma-informed teaching places significant emotional demands on teachers and school professionals requiring them to balance their own wellbeing alongside the relational and regulatory needs of their students and young people they interact with. Participants described how personal stressors, past experiences, and internalised expectations intersected with their professional roles. They reflected on how this made TIAs meaningful as well as emotionally taxing.

While the approach offered a framework and tools for relational engagement and deeper understanding of student behaviour, it also brought to the surface, moments of self-doubt, an increased sense of responsibility, and in some instances, a lingering emotional strain. This was particularly so when teachers felt they had fallen short of their own trauma-informed ideals. The labour also extended beyond the school day, with participants reflecting on how to repair relationship long after the incident.

The emotional toll was further intensified by systemic conditions. Teachers highlighted the isolating nature of the profession. They also pinpointed resistance from colleagues and misalignment with leadership as ongoing challenges. Some described TIAs as being misperceived as an ‘add-on’, which undermined its integration and sustainability.

However, participants also expressed that TIAs had the potential to positively reshape practice and relationships. This provided a deeper sense of purpose and professional alignment. As Martin suggested, when understood and embedded meaningfully, TIAs do not increase workload, they transform it.

4.3.3 Sub-Theme Two: Professional Identity Transformation

Participants described a gradual but significant transformation in their professional identity. Whether they engaged with TIAs before or during the whole-school training, they reflected on an internal shift in how they saw themselves as educators. Bethany acknowledged that trauma-informed training reinforced her belief in the importance of the teacher's role beyond delivering academic content, emphasising holistic student development and emotional connection:

> *"Yeah...I guess... it has like maybe informed...an overall approach, and then also mainly...value that to the role or the importance of the role of the teacher in the development of young people..." (Bethany, F, 297- 300)*

Her reflections show a deepening appreciation for the teacher's role in emotional and developmental growth.

This suggests that TIAs resonated with and expanded her existing values. She also reflected on the emotional rewards of relationship-building, further solidifying her belief in the importance of relational teaching:

"Yeah, like loads of aspects which are emotionally rewarding... building up those relationships with students... to see them, have those moments where they kind of get things, or they maybe even come and speak to you about something... you know that actually... they just walked out of... your classroom, maybe feeling a little bit happier..." (Bethany, F, 264- 268)

For others, trauma-informed engagement prompted a significant transformation in how they saw their role as educators. Edward, for example, explicitly described how his teaching identity had evolved over time:

"...Yeah, I think it probably has... me as a teacher five years ago would have been different. My identity as a teacher and as a leader now is different to what it would have been 3,4,5 years ago..." (Edward, F, 342- 344)

This evolving identity appears to stem not only from professional experiences but influenced by sustained engagement with TIAs.

This seems to have reshaped his understanding of effective leadership and student support. Rather than seeing himself solely as a transmitter of knowledge or an enforcer of rules, he now views his role as more relational and student-centred. Edward also reflected further on this transformational process since the trauma-informed training:

“My thoughts around how we can support students have evolved; it has changed over time, and I think I'm in a better place now. I think a lot of teachers are there and some aren't. I think if I just focus on me personally, difficult situations in the classroom are fewer and far between.” (Edward, F, 38 – 41)

This demonstrates that a significant part of this evolution involves becoming more attuned to students but also being aware of personal needs. Edward went on to describe how his transformed values and beliefs influenced his interactions with students in unstructured school settings:

> *“Yeah definitely, definitely. You know, go up to the playground, and previously, I would find a group of boys who played basketball, might have a couple of shots myself joining some, like, sports, yeah. Now I'm more kind of looking for students who look a little bit sad, look a little left out, look a bit vulnerable, and try and gravitate towards them and ask them how their day is going.”*
>
> *(Edward, F, 104- 107)*

Martin also described a philosophical shift in how he conceptualised his role. He viewed pedagogy as rooted in care rather than content delivery, and TIAs affirmed his belief that relational support was at the heart of effective teaching:

> *"For me, there is a primacy to pedagogy. So if pedagogy, in its simplest sense is care of the young, then what you teach in school is secondary in terms of what we normally mean by curriculum, i.e., content...When the kid comes into the classroom, I'm here to care for you, and your intellectual development is part of it', it’s not separate from that. It has to be built on top of very, very strong foundations." (Martin, F, 294- 302)*

For Martin, this evolution was about breaking down traditional teacher-student hierarchies and fostering genuine relationships. He described how TIAs led him to challenge previous conceptions of authority in the classroom:

> *“...So that's both of us being present, there's no teacher and student...what happens is, is that the learning reveals itself. The teacher is a guide in that. Yeah. And so now the students... are actually no longer responding. They're as much initiating as they are responding. So, it's freeing them up. It's freeing them from the shackles of thinking they're a student...” (Martin, F, 167- 180)*

This idea is supported by Edward, who emphasised that a teacher’s personality and relational skills are essential components of effective teaching:

> *"In teaching, you have to bring your personality into the classroom. If you put the wall up and you're this person who's just there from an authority point of view, the kids just butt heads with you. You have to kind of break down those walls. You have to be able to get down to students' level and have a little bit of fun with them, because they're there to have fun. They're there to learn, but if it's not fun and engaging, they're not going to learn." (Edward, F, 124- 128)*

This perspective reinforces the notion that trauma-informed education is not just about strategies for behaviour management; it is also about fostering an educational environment where relationships are foundational. These evolving perspectives illustrate how TIAs can reshape not only classroom strategies, but the deeper beliefs and values that underpin professional identity.

4.3.4 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Professional Identity Transformation

The findings suggest that trauma-informed engagement acts as a catalyst for professional identity transformation. Teachers reflected on a gradual shift in how they viewed their roles. They identified a shift from centring their roles on instruction to relational and emotional attunement as well as holistic student support. Participants described becoming more values-driven and student centred in their practice. For some, this meant challenging traditional ideals of authority and embracing a more collaborative and empathetic stance. Ultimately, TIAs encouraged school professionals to reimagine their professional purpose.

4.3.5 Sub-Theme Three: Reconnecting with Authentic Professional Selves

While some participants experienced more explicit shifts in how they defined their professional identity, some described a more subtle, reflective process. Their journey was less about adopting a new identity and more about reconnecting with long-held beliefs. This process of reconnection, facilitated by mentorship and professional dialogue about TIAs, helped participants realign their practice with a sense of authenticity and renewed purpose.

In line with the PPCT model, these shifts were not immediate but developed gradually, shaped by personal experience and their evolving professional context. For some participants, this transformation also included a greater awareness of the emotional weight of teaching and the impact of relationships on their own professional fulfilment. Some participants offered a hopeful reframe, suggesting that TIAs, while emotionally labour-intensive, also carries the potential for renewed purpose.

Martin encouraged teachers to embrace TIAs as a way to find greater satisfaction in their work, rather than viewing it as an additional burden:

> *"If you can open yourself up to this, you will find that it's transformational in terms of your practice. If you've ever felt like you don't like going into a classroom or in your head, you've got a voice saying, 'I don't like this class', would you like to lose that voice? It's never about the students. It's always about us." (Martin, F, 404–418)*

This sentiment was echoed by Edward as he commented on reconnecting with his professional identity and the fulfilment that produced.

> *“It’s just made me more aware…trying to be a little bit more in tune… demonstrating… being more empathetic.” (Edward, F, 350 – 353)*

This reflects that a deeper awareness and intentionality elicits satisfaction and emotional clarity to teaching.

4.3.6 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Reconnecting with Authentic Professional Selves

This sub-theme highlights how TIAs can prompt teachers and school professionals to evolve professionally as well as reconnect with their core values and authentic teaching selves. For some, the process was not centred on adopting a new professional identity, but about realigning with long-held values around care and relational practices. As participants grew more confident in TIAs, most began to see themselves as stewards of this culture and relational anchors within the school communities.

This reconnection and deepening of professional identity offered a sense of fulfilment and a reminder of why they first entered the profession.

4.3.7 Sub-Theme Four: Benefits to Teacher Wellbeing

Although much of the discourse around trauma-informed education focuses on either student outcomes or systemic impacts, participants in this study described how relational, TIAs contributed to their own sense of wellbeing. Several of the participants reflected on the benefits or emotional rewards of building stronger, more attuned relationships with students. They commented that they were continually motivated by witnessing their student's growth and engagement over time. Liam described how these relational shifts impacted his enjoyment of teaching more broadly:

> *"If you have a good relationship with students, it makes your days a lot easier… you actually then enjoy being in the classroom a lot more… you want to come to teaching because you enjoy it." (Liam, F, 188 – 193)*

For some participants, trauma-informed engagement fostered a greater sense of emotional balance and self-regulation. Martin also drew on his lived experience and revelation that his wellbeing was significantly impacted by his engagement with TIAs. He highlighted that the trauma-informed journey is centred around the experience of the adult, as that is where the real change starts. He reflected on how adopting trauma-informed expectations helped him remain calm and present, even when working with dysregulated students:

> *“It’s not that there’s not the potential of that... but I’m really saying to come in, this is all play. I’m balancing on this wobble board. Let’s have a look at how we balance this. Yeah okay, so when the students come in, I expect students to be dysregulated at times...so if I understand that, it doesn’t bother me... it’s not that I’m unaware that it’s happening, I’m not in denial of that... but it doesn’t impact on me.” (Martin, F, 261 – 265)*

Together, these reflections suggest that trauma-informed approaches may support teacher wellbeing. This is accomplished not only by reducing stress through an expanding capacity. It also helps by supporting staff to reconnect with the emotional heart of their work.

4.3.8 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Benefits to Teacher Wellbeing

These reflections illustrate that trauma-informed education can have a restorative impact on teachers and school professionals. Moments of connection with students were professionally affirming. Several participants found that adopting TIAs helped them remain more regulated, reducing stress, deepening their capacity, and improving their day-to-day experiences in the school setting. This was done, namely through anchoring their practice in relationships, reflections, and emotional resilience.

4.3.9 Theme Two Summary: Emotional and Professional Impact of Trauma-Informed Approaches

This theme demonstrated that trauma-informed education influences teachers and school professionals on multiple levels; emotional, relational, and professional. Many participants found the shifts towards TIAs meaningful.

Moreover, they found that this this shift aligned with their values, it also required a deeper emotional investment and greater personal vulnerability. Engaging with these approaches often encouraged the participants to consider and re-evaluate their professional identity, to reconnect with the core values, and more intentionally navigate the emotional labour that comes with relational practices.

The findings further suggest that this work, while necessitating strategic and ongoing implementation, also involves an evolving internal process. This internal process was heavily influenced by reflective practices, peer dialogue, coaching, and personal commitment towards growth. Instances where TIAs were supported systemically and interpersonally, the experiences were described as enhancing teacher wellbeing.

This ultimately strengthened professional fulfilment and fostered a sense of purpose. However, without sustained support, the emotional demands of the work risked participants becoming overwhelmed. Therefore, the transformative potential of TIAs is contingent upon individual commitments, collective affirmation, relational support, and alignment across school systems.

4.4 Theme Three: Integrating Trauma-Informed Approaches into Daily Teaching

This theme explores how participants translated TIAs into their everyday classroom practice. As teachers consolidated their training and experienced shifts in professional identity, they described becoming more emotionally attuned and reflective in their roles.

Engaging with TIAs prompted many to challenge long-held assumptions about teaching and behaviour management, leading to intentional changes in how they planned, responded, and related to students.

Participants described adapting classroom routines, communication, and relational strategies in response to student needs. A central part of this process involved recognising their own emotional regulation as integral to their professional identity, not only as a means of modelling calm, but as a foundation for creating ideal learning environments.

Although all staff had access to whole-school trauma-informed CPD, participants' engagement with TIAs varied, shaped by personal teaching styles, interpretations of school policy, and the dynamics of individual classes.

Observational data enriched these insights by offering a contextual view of how TIAs were enacted in practice, such as through de-escalation strategies, relational approaches to discipline, and a strong focus on emotional safety. These classroom interactions illustrated how teachers embedded co-regulatory techniques, adapted questioning styles, and actively considered students' emotional needs. The theme is explored through the following sub-themes.

4.4.1 Sub-Theme One: Adapting to a Relationship-Centred Approach

In addition to fostering self-reflection and emotional regulation, trauma-informed education encouraged teachers to adopt a relationship-centred approach in their practice.

Participants described their internal recognition that they were shifting away from traditional models towards fostering genuine, supportive relationships with students. This shift enabled teachers to better attune to individual student needs, adapting their responses to support emotional regulation and engagement.

One participant highlighted the deeper awareness they had developed when interacting with students:

> *"It's just made me more aware, and made me more aware of other people's struggles, other people's hurt because of trauma. You know, the eyes may say one thing, but the body's telling you something else, facial expression and just trying to be a little bit more in tune with who I'm talking to, what I'm what I'm hearing, what I'm seeing." (Edward, F, 350–353)*

This awareness influenced daily classroom interactions, making teachers more attuned to non-verbal cues and emotional signals from students.

Classroom observations further provided insight into this self-perception. For example, during a lesson observation, Martin was seen circulating throughout the room, ensuring each student received direct and personalised input. His approach included specific, tailored questions that reflected a deeper awareness of student needs, but also their capabilities. In his final interview, Martin reflected on this practice:

> *"It's a bedrock, and everything else is built on that. If there is safety, trust, and relationships between you and the students, and part of that is authenticity.*

If you have the authenticity those relationships allow for a broader expression of the students themselves..." (Martin, F, 43–45)

This illustrates how intentionality in relational practice was key to deepening student engagement and fostering a supportive classroom culture. Edward further commented that the adaptations to his practice meant that he now explicitly considered his students to be people, with their own interests, challenges, and backgrounds. This supported his adoption of relationship-centred approaches and transformed his interactions with students:

"...when you talk about relational practice... it's how I interact with students...Use of language, personality, humour... just having a normal human conversation, without it being a teacher-student conversation... just being more present in the moment and being able to engage and speak to students... curiosity, interest... demonstrating... being more empathetic." (Edward, I, 358–367)

This approach mirrors wider understandings of relational pedagogy, where attending to students' emotional and relational needs is seen as central to engagement and wellbeing in the classroom (Brunzell et al., 2020). In addition to building trust, participants found that adopting a relationship-centred approach reduced behavioural incidents and improved classroom interactions. Edward reflected on how understanding individual student temperament allowed him to tailor his responses in ways which supported emotional safety and participation:

"You've got to break down those barriers, and you've got to know who to ask certain questions to...you ask a question which is too challenging for a student...

He's then going to feel humiliated...embarrassed, uncomfortable. He'll then shut down... and vice versa. If you're asking the brightest lad in the class the easiest questions... he's going to become complacent..." (Edward, F, 128–134)

By adjusting questioning strategies based on student readiness, teachers found that they could foster confidence and encourage participation, supporting the co-regulation process. However, he also acknowledged the risks when relational dynamics are not prioritised. Without a strong foundation of trust and connection, both students and school professionals may struggle to thrive:

"We are not having teachers, teaching to the best of their ability, because they are struggling to manage some of the high conflict situations and dysregulated students. So, for me, it's not about improving their teaching. They're good teachers. They're just not able to get to that point because the relationships aren't strong enough between them and the students. So, for me, the fundamental foundation is strong relationships, where every student feels valued, respected, and then they're going to want to buy into whatever you offer, because they see that you care..." (Edward, F, 215 – 221)

These reflections demonstrates that when relational approaches are embedded at the core of teaching, student are better equipped to engage with learning, and teachers are more able to manage their classrooms effectively. Upon reflection, teachers highlighted the value and impact of building healthy teacher–student relationships. These relationships were not only seen as beneficial for classroom management but also as central to teacher enjoyment and motivation.

Traditional models of teaching often emphasise control, neutrality, and distance, positioning teachers primarily as instructors rather than as relational beings. However, TIAs create space for teachers to engage more authentically, recognising their own emotional needs and desire for meaningful connection. For example, Liam described how relationships with students shaped his sense of enjoyment and fulfilment in the classroom:

> *"...if you have a good relationship with students... you know who you're teaching, and you can make those kind of jokes... also, you want to... come to teaching because you enjoy it.... if you've got, like, a whole class of strangers you don't know, you're not going to enjoy it." (Liam, F, 188–193)*

Liam's reflection highlights that relational practice is not a superficial add-on but a deeply human aspect of teaching. For participants, connection was not a performative strategy. The shift towards relational-centred practice appeared to support teachers' sense of fulfilment and agency, reinforcing the human connection at the heart of trauma-informed approaches.

4.4.2 Sub-Theme Concluding Summary for Adapting to a Relationship-Centred Approach

Participants widely recognised that TIAs fostered meaningful relationships between teachers and students, allowing for deeper engagement, personalised support, and improved behaviour management. Teachers reported that by shifting their approach, they could move beyond punitive discipline and instead respond flexibly and relationally to student needs.

However, they also noted challenges, particularly the logistical constraints of secondary school environments, where large class sizes and limited contact time can make sustained relational work difficult. Despite these barriers, the findings suggest that relationship-centred teaching enhances student regulation, strengthens teacher-student bonds, and fosters a more supportive school climate. These reflections highlight the importance of embedding TIAs at a whole-school level, ensuring that relational approaches are sustained through policy, leadership, and school culture.

4.4.3 Sub-Theme Two: Relational Pedagogy in Practice

Participants described an intentional shift in their interactions, focusing on attunement, warmth, and an understanding of students' emotional states. Observations offered contextual insights into how teachers adapted their language, presence, and engagement in real time. Bethany reflected on the challenges and learning involved in modelling relational responses for her year seven class. She noted how relational and trauma-informed approaches sometimes required adaptations in the moment:

> *"Trying to teach them, modelling how to either respond to somebody that annoys you, or essentially just how to like deal with your own frustration… But actually, you know what? Sometimes, then that's not always like, responded to… So, it's me instead being quite like, stern… a change of tone, which is a lot sterner." (Bethany, F 190 – 222)*

This further highlights the emotional complexities involved in trauma-informed teaching, as well as the flexible and responsive nature of relational approaches.

