



Supporting Emotional Wellbeing in Schools in the Context of Austerity

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Supporting Emotional Wellbeing in Schools in the Context of Austerity



Terry Hanley, Laura Anne Winter, Kimberley Burrell

The University of Manchester

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Executive Summary

Background

Schools are increasingly being seen as hubs for supporting the emotional wellbeing of young people (Department for Education, 2015b; Sharpe et al., 2016). Examination of the literature that focuses upon emotional wellbeing and education illustrates the myriad of significant social determinants that interact when considering successful outcomes (Raffo et al., 2009; World Health Organization (WHO), 2014), with poverty being found to have detrimental effects on both mental health and academic attainment. Further, previous research documents the various impacts of austerity, and austerity related social policy, on emotional wellbeing and education (e.g. Winter, Burman, Hanley, Kalambouka, & McCoy, 2016). To account for the broad range of interacting factors, it is therefore important to adopt a systemic and ecological conception of wellbeing and education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Such an approach encourages us to see issues, such as the bridging of education and mental health services, within their contexts and as situated in various social systems.

The Research Study

This report summarises the findings of a research project, undertaken by staff within the Manchester Institute of Education at the University of Manchester, which explored the way in which schools support the emotional wellbeing of their pupils. Consistent with the systemic perspective noted above, it specially focuses upon the impact of the current social and political climate of 'austerity'. Four key research questions were addressed:

1. What types of professionals are supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils in schools?
2. How well supported and trained do staff feel when facilitating pupils' emotional wellbeing?
3. (a) What activities do professionals undertake when supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils? and,
(b) What reasons do members of school staff give for engaging in activities that support the emotional wellbeing of pupils?
4. Do professionals believe their work has changed as a consequence of the wider context of austerity?

Three secondary schools in Manchester were selected as case study schools to take part in this study. Senior management in these schools were asked to identify members of staff (both those employed by the school and those from outside organisations) involved in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils. These individuals were then invited to take part in semi-structured interviews focussing upon the topics noted above. In total 29 members of staff were interviewed for the study. The interviews were then reviewed for commonalities and key themes.

Findings

The findings indicate that a wide variety of staff are involved in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils in schools. Participants reflected a range of staff roles, including teachers, senior management, counsellors and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs). One respondent told us that, in the current context of austerity, the 'pastoral scaffold' at their

school had shrunk, indicating that they were unable to employ as many staff who had a specific pastoral focus than they were able to do previously. Many participants talked about the range of professionals having narrowed given the cuts to external services which used to support the emotional wellbeing of young people, for example Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and youth clubs.

Participants reported that they believe they are doing an increasing level of challenging work supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils', with little training in this area beyond that focused on safeguarding.

Various activities are undertaken by schools to support the emotional wellbeing of young people, including whole school approaches and specific targeted interventions such as counselling. Notably, in relation to the activities undertaken, our findings suggest that school staff often think about many of their interactions with students as being focused on supporting emotional wellbeing, outside those 'formal' interventions. For example, participants described 'being there' for their students, building relationships, and being available to listen as all being important forms of action to support emotional wellbeing within the scope of their role.

An increased pupil need for support was described by participants, and this was attributed at least in some part to austerity and the broader social and political climate. For example, the overwhelming majority of school staff we spoke to told us that they saw an increasing number of young people who required some support in this area, and that the particular mental health needs they are seeing are increasing in terms of complexity. Participants did not attribute this increase wholly to socio-political issues. However, austerity was suggested to be increasing the level of deprivation experienced by families and communities, and participants spoke about the negative impacts of welfare reform and other social changes, such as the outcome of the recent EU referendum, on pupil wellbeing. Alongside this reported increase in need, participants told us about their perception of a decrease in resources: they talked about the reduced level of funding available to schools and the impact of the way in which services, such as educational psychology support, are no longer funded by the Local Authority but bought in using school budgets. Additionally, there was a significant amount of worry and distress reported about the loss of resources like CAMHS. These external services have historically provided greater support for pupils who were seen as having more complex needs, and school staff were therefore more able to refer pupils in need to these professionals to gain additional support with issues related to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Given the perception of a decreased resource to serve an increased need, and the ways in which school staff reported engaging in a large amount of informal support work for emotional wellbeing, an important finding of this work was that school staff are shouldering a significant emotional burden which is perceived to be increasing. In short, school staff reported feeling like they needed to do more with less, and with less support. Many examples were shared of staff hearing distressing stories and witnessing challenging situations as part of their role within education, and participants reported feeling worried, upset and anxious as a result of the emotional work they engaged in. As noted above they told us that they had limited training to support their work in this area. Whilst they saw supporting emotional wellbeing to be inherent to work within education, they suggested that the scope of this work had broadened and that they no longer felt like education

professionals, but social workers or counsellors. Internal to the school, participants felt well supported and believed that others understood this work was vital to their roles (and how much they were required to do). However, they also felt tensions externally, with Ofsted assessments being perceived as heavily weighted towards academic support rather than pastoral care, and the perception of the UK Government's lack of understanding of the 'on the ground' situation in schools in a context of austerity being prevalent.

