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The Wellbeing of Staff in Alternative Provision: A Nested Case Study in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

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Declaration

I, Wan Farahin binti Ahmad Fahmy, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The current landscape of education has called on school staff to go beyond traditional teaching roles to ensure that children and young people are provided with a significant amount of emotional, practical and pastoral support (Education Support, 2023). These additional responsibilities place considerable demands on the emotional, mental and physical capacities of staff which can potentially hinder their ability to sustain positive school environments that are essential for pupil wellbeing (Woolf & Digby, 2023). This is particularly distinct in alternative provision settings such as PRUs where attending pupils present with complex needs and vulnerabilities and staff are required to be exceptional in meeting these needs (House of Commons, 2018). Nevertheless, there is a significant gap in research concerning the support needs of staff who work in these very environments. This study addressed this gap by examining the wellbeing of teachers and TAs in a nested case study approach with four PRU centres that fall under a single organisation.

The study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of staff regarding their wellbeing, in addition to the factors that influence it. Exploring the role of the EP in supporting staff wellbeing was also an aim of the research. The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model (Law et al., 1996) was used as a guiding framework to explore wellbeing factors. Phase 1 of the study involved a survey comprising the Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS) and open-ended questions with 50 PRU staff across the four centres. Phase 2 involved semi-structured interviews with 6 self-selected staff members from each centre. The findings of this research were analysed using SPSS, Inductive Content Analysis (ICA) and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).

Unique insights were observed based on the different methods of data collection. The TWBS highlighted measurable patterns, while the open-ended responses and interviews provided richer and contextualised responses. Consistent across the three analyses were the effect of high workload, support that was misaligned with need and the impact of leadership on wellbeing. Support from colleagues was seen as a protective factor. While the EP role in relation to wellbeing showed no clear links in the TWBS, qualitative data demonstrated advantages if the role was clearly defined. The implications of this research are a constructive and solution-focused approach to understanding staff wellbeing in a PRU, moving away from deficit narratives. By

defining wellbeing as the balance point between resources and challenges, areas of support can be identified and acted upon.

Impact Statement

This study provides a unique contribution to the field of psychology and Educational Psychology by systematically applying the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model to understand the experiences of an under-researched population. By shifting the narrative away from individual deficit and dysfunction to a wellbeing definition rooted in positive psychology, strengths-based and solution-focused approaches were highlighted that align with a pragmatic way of conducting research. The wellbeing of staff in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) was closely examined by obtaining their perceptions of wellbeing, factors that influence it and the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in supporting it. This study has made an impact in several ways:

- Contributes to research into the wellbeing of staff by addressing a gap in the literature around the unique emotional and systemic challenges faced by PRU staff.
- Promotes a solution-focused narrative by viewing wellbeing as a balance between resources and challenges, rather than through a deficit lens.
- Informs educational leadership of the direct effects of leadership, workload and alignment of support on enhancing the wellbeing of staff, particularly in high-need and high-pressure environments like a PRU.
- Clarifies the role of EPs in supporting wellbeing of staff in the PRU in direct and indirect ways, highlighting their potential to contribute meaningfully to wellbeing of staff through systemic and more refined support.

Several implications are noted for key stakeholders:

Staff within PRUs

Staff should be encouraged and guided to develop personalised wellbeing plans that identify their stressors and coping mechanisms. Engaging with peer support systems and initiatives within the setting, in addition to activities that promote physical and social health are recommended.

Senior leadership

Senior leadership should demonstrate a genuine commitment to wellbeing through visible actions and policies. These include facilitating a culture where staff can be more autonomous in decision-making, workload is more streamlined, debriefing sessions are provided and behaviour management strategies are consistent across the setting. Collaboration with EPs should be

undertaken during planning meetings to co-create support pathways aimed at improving the wellbeing of staff.

Educational Psychologists

EPs should raise awareness of their broad remit and work collaboratively with senior leadership to offer systemic support. This could include the facilitation of peer supervision, listening spaces and the delivery of needs-led practical training. EPs also have a role in advocating for sustainable and meaningful wellbeing interventions, expanding their scope beyond reactive individual casework.

Policymakers and stakeholders

Staff in PRUs should be included in national training and development programs aimed at resilience, trauma-informed practice and emotionally demanding work, given the demographic of the attending pupils. This could help reduce burnout and turnover, supporting long-term workforce sustainability.

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List of Acronyms

AP	Alternative Provision
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CYP	Children and Young People
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FSM	Free School Meals
HOC	Head of Centre
ICA	Inductive Content Analysis
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
LA	Local Authority
OT	Occupational Therapist
PEO	Person-Environment-Occupation
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
RQ	Research Questions
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SWB	Subjective Wellbeing
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
TWBS	Teacher Wellbeing Scale

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The new reality for working in education demands that in addition to teaching, school staff also ensure the provision of emotional support, practical support and pastoral care for children and young people (CYP) (Education Support, 2023). This increase in pressure draws heavily on the emotional, mental and physical resources of teaching staff which can affect their ability to consistently nurture and foster positive school climates crucial for promoting pupil wellbeing and resilience (Woolf & Digby, 2023). In the context of alternative provision where the attending CYP are often those with complex needs and vulnerabilities, there is an expectation for staff within these settings to be the 'most caring', 'most knowledgeable' and 'most skilled' teachers with a particular set of traits that enable them to build trusting relationships with the CYP (House of Commons, 2018; IntegratEd, 2022). Despite this being the case, there is little research that focuses on the needs of staff in these settings who are required to support these vulnerable pupils (House of Commons, 2018). The following sections will first examine research in relation to staff and pupil wellbeing in the wider context, before considering the circumstances of alternative provision settings. A description of the current study will then be presented followed by the researcher's positionality.

1.1 Situating the Research

1.1.1 The wider research context

The education system has long wrestled with funding constraints, heavy workload and accountability pressures which have a detrimental impact on teacher retention and the overall quality of teaching (Toropova, Myrberg & Johansson; 2020). More recently, teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) have also had to rapidly adapt their roles in response to the behavioural changes in CYP in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kim, Oxley & Asbury, 2021). The demands placed on teaching staff continue to rise as a result of these circumstances and their responsibilities have extended beyond the traditional scope of teaching and learning in the UK. Additional duties have included supporting pupils with their personal affairs and family conflicts, signposting families to local support services like social housing and bringing food and supplies in for pupils when needed (Education Support, 2023). As teachers are perceived as responsible for

the wellbeing of pupils in addition to providers of quality education, there is an instinctive response for school staff to continue to support pupils in any way they can (Graham, Powell & Truscott, 2016; Kellock, 2020).

Teachers often cite their reasons for entering the profession as the desire to 'make a difference', a 'passion for the subject' and a 'love of watching students learn' (Perryman & Calvert, 2020, p.4). In actuality, a significant amount of time is spent on pastoral tasks that ensure children are emotionally safe, and in a place to learn, before any teaching can take place (Education Support, 2023). While this is not a concern in and of itself as pastoral support is inextricably linked to teaching practice (Ogina, 2011; Stahl, 2021), the disappointment arises when there is a dissonance between teachers' aspirations and the wider working context. Teachers report feeling like their vigorous efforts to achieve results are resulting in burnout and not rewards, due to what they describe as a growing culture of performativity and accountability (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). The creative aspects of the role are overshadowed by 'box-ticking' (p.6) exercises like progress measures and inspection procedures.

If schools are appointed by the government as key facilitators of the holistic development of CYP in a 'spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical' manner and to prepare them for adulthood (Public Health England, 2014, p. 5), then school staff require the necessary training, support and resources (e.g., Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training) for this role (Education Support, 2023; Dimitropoulos, 2021). Conversely, if schools are to remain places for teaching and learning alone, then external support systems such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) should bear the responsibility of addressing pupils' needs in a timely and immediate manner. This allows staff to refer their pupils to public services with the confidence that the right help will be received, before redirecting them back to their academics (Education Support, 2023; Phillippo & Kelly, 2013). Given this reality of extended pastoral responsibilities and administrative duties, defining the main role of the school is an important endeavour as teaching staff are often disproportionately tasked with bridging the gaps in pupil wellbeing support. Like other jobs within the service sector, this unwavering dedication that they have for the people they work with can therefore come at the expense of their own wellbeing (Education Support, 2023; Kim & Asbury, 2020; Smith et al., 2025).

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 2024 data, Education is the industry with the third highest rate of self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety. Teaching and other educational professionals were found to report statistically higher rates of work-related problems (HSE, 2024). In focus groups with teachers in seventeen different countries across five continents, similar concerns were reported despite the variation in socioeconomic, governance and policy contexts. These issues often happen simultaneously which create a complex interplay of positive and negative impacts on their overall wellbeing (Education Support, 2024). While some teachers feel a sense of purpose and commitment from having agency and the ability to make a difference, other teachers report the increase in bureaucracy and inspection policies which contributes to feelings of 'deprofessionalisation' and devaluation (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Similarly, good relationships with pupils affect teacher wellbeing in a profoundly positive manner but this is against the backdrop of a higher workload and growing parental and government expectations which creates a strain on teachers, consequently affecting their work (Education Support, 2024).

The association between staff wellbeing and pupil outcomes is well documented (Beausaert & Kyndt, 2023; Roffey, 2012). Prioritising staff wellbeing is therefore a strategic investment for the overall success of the education system (Gibson & Carroll, 2021; Rae, Cowell & Field, 2017). The effectiveness of the initiatives to improve staff wellbeing is largely dependent on the depth of the reflection that school leadership teams undertake to understand it. The often immediate response to when teachers, TAs and support staff express occupational hazards is to suggest self-care strategies which are an insufficient response to the need for systemic change (Jones, 2023). For instance, material improvements such as flowers in the staff room and snacks during meetings might make some staff members feel better, but this is a superficial response with minimal sustainability (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). Deeper reflection might result in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs that introduce and encourage staff to practice mindfulness or yoga which may be helpful for some staff members but these remain individual interventions (Kendrick, 2020; O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). Meaningful measures are observed when teachers, TAs and other support staff together with leadership are involved in the process

of exploring what wellbeing looks like within the school to create a culture of compassion and care for all (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021).

Within the education system, a feasible self-care plan should be devised as a formal part of training as this preparation will allow staff to better manage workload stress to return to a baseline or pre-service level of wellbeing (Koenig, Rodger & Specht, 2018). Each member of staff having a personalised self-care plan that includes individual, organisational and professional interventions that both protect and promote wellbeing would have a tremendous impact on staff wellbeing and in turn pupil outcomes as it reflects a school ethos that prioritises care (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). Interventions at an organisational level can include professional supervision, staff coaching and the upskilling of staff through targeted training. This involuntary role of nurturer and carer that teaching staff take on can be challenging when the teaching profession, unlike psychologists or social workers, are not mandated to receive supervision as part of their practice (Stivaros, 2024). Regular communication with peers and professionals like educational psychologists (EPs) who have the experience of navigating emotionally challenging situations should be facilitated by school leadership, to help staff manage their stress and fatigue (Kendrick, 2020).

The evolution of the EP role and the changes in how the profession carries out their service offers increased opportunities to reimagine the way EPs practice and be inventive in how psychology is applied across different contexts and stakeholders (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013). Staff supervision is one such method to provide better care for staff who in turn can then provide better care for the pupils they work with. It is imperative that the supervisor ensures that the supervisee understands the parameters of supervision – that it is a space for containment and reflection on practice (Teater & Ludgate, 2014). While personal supervision for every member of staff may not always be possible due to time and budget constraints, group supervision, working discussion groups and peer supervision that can initially be facilitated by EPs are evidenced to also improve wellbeing (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013; Ellis & Wolfe, 2019, 2020; Kendrick, 2020; Teater & Ludgate, 2014; Willis & Baines, 2017). Having established that schools are relational places and that there are many moving parts within the system, it is imperative that a

community-based approach to working on wellbeing is enacted and that staff wellbeing is given the attention and care it deserves (Education Support, 2023).

1.1.2 The local context

The understanding that school systems are complex places with many factors at play emphasises the need for approaches that can address the diverse needs of various stakeholders. One such approach is to recognise that the mainstream environment may not always be conducive for some CYP. It is therefore important to consider the function of alternative provision and how it operates as a system to support those who require a different educational pathway.

Alternative Provision (AP) in the UK is a term that is used to define any education beyond mainstream schools for CYP who are *"unable to attend mainstream or special school […] whether for behavioural, health, or other reasons"* following a period of suspension or permanent exclusion (Department for Education (DfE), 2023, p. 5). Although a large portion of AP is delivered in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or AP academies including free schools, it can also be provided by a wide range of other settings such as hospital schools, independent schools and some further education colleges, depending on pupil needs (DfE, 2025; Ofsted, 2011). In 2022/2023, the most common type of AP were PRUs which accounted for 177 out of 335 schools and this pattern has been consistent since 2018/2019. In comparison to state-funded primary and secondary schools where boys represent 51% of the population, boys make up 70% of the children in PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools. Data reporting the demographics of CYP in AP show that a significant number are 'economically poor boys' where relative poverty is income under 60% of the median household income for the current year (DfE, 2018, p.7; Francis-Devine, 2024). Over 40% of the children in AP are eligible for free school meals (FSM) compared to 14% of children in mainstream state-funded schools. The proportion of CYP with special educational needs (SEN) or a disability in AP is 77.1%, with 10.4% having SEN statements or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This is in comparison to the numbers of those in mainstream schools with SEN and EHCPs which are 14.4% and 2.8% respectively (DfE, 2018).

It is a requirement of the law for Local Authorities (LAs) to secure a place for children of compulsory school age who have been permanently excluded from school and children who are on the school roll who need access to specialist help around their learning, behaviour or other

needs (DfCSF, 2008). The CYP who attend AP are reported to be among the most vulnerable groups of children who face a wide range of personal, family and school-related factors that have led to their exclusion (DfCSF, 2008). These CYP often have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs that affect their behaviour, and their experiences are characterised by *"trauma, domestic and sexual abuse, teenage parenthood, neglect, family conflict, criminality"* across national and international contexts (DfCSF, 2008; Page, 2021). Despite these challenges, research on pupils' views comparing their experiences in a mainstream school and a PRU highlights several benefits to the latter (Jalali & Morgan, 2017). There is a sense of belonging and connection felt by pupils attending primary and secondary PRUs that is absent from their time in mainstream education as pupils can feel a sense of inadequacy and supposed failure at not being like other peers. Being in an environment that caters to individual needs, dedicates spaces for emotion regulation and fosters strong pupil-staff relationships, contributes to a positive experience at the PRU (Malcolm, 2018). These aspects can be harder to ensure in a mainstream school. Another significant factor that young people felt enabled them to have a positive outcome was a sense of discipline and structure where boundaries and consequences were implemented in ways that were still supportive of underlying emotional needs (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). When teachers maintained consistency in enforcing consequences, behaviours were more effectively managed even when boundaries were being tested (Cothran, Kulinna & Garrahy, 2003; Freiberg, Templeton and Helton, 2013). A positive learning environment was achieved when teachers were successful in finding the balance between 'fun' and 'control' within the classroom, which relied greatly on the strength of their relationship with the pupils (Payne, 2015).

Given the reliance on positive pupil-staff relationships to maintain boundaries and foster a supportive learning environment, staff in PRUs must consistently manage the complex emotional and behavioural needs of pupils. To narrow the gap in meeting need, TAs form a large amount of the workforce in PRUs and take responsibility for a broad number of responsibilities including those previously assumed by teachers such as teaching and planning, without the necessary training (Danby, 2020; Middleton, 2018). This continuous emotional investment can contribute to heightened stress levels which increases the risk of burnout among teachers and TAs. The levels of stress and burnout felt by staff who work with CYP with SEMH and SEN have

been reported to be amongst the highest in the field, making it a reasonable assumption that the teachers and TAs within PRUs operate under significant strain (Garwood, Van Loan & Werts, 2017; Middleton, 2019). Additionally, there is evidence in the literature to show that pupils of burnt-out teachers are more likely to have difficulties managing emotionally and socially and have a lower chance of meeting goals set out in their learning plans (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These links between stress and pupil outcomes provide further support for why the wellbeing of staff in PRUs requires greater attention, as it influences the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of the vulnerable CYP they work with.

1.2 The Current Study

The aim of this study is to develop a thorough understanding of the wellbeing of teachers and TAs in AP settings, specifically PRUs, by identifying the factors that influence their wellbeing. It also seeks to explore the perspectives of teachers and TAs regarding the role of the EP in supporting their wellbeing. By using the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model (Law et al., 1996) as a guiding framework, this study seeks to fill these critical gaps in current research.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 examines the existing literature on wellbeing, discusses various theoretical models including the PEO model, considers the unique context of PRUs and details the role of the EP. The chapter concludes with the research questions designed to meet the aims of this study. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology adopted in this study by first presenting the researcher's epistemological view and positionality, followed by a description of the context in which the research took place. The research design is then detailed, followed by the methodology for each of the two phases of data collection. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research based on the various methods of data collection and concludes with a summary of the key findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the research questions with an exploration of the experiences of wellbeing of teaching staff, the factors that support or impede it and the role of the EP in relation to wellbeing. The strengths and limitations of the study are presented followed by implications for practice and potential future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review explores the complex and often conflated concepts of wellbeing and mental health, highlighting the shift from viewing mental health through a medical lens to understanding it as the prerequisite for wellbeing. Prominent models of teacher wellbeing are reviewed followed by a discussion of the distinctiveness of teacher wellbeing as a construct. The PEO model by Law (1996) is then described as it acts as the guiding framework for this research. The next section outlines PRUs as a unique context for which specific emotional, relational and physical dynamics affect the wellbeing of teaching staff. The subsequent section summarises the evolution of the EP role and the position EPs can have in supporting measures to improve the wellbeing of teachers and TAs. This chapter concludes with an outline of the aims of this research and its ensuing research questions.

2.1 Literature Search Strategy

A search of the literature was undertaken to identify and examine research on the wellbeing of teachers and TAs in PRUs using databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, PsycInfo and the UCL Explore Library. The primary timeframe for the search spanned the years 2015 to 2025. However, older literature was included where deemed relevant. The search prompts focused on teacher wellbeing, teacher mental health, emotional wellbeing, mental health, resilience and stress, in addition to alternative education, alternative provision and pupil referral units in England (see Appendix A for keywords used in prompts). The initial results varied widely, from 15 to 3000 articles, depending on the specificity of the terms. The inclusion criteria for the studies were restricted to those that examined teacher wellbeing in relation to workload, pupil outcomes, pupil behaviour and other systemic challenges, while studies were excluded if they focused solely on pupil behaviour and pupil wellbeing and non-UK contexts. Although research into wellbeing has expanded, particularly in response to the effect of the pandemic, the focus of teacher wellbeing in alternative provision remained limited, with no reference to teaching assistants. Final selections of the literature were based on relevance to the aim of the study and its research questions.

2.2 Understanding Wellbeing

Wellbeing is widely acknowledged as a multidimensional construct that is particularly difficult to define (Brady & Wilson, 2021; Hascher & Waber, 2021). Due to a range of acceptable definitions, the concept of wellbeing has varied in usage across literature, policy, the media and in everyday conversations (Svane, Evans & Carter 2019). The discourse surrounding wellbeing is further complicated by the use of different spellings such as 'well-being' or 'well being', and its association with terms such as 'subjective', 'emotional' and 'mental', each of which denote a unique construct (Svane et al., 2019; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). To provide context for the definition and model of wellbeing used in this research, key perspectives from the literature will be outlined in this section.

2.2.1 The relationship between wellbeing and mental health

Tracing the definitions of wellbeing and mental health over time demonstrates the entwined but separate nature of these constructs, although literature often blurs this distinction by using both terms interchangeably or in tandem (e.g., Carta et al., 2015; Hall, 2010). One of the earliest reviews of mental health by Jahoda (1958) redefined the construct beyond just 'absence of illness' by proposing specific criteria that comprise it. Mental health is an inherently personal matter despite the influence of environment and culture, due to its manifestations that are unique to the individual. Our perception of an individual's mental health – whether healthy or less healthy – shifts based on our focus on either their enduring attributes or their short-term actions. Standards of mentally healthy or 'normal' behaviour vary across time, place and culture and is one of many values instead of the 'ultimate goal' of being human. Much like physical health, there is no universal definition of mental health and programs to promote positive mental health can proceed without one (Jahoda, 1958).

The ambiguity surrounding these constructs becomes more apparent when mental health and wellbeing are used in proximity, as it can lead to a circular definition of either construct. To operationalise mental heath, Keyes (2002) frames it as a collection of symptoms that reflect an individual's subjective wellbeing (SWB) and within this, defines SWB as how an individual appraises their life through their emotional states and positive functioning. He equates emotional

states with emotional wellbeing, measured by the presence or absence of positive feelings and perceived life satisfaction. He also asserts that positive functioning comprises six dimensions of psychological wellbeing and five dimensions of social wellbeing (Keyes, 2002). In essence, Keyes argues that mental health is not solely the absence of mental illness and is not simply defined by the presence of high levels of SWB. Instead, it should be viewed as a continuum of the presence and absence of mental illness and mental health symptoms (Keyes, 2002). While this endeavour provided future researchers with a way of measuring mental health through objective measures of wellbeing, this complex definition contributed to the conflation of these terms in many subsequent studies.

The work by Iasiello and colleagues (2022) on a review of the factor structure of the Mental Health Continuum Short-Form (MHC-SF) tool is one such example where the term 'mental wellbeing' was used synonymously with general wellbeing and 'positive mental health'. While the homogeneity of these terms is the main concern, the tool itself presents problems with its face validity as it is a mental health assessment that is made up of different wellbeing measures (Iasiello et al., 2022). A similar concern was present in a narrative literature review of wellbeing constructs aimed at creating a culturally appropriate positive mental health tool (Vaingankar et al., 2012). This review led to the definition of 'mental wellbeing' as a multifaceted construct that encompasses positive affect, satisfaction and psychological functioning, and 'mental health' as a combination of these components in addition to having the skills to pursue these. Despite this initial definition acknowledging the association and difference between these two constructs, the discussion in the paper does not reflect this. Vaingankar and colleagues (2012) use the terms interchangeably, "*There is growing belief that people who belong to a faith community, or who hold religious or spiritual beliefs, have better mental health. Furthermore, the presence of a superior being in imparting well-being is strongly rooted in all religious communities"* (p. 1792), without referring to any skills involved in the pursuit of mental wellbeing. These instances are among a broad range of written material that reiterate the issue of unclear and often circular definitions for mental health and wellbeing (see Au & Kennedy, 2018; Barry, Clarke & Dowling, 2017, Cefai & Cavioni, 2015; World Health Organisation (WHO), 2021).

Wren-Lewis and Alexandrova (2021) put forth the idea that mental health is a prerequisite of wellbeing, without being identical to it. They expand on this by appraising and agreeing with the definition of mental health typically used in public policy by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) which is that mental health is the *'capacities of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face,*' (PHAC, 2014). The authors highlight several important features of this definition with the first being an appreciation that it focuses on our potential and ability to feel, think and act in ways that enable us to achieve desired outcomes. This supersedes current feelings, thoughts and actions or actual achievements. It allows individuals to be autonomous in how they employ the capacities they have and is a helpful move away from definitions of mental health that are grounded in the notion of wellbeing, as seen from previously mentioned definitions. The second feature the authors appreciated was the simplicity of the PHAC definition in that it just focused on being able to enjoy life and navigate challenges. The third notable feature is its use of feeling and thinking which are psychological capacities that distinguish mental health from physiological health. Lastly, this definition identifies two key aspects which are enjoying life and dealing with challenges and the authors suggest that these can be reconceptualised as psychological primary goods instead. The ability to enjoy life is the ability to value life which is a necessary precondition for well-being. Similarly, the ability to navigate challenges is a broader aspect of the ability to engage in life where goals are pursued regardless of life's obstacles (Wren-Lewis & Alexandrova, 2021).

With this definition, Wren-Lewis and Alexandrova (2021) advocate for a shift from defining mental health through judgements of what is 'good for us' and 'how we should live' to a simple definition that suggests that an individual's mental health is characterised by their tangible and actual ability to make choices that can either feed them or hinder them in their engagement with life. Consequently, wellbeing is thus positioned as a concept that *"requires not merely the ability to value certain states of affairs, but rather the ability to value states of affairs that are good for us"* (Wren-Lewis & Alexandrova, 2021, p. 698), suggesting that wellbeing is then the next step on from simply possessing 'mental health'.

2.2.2 Hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to wellbeing

Current definitions of wellbeing have been informed by its historical background, with two schools of thought dominating earlier discussions of what constitutes wellbeing. The first of these, the hedonic approach, centres around happiness that is obtained ethically where pleasure is maximised and pain is absent (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). This approach focuses on two aspects which are mood and emotions, and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999; Dodge et al., 2012). Good wellbeing is therefore achieved through the presence of positive feelings such as joy and the reduction in negative feelings such as stress or depression (Brady & Wilson, 2021; McLellan & Steward, 2015). Based on this interpretation, SBW (Keyes, 2002) can be perceived as a hedonic conceptualisation of wellbeing (McLellan & Steward, 2015). Although this approach to wellbeing offers the benefit of measurability, it has been criticised for being unsustainable and for oversimplifying the concept of 'being well' (Brady & Wilson, 2021). The human experience is inadequately represented if positive and negative affect are on opposite ends of a continuum, which suggests that wellbeing is instead a dynamic process that arises through the interplay of various contextual factors (Brady & Wilson, 2021; O'Brien & Guiney, 2021).

On the other hand, the eudaimonic approach to wellbeing is rooted in purpose and personal growth where an individual's life activities are aligned with their values and principles (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). This approach dates back to Aristotle who believed in self-realisation that is specific to an individual based on their abilities and disposition (Ryff & Singer, 2006). There is a cognitive and physical element to this approach to wellbeing as he prioritised action and the nurturing of other needs such as health and attention to achieve this sense of wellbeing (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021; Ryff & Singer, 2006). In contemporary literature, where hedonic wellbeing can be associated with SWB, eudaimonic wellbeing can be equated to psychological wellbeing as many of the components such as autonomy, life purpose and self-acceptance are present in Aristotle's definition of wellbeing (Liddle & Carter, 2015; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). These historic approaches to defining wellbeing were once thought to contradict each other but are now understood to be more complementary, thus widening the scope of what is meant by wellbeing by including factors such as context and culture in addition to individual affect, cognition and disposition (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

2.2.3 The chosen definition of wellbeing

Dodge and colleagues (2012) argue that prior wellbeing research outlines dimensions of the construct as opposed to presenting a definition of the term. To establish their definition of wellbeing, Dodge and colleagues (2012) draw on the work of several key researchers in this domain who propose that wellbeing involves returning to a state of equilibrium after facing any psychological, social or physical challenges (Brickman & Campbell, 1971; Headey & Wearing, 1989). This idea of equilibrium emphasises that individuals return to a baseline of happiness following major life events and that equilibrium is the norm and a state to achieve and maintain (Headey & Wearing, 1989, Herzlich, 1973, as cited in Dodge et al., 2012). These life events can also be seen as challenges, and the idea is that each individual develops and draws on the necessary skills or resources to cope with them to reach a balance point (Dodge et al., 2012; Kloep, Hendry & Saunders, 2009). Enjoyment and subsequently wellbeing is achieved at the threshold of 'boredom and anxiety' where challenges are suitably balanced with an individual's potential to act (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

In short, wellbeing is defined as a "*balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced*" (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230), which is the definition adopted in the current study. If a seesaw represents this definition with resources and challenges on opposite sides, optimal wellbeing is at the point where the seesaw is level. A dip in wellbeing occurs when an individual faces a challenge that compels them to adapt their resources to meet it and poor wellbeing is a result of constant imbalance (Dodge et al., 2012; Kloep et al., 2009). To summarise, optimal wellbeing is when individuals have the 'psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge' (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230). The strengths of this definition lie in its simplicity, as the language is accessible to the general public. Given that the word 'wellbeing' is widely used across academic and everyday contexts, an uncomplicated definition is warranted. There is also a universal application to this definition across age, culture and gender without being reductionist in its stance. Instead, it harnesses the idea that each individual has their unique pool of resources to draw from to face a life event that can either be a challenge, an everyday chore or a risk (Hendry & Kloep, 2002, as cited in Dodge et al., 2012).