This was also observed in Bethany’s lesson where she remained responsive and adjusted her approach as needed. She maintained a consistent tone and expectations, striking a balance between relational warmth and clear boundaries. Martin highlighted how familiarity and rapport with students deepened his classroom interactions:

> *"So, in the observation, you probably noticed there was a real familiarity with me in the studio, and that allowed us to have quite a broad experience, I think, transcends maybe the traditional teacher-student relationship." (Martin, F, 45-47)*

During a lesson observation, Martin was actively engaged among students, gathering in the centre of four students to discuss their work. He encouraged them to work in a way that made them comfortable, reinforcing a sense of agency and mutual respect. One student, in particular, was observed seeking Martin’s validation for their work, demonstrating a sense of trust and connection.

Liam also stressed the importance of creating a relational classroom, commenting that it was transformational in supporting student's active listening.

> *"I say it's also done through routines. For example, meeting students at the door, saying good morning, good afternoon, asking about their day, or their weekend, all of these are important in two ways. Firstly, they serve as a welcoming gesture into the classroom. Secondly, they build relationships, which are essential. You can't truly have trauma-informed approaches without relationships. If you have no relationship with a student, they’re not going to want to talk to you, they’re not going to want to listen. So, embedding these routines within daily practice is key." (Liam, I, 257 - 263)*

Throughout a lesson observation, Liam was seen engaging in small gestures that reinforced relational pedagogy. For instance, he tossed highlighters to students instead of walking them around to each table or passing them along, creating a sense of playfulness in the classroom.

Students were also observed asking Liam questions in a more conversational manner, often omitting the formal "sir," which suggested a relaxed and approachable atmosphere. Additionally, Liam reflected student behaviour in a joking way when they were off task, using humour to encourage re-engagement. These interactions fostered a sense of connection and mutual respect between Liam and his students.

Similarly, during a separate observation, Frederick’s interactions were interpreted as reflecting relational pedagogy, as he positioned himself within student groups, engaged in one-on-one discussions, and offered encouragement in a calm and regulated manner. In one instance, he adapted a music lesson to accommodate two students who struggled with the sound of boom-whackers. He provided them with alternative instruments and sensitively encourage nearby peers to play more quietly. This demonstrated attunement to individual needs while maintaining inclusive participation.

While these relational practices are core to trauma-informed education, participants also highlighted systemic constraints that limited their ability to build and sustain these connections. Bethany reflected on the challenge of establishing meaningful relationships with students when juggling high student numbers and limited contact time:

> *"The tricky thing is, is when you've got...so many students...for instance, I've got like four Year 7 classes, three Year 8 classes, two Year 9 classes, two Year 10 classes, two Year 11 classes, and then sixth form. That's a lot of students...sometimes you can't remember...the particularities of some students...in secondary school...maybe some of the students do kind of maybe go under the radar...Sometimes it's tricky, because, if you're just seeing so many people, yeah." (Bethany, I, 889-897)*

This reflects a broader challenge within secondary education, where the structure of the school day and class allocations can act as barriers to relational pedagogy. Despite these constraints, participants actively sought to embed relational teaching strategies within their daily practice, demonstrating a commitment to fostering student well-being even within what the deemed as an overstretched system.

4.4.4 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Relational Pedagogy in Practice

The findings illustrate that relational pedagogy is a core aspect of trauma-informed education, shaping the way teachers engage with students and fostering a sense of trust, safety, and mutual respect. Participants emphasised the importance of relational routines, attuned communication, and small but meaningful gestures that reinforced students' sense of belonging in the classroom. Observational data enriched these accounts by providing contextual examples of how teachers embedded trauma-informed relational practices into their daily interactions. However, teachers also described systemic constraints, such as high student numbers and limited lesson contact time, which sometimes prevented them from deepening individual relationships.

Bethany’s reflection illustrates the tension between trauma-informed aspirations and institutional realities, where some students inevitably "go under the radar" due to class sizes and time constraints. Despite these challenges, teachers prioritised relational engagement as a key strategy in supporting student well-being. These practices not only enhanced students' emotional security but also contributed to a more engaged and responsive learning environment, reinforcing the idea that connection is foundational to effective trauma-informed teaching.

4.4.5 Sub-Theme Three: Creating a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

Participants described their intentionality in creating classroom environments that prioritised TIAs. These efforts aimed to ensure that students felt secure, supported, and able to engage meaningfully in their learning. Martin reflected on how small, everyday interactions can significantly influence a student’s sense of emotional safety in the classroom. He emphasised the importance of being attuned to students’ visible and invisible experiences, such as socioeconomic differences or feelings of insecurity, and highlighted how teacher awareness and relational presence can help students feel seen, safe, and ready to learn:

> *"Take a simple example, a quite a neutral example... All those things are brought into experience... we're not turning around and saying... you've got to delve into all of that... but it's in the moment... How does that present itself... You don't need to analyse the insecurities, but potentially just be aware of it. And then through your interactions, the kid then starts to feel safe around you, and then that dissolves away for him at that moment. And then he's ready to learn." (Martin, F, 353–361)*

This perspective reinforces how emotional safety is embedded in the subtle, moment-to-moment choices teachers make. For Martin, fostering an atmosphere of trust and acceptance enabled students to let go of their defences and engage more fully with learning.

During a lesson observation, students not only expressed challenges related to the task, but also shared personal concerns and worries. Several students who were not in his class at the time stopped by the room during their break, knocking on the door, in the hope of sharing updates or simply connecting. This further illustrates the depth of relational trust he had established.

Edward reflected that his approach to lesson planning and delivery had been influenced by a desire to promote student regulation and confidence:

> *"It's about making sure that the kids feel safe. It's not just physical safety; it's about emotional safety. If a kid is walking into the room carrying something from home, my role is to help them leave that at the door, not ignore it, but help them be ready to learn." (Edward, F, 198–202)*

During his lesson, Edward encouraged students to breathe slowly and stay calm as they approached their tasks. He reminded them to stay "nice and controlled" and spoke explicitly about ensuring they felt secure in their own ability to complete the task ahead. These small but meaningful interactions contributed to a calm classroom climate and affirmed his commitment to creating a regulated environment through explicit trauma-informed language.

Edward later reflected on how his values had shifted as a result of this work, highlighting a growing emphasis on student wellbeing:

> *“...It's just made me realize the importance of mental health more than academic grades, and I think this is where I no longer align with the head teacher of the school, because I see children's mental health and wellbeing as number one. Yeah, and academic grades will follow if a student is in a better head place.” (Edwards, F, 241 – 244)*

This reflection underscores the idea that for many participants, creating a safe and supportive learning environment was not an additional task, but a core part of their teaching ethos.

Bethany also demonstrated a clear commitment to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment. She described her intention to create a calm classroom culture, noting:

> *" Yeah, I pretty much always have music on in the background... like Lo Fi, chill always. I think it kind of just like will helps kind to set the tone and helps...feel like... a different environment that you're coming into. And maybe helps, maybe sometimes, like, settle... or it just maybe helps it maybe sometimes just be a bit more of a calmer mood. So, they walk in and they're like, okay, you know, this is maybe a bit more of a calm space. (Bethany, F, 152- 168)*

During her lesson observation, her interactions were interpreted as relational and playful, as she used humour and informal dialogue, for example, joking with students about off-task behaviour and cheerfully guiding them through the lesson. These actions fostered a safe and respectful atmosphere. While working students asked Bethany questions unrelated to the lesson task suggesting a classroom culture grounded in curiosity, exploration, and psychological safety.

4.4.6 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Creating a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

These findings reflect how participants used TIAs to intentionally design classrooms that promote emotional safety, flexibility, and student engagement. Teachers acted responsively to student needs, emotionally, socially, and practically, demonstrating that trauma-informed education is not confined to specific strategies but rather embedded in the culture and climate of the classroom.

The data reveals that participants deliberately created classroom environments rooted in emotional safety, relational trust, and adaptability.

Through both observed practice and interview reflections, teachers demonstrated how they built spaces where students could regulate, express themselves, and access learning with confidence. These classrooms were characterised by warmth, predictability, responsiveness, playfulness, and curiosity. The emphasis on emotional wellbeing was not separate from academic learning, it was foundational to it. By fostering supportive environments, participants enacted a key component of TIA: enabling students to feel safe enough to learn.

4.4.7 Sub-Theme Four: Emotional Regulation and Flexible Behaviour Management

One aspect of trauma-informed teaching is the recognition that student behaviour is often a form of communication rather than merely an act of defiance or disengagement. Participants described how their engagement with trauma-informed education led them to consider their behaviour management strategies, shifting from traditional punitive approaches to more emotionally responsive and flexible methods. Observations offered interpretive insights into this aspect of their practice, illuminating how teachers actively modelled emotional regulation, adapted their behaviour management techniques, and prioritised de-escalation strategies in challenging situations.

Liam shared how he sought to prevent student removals by engaging students in de-escalation techniques and offering them space to regulate before re-entering the learning environment:

"So, for example, one student, I know that he gets removed from lessons very regularly, but I try and make sure that he stays within the lessons as much as he can. And I've always found it quite useful. If I say, okay, you need to take a step outside now... then I'll go out there and have a quick chat... he usually, not all time, usually responds quite well…" (Liam, F, 88-94)

Edward also described how his approach to behaviour management had shifted towards co-regulation, focusing on non-verbal cues, tone, and body language as key aspects of supporting student regulation:

"For me as an individual... I think it's something I particularly looking at students who are dysregulated, and how my approach to regulating those students has changed over time, but particularly as a result of the training that we've received. And it's given me food for thought as to how I speak to students, non-verbal language, body language, facial expressions, how I stand when I'm addressing a student, specifically the type of language that I'm using, tone, intonation of voices." (Edward, F, 23- 28)

This was reflected in lesson observations, where Edward was explicitly framing emotional regulation as a necessary step for effective learning, reinforcing a calm and predictable classroom atmosphere.

Bethany also demonstrated trauma-informed behaviour management in what could be described as a challenging lesson. Despite escalating challenges with a few students, she remained calm and consistent.

Rather than ignoring disruptive behaviour, she maintained the boundaries of the classroom by addressing the behaviour directly but with care and attunement. She also worked to preserve the student's dignity intentionally seeking to connect before correcting behaviour. This creating an environment where students could re-engage without feeling shamed or rejected.

Martin also reflected on regulating his own emotional state within the lesson:

> *“I don’t mistake where my responsibility lies. So, whilst, whilst we’re co-creating this environment, I’m very, very clear about my role in that, and I don’t do them any service by allowing myself to be off balance. And that’s my work.” (Martin, F, 258- 261)*

This indicates that participants not only recognised the importance of being the regulated adult in the room, but also consciously carried the emotional responsibility for co-regulation, both their own and their students’.

This responsive and caring approach was situated within a wider context of strict whole-school behaviour policies that often contrasted with trauma-informed strategies. Bethany reflected on this tension:

> *"So, it's like in class, they have more reminders, warnings, demerits, and then if they don't listen to that, then it's a subject removal, and then that gets radioed up to isolation. But it's probably also, the new head, he wanted like students to come in, stand behind their desk and be silent straight away. I think he'd like the idea that there's no talking in class at all." (Bethany, I, 470-474)*

Bethany's reflection on institutional pressures offers context to the experiences of other participants who also described adapting their practice considering these systemic expectations. A similar approach was also employed by Martin, who highlighted in his interview how he navigated behaviour policies flexibly while still aligning with TIAs:

> *"So, for instance, it might have been initially... are you following the behaviour policy? I say, well, in the spirit of it... what you're saying to me is that the behaviour policy is actually about learning...well I can evidence that... So, what you're saying... they need to stand behind their chairs. You can move on that a bit, can't you? So, kind of pushing back... you've got to be convincing."* (Martin, I, 578 - 582)

This highlights how Martin challenged rigid structures and advocated for nuanced, student-centred discipline, demonstrating his ability to integrate trauma-informed strategies into everyday classroom practice.

4.4.8 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Emotional Regulation and Flexible Behaviour Management

The findings illustrate that trauma-informed education has supported teachers in developing more emotionally responsive and flexible approaches to behaviour management. Rather than relying on punitive measures, participants described a shift towards relational strategies that prioritise co-regulation, attunement, and de-escalation. Teachers modelled calm responses, used non-verbal communication intentionally, and adapted lesson content or delivery to accommodate students' emotional states.

Lesson observations provided contextual examples of these practices, noting real-time experiences of teachers providing students with space to regulate, employing gentle humour to redirect behaviour, and maintaining emotional safety even in challenging classroom moments.

These strategies were not only preventative but also restorative, allowing students to re-engage in learning without shame or exclusion.

While the wider school context and policies are acknowledged as having some influence, the emphasis in this sub-theme remains on the agency of individual teachers to exercise trauma-informed judgement within their own classrooms. Their practices demonstrated an understanding of behaviour as communication, and a commitment to responding in ways that preserved students' dignity and emotional security.

Chapter 5 Findings: Trauma-Informed Approaches in Context: Systemic Enablers and Constraints

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter explores the systemic and structural conditions that support or hinder the sustainability of trauma-informed education. Building on the previous chapter's focus on teacher practice, reflection, and identity, this chapter shifts attention to the broader organisational and cultural landscape within which trauma-informed education is embedded. It considers how professional learning, development opportunities, and leadership values shape not only individual teacher engagement but also the consistency and longevity of TIAs across the school setting.

Participants highlighted the importance of sustained training and leadership support in embedding TIA throughout the school. However, they also identified key barriers, including inconsistent staff buy-in, lack of resources, and misalignment between leadership priorities and trauma-informed values. These findings emphasise the need for whole-school commitment and a systemic infrastructure to support trauma-informed education over time.

Furthermore, this chapter is also informed by Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This model extends his earlier ecological systems theory to examine how development occurs through interactions between individuals and their environment over time.

In the context of trauma-informed education, teachers and school professionals operate within their immediate classroom relationships (microsystem) as well as their network of broader influences, including school leadership (mesosystem). Additionally, they operate within institutional constraints (exosystem), and this shifts across time (chronosystem). These multiple layers shape both the opportunities and limitations for authentically adopting trauma-informed approaches in a sustained and systemic way. This chapter also present the final theme and the four sub-themes that offer a detailed exploration of how teachers experienced professional development and leadership support in relation to trauma-informed approaches.

5.2 Systemic Enablers and Constraints

The final theme developed from the data highlighted the critical need for systemic and sustained support in embedding TIAs. While the initial CPD sessions were seen as valuable introductions, many participants expressed concerns about their isolated nature and lack of follow-up opportunities. Teachers reflected on the importance of continuous learning, coaching, and ongoing professional dialogue to ensure that TIAs were not only introduced but meaningfully embedded into their daily practice.

Additionally, participants highlighted structural challenges in securing this support, citing time constraints, competing school priorities, and inconsistent leadership buy-in as barriers to effective integration. The absence of sustained, in-depth professional development risked diminishing the long-term impact of trauma-informed initiatives, leaving teachers to navigate challenges independently.

5.2.1 Sub-Theme: Experiencing Leadership Support

Several participants described direct support from colleagues, line managers, and members of the SLT as a key factor in reinforcing TIAs. They felt that having access to supportive leadership helped them sustain these approaches in their daily teaching. One participant noted the critical role of line managers in fostering a trauma-informed mindset:

> *"My line manager, Tom, he's been really supportive in this particular avenue (trauma-informed approaches), and obviously the Assistant Head Teacher as well." (Bethany, I, 705–706)*

Another participant highlighted how the existing leadership structure provided a framework for general support when needed:

> *"Yeah, I think that in terms of leadership in the school, whether that be, you know, middle leaders, line managers, heads of department, or whether it be SLT, I think that those systems are in place for you to seek support if needed."*
>
> *(Liam, I, 519–521)*

These reflections suggest that middle and senior leaders were generally approachable and invested in trauma-informed approaches. However, participants differentiated between individual support from leaders and the school's overarching strategic direction, which depended on whole-school leadership alignment.

5.2.2 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Support

Participants acknowledged that support from line managers and senior leaders contributed positively to their engagement with TIAs. However, this support was most effective when it extended beyond individual relationships and aligned with a cohesive whole-school strategy. These findings point to the need for leadership at all levels to champion TIAs consistently and visibly, ensuring that support systems are embedded in both policy and everyday practice.

5.2.3 Sub-Theme: Navigating Whole-School Sustainability and Culture

Participants explained that trauma-informed approaches were most effective when embedded in formal school policies rather than being left to individual interpretation. Some teachers noted that having designated roles within the school helped maintain consistency and accountability for trauma-informed work. One participant pointed out that the presence of designated leadership roles for mental health and wellbeing signalled a commitment from senior leadership:

> *"...they are officially appointed by the school for that with that kind of thing in mind. So, there is deliberate policy that someone up top, that is seeking to develop awareness of these things right now." (Frederick, I, 898–902)*

Another participant acknowledged their own dual role in promoting trauma-informed approaches within the school:

> *"...one of my other roles is mental health and wellbeing coordinator." (Bethany, I, 694–695)*

A member of the SLT reflected on the collective commitment within the leadership team:

> *"There's, there's a there's a passion as well amongst the senior leaders that we're all vested in this. And there's a real passion. There's a real sort of energy, dynamism that we want to move forward." (Edward, I, 560–561)*

These findings highlight that school culture is shaped by both formal leadership structures and the shared vision of the staff.

However, without top-down consistency, trauma-informed approaches risk being fragmented, relying on individual champions rather than being fully embedded within school-wide policies.

5.2.4 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: School Culture and Consistency in Trauma-Informed Approaches

Embedding TIAs into the cultural fabric of the school requires more than individual enthusiasm, it calls for a deliberate, coordinated approach. Participants noted that formal leadership roles and a collective vision helped ensure consistency, but without systemic backing, these efforts can become isolated. The data suggests that clear policy alignment and visible leadership commitment are crucial for sustaining a trauma-informed school culture.