Recommendations

Whilst acknowledging that broader changes to austerity politics are realistically required in order to address many of the issues raised by our participants, and that this study was relatively small-scale in nature, we make several recommendations on the basis of our findings. These are as follows:

- National health and education policies need to take a joined up approach. They should clearly articulate where the remit and boundaries of school practitioners' roles in addressing emotional wellbeing begin and end. Ideally, broader systems should be examined so as to ensure that schools are fairly assessed on what they are being asked to do within the communities that they serve. Ofsted should therefore appropriately recognise the significant amount of work that staff do to support the emotional wellbeing of young people, and its associated importance within the role of education, and take this into consideration more consistently within assessments of school provision.
- Senior management should pro-actively reflect upon the culture that they are promoting within their schools. Specifically, the support for school staff (teaching and other professional groups) who are engaging in a significant amount of emotional labour should be considered. Clinical supervision should be supported and broader training should be provided for staff, focusing on issues such as mental health awareness, basic counselling skills and risk assessment. Further, additional training around issues related to the likely impact of austerity upon children, families and communities would also be of benefit for example on issues such as welfare reform and housing. Senior leadership teams may also be in a position to lobby Government and wider macro systems about the 'on the ground' experience of schools and school staff in the context of austerity.
- As there is already an abundance of good practice occurring in schools, it is recommended that professionals supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils should network and share resources. Whilst such networks are already in existence (e.g. Schools in Mind) this research indicates that sharing resources related to the impact of social and political forces, such as austerity, upon emotional wellbeing would be a useful focus of this work.
- Finally, professionals who are actively engaged in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils should engage in their own supportive reflexive activities. For example, peer supervision networks and groups might be established to provide emotional support for staff. Such groups, which are commonplace in psychological practices, can promote reflexive practice and potentially support staff in coping with the emotional labour associated with such tasks.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Table of Contents	5
Table of Figures	5
Acknowledgements	6
Author Information	6
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
Chapter 2: Methodology	10
Chapter 3: Findings	12
1. What types of professionals are supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils in schools?	13
2. How well supported and trained do staff feel when facilitating pupils' emotional wellbeing?	15
3(a). What activities do professionals undertake when supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils?	18
3(b). What are the reasons why members of school staff are engaged in activities to support the emotional wellbeing of pupils?	20
4. Do professionals believe their work has changed as a consequence of the wider context of austerity?.....	21
Chapter 4: Discussion and Recommendations	30
Core theme 1: <i>A 'perfect storm'</i>	30
Core theme 2: <i>Roles and responsibilities of school staff</i>	31
Core theme 3: <i>'Emotional labour' and the emotional burden</i>	32
Implications and recommendations	33
Appendix	38
A: Interview Schedule.....	38

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Table outlining key descriptive features of the schools involved	10
Figure 2: An abbreviated interview schedule	11
Figure 3: An overview of the staff involved in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils. 14	

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Author Information

Dr Terry Hanley, CPsychol, AFBPsS, is the Programme Director for the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at the University of Manchester. He is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and has recently co-edited *The SAGE Handbook of Counselling and Psychotherapy (4th ed)* with Colin Feltham and Laura Winter (Sage, 2017). Terry worked as a therapist in educational settings for over 10 years and has completed numerous research projects focusing upon the emotional wellbeing of children and young people. He was also lead editor of the text *Adolescent Counselling Psychology* (Routledge, 2013). Follow him on twitter @drterryhanley.

Dr Laura Anne Winter, CPsychol, is a Lecturer in Education and Counselling Psychology based at the University of Manchester, Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a HCPC registered Practitioner Psychologist (Counselling). She has recently co-edited *The SAGE Handbook of Counselling and Psychotherapy (4th Ed.)* with Colin Feltham and Terry Hanley. Her research interests focus on issues of social justice, and in particular the impact of economic and relational inequality on both psychological wellbeing and educational processes and outcomes. Previously she has been involved in research exploring social justice attitudes and behaviours within counselling and educational psychology, and the impact of welfare reform on children and families.

Kim Burrell is the Northern Hub Coordinator for the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families having previously worked as a Research Assistant in the Manchester Institute for Education at the University of Manchester. Her research interests include the emotional wellbeing of young people and the role that schools play in identifying and responding to this.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

This report presents the findings of a recent piece of work conducted by staff from the Manchester Institute of Education (MIE) at the University of Manchester. The project explored the way in which professionals are supporting the emotional wellbeing of secondary school pupils within the context of austerity. In this first chapter we situate the project briefly in terms of the national and international context, with a specific focus being upon recent policy developments and the academic literature. Finally, to end this chapter we outline the rationale and scope of the work.

Emotional wellbeing in education and schools

Mental health provision is currently high on the United Kingdom (UK) national political agenda, with Theresa May making reference to the lack of provision in her inaugural speech as Prime Minister (The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, 2016). Of particular concern is the prevalence of mental health issues among children and young people. Approximately 1 in 10 young people under the age of 16 meet the criteria for a diagnosed mental health problem (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford, & Goodman, 2005), while around a fifth of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year (WHO, 2003). The emotional wellbeing of young people can have a large impact on their life chances. For example, there is compelling evidence to suggest that childhood mental health problems and lower levels of emotional wellbeing have a negative impact upon education and academic attainment (Breslau, Lane, Sampson, & Kessler, 2008; Moilanen, Shaw, & Maxwell, 2010).

Schools are uniquely positioned to access young people, and as such have become a focal point of government policy in this area. The publication of the Department of Health's *'Future in Mind'* (DoH, 2015) and the Department for Education's *'Counselling in Schools: a blueprint for the future'* (DfE, 2015) highlight the increasing roles that schools are being asked to play in promoting and supporting the psychological wellbeing of young people. Many approaches are already employed in supporting emotional wellbeing within the school setting (Sharpe et al., 2016). These include resources provided internally, and funded through the school budget, alongside specialist external provision, for example from educational psychology, counselling and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Internal support structures often involve whole-school universal approaches (e.g Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2005). Furthermore, teaching staff are commonly taking on pastoral and supportive roles beyond the traditional view of a teacher who only supports academic growth and development (Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2009). Research has suggested that school practitioners often feel unsupported and deskilled when talking about mental health, and do not feel completely confident in this growing area of their work (Danby & Hamilton, 2016).