This definition for wellbeing, although from 2012, is suited to the aims of this research which are to explore how staff at the PRU feel about their wellbeing and what they feel are facilitators and barriers to their wellbeing. This touches directly on the resources that staff feel they possess whether related to their disposition, environment or occupation, to navigate the challenges that they face daily on both a professional and personal level. To conclude this section, this study aligns itself with the position that mental health and wellbeing are separate constructs, that mental health is a prerequisite to wellbeing and that the definition for wellbeing is that point of equilibrium after a period of challenging situations. The research presented above is by no means an exhaustive description and aims to highlight the complexity behind defining mental health in isolation from wellbeing and in defining wellbeing itself as a construct. To build on the foundation established in this section, the next section provides an examination of several models that have been developed to understand teacher wellbeing within the context of education.

2.3 Existing Models of 'teacher wellbeing'

In reviewing the literature on teacher wellbeing as a construct, several models consistently emerge, and they can be broadly grouped into three categories: 'positivity', 'stress and burnout' and 'workplace or organisational' (Ozturk, Wigelsworth & Squires, 2024). Although these models attempt to define teacher wellbeing, these frameworks do not capture a construct that is truly distinct from general wellbeing. Instead, wellbeing is contextualised within the teaching profession based on the elements that make up each model.

2.3.1 Positivity model

The PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) is a frequently cited model in research that looks at teacher wellbeing in local and international contexts (Dreer, 2021; Falecki & Mann, 2020; Nguyen, 2024; Turner, Thielking & Prochazka, 2022; Yeh & Barrington, 2023). Seligman (2011) states that 'well-being', like the word 'freedom', has no single measure and is instead made up of several measurable elements. His theory of wellbeing consists of five elements, with each element having three properties that make it an element which are that it contributes to wellbeing, is pursued for its own sake and not only in the pursuit of other elements, and is measured

independently of other elements. The five elements that make up the PERMA model are Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement.

The PERMA model has been adopted as a measure of wellbeing in many studies although the researchers have used it in different ways. In Dreer (2021), 457 teachers from Germany were given online questionnaires comprising a measure of job satisfaction and the German version of the PERMA-profiler. The aim was to assess the contributions of each of the PERMA elements to job satisfaction. The resulting finding was that Positive emotions, Achievement and Relationships contributed significantly to job satisfaction whereas Engagement and Meaning did not, based on the results of the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). By using MANCOVA, the researchers could analyse how the means of the PERMA dimensions varied between groups (those with high and low job satisfaction), while accounting for any other variables that might influence these outcomes (Dreer, 2021).

The author hypothesises that Engagement may not directly affect job satisfaction but may play a supportive role by strengthening positive emotions in the workplace and suggests that future research should investigate this relationship more thoroughly. This challenges the property of the PERMA model that states the exclusivity of each element where it is pursued for its own sake and measured independently of others. The findings of this study suggest that Engagement and Positive emotion is more interdependent than dependent which calls into question its compliance with the model's defined properties, the measurement of the Engagement subscale or both.

Turner and colleagues (2022) conducted a study with 5 Australian teachers to explore the effect that providing social support to their colleagues had on their wellbeing as measured by the PERMA profiler. For 15 days, they were instructed to consciously engage in 'social support' practices to provide encouragement and assistance to their colleagues in whatever manner natural to them. These practices included offering emotional support which alleviate loneliness and enhance relationships, as well as sharing resources and feedback which promote professional development. The teachers also completed daily reflections alongside interviews with the researchers which helped them fortify their sense of purpose and fulfilment from engaging in these supportive practices. Relationships was the only element that showed

improvement based on the pre- and post- scores on the PERMA profiler. However, this is a reasonable finding as the study focused on social support with colleagues which enhances a portion of wellbeing, but not as a whole based on the PERMA framework.

2.3.2 Stress and burnout model

Teacher wellbeing has also been investigated from the perspective of negativity or deficiency which calls attention to factors such as stress, burnout and emotional fatigue. Maslach and colleagues (1997) describe burnout as a *"psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishments that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity,"* (p. 192). The effects of burnout affect the individuals themselves, the people they work with and the wider systems in which they interact. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was constructed to assess these three components of burnout using 22 items divided into three subscales with statements on personal feelings or attitudes e.g., *"I feel burned out from my work"* and *"I don't really care what happens to some recipients (noted to mean those who receive their services)"*. There is some correlation between the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalisation subscales and this is in line with research suggesting that these are separate but related aspects of burnout. However, the correlation between the Personal Accomplishment subscale and the other subscales are low which reinforces the independent nature of these constructs resulting in no overall score on the MBI. Each subscale captures a particular aspect of burnout and is scored individually which enables a more meaningful understanding and management of the specific area of concern (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1997).

In a systematic review of 97 studies, 48 studies were identified as including at least one negative psychological construct (e.g., stress, burnout, anxiety and depression) and the most frequently used scale in these studies where burnout was the outcome was the MBI (Fox, Walter & Ball, 2023). In a study where teacher wellbeing was measured through burnout and job satisfaction, the MBI and a 15-item measure of job satisfaction (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) was used to explore the effects of emotional labour on these outcomes (Kinman, Wray & Strange, 2011). The items on the MBI were adapted for the teaching context where recipients were 'pupils' instead of general care recipients. Emotional labour was defined here as the discrepancy

between the emotions that are felt and the emotions that are required to be expressed or supressed at work (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Kinman et al., 2011) and this dissonance can contribute significantly to stress and burnout. Using a hierarchical regression analysis, the study also investigated the potential protective effects of workplace social support on the relationship between emotional labour, the three components of burnout and job satisfaction. While the authors sought to capture wellbeing by including positive and negative constructs such as job satisfaction and burnout, many other environmental factors that affect wellbeing did not form part of the construct such as job demands and expectations, school ethos and culture, and interactions with parents and other stakeholders.

2.3.3 Workplace or organisational model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model was developed by Bakker and Demerouti to extend the thinking behind more traditional occupational health models such as the demand-control model and the effort-reward imbalance model in a way that makes it applicable across most occupations. The core assumption of the model is that every profession has its own stress-related risk factors and these can be grouped into job demands and job resources. Both aspects allude to the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job. Job demands require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain costs such as an "*unfavourable physical environment and emotionally demanding interactions with clients"* (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). These are not inherently negative, but they can turn into stressors when individuals are not sufficiently equipped to manage them. Job resources are either to "*achieve work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs'* or to '*stimulate personal growth, learning and development"* (p. 312). Research has linked job demands such as high-pressure situations, emotional exertion and role ambiguity to poor health, poor sleep and overall fatigue (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Alternatively, job resources such as support, performance feedback and autonomy have been associated with work engagement and increased motivation (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Salanova, Agut & Peiró, 2005). As a framework, the model is comprehensive in addressing wellbeing as it examines both negative and positive outcomes from the perspective of protective factors and risk factors within a profession.

In a study with 954 teaching professionals in primary and secondary schools in England, the JD-R model was demonstrated to be valid in representing the job characteristics that influence the SWB of teachers to support policy amendment in schools (Ostermeier, Koops & Peccei, 2023). The measured characteristics were grouped into job demands which are hours worked, workload, work-life conflict, and job resources which are family policies, manager support, opportunity for skill use, training, job security, autonomy, pay, flexibility and employee voice. The results highlight the importance of increasing job resources particularly manager support, employee voice, autonomy, job security and decreasing job demands such as workload and work-life conflict to improve SWB. The study also revealed the buffering effect of some job resources such as manager support on the negative impacts of job demands such as workload. However, several job characteristics such as family policies, opportunities for skill use, pay and flexibility were found to have no effect on either job satisfaction or negative affect. The role of an organisation is thus to identify the job resource that can mitigate the effect of a specific job demand while increasing wellbeing in its own right, in cases where the job demand cannot be reduced. Although the use of the JD-R model here examines a wide range of job characteristics that contribute to a supportive and positive work environment, there is no mention of any pupil-related factors. Given that teachers spend a large portion of their time interacting with pupils who have their own needs and behaviours, their wellbeing is undoubtedly affected by this interplay of pupil-teacher dynamics which is not mentioned in this study.

2.4 Rethinking 'teacher wellbeing'

The key takeaway from the previous section and the Introduction chapter of this study is that the importance of the wellbeing of teachers and other support staff in schools is undisputed. Prioritising the wellbeing of teaching staff is a responsibility and a critical allocation of resources. However, a question to consider is if teacher wellbeing exists as a distinct construct separate from general wellbeing. The limitations of the aforementioned models whether in the elements discussed, measurement of wellbeing or its applicability, reflect the need to determine whether the challenges and resources faced by school staff reflect a unique form of wellbeing, or their general wellbeing within the context of the profession.

The position that 'teacher wellbeing' is not a unique construct is supported by O'Brien and Guiney (2021) who examine the concept of wellbeing and 'teacher wellbeing' through critical reflection with 256 UK-based teachers from various educational contexts. The authors theorised that the expression and experience of teacher wellbeing is emotionally influenced by the political and social conditions of their work environment. Frequent top-down reforms that are implemented without teacher input can create vulnerability and a loss of autonomy, leading teachers to believe that their wellbeing is uniquely compromised compared to other professions (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). Their research acknowledges the depth and ecological validity of the experience of teachers and they sought evidence for the idiosyncratic nature of teacher wellbeing. However, their investigation across various settings was inconclusive and the authors prefer the phrase 'the wellbeing of teachers' to indicate the lack of distinction between teacher wellbeing and any other occupational wellbeing (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). Reinforcing this perspective, Jerrim and colleagues (2021) analysed the data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Health Survey for England (HSE) to compare the mental health and wellbeing trends of teachers over the past 20 years to other occupational groups. They concluded that although teachers reported an increase in mental health problems and antidepressant use, these trends were also reflected in other professional sectors which highlight a wider issue, rather than one unique to teachers. Accordingly, this study thus examines the wellbeing of teachers and TAs as not a distinct construct, but as the interaction of environmental, occupational and personal factors.

Focusing on the wellbeing of individuals within their complex personal, environmental and occupational contexts provides practical significance. This is evident in the relational nature of schools where the tone of the classroom is cultivated by teachers nurturing good pupil-staff relationships, planning lessons that harness pupils' strengths, setting behavioural guidelines that encourage intrinsic motivation and modelling prosocial behaviour (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Their ability to do so relies heavily on their own emotional and mental capacities. When teachers lack the resources to manage needs within the classroom and the wider school context in the face of increasing demands, it creates an effect called the 'burnout cascade'. This leads to a cycle of disruption as pupil performance worsens, and the classroom environment deteriorates which

triggers emotional exhaustion in teachers from pupil behaviours. Punitive rather than preventative measures increase which further reinforces the cycle of poor staff and pupil wellbeing (Jensen, 2022; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Systemic improvements such as the provision of adequate resources, reduction of administrative burdens, role clarification and a supportive school environment are therefore integral to improving the wellbeing of teachers and directly contribute to better pupil outcomes. This interplay of factors underscores the need to view the wellbeing of teachers and TAs as the interaction of personal capacities, occupational demands and environmental influences rather than in isolation. To understand how these factors converge to shape wellbeing, the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model provides a structured framework for viewing wellbeing as the outcome of these interactions.

2.4.1 The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model

The PEO model by Law (1996) bridges the gaps in the preceding models of teacher wellbeing outlined in section 2.3 and views the wellbeing of teachers and TAs from a general occupational wellbeing perspective. It accounts for internal and external factors such as resilience and workload respectively, to understand an individual in their environment and chosen profession (Law et al., 1996). The PEO model suggests that Person, Environment and Occupation continue to interact over time in ways that affect the congruence or 'best fit' of the relationship and the outcome of that interaction is a person's occupational performance. Person within this model is understood to be dynamic and ever-changing, with a set of personal characteristics that have a varied response to intervention. Environment is the physical and social context within which the occupational performance of the person unfolds and this relationship is bi-directional – it influences behaviour and is influenced by behaviour. Occupation in this model is characterised by activities and tasks that are driven by a person's need to achieve purpose and self-fulfilment within their role and environment. As individuals, our identity and views continue to shift as we interact with our environment and occupation (Bass et al., 2024b). Occupational performance is thus characterised by a person's ability to manage in situations where there is conflict between their views of self against environment and occupation due to changing priorities.

The model has been used in many different ways to understand different topics which highlights its flexibility. In a project aimed at promoting the Occupational Therapist (OT) role and educating teachers on the scope of OT practice within schools, the PEO model was used to both guide the literature review and the end product which was a series of educational videos regarding the role (Graves, 2023). Various permutations of the transactions such as 'Environment and Occupation' and 'Person and Environment' were explored in the literature review to provide context for how the law affects OTs in school systems, for example, and how the school climate affects pupil learning. The first three videos in the product targeted Occupation, Person, Environment and Occupational Performance aspects in that order and the fourth video covered the OT-Teacher collaboration (Graves, 2023). In another project where the aim was to understand the experiences of university employees on the Employee Wellness Programme (EWP), the PEO model was used as a theoretical lens to analyse the results of the study (Malatjie, 2019). The ten participants in this study were asked about their views of the EWP and their reasons for accessing the EWP were an indication of how problems in their personal life also affected their work life. This aligns with the PEO model of understanding that all the components of a person's life are interconnected and where occupational performance improves as a result of these different elements coming together positively, it is also to the indirect benefit of the employer.

A scoping review conducted to investigate how and why the PEO model was used in research and practice echoes the previously mentioned uses of the model and provides further evidence for its adaptability (Bass et al., 2024a). The key findings in the review are how applicable the model is across a wide range of populations and contexts apart from the general population with no inclusion or exclusion criteria. The model extended to being used in research with those with physical conditions e.g., cancer and osteoporosis, those with cognitive and behavioural conditions e.g., Autism and dementia, and specific groups e.g., incarcerated individuals and teachers, in addition to its use across the lifespan and community. The findings of the review underscore the importance of adopting a systems approach to understanding issues like health and disability and that understanding the environment in addition to a person's capacity plays an important role in influencing performance. By emphasising the continuous and dynamic

interaction between Person, Environment, and Occupation, the PEO model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the wellbeing of teaching staff, particularly in PRUs where context and occupation play a significant role. It also has positive implications for practice, offering a structured approach to implementing interventions across these three levels to support meaningful change.

2.5 The Landscape of a PRU

It was established in the Introductory chapter that PRUs often cater to incredibly vulnerable CYP who can present with complex learning, behavioural and emotional needs. The influence of the environment is mediated by contextual factors which are the characteristics of the place and compositional factors which are the people in the place (Shackleton et al., 2019). The contextual element largely involves the emotions that arise from working in PRUs as a result of extending care beyond that of an average teacher, which staff in PRUs are accustomed to doing. The compositional elements that will be addressed are the relationships with pupils and between teachers and TAs. Navigating these relationships is a vital aspect of the role and can present in many ways that have an influence on wellbeing.

2.5.1 Emotional complexities in PRUs

The experience of difficult life events and frequent exposure to highly stressful situations have a detrimental impact on an individual's confidence, attendance, focus and motivation, which affect learning outcomes (Roffey, 2016). While Roffey's focus is on pupils in this instance, the impact of stressful situations similarly affects the wellbeing of teachers and TAs working in PRUs more intensely than in mainstream settings. Working with pupils who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion requires immense dedication and effort that can transcend the boundaries of a typical job (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017). Teachers and TAs are required to continuously model positive emotional reactions while simultaneously responding to the emotions of their pupils (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). They work tirelessly to ensure that CYP are provided with the structure and support they need to inspire prosocial forms of behaviour that are normally expected in mainstream schools. Minor progress in behaviour or learning that can be overlooked

in mainstream education is often a highly valued achievement within a PRU (Bolton & Laaser, 2020).

The cost of prioritising the relational aspects of the role can contribute to a range of emotional demands. Emotional labour is one such phrase that is often used in the context of AP settings (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017). It was first conceived by Arlie Hochschild and is defined as the management of emotions to perform organisational duties, often creating tension between what is felt and what is expressed (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Hochschild, 2012, as cited in Kendrick, 2020). The concept encompasses a range of interpersonal interactions in educational settings. These include in-person contact with pupils, parents and other professionals (e.g., Ofsted inspectors); efforts to produce an emotional state in others – often pupils (e.g., calmness or enthusiasm); resistance to managerial systems (e.g., accountability measures or policy changes); and/or the encouragement of emotional states that are socially desirable (e.g., happy faces in the classroom) (Menandez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017).

The two main features to emotional labour are surface acting and deep acting. The former is characterised by the dissonance between the emotional state of teaching staff and organisational rules (Kendrick, 2020). For example, teachers and TAs in PRUs are expected to provide unconditional positive regard and understanding towards the pupils due to the adverse life experiences they have had, which can require them to mask emotions even in the face of verbal or physical abuse. There is an expectation for employees to 'control' their emotional expressions to ensure that their behaviours match organisational protocol (Ngcobo, Chiwawa & Wissink, 2022). Alternatively, deep acting goes beyond what is superficial and requires a stronger degree of emotional control. Employees strive to become intrinsically driven to align their emotions with organisational feeling rules, which provides a stronger platform from which to engage in emotional labour (Kendrick, 2020; Ngcobo et al., 2022). In relation to teaching staff, they feel a strong connection to their work and are committed to ensuring successful outcomes for CYP. Their true emotional state aligns with the organisational rules. Sustained surface acting can negatively impact wellbeing as the process requires consistently drawing on psychological resources to regulate emotions in line with expectations (Grandey, 2000).

Another prevalent concept is the coexistence of compassion satisfaction and compassion

fatigue within individuals in service sector roles which naturally extends to those working in AP settings. Compassion satisfaction is described as the pleasure or enjoyment that those caring for vulnerable individuals experience (Kendrick, 2020). The idea of compassion satisfaction draws on the belief that empathic work is the individual's life's purpose and contains great meaning, despite its challenges (Conrand & Kellar-Guenther, 2006, Friedman, 2002, as cited in Page, 2021). While the compassion satisfaction typically seen in teachers is higher than those working in therapeutic settings due to a lower exposure to trauma (Kendrick, 2020; Teater & Ludgate, 2014), the opposite can actually be argued. In PRUs over mainstream settings, the nature of the work is with CYP who experience more trauma and are more vulnerable but the positive contributions made to their life outcomes can be more impactful for teachers and TAs (Bolton & Laaser, 2020), therefore enriching their feelings of compassion satisfaction.

On the opposite end of the continuum lies compassion fatigue. At the core of emphatic work within the context of trauma, there is a high degree of empathy and openness that practitioners must maintain (Page, 2021). This results in compassion fatigue which is the cost of supporting others through their traumatic experiences and the uninhibited emotional and behavioural reactions combined with the stress caused by the desire to help (Koenig et al., 2017). For teachers and TAs within PRUs, it is the result of caring for the CYP they work with whose lives are marked by the behavioural, socioemotional and academic cost of trauma (Ormiston, Nygaard & Apgar, 2022). While the compassion satisfaction derived from working with these CYP could be higher than staff in mainstream schools, the compassion fatigue experienced is also susceptible to higher levels due to the level of care required. There is an increased likelihood of greater exposure to and therefore absorption of trauma (Wertz, 2000, as cited in Page, 2021). Nevertheless, redirecting the focus of teaching staff to the successes of their pupils and the moments of joy felt within the role in an environment that promotes compassion satisfaction can act as a buffer against the negative impacts of compassion fatigue (Kendrick, 2020).

Understanding this interplay of emotions is an important aspect to understanding the occupational experience of teachers and TAs in PRUs. Mitigating these effects largely involve extensive training for teaching staff around what the risk factors within both themselves and their colleagues can look like and how they can prepare for it (Kendrick, 2020). It is also a

necessity for self-care to become part of line management processes, debrief meetings and the sharing of strategies and information to work with CYP effectively. Having spaces within the setting that can provide teaching staff with emotional and physical distance from the CYP to either engage in fun activities or regulation activities would be beneficial in alleviating these emotional demands (Oberg, Macmahon & Carroll, 2024; Page, 2021).

2.5.2 Navigating relationships with pupils

The quality of pupil-teacher relationships as perceived by both teachers and pupils have a key influence on how CYP adjust to their school context (Longobardi et al., 2020). There is a reciprocal element to this relationship where pupil behaviours and emotions influence staff behaviour and emotions. Relationships with staff have been cited as one of the most important relationships formed in AP settings, with the idea that they 'hold the story' for CYP (Malcolm, 2021). The relationships are characterised as intense and personal, requiring emotional energy, a key factor in CYP enjoying school and uniquely exclusive to AP settings (Farouk, 2014; Leather, 2009; Nicholson & Putwain, 2018 as cited in Malcom, 2018). Prominent approaches to the understanding of pupil-teacher relationships include attachment theory, which underscores the necessity of having warm and trusting relationships as a secure base for which children can approach new situations and enhance their emotional development (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008). There is more flexibility within PRUs to meet the individual needs of the pupils which can be absent in mainstream settings (Malcolm, 2019). Where the relationships have been positive, pupils often describe these in terms of being treated like adults as there is both a sense of duty and freedom, and that staff members often feel like family (Malcom, 2019, 2021).

Although this nurturing and creation of a familial dynamic has its benefits to staff wellbeing, as highlighted in the previous section, this amount of emotional investment has its drawbacks. The continuous management of diverse emotions requires considerable skill on the part of teaching staff. The ability to work at a greater and lesser emotional distance is warranted (Malcolm, 2021), and teaching staff within PRUs are advised to perceive their relationships with pupils as something dynamic. Visualisations of a pendulum have been helpful in enacting strategies that allow them to work at different levels of emotional distance (e.g., maintaining closeness when pupils open up about their struggles but not taking it personally when they are

rejected or rebuffed) (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017). To achieve this level of emotional learning, staff can frequently engage in surface acting measures and this mismatch in felt emotion and expression is described as a lack of emotional authenticity (Keller & Becker, 2020). While this has been shown to be harmful to teaching staff in the long run, the effect on pupils is underexplored (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Keller & Becker, 2020).

The findings in Keller & Becker's (2020) research into the effect of emotional authenticity as perceived by pupils were confounding, suggesting that it is a complex interplay of subjective experiences. Pupils' perceptions of emotional authenticity appeared to be misaligned with self-reported perceptions by staff and the specific cues that pupils draw on to determine this is unclear. It is possible that situational elements play an important role in how pupils perceive the emotional authenticity of teaching staff. Keller & Becker (2021) suggest that the emotion under consideration could be a contributing factor (e.g., teachers being authentic in their expressions of job, but inauthentic in their expressions of anger). The authors recommend further examinations into the advantages of being emotionally authentic even in times of expressing negative emotions – up until the point it is maladaptive for pupils. Perhaps the pupil-staff relationship is made more genuine when staff display their genuine emotions even in times of anger, presenting as more sincere in their behaviour while also modelling strategies to navigate these negative emotions.

The challenges of fostering positive relationships while maintaining appropriate boundaries resonate with both teachers and TAs, although research predominantly focuses on the former. However, the specific difficulties associated with the TA context cannot be overlooked. The professionalism of TAs is challenged in several ways due to the cuts in funding in 2010 and the lack of clarity around the role (Middleton, 2018). TAs are left with variable salary scales, qualification expectations and limited career progression which is determined within schools. Despite this, their responsibilities have increased to include a wide range of direct teaching tasks in addition to pastoral care. The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) report and subsequent media coverage further compounded these difficulties (Blatchford, Russell & Webster, 2012; Stevens, 2013, as cited in Middleton, 2018). Although the succeeding Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project by Webster, Blatchford and Russell

(2012) involved working with staff from ten schools in two different LAs to develop strategies for TA effectiveness, these are not always effectively implemented in current practice.

In essence, navigating relationships with pupils on the part of both teachers and TAs are compounded by the increasing demands on PRUs by policymakers. PRUs are expected to operate on par with mainstream schools to improve pupil attainment (HM Government, 2022; Johnston, Malcolm & Pennacchia, 2024). Though unintended, the consequence of this designation is that managerial evaluation of staff performance becomes linked to pupil achievements through selective measurement by school leadership, without accounting for the daily behaviour management and caring practices that take place (Bolton & Laaser, 2020).

2.5.3 The importance of relationships with colleagues

The quality of professional relationships plays a critical role in shaping the overall wellbeing of teachers and TAs, serving as a vital support system within the intricate setting of the PRU. The aim of this section is not to provide an extensive analysis of the discourse in TA research that centres on recurring themes such as role clarification, deployment, training and planning time with teachers (Giangreco, 2021; Webster & De Boer, 2021). Instead, the wellbeing of teaching staff remains the principal focus with an exploration of how relationships with colleagues fit into the broader PEO framework. While the previously mentioned factors inadvertently contribute to the teacher-TA relationship, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine it in a large amount of detail.

As mentioned in the section on Researcher Positionality, Solution Circles had been introduced to teaching staff at the PRU in the current study and in addition to the EPS offering more systemic work, it was also with the intention of fostering collegial support. There is evidence to show that facilitating reliable peer relationships can prevent demoralisation and a depletion of emotional resources. The type of support or supervision likely to reduce stress that is both cost and time effective is in the form of a colleague or peer as a supervisor as opposed to someone in a position of greater power such as a manager or senior leadership (Teater & Ludgate, 2014). When power imbalances and evaluation anxiety are removed, more open and honest conversations around personal work-related issues can be held. Participation in group supervision has also been reported to improve the performance of teaching staff. Cognitive,

emotional and social competencies increase (Malm, 2009); teaching skills and practices improve (Gersten et al., 2010); and staff are motivated to participate in these sessions and provide positive feedback to their peers (Wiyono et al., 2022). As a unique community of staff within PRUs, there is a sense of solidarity when teaches and TAs fortify their relationships. They develop a strong compassion for the labour process through respect, shared goals and mutuality (Bolton & Laaser, 2020).