5.2.5 Sub-Theme: Interpreting CPD and Ongoing Support

Participants described varied experiences with the schools' trauma-informed CPD, with their engagement and takeaways shaped by personal dispositions toward professional development. Some entered the training with openness and curiosity, while others brough a foundation of external learning that enriched their experience and understanding. For instance, Frederick highlighted his positive mindset to CPD, indicating that this helped him meaningfully engage with the training content:

> *"I generally go into all these training sessions with a sense of positive, open-mindedness, because I think, right, got to do this. Might as well get the most out of it." (Frederick, I, 783)*

This suggests that for some teachers, an inherent openness to learning plays a pivotal role in how they engaged with the training content.

Other participants had already encountered trauma-informed approaches through independent learning or external courses. Bethany, for instance, described her exploration of the polyvagal theory through a course outside the school, while Hannah noted having had various trauma trainings over time:

> *"And then we've been looking at kind of in the polyvagal theory, like in education. So, a colleague and I signed up to a training course from the Polyvagal Institute…" (Bethany, I, 53–54)*

Several participants also brought broader professional perspectives to their engagement with CPD. For example, Edward explained that his senior leadership responsibilities encouraged him to consider how trauma-informed approaches connected to broader school strategy:

> *"Myself and a couple of other senior leaders and middle leaders have been looking at how best to support students with SEMH, who experience trauma in the classroom and at home, and how best to support them in the classroom." (Edward, I, 39–41)*

As Martin was an early advocate for trauma-informed approaches in the school, presenting one of the initial initiatives, his involvement in the planning of the CPD also appeared to deepen his investment in the process:

> *"The way I was looking at the training, knowing that I was already part of asking the providers to maybe pitch it at this level...in a strange way, I wasn't passively sitting in the audience." (Martin, I, 214–215)*

Participants explained that the CPD was initially launched as a whole-school initiative which was designed to create a shared language and foundational understanding across staff. However, several teachers and school professionals expressed concern that the training was not consistently reinforced in practice. Bethany noted that the lack of integration with school-wide priorities, such as the behaviour systems, risked reducing the CPD to a one-off event:

> *“So, it’s kind of maybe feels like, to be frank, like this was maybe a training day, and some people who were generally interested in it took it on. But because it hasn’t probably been mentioned since then, it’s like, oh, year, that was a lovely training day.” (Bethany, I, 337 – 344)*

While some staff view the CPD as a strong starting point, other felt its brief and general nature limited its long-term impact. Hannah described how the brevity of the training made it difficult for colleagues to retain or apply its content:

> *“I think the sticking points are, it’s such a short amount of training, it kind of gets lost for some people.” (Hannah, I, 98 – 99)*

There was a clear demand among the participants for more practical, interactive, and reflective elements to be integrated into the training. The commented that additional case studies and group discussions would be useful as part of ongoing professional learning:

> *“I think case studies, along with group discussion, would be good…because then you can talk to other teachers and see what their approach would be…” (Liam, I, 122 – 123)*

While some participants had thoughts about how the training could be expanded, Edward described how the school attempted to follow up the initial CPD with more targeted development. This tiered approach targeted specific staff groups; however, this differentiation was experienced to be uneven across the school:

> *“We started off with all staff launching, you know, the trauma informed classroom...from a whole school point of view. And then as the year went on, we were picking up certain groups of staff. Right within, within your remit, we need to do a bit more work around this.” (Edward, I, 321–326)*

Structural barriers further complicated sustained engagement. Edward reflected on the structural challenges of coordinating and sustaining a whole-school approach. He highlighted how the scale of the organisation can make it difficult to maintain consistency and keep TIAs at the forefront:

> *“But, you know, trying to get 150 professionals to, all, you know, deliver in the same way is, I wouldn't say it's impossible, but it's going to be very, very challenging in any organization. (Edward, I, 451 - 453)*

Martin reinforced this, explaining how the structure of the school day often hinders reflection and follow-through on trauma-informed approaches:

> *“I think, you know, one of the things is, is how relentless the school day is, and that the nature of the day is that it doesn’t allow for a lot of space. So, you get caught up, and the practices, or the things that you want to engage with, even if they’re good things... they get lost in the kind of busyness.” (Martin, F, 1122–1129)*

Another major barrier identified was the lack of time dedicated to sustained professional development. Hannah captured this challenge by describing the pressure staff faced when trying to prioritise meaningful CPD opportunities:

“We have so little training opportunities. We are fighting for any window... it is that's one of the biggest constraints, is actually having that window of time to deliver that and to deliver it regularly enough to embed it.”

(Hannah, I, 375 & 378–379)

These findings suggest that while teachers valued trauma-informed CPD and demonstrated a commitment to embedding the approaches several aspects of reality in their school context opposed that.

This was namely, the absence of structural support, such as protected time, sustained follow-up, and systemic alignment. These factors appeared to limit the long-term effectiveness of trauma-informed approaches.

5.2.6 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Interpreting CPD and Ongoing Support

Participants’ reflections on their initial engagement with trauma-informed CPD revealed a mix of enthusiasm, prior knowledge, and critical perspectives. While many approached the training with openness and curiosity, others brought pre-existing understanding that helped them contextualise the material. The CPD was generally seen as valuable, particularly when teachers had a role in shaping its delivery or could relate it to their broader responsibilities within the school. However, the effectiveness of the initial CPD was shaped by its integration into broader school systems.

Without clear expectations, whole-school reinforcement, or follow-up dialogue, the training risked being reduced to a one-off event. These findings suggest that initial engagement with trauma-informed CPD can only serve as a meaningful starting point when embedded within a sustained and coherent professional learning strategy.

5.2.7 Sub-Theme: Experiencing Structural Barriers and Systemic Tensions

Despite the positive influence of supportive leaders at some levels, participants expressed concerns about inconsistencies at the highest levels of school leadership. The school initially embarked on its trauma-informed journey under a supportive Head Teacher who recognised the diverse needs of its students:

> *"When I started, there was a new Head... and he was fantastic... I said to him; you do know that it's not that kind of school? You do know this is just a London borough school that's going to have kids from all walks of life... And he was really supportive..." (Hannah, I, 509–513)*

However, this leadership direction shifted with the arrival of a new Head Teacher just prior to the school involvement with the local authority Virtual School and EPS. Participants in the study reflected that the newly appointed Head Teacher prioritised traditional disciplinary policies over trauma-informed approaches:

> *"But then you get this big about-turn where you get a new head teacher, a new governing body, yeah, and their first thing is, behaviour is not good enough."*
>
> *(Martin, I, 1060–1061)*

Bethany reflected on the uncertainty surrounding the new leadership's stance on trauma-informed approaches:

> *"I'm not quite sure... this is obviously work that the school started with the previous head... now we've got the current head, who's obviously got, you know, new school…. I don't know to what extent this may be something that he wants to focus on. And then I know that there has been, like, a new behaviour system put in... but that wasn't necessarily paired up with this (trauma-informed training). So, it's kind of maybe feels like, to be frank, like this was maybe a training day, and some people who were generally interested in it, took it on."*
>
> *(Bethany, I, 337–343)*

Participants suspected that the new leadership team prioritised policies aimed at improving academic outcomes and enforcing more punitive disciplinary measures, leading to a conflict between trauma-informed approaches and the school's behaviour policies. One teacher described the disconnect:

> *"So, we're in a strange position... running with that trauma-informed... with a head-teacher who's not interested in it. Who, yeah, can only see it in terms of the behavioural model... I want students behaving." (Martin, I, 799–801)*

Teachers emphasised that the sustained success of trauma-informed initiatives relied heavily on continued support from both the Headteacher and the wider senior leadership team. With only one exception, all members of the senior leadership team were described as supportive of the school's trauma-informed direction:

> *“...we have to tackle the head teacher and the senior leaders, which I'm part of... that if we, if we get it right, then everything will filter down, as opposed to just targeting four or five students, four or five staff that we know actively struggle.”*
>
> *(Edward, I, 543–545)*

Another participant noted that some staff resisted trauma-informed changes, using the lack of clear leadership direction as justification for reverting to punitive disciplinary models:

> *“...the leadership team under him (Head Teacher) are pushing back... I don't know who's going to come out (successful), whether he, he sees the value of it... which is really unfortunate... And then those staff that were not getting on board are kind of saying... I don't have to look at myself (my practice) or go through that what might be a little bit uncomfortable, ah, I can now say he's not behaving. He's got 10 points, kick him out.” (Martin, I, 1201–1218)*

This suggests that shifts in leadership priorities can create a permissive environment for staff to disengage from reflective practice. Consequently, this reinforces a reliance on more traditional models of classroom management which prioritised compliance over connection.

5.2.8 Concluding Summary for Sub-Theme: Experiencing Structural Barriers and Systemic Tensions

While supportive leadership at the middle and SLT levels can nurture trauma-informed approaches within schools, the absence of clear, consistent commitment from the Head Teacher and governing body undermines long-term sustainability. Participants expressed concern that leadership transitions had disrupted progress, allowing conflicting priorities and resistance among staff to take hold. These insights reinforce the importance of whole-school leadership alignment and clarity in policy direction to ensure trauma-informed approaches become embedded, rather than short-lived or inconsistently applied.

5.4 Summary of Findings

This chapter has explored how teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experienced trauma-informed education over the course of an academic year. This research drew from two rounds of interviews and lesson observations. The findings illustrate how trauma-informed approaches are not simply technical or behavioural interventions, but deeply relational and reflective practices. They are shaped by a dynamic interplay of person identity, ethos, self-efficacy, and emotional labour. Participants described a clear shift in their everyday practice towards relational pedagogy, emotional attunement, and the intentional creation of safe, predictable learning environments.

Observational data offered insight into the subtle ways these values were enacted, namely through tone, humour, consistency, and a commitment to being a regulated adult in the room. Emotional safety was not incidental but actively constructed in moment-to-moment interactions.

However, the impact of trauma-informed approaches extended far beyond strategies. A central theme was the internal work required of staff. This work involved ongoing self-reflection, emotional regulation, and a re-evaluation of professional identity. Participants spoke about how trauma-informed training prompted deeper engagement with their own values, stressors, and in some instances, past experiences. This was not passive learning, it was transformational, complex, and often emotionally taxing.

The findings revealed that many participants experienced a tension between their evolving trauma-informed ethos and the structural realities of school life. This included the behaviour policies, leadership changes, and limited time for meaningful trauma-informed dialogues. Despite these tensions, some participants reported enhanced self-efficacy and a renewed sense of purpose, while other risked moments of emotional exhaustion and isolation. The data captured the emotional labour of sustaining relational practice in an often unrelenting system.

Professional development played a key role. While initial CPD served as an important entry point, participants stressed the need for ongoing, embedded learning that allowed for reflection, coaching, and adaptation over time. Where this was absent, trauma-informed work risked becoming diluted or siloed.

Leadership culture was interpreted as a decisive factor in enabling or constraining sustained trauma-informed approaches. Support from line managers and SLT helped reinforce trauma-informed values. However, where leadership priorities shifted, particularly at the Head Teacher level, participants noted a loss of alignment and clarity. This made trauma-informed work harder to sustain.

Together, these finding demonstrate that trauma-informed education is not a static set of practices, but an evolving, identity-shaping endeavour. It requires emotional investment as well as systemic alignment to flourish. The participants in this study were not merely implementing new strategies, they were negotiating the emotional and professional implication of this work in real time. These insights provide the foundation for the following discussion chapter, where the findings will be examined in relation to existing research and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The present study explored the emotional labour, identity shifts, and psychological rewards and tensions experienced by teachers and school professionals engaging with trauma-informed approaches. Set in a London secondary school serving a diverse population of young people with varying needs and abilities, the study sought to understand how school staff navigate, interpret, and embody trauma-informed training and practice in their daily work. This context required practitioners to be not only relationally responsive, but also reflective and resilient in the face of complexity.

The primary aim of the study was to investigate how teachers and school professionals experience and perceive trauma-informed training and practice. To support this overarching aim, the research focused on several targeted areas: the perceived benefits and challenges of the training, the day-to-day integration of TIA into classroom and relational practice, and the emotional and professional impacts of engaging with this work overtime.

By examining these aspects, the study offers a window into the lived experiences of educators actively engaging with trauma-informed approaches, revealing how these shape their role, identity, and wellbeing. In doing so, it contributes to current literature by foregrounding teacher voice, contextualising trauma-informed education within real school settings, and exploring how educators might be best supported both during training and throughout their careers.

This chapter discusses each of the key themes in relation to the existing research literature and theoretical frameworks introduced in the earlier chapters. This includes Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, which offers a practical lens for interpreting the reciprocal and context-sensitive nature of trauma-informed engagement over time. It critically examines the implications of the findings, highlights areas of alignment and tension with previous work, and reflects on how this study contributes to the broader understanding of trauma-informed practice in education.

6.2 Evolving Understandings: Reflecting on Training, Identity, and Emotional Impact

This section addresses the first and second research sub-questions:

1. How do the perceived benefits and challenges of trauma-informed training evolve over time for teachers and school professionals?
2. How do the emotional and professional impacts of engaging with trauma-informed approaches shift over time?

Drawing on participant narratives and relevant literature support this section as it explores how trauma-informed training prompted personal reflection, surfaced emotional histories, influenced professional identity, and contributed to teachers' self-efficacy and relational confidence over time.

6.2.1 Reflecting on Emotional Responses and Professional Practice

Engaging with trauma-informed approaches prompted participants to reflect on both the young people they supported and their own internal responses. For some, this reflective stance was described as arising in the moment, particularly during emotionally charged classroom interactions. For others, engagement evolved gradually through ongoing exposure to trauma-informed ideas and reflective dialogue with colleagues. This study extends Berger's (2019) insights by showing how trauma-informed relational practice develops not only through repeated exposure but also through informal, emotionally attuned peer dialogue. Across these experiences, participants described a shift from reactive responses to more intentional and emotionally regulated approaches.

Many became curious about their own responses to student behaviours. Some interrogated feelings of frustration or moments of being emotionally unsettled, linking these to personal or professional experiences. Stokes and Brunzell (2019) describe trauma-informed work as a reflective and emotionally demanding journey, requiring adults to questions assumptions and relational habits. In this study, such introspection deepened participants' ability to stay present and compassionate in their interaction.

Trauma-informed engagement also led to unintended personal insights. Several participants described moments when their own emotional histories were triggered by events in the school. While this sometimes led to discomfort, it also fostered greater empathy and relational intentionality. Brunzell, Waters, and Stokes (2021) suggest that trauma-informed reflection opens a window into educators' own emotional landscapes.

This sentiment is reinforced by O'Toole (2022) suggesting the need for emotional safety not only for students but also for staff, who much navigate their own vulnerability in this work. Distinctive to this study is the finding that trauma-informed engagement supported not only study wellbeing, but also enhanced teacher and school staff self-regulation, emotional literacy, and identity clarity. This positions TIAs as mechanisms benefitting and supporting educator and student wellbeing.

6.2.2 Self-Regulation, Empathy, and Emotional Preparedness

Participants emphasised that self-regulation was foundational to supporting students' emotional needs. As Luthar and Mendes (2020) suggest, educators must have access to internal emotional resources to remain grounded in challenging moments.

In this study, self-efficacy and self-regulation supported not just compassionate responses but also increased willingness to engage with students' emotional needs. This reflects Alisic's (2012) finding that teachers' confidence in supporting trauma-affected students is closely linked to emotional readiness and awareness.

Participants also described proactive planning, anticipating emotionally charged lessons or student dysregulation, preparing themselves mentally, and identifying ways to stay regulated in order that they might positively address these moments. This supports Christian-Brandt et al.'s (2020) view that emotional preparedness strengthens resilience and protects against burnout.

6.2.3 Vulnerability, Support, and the Role of Relational Spaces

Participants reflected on how trauma-informed training invited them to confront personal emotional histories, surfacing past experiences that shaped how they related to students. Southall (2023) and Stokes and Brunzell (2019) emphasise that this work requires emotional presence, making it inherently vulnerable. In this study, that vulnerability was often managed through informal peer relationships and reflective dialogue.

In the absence of formal supervision or coaching, teachers described using peer conversations to process emotionally charged experiences. Trusted colleagues provided relational containment, offering validation and shared understanding. While Brunzell et al. (2016) highlight the importance of staff wellbeing, this study contributes further by demonstrating how informal relational spaces served as the primary containment mechanism for educators in emotionally taxing settings. Further to this point Chidley and Stringer (2022) highlight the importance of emotionally safe, relationally attuned learning environments. Educational psychologists, participants suggested, are well placed to support these reflective spaces.

Participants also noted that these relational spaces supported evolving teacher identity. Talking through experiences with peers helped them reframe challenges and consolidate their learning. Importantly, it also helped them to remain emotionally available in the classroom. The intersection of personal reflection, vulnerability, and peer support formed a developmental process in which identity, confidence and self-efficacy grew over time.

6.2.4 Professional Identity in Transition

As participants deepened their trauma-informed engagement, they began to re-evaluate their professional roles. The shift from being content deliverers or behaviour managers to becoming emotionally present, relational practitioners reflected a broader identity transformation. Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) Process- Person- Context- Time (PPCT) model offers a useful lens here: development unfolds through reciprocal interactions between the individual and their environment over time. In this study, teachers' evolving identities were shaped by personal values, systemic constraints, and relational contexts within their schools.

Several participants described reconnecting with their initial motivations for entering the profession: making a difference, creating safety, or becoming a trusted and cherished teacher in a young person's life. Others adopted broader pedagogical perspectives, framing teaching as a form of care. These findings support Beauchamp and Thomas's (2009) conception of teacher identity as socially constructed and fluid, shaped through interpersonal experiences and ongoing reflection.