A systemic understanding of emotional wellbeing and education

Frequently, the mental health of young people is seen as an individualised issue explained by largely individual factors (e.g. she has a genetic disposition to depression; or he has lower levels of resilience and has therefore developed anxiety). In contrast to this approach however, a significant body of work documents the ill-effects of poverty and deprivation on

emotional wellbeing. For example research has examined the social determinants of mental health and found that poverty and inequality are both significant factors in the development of mental health problems (e.g. Allen, Balfour, Bell, & Marmot, 2014; WHO, 2014). Given the numerous social determinants of mental health, critical psychology perspectives have argued against an individualised model of wellbeing. This argues that 'mental health problems' are not solely caused by individual factors and that we should remember to view the individual within the broader social systems in which they are situated, rather than divorcing them from their context and considering them in purely individual terms (Parker, 2015; Prilleltensky, 2013). Similarly, within education, social determinants have been discussed, and research has shown the way in which students from poorer backgrounds do worse in terms of academic achievement, and are more likely to drop out of education earlier (Cooper & Stewart, 2013; Raffo et al., 2009). From this view point we can look at young people within the context of their school, their local community, and their city, as well as the national and international context. Policies and practices, which are embedded at each layer of that social structuring, may therefore be seen to be impacting upon young people and their wellbeing.

The impact of austerity

In terms of the current broader social and political context, 'austerity' and related policies remain an issue in the UK and across Europe. The UK has been in a period of austerity since the election of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition Government in 2010. This followed on from the international financial crises in 2007/8 and translates to a political and social context of reductions in state spending and the shrinking of the welfare state, for example through budget cuts for specific services and changes to policies around welfare and social benefits (Karanikolos et al., 2013). Research suggests that low-income families with children in the UK lost the most from changes to benefits and taxes introduced between 2010 and 2014 (De Agostini, Hills, & Sutherland, 2014).

Given the systemic, critical understanding of education and wellbeing described above, we suggest this political context may potentially impact upon young people in various significant ways. For example, a range of negative impacts of austerity on health have been discussed (Karanikolos et al., 2013) and regular newspaper stories in the UK are beginning to demonstrate the increasing impact of this wider social and political context on schools and their funding and practices (e.g. Adams & Marsh; Press Association, 2017; and also see the twitter hashtag #whatwouldyoucut). Furthermore, academic research has begun to explore the impact of austerity, and austerity related policies, on education and teaching. For example, work has reflected on the regulation and assessment of 'good' teaching and education in the context of austerity (Simmie, Moles, & O'Grady, 2016), the impact of privatisation (Jones, 2015), and the impact of specific welfare reforms such as the 'bedroom tax' on children and their education (Winter et al., 2016). The latter project, conducted by a team of researchers at MIE, found that schools are witnessing a range of impacts of welfare reform on children and families, and that this is leading to numerous changes in pastoral support practices within schools (Bragg et al., 2015).

The current project

Given (1) the current push for schools to increasingly act as hubs that support the emotional wellbeing of young people, (2) the evidence for a broader systemic understanding of

wellbeing, and (3) the emerging evidence base around the impact of austerity on both education and wellbeing, we considered that the current social and political climate of austerity in the UK was an important context to examine when considering the ways that schools are supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils. We aimed to extend both the work done examining the role of schools supporting emotional wellbeing (Rossi, Pavey, Macdonald, & McCuaig, 2016; Sharpe et al., 2016), and existing research which has explored the impacts of austerity on wellbeing and education (Winter et al., 2016). In doing so, we initially focused on four interrelated research questions:

1. What types of professionals are supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils in schools?
2. How well supported and trained do staff feel when facilitating pupils' emotional wellbeing?
3. What activities do professionals undertake when supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils?
4. Do professionals believe their work has changed as a consequence of the wider context of austerity?

Within the chapters that follow we initially outline the research methods that we have employed before moving on to discuss the findings from our analysis of the transcripts. The findings are structured around the research questions noted above, and quotations from the participants are provided to give the reader an accurate sense of the experiences of those who have been involved. In the final chapter we then move on to discuss the findings of the work in relation to broader literature and policy, as well as discussing some implications arising from the project. Following these reflections, our recommendations for policy makers, senior leadership teams in schools and professionals are presented. Ultimately, the aim of this report is to provide an extended account of the main findings presented in a digestible format for stakeholders and interested parties. This will form the basis of more specific academic publications and presentations.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The data gathered to answer our research questions was generated using a qualitative case study design. Following ethical review from the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee, three co-educational secondary schools/academies from the city of Manchester were recruited as case study schools. For the purpose of this report, these schools have been given fictional names and are referred to as Hillview Academy, Newtown School, and Littlewood School.

Initially it had been planned to recruit schools that enabled a comparison to be made between the more ‘advantaged’ and more ‘disadvantaged’ schools, with the published Pupil Premium data being used as a proxy to identify relevant schools. Unfortunately it was not feasible to get enough variance in the interested schools to make this angle of enquiry meaningful. As such, three schools within the geographical area of interest were selected on a first come, first served basis. Each of these had between 50% and 70% of pupils who were eligible for the Pupil Premium contribution at the time of recruitment. These figures prove relatively common for the region, with the mean average Pupil Premium being 57.1% in the 2015/16 academic year. Figure 1 provides a brief overview of key descriptive features of the schools involved (some elements have been amended slightly to preserve the anonymity of the Schools in question).