The TA-teacher relationship is reported to be most effective when there is mutual appreciation, clear outline of roles and responsibilities and good communication between them (Research, 2024). Beyond solely defining positions and duties, challenging traditional views of professional hierarchies through a culture of trust and respect will contribute to the overall teacher-TA relationship. When considering the impact of TAs on pupil learning, the support they receive from teachers and the wider school system to achieve good outcomes is a necessary consideration (Blatchford, 2011; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). While teachers and TAs do have different responsibilities, it would be beneficial for a school and community to create an ethos that enables both groups of professionals to be treated as equally important in the part they play in fostering successful pupil outcomes. Being part of a collaborative process enables collegial decisions to be made that contribute significantly to fostering trust and respect between these professionals and a collaborative team fosters autonomy, independence and reciprocity (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). This ultimately enhances the educational environment, which has the desired effect of improving the wellbeing of staff and pupils alike (Oberg et al., 2024).

The relationship between staff and senior leadership is an equally important aspect to consider within the organisation. Leadership support is highlighted as a crucial need to enable staff to manage stressful situations and juggle the demands of their roles (Simmons et al., 2019). The goal of improving wellbeing is a collective responsibility that requires the support, participation and commitment of senior leadership, if any change is to take place successfully. Effective senior leadership is seen as one of the factors that contribute to good wellbeing due to their influence on the school climate and role as decision makers (Konu, Viitanen & Lintonen, 2010). The role of supportive leaders was a frequently cited response in research examining aspects of the school environment that facilitated good wellbeing, coming second only to the

impact of having positive relationships with colleagues (Doan et al., 2023). In addition to implementing measures that encourage a supportive and collaborative environment and taking steps to mitigate job demands, internal processes can also be supported. Motivation can be targeted through senior leadership taking the necessary steps to strengthen staff's sense of autonomy and competence (Zhou, Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2024). As a whole, there is a call for leaders to place great importance on the wellbeing of their staff, as it ultimately affects pupil wellbeing (Cann, Riedel-Prabhakar & Powell, 2020). Reporting staff wellbeing levels could potentially be a step to consider among other factors that demonstrate the quality of the institution (Zhou et al., 2024).

2.6 EP Contribution to the System

The significance of the EP role in contemporary educational settings is widely recognised. However, a substantial portion of the published research around its specifics, while valuable, is relatively dated; and the profession has since evolved in the face of social and political changes (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010; Lee & Woods, 2017; Rae et al., 2017; Roffey, 2015). Although doctoral work conducted by TEPs has been vital to extend our understanding of the EP role in practice (see Jeffery, 2023; Purewal, 2020; Salt, 2022; Stivaros, 2024), there is a clear need to improve the dissemination of findings to bridge the gap between research and practice. Valuable insight into the EP role and discourse is provided in a recently published DfE report on EP service impact with data from EPs including trainee and assistant EPs, Principal EPs (PEPs), school staff, families and CYP themselves and other stakeholders (Atfield et al., 2023). It is acknowledged at a macro level that there is variability in how the EP role is understood (Atfield et al., 2023).

While EP work with CYP and their families is vital, an essential yet underutilised aspect of the role is the provision of early intervention and systemic intervention. The DfE report states the benefits of early intervention and systemic work to shape school and LA policies with EPs acting as a 'critical friend'. All stakeholders involved felt that EPs were skilled in facilitating open and honest conversations in a collaborative and constructive manner. EPS models where schools have a link EP were reported to be helpful as EPs could share knowledge specific to the setting and build good relationships with staff and families. However, a recurring barrier to more extensive EP work outlined in any research into EP service delivery is the limited capacity of both

the EPS and schools. Schools face their own challenges with staff shortages and budget restrictions which compel them to focus on statutory assessment over early intervention (Atfield et al., 2023). EP time is occupied by EHC assessments over the delivery of interventions and work that could effectively embed knowledge and skills in addition to providing school staff with more targeted support. However, this creates a 'catch-22' situation where proactive support is impeded by statutory work that leads to more statutory work in the future. Establishing and maintaining pre-emptive measures is therefore the desired goal.

Given the relationship EPs have with schools and the range of services they can provide, calling on EP support for the wellbeing of teaching staff is a sensible approach. The Anna Freud Centre (2020) recommends a variety of universal, targeted and specialist support services to be integrated into a school's wellbeing initiative. While specialist support such as crisis support and Employee Assistance Programs lie beyond the EP role, targeted and universal support ranging from supervision, training to upskill staff, implementation of a staff wellbeing team and the facilitation of an inclusive and supportive school climate can be offered to schools. What is most important, however, in the implementation of any wellbeing initiative, is to ensure that the voices of the entire community are represented (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). Building in time to understand the perspective teachers and TAs hold around what might work for them, bridges the dissonance between management and staff who interact with pupils on a daily basis and EPs are well-placed to facilitate these conversations. Understanding what works for the specific environment – its composition and context – goes a long way in effecting sustainable change as it is relevant to the community within it, and this reinforces the aim of this research.

2.7 Aims and Research Questions of the Current Study

The rationale for this study was to contribute to the insufficient research into the needs and wellbeing of staff in AP, specifically PRUs. Based on this literature review, the aims of this study were to gain an understanding of how teaching staff themselves perceive wellbeing and what factors they identify as having an influence on wellbeing. The possible role of the EP in supporting wellbeing was also considered. The following research questions were formulated to meet the aims of the research:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do teachers and TAs within the PRU understand and experience wellbeing?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What factors do teachers and TAs within the PRU identify as having an influence on their overall wellbeing?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What role can EPs play in supporting the wellbeing of staff within the PRU?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter begins with an outline of the researcher's position, focusing on positionality and epistemology, and how it contributes to the approach adopted in this study to answer the RQs. Next, an overview of the umbrella PRU organization within which the research took place will be presented, together with a description of each of the four centres. The research design is then outlined, followed by the methodology for each of the two phases of data collection, including ethical considerations, sampling, data collection procedures, measures and analyses.

3.1 Researcher Positionality

Insider/outsider positionality falls on a continuum as opposed to being two opposing constructs and it can be derived from features such as professional and personal roles, cultural contexts and/or institutional conflicts (Goundar, 2025; Yip, 2023). Positionality statements are thus intended to recognise that research is undertaken by subjective individuals whose backgrounds shape the lens through which they view the world (Savolainen et al., 2023). In line with this, my previous experiences have informed the perspectives I bring to this research. Prior to the doctorate, I held roles at different times as an Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) therapist and as a crisis helpline volunteer. Both positions involved managing emotionally and physically demanding situations such as behavioural incidents and crisis de-escalation. These situations had a significant impact on my wellbeing and the extent of this impact was largely moderated by organisational practices. Supportive practices such as debrief sessions and leadership finding the balance between client needs and employee wellbeing played a critical role in shaping my experience and resilience in these roles.

As part of the Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) efforts to work more systemically with the staff at the PRU, we facilitated the implementation of Solution Circles which is a problem-solving approach that can be used by different professionals (Forest & Pearpoint, 1996). At each of the four centres, a small team of EPs (myself included) would talk staff through this approach, give a short demonstration and then run a session with them. Each EP was part of a group comprising 5-6 members of staff and a member of staff was assigned the role of Process Facilitator. I had also attended an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) supervision session

with a colleague who was the supervising EP during one of my visits to the PRU. These visits and further conversation with colleagues gave me insight into the wellbeing of staff at the PRU which led to the development of my research proposal in Year 3 of my training. This was received positively by the headteacher of the PRU and the mental health lead as the organisation was already looking for ways to prioritise staff wellbeing.

These collective experiences shaped my understanding of the EP role in providing emotional and practical support for PRU staff who typically work with some of the most vulnerable CYP. As Katyal and King (2013) have noted, the insider and outsider status of a researcher can vary depending on the aspects of the research that are examined. My previous roles increased my sensitivity towards issues of wellbeing, burnout and the importance of organisational support. My involvement with staff as a trainee EP positioned me as a partial insider and I was familiar with the context and some of the staff whilst still being external to the organisation. These intersecting roles enabled me to maintain both empathy and critical distance and I remained reflexive throughout the research process to ensure that my interpretations were informed and not biased by personal experience.

3.2 Epistemological Position

My epistemological position is rooted in pragmatism as a result of my collective experiences, which guides how the aims of this research have been addressed. There is an understanding that pragmatism supports the person-in-environment perspective which states that people cannot be fully understood without considering the context in which they exist (Hothersall, 2019). This position is in alignment with the framework chosen to steer this research, which is the PEO model. Pragmatism focuses on the notion of choosing the methodological approach that is best suited to answer the RQs to fulfil the research aims (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). As opposed to the belief that this is an argument for mixed-methods research, it is instead an argument for a methodology appropriate for gathering the necessary data, whether quantitative, qualitative or both (Biddle & Schafft, 2014; Maarouf, 2019).

The benefits of pragmatism as a research paradigm are that it is focused on exploring individual experiences to solve practical problems in the real world (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Three core principles underscore this approach to an investigation of any research problem which

are that there is an emphasis on actionable knowledge; there is a recognition of the relation between experience, knowledge and action; and that inquiry is an experiential process (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). As an epistemological position, the critique of pragmatism has been in its problem-centred focus, with the assumption that a system is only examined when it malfunctions. This often results in problem-focused inquiry prioritising a return to the status quo (Thompson, 1997). However, researchers are at liberty to construct their studies in a manner that guides the outcomes of their study beyond simply maintaining existing conditions by determining the relevant questions and appropriate methodologies to use. In taking a pragmatic approach to answering the RQs, there is scope to identify experiences and factors that are crucial to the wellbeing of teaching staff within this setting. This can inform actionable ways of working in the future which carries implications for staff, EPs and the wider school system.

3.3 Case Setting

This section establishes the contextual background of the PRU through a description of the setting. The purpose of a PRU is defined as an emergency and seemingly temporary learning environment for children and young people who have been excluded or referred from mainstream schools. This can be due to a wide range of reasons but are often linked to behavioural difficulties and other SEMH needs (Bolton & Laaser, 2021). For the purpose of this study, the names of the umbrella organisation and the centres have been replaced with pseudonyms and will be used throughout this thesis. The research took place across four centres that fall under one state-funded umbrella organisation that I have called Lakeland that is located in a Greater London borough and that is home to a diverse community of people. Across Lakeland, there is one headteacher and eight senior lead staff who make up the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Members of the SLT are distributed across the four centres and the centres are located in an approximately 7-mile radius of each other in different towns. Each centre then has their respective Head of Centre (HOC) and Assistant HOC. The four centres will be referred to as Evergreen where the headteacher is situated, Hilltop, Horizon and Spark.

It is important to note that this research was conducted during a time of organisational restructuring. This involved ongoing headteacher changes and shifts in pupil demographics across the centres throughout the entire data collection period. Historically, Evergreen, Horizon

and Spark were segregated by year group (Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Primary, respectively). Pupils in Hilltop were referred by Tier 3 CAMHS (more details below). At the time the research was conducted, organisational restructuring led to pupils in Evergreen and Horizon being separated by EHCP allocation which was determined by whether the pupils had existing EHCPs or were awaiting EHC needs assessments. This meant that the demographic composition of these two centres was not static. Additionally, Spark which was formerly a centre for only primary-aged children, began to have pupils in Key Stage 3 as the existing cohort of primary-aged pupils transitioned into secondary school age. Throughout these changes in the other three centres, Hilltop has remained specifically for secondary-aged and sixth form pupils who are unable to access mainstream education due to mental health and medical needs. The following tables reflect the overall pupil composition (see Table 1) and overall staff composition (see Table 2) at Lakeland. Subsequent sections will describe each of the four centres in sufficient detail using data from the 2023-2024 academic period, which was when the research was conducted.

Table 1

Pupil composition at Lakeland in 2023-2024

Lakeland	Total number of pupils on roll n = 122 pupils (% of sample)
No. of girls on roll	35 (28.7%)
No. of boys on roll	87 (71.3%)
No. of eligible pupils with an EHCP	46 (37.7%)
No. of eligible pupils with SEN support	75 (61.5%)
No. of pupils where English is their first language	111 (91%)
No. of pupils where English is not their first language	9 (7.4%)
No. of pupils where their first language is unclassified	2 (1.6%)
No. of pupils eligible for FSM	86 (70.4%)

Table 2

Staff composition at Lakeland in 2023-2024

Role	Evergreen	Hilltop	Horizon	Spark
HOC	1	1	1	1
Assistant HOC	1	1	1	1

Teachers	7	7	7	6
TAs	10	13	11	15
Support Staff	2	2	3	1
Caretaker	1	1	0	1
Total	**22**	**25**	**23**	**25**

3.3.1 Evergreen

Evergreen was formerly known as the KS3 centre. It is located in a suburban town in the borough. The centre's mission is to develop well-rounded and resilient pupils through a balanced curriculum and strong relationships. They aim to have pupils gain at least one accredited qualification in a core subject in Year 9.

3.3.2 Hilltop

Hilltop is located in a different suburban town to Evergreen and offers short-term, specialised support for secondary students that are referred by Tier 3 CAMHS. Tier 3 CAMHS represents specialised mental health services for CYP with complex or severe mental health needs, who require interventions beyond those offered by primary care (Tier 2) or school-based support (Tier 1). At Hilltop, there is a focus on reintegration into mainstream education through adapted curriculum that includes GCSE preparation and vocational skills, and addresses SEMH needs. There is also Sixth Form at Hilltop with pathways for re-engagement following a period of poor health.

3.3.3 Horizon

Horizon was formerly known as the KS4 centre. It is located in a town on the periphery of the borough. The centre offers a holistic curriculum to address SEMH, literacy, numeracy and communication needs. A Year 11 internship program prepares pupils for future employment through placements.

3.3.4 Spark

Spark was formerly a primary-aged only centre and is located in the same town as Horizon. The centre values working together to prioritise the child and account for their social, physical,

emotional and financial contexts. The desired goal of the curriculum is to foster success from their starting point at Lakeland, to secure and stabilise their SEMH and academic needs. Therapeutic support is offered in the form of access to play and art therapists.

3.4 Research Design

This research is a case study that uses a mixed-methods design that brings together quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection. Phase 1 of the study involved conducting a survey with teaching staff across all four centres and Phase 2 involved semi-structured interviews with self-selected staff members from each setting. The use of questionnaires offers advantages of time and scale as they enable data to be collected from a sizeable number of respondents in a short amount of time (Bartram, 2019). They also provide the option of statistical analyses to compare groups and subgroups of interest such as professional roles. Combining questionnaires with interviews are a common research design to obtain more insight into the questionnaire data. As opposed to using focus groups, individual interviews are a practical and ethical way to manage group dynamics and issues of confidentiality and anonymity (Winwood, 2019). These semi-structured interviews also provide a good platform to interact with respondents and discuss their answers in more depth. The data is integrated at the level of study design through an explanatory sequential design where quantitative methods were employed in Phase 1 and analysed to identify trends and patterns, followed by Phase 2 of qualitative data collection to verify and contextualise the findings (Othman, Steen & Fleet, 2020).

3.5 Phase 1: Online Questionnaire

3.5.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research was sought by first registering the research with the UCL Data Protection Office as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process and then by submitting the ethics application to the Faculty Research Ethics Review Committee. The ethics application was in accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) guidelines and was granted approval (see Appendix B) by the UCL Institute of Education.

3.5.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify Lakeland as the setting for the research as it met the criteria relevant to the RQs. As Lakeland employs a high number of teachers and TAs relative to their population who represent the core teaching and support personnel, their wellbeing is essential to the daily functioning and effectiveness of the PRU. This makes it an appropriate setting for this research. The participants for the online questionnaire were obtained through opportunity sampling. Although staff were informed of the research, data collection took place at the end of the school day at their regular end-of-day briefing, thus making the sample those who were available. This resulted in a total of 58 out of 84 members of staff (teachers, TAs and support staff) who responded to the questionnaire.

3.5.3 Procedure for data collection

It was agreed with the Lakeland headteacher and the Lakeland mental health lead (assistant HOC at Hilltop) that I would attend the end-of-day debrief meeting at each of the four centres. Prior to my visit, the information sheet and link to the online questionnaire were distributed via email to staff at each centre via their respective HOCs. The information sheet (see Appendix C) described the voluntary nature of their involvement and how their responses would be recorded and distributed. The consent form (see Appendix D) is embedded in the online questionnaire and staff are made aware of their right to withdraw at any point during the study. They were also reminded that information shared would remain confidential unless any safeguarding concerns were disclosed. Staff were also given the option for a debrief session with the researcher following the first phase of the research to preserve psychological safety if any difficult feelings arose from answering questions around unmet needs and how those affected their wellbeing. At each centre, I met with all the teaching staff who were present on the day to provide them with an overview of the research and what the questionnaire would entail. I provided them with a QR code to scan that would direct them to the online questionnaire. I stayed throughout the duration of them completing the questionnaire to answer any questions they might have and to ensure that if any distressing matters emerged, they could debrief with me after the session.

3.5.4 The questionnaire

The online questionnaire (see Appendix E) consisted of demographic questions, open-ended questions around staff wellbeing and the Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS) by Collie and colleagues (2015). The first page of the questionnaire displayed a consent form where selecting 'yes' to participating in the research would take them to the start of the questionnaire. Demographic questions about the participants allowed a more accurate and nuanced description of the sample in relation to gender, age, job title and caring responsibilities that participants may have outside of their work environment.

The section of questions that followed were general questions about participants' wellbeing that were constructed based on literature and previous research that had been done in this area. Questions in this section explored what wellbeing meant to each participant and how they would describe the state of their wellbeing in relation to their job. Further questions involved gathering feelings around how participants felt their wellbeing was valued by different stakeholders within the organisation and the types of support currently in place. The final portion of the open-ended questions were about the role that staff felt EPs could play in supporting their wellbeing.

3.5.4.1 Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS)

The Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS) (Collie et al., 2015) measures three factors of wellbeing, that is, Workload Wellbeing, Organisational Wellbeing and Student Interaction Wellbeing. The first factor comprises issues related to completing tasks within allocated timeframes and additional work that can affect this. The second factor links to how staff feel about the culture, relationships and support within the organisation. The third factor encompasses classroom management, staff's perceptions of pupil behaviour and pupil-staff relationships within the organisation. The TWBS asks respondents to rate the extent to which different aspects of their work influence their wellbeing.

The psychometric properties of the TWBS were established with a sample of Canadian teachers to provide evidence for its use (Collie et al., 2015). The following table (see Table 3) indicates the values of the statistics that were conducted. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the three factors were .85, .84 and .82 respectively, and as .80-.89 indicates good internal

consistency, this suggests that the three factors are consistently measuring distinct aspects of wellbeing (see Appendix F for more detailed descriptions of each statistic).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Factor Loadings for TWBS factors

Wellbeing Factor	Cronbach's α	Skewness	Kurtosis	CFA Loading Range (M)
Workload	.85	0.31	0.02	.62-.72 (.70)
Organisational	.84	-0.45	0.18	.58-.75 (.69)
Student interaction	.82	-0.27	-0.42	.51-.92 (.73)

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha; CFA = Confirmatory Factor Analysis; M = mean. CFA loading range indicates the lowest and highest standardised item loadings, with the mean in parentheses.

Based on these statistics and further analyses with different sociodemographic subgroups (e.g., gender, age, teaching experience), the authors report that there is confirmation for reliability, approximate normality and factor structure. The psychometric properties of the instrument also tended to be similar across subgroups (Collie, 2014; Collie et al., 2015). These findings provide confidence in the instrument's ability to assess teacher wellbeing effectively across different subgroups.

To fit the purpose of the current study, the 16-item TWBS questionnaire was adapted to include questions that would encompass the role of TAs (e.g., Administrative work related to teaching/support of learning; Recognition for my teaching/support of learning). Workload and Organisational Wellbeing were each assessed with 6 items, while Student Interaction Wellbeing was assessed with 4 items, equating to a total of 16 items on the scale. Examples of these items were 'marking work' (workload), 'recognition for my teaching' (organisational), and 'student motivation' (student interaction). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which different aspects of their work impacted their wellbeing on a 5-item scale of Negatively, Mostly Negatively,

Neither, Mostly Positively and Positively. They were asked to select Neither if the item was not applicable to their current role.

A systematic review by Fox and colleagues (2023) on how teacher wellbeing is operationalised and measured in research found that across 97 studies, only 21 of these used specific scales to measure teacher wellbeing. These four multidimensional scales incorporated questions related to workload and job demands, relationships within the organisation and support from others. Only two scales included measures of student interactions which were the TWBS and a measure by Aelterman and colleagues (2007). The decision to use the TWBS was guided by several reasons, primarily its concise 16-item format which offered a more efficient data collection process and minimises participant burden, compared to the 60-61 items on the Aelterman scale. Secondly, the construction of the TWBS was through a rigorous three-part study (Collie, 2014), and later refined and validated with different demographics (Collie et al., 2015; Jellis, Williamson & Suto, 2021). While Aelterman (2007) reported subscale descriptions and Cronbach's alpha, individual items and additional psychometric properties were not made available. In contrast, there is greater transparency, reliability and accessibility with the TWBS which makes it more suitable for this study. Additionally, Collie and colleagues (2015) recommended cross-cultural validation of the instrument, qualitative research to explore response motivations and person-centred analyses to understand individual wellbeing experiences, which fit the parameters of the current research.

3.5.5 Analyses

The data collected in Phase 1 of the study provided preliminary insights into the perceptions staff hold of their wellbeing and informed the development of the semi-structured interview schedule in Phase 2 of the research. The analyses of the questionnaire responses were to identify patterns of areas of need amongst the participants and to observe differences or similarities, if any, across the demographic characteristics of the participants relative to staff contract (teacher or TA) and other personal characteristics such as gender. Questionnaire responses were processed by first removing one participant who had not consented to taking part which left 57 participants. All responses were anonymised by giving each participant an ID. The range of roles provided by the participants was consolidated into three job titles, broadly capturing the variety of positions that

staff members hold. These were teacher (TX), TA and Support (encompassing support staff such as Pupil Support Officer). The next step was to convert all the questions that involved responses that could be categorised into ordinal data (e.g., caring responsibilities and responses to closed questions). Caring responsibilities were scaled from 0 (no caring responsibilities) to 3 (many caring responsibilities that included the participants' whole family and extended family). The value that senior leadership, other colleagues and participants themselves placed on their wellbeing were also scaled into 0 (disagree that it is valued), 1 (neither agree nor disagree that it is valued) and 2 (agree that it is valued). Questions that asked if support was sufficient either within the provision or external factors were scaled into 0 (No), 1 (Somewhat) and 2 (Yes). On whether EPs were able to support staff wellbeing, the scale was 0 (No), 1 (Unsure) and 2 (Yes).

A reliability analysis for the three factors of the TWBS as I had adapted it for this study resulted in Cronbach's alpha values of .80, .85 and .81 for Workload Wellbeing, Organisational Wellbeing and Student Interaction Wellbeing respectively. These values are closely aligned with the coefficients in Collie's (2015) research, which strengthens the confidence in the TWBS as a reliable measure of wellbeing, given that participants were from the UK in this research and not Canada like the original scale. During the data cleaning phase, several items were identified as having missing responses. This prompted an examination of the missing data, specifically if it abided by the Missing Completely At Random (MCAR) pattern (see Appendix G for a thorough analysis of the missing data). Once I had established that the missing data was MCAR, listwise deletion was the employed method to handle the missing data. After removing participants who had at least one missing value in their responses, the dataset was reduced to 50 participants. Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) was undertaken using descriptive statistics and visual inspection of distributions to examine the overall distribution of scores on the three wellbeing factors across the 50 participants and then within subgroups defined by various demographic and contextual variables. These subgroup analyses were based on centre; job title; gender; caring responsibilities; the extent to which they believed their wellbeing was valued by senior leadership, colleagues and themselves; perceived sufficiency of support within and beyond the PRU; and the perceived role of the EP in supporting wellbeing. The next step was to run inferential statistics with each subgroup of variables by first conducting preliminary tests of normality

(Shapiro-Wilk) and variance homogeneity (Levene's test). Based on the results of these tests, one-way ANOVAs were used where assumptions were met, and non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis) were used otherwise. Details of these analyses are included in the next chapter of this study.

For the 7 open-ended questions in the questionnaire, the responses were uploaded to Microsoft Word to be analysed using Inductive Content Analysis (ICA). ICA was appropriate as the data were not sufficiently nuanced to justify a detailed thematic analysis. This approach to analysis is an inductive process that involves iterative coding which is characterised by developing codes that are grounded in the data set (Vears & Gillam, 2022). The broad content categories that are established in ICA can be referred to as 'themes' but Vears and Gillam (2022) suggest that themes are more suited to thematic analysis methods. An outline of the process of ICA are as follows: 1. Read and familiarise, 2. First-round coding: identify big picture meaning units, 3. Second-round coding – developing subcategories and fine-grained codes, 4. Refining the fine-grained subcategories, 5. Synthesis and interpretation, and this 5-step process was repeated for each question. Initially, all the responses were read and re-read so I was well-acquainted with what each participant had written. This step lent itself to step 2 where general patterns of meaning in the dataset were identified before subcategories were determined in step 3 using words taken directly from participants' responses or were as close in meaning to what they had said. In step 4 and 5, these subcategories and categories were refined to develop a narrative that would make sense of the data. Frequency counts of the subcategories are included in the findings to provide a more thorough picture of the responses in terms of its depth and its breadth. The decision to include frequency counts illustrates the value of each response and treats each participant's words with equal importance.

3.6 Phase 2: Interviews

3.6.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for Phase 2 of the research was included in the initial ethics application process. At the start of the interview, participants were again reminded of their right to withdraw before a given date, after which their data would then be anonymised which would make retrieval

difficult. They were also informed that their responses would remain confidential unless any safeguarding concerns were disclosed and that direct quotes would only be used where necessary. Participants were informed that their responses would be written up into the thesis and that overall themes of the research would also be fed back to SLT and the EPS to improve current initiatives.

3.6.2 Sampling

The participants in this phase of the study were self-selected at the end of the questionnaire where they indicated 'yes' or 'no' to being contacted for a follow-up interview. The initial plan was to interview a random sample of teachers and a separate random sample of TAs, both drawn from those who responded to the follow-up email for interview. 19 participants responded 'yes' to the interview but only 16 of them gave their full name and email addresses. Of these 16, 10 participants did not respond to follow-up emails. This resulted in a total of six participants who were interviewed. Further descriptions of the participants will be presented in the next chapter.

3.6.3 Procedure for data collection

All the 16 participants who provided email addresses to be contacted were offered the opportunity for an in-person or online interview (via either Teams or Zoom). Eventually, six participants were available for an interview at timings that aligned with the study timeline and our respective schedules. Arranging interview times for a few participants required getting in contact with their respective HOCs to ensure that the participants could be released from their duties for 45-60 minutes. A few participants opted to be interviewed outside of pupil contact time which was before 8.30 am and after 3 pm. The interview began with a recap of the purpose of the study, the length of time the interview would take, and any reminders related to the ethics of data collection including it being recorded. When asked if they had any questions before we started, a few participants asked about wanting to read the final write-up which was a positive start. All interviews were recorded on a software that enabled voice recording and transcription. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed when all participants had been interviewed.

3.6.4 Interview schedule

The interview schedule (see Appendix H) was constructed in a manner that would enable a richer understanding of the experiences of the participants based on their survey responses. Bearman (2019) suggests that effective interview schedules consist of guiding questions that initiate thoughts and recollections of the 'phenomenon of interest' (p. 4). He suggests that this is likely to be achieved when prompts are relevant to the participants and easily understood. Participants are also able to respond more freely when they are at ease and are not intimidated by the questions. The interview schedule was constructed based on previous research and the data collected from the survey responses. It was then reviewed and refined with the help of my research supervisors and fellow TEPs before it was used in the research.