Day and Gu (2007) argue that professional identity is anchored in moral purpose but continually shaped by contextual influences. For many teachers in this study, trauma-informed approaches offered a way to enact their values with greater authenticity. Brunzell and Norrish (2019) suggest that such frameworks can help educators reconnect with professional purpose, particularly when grounded in relational, strength-based practices. While emotionally demanding, this process often brought clarity rather than confusion.

These identity shifts however, were not without complexity. Birchall (2021) and Lasky (2005) highlight how emotionally charged school environments can reshape teacher identity, particularly where there's tension between institutional demand and relational values. Yet, for many participants, the emotional and ethical grounding of trauma-informed approaches brought clarity to their role, rather than confusion. This study contributes knowledge by illustrating how trauma-informed engagement facilitates an identity shift, enabling educators to align their daily practice with their core professional values. Additionally, unlike previous cross-sectional studies, this research captures this transformation over time.

6.2.5 Section Summary

The findings in this section illustrate how trauma-informed approaches influence teachers' and school professionals' emotion journeys. Rather than being a static outcome of training, trauma-informed engagement is a dynamic, relational, and context-sensitive process. It evolves over time through emotional labour, vulnerability, peer support, and reflective identity work. The implications of this for leadership, culture, and systemic enablers of trauma-informed work are considered in the following sections.

6.3 From Principles to Practice: Developing Trauma-Informed Approach in Daily Work

This section addresses the third research sub-question:

3. How does the integration of trauma-informed approaches into everyday practice develop over time for teachers and school professionals?

Drawing from participant narratives and relevant literature, this section explores how trauma-informed engagement is sustained and developed through relational mechanisms, particularly informal peer coaching, reflective practice, and emotionally safe professional relationships.

6.3.1 Informal Peer Coaching and Reflective Practice

An important finding across both interview phases was the role of peer relationships in helping staff sustain trauma-informed approaches. Participants consistently spoke about the value of professional dialogue and collegial support, describing how day-to-day conversations with trusted colleagues helped buffer the emotional intensity of their work. These interactions were not formalised but were deeply meaningful.

Whether through shared reflections or moments of peer mentorship, these relationships helped staff make sense of emotional experiences and the complexities of trauma-informed approaches. Importantly, participants valued that these conversations took place with colleagues who understood the specific school context and empathised with their perspective.

As White and McCallum (2020) emphasise, emotionally safe peer learning communities can provide the grounding and confidence needed to sustain trauma-informed practice over time. In contrast to Boylan, Lundie, and Serow (2023), whose focus is more formal mentoring structures, this study offers additional insight into how teacher-led, informal coaching conversations might serve as sustainable vehicles for trauma-informed reflections. This is particularly so, in the absence of formal trauma-informed CPD frameworks.

Some participants also described how emotional safety within these relationships enabled them to observe one another's lessons. This act of mutual trust not only reinforced collegial bonds but also made trauma-informed approaches visible in everyday teaching practice. These peer observations provided opportunities for constructive dialogue, allowing teachers to reflect on and refine their relational strategies. This echoes Boylan et al. (2023), who found that shared professional identity and emotionally secure mentoring environments can foster collaborative learning and pedagogical development.

Teachers often described these informal spaces as vital to their wellbeing and professional growth. They provided what participants framed as informal peer coaching, spaces where colleagues could offer insight, reassurance, or just a shared sense of understanding. This echoes Brunzell, Stokes, and Waters (2021), who highlight how peer coaching supports the emotional integration of trauma-informed ideas through relational dialogue. Similarly, White and McCallum (2020) note that emotionally safe peer learning communities foster confidence in applying trauma-informed practices.

For participants in this study, such exchanges helped them feel less isolated, seen and understood, and more emotionally anchored in their trauma-informed work. Brunzell, Stokes, and Waters (2022) argue that collaborative reflection and informal mentoring sustain professional confidence and identity during implementation challenges. While peer support is often mentioned in literature, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how teacher-initiated, informal peer coaching functions as a meaningful bottom-up mechanism. In a real-world setting, this mechanism can sustain trauma-informed engagement. From Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) PPCT perspective these informal coaching conversations function as proximal processes which support teacher development through consistent and reciprocal interactions within a shared relational environment. As demonstrated in this study, over time, these interactions contribute to a shift in professional identity and confidence.

6.3.2 Relational Containment and Emotional Safety

In addition to reflective dialogue, participants emphasised the emotional safety that trusted peer relationships provided. Teachers described these interactions as spaces where they could express vulnerability, share doubts, and navigate emotionally difficult moments, whether those arose from student behaviour or tensions with leadership. Southall (2023) suggests that trauma-informed work exposes staff to emotional risk, making relational containment a critical support. Participants described developing informal support systems where trusted colleagues offered emotional scaffolding.

Stokes and Brunzell (2019) stress the role of emotionally safe peer relationships in helping educators process emotional exposure, while Chidley and Stringer (2022) highlight how reflective dialogue, often supported by EPs, embeds trauma-informed culture at the whole-school level.

Several participants noted that emotional safety enabled them to remain emotionally present with students rather than becoming withdrawn. Ferguson (2022) similarly found that teachers relied on informal networks to manage the emotional demands of implementing TIAs. These emotionally supportive relationships helped participants reframe challenges and re-engage with students and colleagues more intentionally.

This also reflects Dorado et al.'s (2016) HEARTS model, where reflective staff collaboration forms the basis of emotionally supportive school environments. Conversations that participants found most valuable were grounded in real-world experiences, echoing Berger, Bearsley, and Lever's (2020) finding that lived, context-specific reflection fosters trauma-informed development.

Overall, the integration of trauma-informed practice into daily work was sustained not through formal structures alone, but through relational and reflective dialogue that acknowledged the emotional demands of the role and supported educators in staying connected to both their students and their professional values.

6.5 Systemic Conditions for Trauma-Informed Engagement Supports and Constraints

This section addresses the final research sub-question:

4. How do teachers and school professionals perceive and experience the systemic factors that enable or constrain trauma-informed practice over time?

Drawing from participant narratives and established literature, this section explores how systemic factors both enable and constrain the embedding of trauma-informed practices in schools.

6.5.1 The Role of External Support and the Need for Sustained Learning

Ruttledge (2022) notes that external professionals, such as educational psychologists, can play a vital role in sustaining self-efficacy by offering structured, validating reflective spaces. While peer dialogue was frequently mentioned by participants, some also expressed a desire for deeper input from outside professionals to support their emotional processing and professional growth. Participants emphasised that for external input to be meaningful, professionals needed to take time to understand the specific school context and culture. Participants also stressed the value of emotionally attuned external input, particularly from professionals who could facilitate longer-term development.

This study builds on Chidley and Stringer's (2022) work by suggesting that while EPs are well-positioned to support the process of embedding trauma-informed approaches, their input must be relationally and culturally responsive, tailored to the school's stage of development in order to enable sustainable change. Several described that without this kind of ongoing input, trauma-informed approaches could fade or feel disconnected from daily school life. MacLochlainn et al. (2022), in their evaluation of a two-day whole-school trauma-informed training, similarly highlighted the importance of continuous systemic support to help staff embed and sustain trauma-informed engagement. Participants in this study echoed this, expressing frustration when training was treated as a one-off event, rather than part of a sustained developmental process.

Although not directly voiced by participants, the finding that staff with prior exposure to TIAs engaged more readily with training raises important questions about readiness and the conditions which support it. Drawing on Chidley and Stringer (2022), this study extends the discussion by proposing that EPs could play a more active pre-training role in supporting schools to create supportive transfer climates. These are school settings in which ethos, leadership, and relational dynamics are intentionally cultivated to support behavioural and cultural change. This perspective aligns with Boylan et al. (2023) who argue that training alone is insufficient. Instead, what is required is a systemic approach in which professionals work with school leadership to shape the cultural and relational infrastructure prior to the introduction of trauma-informed training. Together these findings highlight the importance of both peer and external support in sustaining trauma-informed engagement. The work is relational by nature, and so too is the support that enables it.

Participants described staying engaged not because they had mastered every strategy, but because they felt understood and supported. Trauma-informed education, in this sense, was not sustained by knowledge alone, but by emotionally intelligent relationships within and beyond the school.

6.5.2 Leadership as an Anchor for Cultural Change

Participants repeatedly highlighted the central role of leadership in sustaining trauma-informed approaches. Where headteachers and senior leaders actively endorsed and modelled relational values, teachers felt more confident prioritising connection over compliance.

This leadership support gave legitimacy to trauma-informed work, especially in environments where other initiatives or behaviour systems risked diluting or negating the message. In the school context of this study, strong support for trauma-informed values was evident among middle leaders and most members of the SLT. However, participants noted that this did not extend to the headteacher or governing body, who remained more focused on traditional behaviour management and academic outcomes. This partial endorsement created an atmosphere of inconsistency.

Several teachers shared that while relational practice was encouraged by immediate leaders, the broader school vision lacked coherence. This leadership disconnect mirrors concerns raised in the literature. White and McCallum (2020) emphasise that consistent leadership vision is essential for embedding TIAs. MacLochlainn et al. (2022) similarly identify SLT buy-in as a key predictor of implementation success.

Thomas et al. (2019) and Overstreet and Chafouleas (2016) reinforce this point, arguing that leadership engagement is a core driver of trauma-informed cultural change, particularly in high-stress educational contexts. The present findings support this view. When leadership support was inconsistent or unclear, it created confusion about how deeply TIAs were expected to shape staff practice.

6.5.3 Whole-School Culture and Shared Responsibility

Many participants spoke about efforts to promote trauma-informed values across the school but also raised concerns that these efforts weren't always joined up. Some staff were deeply engaged, while others remained disconnected from actively engaging.

This uneven engagement was often traced back to the lack of clear messaging from senior leadership, the headteacher, or the priorities of governors, leaving ambiguity about whether trauma-informed work was optional or central to the school's ethos. Several teachers shared that colleagues viewed the approach as too soft or permissive, suggesting that without consistent reinforcement or space for discussion, misunderstandings regarding trauma-informed approaches could take root. Participants overwhelmingly believed that trauma-informed work could only thrive when adopted as a whole-school commitment.

This aligns with Brunzell, Waters, and Stokes (2015, 2016), who argue that trauma-informed change relies on cultural coherence, not isolated application. O'Toole and Dobutowitsch (2023) also stress the importance of shared expectations and consistent values across staff teams to build relational safety and predictability for students.

Participants often noted several constraints that worked against the embedding of trauma-informed approaches. These included large class sizes, increasing numbers of pupils with SEN or additional needs, fragmented staffing and teacher rotas, accountability measures such as school league tables and exam results, opposing behaviour policies, and the absence of leadership support. These factors created emotional and logistical barriers to implementing and sustaining relational, reflective practice. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that trauma-informed practice is both enabled and constrained by the wider systemic conditions in which schools operate. While individual commitment matters, it is the alignment between leadership, culture, relational infrastructure, and external support that ultimately determines whether TIAs take root and thrive. These systemic dynamics can be understood within the PPCT framework, where inconsistent leadership vision and fragmented relationships disrupts the proximal processes required for ongoing practical change.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Restating the Research Aims and Design

This study set out to explore how teachers and school professionals experience and engage with trauma-informed training and practice within the context of a London secondary school. At its core, the research aimed to centre teacher voice, to understand how educators make sense of trauma-informed ideas, not just in theory, but in the emotional, relational, and systemic realities of their everyday work. It recognised the complex and often invisible labour involved in supporting students affected by trauma, and asked how this work shapes, challenges, and affirms the people who carry it out.

The central research question guiding the study was:

How do teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experience and engage with trauma-informed training and approaches over time?

To explore this question in greater depth, three sub-questions were developed:

- How do the perceived benefits and challenges of trauma-informed training evolve over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How do the emotional and professional impacts of engaging with trauma-informed approaches shift over time for teachers and school professionals?
- How does the integration of trauma-informed approaches into everyday practice develop over time for teachers and school professionals?

A qualitative, interpretivist approach was used to prioritise participants' lived experiences and their own meaning-making. The research design included two rounds of semi-structured interviews across two academic years—the first during summer term 2023–2024, and the second during spring term 2024–2025. Lesson observations were carried out between these phases, offering an opportunity to understand how trauma-informed ideas were applied in practice.

This temporally sensitive design made it possible to explore not only what teachers thought about trauma-informed approaches, but how their perspectives shifted over time. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), with a strong emphasis on researcher reflexivity and positionality throughout.

Although the study was rooted in a single school context, it raised broader questions about what it means to sustain trauma-informed practice in real-world educational settings. Rather than focusing on implementation metrics, this research highlighted teachers' emotional journeys, namely the way their roles evolved, the tensions they held, and the relational work that sits at the centre of trauma-informed education.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings and Their Significance

This study explored how teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experienced and engaged with trauma-informed training and approaches over time. Findings indicate that trauma-informed work was emotionally demanding, requiring teachers to reflect deeply on their own emotions, values, and professional identity.

However, many participants described this internal process as grounding and personally meaningful. Trauma-informed approaches helped them to pause, reflect, reconsider, and reconnect, a process that engaged their core values and supported their own emotional regulation. This process was often a precondition for co-regulation with students. Distinctive to this study is the finding that sustained engagement with TIAs shaped professional identity over time. Participants experienced the tug between behaviourist, control-oriented models of practice and more relational, values-based understanding of their roles, ultimately opting for the latter. For some this shift reawakened a sense of professional purpose.

Viewed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) PPCT model, these shifts demonstrate how professional growth (Person) is shaped by consistent relational interactions (Process) within emotionally attuned environments (Context) across time (Time).

Another contribution of this study is the identification of informal peer coaching as a core sustaining mechanism. Teachers described these peer relationships as validating, emotional containing, and essential for embedding trauma-informed approaches into everyday work. This extends current understandings by elucidating the role of teacher-led, real-time dialogue in maintaining a commitment to trauma-informed engagement.

Findings also underscore the importance of systemic support, particularly from senior leadership and external professionals. Where leadership was aligned and consistent, trauma-informed engagement was more often sustained. Conversely, the experience of fragmented leadership and competing agendas acted as constraints.

Although participants valued the involvement of educational psychologists, some felt they lacked sufficient opportunity for follow-up support. These findings support a more proactive role for EPs in not only post-training reflective support, but in helping schools prepare the culture and relational conditions necessary for successful embedding.

Finally, while trauma-informed work was emotionally taxing, several participants found it relationally rewarding. Rather than viewing emotional labour as a burden, participants reflected on finding meaning in the depth of their relationships with students and colleagues. This study contributes a nuanced understanding of the emotional complexity of trauma-informed education, where regulation, identity, and relationship are developed in tandem.

7.3 Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study hold important implications for both the practice and policy of trauma-informed education. While teachers are often positioned as implementers of trauma-informed approaches, this research affirms that they must also be viewed as beneficiaries. Rather than serving only student wellbeing, trauma-informed approaches supported teacher self-regulation, emotional reflection, and professional identity development. These educator-experienced processes are not peripheral; they are critical to sustaining engagement with trauma-informed practice. As such, both policy and practice must recognise the relational and emotional demands placed on educators and ensure that support structures are in place to meet those needs.

7.3.1 Implications for Educators and School Staff

A key implication of this study is that trauma-informed approaches must be understood not only as interventions for students, but as professional development tools for teachers and school professionals. Participants described how engagement with trauma-informed work prompted deep emotional reflection and shifts in professional identity. However, these changes required time, relational safety, and benefitted from peer support. For trauma-informed engagement to be sustained, schools must create environments where staff feel supported, not just trained.

This study highlights the potential of informal peer coaching and relational dialogue as core sustaining mechanisms. While CPD is often delivered externally, schools can cultivate internal structures, such as peer mentoring, collaborative planning time, and reflective groups that foster ongoing growth. These mechanisms offer emotional containment and a sense of shared responsibility, enabling school professions to stay engaged with the work even when it feels emotionally taxing.

Importantly, with systemic constraints such as limited funding for external training or long-term support, developing peer coaching relationships from within may be one of the most sustainable ways to embed trauma-informed approaches. When staff feel safe, seen, and supported, they are better positioned to offer the same to their students. Trauma-informed education, at its core, must be relationally modelled and embedded at every level of the school system.

7.3.2 Implications for Policy and CPD Design

Findings from this study highlight the need to reconceptualise trauma-informed training not as a one-off event, but as part of a sustained process of cultural and relational change. Participants consistently described training sessions as helpful but limited when not followed up with opportunities for reflection, discussion, or guided practical application. When systemic pressures intensified, the principles of trauma-informed engagement at times took a back seat, suggesting that without sustained input, training is unlikely to influence long-term engagement.

Effective trauma-informed CPD must therefore be embedded within a broader commitment to reflective learning. This includes planned follow-up sessions, spaces for peer dialogue, and alignment with whole-school values, ethos, and policies. Crucially, CPD should be responsive to the development stage of the school, acknowledging where staff are in their journey of understanding, readiness, and capacity. One-size-fits-all approaches are unlikely to succeed in the absence of cultural preparation and relational safety. Trauma-informed work is iterative, not linear.

At a policy level, this means moving beyond performance-focused CPD models to prioritise staff wellbeing, relational safety, and identity-affirming practice. If trauma-informed education is to be more than a technical intervention, policies must support the creation of emotionally intelligent school cultures in which staff feel safe to reflect, grow, and relate differently.

7.3.3 Implications for Educational Psychologists

This study highlights a vital role for educational psychologists in supporting trauma-informed education, not simply as trainers, but as systemic partners in cultural change. Participants expressed a need for emotionally attuned support that extended beyond initial training, particularly as trauma-informed work often prompts self-reflection, emotional labour, and shifts in professional identity. EPs are well-positioned to provide psychologically informed, relational spaces that help educators process and embed new ways of working.

Importantly, EPs can support schools not only during and after training, but also before, by helping to assess readiness, understand the school's relational culture, and support the creation of conditions for change. As Chidley and Stringer (2022) argue, a supportive "transfer climate" is essential for any training to have meaningful and sustainable impact.