	School 1	School 2	School 3
Name	Hillview Academy	Newtown School	Littlewood School
Type	Mixed Comprehensive	Mixed Comprehensive	Mixed Comprehensive
Pupils	1500	1000	1000
Pupil Premium	50%	65%	70%
Ofsted Rating	Good	None as yet	None as yet

Figure 1: Table outlining key descriptive features of the schools involved

Once schools had been recruited, the initial step of the research was to invite each case study school to identify the key professionals they see as engaging in work to support pupils’ emotional wellbeing. Senior managers from each school were asked to develop a list of relevant people which included representatives of senior leadership teams, teaching staff and external providers working within the school. Those identified were invited to attend a semi-structured interview to discuss the work that they undertake in supporting the emotional wellbeing of the students and how this has been impacted by the present socio-economic

climate. The main questions posed are outlined in Figure 1 below (A full interview schedule can be found in Appendix A: Interview Schedule):

In what ways do you see your role as supporting the emotional wellbeing of young people in the school?

How does your role link to other professionals supporting the emotional wellbeing of students in the school?

What are the positive things you take from supporting the emotional wellbeing of students?

What difficulties, if any, do you experience with supporting the emotional wellbeing of students?

Have you seen the need for such support for students change over recent years at all?

What do you think the impact of the current economic and political climate has been on students' emotional wellbeing, if any?

How well supported do you feel in your work with students, particularly in relation to emotional wellbeing?

Have you had any training which has helped you when supporting the emotional wellbeing of students?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Figure 2: An abbreviated interview schedule

In total 29 interviews were completed, all by the same interviewer. Thirteen came from Hillview Academy, nine from Newtown School and seven from Littlewood School. The interviews were transcribed, anonymised and summarised. Participants were then invited to comment on the summary of their interview to ensure that the key points made by the staff members had been picked up (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). A thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method provides the flexibility to allow key themes pertaining to the research questions to emerge. The themes derived from the analysis were then considered for coherence by the research team as a whole (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999).

The study design has enabled us to capture a rich picture of the current context as understood by those working to support the emotional wellbeing of young people. It adopts a critically informed stance that is in keeping with the position advocated by Professor Michael Apple (2013). Here researchers are viewed as (1) bearing witness to the impact of the current policies upon practices and practitioners, (2) highlighting contradictions and action with a view to engaging in transformational social and educational efforts, and (3) acting as a 'critical secretary' for those engaged in fruitful activities. It is however important to acknowledge that the views presented here are the perceptions of the participants as they are understood by the research team. As such, these reports are not presented with a view to being directly generalizable to other contexts. It is however anticipated that the findings will have resonance with the work of others.

Chapter 3: Findings

Within this section we provide an overview of the key findings from this study. As noted earlier in this report, we initially posed four questions for the research:

1. What types of professionals are supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils in schools?
2. How well supported and trained do staff feel when facilitating pupils' emotional wellbeing?
3. What activities do professionals undertake when supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils?
4. Do professionals believe their work has changed as a consequence of austerity?

In the process of conducting our analysis, an additional question arose. This was,

What reasons do members of school staff give for engaging in activities that support the emotional wellbeing of pupils?

As the content in the interviews related to this commonly linked to the answers we obtained for research question three, for the rest of this report we refer to this as follows:

3. (a) What activities do professionals undertake when supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils? and,
(b) What reasons do members of school staff give for engaging in activities that support the emotional wellbeing of pupils?

We have structured this chapter around these four overarching questions. In the subsequent discussion chapter, we reflect upon the findings in relation to the literature, as well as considering the implications of our work and future directions for research and practice.

1. What types of professionals are supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils in schools?

The research identified numerous professionals, both internal and external to the school, who work to support the emotional wellbeing of pupils. The professionals identified included those at various career levels, ranging from Head teachers to Newly Qualified Teachers, and a majority were female (79%). It also included those from various professional backgrounds, including teachers, nurses, counsellors, CAMHS practitioners, teaching assistants, learning mentors, and safeguarding officers. Figure 3 provides a summary of the professionals that were identified by senior staff within the schools involved in the project. Two groups are represented, with the first reflecting staff bought in by the school themselves and the second identifying resources paid for by outside sources (all individuals are clustered together and multiple roles separated so as not to identify participants in the study). Those that are underlined were not interviewed for the project as they were unable to take part. In considering these different groups of professionals, it is notable that those with more specialised services focused upon emotional wellbeing/mental health were commonly situated outside of the school (e.g. counsellors, educational psychologists and school nurses).