The interview began with general reminders around the purpose of the research and the ethics surrounding this. Several introductory questions were then asked based on their responses to the survey as a lead-up to the main body of questions. Participants were asked about how an average day at their respective centres would look like in terms of the responsibilities they have and their overall contact time with pupils and other staff members. The questions in the survey in Phase 1 contained closed questions around how staff viewed wellbeing, how their wellbeing was valued by themselves, other colleagues and senior leadership and factors that might support or hinder optimum wellbeing. The main section of questions in the interview schedule provided staff members with the chance to elaborate on their responses from the survey and add more context about the state of their wellbeing. When asking about current measures of supporting staff wellbeing, asking open questions such as 'what could be done differently' enabled a more extensive discussion around how staff felt about how their wellbeing was supported at Lakeland and their respective centres. Prior to each interview, each participant's survey response was analysed so that their responses could be used in the prompts to deepen conversation and encourage further reflection. The final section of the interview involved asking an open question around anything else participants felt they would like to add or discuss. Upon thanking them for taking the time to participate in the interview and in the research as a whole, several participants shared that they had enjoyed speaking with me and that the process had felt like a conversation. This aligns with principles of a successful interview where there is a natural flow to the

conversation which is achieved by an interview schedule that is in an 'intuitive' order (Bearman, 2019).

3.6.5 Analysis

A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was chosen as it involves exploring the truth of participants' experiences, views and behaviours within the context that is being investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The six phases of the RTA process are as follows: Familiarising yourself with your data, Generating initial codes, Searching for themes, Reviewing themes, Defining and naming themes and Producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). Braun and Clarke also outline a set of criteria designed to establish rigour in thematic analysis which were systematically applied in this research. The first phase of the six-phase analytical process of 'familiarisation with the data' (Byrne, 2021, p. 1398) began with the process of transcription itself. All interviews were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo 14, a software for qualitative data analysis. In line with the first criterion, each audio recording was heard multiple times and transcripts were verified against the recordings to ensure accuracy and detail. Each transcript generated new thoughts and ideas around what information was relevant to the RQs. Phase Two and Phase Three involved generating initial codes and themes. To ensure that each item was given equal attention, that the coding process was comprehensive and that themes were internally coherent and distinctive (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I went back and forth between the transcripts. In each transcript, responses that were surface-level and descriptive were first identified, before underlying meanings and assumptions were coded (see Appendix I for a sample transcript and corresponding codes). When moving between transcripts, codes were reiterated to capture the breadth and depth of information provided by the participants.

Once all the relevant information had been coded, the process of generating themes began. In adherence to the guidelines of RTA where themes are produced through a structured process of interacting with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022), the codes were analysed and grouped to form themes (see Appendix J for a sample of the grouping of codes into themes). This process involved a few codes being reimagined as they were representative of a more overarching narrative, which also led to the development of subthemes before themes were constructed. A draft of the overall thematic map was formed at the end of Phase 3 with themes, subthemes and

their relevant codes (see Appendix K for sample of Theme 1 map). Throughout this process, codes and possible themes were shared with my university tutor, a fellow TEP and my research supervisors. Phase 4, 5 and 6 then involved reviewing, naming and defining the themes followed by the reporting of these in a coherent manner which will be presented in the next chapter.

The main assumptions of the RTA method were articulated by Braun and Clarke (2022), the first of which is that researcher subjectivity is a strength and that researchers are to be conscious of their role in shaping their research. The authors state that the process of good coding requires both immersion in the data and distance from it to allow reflections and insight. The following section on reflexivity demonstrates my transparency in how I engaged with the data and was active in the process. Braun and Clarke (2022) note that coding quality does not depend on multiple coders and 'Good coding (and theme development) can be achieved singly, or through collaboration, if it seeks to enhance reflexivity and interpretative depth, rather than consensus between coders' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 9). Finally, Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasise that all data analysis is underpinned by theoretical assumptions which need to be acknowledged.

3.7 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity is grounded in respect for subjectivity and is how qualitative researchers acknowledge the importance of the interconnected personal, interpersonal, methodological and contextual factors that may influence research (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Engaging in reflexivity is a process that transcends the entire 'life' of any research project.

3.7.1 Personal reflexivity

In the Introduction I acknowledge my position as an outsider, despite being able to resonate with some of the feelings and challenges that staff at the PRUs face. I find it admirable that staff members continuously greet each other, pupils and even visitors with warmth. Having waited in the staff room across the centres prior to beginning my work, there is often banter and laughter between staff members alongside the 'rants' and venting that can also take place. Undeterred by the often frenzied tone that characterises the dynamic of the PRU, there is a sense of community that is palpable across the centres.

However, there were times that I would come away from a visit – either after having worked with staff or a CYP – feeling powerless or helpless. This feeling stemmed from speaking to staff members who were visibly stressed or from witnessing a distressing incident related to a CYP's behaviour and this feeling would extend to both the pupils and the staff members involved. Having worked with some of the pupils at Lakeland, there is an added layer of sympathy for the situation that some of these CYP are in, that is through no fault of their own.

My sense of helplessness or powerlessness may have come from being a TEP but having spoken to several colleagues, and in supervision, I realised that it is not an uncommon feeling. I recognise that these feelings may be projected onto my interpretations of the data, as I may be expecting staff members to feel a similar way from their work in the PRU and within the wider system. These interpretations were therefore discussed with several colleagues, my tutor and supervisors. Admittedly, after Phase 1, the number and depth of the responses to the questionnaire surprised me. I had not expected the level of thought that most participants had gone into in their responses, given that the data collection period took place after the end of what is often a long day for the staff. Ther input was insightful, and I have tried to honour these voices to the best of my ability.

3.7.2 Interpersonal reflexivity

During Phase 1, I was aware of my nerves around speaking to staff on my own, aware that my position as TEP may impact power dynamics. My trainee status could lead to my knowledge being perceived as less credible or less practical in comparison to the experiences of the staff. I was also coming into the centres with my researcher – and by extension university hat on – and not as a representative of the borough or the EPS. This contributed to my worry about being perceived as just a student or that this research was conducted to only fulfil degree requirements. These worries were alleviated when staff members took the time to greet me, listened to what I had to say and took their time with the questionnaires.

Each of the six interview participants were a privilege to speak with. The level of vulnerability was truly appreciated. Participants were reflective and keen to share their perspectives. I appreciated that they were also honest in expressing where EP work could be reshaped to be more effective, and this may have been where being a TEP/researcher/student

was advantageous in levelling out the power dynamic. At the end of every interview where I thanked participants, they thanked me in kind. They felt like they would be going away feeling lighter and feeling like they had some form of supervision – or rather conversation with a critical friend. My confidence in my skills as a TEP grew throughout these interviews and I feel that my respect for each member of staff, my authenticity and ability to build rapport is integrated with my practice whether as researcher or EP.

3.7.3 Methodological reflexivity

From a pragmatic position, I sought to devise a research design that would enable me to obtain the data I wanted in a way that would make sense for my RQs. I had initially considered eliminating Phase 2 of the research due to time constraints and a fear that no participants would be willing to be interviewed. These feelings were navigated in research supervision and in tutorials with my personal tutor and eventually I had six successful interviews, alongside 50 fully completed questionnaire responses. Many steps were taken to ensure that the missing data was handled appropriately in a way that I could maintain transparency and remain true to the data. Having generally conducted qualitative research, this level of quantitative analyses required a lot of cross-checking with fellow TEPs to ensure that I was rigorous in my process.

Various steps during my RTA were discussed with either my personal tutor, TEPs and/or my research supervisors. I transcribed every interview myself and listened to each recording several times to fully appreciate staff views. The subthemes and themes have undergone several iterations to ensure that I am capturing the data in a way that is meaningful. While I am mindful of each theme being reflected by a majority of the participants, there is also richness in some subthemes being characterised by a single member of staff due to their years of experience.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings of this research will be presented in relation to the three RQs which are **RQ1:** How do teachers and TAs within the PRU understand and experience wellbeing?; **RQ2:** What factors do teachers and TAs within the PRU identify as having an influence on their overall wellbeing? and **RQ3:** What role can EPs play in supporting the wellbeing of staff within the PRU?. A demographic profile of the participants from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research will first be outlined. Subsequent sections of this chapter will then describe the findings derived from each tool that were specifically designed to address the RQs. These sources are the Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS) scores, the themes identified through inductive content analysis (ICA), and the themes generated from reflexive thematic analysis (RTA).

4.1 Participant Information

The online questionnaire in Phase 1 was completed by 57 participants. Seven participants had a few missing responses on the TWBS and their responses were therefore removed from the dataset, in accordance with Missing Completely At Random (MCAR) procedures as previously mentioned. In Phase 2, a total of six participants were interviewed. With regards to Phase 2 participants, a few categories have been grouped together to maintain anonymity and ensure that participants are not identifiable. Table 4 and Table 5 (see below) provide an overview of these participants.

Table 4

Demographic characteristics of Phase 1 participants

Variables	Response Category	n = 50 participants (% of sample)
Gender	Female	33 (66%)
	Male	17 (34%)
Age	0-25	6 (12%)
	26-35	16 (32%)
	36-45	10 (20%)
	46-60	16 (32%)
	>60	2 (4%)

Lakeland Centre	Evergreen	9 (18%)
	Hilltop	10 (20%)
	Horizon	14 (28%)
	Spark	17 (34%)
No. of Years at Current Centre	<1	4 (8%)
	1-5	28 (56%)
	6-10	9 (18%)
	11-15	5 (10%)
	16-20	2 (4%)
	21-25	2 (4%)
Job Title	Teacher	17 (34%)
	TA	25 (50%)
	Support staff	8 (16%)

Table 5

Demographic characteristics of Phase 2 participants

Variables	Response Category	n = 6
Gender	Female	4
	Male	2
Centre	Evergreen	1
	Hilltop	1
	Horizon	2
	Spark	2
Job Title	Teacher	2
	TA	3
	Support staff	1
No. Of Years at Lakeland	1-10	4
	>10	2

4.2 Findings from the Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS)

To provide a sense of the impact that the three wellbeing factors which are Workload Wellbeing, Organisational Wellbeing and Student Interaction Wellbeing have on the current sample, the scores of all 50 participants will first be presented. Comparison analyses based on the various demographic and contextual variables will then follow.

4.2.1 Overall observations

Several observations can be made from the descriptive statistics in Table 6 (see below) based on an understanding of the scoring on the TWBS. The range of scores is from 6 (every item is rated as negatively affecting wellbeing) to 30 (every item is rated as positively affecting wellbeing) or 4-20 (for student interaction wellbeing). A natural midpoint for the Workload and Organisational Wellbeing scales would be 18 and 12 for Student Interaction Wellbeing.

On average, Workload Wellbeing has a moderately negative impact (*M* = 16.88) on wellbeing. The standard deviation (*SD* = 3.78) suggests that there is a reasonable amount of variability in the participants' experiences of workload on their wellbeing. The skewness value (0.97) indicates that the distribution is positively skewed, which means that the majority of participants feel that workload impacts wellbeing negatively. However, there are a few participants who have experienced workload more positively, which raised the average score. For Organisational Wellbeing (*M* = 18.62), participants may perceive the organisational aspects of their work as having a slightly more positive impact on their wellbeing compared to workload. The standard deviation (*SD* = 4.3) suggests a greater variability in responses compared to workload. Student Interaction Wellbeing yields the lowest mean among the three factors (*M* = 12.08). As the scores on this factor range from 4-20 with a natural midpoint of 12, this suggests that student experience has a neutral effect on wellbeing. Alongside the standard deviation (*SD* = 3.16), skewness (0.09) and kurtosis (-0.18) values that are close to zero, although the average experience is neutral, there is a moderate range of experiences that are distributed in a near-normal way. The *SD* scores across all three factors indicate a moderate to high amount of variability which reflects the diverse nature of staff's experiences of wellbeing.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of all 50 participants

Factor	n	M	SD
Workload WB	50	16.88	3.778
Organisational WB	50	18.62	4.295
Student Interaction WB	50	12.08	3.161

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

4.2.2 Comparative analyses

Several comparisons were made based on the variables that could potentially influence the TWBS scores as they contribute to the understandings of the RQs. The variables presented are centre, job title, the extent to which individual staff believed their wellbeing was valued by: senior leadership, colleagues and themselves, the caring responsibilities staff have, the perceived sufficiency of supportive factors within and beyond the PRU and the potential role of the EP in supporting wellbeing.

4.2.2.1 Cross-centre comparison

The descriptive statistics in Table 7 (see below) can be summarised in several ways. Participants in all centres perceived workload as having a moderately negative impact on wellbeing ($M < 18$ which is the midpoint score). Across Evergreen, Hilltop and Horizon, the relatively low SD values suggest minimal variability in experiences compared to Spark ($SD = 5.337$). For organisational factors, staff across the centres apart from Evergreen perceive these as having a neutral to almost positive impact on wellbeing. There is a relatively low to moderate amount of variability in experiences of participants from Evergreen, Horizon and Hilltop with Spark again showing the most variability on this factor. For the impact of student interaction on wellbeing, staff at Evergreen and Spark report that it has a moderately negative influence ($M = 10.78$ and $M = 11.06$ respectively), over the other centres. Again, there is the most variability in responses of staff at Spark ($SD = 3.848$), in comparison to the other centres. Distribution of scores among Hilltop staff on this factor are the most varied with most participants being negatively impacted by student interaction and a significant few who are more positively impacted. The high kurtosis value (2.137) suggests that a large number of staff are having similarly negative experiences while a significant amount have experiences that are either significantly more positive or significantly more negative than the average.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics based on centre

Factor	Centre (n=50)	M	SD
Workload WB	Evergreen (n = 9)	16.11	2.713
	Hilltop (n = 10)	17.60	2.797
	Horizon (n = 14)	16.86	2.825
	Spark (n = 17)	16.88	5.337
Organisational WB	Evergreen (n = 9)	17.89	3.060
	Hilltop (n = 10)	19.10	3.281
	Horizon (n = 14)	18.50	3.611
	Spark (n = 17)	18.82	5.887
Student Interaction WB	Evergreen (n = 9)	10.78	2.539
	Hilltop (n = 10)	13.90	2.234
	Horizon (n = 14)	12.86	2.507
	Spark (n = 17)	11.06	3.848

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

In summary, there are differences observed across the centres with regards to all three factors based on the descriptive statistics. To determine if these differences are statistically significant, different parametric and non-parametric tests, depending on the result of running tests of normality, were conducted on each wellbeing factor. For Workload Wellbeing (Kruskal-Wallis) and Organisational Wellbeing (one-way ANOVA), statistical analyses indicated that there

were no differences in the impact of workload or organisational factors on wellbeing across all four centres. For Student Interaction Wellbeing, a Kruskal-Wallis test identified a significant difference of $p = .022$. However, a Dunn's post-hoc test failed to identify differences between the centres. There is a slight tendency towards Hilltop being different from Evergreen and Spark, but the trend was not significant ($p > .05$). To conclude, there were no significant differences on the impact of any factor on overall wellbeing across the four centres.

4.2.2.2 Job title comparison

The descriptive statistics in Table 8 (see below) highlight several factors. All three job titles perceived workload as having had a moderately negative impact on wellbeing as reflected in their means ($M < 18$), although TAs appeared to have perceived it least negatively ($M = 17.58$). For Organisational Wellbeing, while support staff viewed organisational factors as having had a moderately negative impact on wellbeing ($M = 17.63$), the other two groups leaned closer to a positive effect, with TAs again having the highest mean closest to it having a positive impact. For Student Interaction Wellbeing, there was a neutral view of the impact this had on overall wellbeing as all means tended towards the average.

Table 8

Descriptive statistics based on job title

Factor	Centre (n=50)	Mean	SD
Workload WB	Support (n=8)	15.88	3.357
	TA (n=26)	17.58	3.992
	Teacher (n=16)	16.25	3.606
Organisational WB	Support (n=8)	17.63	4.897
	TA (n=26)	19.00	4.604
	Teacher (n=16)	18.50	3.596

Student Interaction WB	Support (n=8)	12.00	3.423
	TA (n=26)	12.08	3.261
	Teacher (n=16)	12.13	3.074

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

As a whole, there was variation across the groups in terms of their perceptions of how positive or negative the three factors were on their wellbeing. There was also a reasonable amount of variability within the responses, indicating differing experiences within the groups. A Kruskal-Wallis test (Workload Wellbeing) and one-way ANOVAs (Organisational Wellbeing and Student Interaction Wellbeing) indicated that the three factors had a similar impact on wellbeing regardless of job title.

4.2.2.3 Correlation table of variables

The relationships between the three aspects of staff wellbeing and several attitudinal variables were examined using a Spearman's correlation test (see Table 9).

Table 9

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficients Among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Workload WB	–									
2. Organisational WB	.568**	–								
3. Student Interaction WB	.416**	.430**	–							
4. Senior L/ship Value WB	.188	.526**	.078	–						
5. Caring Responsibilities	–.044	–.123	–.022	–.170	–					

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Colleagues Value WB	.257	.454**	.151	.403**	–.122	–				
7. I Value My WB	.124	.026	–.133	.157	.014	.102	–			
8. Sufficient PRU Support	.316*	.479**	.367**	.499**	–.114	.324*	.022	–		
9. Sufficient Other Support	.342*	.444**	.231	.460**	–.303*	.197	.018	.644**	–	
10. EP Support for WB	.221	.139	.058	.121	–.019	.023	.153	.132	.193	–

Note. Values represent Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients; *p < .05. **p < .01; Em-dashes (–) indicate the perfect correlation of a variable with itself.

Workload, Organisational and Student Interaction Wellbeing were shown to be significantly and moderately correlated with each other. This is an expected finding as these three factors capture different dimensions of overall wellbeing. The correlation coefficients suggest that improvements or difficulties in one aspect of wellbeing can influence an individual's experience of other aspects. Table 12 also shows that various attitudinal variables are significantly and moderately correlated which indicates several meaningful relationships, including those among the attitudinal variables themselves.

Staff perceptions of senior leadership valuing their wellbeing

PRU staff viewing senior leadership as valuing their wellbeing was moderately associated with organisational factors being perceived as having a positive influence on their wellbeing. This was also correlated with thinking that colleagues value their wellbeing. Additional variables positively associated with perceptions of supportive senior leadership included staff feeling that factors within and beyond the PRU were sufficient support for their wellbeing. These relationships suggest that the behaviours and approach of senior leadership can influence broader perceptions of support for wellbeing within the PRU.

Staff perceptions of colleagues valuing their wellbeing

In addition to being associated with perceiving senior leadership as supportive, this variable was also correlated with staff feeling that factors within the PRU provided sufficient

wellbeing support. This sense of collegial support can reinforce the perceptions of a supportive culture within the PRU.

Individuals valuing their wellbeing

The correlation coefficients in Table 12 highlight that an individual's perception of how much they value their own wellbeing has no association with the three aspects of wellbeing, nor with the attitudinal variables. The absence of any correlations – particularly with the three wellbeing factors – suggests a potential disconnect between personal perceptions of wellbeing and experiences of role-related factors as teaching staff.

Caring responsibilities

There was a moderately strong inverse relationship between the caring responsibilities staff had and their perception that factors beyond the PRU provided sufficient support for their wellbeing. It is possible that the additional pressures of caring roles contribute to the view that external support beyond the PRU is insufficient, although such support could exist.

EP support for wellbeing

There were no significant correlations between perceived EP support for wellbeing with any of the wellbeing variables or the attitudinal variables. As the role of the EP is often associated with pupil-focused work, staff may not recognise that there is scope for EP input on wellbeing. It is possible that the experience or perceptions of EP support may not align with the specific wellbeing dimensions that are measured or that staff feel are relevant to their own wellbeing.

4.3 Findings from the Open-ended Questions

This section details the categories and their respective subcategories derived from the Inductive Content Analysis (ICA). Five overarching categories were identified from the categories of participants' given responses which were 'Perceptions of wellbeing as a construct', 'Descriptions of their current state of wellbeing', 'Factors contributing to their overall sense of wellbeing', 'How wellbeing can be better supported' and 'The EP role in supporting wellbeing'.

4.3.1 Perceptions of wellbeing as a construct

Perceptions of wellbeing as a construct is an overarching category (see Figure 1) formed from two categories of responses to the first question of what the term wellbeing means to participants.

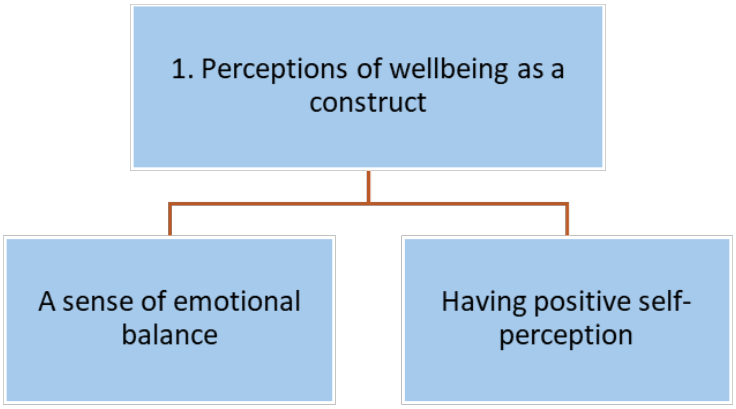


Figure 1 - Perceptions of wellbeing as a construct

A sense of emotional balance:

A key category that emerged from participants' responses was 'A sense of emotional balance'. This category encompassed the different emotional states that staff felt were linked to the term wellbeing and highlighted the nuanced ways in which they perceived wellbeing beyond the absence of stress. Several subcategories informed this category, and most participants described wellbeing in terms of feelings of peace and relaxation, followed by feeling happy and positive, and then feeling 'ok' and stable. These experiences were described using phrases such as *"peace of mind"* and *"feeling happy"* with one participant saying that inner peace would be *"being on a beach with no workload".* Although only one participant had associated wellbeing with the term 'mentally safe', it was important to include this response to capture the weight of their perception of wellbeing.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
A sense of emotional balance	A sense of fulfilment	".. feeling satisfied"	2
	Feelings of peace and relaxation	".. peace of mind"	13
	Feeling 'ok' and stable	".. being ok, stable"	3

	Feeling happy and positive	"Feeling happy"	4
	A sense of mental safety	".. (feeling) .. mentally safe"	1

Having positive self-perception:

Another category that emerged from the responses was 'Having positive self-perception'. This category was derived by the subcategory of a sense of self-confidence, which reflected participants' views of associating wellbeing with feeling good about themselves. Although this category was only mentioned by two participants, it contributed to the understanding of wellbeing as a construct beyond emotions to include self-appraisal.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Having positive self-perception	A sense of self-confidence	"Feeling nice and confident with yourself"	2

4.3.2 Descriptions of their current state of wellbeing

Descriptions of participants' state of wellbeing (see Figure 2) is a main category formed from the singular category of responses to the question of how staff would describe their overall sense of wellbeing in their current role.

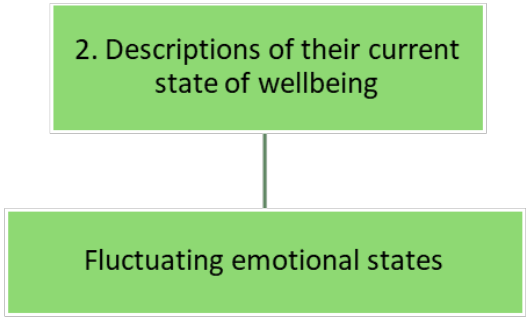


Figure 2 - Descriptions of their current state of wellbeing

Fluctuating emotional states:

This category of 'Fluctuating emotional states' was derived by subcategories that reflected the varying emotional labels and feelings that were named by staff pertaining to their current situation. A majority of staff felt that their wellbeing was in the 'neutral' to 'good' range and included a temporal element in their response such as *"feeling good at the moment"* and *"better than before"*. A high number of staff also reported a high level of stress and negative feelings, which is reflective of the range of experiences staff have.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Fluctuating emotional states	Feeling 'stressed'	"Stressed"	8
	Variations of feeling 'ok' and neutral	"Generally ok"	13
	Variations of feeling good within a timeframe e.g., 'at the moment', 'better than before'	"Pretty good most of the time"	17
	Described with negative feelings e.g., overwhelmed, anxious, fragile, tired	"Overwhelmed a lot"	10

4.3.3 Factors contributing to their overall sense of wellbeing

Factors contributing to participants' overall sense of wellbeing is an overarching category (see Figure 3) obtained from three categories. These categories were in response to the question of what factors within and beyond the work environment contribute to staff wellbeing.

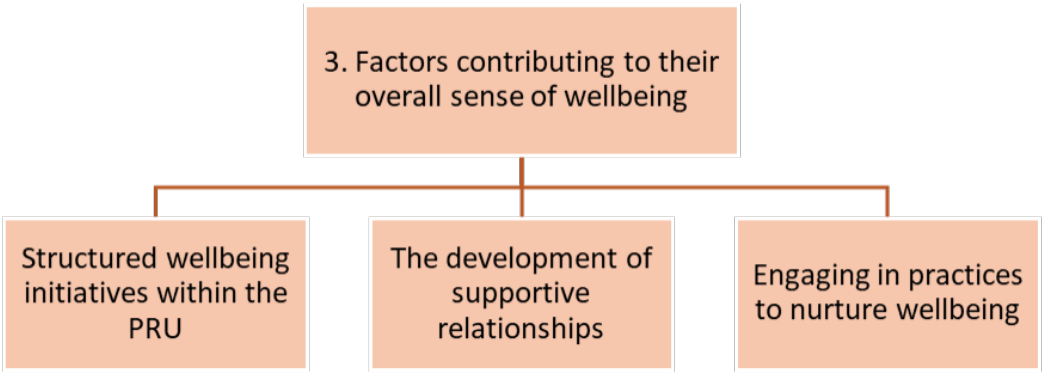


Figure 3 - Factors contributing to their overall sense of wellbeing

Structured wellbeing initiatives within the PRU:

This category of 'Structured wellbeing initiatives within the PRU' was formed from subcategories that involved descriptions of practices such as being able to leave early and having allocated budgets for resources. Although leaving early was a specific wellbeing initiative, several participants felt that this time was not always protected as there were conflicting responsibilities at times. Specific strategies such as Solution Circles delivered by the EPS and various forms of mindfulness training were also highlighted although several participants mentioned that these were no longer running. Having time away from incidents was also seen as a way of improving wellbeing as it gave them time to decompress.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Structured initiatives within the PRU	Scheduled time off to leave early two afternoons a term	"Leaving an hour early once every half-term"	37
	Allocated funds for resources e.g., snacks, facilities	".. wellbeing budget for food and personal items"	15
	Specific supportive practices e.g., Solution Circles, mindfulness, time away after incidents	"We had mindfulness training a couple of years ago"	6

The development of supportive relationships:

This category of 'The development of supportive relationships' was informed by subcategories that centred on the role of relationships between colleagues and senior leadership. Participants felt that support was particularly important from an emotional standpoint through check-ins. Practical support was also equally key and several participants said that having a working group that assisted with navigating difficult situations was helpful.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
The development of supportive relationships	Supportive senior leadership and colleagues through check-ins and discussions	".. leadership are very responsive to personal circumstances"	9
	Workload challenges being appropriately addressed	"A workload group that looks at supporting staff"	4

Engaging in practices to nurture wellbeing:

This category of 'Engaging in practices to nurture wellbeing' was developed from subcategories where participants outlined the various activities they did that ranged from alone time to decompress, to social interactions with loved ones including pets. The activities named by staff involved physical elements e.g., working out, hiking, as well as cognitive elements e.g., mindfulness. A large number of participants had support systems in the form of friends and family and felt that time spent with them improved wellbeing.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Engaging in practices to nurture wellbeing	Prioritising alone time to decompress and do solo activities	"Time to decompress.. time in nature alone"	17
	Engaging in social interactions and quality time with loved ones including pets	".. spend time with my family and friends"	19
	Participating in activities of leisure e.g., working out, hiking	"Do sports, travel and go hiking"	16

	Practising mindfulness as a stress management tool	"Mindfulness"	2

4.3.4 How wellbeing can be better supported

'How wellbeing can be better supported' is a main category derived from two categories (see Figure 4) of participants' responses that centre around improvements to practice that can be made within the PRU.