This aligns with the bioecological perspective underpinning this study: effective trauma-informed work depends on the dynamic interaction between individuals, systems, and time. EPs can work at these intersecting levels, engaging with leadership teams to co-construct relationally grounded, context-sensitive approaches which evolve alongside the school's developmental stage. As such, trauma-informed practice offers EPs an opportunity to engage in deeper, sustained work centred on relationships, identity, and systemic understanding. EPs are well positioned to support schools in embedding trauma-informed approaches in a meaningful and sustainable way.

From the findings, participants highlighted the value of contextual understanding and emotional relatability that emerged through informal peer coaching. This form of support was perceived as more ecological and sustainable than external input. This enabled teachers to embed trauma-informed approaches in ways that were responsive to their school culture. When asked to reflect on support mechanisms, participants generally favoured internal, peer-based structures over continual involvement from external professionals.

While EPs are well suited to support trauma-informed pedagogy, their role may be most impactful when centred on systemic support. This includes ongoing engagement with school leadership as well as providing supervision, consultation, or reflective spaces for identified trauma-informed champions within the school. In doing so, EPs could adopt a ‘coach of the coaches’ role, working alongside those leading trauma-informed culture internally. This approach would not only empower school-based staff but also deepen EPs’ understanding of the school’s evolving relational dynamics and cultural landscape.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study offers an in-depth exploration of how school professionals engage with trauma-informed approaches over time. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The research was conducted within a single secondary school in a London borough, which limits the transferability of findings to other contexts. Additionally, participants were self-selecting and may have been more open or positively inclined toward trauma-informed approaches, potentially influencing the thematic focus of the data.

Although the study spanned two academic years, data collection took place over a six-to-seven-month period. This allowed for some temporal insight into participants' experiences, but it did not capture the full arc of long-term implementation, nor broader influences such as leadership turnover or shifting school and systemic priorities.

While two rounds of interviews were conducted, not all participants took part in both, which reduced the consistency of temporally sensitive perspectives.

The combination of semi-structured interviews and lesson observations offered a rich and contextualised view of how participants perceived and enacted trauma-informed approaches, allowing for a more layered interpretation of their professional experiences.

However, observations were limited to a single lesson per participant and should be interpreted as illustrative rather than comprehensive. Additionally, participants were aware they were being observed, which may have influenced their behaviour. These factors were acknowledged during analysis and documented through reflective notes to guard against over-interpretation of isolated moments.

Finally, my role as a trainee educational psychologist embedded within the local authority may have influenced the research process. While this positioning supported rapport-building and mutual understanding, it may also have introduced subtle power dynamics or shaped how participants chose to share their reflections. As with all qualitative research, findings must be interpreted in light of the relational and contextual dynamics of the study.

In addition, the small sample size meant that not all subject areas within the school were represented. Teachers who taught subjects such as music, art, history, and foreign languages were included. These disciplines, particularly music and art, may naturally align more closely with trauma-informed approaches through their emphasis on creative expression, flexibility, and relational pedagogy. By contrast, subjects such as mathematics or science, often shaped by more rigid curricula and high-stakes assessment, may pose different challenges in applying emotionally responsive approaches. The absence of this disciplinary diversity means that important variations in how trauma-informed practice is experienced across subject areas may not have been fully captured.

Future research could usefully explore how subject-specific factors influence the adoption of trauma-informed approaches, particularly in relation to pedagogical flexibility, classroom dynamics, and professional identity. These limitations mean the findings should be understood as contextually situated rather than broadly generalisable. Nonetheless, the study offers transferable insights that may resonate with similar school settings or inform broader implementation work. Future research could expand the current design by engaging with multiple schools across different local authorities or educational phases. Additionally, longitudinal studies extending beyond a single year would offer valuable understanding of how trauma-informed approaches are sustained or adapted over time.

Finally, further work is needed to explore school readiness, the developmental stages of whole-school implementation, and the dynamic interplay between top-down leadership and bottom-up relational processes in embedding cultural change.

7.6 Final Reflections

This study set out to explore how teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experienced and engaged with trauma-informed training and approaches over time. The findings presented throughout this thesis suggest that trauma-informed work is emotionally layered, relationally grounded, and shaped by the wider systems in which it is embedded. Participants' accounts revealed that trauma-informed approaches supported emotional awareness, strengthened relationships with students, and, at times, renewed their sense of professional identity.

Yet, they also spoke candidly about the challenges of sustaining emotionally responsive practice within high-pressure environments. For many, this work demanded vulnerability, courage, and the support of trusted colleagues.

As a trainee educational psychologist, this research has deeply shaped how I understand the role of psychology in schools. It has reinforced that trauma-informed approaches are not a discrete set of strategies, but rather a relational ethos that shapes professional identity and everyday interactions. Engaging in this research has heightened my awareness of the emotional labour of teaching and the systemic conditions that either enable or constrain sustainable change. Above all, I am left with a profound appreciation for the commitment, self-reflection, and relational care carried out by educators, often quietly and without recognition, as they strive to meet the complex needs of their students.

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Appendix A: Initial Interview Schedule

Project title: **An Exploration of Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Schools and the Perspectives of Teachers**

Interview Schedule

Participant number:	XX
Welcome & explain the following:	✓ Purpose of the research: To gather the perspective of the implementation of trauma-informed approaches amongst teachers. ✓ Confidentiality: no names or identifying features will be used / interviews stored securely ✓ Obtain consent for participation and recording ✓ Opt-out at any stage; right to not answer any questions; after end of video the transcript will be integrated into analysis. ✓ Recording; video or not?

Key Words:

Implementation refers to a process in which a set of activities is executed to put an innovation into daily practice (Fixsen et al., 2005, 2019) "Science to Service"

Area	Main questions	Further prompts
1. Educator's Experiences & Perspectives on Trauma-Informed Approaches	What does the term "trauma-informed approach" mean to you? Can you describe your experiences with trauma-informed training?	• Ask about their experiences with trauma-informed training and its impact on their practice.
	Can you describe any experiences you've had with trauma-informed practices in your school?	• Can you give specific examples of how trauma-informed approaches are used in your school?
	Has your trauma-informed training impacted your practice?	• If they have, how have these approaches change the way you interact with students and colleagues?

		• How do you show playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy in your interactions?
2. Underlying Mechanisms and Challenges *Investigate the underlying mechanisms that facilitate or hinder implementation*	Can you tell me about how trauma-informed approaches have been put into practice in your school? What do you see as the main things (facilitators) that helps make these approaches work well? What do you see as the main barriers or obstacles to making these approaches work?	• Inquire about institutional structures, policies, and resources that support or impede the implementation process. • How has training and development for teachers and staff helped in putting trauma-informed approaches into practice? (Professional development) • How have the plans and structures within the school made it easier or harder to implement these approaches? (Implementation planning) • How does the support from school leaders affect the use of trauma-informed practices? (Leadership Support) • How do you involve and get support from parents, students, and other people in the community for these initiatives? (Engaging Stakeholders) • How much do the teachers and other school staff agree with and support the use of trauma-informed practices? (Buy-in) • Have the relationships between staff, students, and parents changed? If so, how?

		Explore any other challenges or barriers encountered in implementing trauma-informed approaches.
3. Contextual Factors and Influences *Delve into the socio-cultural context of the school environment and its influence*	Can you identify any factors (or mechanisms) that help make trauma-informed approaches successful? Can you identify any factors (or mechanisms) that make it difficult to implement trauma-informed approaches? Do you feel that any school policies or aspects of your school have made a difference to how well these approaches are used?	Consider community demographics, school culture, school focus, leadership structure, etc. • How do community and school demographics and school culture, school focus influence the implementation of trauma-informed practices? • What impact do school's focus and leadership structure have on these approaches? (consider the specific context of the school) • How do behaviour policies and support systems for staff and students affect the use of trauma-informed practices? (pastoral support in schools) (supervision?) (forums to discuss challenging aspects of the role) • How do broader social and cultural factors affect your interactions with students and the implementation of trauma-informed practices? Probe for how broader social and cultural dynamics impact educators' interactions with students and the implementation of trauma-informed practices. - Behaviour policies - Pastoral support for staff - Pastoral support for students - Time allocations
4. Reflection & Closing	Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with trauma-informed approaches? Thank the participant for their time and offer any additional	Thank participants for their participation and offer the opportunity for any final remarks.

	clarification or follow-up information if needed	Confirm consent for the use of the interview data for research purposes.

Appendix B: Final Interview Schedule

Project Title: **Navigating Trauma-Informed Education: Teacher Reflections from a London Secondary School**

Interview Schedule

Research Question:	How do teachers and school professionals in a London secondary school experience and engage with trauma-informed training and approaches over time?		
Participant:			
Section	**Conceptual Groups**	**Primary Question**	**Prompts**
Introduction		Reiterate the purpose of the study and the participant's role.	Briefly summarize themes from the first round.
		Explain the focus of this interview: to build on earlier insights, explore specific themes in depth, and relate these to classroom observations.	Remind participants about confidentiality and ask for consent to record the interview.
Perceptions of Trauma-Informed Training	Teacher Wellbeing and Support, Training & Implementation	Reflecting on the trauma-informed training you've received, what aspects do you now see as most relevant to your practice?	- Are there elements of the training you found less applicable or challenging to implement? - Have your thoughts about the training evolved since our last conversation?
		How well do you feel the training prepared you for the realities of working in a London secondary school?	- Were there specific parts of the training that felt particularly suited—or unsuited—to your school's context? - How might the training be adapted to better meet your needs?
Translating Trauma-Informed Approaches into Practice	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action, Emotion & Relational Aspects	How have you incorporated trauma-informed approaches into your day-to-day classroom practices since our last discussion?	- Can you provide examples of specific strategies or approaches you've adopted? - Have you adjusted your approach to behaviour management?

		During classroom observations, I noticed [specific example, e.g., calm starts to lessons or de-escalation techniques]. Can you tell me more about your thinking behind that approach? Standing at the door at the start of the lesson and welcoming student in.	- What influenced you to use that particular strategy? - How do students generally respond to these practices?
		Are there situations where you feel trauma-informed approaches are particularly effective—or ineffective—in practice?	- How do you adapt these approaches to different students or situations? - Have you faced moments where the approaches didn't align with the reality of the classroom?
Emotional and Professional Impact	Teacher Wellbeing and Support, Emotion & Relational Aspects	How has engaging with trauma-informed practices impacted you emotionally and professionally?	- Have you noticed changes in your stress levels, teaching confidence, or relationships with students? - Are there aspects of this work that you find particularly rewarding—or emotionally challenging?
		How do you balance your emotional well-being while working with students who may have experienced trauma?	- Are there strategies or support systems you rely on? - How do you decompress after particularly difficult interactions?
		In what ways has trauma-informed training influenced your professional identity as a teacher?	- Has it changed how you view your role in the classroom? - Do you see yourself as more relational or emotionally attuned?
Challenges and Barriers	Barriers & Challenges, School Policy & Leadership	What do you see as the biggest barriers to applying trauma-informed approaches in your school?	- Are there particular school policies or systemic factors that make it difficult to use these approaches?

			- How do you navigate conflicts between trauma-informed practices and traditional discipline approaches?
		Have you faced any resistance from colleagues, leadership, or parents when using trauma-informed strategies?	- Can you share an example of how you responded to this resistance? - How could the school better support staff in overcoming these challenges?
		From your perspective, how does the school's culture influence the success of trauma-informed practices?	- Do you feel the school prioritizes relational approaches, or is it more focused on academic outcomes? - How aligned are leadership and staff in their views on trauma-informed education?
Benefits and Facilitators	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches, Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	What do you think are the most significant benefits of using trauma-informed approaches in your classroom?	- Have you seen changes in student behaviour or engagement? - How have your relationships with students evolved?
		Are there particular strategies, resources, or supports that have made it easier to adopt trauma-informed practices?	- What roles have colleagues or leadership played in supporting you? - Are there external resources or training you've found helpful?
		How does consistency in trauma-informed practices across staff impact your work?	- Do you notice differences in how students respond when all staff use trauma-informed approaches? - How can the school improve consistency across departments or staff members?
Reflection and Future Directions	School Policy & Leadership, Training & Implementation	Reflecting on your journey with trauma-informed education so far, what do you see as your biggest learning or takeaway?	- Has this work changed how you see yourself as a teacher?

			- What would you do differently if you were starting this journey again?
		If you could change one thing about how trauma-informed practices are implemented in your school, what would it be?	- Are there specific policies, leadership practices, or resources you'd like to see improved? - How could trauma-informed training evolve to better support you?
		Looking ahead, what would you hope for in terms of the school's trauma-informed approach over the next year?	- Are there particular changes or developments you feel are needed? - How do you think the school community as a whole could benefit?
Closing		Ask if there's anything else they would like to share or clarify.	Thank them for their time and contributions. Reassure them about confidentiality and share next steps for the research.

Appendix C: Observation Pro Forma

Navigating Trauma-Informed Education: Teacher Reflections from a London Secondary School

Observation Proforma

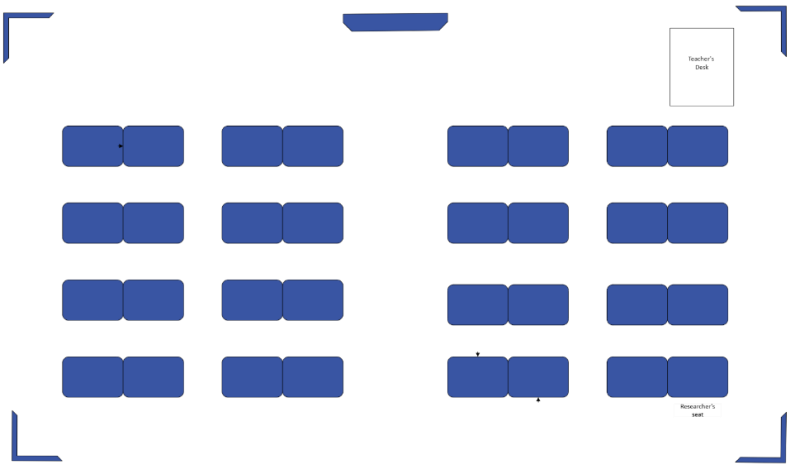
Observation Details	
Date/ Time:	
Participant ID (Pseudonym):	
Context:	
Duration:	

Observation Focus	Notes/ Details
Evidence of trauma-informed practices	(e.g., creating safety, fostering trust, promoting emotional regulation, use of positive/ supportive language) •
Interactions with students and staff	(e.g., communication style, responsiveness, collaborative or supportive behaviours) •
Indicators of self-efficacy	(e.g., confidence in handling challenging situations) •
Evidence of stress or burnout	(e.g., physical signs or verbal expressions, tension, fatigue) •

Observer Reflections & Questions
• Space for detailed notes on observed behaviours and interactions, focusing on professional practices. • Avoid personal judgments; stick to observable actions and language • (e.g., "This interaction aligns with trauma-informed ss because...")

Observation Focus	Notes/Details
Trauma-Informed Practices	
Uses supportive, non-judgmental language	
Provides clear and consistent instructions	
Demonstrates flexibility in responses	
Encourages student autonomy	
Indicators of Self-Efficacy	
Approaches challenges confidently	
Proactively manages student behaviour	
Seeks help or collaboration when needed	
Readiness for Trauma-Informed Practice	
Actively applies strategies from training	
Reflects on student behaviour through a trauma-informed lens	
Incorporates emotional regulation techniques	
Other Observations	
Notes/Details:	

Classroom Diagram



- **Seating Arrangement**:
  - Are students seated individually, in pairs, or in groups?
  - Is there a clear line of sight for all students to the whiteboard/screen?
  - Are there any students seated separately from the main groups? Why?
- **Teacher's Positioning**:
  - Where does the teacher primarily position themselves during the lesson (e.g., at the front, circulating the room)?
  - How does the teacher interact with students in different parts of the room?
- **Classroom Environment**:
  - Are there any visible displays or resources related to trauma-informed practices?
  - How is the space organized (e.g., for accessibility, inclusivity, or specific needs)?
- **Student Behaviour**:
  - Are there observable patterns of behaviour based on seating location (e.g., engagement, interactions)?
  - Do students appear comfortable and supported in their environment?
- **Interaction Dynamics**:
  - What types of interactions occur between the teacher and students (e.g., verbal, non-verbal)?
  - How do students interact with one another during the lesson?
- **Classroom Atmosphere**:
  - Is the classroom atmosphere calm, structured, or lively?
  - Are there any signs of tension, disengagement, or other dynamics that stand out?
- **Physical Features**:
  - Note any significant environmental features such as lighting, ventilation, or noise levels.
  - Are there resources or tools visibly available (e.g., sensory aids, calming corners)?

Appendix D: Member Checking Summary

BCE Interview

JM's research focuses on the implementation of trauma-informed practices in education, particularly from the teacher's perspective. BCE discussed her experiences with various trauma-informed training sessions, including those led by XX and XX from the virtual school and the Polyvagal Institute. BCE emphasized the importance of relational approaches and understanding behaviour as communication. She noted challenges such as the lack of prioritization from the Head Teacher. This contrasts with some members of the senior leadership such as the assistant head. She further highlighted the disjointed nature of behaviour policies. BCE highlighted that while she has received training and support from her line managers, particularly from line managers like XX and XX, the need for ongoing training and support on a wider school level could be beneficial. She also discussed the impact of trauma-informed practices on her teaching practice and personal well-being.

Action Items

- Explore resources from Trauma Informed Schools UK and Beacon House for further learning and support.
- Continue having reflective conversations with line managers and colleagues to support the ongoing implementation of trauma-informed practices.
- Advocate for the inclusion of trauma-informed approaches in the school's wider policies and structures to facilitate more effective implementation.

Outline

Implementation of Trauma-Informed Practices in Education

- JM explains the purpose of his research, focusing on the implementation of trauma-informed practices in education.
- He emphasizes the lack of teacher voices in existing research and aims to explore how teachers engage with trauma-informed practices.
- JM assures confidentiality and security of the information gathered during the interview.
- He introduces the concept of "science to service," relating to the application of knowledge from CPD INSET days.