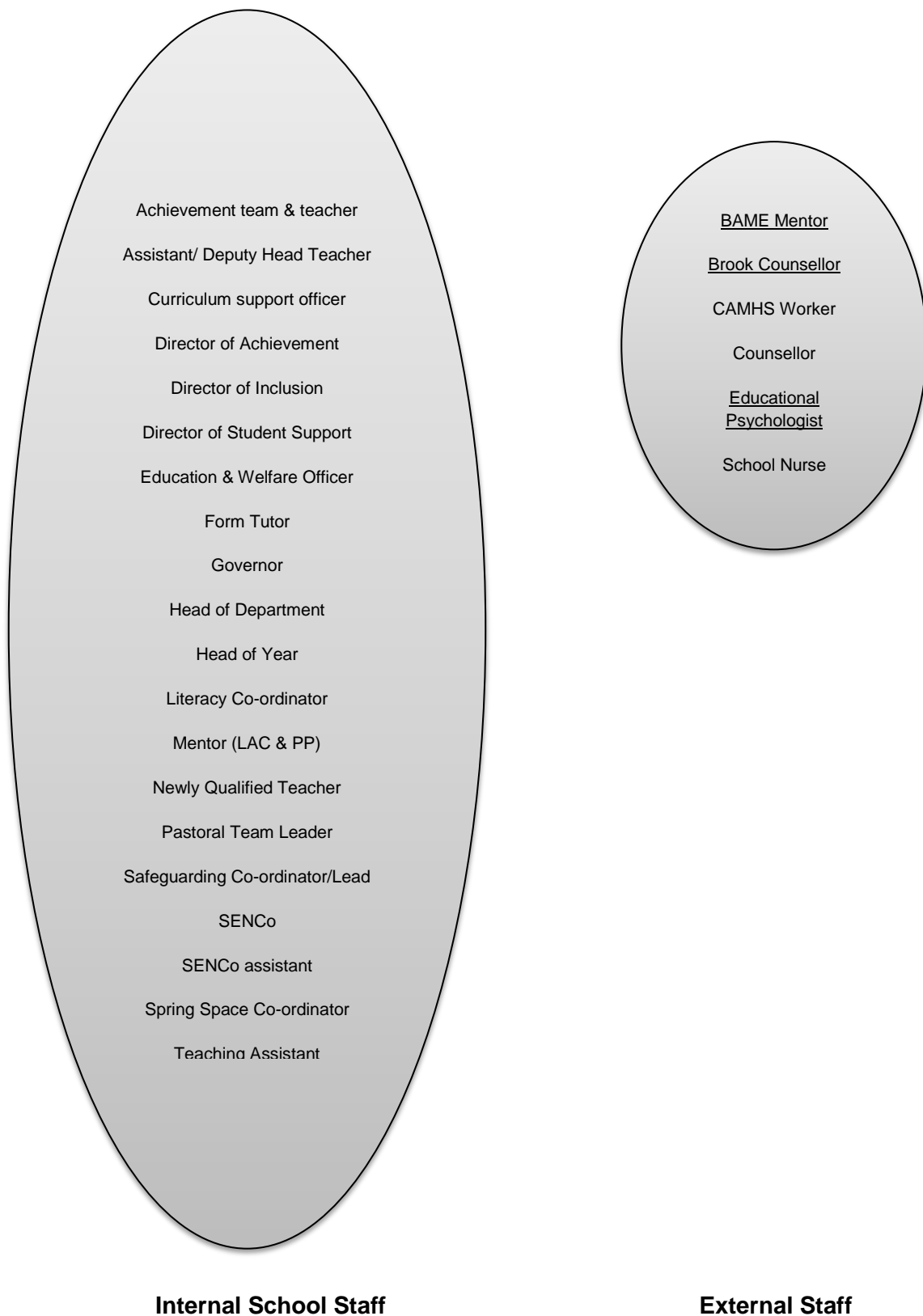


Figure 3: An overview of the staff involved in supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils

The primary focus of the participants' roles varied, with staff varying greatly in the amount of time dedicated to supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils. Here we note that some staff reported this to be below 15% of their time whilst others noting it as 100% of their time. The inherent problems of defining 'supporting emotional wellbeing' and the difficulties in estimating and reporting time spent in this capacity are acknowledged here. This is something we reflect on in relation to the second research question and the 'activities' undertaken by staff. Importantly, over 50% of the interviewees reported that their role was primarily devoted to this kind of work, with descriptions of their workload including individuals using terms such as "majority", "key part of role" or "a lot of time". Notably, this delineation was however not straight forward, with one participant summing it up by stating:

So I think, you know you see it on a daily basis, and you do it on a daily basis but you don't actually necessarily devote a specific time for it if that makes sense (Pastoral Team Leader, Newtown School)

A majority of the participants stated that they spent a significant amount of their time supporting the emotional wellbeing of the students in some capacity. This may not be surprising given that they were identified as those with a contribution to make by the Senior Leadership Teams of the respective schools. Participants also talked about the changing nature of the range of professionals supporting the emotional wellbeing of students, and so what we found can only be considered a snapshot in time. When we address our fourth research question below, relating to the impacts of austerity, we outline the way in which the perceptions of the current cuts to services and the changing organisations and funding involved is seen to impact upon who is working with pupils to support wellbeing.

2. How well supported and trained do staff feel when facilitating pupils' emotional wellbeing?

Participants reported that there were numerous difficulties for them in supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing, which therefore highlighted the need for appropriate support and training for staff. The most commonly cited difficulty faced in providing emotional support to young people was a lack of time available to engage as they would like to with young people identified as requiring support.

I do struggle with is the time aspect, which is like anything. You want these children to be seen ASAP but in the real world it doesn't work that way (School nurse, Newtown School)

I just wish that we really had that little bit more time, if even if it was just an hour a day to be able to sit down and talk to some of them. You know we could possibly fit 2 students in in an hour; those that you know might be struggling (Looked after Children & Pupil Premium mentor, Littlewood School)

Alongside this, emotional difficulties experienced by the staff in providing support for students were articulated. There was clear evidence of the impact on the emotional work on the wellbeing of the staff involved, and that it was sometimes a challenge to manage that impact:

It probably sounds a little bit selfish and I don't mean it to but the fact that you do then worry about that student, the fact that you do then take it away with you and I

think that anyone that says they're not maybe they're a lot harder than me (Curriculum Support Officer, Hillview Academy)

You've got to be ... hard hearted isn't the word because I'm not because if I didn't care about the kids you couldn't do this role ... but you've got to be I suppose emotionally resilient (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

Difficulties posed by perceived unrealistic expectations from Government and in measuring and gaining recognition for the impact of interventions to support emotional wellbeing were also highlighted.