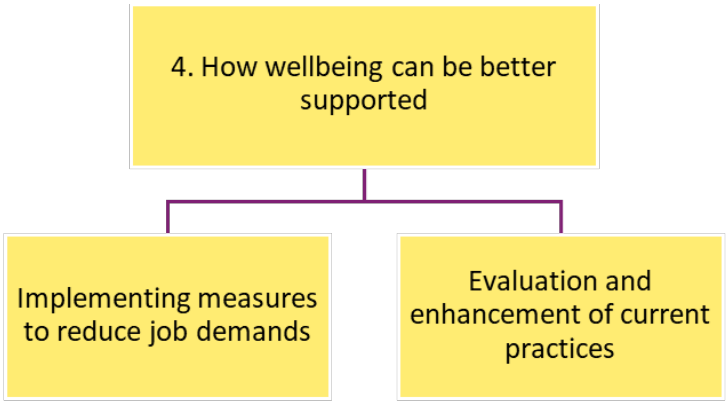


Figure 4 - How wellbeing can be better supported

Implementing measures to reduce job demands:

This category of 'Implementing measures to reduce job demands' was formed from two subcategories with the most frequently mentioned response revolving around adjustments to their current schedule. These included feasible suggestions to their working schedule that participants felt would relieve them of stress and pressure such as more debrief time after incidents, supervision, and protected time for administrative tasks. Four participants felt that an expansion of the current team would enable staff to see a reduction in their workload in the long run.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Implementing measures to reduce job demands	Making adjustments to current working schedule that include more debrief time, supervision, admin time and paperwork reduction	"Providing 4 days a week teaching and 1 admin day to catch up"	25

	Expanding the team to reduce workload and maintaining reliable support staff	"More support to help staff long-term"	4

Evaluation and enhancement of current practices:

This category of 'Evaluation and enhancement of current practices' highlighted two subcategories around commitment to policy and staff being actively involved in wellbeing conversations. Commitment to policy was in two key areas. Several participants emphasised the need for streamlined strategies amongst all staff when navigating difficult situations with CYP, as well as consistency in how paperwork was completed. Another area of policy adherence was in relation to how staff are treated and managed to ensure fair treatment for all. Nine participants also felt that staff should be continuously involved in discussions around their wellbeing to establish practices that were relevant and effective to staff themselves.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Evaluation and Enhancement of Current Practices	Commitment to policy and protocol adherence	"Ensuring all staff members follow the same protocol"	6
	Actively involving staff in conversations and discussions around wellbeing	"Having termly discussions about staff wellbeing"	9

4.3.5 The EP role in supporting wellbeing

'The EP role in supporting wellbeing' is an overarching category that is informed by three categories (see Figure 5) of ways in which EP support can be engaged.

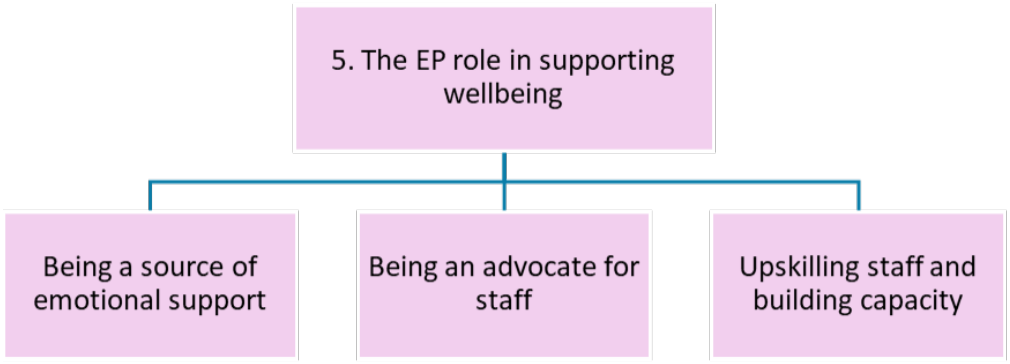


Figure 5 - The EP role in supporting wellbeing

Being a source of emotional support:

'Being a source of emotional support' was a main category informed by three subcategories of participants' responses describing the ways EPs could provide therapeutic support, a listening space and supervision. Staff felt that EPs could provide the emotional and psychological support they need. Five participants made specific reference to having supervision with an EP, with one participant stating that their previous experience of it had been helpful. The common trend in participants' responses was their need for a dedicated safe space that encouraged them to share their concerns freely.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Being a source of emotional support	Therapeutic support through dedicated sessions with staff	"Therapy sessions"	5
	Acknowledging feelings and offering a listening space	"Allow us to explore ways in which we can all have an open dialogue"	12
	Specific mention of supervision sessions with an EP	"Provide supervision for staff who are of need"	5

Being an advocate for staff:

This category of 'Being an advocate for staff' built on the previous category of EPs providing emotional support by drawing on responses that positioned EPs as an advocate. Four participants felt that the concerns they shared with EPs could be communicated on their behalf to senior leadership.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Being an advocate for staff	Being an advocate for staff by liaising with senior leadership	"Speaking on behalf of staff"	4

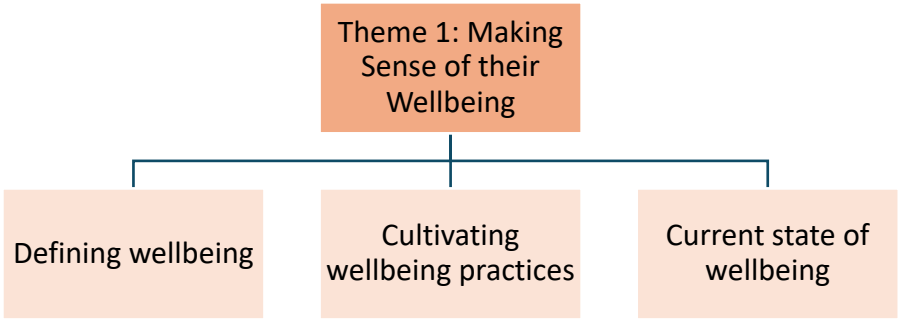
Upskilling staff and building capacity:

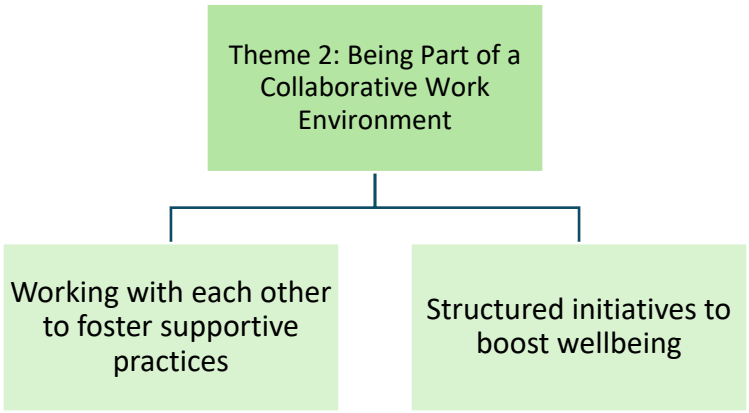
This category of 'Upskilling staff and building capacity' reflected participants' responses derived from three subcategories. Several participants expressed their desire to continue to support CYP in the best way they could and felt that EPs have the knowledge and expertise to help with this. As part of their professional development, participants felt that EPs could deliver training that is tailored to their needs and can offer advice and possible solutions to navigate difficult situations.

Category	*Subcategory*	*Sample Response*	*Frequency*
Upskilling staff and building capacity	Providing strategies to support staff in their interactions with pupils	"Provide strategies to better support young people"	6
	Delivering different forms of relevant and appropriate training	"Can provide us with Solution Circles"	5
	Support with challenges at work by providing advice and solutions	"Providing strategies to help manage difficult situations at work"	9

4.4 Findings from the Interviews

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, a RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was conducted with the data obtained from the interviews. Five main themes were derived from the interviews, with a total of 14 subthemes between them (see Appendices I, J and K for sample transcript, codes and theme, see Figure 6 for overall thematic map). An important point to note is that there will be instances where mental health and wellbeing are used in tandem throughout the themes. This is based on the language used in participants' responses.





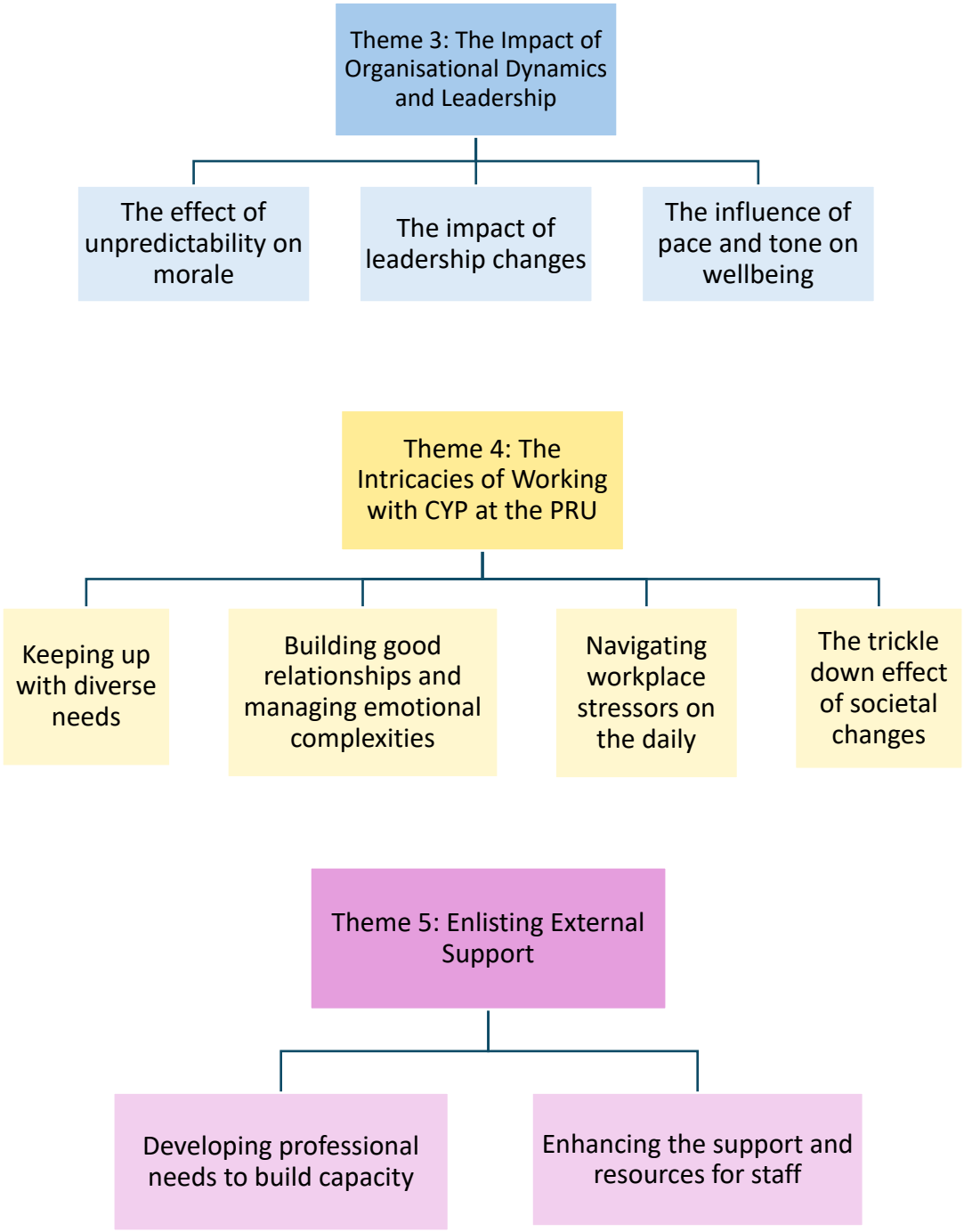


Figure 6 - Overall thematic map

4.4.1 Theme 1: Making Sense of their Wellbeing

This theme encompasses participants' definitions of wellbeing, the practices they engage in to cultivate a sense of good wellbeing and the current state of their wellbeing.

4.4.1.1 Defining wellbeing

Wellbeing was defined by all six participants in a variety of ways that emphasised the interconnectedness of physical, mental and emotional health, an example of which is seen in Participant B's response.

> *"I mean physical health I think does impact your mental health. And you know when you're running – you're releasing all those hormones – or all those chemicals and it will affect your mental wellbeing. I know that if I run or I'm working out regularly, then my mental health is much better" -* ***(Participant B)***

One participant mentioned the state of being calm and in a positive emotional state to be able to cope with issues that arise. Several responses centred around the state of being free from stress and having the mechanisms to cope with stress and anxiety, among other emotions. Another participant viewed wellbeing through the lens of being able to feel good about their job by having good emotion management strategies. Participants' responses included the view of 'leaving work at the door' where a separation between one's personal and professional life was necessary to have good overall wellbeing.

4.4.1.2 Cultivating wellbeing practices

A common response shared by the six participants was that there was a clear focus on balancing work and their personal life to look after their wellbeing.

> *"I mean certainly, when I – when I go home from here, I'll watch really rubbish TV for half an hour with a cup of tea. No one talks to me until I talk to them. They kind of know that I need to just shut down for half an hour" –* ***(Participant E)***

Three participants highlighted the importance of physical activities such as working out, swimming and spending time in nature. All six participants felt that friends and family were an important component in the maintenance of their wellbeing from the perspective of having emotional support and social opportunities. Two participants named mindfulness practices and

mechanisms to reframe stress as a way of looking after their wellbeing, stating that taking the time to view challenges from a different perspective was helpful in managing their emotions.

4.4.1.3 Current state of wellbeing

The interviews were an opportunity to dive deeper into the state of participants' wellbeing and staff reflected on several factors. As seen from Participant A's response, the ratio of adult to pupils can vary rapidly which affects the classroom environment and how that is managed.

> *"Um, it comes and goes in waves. See for instance, let's say, because the numbers here are always up and down.. there will be a period of time that you'll have a class that's quite flaky some of them attendance-wise [interviewer agrees].. so two or three would be coming in, and there's not really much stress with them.. it depends on the cohort.. on the type of children.. [inaudible].. if you get six and beyond.. seven, eight or even nine (children in the classroom), then the stress level is just soaring"* – ***(Participant A)***

The wellbeing levels of staff fluctuated depending on the time of the academic year and the composition of CYP they worked with which is a feature unique to the dynamic nature of the PRU. One participant felt that their wellbeing was in a good place, and this was largely due to what they did outside of work to improve their wellbeing. Another participant felt that they were stressed but 'okay' for a similar reason. At the time of the interviews, it seemed to be a stressful time within the PRU as several participants mentioned that they were overwhelmed and stressed from the current workload with competing demands that were not in line with their pay. The pressure of their schedule was also affecting their wellbeing with one participant sharing that they were not getting enough breaks and that this was beginning to affect their diet. Another participant shared that they were putting work above looking after themselves due to current circumstances.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Being Part of a Collaborative Work Environment

This theme was characterised by staff members working with each other to provide support on a daily basis. Wellbeing initiatives that are currently implemented across the PRU were also discussed.

4.4.2.1 Working with each other to foster supportive practices

All six participants shared collaborative practices that formed part of the support that staff had for each other. TAs are present in the classrooms and radios are used by each staff member to communicate quickly throughout the day. Several participants stated that staff members are constantly checking in on each other, offering each other breaks and stepping in to help manage challenging situations which speaks to their sense of care for each other (see quote from Participant C).

> *"Yes, it's on the go check-in with you on this sort of thing; sharing resources, sharing planning, even if you're across departments, or get asking from people that they knew at previous schools or mainstream sometimes. Um, again, offering to help with students, offering to cover you if something comes up, you know… say, it's been a really hard day, you've had a lot of meetings and then all that, I know – one colleague and I, we both like playing the same card game, and we will go and sit in a classroom, have a cup of tea or a cool drink and just kind of play a game and talk about what's happened"* – ***(Participant C)***

Participant C said that at Hilltop, there is a high staff to child ratio and during transition periods (e.g., break and lunch times) where it can be challenging for some children, all staff practice a high amount of vigilance. Two participants shared that having staff who are Team Teach trained is helpful to handle difficult incidents effectively. Team Teach is a positive handling strategy that is the least intrusive way to manage behaviour that exhausts verbal and non-verbal de-escalation techniques before physical handling methods are used. One participant shared that as a part-time staff member and ELSA, they felt left out of some activities as their schedules differed from the full-time staff, including when they might take the early afternoons off every half-term. All six participants felt that the general atmosphere between staff was collaborative and positive. However, the culture between staff of making sure everybody is looked after can result in them feeling a high sense of responsibility at the expense of looking after themselves.

4.4.2.2 Structured initiatives to boost wellbeing

All participants mentioned initiatives within the PRU that are specifically aimed at promoting staff wellbeing which are an early finish one afternoon every half-term, the provision of Gregg's vouchers and a wellbeing budget for small items (e.g., snacks).

> *"[going home early..] That's it, that's basically it. Even the kids take the piss out of us now because they're like 'Oh look, everyone's ready to go when we go' so it's just an excuse to just leave which is good. I mean it's (…) like it's a positive thing like to say that on a*

Wednesday, once every term you're gonna go home but in terms of building a team spirit, or better team – a community, I don't think it helps at all. It helps personally cause you can go to your garden and just chill, but to become close to your team, it doesn't really help" – ***(Participant D)***

Although these measures were appreciated, similar to Participant D's response, several participants shared that the wellbeing initiatives did not always match the challenges they faced. Additionally, two participants expressed that several changes in leadership over the past year had shifted the tone of the workplace, and in turn their wellbeing. One participant shared that having a flexible HOC was a positive factor that fostered a better environment to work in.

4.4.3 Theme 3: The Impact of Organisational Dynamics and Leadership

This theme revolved around the impact that restructuring and frequent changes in leadership had on their morale. The pace and tone of the environment had a significant influence on their wellbeing.

4.4.3.1 The effect of unpredictability on morale

Each centre has undergone several changes that has contributed to the dynamics within the provision, the effects of which are compounded by leadership changes.

"Absolutely, I would only be teaching one.. yeah. But that's the way it works here in this provision (centre) because they didn't want the students to be changing groups all the time.. [interviewer agrees]. Not groups, to be changing tutors all the time. So.. what they do is, you have one teacher teaching all the subjects, they develop a relationship with them (the students).. and they (the students) respond to you better" – ***(Participant A)***

Apart from that, CYP with EHCPs are now being separated by centre from those who have been excluded although they are in the same age group, and this was a decision made to tailor support accordingly. One participant reports that at some of the sites, pupils have been grouped by year which reflects efforts to manage needs. These changes do influence the tone within the setting and is similar to what was expressed in a previous theme regarding the current state of their wellbeing. All participants shared that recent changes in leadership have impacted morale and the way staff perform their duties. Depending on the centres, there are also inconsistencies between how paperwork, behaviour and other tasks are managed which create confusion amongst staff. One participant shared that there are high demands currently placed on staff due

to understaffing and having limited space for interventions which creates pressure and affects the atmosphere within the site. Another participant shared a similar observation and feels like this is further compounded by the evolving behaviours of CYP influenced by external circumstances. These variations highlight the challenges of maintaining consistency and support across different settings.

4.4.3.2 The impact of leadership changes

Based on all six participants' responses, staff wellbeing being valued appeared to shift with changes in leadership.

> *"Um well recently we had a change of leadership and so I think maybe it (wellbeing) was valued in different ways. So previously when I think – when I wrote that – our previous head well headtea- our head of centre was really um.. proactive with wellbeing and you know, if you went to her with like a tough day, I think she would really listen and you know, she'd like give you a cuddle and like reassure you that it's really hard working in alternative provision you know like not every day is easy. But I think that that's slightly changed with the new um leadership. I think they've got different priorities. Which I think has made wellbeing – has maybe dipped.." –* ***(Participant B)***

One participant held a neutral position regarding how wellbeing is valued by senior leadership whereas two other participants feel that it is not valued based on several factors. Changes in leadership have reflected a change in approach to difficult situations from being more emotional and understanding to being more logical and practical. One participant shared that previously, 1:1 drop-in sessions were conducted which was perceived to be a proactive measure to managing staff wellbeing. While a few participants felt that the early afternoons off every half-term and spending on facilities were a positive step, two participants felt that a lack of respect, acknowledgement of value and having responsibilities fairly distributed diminished these initiatives. One participant mentioned that a HOC who is flexible and understanding was appreciated but small inflexibilities around budget reallocation for resources felt less supportive.

4.4.3.3 The influence of pace and tone on wellbeing

The dynamics within each centre appear to be shaped by various factors such as division of responsibilities, interpersonal relationships and leadership approaches.

> *"Yeah we're on high alert, constantly you know. But, saying all of that, it – it – [centre name] for sure, is a great place to work. And that's why certainly here, the turnover of*

staff is less than it would be in other centres maybe because we are a tight bond. Us staff in general.. in the main.. you know" – ***(Participant E)***

One participant shared that there is a different pace and tone in a PRU compared to mainstream which can be challenging in both positive and difficult ways. There is good banter between staff and good relationships have developed at their particular centre. Several participants express the frustration of having their efforts go unrecognised and tasks being distributed in an unbalanced way as it affects morale which affects their performance. Two participants verbalised the difficulties of being 'abused' by pupils and parents along with the physical aspect (e.g., restraining children), the noise and frequency of incidents and its negative effect on their work environment. All participants highlighted the need for more communal and relevant efforts to make the environment feel more supportive and effective in its operations.

4.4.5 Theme 4: The Intricacies of Working with CYP at the PRU

This theme involved descriptions of the diverse needs of CYP and how to respond to them. Nurturing good relationships and managing the emotional complexities that came with working with these CYP was recounted in detail. Additionally, workplace stressors had to be navigated daily which impacted their wellbeing. The impact of wider societal changes also added a layer of complexity to the work.

4.4.4.1 Keeping up with diverse needs

The six participants were from all four centres, and thus able to characterise the diverse range of needs among the CYP across Lakeland. Nevertheless, their responses are likely to not be representative of staff at each centre due to the small sample size. Their responses varied depending on the centre and the challenges they faced.

"*This is something the head of my centre always says and I do enjoy it because he says that every person that works in Lakeland should spend at least two days at the other sites (centres) so that we could understand what everyone else is going through because every centre is very different. And I think that that discussion, because that level of understanding, seeing the difference between what the – primary and the intensity there, the difference with some of the safeguarding issues at the other site is compared to safeguarding issues here. I think that would be very interesting to see. Because if you understand people, it's easier to sympathise and I think understanding can help improve wellbeing because you know, if people know what you're going through, they*

understand you better and that might make you feel better as a person. Because I know I think of it like when they talk about awareness around county lines and grooming and that at some – at some of the other sites (centres). That's not really present here, but then the level of mental health, the emotional avoidance, sometimes intensity of our students just emotionally, is different here" – ***(Participant C)***

Different points of the day can also be challenging, particularly the start and end of the school day and break and lunch times due to the transitions and social interactions that are required. Long breaks and weekends can also be difficult for some of the CYP. At the centres with older children, two participants reflected on the range of challenges going from minor issues like them using their phones in class to gang-related incidents. The safeguarding concerns between the centres also differ based on severity and the primary need to be addressed (e.g., 'Are they being groomed? Are they avoidant? Is this a mental health need?'). In reflecting on the ways staff manage the enforcement of boundaries with CYP, one participant felt that is was easier to work with the older children as they tend to have better reasoning and emotion regulation skills whereas another participant felt that the younger children responded better to tangible rewards. A different participant felt that some CYP can feel the pressure of expectations to behave a certain way and can react to this by being 'hot and cold' with staff they have built a relationship with. Three participants felt that these presentations are potentially due to having had adverse childhood experiences and home situations that are unsettling, which is common for many of the CYP across the centres. One participant reflected on the intensity and type of behaviours displayed that can differ greatly between the CYP. Some children present as quiet and are struggling internally while others exhibit more outward behaviours (e.g., cutting or being aggressive).

4.4.4.2 Building good relationships and managing emotional complexities

Three participants reflected in depth on the importance of building good relationships with CYP to foster an environment that allows them to grow.

"You don't get on with every child. I mean anybody that says they get on with every child, they're lying. You do get the ones that you do get on really well with and you can have a laugh with, you can talk them around and you can get them to do things, and there are those students with.. where you – I'm not even gonna try, and I'll pass it on to another member of staff that they do get along well with you know, and we know that, you know? We [inaudible] so you do tend to get to know the kids anyway? I mean they

*come to me now for toasties in the morning and it's 'Miss, I'll take the usual please' and I'm like 'Right okay' [general laughter] and I know, like I know what they're having, they only have to say 'The usual' and [inaudible]" – (**Participant F)***

There is a fine line to walk between enforcing discipline and building rapport, and being consistent with boundaries helps prepare them for life beyond the PRU. One participant who works predominantly with younger children feels that the classroom dynamics and behaviours that children display can call for stricter actions on the part of the teachers which result in the children getting upset and the relationship being strained. The need to restrain children at times can also lead to emotional responses from both staff and children, which underscores the intensity of the pupil-staff relationships within the PRU. Another participant expressed that seeing the young people they work with go through difficult situations also lead to strong emotional reactions from staff although these have to be personally managed. Participants who work with older CYP feel that they are able to build relationships through banter and that they have a more positive influence on them. Two participants shared that despite the 'hot and cold' nature of the relationships, pupils do return later on to thank them for being there for them. Another participant feels that the emotional load of constantly staying alert and being aware of all the differing needs can be draining which requires good regulation skills on their part. All six participants exhibit their ability to consistently stay present and empathetic despite the challenging situations they face with the CYP and the toll it takes on them.

4.4.4.3 Navigating workplace stressors on a daily basis

A variety of factors that impact wellbeing were shared and these stem from both workplace dynamics and personal challenges. One participant felt that violence such as in the form of needing to manage situations where CYP exhibit violence, is an acknowledged part of the role (see quote below). This reflects a sense of acceptance and is a possible indication that meaningful change may be difficult due to the nature of the job.