BCE's Trauma-Informed Training Experiences

- BCE shares her experiences with trauma-informed training, mentioning sessions led by colleagues XX and XX from the virtual school.

- She discusses the American book "The Regulated Classroom" and the polyvagal theory training course from the Polyvagal Institute.
- BCE expresses her ongoing interest in trauma-informed practices but acknowledges the challenge of applying them in real situations.
    - *"And I guess I kind of just genuinely interested in it, like, yeah, also, like, listen to podcasts, like, listen to like, Gabor Mate. I think I probably have an interest in it, but I'm still no, you know, I think expert, and it's also really difficult, really putting it into that, yeah, like, into practice,"*
- She highlights the difficulty of managing behaviour, using an example of a child hitting his head and the complexities of restraining him.
    - *"Yeah, just the think that was a brilliant example. You've got a kid hitting his head into the wall. And he's one, and you have to restrain him because you don't want him to hit his head. Where it's like, Oh, okay. Like, how, how do you actually, really try and do this in reality"?*
- JM asks BCE to define trauma-informed approaches, leading to a discussion on relational approaches to behaviour.
    - *"And so I guess it means thinking like it, taking a Relational Approach to behaviour, and kind of understanding that often the behaviour is trying to communicate and need and like obviously that the trauma isn't trauma with a capital T can be like trauma and the sense of that person has an experience that is that the perception of that child in the moment."*
- BCE explains that trauma can be perceived differently by each person and emphasizes the importance of understanding the behaviour as communication.
- JM agrees, noting the relational aspects and the variability of trauma experiences.
- BCE shares her excitement and curiosity about the training, linking it to ongoing discussions in her department.
    - *"Yeah, I was quite excited about it, quite curious, kind of quite pleased about because obviously it kind of linked to things that Richard and I have been speaking about in the department anyway,"*

Experiences and Impact of Trauma-Informed Training

- BCE describes the training sessions, focusing on scenarios and discussions about student behaviour and the bigger picture.
    - *"So, I think the part of the training which was thinking about different scenarios and maybe thinking about maybe why the students were maybe behaving in that way, or maybe what the seeing, what the bigger picture was, and then talking about that with colleagues, that was really helpful."*
- BCE mentions a video about the nervous system and ACEs, which made sense to her due to prior familiarity with the concepts.
    - *"They made sense. But I guess maybe because I'd maybe heard that before, so it was things that I was familiar with, it was good to have it in that context"*

- BCE discusses the handout on trauma-informed methods, highlighting the importance of regulated adults and their impact on children.
    - *"I think the side that really stuck out was like, if you have a dysregulated adult and then a regulated child, how that will still that will result in a dysregulated child.... Yeah, and so the kind of just being aware of, literally, our roles to play, of like, how us staying calm is really important..."*
- She reflects on the challenge of maintaining calm and effective management when traditional methods fail.

Challenges and Facilitators in Implementing Trauma-Informed Practices

- BCE talks about the difficulty of balancing calmness with effective management, especially in challenging situations.
    - *"You know, it can be tricky when you're sometimes not knowing, like, where to go next. You know you have been really calm if you have given them choices and consequences, and everything hasn't worked... you're meant to be trying to model to a student of, like, how to how to behave."*
- She mentions the potential bias in student responses to male teachers and the impact of her gender in school.
    - *"But at the same time, you know, maybe also maybe with being a female teacher working in school, I do feel like maybe sometimes they just may not like because I haven't got like that really loud booming authoritative voice"*
- JM and BCE discuss the broader impact of trauma-informed practices on her teaching practice and interactions with colleagues.
    - *"It (trauma-informed training) has yeah, I think I'm probably more aware of it..."*
    - *"...my boss here... like, we'd always talk about building relationships and everything...but to be honest, I think, like, I've still would like to learn more of like, in practice."*
- BCE notes the importance of tone, positioning, and language in maintaining positive relationships with students.
    - *"Thinking about like, the tone and how you speak to students, or maybe also being aware of like, even things like where you stand, yeah, so like, rather than like, directly, like, coming around to the side, and maybe rather than across the classroom, obviously going up and speaking to the student."*
    - *"And kind of and trying to make it focussed on like, it's not the student themselves, it's just the choice that they've made in that moment."*

Barriers and Facilitators in School-Wide Implementation

- BCE identifies the lack of prioritization from senior leadership as a barrier to embedding trauma-informed practices school-wide.

    - *“I'm not quite sure about maybe, because this is obviously work that the school started and before with the previous head, yeah, now we've got the current head, who's obviously got, you know, new school, like, lots of things to get their head around. I don't know to what extent this may be something that he wants to focus on.”*
- She mentions the new behaviour system and the potential disconnect with trauma-informed approaches.
    - *“And then I know that there has been, like a new behaviour system in, like, put in, but I don't think that was that wasn't necessarily paired up with this.”*
- JM and BCE discuss the importance of ongoing training and resources to keep trauma-informed practices on staff radars.
    - *“So, it’s kind of maybe feels like, to be frank, like this was maybe a training day, and some people who were generally interested in it, took it on. But because it hasn't probably been mentioned since then, it's like, oh, yeah, that was lovely training day.”*
- BCE highlights the need for additional resources and continual training to support the implementation process.
    - *“Continual training, yeah, just so that like it's on people's radar...Takes a while to embed it...like where its drip fed so that it’s not something that’s then pushed back in people’s mind.”*
- BCE comments on the power dynamics within the classroom and the external pressures teachers feel.
    - *“I think control is a huge thing. And actually, maybe there's also that I also think about, like, maybe sometimes how teachers should control this class.”*
    - *“So maybe especially if you're a younger teacher as well, like, you know, you do think like, God, I have to control...anytime in your teaching career, if someone walks past this class now, they hear this, they can think that I'm a bad teacher because I haven't got my class under control.”*

Impact on Teacher-Student Relationships and Pastoral Support

- BCE reflects on the impact of trauma-informed practices on her relationships with students, emphasizing the importance of positive reinforcement.
- She mentions the support from her department and the ongoing conversations about trauma-informed approaches.
    - *“I mean, we do, like an ongoing piece of work. Because it is, I think you just find it quite challenging... that whole thing of in practice, yeah, in that moment, yeah, when you are challenged and when it is really, yeah, like, tricky to deal with, what do you do? Your kind of actually, sometimes just revert back...”*
- BCE discusses the role of pastoral support in the school, including wellbeing listeners and sixth form mentoring.

    - *“The pastoral support in Fishers is pretty good in terms of, it is good in terms of, like, all the other avenues of, like, support for students...There's like, other kind of opportunities for the students like, as a peer. I run the sixth form mentoring... and like all students can say that they would like a sixth form mentor...”*
    - *“I think that is definitely one of the strengths of the school, of really looking out for students, and like the heads of years are really great and do a lot, and really take the time to let to know their students”*
- She notes the challenges of managing a large number of students and the importance of being aware of individual needs.
    - *“I usually have information about your students, you know, when they first join and, in your class, ... I think that does just, I think that's just an important part of being teacher anyway, like knowing who, knowing who's in your class”*
    - *“But I mean, also, the tricky thing is, is when you've got like, so many students, you know, for instance, I've got like, four, year seven classes, three, year eight classes, two, year nine classes, two, year 10 classes, two, year 11 classes, and then sixth form. That's a lot of students. So, like, sometimes you can't remember, like, the particularities of some students.”*
    - *“You know, feels guilty, because you know you may have to spend so much time with a particular student... yeah, you can't do it all”*

Support Systems and Leadership Influence

- BCE highlights the support from her line manager, AD, and the mental health and wellbeing coordinator role she shares with Nicole Davis.
- She mentions the shift in leadership and the potential impact on the focus on trauma-informed practices.
    - *“I'm not quite sure about maybe, because this is obviously work that the school started and before with the previous head, yeah, now we've got the current head... I don't know to what extent this may be something that he wants to focus on...”*
- JM and BCE discuss the importance of leadership support and the role of SLT in embedding trauma-informed practices.
    - *“...they're obviously that part of the SLT, so the assistant head, and then also another, an assistant head... encourage staff faculty to have, like, a rope approach, which is more like relational, kind of asking students questions about choices and not raising your voice and kind of giving them options.”*
- BCE notes the potential for ongoing work and the need for a clear behaviour policy linked to trauma-informed approaches.

Broader Social and Cultural Factors

- BCE discusses the cultural and social factors influencing mental health and trauma-informed practices in the school.
- She mentions the diverse student population and the challenges of supporting the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds.
    - "I think you know, culturally, yes, that probably that does still have an impact. There may be, you know, students from different cultural backgrounds that may find it difficult to talk to their parents about their mental health."
    - "He cohort that we've got in year seven at the moment... most definitely applies to them, like the trauma informed approach. But there's also got quite a lot of likes, educational needs so that can make it sometimes, like tricky."
- BCE reflects on the impact of the Catholic ethos of the school creates a caring environment where pastoral care of the students is highly valued.
    - *"Like, I think it's obviously in terms of, like, the kind of Catholic ethos of kind of looking out for people and kind of caring for others... there may be certain topics like sexuality that will be like difficult for them to talk about, if it is that linked to mental health..."*
- She notes the potential barriers and facilitators in implementing trauma-informed practices in a diverse school setting.

Reflections on Trauma-Informed Practices and Personal Impact

- BCE shares her reflections on the personal impact of trauma-informed practices, including increased awareness and confidence in her role.
    - *"I think it is just, you know, just very much having that awareness of kind of what you're bringing to that situation and just, you know, because sometimes just taking that moment to, okay, how am I choosing to kind of respond to this in this moment? I think it kind of gives me confidence in the sense of going the right way."*

- She discusses the importance of understanding the biology and history behind student behaviour and the impact on her teaching practice.
    - *"Maybe if you understand, like, the biology of what's happening in that child, or kind of their history, then you actually, you know, it's not your fault if you can't control like, you know, responses. You just do your best to try and set up the environment in which it is safer and calm"*

- JM and BCE talk about the challenges of balancing multiple roles and the importance of ongoing support and training.
- BCE emphasizes the need for a supportive environment and the role of reflective practice in implementing trauma-informed approaches.

Appendix E: Observation Data Coding

This appendix includes a selected lesson observation extract with corresponding inductive codes, conceptual group, and researcher notes. This material contributed to the triangulation process and supported integration of interview and observational data.

Participant	Observation	Code	Conceptual Group	Notes
MDR_OBSV	Session on prep for January – mentioned that it's to support them for exams that are coming	Preparation for Student Success	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Demonstrates future planning and emotional scaffolding to reduce anxiety and promote confidence.
MDR_OBSV	Trying to get them to think ahead and troubleshooting what might be difficult about it	Encouraging Critical Thinking	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Promotes problem-solving and self-regulation by helping students anticipate challenges.
MDR_OBSV	Commenting on what they do know – their ability in doing well (encouraging)	Affirming Strengths	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Reinforces positive identity and builds confidence through affirming language.
MDR_OBSV	Calming tone of voice	Emotional Regulation	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Models emotional calm and self-regulation, contributing to classroom stability.
MDR_OBSV	Only a few lights on so class environment is calm	Environmental Calming Strategies	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Adjustments to lighting promote a calming, sensory-friendly environment.
MDR_OBSV	Consistently moving around the room – holding students in mind (e.g., when one boy asked for assistance while working with someone else, the teacher remembered and went over)	Attunement to Student Needs	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Demonstrates attunement and responsiveness to individual student needs.
MDR_OBSV	Subtle communication with students (when needing them to listen teacher would just say	Subtle Behaviour Management	Behaviour Management	Maintains engagement and attention without punitive measures.

	a name and kindly say thank you)			
MDR_ OBSV	Using names of each pupil he calls on	Personalised Engagement	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Reinforces relational safety and trust.
MDR_ OBSV	Engages and is amongst the students (gathered in the centre of 4 students talking about one of their pieces of work)	Collaborative Presence	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Reflects relational teaching by embedding himself in student groups.
MDR_ OBSV	Encouraging them to work in a way that makes them comfortable	Encouraging Autonomy	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Fosters student independence and choice.
MDR_ OBSV	Student just wanted teacher to see what he had done – a sense that he cared about his opinion of his work and found that comforting	Valuing Student Contributions	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Shows the importance of teacher validation in building trust and engagement.
MDR_ OBSV	Affirming students' progression and telling them that they are doing brilliant work	Affirming Language	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Consistent use of affirming language enhances student self-efficacy.
MDR_ OBSV	Confidence in allowing the lesson to be student-led	Student-Led Learning	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Demonstrates teacher confidence and trust in student autonomy.
MDR_ OBSV	Established trust for students to go in and out of the room to get resources. He allowed them to use his keys for a locked area to retrieve supplies	Fostering Trust and Responsibility	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Reflects trust-building and student responsibility.
MDR_ OBSV	Calm when things didn't go to plan with students not bringing their work	Calm Problem-Solving	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Models' emotional regulation during unexpected challenges.
MDR_ OBSV	Uses humour and sarcasm, empowering students to set things up, establish the work themselves	Humour as Engagement	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Encourages relational engagement and reduces classroom tension.

MDR_ OBSV	Student was waiting on a computer to load and teacher used simple questions like "What are you going to do" – pupil thought of a way to be productive, and he affirmed that	Promoting Problem-Solving	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Encourages student initiative and problem-solving through gentle prompting.
MDR_ OBSV	Created a calm and responsive environment	Environmental Calming Strategies	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	The calm environment contributes to emotional regulation and engagement.
MDR_ OBSV	Looked to support strengths	Strength-Based Approach	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Focuses on identifying and affirming strengths rather than deficits.
MDR_ OBSV	Confidently dealt with challenging moments through connecting with students first	Relational Behaviour Management	Behaviour Management	De-escalates situations through connection and relational engagement.
MDR_ OBSV	Student-led class – combination of allowing students to seek assistance and noticing when to jump in (signs of attunement)	Encouraging Autonomy and Attunement	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Demonstrates teacher awareness and responsiveness to student needs.
MDR_ OBSV	During the lesson there were no instances of challenging behaviour	Calm Classroom Environment	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Suggests effective classroom management and relational engagement.
MDR_ OBSV	Tables were organised in a way that allowed for free flow of movement. Big pieces of furniture, like painting easels, were placed to the side to avoid distraction	Accessible and Inclusive Space	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Physical space is arranged to promote inclusivity and ease of movement.
MDR_ OBSV	Students focus on their work while maintaining conversation with each other. They were also softly talking	Peer Collaboration	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Promotes positive peer relationships and a relaxed classroom atmosphere.
MDR_ OBSV	Students were able to decide where to sit. They also seemed to work well in the groups and areas they chose	Student Comfort and Autonomy	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Fosters student autonomy by allowing choice in seating and collaboration.

Appendix F: Examples of Initial Coding

Example of familiarisation and initial coding. This table presents quotes from six participants, showing how inductive codes were generated during the initial analysis phase and later grouped into broader conceptual groups.

Participant	Participant Quote	Initial Code	Conceptual Group
Martin	*"We focus on relational, rather than behavioural strategies."*	Relational Approaches to Behaviour	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action
Bethany	*"It takes time to embed trauma-informed practices."*	Time-Intensive Embedding	Barriers & Challenges
Liam	*"I think perhaps I was more aware of it...but I did most of the stuff already."*	Teacher Confidence and Self-Efficacy	Teacher Wellbeing and Support
Hannah	*"We try to bring trauma-informed language into all staff meetings."*	Embedding Trauma Language	School Policy and Leadership
Edward	*"Some staff still see themselves as 'academic only,' disengaging from relational aspects."*	Academic-Only Teacher Mindset	Barriers & Challenges
Frederick	*"Being consistent in our approach helps students feel more secure and less anxious."*	Consistency Creating Security	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches

Appendix G: Annotated Transcript Excerpt (Liam)

A corresponding excerpt of Liam's transcript was annotated to illustrate the beginnings of reflexive meaning-making. Codes were grouped into broader conceptual groups to support early theme development.

Quote	Code	Conceptual Group	Notes
"I feel like perhaps I do employ the use more of a restorative conversation now."	Restorative Conversations	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Reflects the practical application of trauma-informed training, contributing to behaviour management through relational approaches.
"I thought I did a lot of it already. Yeah, I do think it's good to perhaps be more aware of it."	Impact on Practice	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Suggests that training validated existing practice while deepening awareness, reinforcing teacher self-efficacy.
"I always think a lot of the bits with trauma informed practice... making a safe environment, making students feel wanted, engaged with."	Safe Environment	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Emphasises the creation of safety and belonging as central to trauma-informed education.
"Removing them from the environment... give them a minute by themselves to calm down."	De-escalation Strategy	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Describes a trauma-sensitive response to challenging behaviour through relational regulation.
"This way it shows that you're actually listening to the student... you can be successful."	Listening to Students	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Emphasises student voice and relationship-building as key to successful outcomes.
"The training itself was led by the safeguarding lead... I felt perhaps we could do a little bit more, sort of scenarios."	Training Gaps	Training & Implementation	Highlights the need for interactive learning methods like scenarios to deepen staff engagement.
"I feel like it could have been a little more impactful."	Perceived Effectiveness of CPD	Training & Implementation	Indicates teacher perceptions of trauma training as limited in depth and delivery.
"Given some practice scenarios would be good... which we didn't really get."	Need for Practice-Based Learning	Training & Implementation	Advocates for experiential, collaborative learning to support trauma-informed application.
"Personally, I would say I did most of the stuff already."	Prior Practice Alignment	Trauma-Informed Practice in Action	Reflects alignment between teacher's pre-existing practices and trauma-informed approaches.