It's difficult professionally to say what impact it has because often these interventions it's really hard to measure the impact (SENCo assistant, Hillview Academy,)

I think professionally and I think this is throughout the teaching profession, is that the expectations in a really difficult economic climate and a really uncertain political climate but also all the change in educational reforms over the last few years, I think the expectations by the government of what we can achieve, because I think they're really unrealistic (Enhanced provision coordinator, Hillview Academy)

In addition to being problematic for staff themselves, this increased stress and decreased morale among the staff was linked by some respondents to increased emotional wellbeing issues among the young people as they weren't getting positive role modelling.

I think that role modelling does have an impact and I think austerity does have an impact on how safe professionals feel about role modelling what they do (Director of Children and Family Inclusion Services, Littlewood School)

If a child is in school 6 hours of the day, a lot of adults in the school become their significant adults in their lives so it's important that they are in a good place. It's important that they see positive kind of aspects of their roles and I think there's more and more pressure on staff in schools in a whole range of areas and I think that has a huge impact on young people's emotional well-being (Senior CAMHS Practitioner, Littlewood School)

I think the uncertainty that's been put on adults and the teaching profession I think that uncertainty is going to then come back to the young people I think. Young people who have already got so much uncertainty in their life, school and education is the place they're safe and I think that, that's why I think long term it could have an even bigger impact on the ... and actually the emotional well-being of students (Enhanced provision coordinator, Hillview Academy)

Participants appeared to experience a split between how they felt within their own school environment, and how they felt as a teacher within the broader political system in which education is embedded. On the whole, participants felt supported in their role internally by their colleagues and had clear referral pathways if they were needed.

I would never feel that a student's told me something and that "oh god what do I do?" I've never felt like that here at all. So yeah, I feel really supported (Curriculum support officer, Hillview Academy)

However, in terms of external support and understanding there was perceived to be a lack of understanding of the difficulties that the teachers and the young people faced among central government. This was alongside a lack of resources available to support the young people themselves, which served to decreased feelings of support.

By my colleagues, most definitely, yes. [But] by those people down there in Whitehall, no not at all. I just think...and I'm not ... well I am having a go because I just think they need to come and understand (Assistant Head Teacher, Littlewood School)

Externally, I don't feel supported at all, to be honest because I suppose the specialist agencies, the resourcing seems to be just depleting quite a bit (SENCo assistant, Hillview Academy)

Participants were asked whether they had received training specifically in supporting the emotional health of young people and whether they could identify any training that they felt would be helpful in this area. The training participants described having to date largely focussed on safeguarding issues. Within our interviews, individual staff suggested that they wanted more training in mental health issues and how to deal with and identify emotional problems, and participants representing senior management commented that they wanted to increase the work done in this area:

I feel like mental health is becoming more sort of ... is deteriorating amongst students is my feeling, so any support or training around that would be really useful (SENCo assistant, Hillview Academy)

We're looking further down the line at putting more things into our role and looking at kind of getting some of the tools that other agencies might have used previously to introduce some of that more specific work with young people... To try to deliver that within school really because lots of things are no longer in existence (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

However, alongside this, a tension appeared around whether school staff thought they should have additional training or not, and whether or not they should be expanding their roles to support emotional wellbeing further. This tension largely centred on competence and responsibility. For example, in addition to the desire for more training, other respondents felt that further training may not be desirable and that the appropriate use of referrals was preferable, or that it is not their role to continually expand their remit and train to be able to support families with all issues. This sentiment is expressed in the following quotes:

I think the level of training we have is sufficient for what we need to be able to do and anything further than that would probably be starting to step on the toes on the person above that is the qualified expert in that area rather than us which our day-to-day is teaching (Head of Department, Newtown School)

Yes, we're here to support them as a whole person but at the moment it feels like absolutely everything comes back to schools ... I can't be trained in every single area that a family would possibly have a support need (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

A view was also presented that this sort of support and interaction was more likely to be dependent on the personality of the staff member than any professional training.

I think a lot of it is personality based, how high up on the agenda it is and what worth individual members of staff see in it, and ever since I have been here it has been integral, it has to be done especially in an area like this where the students can find it difficult (Head of Department, Newtown School)

3(a). What activities do professionals undertake when supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils?

The question of what constituted support for emotional wellbeing in the interview was left deliberately vague, with the view that the respondent could then determine this. Specifically, this allowed us to gather data on a wide range of activities which participants themselves defined as supporting the emotional wellbeing of their pupils. The activities which our respondents discussed included both specifically designed interventions and more general behaviours and pastoral support that many individuals considered significant.

Relationships and role modelling

An emphasis on building strong relationships between staff and students was presented as a way of supporting the emotional wellbeing of the young people, as was role modelling positive behaviour and emotional health.

Something we're really, really keen on in this school, is that idea of building relationships to ensure that learning is positive, learning is happening and students can be successful (Enhanced provision coordinator, Hillview Academy)

As much as we have timetable concerns, as much as we have a shrinking resource from exterior agencies and from health, actually very simple interventions can have a massive impact and that these interventions are essentially down to role modelling, they are down to staff and student relationships and they are down to effective communication (Director of Children and Families Inclusion Services, Littlewood School)

Participants talked about how the relationships they build with students allow trust to develop and then young people are more able to share with them and come to them with any particular issues. One participant talked about the importance of showing care for their pupils and helping them to see "value in themselves". Another reflected on the importance of personalising things to individual students, and one talked about needing to fully understand and know the students they work with. Therefore, a relational approach to education was seen as playing an important role in supporting emotional wellbeing.