"[pause].. I just think that's there's only so much you can do about someone's wellbeing when these people have chosen a kind of job that has violence in it, do you see what I mean? So you see if I have to hold children, that's something that I've signed up for.. okay.. And if I have to hold children all the time, then I can't really say to you the fact that they've given us an afternoon off uh is making me feel better, you know? It's still like, my body's still under stress. Do you see what I mean? Yeah, so it's – it's a strange

one. Like, I don't know what wellbeing.. uh.. hm.. well I suppose – I suppose they are trying to give us ways in which they show that they appreciate our wellbeing. I just feel that your wellbeing can't get as good due to the fact that there's other things that take a toll on it so significantly, like the abuse from children, the abuse from the parents, uh the physical part of the job, the noise.. uh yeah and also the frequency of the incidents. Like it's just such an eventful job that.. yeah. It's hard to find the wellbeing in it. That's why I'm saying 'neutral'. – ***(Participant A)***

Two participants shared examples where there was a mismatch in staff's needs and the initiative aimed at improving wellbeing. Having their bodies under stress from holding and restraining CYP during difficult incidents could not be alleviated by 'leaving early on some afternoons'. Working within the PRU is such that there are significant stressors such as abuse from pupils and parents, physical demands, high levels of noise, and frequent incidents. One participant shared that the difficulty of working with such vulnerable CYP can be compounded by leadership that displays little understanding and empathy. Additionally, two participants shared that poor communication between staff can affect mood and morale which leads to additional stress within the centre. A different participant echoed these feelings and felt that inefficiencies with how staff are deployed create further tension due to the dissatisfaction of having responsibilities beyond their existing scope of work.

4.4.4.4 The trickle down effect of wider societal changes

One participant reflected deeply on this issue (see quote below), feeling that wider changes within society have contributed to the change in dynamics within the PRU. As a member of staff who has been at the PRU for a significant amount of time, they felt that the behaviour of the CYP had changed which affected the nature of the challenges faced by staff.

"It's.. it's the kids don't have respect for the staff which is what they used to have. When I first started there could be a fight break out and you'd go in-between the kids and break them up and then all you would be a certain child saying 'Oh Miss is coming, that's it we can't fight now cause she won't have it' and they fight now [inaudible] it doesn't get broken up cause they know [inaudible] they're gonna get hurt and there's not enough time for you to get hurt. But I think this is why a lot of the kids do it here. But we'd go between the kids and then you turn around and say to them 'That's enough' and they'd stop or they'd move me out the way and carry on but now, you do get caught in the crossfire. It's – there's just not the respect from the kids but then I blame a lot of this on – on computer games and there's no socialisation anymore. Like kids used to go out and play when they were growing up until the street lights come on. That was my curfew.

Used to say to them, 'Soon as the lights come on, you come in'. But now people don't let their kids out cause they're scared and they're scared to let them out because they don't know what's going on. And they're putting them in more danger by leaving them in front of the computer or the tablet" – ***(Participant F)***

In Participant F's opinion, respect seen from the CYP seemed to have shifted greatly and this was attributed to the time spent online and on computer games which reduced socialisation and learning appropriate social skills (e.g., with elders and with friends). The same participant felt that the need to keep CYP safe physically has extended to the online realm which can often be more difficult and reflects broader social anxieties around keeping children safe. This participant also believes that a communal sense of safety and looking out for one another seems to have diminished over time. Within the school setting, CYP who are quieter and 'don't complain' often get overlooked in comparison to the ones who are more vocal and 'aggressive'. This is a similar response to what was shared in the theme on keeping up with the diverse needs of CYP. This issue becomes more prominent with the lack of adequately skilled supply staff who can struggle to meet the unique demands of working in a PRU which affects efforts to successfully support these vulnerable children.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Enlisting External Support

This theme comprises the role staff feel EPs can have in supporting them in different ways, with feedback on how current efforts could be improved. Ways in which resources could be enhanced and staff could be upskilled were described, to improve overall performance at work.

4.4.5.1 Developing professional needs to build capacity

Participants identified support that would be helpful from an EP to manage the demands of their roles. Four participants expressed that they would appreciate 1:1 sessions such as supervision alongside group sessions as the former allowed deeper reflection with a more personal approach and a space to 'release emotions'.

"Oh yeah [link EP] yeah, I've spoken to her a lot of times. We always have a laugh every time she comes by. She's a very good person and one time she was doing an assessment for a student, that student was very disruptive, very silly, very unregulated, and would only do it if I was there so I had to sit through the whole assessment. She's a very good

professional I have to say, she's very experienced, , and she's a very good person overall, yeah" – ***(Participant D)***

One participant mentioned Solution Circles that had previously been done, stating that they found that helpful as it informed their thinking around situations and being more proactive. The current process of working with an EP was highlighted as 'detached' by a different participant. They felt that more open lines of communication were required as correspondence with an EP often took place through the SENCo without the teacher being directly involved until the visit. This left little room to prep questions to ask the EP that would be helpful. Two participants felt that training delivered by the EPS was not always productive as background on topics was often prioritised with minimal strategies given. One participant expressed that strategies do not have a 'one size fits all' approach which reinforced feelings around training being unhelpful. Both participants emphasised the need for training that was more suited to the PRU setting and were around recent and specific topics to develop their skills. All six participants felt that an EP was a valuable resource if support was accessible and appropriate for their needs.

4.4.5.2 Enhancing the support and resources for staff

Participants mentioned several factors that improve their overall performance at work alongside other factors that could be adapted to further enhance this. The responses of several participants demonstrated that on a personal level, intrinsic motivation played a significant role in their ability to carry out their duties.

"Yes, I think that also tends to – I don't know how accurate – but I feel like a lot of people here, as an organisation; a lot of them have seen some very difficult circumstances, they've seen the level of stress that I think they come into this with a lot of resilience and understanding, and I think you'll see that more here in alternative provision than you would see within a mainstream" – ***(Participant C)***

Their ability to work on their mental health outside of work through exercising, having alone time and talking to friends and family supported their wellbeing which supported their job performance. One participant felt that wraparound support and regular check-ins with staff are a necessary proactive measure to support wellbeing. Having staff included in working groups to discuss important issues such as funding, impact and interventions was also seen as important. Three participants reflected on the constraints faced by the PRU with regards to space, funding

and staffing but felt that more effective deployment and re-strategising would help relieve the burden on current staff. Three other participants suggested access to a form of counselling, supervision sessions or opportunities for thorough debriefing to process the emotional toll of their work. Four participants also reflected on senior leadership being more alert and aware of concerns that staff had. They felt that a way to reduce unnecessary burdens on staff was to ensure that paperwork was streamlined at every centre and that schedules were balanced, including not having supportive measures (e.g., training) be seen as additional work. One participant felt that it would also be helpful for all members of staff including senior leadership to be trained on restraint techniques as that would increase the amount of support to draw on during an incident. It would also strengthen understanding between each other around the emotions that can arise during these incidents and build a more empathetic community. Time for preparation and planning being protected and built into their schedule was also a factor that participants felt would enable them to perform better.

4.5 Summary of Findings from each Section

The following is a summary of the findings from each method of data collection, which are the TWBS, the open-ended questions and the interviews.

4.5.1 Quantitative findings from the TWBS

Several key findings can be highlighted based on the quantitative analyses conducted on the TWBS responses. There is a moderate amount of variability across the responses which emphasises the diverse nature of the wellbeing experiences of the PRU staff. Workload is observed to have a negative impact on wellbeing, although there are members of staff who perceive it positively. There is greater variation in staff's experience of organisational factors in comparison to workload, but these are perceived to have a more positive impact on wellbeing in comparison. Staff's views of student interaction on wellbeing indicate that it has a neutral impact on wellbeing. Additionally, as the questions on the TWBS capture three different features of overall wellbeing, the analyses indicate that improvements or difficulties in one aspect have an influence on the individual's experience of other aspects. For example, if a member of staff is

struggling with their workload, it might also negatively impact how they view the organisation or their interactions with pupils.

Across the four different centres, there are variations in how the three aspects of wellbeing are perceived. Although these differences are not statistically significant, staff at Spark – which was formerly for only primary-aged CYP, appeared to have the most variability in their experiences on all three factors. Similarly for job title, no significant differences were observed between teacher, TA and support staff across all three aspects of wellbeing. However, support staff appeared to view organisational factors as having a moderately negative impact on wellbeing whereas TAs leaned towards it having a positive effect. For the attitudinal variables, there were a few notable findings. Staff who perceived senior leadership as valuing their wellbeing also felt that colleagues also valued their wellbeing and organisational wellbeing was perceived more positively. The more caring duties staff had, the less they felt that external factors beyond the PRU provided sufficient support for their wellbeing. Lastly, EP support did not seem to be directly linked to the three aspects of wellbeing or other attitudinal variables.

4.5.2 Qualitative findings from the open-ended questions

The responses to the open-ended questions in the survey were grouped into five overarching categories which were Perceptions of Wellbeing as a Construct, Descriptions of their Current State of Wellbeing, Factors Contributing to their Overall Sense of Wellbeing, How Wellbeing can be Better Supported and The EP Role in Supporting Wellbeing. Staff viewed wellbeing as a multifaced construct that encompassed emotional states and self-worth, moving beyond wellbeing as merely the absence of stress. Their overall wellbeing was described using a range of emotional labels which reflects the diverse experiences staff have but more importantly with a temporal element that reflects changes over time. Several current and former initiatives within the PRU that contributed to better wellbeing were highlighted such as half-termly early afternoons off, a resources budget and previous sessions on mindfulness and Solution Circles. Staff named practical measures to support their overall wellbeing which included adjustments to their schedule to reduce workload and increase capacity. Their responses also included the importance of having active conversations around current practices to ensure that supportive measures were relevant to their needs. The role of the EP was outlined as a resource for

emotional support through supervision, practical support for both managing CYP and managing workload through training and as an advocate for staff.

4.5.3 Qualitative findings from the interviews

Five main themes were constructed from the interview responses which were Making Sense of their Wellbeing, Being Part of a Collaborative Work Environment, The Impact of Organisational Dynamics and Leadership, The Intricacies of Working with CYP at the PRU and Enlisting External Support. In Theme 1, participants described wellbeing as the interconnection of physical, mental and emotional health in the pursuit of emotional states such as being calm and feeling good. Good wellbeing was also seen as having the resources to overcome challenges with participants engaging in practices such as exercise, mindfulness and fostering social connections to maintain their wellbeing. In describing their current state of wellbeing, participants felt that this varied greatly across the year depending on workload, pupil dynamics and their individual coping strategies. Theme 2 highlighted the sense of collaboration among staff within the PRU in providing support for each other. Alongside an informal culture of checking in on each other, stepping in to help during challenging situations to maintain high pupil to adult ratios in the classroom was part of their practice. However, these sometimes led to the needs of others being prioritised over their own. The structured wellbeing initiatives that had been mentioned in the survey responses were also named. Participants did feel that these initiatives were appreciated but limited in meeting the demands of the job. While the overall culture among staff was supportive, changes in leadership had influenced how supported some staff felt, with differences between centres observed.

Following on from leadership changes, Theme 3 specifically examined organisational dynamics and leadership. Structural changes such as how pupils were grouped in the four centres and recent changes in headteacher of Lakeland led to feelings of uncertainty. Participants also described inconsistencies in procedures and increased pressures from understaffing and evolving pupil needs. Changes in leadership had a significant impact on how supported staff felt and while positive efforts were acknowledged, unbalanced workloads and feeling underappreciated overshadowed these efforts. Theme 4 discussed the nature of working with CYP who attend the PRU in greater detail. Supporting these CYP with high-level needs was emotionally intense and

often complex. Participants reflected on the differences between the centres that depended on the demographics and traits of the CYP – noting that each centre had their unique safeguarding concerns, behavioural dynamics and emotional demands. Building good relationships with the CYP was described as essential but often difficult due to the need to constantly adjust to the needs of the CYP. Several workplace stressors from physical demands to managing trauma-related behaviours were described which staff felt had a significant strain on their wellbeing. These could not be improved with existing wellbeing initiatives. Broader societal changes were also expressed in relation to how CYP were developing and presenting which added a layer of complexity to staff's relationships with them. In Theme 5, participants considered the role of the EP in providing more personalised support in the form of supervision. While previous initiatives like Solution Circles were helpful, current EP involvement felt detached due to limited communication until the day of the visit and EPs' direct involvement with pupils. Participants also emphasised the need for training from the EPS to be more relevant and recent in order to have EP support be more valuable. To share the physical and emotional load, participants suggested that all staff including senior leadership be trained in restraint techniques to support during incidents and enable mutual understanding of the emotional challenges these presented. Participants were also seeking out changes to their schedules to include preparation and planning time, to ensure that their wellbeing was better managed so they could support CYP more effectively.

4.5.4 Unique and shared findings among the three methods

Several findings were observed to be specific to each type of data collection method. As a quantitative instrument, the TWBS highlighted numeric and measurable patterns in the three aspects of wellbeing across the 50 participants. Student interaction was seen to have a neutral impact on wellbeing but in the interviews, participants considered the intensity and challenges of working with CYP at the PRU in significant detail. The TWBS portion of the survey enabled objective comparisons by role, centre and various attitudinal variables which will be helpful when considering where interventions should be targeted. The open-ended questions provided a good starting point for all 50 participants to elaborate on various aspects of wellbeing such as their perceptions of it and factors that support it. Participants were able to contextualise their

experiences which was not possible with the TWBS. In comparison to the interviews, the open-ended questions provided a broader representation of staff's experiences of wellbeing. However, a greater amount of detail was captured in the interview data as participants had the time and space to narrate their experiences.

There were also findings that were consistent across the three types of data collection. Workload was observed to negatively affect wellbeing and this was seen in the quantitative and qualitative data. Factors such as time constraints, administrative tasks and the physical and emotional demands were mentioned in the responses to the open-ended questions and interviews. The TWBS includes questions on this aspect such as "Fitting everything into the allotted time" and "Administrative work related to teaching/support of learning". Leadership was an important factor in influencing staff's perceptions of wellbeing. Organisational wellbeing correlated positively with staff perceiving senior leadership as valuing their wellbeing. Narrative accounts detailed the changes in leadership and how it impacted the culture within the centres and the overall PRU. Across the TWBS, open-ended questions and interviews, support from colleagues was deemed an important protective factor. Staff at each centre valued the relationships they had built with one another. Another notable finding was that current support was deemed insufficient, although this was an indirect link in the TWBS in the form of scores on the various aspects and correlations with other factors. In the open-ended portion of the survey and the interviews, participants were able to express that initiatives like early finishes and budgets were not aligned with the underlying needs. Staff were also able to elaborate on their responses and name factors that they felt could improve their wellbeing that were on a systemic and structural level. With regards to the role of the EP, the TWBS did not provide any evidence for its links to wellbeing. The responses to the open-ended questions and the interviews provided possible explanations for this as staff were able to expand on the potential benefit for the EP role if its scope and accessibility could be improved.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on teacher wellbeing by examining the wellbeing of teachers and TAs in PRUs to understand how wellbeing is perceived and experienced by the staff in these settings. The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model states that Person is a component that incorporates any characteristics of the person which are physiological, psychological, cognitive, spiritual, emotional, sensory/perceptual; Environment encompasses culture, social support, social capital, any physical and natural environments, policy and assistive technology; and Occupation essentially refers to any characteristics of the activities, tasks or role that are performed daily (Bass et al., 2024b). Using this model as a lens, the findings of this research will be discussed in relation to the research questions. Strengths and limitations of the study will then be presented, followed by implications for practice and potential directions for future research.

5.1 RQ1: How do teachers and TAs within the PRU understand and experience wellbeing?

Given that the basis for the research was to understand how staff at the PRU experience wellbeing, it was important to first understand how it is viewed, using the PEO model as a lens. As discussed in Chapter 2, there was ambiguity in wellbeing definitions in some existing research, as terms such as mental health, mental wellbeing and subjective wellbeing were used interchangeably (Carta et al., 2015; Hall, 2010; Vaingankar et al., 2012). Consequently, other perspectives of the construct and later research began to understand it as a broader state that encompassed various components. This led to the definition used in the study that sees optimal wellbeing as individuals having the 'psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge' (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230). The definitions shared by participants across both phases of the study aligned with this definition and largely fell under the component of Person, with some overlaps with Environment and Occupation. The dynamic interaction of the factors within these components on wellbeing are recognised by staff and wellbeing was perceived as the interconnection between mental, physical and emotional health. Staff within the study acknowledged the holistic nature of the concept in

addition to the feelings associated with it. Wellbeing was characterised by a sense of emotional balance and a positive perception of self. The language that staff associated with wellbeing included 'feeling stable', 'feeling calm' and 'having mental safety'. There was also an element of wellbeing being equated to a particular state of mind such as having 'peace of mind' and a 'positive emotional state'. Having a positive view of self was also highlighted by several staff which links to a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that comes with having good wellbeing. The confidence and accomplishment that arises from managing one's personal and professional life added to how wellbeing was understood by staff. These feelings are an important facet of the concept, as this sense of purpose is what often acts as the driving factor that leads to entry into any profession, particularly service sector roles (Perryman & Calvert, 2020).

Despite the prevalence of the term 'teacher wellbeing' in research and policy, there was insufficient evidence in the literature to suggest that teacher wellbeing exists as a unique construct (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021; Ozturk et al., 2024). The literature instead reflected general wellbeing contextualised within the occupational realities of teaching as outlined in Chapter 2 based on the three categories of 'deficiency', 'positivity' and 'professionalism'. This position aligns with how the findings of RQ1 are interpreted as the definitions of wellbeing expressed by PRU staff were not occupation-specific but grounded in broader psychological, social and emotional perspectives. Additionally, previous research had only considered the perspectives of teachers, which has potentially strengthened the idea of the construct as unique to the profession (e.g., Dreer, 2021; Fox et al., 2023), without comparing these against the wellbeing of other staff within an educational setting. As this study considered the views of teachers, TAs and support staff where neither group referred to specific aspects of their role in defining wellbeing, this supports the idea that 'teacher wellbeing' may not exist as separate to general wellbeing. Findings from the TWBS also reflect the idea of a broad sense of wellbeing as there were no significant differences between the wellbeing scores of the three staff groups. An individual's wellbeing is therefore a combination of various factors that include their professional context, which is a position shared by O'Brien and Guiney (2021) based on the findings of their research.

Lastly, there were two attributes that fell under all three components of Person, Environment and Occupation. These were that wellbeing is a dynamic concept that requires

actions to maintain, and that the ability to employ coping mechanisms to navigate challenges reflects good wellbeing. The latter suggests that wellbeing does not only come from things in life going well, but it is also to have the strategies to navigate life when it is not going well. Staff in this study highlighted the idea of good wellbeing as having boundaries between one's personal and professional life and that being able to 'leave it at the door' was seen as crucial in maintaining their sense of emotional balance. Their considerations of their personal life as influencing their wellbeing, further reinforce the idea that the wellbeing of staff is to be understood in a broader sense that is not limited to occupation alone.

Staff experiences of wellbeing at the time of this study can also be illustrated by several key points. Experiences varied across the PRU, with some staff having highly positive experiences, some having highly negative ones, and others falling somewhere in between. This range was seen regardless of the centre staff worked at or their job role. Within this, staff described their current state of wellbeing in ways that emphasised its fluctuating and dynamic state. At different times of the year or academic period, their sense of wellbeing varied from feeling 'ok' and good, being 'in a better place than before' and 'pretty good most of the time' to feeling 'stressed', 'overwhelmed', 'anxious' and even 'fragile'. As the definition for wellbeing adopted in this study is that it is 'the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced' (Dodge et al., 2012), this idea of fluctuation supports this definition. The visualisation of wellbeing as a seesaw as mentioned in Chapter 2 reinforces the need to find that equilibrium point throughout the changes that can occur as one goes about life.

5.2 RQ2: What factors do teachers and TAs within the PRU identify as having an influence on their overall wellbeing?

The findings of this research provided insight into a range of factors that have an influence on the wellbeing of staff. These factors could be broadly categorised into those that support wellbeing, those that impact it negatively, and suggestions for how it could be improved. Many of these factors fell under the umbrella of Occupation and Environment, although there remain overlaps between categories including Person. This is expected, as contemporary research has

shown that wellbeing elements are interlinked and shaped by both individual cognition and disposition, and broader contextual and cultural factors (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993).

5.2.1 Factors that support wellbeing

Staff in the current study expressed many Environment-related components that are contributing to good wellbeing where it is not the sole responsibility of an individual and is shown to be facilitated by the culture and social support within a setting (Simmons et al., 2019). Research in PRUs have consistently highlighted the significance of relationships and there is a perceived expectation for staff to extend care beyond what is typical in mainstream education as PRU staff often work with the most vulnerable CYP (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These studies emphasised that supportive relationships can act as protective factors. Participants in the current study highlighted this aspect in descriptions of their relationships with senior leadership, colleagues and pupils respectively. Findings from the TWBS, noted that organisational factors were a wellbeing factor that appeared to affect staff least negatively. These were measured by relationships with administrators in the school, leadership support, recognition for teaching/learning support, rules and procedures within the schools, communication between staff and participation in decision-making within the school. Previous research has concluded that key facilitators of good wellbeing are when staff are valued by senior leadership, have autonomy in making decisions and are able to build good relationships as modelled by leadership (Cann et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2024). Findings from the current study corroborated this as organisational factors were positively associated with staff perceiving senior leadership as valuing their wellbeing. If staff felt that organisational factors impacted their wellbeing more positively, they were more likely to perceive senior leadership as valuing their wellbeing. Senior leadership can make and implement practices that lend a supporting hand. If staff felt that senior leadership value their wellbeing, these perceptions had a positive impact on how they perceived organisational factors such as relationships with administrators and having support from leadership which are factors that are touched upon in the questions.

Supportive colleagues were also highlighted in this study and in previous research (Bolton & Laaser, 2020; Research, 2024). Having colleagues that are ready to step in and share the burden of their workload, offer a listening ear, a laugh or some fun, all add to a positive and

understanding environment. It also stands to reason that student interactions make up a large part of the Occupation component of staff at the PRU. Having good relationships with pupils were seen as important based on the responses shared by the interview participants. This resonates with a dearth of research on the pupil-staff relationship examining the impact of good relationships on resilience, a sense of belonging and academic outcomes. This bi-directional relationship also encourages prosocial pupil behaviours which staff respond to positively, which further increases good behaviour (Gibson & Carroll, 2021; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Rae et al., 2017, Woolf & Digby, 2023). However, the findings of the TWBS demonstrated a slight contradiction with previous research and the interview responses. Student interaction appeared to have a neutral effect on wellbeing based on the four questions that touched on poor behaviour, relationship with pupils, pupil motivation and classroom management. As pupil interactions do vary on a daily basis with some interactions being positive, and some being negative, the TWBS may not have captured the complexity and nuances of these pupil-staff relationships in sufficient detail. It is possible that if more questions were asked, or alternatively if staff themselves defined the components of student interactions that contributed positively and negatively to their wellbeing, responses would equal that found in previous research.

In relation to this on a broader sense were the perceptions of support within the PRU and beyond it. If staff perceived this support as sufficient, their wellbeing as measured by the factors of workload, organisational factors and student interaction yielded more positive scores. This finding is aligned with Dodge's (2012) definition for wellbeing that views it as the balance point between an individual's resources and the challenges they face. Staff perceived themselves as able to manage their daily stressors due to their access to supportive resources. As causality cannot be inferred from the correlation analyses of the TWBS, the alternative could also be true. When the wellbeing factors on the TWBS are perceived as having a positive impact on staff, there is a tendency to feel that support within and beyond the PRU is sufficient as staff are able to cope. Regardless of whether factors within and beyond the organisation support wellbeing, or staff are well-regulated and able to reframe the challenges they face, a reciprocal effect is still observed between perceptions of support and wellbeing.

Apart from relational factors within the environment that staff highlighted as a priority to achieving good wellbeing, references were also made to existing tangible and structural initiatives within the PRU. These included half-term early finishes, food vouchers, a small staffroom budget and stress-reduction initiatives such as mindfulness, Solution Circles and breaks after behavioural incidents. Participants also described a range of personal activities outside of work such as having time outdoors, time with family and friends and time on their own whether for leisure or for working on cognitive, spiritual and emotional practices. The range of elements that were discussed encompassed physical, social, emotional and cognitive elements, and that being alone was equally as important as being social for good wellbeing. This is consistent with findings from RQ1 where wellbeing is understood to be dynamic, fluid and multidimensional, echoing the concept of wellbeing as an equilibrium (Dodge et al., 2012).

Two other factors identified by staff fell under the component of Person. Compassion satisfaction is a key derivative of the work staff do. Participants described a sense of fulfilment from contributing meaningfully to the education of the CYP within the PRU. Although there is a lot of inconsistency in pupil-staff relationships within the PRU which will be explained in the next section, staff reflected positively on the impact of good pupil-staff relationships. While staff reported that it seemed as though pupils were unappreciative of their efforts during the time they were educated in Lakeland, staff reported experiencing a sense of retrospective gratitude from the pupils who visited Lakeland after they had moved on to either employment or further education. This mirrors previous research where staff in PRUs are reported to "hold the story" for pupils, having invested themselves emotionally into their progress (Farouk, 2014; Leather, 2009, Malcolm, 2018, 2021; Nicholson & Putwain, 2018). However, it is also possible that the pupils who returned for a visit were the pupils who had a more positive experience than their peers who did not. In Chapter 2, research highlighted the higher levels of compassion satisfaction in staff who do not work in therapeutic settings or engage with trauma (Teater & Ludgate, 2014) over those who do. The findings in this study offer some contradiction to this perspective as participants demonstrated the capacity to stay empathetic and regulated despite the emotionally demanding nature of their work. High levels of compassion satisfaction were reported perhaps

because of the high needs of the pupils. This supports Bolton and Laaser's (2020) argument that working with vulnerable CYP in PRUs can be experienced as equally rewarding as it is exhausting. Intrinsic motivation was also highlighted as a resource guiding staff's engagement with their roles. Taking measures to invest in their personal care such as exercise, practising mindfulness and seeking support from friends and family are behaviours that align with research identifying protective cognitive and psychological factors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Oberg et al., 2024).

To summarise, the findings discussed in tandem with previous literature in this section represent the complex interaction of personal, environmental and occupational factors (Law et al., 1996). While each factor has the potential to support wellbeing, the way it is enacted can also compromise wellbeing.