"Some teachers who are perhaps a bit more old school... haven't adopted it fully."	Resistance to Change	Barriers & Challenges	Suggests generational or pedagogical resistance among staff to trauma-informed shifts.
"I don't think they probably haven't taken everything on board from the trauma-informed research."	Teacher Readiness for Trauma-Informed Approaches	Barriers & Challenges	Indicates partial engagement or resistance due to lack of understanding or alignment.
"You had one member of staff who just always found their behaviour quite challenging... but they weren't actually aware of the situation."	Staff Awareness of Trauma	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Highlights the importance of communication and shared understanding in staff responses to trauma.
"It's always good to have that sort of discussion with the staff members... telling them, you know, if they need to take a break..."	Staff Communication Around Student Needs	Emotion & Relational Aspects	Suggests informal peer dialogue supports trauma-informed responses and teacher empathy.
"You do try to support staff as much as possible... comes down to making sure you're listening to the staff member themselves."	Peer Support	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Indicates a shared responsibility and reflective culture supporting teacher wellbeing.
"If a ECT has a really challenging class, you need to provide much more support."	Supporting Early Career Teachers	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Underscores trauma-informed leadership through tailored support for new teachers.
"When we were having the trauma-informed training, I never actually thought of applying it to staff."	Staff Application Gap	Training & Implementation	Suggests that training may have narrowly focused on student needs, omitting staff wellbeing.
"I'd say it's probably already something I did, but it's good to be aware of it."	Validation of Existing Practice	Teacher Wellbeing and Support	Demonstrates that training reinforced teacher confidence and professional identity.
"We're a fairly supportive school, so it's a very open-door policy."	School Support Culture	Facilitators of Trauma-Informed Approaches	Reflects leadership and team culture that promotes help-seeking and emotional safety.
"Highlighting that not only is this for students but also for you would be good."	Inclusive Framing of Training	Training & Implementation	Suggests reframing training content to explicitly include staff wellbeing.

Appendix H: Corresponding Transcript Excerpt: Liam

01 LIAM Initial Trauma-Informed Interview
Wed, Oct 09, 2024, 2:35PM • 50:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS
trauma informed, teacher perspectives, implementation process, restorative conversations, behaviour management, safeguarding lead, training impact, student relationships, centralized detentions, reflective tasks, parent engagement, extracurricular activities, staff support, leadership support, school culture

SPEAKERS
LIAM, JM
JM 00:00
Yeah, so just wanted to make sure it's alright for me to record that I just have consent for that cool. So, the purpose of research, you obviously got the information sheet looking at really, I'm just trying to gather teachers' perspectives, educators' perspectives on the implementation of trauma informed approaches. As a there's a lot of research around trauma informed approaches in general, and it's becoming a lot of a buzzword within the UK, but there's not a lot of research on how that's actually implemented. And further, there's not a lot of research on how teachers perceive that implementation process. So, I'm really just looking to get your understanding of the whole process as it were, like the training and all that. When I say implementation, I mean, like science, some people don't, yeah, people have different interpretations of what implementation means. But I'm looking at basically from science to actually outworking of it. So, science to service, essentially. And so just want to let you know everything's confidential. No names will be, Roy said this. Everything's stored securely. And then, yeah, once everything's transcribed, literally, it's your recording is erased, yeah, so you don't have to worry about that. You're welcome to obviously opt out at any point. All right, cool. So, I guess, to get us started, you mentioned you've been teaching for five years, almost five years, amazing, and you've you guys are still in the trauma-informed training and just finishing up?

LIAM 01:41
Believe we might think we finished it now, the last, the last bit of training we had. Then we had a sort of a whole school CPD session, okay, where the safeguarding lead was running through basically what the, what the approach is, okay, which I think was, was a few months ago now.

JM 01:58
Okay, so if I can ask, what does the term trauma informed mean to you, everyone sort of picks out things from the training. How that relates to you? How do you feel? How you translate that?

LIAM 02:11

Yeah, I mean, for me, it pretty much sort of comes down to the way in which you interact with students and sort of assuming that they always have that sort of possible chance of past trauma that you need to be able to deal with adapting, and it's always about making sure they sort of feel safe within the environment and school, which is kind of like I've always seen it as the fact that that's sort of our expectation anyway, yeah, this is just a sort of way of labelling. It also clear that you should be, should be talking to them, yeah, because I always think a lot of the bits with sort of trauma informed practice, you know, like making a safe environment, making students feel, you know, wanted, engaged with. And I always just thought that was a part of it anyway, because I think gone are the sort of days where you still see it, I think one of the days where you have teachers who, just like the shout in the kids face, don't see don't see that as much anymore, yeah. And certainly not something I do my practice, yeah, so, so

JM 03:08
So, doing the training, you were like, okay, this is what I do?

LIAM 03:11
I thought I did a lot of it already. Yeah, I do think it's good to perhaps be more aware of it, yeah, yeah. And you know, know that that's the sort of approach that you should be adopting

JM 03:24
To be able to name it, yeah.

03:28
Because before that, I suppose you just call it behaviour management

JM 03:33
Have your experiences with the trauma informed training. Do you think, even though you've already known, I guess you say it's already sort of been built into your practice currently, but your experience with the trauma informed training has that altered your experience with students at all, or impact on your practice at all.

03:51
I feel like perhaps I do employ the use more of a restorative conversation. Now, okay, so what's something I do like to do, I think I try and try and do a little bit more. Now, I always find that's a really good use of your behaviour management anyway, yeah, restorative conversations or, or just literally giving the giving the student a bit of time to calm down, yeah, so like removing them from the environment of the classroom with all their peers. Yeah, they were watching, taking them outside, give them a minute by themselves to calm down. Go out, have a little chat. Yeah, need to reign it in now, blah, blah, blah. Now come back in, and then usually after that, they're fine. So, I always find that approach works really well, not just in terms

JM 04:30
Has that shifted, though, since the training?

LIAM 04:32
I think so. Yeah, I think I do. I do it more, yeah, I do think the students find it very that's definitely a better approach than these students going, right, you're now removed, you've got an hour goodbye. This way it shows that you're actually listening to the student. They know that they're being listened to, and then they can all come back in, and then you can be successful. You've got to give them the opportunity. If you just remove them straight away, then you're just damaging the relationship in the future.

JM 04:57
That's really helpful to understand. Nice, I think thinking about the training then, because obviously, obviously talking about the implementation. What would you experience with the training itself?

LIAM 05:13
So the training itself was led by the safeguarding lead, she used a PowerPoint, talking through about what the safeguarding, what's not safeguarding, what the trauma informed approach is, yeah, and how it should be implemented in in our practice, essentially, and I felt perhaps we could do a little bit more, sort of scenarios, okay, that perhaps would be a little bit better, but there's just sort of, like a general kind of training on the practice itself. But I think given some, given some practice scenarios, would be good for staff members.

JM 05:50
Like case studies to do together?

LIAM 05:51
Yeah, yeah. I think that would be quite useful, which we didn't, we didn't, we get, didn't really look much of that at all. Okay, this is sort of, this is the new process. This is what we're doing, and, yeah, implementing it in that way.

JM 06:02
Okay, so within the I guess the training was it primarily just PowerPoints. Was any time for reflection or those sorts of things?

LIAM 06:12
Not that I remember, I'm pretty sure it was just a PowerPoint, PowerPoint, yeah, so I feel like could have been a little bit more impactful the training. I'd say.

JM 06:22
What would you suggest putting anything else besides the possible case studies or scenarios?

LIAM 06:27
I think case studies would like with like, group discussion would be good, because then you can talk to other teachers, see what their approach would be, and then see, like, how would you apply the, you know, the concept of trauma? Yeah, trauma led ones to the different situation.

JM 06:45
So more so, yeah, case studies, group discussion and how to apply or the applications. Okay. Have you had any trauma, informed training before?

LIAM 06:55
No, not that I recall.

JM 06:56
Okay, just curious. Some people come and come into these sorts of things with, I guess, a bit of background on it and they understand it already. So, thinking about how trauma informed practices maybe have been integrated within the school. Have you had any experiences that have shifted from pre, I guess, training till now, with regards to the practices within the school?

LIAM 07:32
So, you talking about me by myself or the school overall?

JM 07:38
Within the school and by yourself.

LIAM 07:39
Personally, I would say that I did most of the stuff already. There's no, I know it's not particularly very helpful. I think, yeah, a lot of it I had, I had done already, in the fact, obviously those restorative conversations, listening to students and giving them space and time to calm down, I think all of those things I did already. I think perhaps I was maybe more aware of it, yeah, and it gave me more time to make sure that those are being implemented correctly. But okay, as a whole, I just, I just think a lot of the things that are suggested within the training are just, it's just good practice anyway.

JM 08:13
Yeah, okay, yeah. Have you experienced that with, I guess, when, when the bigger context of the school? Have you seen other teachers sort of adopting it as well?

LIAM 08:21
I think it varies. Okay, yeah, I think, I think it does vary. I think you've got some teachers who are perhaps a bit more old school, who perhaps haven't adopted it fully, yeah, okay, because you do still get some teachers who are very happy just to get the person removed and they're going out, and then other teachers who are very focused on the sort of communication with students. It sort of depends on people in general, really.

JM 08:48
Okay, so yeah, maybe some of the older teachers. Do you find it?

LIAM 08:53

Perhaps maybe they are a little bit more set in their ways. Yeah, at that point, not to say that what they're doing is bad, it's just the fact that I don't think they probably haven't taken everything on board from the trauma informed research, as they perhaps could be.

JM 09:06
Yeah, absolutely, interesting question, has trauma informed training, I guess even, even how you practice already, has it impacted how you interact with your colleagues?

LIAM 09:22
In what way, what way, what in talking about students?

JM 09:33
Yeah, or even communicating about students, your own personal challenges within the school system, or anything around that?

LIAM 09:39
I would say it's always very important when talking to others, because you only because you do get sort of occasional staff complain about students. Yeah, it's always important to sort of look at, perhaps, why that situation has occurred. So, you might have some students who are dealing with things like their parents are getting divorced, or the bereavement in the family, in which case you're going to see a noticeable change in behaviour. Because that. In the ways, you know, that's what trauma is. So, making sure that all staff members are aware of those situations going on is really important. So yeah, for example, we had one student who was literally going about with their mum had unfortunately passed away, and so obviously that's going to cause a lot of difficulties. And you had one member of staff who just always found their behaviour quite challenging, and after that, found it even more challenging, but they weren't actually aware of the situation at that time. So, it's always good to have that sort of discussion with the staff members, telling them, you know, if they need to take a break, which they will do, then just let them. So, I think for a few lessons, that person was just removed from that lesson, just to be, just because they thought it was, they would just get those get themselves in trouble, and just until they got their sort of headspace sorted out. Yeah, so again, that's making sure that the student feels comfortable and the staff members is made aware of the issues.

JM 10:58
Yeah. Okay, so you more so communicate about a young person, challenges that they may have, etc. Anything around like supporting each other through difficult situations, challenging students, challenging behaviour?

LIAM 11:15
Oh Yeah. So of course, you do try to support staff as much as possible, and that always comes down to making sure you're listening to the staff member themselves. And if there's anything you can do to try and help with that staff member. So, if they're having challenging behaviour in the lessons, it's about arranging a time for you to perhaps come in, and for you to essentially not take over the class but essentially sort of watch over the class for a small bit of time. That way, if

anyone does need to be removed, then they can be removed. But for most teachers, they there are always the challenging classes. I always think it comes down to most teachers don't like to try and look weak in a way. They like to try and sort of push on with it, yeah, but especially the sort of the younger teachers like ECT, is making sure that they have the adequate level of support is really important. Otherwise, they don't want to stay on. They don't want to stay on being a teacher. So being really aware of if a ECT has a really challenging class, you need to provide much more support. Yeah, have those conversations. Break it down. Where do you think you're perhaps going wrong, or anything else you can do to improve that class. And then you go, you give them a load of strategies to use. Yeah, the strategies aren't very successful, and obviously you have to take more severe, severe measures. But fortunately, this year, we haven't had any problems like that, so our ECTS have settled in. That's what you want, though.

JM 12:43
So, it sounds like though that's already sort of built into your practice. Do you think the trauma informed training, having that awareness, being able to name these things, has it impacted, I guess, your understanding of your support? Or is it something you've just already...?

LIAM 13:04
I'd say it's probably already something I already did, but it's good to, I suppose, be aware of it. But when we're having the trauma informed training, I never actually thought of it applying it to staff. I always really just thought of applying it to students. So, it's interesting, you're talking about, how could you also apply to staff, because I never really considered it that way. So yeah, just definitely I'll look into it.

JM 13:27
That's interesting. Yeah, okay, and maybe that could maybe that's something that could explored within the training itself.

LIAM 13:33
Yeah, that would be useful. I'd like to think, because I think already, we're a familiar supportive school, so it's very open-door policy if you feel like you're having real challenges, and the doors always open to ask for some support. So, I think we do that already, but perhaps, yeah, highlighting that, yeah, not only is this for students, but also for you, would be good. Yeah, definitely something.

Appendix I: Field Notes and Reflective Journal Entry

Field Notes & Reflective Journal

HBA– 07.07.2024

1. Preparation

- **Research Design Overview**:
    - My research is attempting to gain insight into the implementation process of trauma-informed approaches within a secondary school
    - This research has employed a qualitative methodology as I am looking to conduct semi-structured interviews of 6 – 8 staff who are undergone a whole-school trauma-informed training. There will be two rounds of interviews – one in the summer term of 2024 and one in the autumn term of 2024.
        - ♣ Therefore, this research will aim to investigate teachers' experiences and perspectives regarding trauma-informed training and its implementation, emphasising the identification of challenges, successes, and changes in perspectives and practices over time. As such the primary and sub-research question will be:
        - ♣ What are teachers' perceptions and experiences of the mechanisms and factors that influence the implementation of trauma-informed approaches in schools?
        - ♣ What are the potential barriers toward the implementation of trauma-informed practices?
- **Fieldwork Plan**: Outline a plan for your fieldwork, including dates, locations, and participants involved.

2. Field Notes

A. Background Information

Each entry should start with:

- **Date and Time**: 08.07.2024 @ 14:00
- **Location**: HS
- **Participants**: 02HBA

B. Descriptive Notes

- **Observation Details**: Describe what you see, hear, and observe in as much detail as possible. Focus on facts and specific details.
    - Again, I was in a room called the “Yellow Room”. This room had a several cushions on the floor, a Velcro mood board on the wall as well as Zones of Regulation board. I would assume that this was an area designated for ELSA, possibly a space for young people to regulate.
- **Contextual Information**: Note the context of the observation, including environmental conditions, social setting, and any relevant background events.
    - We were in a dark room this time around as the lights seemed to be on a timer. I also had some technical difficulties with the transcription software which delayed our start.
- **Direct Quotes**: Record verbatim quotes from participants where possible and appropriate.

C. Analytical Notes

- **Initial Impressions**: Write down your initial thoughts and feelings about what you observed.
    - My initial thoughts were that she seemed quite reserved, maybe unsure of what to expect from the interview. We initially had some technical difficulties with the Wi-Fi and the transcription software, and she was patient throughout the troubleshooting process. She didn’t necessarily seem willing to make small talk. I got the sense that maybe she was uncomfortable with the lights being off because her attention was drawn to that. With that in mind, I did my best to lighten the situation and respond with lots of smiles and affirmations. I think that this was a useful, in-the-moment reflection as the conversation flowed well.
    - I was also struck by the breadth of experience that she had – she mentioned that she had been working in schools for 30 years and 20 years within inclusion. She was also the designated person for the school with regard to Looked After children. My initial impression was that she would be quite engaged and knowledgeable about the topic of trauma-informed approaches.
- **Developing Themes**: Identify and note any themes, patterns, or recurring ideas during the observation.
    - A developing theme that came from this interview was the disconnect between those in power and staff actually attempting to outwork this training into their practice.

    - There was a mismatch or disconnect between policy and the training.
    - The governors as well as the head teacher likely did not value this training and way of thinking.
    - School image being rooted in several hundred years of history and prestige. School identity was intertwined with the governance and the new head teacher, in which both are primarily focused on academic attainment
- **Questions Raised**: List any questions or issues that arise during the observation that may require further investigation.
    - Who has the ability to speak into and challenge the narrative with the head teacher?
    - Are the structures and policies a result of the head teacher's priority?
    - Would trauma-informed approaches class with some of the policies in the school?
    - Why did they do the training? Who has the influence to keep the school involved in the pilot if the headteacher and the governors aren't as keen?

D. Reflection Notes

Reflection notes help you to critically engage with your observations and analysis:

- **Personal Reactions**: Reflect on your own reactions and biases that might influence your perception.
    - I was quite interested in how a person in the position of HBA might be an asset to the wider team. Wouldn't it be beneficial to create an in-house system of trauma-informed training? Also, there was a sense that there were various trainings delivered despite it being one from the same pilot study. Was there a consistency of approach?
    - If not, I wondered what the quality control process was with the practitioners who delivered the training.
    - I also thought about how this interviewee seemed comfortable to speak about the importance of TI approaches to meet the cultural, religious, and ethnic needs of the children and young people at the school. I thought that she was quite reflective.
    - Interestingly she mentioned that racism is happening in their school – she did not think it was a lot, but this was something that came up. In speaking about trauma informed implementation – I did wonder where that comment came from. Was this due to a fear of not saying the right thing because I am a Black person. Did she feel the need to bring up race because of my race? Did she feel she had to demonstrate her awareness

of racial challenges, was she trying to relate being from a racialised and minoritised background as having a trauma experience?
    - I did appreciate how honest she was able to be regarding the leadership of the school. She was open to highlighting the cracks in the system; however, it seemed like there was a proper outlet for her within the school.
- **Methodological Notes**: Consider any issues or challenges in data collection and how you addressed them.
- **Theoretical Insights**: Link your observations to existing theories or concepts in the literature.
    - Things to highlight were the importance of senior leadership support
    - The importance of head teacher and governors' support
    - Continued training is vital to the implementation of trauma-informed approaches
    - The need for more practical examples of how to implement them in the classroom.