Targeted Interventions

Targeted interventions were also described which provided support for students' emotional wellbeing. Within this, participants described both interventions which happened in more formal spaces and those which could be described as more informal practices. Formal targeted interventions included services such as counselling, art therapy, drama therapy and programmes designed to help to develop a certain skillset or overcome specific issues. In terms of informal targeted interventions, many participants suggested that this approach was an important part of the support a school is able to provide.

I mean some of my students just want to talk to someone who is listening ... you know... whether that's ... perhaps they come from a home where emotions are not valued or they're not given any credit or there are too many people in that home to get listened to (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

I think over here we are very good at unpicking the story of the child and I think that is something that schools are having to do more and more because no one else is unpicking the story and no-one else is putting into place the things that need to be put into place to allow those students to be successful and happy (Enhanced provision coordinator, Hillview Academy)

This informal approach was described as school staff being available to listen to a young person or explore what issues they are facing, and links to building relationships as a school practitioner as referred to above.

Whole School Interventions

Structured universal or whole school approaches were described in each school. These complimented the targeted work described above, and included time or activity specific interventions such as 'Happy and Healthy week' and ongoing approaches to aid the development of perceived positive attributes that may help the students' emotional wellbeing.

But one of the things which is really good about our school and what we do is we call them our Qualities of Success and we talk about kind of Cooperation and Motivation and Optimism and Resiliency and things are hard and it doesn't matter you all have different triggers (Assistant Headteacher, Hillview Academy)

It's about saying I've got a resource here and a skillset, I can role model and teach this skillset to this young person and then they can apply it across a range of subjects and a range of arenas (Director of Children and Families Inclusion Service, Littlewood School)

What is emotional wellbeing?

A final theme in relation to the activities undertaken by school, relates to defining what wellbeing is. School staff were asked specifically about things which supported the emotional wellbeing of their pupils. In addition to the activities described so far within this section, school staff described an even broader range of interventions which included providing food and clothing for pupils. For example, two of the three participating schools talked about offering a free breakfast for all pupils, and school staff also talked about the use of uniform banks:

We have a uniform bank where students can go if situations like that arise. I'm just trying to think of ... like things like food, because we, we have a lot of students who are free school meals, so we provide food for those, we do free breakfasts in the morning so, I think that there are a lot of situations that could arise but we ... I think we're quite good at dealing with those so it doesn't manifest as much as it might do in other schools or other environments (Achievement Team member, Hillview Academy)

These were seen as interventions to meet basic needs, and appeared to be classed as wellbeing support by the schools. We understand this as potentially indicating that

participants had a broad understanding of emotional wellbeing, in which physical needs have a direct link to psychological processes and education:

It could be from needing to go and buy uniform because they don't have the money to go and buy uniform ... kind of ... from a nutrition point of view - so have they had food, have they been watered? It sounds like [I'm talking about] a plant but have they had the necessities because that can have a massive impact academically and emotionally (Head of Year, Hillview Academy)

3(b). What are the reasons why members of school staff are engaged in activities to support the emotional wellbeing of pupils?

One area of interest, which was identified through the analysis but did not directly address any of our initially posed research questions was, 'why do school staff get involved in activities to support pupils' emotional wellbeing?' We realise that some of our participants had been directly employed, and in some cases were professionally qualified, to support the emotional wellbeing of young people. However, a number of the professionals we spoke to, were not in this position, for example they were employed as teaching staff and yet were heavily involved in pastoral work supporting wellbeing. This is illustrated in the following quote:

I'm not a social worker, I was never trained to be a social worker and sometimes I wonder how much of my job falls into that, you know. I'm a teacher, I'm an English teacher, that was my starting point but most of my work now is around pastoral needs and that's quite telling I think (Assistant Head Teacher and Pastoral lead, Hillview Academy)

Responses such as this raised the questions, 'why is so much of this work is being undertaken by educational staff?' and 'what is the rationale for this way of working?'. Our analysis indicated that different positions were taken in relation to these questions. For example, there was a suggestion that supporting wellbeing played a functional role within education, as it was good for academic attainment.

They can't attain if they're not feeling safe, it is Maslow's triangle isn't it? If they don't feel safe, looked after, nurtured, school's the last thing on the list (Assistant Head teacher & Pastoral leader, Hillview Academy)

In this case, the view is that you need to support emotional wellbeing in order to achieve academically. In addition to this perspective, some participants also reflected on the way in which supporting emotional wellbeing was simply a fundamental part of their role in education: part and parcel of their work, and 'the right thing to do'. Many respondents described a great sense of achievement when a young person who had been struggling was seen to overcome their problems and succeed.

So you don't go into teaching to help people write essays do you? You go into teaching because you want to you know you want to be part of that rounding and that sort of good citizenship really (Senior Vice Principal, Newtown School)

4. Do professionals believe their work has changed as a consequence of the wider context of austerity?

This project focused on the impact of austerity. We reflected on the importance of this as a focus to the work within the introduction above. Nevertheless, because of the difficulty defining austerity measures as distinct from more general social, economic and political change, we asked participants to describe what, if any, impact the 'current economic and political situation' has had on the emotional wellbeing of pupils and how schools support that. There are a number of themes relating to this question. In a broad sense participants reflected on their perception of an increased level of pupil need for emotional wellbeing support. They also described a number of more specific areas in which they felt the impact of the social and political context to be felt, and which were therefore seen to have changed their work and the work of schools. These included the UK vote to leave the European Union; a perceived increase in deprivation in their catchment areas; welfare reform and disability support; educational policy narratives and changes; changes to funding for schools; and changes funding for external services. These themes were seen to have either increased the need for greater support for emotional wellbeing for schools, or decreased the capacity for schools to support emotional wellbeing. In this section we talk through these themes in turn and illustrate with participant quotes. In the discussion section which follows we then go on to reflect on the implications of this perceived situation.