5.2.2 Factors that affect wellbeing negatively

Based on previous research citing the experiences of both staff in PRUs and mainstream settings, a commonly identified Occupation pressure point is workload (Education Support, 2024; Toropova et al., 2020; & Johansson, 2020). This was also found in the current study where staff across all centres perceived workload as having a moderately negative impact on wellbeing. In examining potential differences in experiences between teachers, TAs and support staff, TAs appeared to have a wider range of extreme experiences in comparison to the other two roles. Although this difference was not statistically significant, which meant that staff generally experienced workload in the same way, this is a reasonable finding rooted in research. The deployment of TAs has either been on a rotational basis with TAs moving from classroom to classroom or attached to a specific pupil or teacher (Blatchford et al., 2012; Stevens, 2013, as cited in Middleton, 2018). This inconsistency is potentially what led to this wide range in experiences as TAs within the PRU are not all assigned to a particular teacher or pupil, thus resulting in a variable workload between them. As a whole, findings from the TWBS suggested that TAs appeared to have the least negative views of workload and organisational factors on wellbeing in comparison to teachers and support staff. Although peer support and collaborative practices that are clearly defined can act as protective factors against workload-related stress (Konu et al., 2010), this is a surprising finding given the research mentioned earlier. However, as

there is little research exploring the wellbeing of TAs specifically, this is a positive albeit surprising contribution that requires further research. What factors could be acting as a protective factor and are they particular to Lakeland alone? In the interviews and open-ended questions, several TAs had reported the existence of TA working groups that was a space for TAs to meet and share resources and ideas. Additionally, one TA had mentioned being linked to a specific teacher for a subject which enabled them to build a good relationship that benefited their pupils. These could be mitigating factors against the workload pressures and inefficient deployment effects mentioned earlier. Further discussion around staff deployment and role clarification will be discussed in the last paragraph of this section.

Another aspect of Occupation that was reported to heavily influence staff wellbeing was that staff are expected to be able to manage violent and challenging situations with pupils. This suggests the hypothesis that if student interaction questions on the TWBS had made specific references to being "abused" (as mentioned by an interview participant), perhaps this factor would have a more negative than neutral impact on wellbeing. In having to navigate these difficult situations, staff were open in their reflections on how this took a toll on them physically and emotionally. This echoes earlier literature underlining the impact of high emotional demands and frequent exposure to distress on capacity for self-regulation (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017). The compassion fatigue that comes with this desire to help and perform their role to the best of their abilities can result in poor wellbeing (Koenig et al., 2017; Ormiston et al., 2022; Page, 2021). This finding is tied to several wider Environment concerns shared by staff, one of which being the mismatch between the offered wellbeing initiative and what is actually needed. The stress felt in their bodies from having to physically restrain CYP during difficult incidents could not be alleviated by leaving early one afternoon every half-term. In the context of the PEO model and optimal wellbeing as a balance point (Dodge et al., 2012), when environmental support does not match the intensity of occupational demands, staff are likely to experience poor wellbeing. The additional daily tensions of 'abuse' from pupils and sometimes parents and high levels of noise and incidents, while understood as a part of their role, could take a sustained toll on their wellbeing. Another wider issue expressed by staff was that wider societal changes have impacted the behaviours of pupils. They suggested that the increase in digital technology usage and online

interactions has reduced the opportunities for young people to develop the social skills that face-to-face interactions would typically strengthen. As a result, staff have observed a decline in respectful behaviour with pupils more frequently overstepping boundaries and displaying rudeness.

The diverse range of needs of the CYP in PRUs warrant different strategies to manage their behaviour. Several staff reported a preference for working with older CYP as there is a level of reasoning and negotiation that can take place with them in comparison to with younger CYP. Others however express their preference for working with younger CYP as behaviour management can be in the form of tangible rewards and extrinsic motivation. Aside from that, as mentioned in the section above, pupil-staff relationships can be inconsistent within the PRU. There is a 'hot and cold' element to the dynamic and staff felt that it could be due to the pressure of expectations to behave and the adverse experiences the CYP have experienced. Managing these relationships can come at an intense cost to their wellbeing as they are required to constantly be on alert and both emotionally present and distant whenever necessary (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017). Staff felt that the relationships are often led or initiated by the pupil and they must act accordingly in response to this, in a way that also preserves their own emotions. Staff have to strike the right balance in enforcing discipline and building rapport, and several staff felt that having to restrain CYP physically can affect this greatly. These incidents are always an intense and emotional time for both pupils and staff, which has harmful effects on wellbeing if it happens too frequently.

Staff noted that not every pupil had a good relationship with every member of staff. They communicated the idea of 'playing to their strengths' by having the CYP in question be spoken to by the person they were closest with during particularly difficult incidents. While this can be a good thing, it can also lead to overreliance on certain staff which can take a toll on them (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2017). This is therefore something that requires targeted attention to avoid constant compassion fatigue and emotional exhaustion. CYP in PRUs benefit from boundaries (Cothran et al., 2003, Freiberg et al., 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Payne, 2015) and this can only happen when they are implored to behave respectfully with all staff. However, research has also shown that sometimes CYP gravitate towards a particular member

of staff and the reason for why this is the case may not be particularly clear (Keller & Becker, 2020). The relationships pupils form with a particular staff member may not necessarily be about the emotional authenticity or inauthenticity that is displayed by that staff member. There appears to be other underlying factors informing the decision of the CYP in being 'close' to the staff member they prefer which research has not yet been able to distinguish.

Other factors that have a negative impact on wellbeing can be understood through the component of Environment. The organisational restructuring that took place at the time led to staff expressing that leadership changes had resulted in wellbeing being treated as less of a priority than with previous headteachers. The interplay between individual leadership styles and external pressures such as accountability measures that emphasise pupil achievement, shifted the approach to wellbeing from a relational focus to one that focused more on procedural practices (Bolton & Laaser, 2020; Konu et al., 2010). The Occupation element of the job presents with difficulties of its own and when compounded by leadership that overlooks empathetic approaches, staff come away feeling stressed and overwhelmed. However, these factors can be mediated by HOCs at the respective centres and some staff reported that the HOC at their respective centres act in a flexible and positive manner which contributes to their wellbeing.

A final important factor mentioned by some staff that touches on the wider discourse often mentioned in TA research was in how roles are distributed and how staff are deployed across the centres. When responsibilities expand beyond the resources to manage them and there is no clarity of role, there is a tension that is created which leads to poor morale and unhappy employees. Literature and practice regarding TA roles often overlook the core consideration that if TAs are to be deployed effectively, the specific role of the teachers must first be defined to facilitate collaboration (Giangreco, 2021). The roles of staff within the PRU should not be determined in isolation if the purpose of the TA within the classroom is to supplement and complement the role of the teacher. This supports the argument in previous research (Webster et al., 2012) that unclear or inconsistent deployment structures can create systemic pressures that have a negative impact on wellbeing.

5.2.3 Suggestions for how wellbeing can be improved

In both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the data collection, staff were encouraged to provide suggestions for how wellbeing can be improved. These largely fell into either the component of Environment or Occupation. As workload was a factor that significantly impacted wellbeing, staff felt that actionable steps should be taken to reduce job demands. While acknowledging budget constraints, staff felt that efficient deployment should remain a priority as it had positive long-term effects. They expressed the need for role clarity, fair distribution of responsibilities and support staff that were reliable. During the Solution Circle work that had taken place with staff and the EPS, one of the concerns was that teachers were often having to either 'train' support staff on the spot, or carry out the tasks themselves, as time was insufficient to ensure consistency. Although hiring additional trained staff was recognised as 'wishful thinking' on the part of some staff, they did feel that this would be helpful in reducing workload demands. Additionally, staff verbalised their need for better protection of their time to prepare for lessons and execute administrative tasks that were part of their job. This connects to suggestions around more streamlined processes for paperwork across centres to be adhered to more strictly. This is to ensure that no single member of staff is expending more effort than necessary to prepare paperwork for reporting/progress tracking purposes. Another benefit to protected planning time is that it improves collaboration between teachers and TAs and ensures that tasks are clearly outlined which is advantageous for the CYP they work with. Although staff recognise the ever-changing tone and pace of the PRU, having marginally more predictability with scheduling and protected time and space for interventions are essentially measures that could support staff performance.

An Occupation component that one member of staff felt strongly about was that all staff including senior leaders should be trained in restraining CYP. They felt that the physical and emotional exhaustion that arises from these incidents could not always be appreciated and understood by those who did not have to do it. On a practical level, this also means that any member of staff is able to jump in and help which is quicker than having to wait for a specific person. The CYP in question could also potentially be distressed for a shorter period as there is no lag in response time, which is a desirable outcome. Another actionable step linked to incidents and scheduling was in staff wanting a set amount of time to decompress after an incident with a

CYP. They felt that this was necessary to enable them to regulate their emotions and return to a baseline state to carry on with their tasks for the day. This aligns with previous research where opportunities for recovery following emotionally taxing events are essential for relieving potential compassion fatigue and maintaining good emotion regulation (Koenig et al., 2017; Ormiston et al., 2022). The last and arguably most important factor which is also strongly underscored by O'Brien and Guiney (2021) is that staff would appreciate being involved in decision making around their wellbeing to establish the most effective outcome where support explicitly meets needs.

5.3 RQ3: What role can EPs play in supporting the wellbeing of staff within the PRU?

Based on the responses to the survey questions, over half the staff in this study felt that EPs have a role in supporting wellbeing in the PRU, whereas the other half were unsure as to how this could be done. Given the breadth of services that can be provided by EPs, it is imperative that these are made known to decision makers and stakeholders (Atfield et al., 2023; Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013). The way in which the EP is positioned within the wider network could serve as a mediator between senior leadership and staff. Being an advocate for staff was seen as a potential role for EPs in supporting them to be heard. To a certain extent however, the EP position is too distinct from the organisation, and staff expressed the need for more streamlined and straightforward ways to work with an EP. Communication often filtered through from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) which was not always helpful as it meant that staff did not have the time to prepare their questions and make the best use of EP time.

Other ways in which staff felt that EPs could influence wellbeing was in providing therapeutic support. Although 'therapy sessions' were specifically mentioned by several staff, this is beyond the EP remit in the way that traditional therapy is understood. Instead, EPs are well-placed to provide a listening space or supervision which relates to skills that EPs already have (Atfield et al., 2023). While 1:1 supervision is not always possible due to scheduling and time restrictions, staff felt that group supervision would also be helpful. Drawing on the work of Teater and Ludgate (2014) that outline peer supervision as effective, much like the goal of the Solution Circles, EPs can support staff to eventually run them on their own. This can be achieved by

working with senior leadership to protect time in staff's schedules for this as it goes a long way in supporting wellbeing. An additional aspect of the role of the EP that already has its place is in providing staff with training. However, staff expressed that they would prefer training to focus on solutions and strategies. Several staff shared that although knowing background and evidence was helpful which is often the 'format' for training sessions, these often took up a large amount of time which resulted in minimal space at the end for discussions and resource sharing. The 'buy-in' of staff attending training is important and it should not be seen as additional work, which was cited by a few participants as this would have the opposite desired effect on their wellbeing.

5.4 Contribution to Psychology and Educational Psychology

This study offers contributions to the field in several ways. The first is by conceptualising wellbeing as a multidimensional construct that moves away from deficit narratives to positive psychology concepts where optimal wellbeing is a balance of resources and challenges – a view reflected in participants' views of wellbeing. By applying the PEO model to the experiences of staff in PRUs, the study extends the model's psychological application beyond its traditional use in occupational psychology to educational psychology, and an under-researched population in a high intensity environment. Taken together, the findings of this study illustrate how the wellbeing of staff (not just teachers) in PRUs are a dynamic interplay of personal resources (e.g., emotional balance, self-perception, intrinsic motivation, environmental conditions (e.g., leadership style, collegial support, policy demands) and occupational factors (e.g., workload, physical demands, role distribution).

Another contribution to the field of educational psychology is by highlighting that relationships are central to both the wellbeing of staff within the PRU and the research methodology. Participants spoke at length about how relationships with CYP, colleagues and senior leaders influenced their wellbeing and how supportive or strained relationships either strengthened their capacity or were emotionally draining. From a methodological standpoint, a pre-existing relationship with staff from previous work within the PRU facilitated their engagement in both phases of the study. I was familiar to a majority of the staff and the six participants in Phase 2 were able to reflect honestly during the interviews. In response to RQ3, participants named several ways in which EPs could support their wellbeing. As relational

processes underpin many aspects of EP practice like supervision, consultation and systemic change, relationships are therefore seen as important mechanisms of change.

Lastly, this research contributes to the field by advocating for EPs to acknowledge and embrace their role in influencing change at a systemic and organisational level. The findings of this study add to the knowledge base around emotional labour, and how cognitive, emotional and behavioural domains such as self-efficacy, motivation and resilience are shaped by the demands of the environment and their occupation. Through supervision or informal listening spaces, targeted and practical training to build staff capacity and co-constructing organisational responses to workload pressures, EPs are well placed to support the wellbeing of staff in the unique environment of a PRU.

5.5 Study Implications

Several actionable implications were identified throughout the course of this research for staff themselves, senior leadership of the PRU and EPs:

Implications for staff within the PRU

As wellbeing is recognised as a fluctuating state, staff would benefit from identifying their specific stressors alongside effective coping mechanisms that are relevant to them. This can then be compiled into a personalised plan aimed at restoring optimal wellbeing when challenges arise. Being mindful of their own needs but also those of colleagues can foster stronger relationships and enhance overall wellbeing. To maintain that sense of emotional balance, it is important for staff to continue to maintain clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives as much as possible. The demands of the role can be reduced by fully utilising existing support systems such as engaging with colleagues, sharing resources and streamlining processes to reduce administrative work. Engaging in activities outside of work that support physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health, including spending time outdoors, connecting with loved ones, and enjoying personal “alone time,” is vital. Staff should also continue to provide feedback on training and advocate for sessions that are solution-focused and relevant to current workplace demands. Encouraging open communication about needs and actively participating in support initiatives like solution circles or group supervision can also strengthen wellbeing across the team.

Implications for senior leadership

Senior leadership plays a crucial role in demonstrating that staff wellbeing is genuinely valued through meaningful actions and policies. Fostering a culture of social support and collective responsibility can be achieved by modelling good practices, such as treating staff as equals and affording autonomy in decision-making. Consulting with other establishments or professionals to identify strategies for workload reduction is recommended, with a particular emphasis on protecting staff time for preparation, interventions, and administrative tasks when necessary. Opportunities for debriefing and decompression following difficult incidents is equally important. Advice could be sought on co-constructing efficient schedules that also safeguard staff wellbeing. Consistent implementation of behaviour management strategies across the PRU and equitable treatment of staff by senior leadership is essential. Providing training, including Team Teach physical restraint and behaviour management, for all staff members is necessary to maintain safety and confidence. Clarifying staff roles can help reduce tension, improve morale, and foster more effective collaboration. Engaging staff actively in discussions around any changes ensures that interventions are co-created and that wellbeing solutions are aligned to actual needs. Collaborating with EPs to create streamlined pathways for accessing support, especially for specific casework with CYP, can lessen sole reliance on the SENCo and enable staff to feel included in the process.

Implications for EPs

EPs can increase awareness of the wide range of services they offer and advocate for systemic solutions that reduce long-term reliance on individual casework. They should continue to advocate for staff wellbeing and seek ways to assist senior leadership with intervention implementation. Working collaboratively with senior leadership can improve communication channels with staff to enhance support and effectiveness. Within time constraints, EPs should explore creative options to offer listening spaces, individual supervision, and/or group supervision. Facilitating the development of peer supervision groups that can operate independently and regularly is another important area of focus to mediate time constraints. Lastly, ensuring that training is needs-based, with a strong emphasis on practical strategies and solutions tailored to staff concerns, will help maximise the impact of EP involvement.

5.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The study extended existing knowledge of 'teacher wellbeing' by suggesting that the construct is no more distinct than general wellbeing within any occupation. In adopting the Dodge (2012) definition, this study sought to provide additional evidence for its use and accessibility as a way of understanding wellbeing. As a case study, the aim of the study was to explore the wellbeing of staff within the PRU in depth and to provide knowledge that is potentially applicable or even transferable to other similar contexts. Appreciating how staff understand and experience their own wellbeing is crucial if interventions for improvement are to be effective (O'Brien & Guiney, 2021). One of the ways in which the study provided a unique contribution to the field was in using the PEO model to understand the different factors that act and react with one another to influence the wellbeing of staff within the PRU. The level of depth to which these feelings are explored in an organisation such as the PRU can inform the responses that succeed it. Through an understanding of these perspectives, strategies can be developed that target the various components of Person, Environment or Occupation to lead to sustainable improvements in the wellbeing of staff.

Another strength of the study lies in its pragmatic design. The RQs are relevant to the purpose of the study and through the findings, actionable steps can be taken to improve the wellbeing of staff. A total of 50 (57 including incomplete responses) staff out of 65 teachers, TAs and support staff across the four centres participated in Phase 1 of the research. This high participation rate provides a fairly strong basis for being representative of the wider staff population across the four centres, supporting the implementation of proactive measures based on the research findings. The use of a mixed-methods design that first involved questionnaires then interviews allowed me to triangulate the data and cross-reference it between the various sources. The use of an established tool (the TWBS) and various analysis methods which were quantitative and qualitative, enabled me to present a comprehensive picture of the wellbeing of staff within the PRU. As the online questionnaire also included open-ended questions, these provided a useful foundation for establishing emerging patterns that interview respondents could either solidify or dispute. The semi-structured nature of the interviews also gave me the opportunity to engage in natural conversation with each respondent.

As an evaluation of methodology, while the TWBS was useful in exploring different components of wellbeing, the open-ended questions and interviews were necessary for more meaningful insight into staff wellbeing. The TWBS alone would not have been the most informative measure as there were also factors that were not included such as parent relationships and specific physical challenges with CYP. The depth to which feelings can be explored is also limited. Additionally, a 5-point Likert scale has its strengths and limitations. While it was useful in capturing nuance (e.g., strongly agree and somewhat agree), there was a possibility for central tendency bias where participants avoided extreme options and clustered around the middle point. A 4-point Likert scale could reduce this bias. Alternatively, allowing participants to provide 'yes' or 'no' responses to the TWBS questions could reduce ambiguity around the scaled responses. However, closed questions do reduce insight into subtle trends that can be useful in understanding attitudes or feelings. Finding a balance in how the responses to the quantitative questions are obtained in combination with qualitative data collection methods will provide the most comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in future studies. An additional limitation to consider is the statistical power of the tests. As the three staff groups were of varying sizes, the probability of correctly rejecting the null hypothesis is strongly influenced by factors such as sample size, effect size and significance level (Dorey, 2010). Although inferential analyses were conducted to compare wellbeing across the three groups, the unequal sizes of the groups (TA = 26, Teacher = 16, Support = 8) are a possible limitation to consider. The smaller group of support staff reduces the sensitivity of detecting differences. Unequal group sizes may also affect the robustness of assumptions of homogeneity of variance and bias post-hoc comparisons. When interpreting the absence of significant differences across staff groups, this should be factored into the analysis.

The second limitation of this study was in the amount of interview participants recruited. Ideally, I would have liked to have interviewed more participants or conduct a second round of interviews to corroborate findings from earlier phases. Given the time constraints of this research and the difficulty in securing time with staff for the interviews, this had not been possible. With considerations to my professional background, relationship with the PRU and other potential

biases, this could affect the objectivity of the research. However, many steps were taken to ensure reflexivity and transparency at every stage of the process.

To the extent that the findings are representative of other contexts, it is likely that many of the elements discussed are relevant to other PRU settings and/or AP with similar demographics. The findings are a reflection of staff experiences and perceptions within this distinct organisational and educational framework and should be interpreted as such. While participants' responses may be representative of Lakeland as a PRU setting, generalising the findings to mainstream educational settings where structures and demographics are different should be done with caution. However, what is applicable across settings is examining what wellbeing means to staff in any particular setting and what strategies they personally believe are meaningful and helpful to them. Collaborative working between staff and senior leadership to implement measures that improve and sustain good wellbeing involves conscious effort to empower staff and ensure they feel valued, respected and heard.

5.7 Directions for Future Research

Having explored the perceptions and experiences of wellbeing and the factors that influence it of staff within Lakeland in particular, several recommendations can be made around future research. Replicating this research with participants across different PRUs would provide valuable insight into determining whether the findings are consistent across the unique setting of a PRU in comparison to a mainstream setting. Cross-occupational comparisons could be made to further explore the idea that 'teacher wellbeing' is not distinct from occupational wellbeing by comparing the wellbeing of teachers and TAs to other roles within the PRU such as SENCos and senior leadership, including headteachers. These findings can then be compared against staff views from mainstream settings to investigate whether the PRU environment has unique influences on wellbeing or shares similar characteristics instead. A suggestion regarding methodology would be to investigate the impact of different Likert scale formats to support the validity and reliability of the data gathered using the TWBS. Additionally, multiple rounds of interviews or having focus groups could provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of staff, particularly regarding factors that are not addressed by the TWBS such as parent-staff relationships and physical incidents involving pupils. Lastly, with the identification of factors that

correspond to different components of the PEO model in this research, future research can focus on developing and evaluating an intervention based on these findings aimed at improving staff wellbeing.

5.8 Concluding Thoughts

Amidst the often dire headlines of teacher burnout and stress, this study distinguishes itself by offering a pragmatic approach to understanding the wellbeing of teaching staff in a PRU. As opposed to focusing on the negatives, this research employs a constructive view that identifies the 'what works wells' and the 'even better ifs' around wellbeing. This shift in understanding is led by a simple definition that operationalises wellbeing as the balance point between an individual's resources and challenges faced. By understanding the resources that staff have at their disposal against the challenges that they face, this visualisation enables senior leadership to strike the right balance to ensure optimal wellbeing.

This study addressed a critical gap in the literature by examining the wellbeing of teachers and TAs within AP settings, specifically PRUs. By adopting a nested case study approach with four PRU centres under an umbrella organisation, the aim was to have a more thorough understanding of the factors influencing staff wellbeing. Another aim was to explore the perspectives of teachers and TAs on the role of the EP in supporting their wellbeing. The guiding framework to understand what wellbeing looks like in this PRU was the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model (Law et al., 1996). As this research was conducted in a PRU within the local authority where I undertook my placement as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) for two years, my positionality as an insider and outsider was carefully considered.

This research has made a distinct contribution to the field and has presented clear implications for PRU settings, in addition to the exploration of wellbeing of staff in general. It was a privilege to have been able to gather the views of staff across Lakeland and have individual conversations with a few staff. Their insight was informative and invaluable, and I hope this has been captured in the study.

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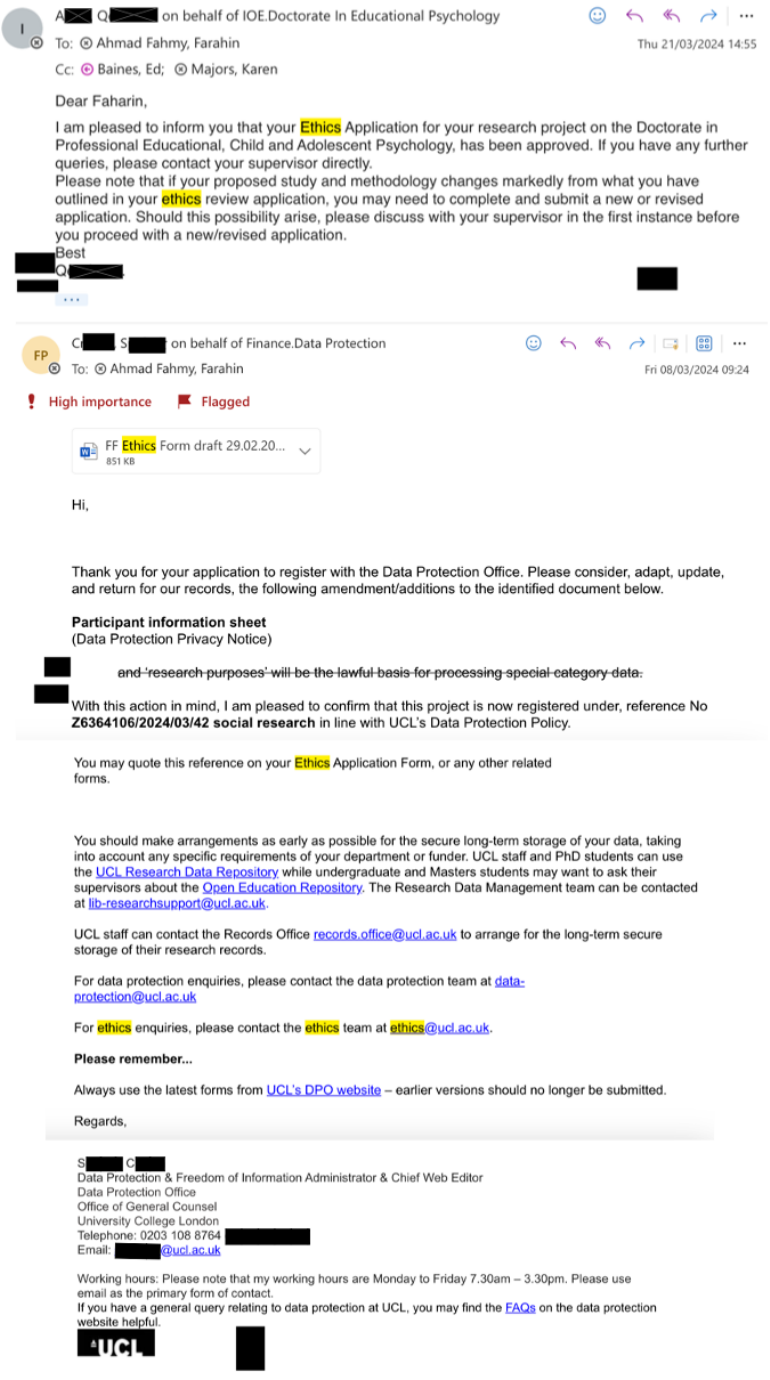
Appendices

Appendix A – Literature Search Keywords

The following keywords were used to inform the searches: ("teacher wellbeing" OR "teaching assistant wellbeing") AND "pupil referral units" AND "England"; ("teacher mental health" OR "emotional wellbeing") AND "alternative education" OR "pupil referral units" AND "staff experiences"; (“wellbeing” OR “mental health” OR “resilience” OR “stress” OR “burnout”) AND ("pupil referral units" OR "alternative provision") AND "teachers" OR "teaching assistants" AND "England"; ("teacher" OR "teaching assistant") AND ("Person-Environment-Occupation model") AND "wellbeing"; ("teacher wellbeing" OR "teacher well-being") AND ("model" OR "theory" OR "framework").

Inclusion criteria for the studies were a timeframe of ten years (although relevant exceptions were made); associations between workload and pupil attainment; teachers managing challenging behaviour; specific reference to roles such as nurture group practitioners due to the mention of complex needs; and intersections of Covid-19 and wellbeing. Exclusion criteria included studies that solely focused on pupil behaviour or pupil perceptions; studies that were not relevant to the UK context; studies that did not specifically reference staff and/or staff wellbeing; studies that were on inclusion and exclusion from mainstream schools; and those that were limited to pre-service teachers alone. Databases such as ‘Google Scholar’, ERIC, PsycInfo and the UCL Explore library.

Appendix B – Ethics Approval



A[redacted] Q[redacted] on behalf of IOE.Doctorate In Educational Psychology

To: Ahmad Fahmy, Farahin

Thu 21/03/2024 14:55

Cc: Baines, Ed; Majors, Karen

Dear Faharin,

I am pleased to inform you that your Ethics Application for your research project on the Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, has been approved. If you have any further queries, please contact your supervisor directly.
Please note that if your proposed study and methodology changes markedly from what you have outlined in your ethics review application, you may need to complete and submit a new or revised application. Should this possibility arise, please discuss with your supervisor in the first instance before you proceed with a new/revised application.