3. Post-Fieldwork Reflection

After each fieldwork session, spend some time reflecting on the session as a whole:

- **Summary**: Summarize the key points and significant moments from the session.
    - I believe that some of the more pertinent points were largely to do with the juxtaposition of trauma-informed approaches and views of values of key stakeholders such as the head teacher and governors.
    - In this interview it was the belief of the interviewee that trauma-informed training takes years to actually implement successfully, however, that only occurs in context of ongoing training, a commitment to the process by all and support from leadership
- **Analysis**: Reflect on how the new data fits with your existing understanding and any adjustments to your research questions or methods.
    - The current data seems to align with the existing understanding of how trauma-informed practices are implemented. There is evidence to suggest that it requires a top-down approach, on-going training and intervention, outside advice and guidance from qualified practitioners, and a significant amount of time to allow for the day-to-day application of this approach.
- **Action Plan**: Outline any next steps, including follow-up questions, additional observations needed, or changes to your methodology.
    - I’ve noticed that the interview schedule did not flow as smoothly as I wanted it to. It is possible that each interviewee will present another

challenge with regards to my interview schedule as each interviewee has seemed to vary in experience and understanding of trauma-informed practices.

Appendix J: Field Notes and Reflective Journal Entry

Field Notes & Reflections
BCE– 09.07.2024

1. Preparation

- **Research Design Overview**:
    - My research is attempting to gain insight into the implementation process of trauma-informed approaches within a secondary school
    - This research has employed a qualitative methodology as I am looking to conduct semi-structured interviews of 6 – 8 staff who are undergone a whole-school trauma-informed training. There will be two rounds of interviews – one in the summer term of 2024 and one in the autumn term of 2024.
        - ♣ Therefore, this research will aim to investigate teachers' experiences and perspectives regarding trauma-informed training and its implementation, emphasising the identification of challenges, successes, and changes in perspectives and practices over time. As such the primary and sub-research question will be:
        - ♣ What are teachers' perceptions and experiences of the mechanisms and factors that influence the implementation of trauma-informed approaches in schools?
        - ♣ What are the potential barriers toward the implementation of trauma-informed practices?
- **Fieldwork Plan**: Outline a plan for your fieldwork, including dates, locations, and participants involved.

2. Field Notes

A. Background Information

Each entry should start with:

- **Date and Time**: 09.07.2024 @ 10:30a & 12.07.2024 @ 13:40
- **Location**: School/ online
- **Participants**: 03EMB

B. Descriptive Notes

- **Observation Details**: Describe what you see, hear, and observe in as much detail as possible. Focus on facts and specific details.
    - For this interview I went to a different room on the school as the room where the other interviews were, was unavailable. We walked to a different area of the school grounds and ended up in the art department. Immediately when we arrived at the room, there was a young person directly outside the room quite obviously distressed. He was near tears, however, as there was a teacher with him, we proceeded to our room for the interview.
    - As I was getting set up, we began to hear a persistent banging on the other side of the wall. The teacher that I was interviewing proceeded to leave the room to provide additional support as this young person was continuously hitting his head on the wall.
    - That occurrence was a salient thought to start the interview, and it came up in the conversation.
    - It appeared that we were in a staff room which was also an office, so things were scattered about. It also meant that there were several occasions when we were interrupted/ someone came into the room. This of course disrupted the flow of the conversation as the interviewee would forget her line of thought.
    - Additionally, we were in a room which was located near an entrance and the windows were open. This seemed to impact the interview as the conversations of children were heard. The interviewee seemed to be cautious of speaking to loudly, which likely impacted the audio recording and transcription.
    - **12.07.2024**
    - Today the interview continued as we were unable to get through all of the content during our initial meeting. This time we made the meeting online as that seemed easier to coordinate. I trailed the process of recording and transcribing online, however, we ran into a few technical challenges with our audio. BCE was seemingly unbothered by the delay and generally seemed more at ease with our conversation.
- **Contextual Information**: Note the context of the observation, including environmental conditions, social setting, and any relevant background events.
    - BCE was still in the Arts Department
    - I was meeting with BCE from the office

- **Direct Quotes**: Record verbatim quotes from participants where possible and appropriate.

C. Analytical Notes

- **Initial Impressions**: Write down your initial thoughts and feelings about what you observed.
    - I'm constantly aware of the gender differences when I'm working in close proximity to a female professional whom I do not know. I was conscious of how to sit, where to sit, giving enough eye-contact, but not too much. Nonetheless, the participant eased into the conversation and seemed interested in the topic. She had done some other training into relational and trauma-informed methods, purchased books and other resources, and was generally quite interested in this approach. My initial impression was that she understood a lot about trauma-informed approaches and possibly due to the nature of teaching art, that she was able to apply TI approaches in a more fluid/ flexible way. Her students are not necessarily faced with challenging academic tasks, which may reduce anxiety and externalising behaviours.
    - We were on a time constraint, so we were not able to complete our interview. Despite this, it did not feel rushed as we were able to dig a bit deeper around potential barriers and facilitators.
- **Developing Themes**: Identify and note any themes, patterns, or recurring ideas during the observation.
    - The idea is that trauma-informed approaches, particularly whole-school interventions, benefit from taking a top-down approach. This participant questioned the buy in from senior staff, the head teacher and the governors.
    - The idea of the implementation process taking time. To imbed any practice into day-to-day life, there must be an intentionality and a consistency.
    - There seemed to be an importance placed on having a team of teachers to go on the journey with.
    - There was a theme certainly around self-awareness, reflection, self-regulation and co-regulation.
    - **12.07.2024**
    - When considering the systems, BCE spoke about how the teacher to pupil ratio did not always align with trauma-informed approaches. She felt that she was unable to consistently work in this way die to the number of pupils in

her care during transition points throughout the day. Similarly, she felt this during lunch and break times.
    - The idea that the progression of these ideas and practices benefit from having the support of senior leaders within the school.
    - Particularly there was an emphasis on direct leaders/ line managers and their influence. Beyond that, BCE suggested further that it would be challenging to fully implement or adopt or support such trauma-informed efforts without expressed interest and support from the head teacher and governance.
    - BCE spoke about the access to resources, namely in the form of physical teacher support and the idea of having time. Time was a significant idea in that she thought the idea was necessary to encourage reflection and discussion.
    - Interestingly, there was a lack of knowledge about other departments, there was no opportunity to seek support from other departments or to be challenged/ support across the school (e.g. very insular)
    - There were some interesting themes such as the intersection of religion and trauma-informed practices. How that related to sexuality particularly. Additionally, there were some thoughts about cultural sensitivity and acceptance or knowledge of mental health challenges.
- **Questions Raised**: List any questions or issues that arise during the observation that may require further investigation.

D. Reflection Notes

Reflection notes help you to critically engage with your observations and analysis:

- **Personal Reactions**: Reflect on your own reactions and biases that might influence your perception.
    - Today I noticed a teacher hesitating slightly before discussing difficulties with their current behaviour policy. I wonder if my role as a trainee EP made them feel they needed to frame their answers in a particular way, perhaps expecting me to agree with or evaluate their approach.
    - This interview I felt was closer to the mark with regard to tapping into the implementation side of things. I think I still need to make the interview schedule clearer as there are two sections which have similar questions, but one is attempting to draw out school-related facilitators and barriers and the

other more systemic-related factors. I think I need to change that in my interview schedule.
    - I thought that this interview resembled more of a directed conversation and while interesting, at times I felt I had to bring the conversation back.
    -
- **Methodological Notes**: Consider any issues or challenges in data collection and how you addressed them.
- **Theoretical Insights**: Link your observations to existing theories or concepts in the literature.
    - So far, all the same themes seem to be present in the interviews.
    - Although, teacher-to-teacher support and relationship was probably one that came up today.

3. Post-Fieldwork Reflection

After each fieldwork session, spend some time reflecting on the session as a whole:

- **Summary**: Summarize the key points and significant moments from the session.
    - I think that the data I'm looking for is there, however, I still feel like there are more prompts that I could add to get to a deeper level of understanding. We were not able to finish our session, so we will schedule in an alternative tie to speak. However, I do think that this gives me the opportunity to edit some of the questions in the final section.
- **Analysis**: Reflect on how the new data fits with your existing understanding and any adjustments to your research questions or methods.
- **Action Plan**: Outline any next steps, including follow-up questions, additional observations needed, or changes to your methodology.
    - I will follow up with the participant to schedule the remainder of the interview.
    - I will also amend the interview schedule once more to reflect an exploration into systemic factors.
    - After the continuation of the first interview, I will need to consider how my initial interview schedule and the initial findings might influence the second interview in the autumn term.

Appendix K: University College London Ethical Approval

Dear Jeramey

Thank you for sending in your ethics application.

I am writing to confirm that ethical approval has been granted by the UCL Institute of Education for your doctoral research project titled:

An Exploration of Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Schools and the Perspectives of Teachers

This ethical approval has been granted from 27th May 2024 and the document you provided has been saved to your student file.

Please can you also upload the approved ethics form to your UCL Research Student Log https://researchlog.grad.ucl.ac.uk/.

I wish you all the best for your forthcoming research.

Regards,

Ms Michelle Brown

Programme Administrator | Centre for Doctoral Education |

Appendix L: Participant Research Information Sheets

IOE – FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

UCL

Navigating Trauma-Informed Education: Teacher Reflections from a London Secondary School

May 2024 – August 2025

Information sheet for Trauma-Informed teaching staff

I am Jeramey Mason, a doctoral student enrolled in the Doctorate of Child and Adolescent Psychology program, currently in my second year of study. As part of my academic journey, I am conducting doctoral thesis research. The proposed research will explore the perspectives and experiences of teachers on trauma-informed approaches reflecting on the training, integration and impact on practice. My research interests primarily revolve around the cognitive development of children and young people, with a specific emphasis on supporting neurodiversity during crucial developmental stages. This interest naturally extends to exploring strategies for effectively supporting those involved in the care, guidance, and education of children and young people.

Therefore, the focus of the proposed research is to gain insights into the perspectives of trauma-informed educators, with the aim of better understanding their journey towards becoming trauma-informed and the experiences encountered along the way. Your participation in this research would be immensely valuable, as your insights can contribute significantly to the depth and richness of the findings. I have provided this information sheet to offer a concise overview of the intended research. Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. Your consideration and potential participation in my research are greatly appreciated.

Who is carrying out the research?

- Jeramey Mason: jeramey.mason.22@ucl.ac.uk

Why am I doing this research?

It is crucial to engage the voices of teachers and school professionals operating within educational environments that are transitioning towards adopting trauma-informed approaches. My aim is to explore both the potential advantages and challenges inherent in adopting such approaches within mainstream settings. By identifying recurring themes and occurrences, we can better generalize these practices to a broader spectrum of schools across the UK.

Furthermore, the proposed research aims to highlight ways in which teacher perspectives shape and influence the integration of trauma-informed practices. Understanding the motivations and rationale behind their viewpoints is essential for informing the development and refinement of these practices within the educational landscape. By amplifying the voices of teachers and elucidating their experiences, we can facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play within trauma-informed

educational settings. This, in turn, will contribute to the ongoing improvement and evolution of supportive frameworks for students affected by trauma.

Why are you being invited to take part?

Teachers play a pivotal role in the development of children and young people, serving as critical figures within their educational ecosystem. Their interactions with students form the foundation for attuned learning, which is essential in schools nationwide. As awareness of trauma-informed approaches grows globally, there's been a notable increase in their advocacy within the UK, spearheaded by organizations like Trauma-Informed Schools UK. Concurrently, research into the effects of trauma-informed practices on academic achievement and student well-being has expanded. However, crucial aspects that remain relatively unexplored are the experiences and perceptions that school professionals as it relates to trauma-informed approaches.

This gap is significant as teachers are the ones tasked with carrying out these policies and practices in the classroom. Understanding their perspectives and experiences is paramount in refining these approaches to ensure their effectiveness.

Your participation in this research will provide invaluable insights that can inform educational institutions on how to better support both students and staff. By delving into the teacher experience with trauma-informed practices, we can enhance the overall efficacy and sustainability of these approaches, ultimately fostering healthier learning environments for all involved. Since your school has taken part in a trauma-informed pilot study organized by Sutton Virtual School and implemented by Cognus Educational Psychology Service, it provides an opportunity for the researcher to highlight both the similarities and differences in educators' experiences within a single setting.

What will happen if you choose to take part?

- Your contribution to the research will be in the form of two semi-structured interviews as well as an school/ in-class observation. This means that there will be two rounds of interviews, an initial interview during the Summer term 2024 and a follow-up during the Spring term 2025. The interviews will be approximately 45 minutes long and will more resemble a guided conversation on the topic. The observations will take place in the Autumn term 2024 and the researcher will seek to experience to gain a sense of your practice within the school. Importantly, each participant maintains the right to withdraw from the research at any point.
- An example of some questions which will be used during the interviews is:
    - Can you describe your experience with trauma-informed training?
    - What were your expectations going into the training?

What will happen with the things I say?

- Data collected from each participant will be audio recorded as well as transcribed using Microsoft software. Data will be gathered and stored on a password protected laptop. Data collected from each participant will be stored securely and anonymity will be maintained. In accordance with UCL Data Policies and Expectation, participant data will be held securely and preserved for a period of ten years. Participants retain the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Additionally, participants have the option to withdraw their data associated with their participation until it is aggregated.

Could there be problems for you if you take part?

- During the interviews I will explore feelings pertaining to your role and there is potential for those questions to elicit strong and vulnerable feelings. If there is ever a moment when, you, the participant, feels uncomfortable, you will be entitled to stop. Sensitive and vulnerable topics will be carefully considered and a safe space to communicate will be a priority of the study. Further, if there are any concerns about the welfare of a participant, the researcher will offer support by encouraging the participant to follow local safeguarding policies or by signposting the participant to an appropriate support agency.

What will happen to the results of the research?

- Data collected as part of the research will be used to support the subsequent research paper outlining my findings. There will be attention drawn to overall themes and specific points which have direct relevance to the research questions. If direct quotes are used within the research paper, then pseudo names will be utilised. The real identify of a participant will never be disclosed. Any information or data collected will be stored securely for a minimum of 5 years unless otherwise specified, and the findings of the research will be made available upon its completion and request.

Do you have to take part?

- It is entirely up to you whether you choose to take part. It is hoped that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience. Should there be any concern regarding your contribution to the research, you maintain the right to withdraw at any stage

Data Protection Privacy Notice

- The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

- This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information from research studies can be found in our 'general' privacy notice for participants in research studies here.
- The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices. The lawful basis that will be used to process any personal data is: "Public task' for personal data and 'Research purposes' for special category data. We will be collecting personal data such as [given name, surname, length of employment, and role].
- Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data, you provide we will undertake this and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.
- If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

- Should you require any further information please contact Jeramey Mason at

- If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to his project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

An Exploration of Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Schools and the Perspectives of Teachers

Information Sheet: Short Form

May 2024 – August 2025

Research Overview:

- **Researcher:** Jeramey Mason, Doctorate of Child and Adolescent Psychology, UCL.
- **Purpose:** Explore teachers' experiences with trauma informed approaches in schools.
- **Importance:** Enhance understanding of these practices to improve educational environments for students and staff.

Why Your Participation Matters:

- Teachers are key in implementing trauma informed practices.
- Your insights will help refine these practices for better support and effectiveness.

Participation Details:

- **Interviews:** Two semi structured interviews (45 minutes each) during Summer 2024 and Spring 2025.
- **Topics:** Experiences and expectations of trauma informed training.
- **Confidentiality:** Data will be anonymized and securely stored.

Potential Considerations:

- Discussing trauma related topics may be sensitive.
- Support and a safe environment will be provided.

Outcome:

- Findings will be used in a research paper to improve trauma informed practices in education.
- Participants can withdraw at any time.

Contact Information:

- **Jeramey Mason:**

Your participation will contribute significantly to this important research. Thank you for considering.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix M: Participant Informed Consent Form

Navigating Trauma-Informed Education: Teacher Reflections from a London Secondary School
Trauma-Informed Education in Practice: School Professionals' Reflections from a London Secondary School

Participant Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study please complete this consent form by ticking each item, as appropriate, and return to the research team via the contact details below:

1) I confirm that I have read and understood this information sheet, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these questions adequately answered. ☐

2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐

3) I know that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point. ☐

4) I agree for the interview to be recorded, and that recordings will be kept secure and destroyed at the end of the project. I know that all data will be kept under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). ☐

5) I agree that small direct quotes may be used in reports (these will be anonymised). ☐

6) I understand that in exceptional circumstances anonymity and confidentiality would have to be broken, for example, if it was felt that practice was putting children at risk, or there were concerns regarding professional misconduct. In these circumstances advice would be sought from a senior manager from another local authority who will advise us as to the appropriate course of action and as to whether we need to inform the authority of what you have told us. ☐

Name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name of researcher: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

[Principal Investigator contact details]

Navigating Trauma-Informed Education: Teacher Reflections from a London Secondary School

Participant Observation Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study please complete this consent form by ticking each item, as appropriate, and return to the research team via the contact details below:

1) I confirm that I have read and understood this information sheet, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these questions adequately answered. ☐

2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐

3) I know that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions following the class observation and that I can withdraw my participation at any point. ☐

4) I agree for the researcher to collect observational information/ data in the form of notes, including observations conducted in the classroom setting to align with interview responses. I understand that these observations will focus solely on professional practices and will not interfere with teaching activities. All notes will be kept secure and destroyed at the end of the project, and all data will be handled under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). ☐

5) I understand that in exceptional circumstances anonymity and confidentiality would have to be broken, for example, if it was felt that practice was putting children at risk, or there were concerns regarding professional misconduct. In these circumstances advice would be sought from a senior manager from another local authority who will advise us as to the appropriate course of action and as to whether we need to inform the authority of what you have told us. ☐

Name:.....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name of researcher:.....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

[Principal Investigator contact details]