Best

[redacted]

C[redacted] S[redacted] on behalf of Finance.Data Protection

To: Ahmad Fahmy, Farahin

Fri 08/03/2024 09:24

High importance Flagged

FF Ethics Form draft 29.02.20...
851 KB

Hi,

Thank you for your application to register with the Data Protection Office. Please consider, adapt, update, and return for our records, the following amendment/additions to the identified document below.

Participant information sheet
(Data Protection Privacy Notice)

[redacted] ~~and 'research purposes' will be the lawful basis for processing special category data.~~

With this action in mind, I am pleased to confirm that this project is now registered under, reference No **Z6364106/2024/03/42 social research** in line with UCL's Data Protection Policy.

You may quote this reference on your Ethics Application Form, or any other related forms.

You should make arrangements as early as possible for the secure long-term storage of your data, taking into account any specific requirements of your department or funder. UCL staff and PhD students can use the UCL Research Data Repository while undergraduate and Masters students may want to ask their supervisors about the Open Education Repository. The Research Data Management team can be contacted at lib-researchsupport@ucl.ac.uk.

UCL staff can contact the Records Office records.office@ucl.ac.uk to arrange for the long-term secure storage of their research records.

For data protection enquiries, please contact the data protection team at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

For ethics enquiries, please contact the ethics team at ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

Please remember...

Always use the latest forms from UCL's DPO website – earlier versions should no longer be submitted.

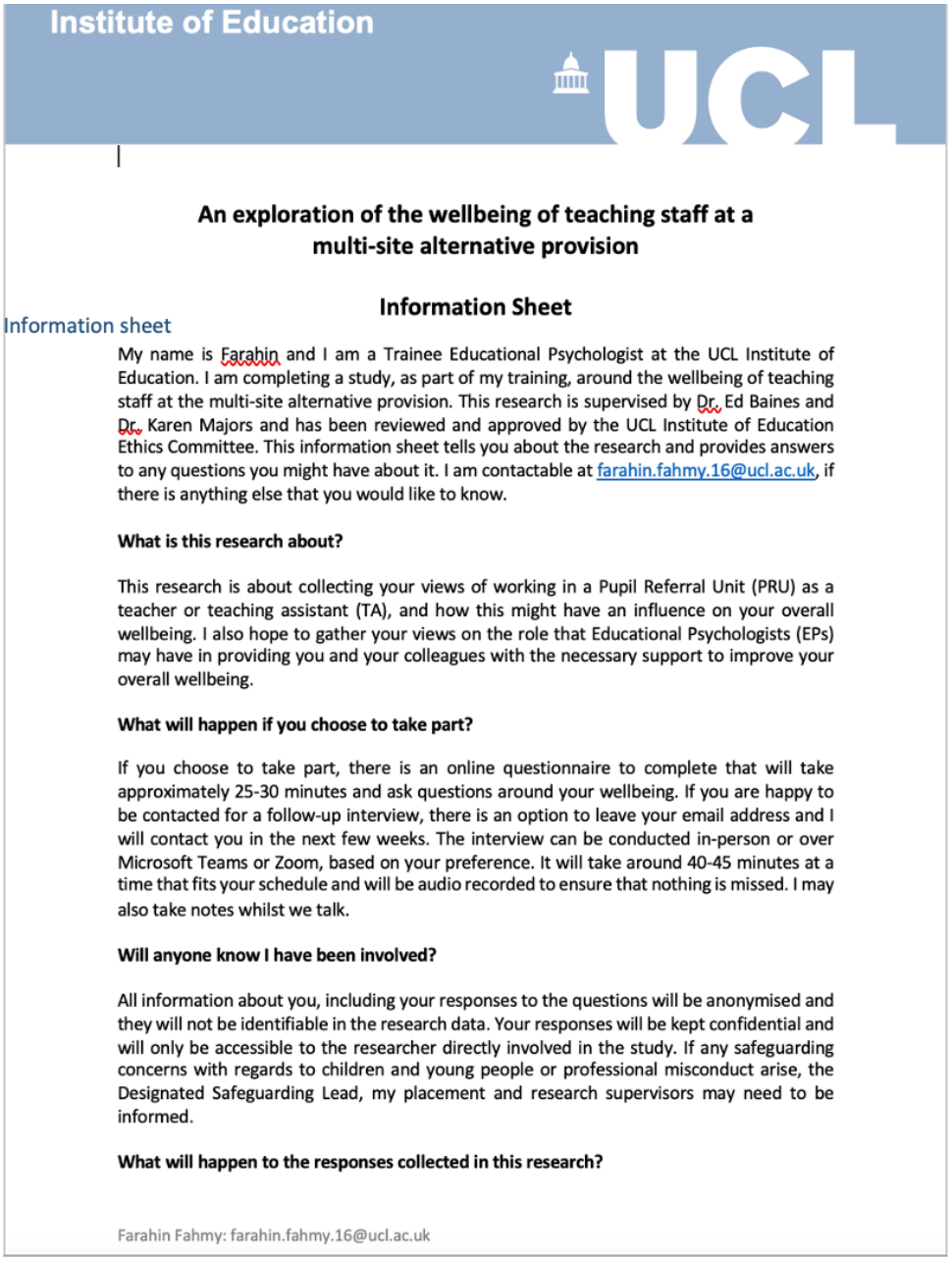
Regards,

S[redacted] C[redacted]
Data Protection & Freedom of Information Administrator & Chief Web Editor
Data Protection Office
Office of General Counsel
University College London
Telephone: 0203 108 8764 [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@ucl.ac.uk

Working hours: Please note that my working hours are Monday to Friday 7.30am – 3.30pm. Please use email as the primary form of contact.
If you have a general query relating to data protection at UCL, you may find the FAQs on the data protection website helpful.

UCL [redacted]

Appendix C – Information Sheet



Institute of Education

UCL

An exploration of the wellbeing of teaching staff at a multi-site alternative provision

Information Sheet

Information sheet

My name is Farahin and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the UCL Institute of Education. I am completing a study, as part of my training, around the wellbeing of teaching staff at the multi-site alternative provision. This research is supervised by Dr. Ed Baines and Dr. Karen Majors and has been reviewed and approved by the UCL Institute of Education Ethics Committee. This information sheet tells you about the research and provides answers to any questions you might have about it. I am contactable at farahin.fahmy.16@ucl.ac.uk, if there is anything else that you would like to know.

What is this research about?

This research is about collecting your views of working in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) as a teacher or teaching assistant (TA), and how this might have an influence on your overall wellbeing. I also hope to gather your views on the role that Educational Psychologists (EPs) may have in providing you and your colleagues with the necessary support to improve your overall wellbeing.

What will happen if you choose to take part?

If you choose to take part, there is an online questionnaire to complete that will take approximately 25-30 minutes and ask questions around your wellbeing. If you are happy to be contacted for a follow-up interview, there is an option to leave your email address and I will contact you in the next few weeks. The interview can be conducted in-person or over Microsoft Teams or Zoom, based on your preference. It will take around 40-45 minutes at a time that fits your schedule and will be audio recorded to ensure that nothing is missed. I may also take notes whilst we talk.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

All information about you, including your responses to the questions will be anonymised and they will not be identifiable in the research data. Your responses will be kept confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher directly involved in the study. If any safeguarding concerns with regards to children and young people or professional misconduct arise, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, my placement and research supervisors may need to be informed.

What will happen to the responses collected in this research?

Farahin Fahmy: farahin.fahmy.16@ucl.ac.uk

concerns with regards to children and young people or professional misconduct arise, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, my placement and research supervisors will need to be informed.

What will happen to the responses collected in this research?

As this research is intended to inform the work of EPs regarding supporting staff wellbeing, the results will be shared with the Senior Leadership team and the EP service. Please be assured that all responses are anonymised and that there will be no identifiable data within the thesis.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you choose to take part. I hope that if you do choose to be involved in either the questionnaire phase alone or both the questionnaire and interview phases, that you will find it a positive experience. If at any point you wish to withdraw from completing the questionnaire, you can simply exit the page. If you wish to withdraw from the interview phase before April 2024 when the results of this research will be written up, your data will be permanently deleted and not included in the research.

If you would like to be involved, please complete the questionnaire by **11th March 2024.**

Contact for further information:

If you have any further questions, you can contact me at farahin.fahmy.16@ucl.ac.uk.

All research has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee prior to any data collection.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read through this information sheet.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project is UCL. The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

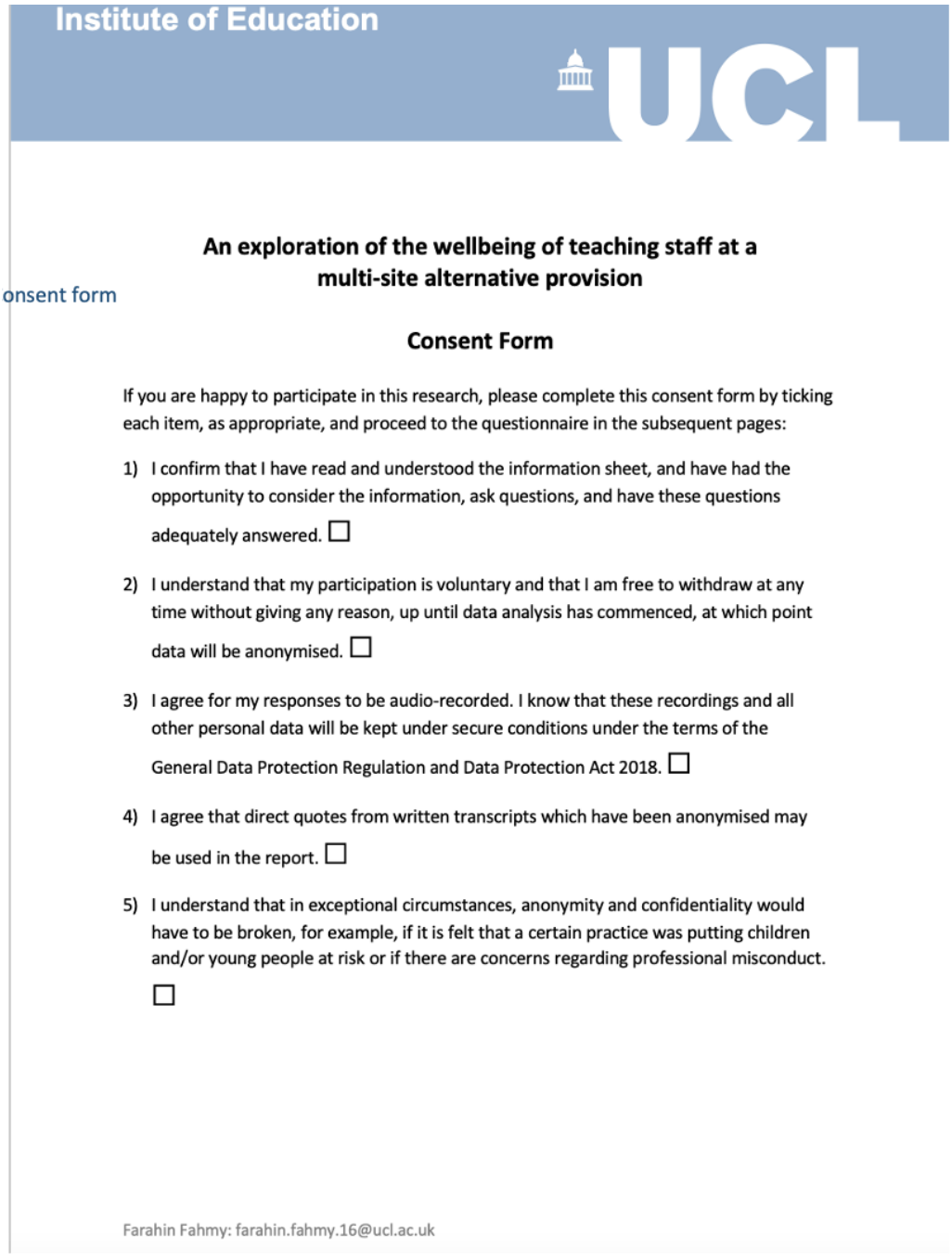
This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information from research studies can be found in our 'general' privacy notice for participants in research studies here.

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.

Personal data such as your age, ethnicity, role, position and number of years at the PRU will be collected. This data will be processed so long as it is required for this research. The data will be anonymised or pseudonymised and the processing of personal data will be minimised wherever possible. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to understand your rights as a research participant, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

Farahin Fahmy: farahin.fahmy.16@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix D – Consent Form



Institute of Education

UCL

onsent form

An exploration of the wellbeing of teaching staff at a multi-site alternative provision

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this research, please complete this consent form by ticking each item, as appropriate, and proceed to the questionnaire in the subsequent pages:

1) I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have 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, up until data analysis has commenced, at which point data will be anonymised. ☐

3) I agree for my responses to be audio-recorded. I know that these recordings and all other personal data will be kept under secure conditions under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. ☐

4) I agree that direct quotes from written transcripts which have been anonymised may be used in the report. ☐

5) I understand that in exceptional circumstances, anonymity and confidentiality would have to be broken, for example, if it is felt that a certain practice was putting children and/or young people at risk or if there are concerns regarding professional misconduct. ☐

Farahin Fahmy: farahin.fahmy.16@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix E – Online Questionnaire

An exploration of the wellbeing of teaching staff at a multi-site alternative provision

This questionnaire contains questions from the Teacher Well-being Scale by Rebecca Collie and her colleagues (2015) alongside more general questions around your wellbeing and overall work experience.
Your responses remain confidential and are only known to the researcher and her supervisors and they can be withdrawn upon request: farahin.fahmy.16@ucl.ac.uk

Demographics

2. Full name *
3. Gender *
Male
Female
Non-binary
Prefer not to say
4. Job Title/Titles *
5. Brief description of role and everyday responsibilities *
6. Primary site of work *
Spark
Hilltop
Evergreen
Horizon
7. Number of years working in current establishment: Spark/Hilltop/Evergreen/Horizon (please just put a number) *The value must be a number
8. Number of years working at Lakeland before being at current establishment (please write 0 if not applicable for you) *The value must be a number
9. Total number of years as a teacher or teaching assistant *The value must be a number
10. Age (please just put a number) *The value must be a number
11. Caring responsibilities outside of the work environment (e.g., children, parents, partner) *

General questions around wellbeing

12. What does the term 'wellbeing' mean to you? *
13. Based on your current role, how would you describe your overall sense of wellbeing?*
14. To what extent is your wellbeing valued: *
i. Senior leadership values my wellbeing
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
ii. My colleagues value my wellbeing

Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
iii. I value my wellbeing
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
15. How is staff wellbeing currently supported within the provision? *
16. Is this support sufficient? *
Yes
Somewhat
No
17. What factors support your overall sense of wellbeing? (please consider factors both within and outside of your work environment) *
18. Is this support sufficient? *
Yes
Somewhat
No
19. In your view, how can staff wellbeing be better supported? *
20. Do you think Educational Psychologists have a role in supporting staff wellbeing? *
Yes
Unsure
No
21. In what ways can Educational Psychologists support staff wellbeing? *
22. Why do you think Educational Psychologists may not be able to support staff wellbeing? *

The Teacher Wellbeing Scale (TWBS)

Currently, how do the following aspects affect your wellbeing? (please note that there are five responses: Negatively, Mostly Negatively, Neither, Mostly Positively, Positively, and you do have to scroll to the right)

1. Marking work
2. Relations with administrators at my school
3. Poor behaviour of students
4. Fitting everything into the allotted time
5. Support offered by school leadership
6. Relations with students I work with
7. Administrative work related to teaching/support of learning
8. Recognition for my teaching/support of learning

9. Student motivation
10. Work I complete outside of school hours for my teaching/support of learning
11. School rules and procedures that are in place
12. Completing teaching/support of learning tasks in the given time
13. Communication between staff members within the school
14. Classroom management
15. Staying late after work for meetings and activities
16. Participation in school-level decision making

Appendix F – TWBS Descriptive Statistics

Table of descriptive statistics

Item (wellbeing factor)	Skewness	Kurtosis	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) loading range (mean)
Workload	0.31	0.02	0.62-0.72 (0.70)
Organisational	-0.45	0.18	0.58-0.75 (0.69)
Student interaction	-0.27	-0.42	0.51-0.92 (0.73)

The skewness values for all three factors suggest that there is a slight positive skew, a moderate negative skew and a slight negative skew. This means that more teachers report scores below the mean for workload wellbeing and more teachers report scores above the mean for organisational and student interaction wellbeing. There is an indication of higher workload burden but more positive perceptions of organisational and student interaction factors. In terms of distribution of scores based on Kurtosis values, workload wellbeing scores are distributed similarly to a normal curve. Organisational wellbeing scores show a slight concentration around the average with fewer extreme scores in either direction. Student interaction wellbeing scores are more evenly distributed compared to a normal distribution with fewer teachers reporting very high or very low levels. The values of the CFA for all three factors suggest the items in each factor are well-related to the underlying construct.

Appendix G – Analysis of Missing Data

Investigating the missing data required several steps:

1. Running Descriptive Statistics for Missing Values

The missing data appeared to be randomly scattered across variables, with no items having a particularly high percentage of missing values. This is a weak but useful indication of MCAR.

2. Running a Missing Values Analysis (more detailed patterns)

A Missing Values Analysis was conducted using the Expectation-Maximisation (EM) estimation method to run Little's MCAR test. The Little's MCAR test resulted in a value of Chi-Square = 96.125, DF (degrees of freedom) = 85, Sig. = .192. Given that the p-value is greater than a significance level of $p < .05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The missing data is likely MCAR. Although likelihood is not definitive, evidence suggests that the missing data is MCAR.

3. Further analyses given that MCAR is supported

The decision had to be made around whether I performed listwise deletion or imputation. The percentage of missing data was small, which would make listwise deletion acceptable. Although this would reduce the sample size, the benefits with regards to simplicity, transparency, computational efficiency and meeting the MCAR assumption outweighed it.

Appendix H – Interview Schedule

Begin with recapping the purpose of the study, the length of time it will take and all reminders: interview is audio recorded and that I will be taking notes, responses are anonymised and files will be deleted after they have been transcribed, responses are kept confidential unless there are safeguarding concerns (remind them of procedure), participants have the right to withdraw at any time and I am contactable via email. *Any questions before we start?*

*Check audio recording to ensure that it is working well

General introductory questions:

1. Recap of length of time the participant has been at their current provision and their official job title
2. Overview of their contact time with pupils and/or other staff

Main body of questions:

1. In the questionnaire, your understanding of the term 'wellbeing' was described as …… Is there anything you would like to add or elaborate on?
2. You described your overall sense of wellbeing as ……. and I was wondering if there was anything about your current role that you would like to make specific reference to in terms of your wellbeing?

Follow-up questions after question 2 around specific items that might affect wellbeing in a positive or negative way

3. With regards to the value placed on your wellbeing, you agreed/disagreed/neither agreed nor disagreed about your wellbeing being valued by yourself/your colleagues/senior leadership' I was wondering if you could tell me more about this?

Question 3 expands into three separate questions (yourself/your colleagues/senior leadership)

4. You rated the value that senior leadership places on your wellbeing as 'not valued/somewhat/highly' and I was wondering what else you could say about why you feel this to be the case?
5. With the current measures of supporting staff wellbeing in the provision that you mentioned, and feeling that they are 'somewhat/not sufficient', what could be done differently? Are these measures specific to the site that you work at? Is there any support within the wider network?
6. You mentioned ……. as factors that support your wellbeing, and I was wondering if you could tell me more about …… (any professional factors) and …… (any personal factors).
7. I was wondering if there are any factors within or outside of the school environment that have a negative effect on your wellbeing and if you could expand on them?

Follow-up questions after question 7 with specific items: positives and negatives/ facilitators and barriers

8. As you know, an Educational Psychologist is linked to each education setting within the borough and this Education Service has a link EP that works across the four sites. You said yes/unsure/no to the question on EPs having a role in supporting staff wellbeing. Can you expand on this?
9. Is there any other factor or action that we might not have covered that you feel could improve staff wellbeing?

Closing questions:

1. Is there anything else that you would like to add or discuss before we end this interview, or is there anything we spoke about earlier that you would like to return to?
2. Do you have any questions?

*Check audio recording to ensure that it recorded the interview

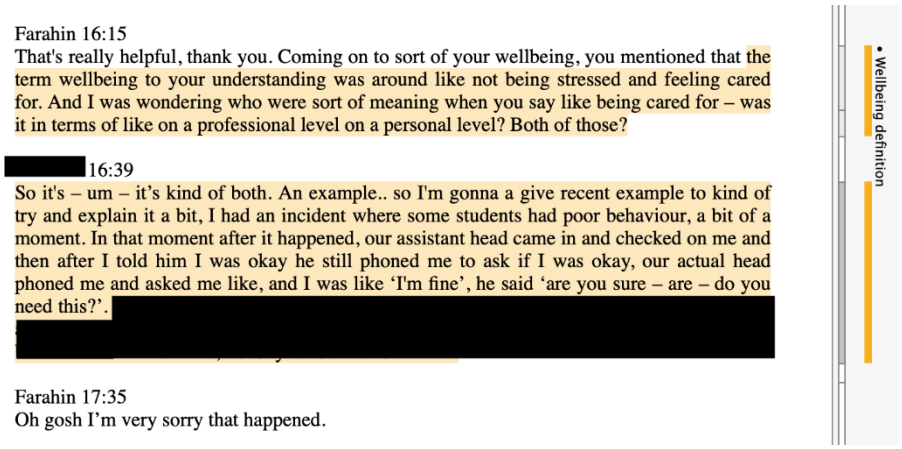
Bring interview to a close and thank the participant for their time. Summarise my next steps and remind them of option for a debrief session if necessary or if they would like any resources or information on relevant support services.

Appendix I – Sample Transcript and Corresponding Codes

Screenshots from coding process on NVivo

Pseudonym and accompanying information that might be identifiable has been redacted as it is not relevant to the code

Transcript: 03

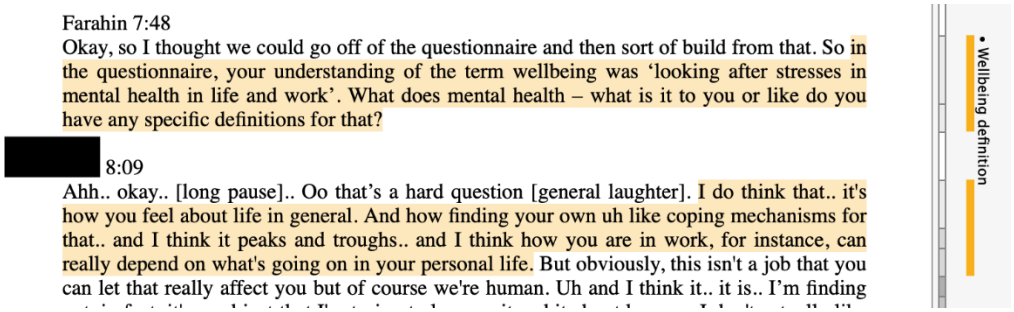


Corresponding codes:

Not being stressed, feeling cared for

From a professional and personal perspective

Transcript: 05



Corresponding codes:

Looking after stresses in mental health in life and work

Being able to cope emotionally and feeling good about your job and how that is managed

Dynamic with peaks and troughs

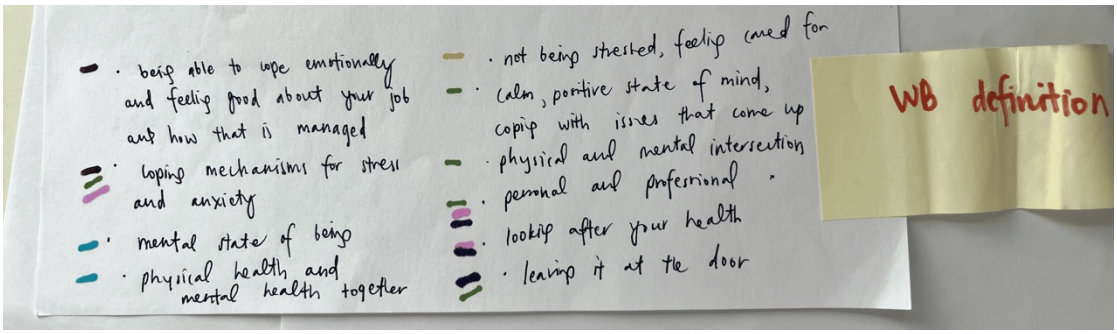
Appendix J – Sample of Grouping of Codes into Subthemes

Revised Subtheme	Initial Subtheme	Contributing Codes
Defining wellbeing	Wellbeing definition	Being able to cope emotionally and feeling good about your job and how that is managed

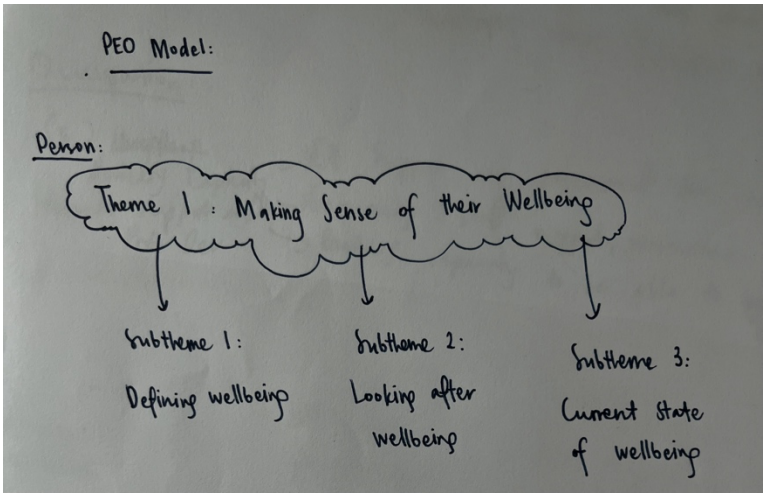
		Dynamic with peaks and troughs
		Mental state of being
		Physical health and mental health together
		Not being stressed, feeling cared for
		Calm, positive state of mind to cope with issues that come up
		Personal and professional related
		Leaving it at the door
		Looking after stresses in life and work
		Working out, socialising
Cultivating wellbeing practices	Wellbeing practices	Not connecting with work over the weekend
		Mindfulness practices
		Talking to friends about wellbeing and mental health
		Supportive family to talk to
		Reframing stress and seeing it in different ways
		Having boundaries with work and home
		Measuring emotions so it does not spill over
		Work socials
		Physical exercise like swimming
		Being out in nature
		Speaking with sister who is also working on wellbeing
		Watching rubbish TV and not being disturbed
		Speaking with friends and family
		Looking after self
		Booking in nice things
		Periodic EP check ins
		Helping others helps them, getting a lot for wellbeing in that way

Appendix K – Draft Thematic Map of Theme 1

Subtheme 1 with corresponding codes



Draft thematic map of Theme 1



Draft thematic map of Theme 1 in relation to research question 1

How do teaching staff within the PRU perceive their overall sense of wellbeing?

RQ 1 Thematic Map:

Theme 1: Making sense of their wellbeing (Person)

Sub-theme: Definitions of wellbeing (questionnaire and interviews)

Sub-theme: Current state of wellbeing (questionnaire and interviews)

Sub-theme: Everyday responsibilities (interviews)