- ***Perceived change in level of need for support of emotional wellbeing***

The majority of the participants identified an increased level of need for emotional support among the young people that they work with, as can be seen in the following quotes:

I have always sort of known that there are issues and that some students do struggle, not necessarily just with behaviour but you know with their mental health. But this year, I will say that I feel like it's increasing because this year I see everything (SENCo assistant, Hillview Academy)

There is a lot more pupils being put on the SEN register for social, emotional and mental health issues so I mean, just looking at that data tells me that there is an increase on the emotional well-being of the pupils and obviously the need to support (SENCo, Newtown School)

An increase in need, an increase in the severity of the need, and also an increase in the numbers and I suppose the other thing that I have noticed is a decrease in the age at which this need becomes apparent (Director of Children and Families Services, Littlewood School)

Participants based in schools also reflected on their feeling that the particular presenting issues of students in relation to their emotional wellbeing are becoming more complex. This was a viewpoint which was shared with the mental health professionals we interviewed who were working with the schools:

The complexity of the issues that the young people come with are like, they are getting more and more complex really the young people and a lot of risk issues, a lot of risky behaviour (External Counsellor linked to Hillview Academy)

Our research did not directly assess whether or not there has been an increase in the level of need, rather we focused on the school professionals' perspectives of the situation. Therefore we are unable to state that there is indeed an increased level of pupil mental health problems or issues with emotional wellbeing. We are also unable to comment specifically on whether, if there is an increased need, this is specifically due to 'austerity' or the current socio-political context, given our focus on staff perceptions. We did however hear in our interviews a feeling from school staff that the increased need they perceive was related at least in part to the social context in which their students are embedded:

It's [austerity] not about young people, it's not about the majority of the population, I find the reforms really elitist I find the reforms are geared towards the upper middle class and above and that is my political belief very much so (Assistant Head Teacher, Hillview Academy)

I think the emotional well-being of students has been affected very much by the increase of deprivation and both in terms of deprivation at a family level but also with regards to the cuts in school (Enhanced Provision Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

This was not however clear cut, or straight forward. For example, participants did acknowledge, as can be seen in the quote from the Assistant Headteacher of Hillview Academy above, that their views were coloured by their own professional and political views and opinions. Furthermore, although this was the view of the vast majority of participants, there were mixed perspectives within the sample. For example, some disagreed that there had been a change or increase in the level in need:

I wouldn't say I've seen a significant difference, I think there has always been...you always get a cohort of students within a year group who need that additional support. I think I feel probably now there's more support in place for students now within the school than there was in the past (Learning mentor, Newtown School)

I do feel that living in the area we do there will always be a very steady number of children that like, that need support (Looked after Children and Pupil Premium mentor, Littlewood School)

Other contributors felt that the level of need had remained constant but that the specific issues had changed:

The only sort of correlation you can kind of see is the way that it emits itself depending on the age and the maturity of the student but in terms of how it has changed over time I don't, I don't necessarily think there is much that I could put my finger on (Head of Department, Newtown School)

Participants reflected on the impact that the increased need had on the day-to-day practice of their role:

I'm not a social worker, I was never trained to be a social worker and sometimes I wonder how much of my job falls into that, you know. I'm a teacher, I'm an English teacher, that was my starting point but most of my work now is around pastoral needs and that's quite telling I think (Assistant Head Teacher and Pastoral lead, Hillview Academy)

- ***Increase in deprivation***

The catchment areas for all 3 schools included in the study were considered by respondents to include disadvantaged or deprived neighbourhoods. When talking about whether or not their work has changed as a result of austerity, school staff reflected on their feeling that the current economic situation has increased family poverty and widened the number of families struggling financially:

It's not just kind of about those young people who are classed as free school meals or disadvantaged... there is a whole kind of level beyond ... just above that, and their families fall in and out and they really are living on the breadline. They're not workless or they're not classed as disadvantaged but they are surviving, they are just surviving I think that kind of from being a really thin layer has grown massively and I think that is because of the current political you know (Assistant Head Teacher, Hillview Academy)

The impact of a deteriorating family financial situation reportedly affected the emotional wellbeing of the young people in a number of ways, which therefore impacted upon the work schools are doing to support this. For example, school staff suggested that restricted access to regular food, new clothing, and opportunities for socialising with peers, and in some cases living in an unstable home environment were highlighted as affecting the emotional wellbeing of the children. Participants talked about the differences in the amount of 'cultural capital' between pupils from different social and economic backgrounds:

It's the social aspect for children as well. If their friends are going to the cinema and they can't afford to go it's that developmental and that social kind of gap I suppose that's building (Head of Year, Hillview Academy)

School staff suggested that the pressure for parents of living with significant financial worries sometimes resulted in strained relationships and distress for families. One respondent claimed to be aware of an increase in violence and alcohol misuse within the home. In relation to our research question, living within this environment was perceived to have a detrimental impact on the young person's mental health and therefore once again would increase the level of need which schools are presented with.

If you've got your Mum at home crying her eyes out because she's skint, she thinks she's going to be made homeless, that then means that that young person comes into school with the weight of the world on their shoulders (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

There's lots of arguing and I mean really massively strained relationships because of the lack of money (School nurse, Newtown School)

I have seen in this job, in the role I have done over the years and the role I do now a rise in domestic violence which is having an impact on the young people (Head of Year, Littlewood School)

Once again, this was not a clear cut issue however, and one member of staff who conducted home visits as part of their role felt the rise in deprivation and poverty may be difficult to substantiate.

You can see it with the young people but I'm not sure how tangible it is (Education and Welfare Officer, Littlewood School)

Furthermore, it is very challenging to identify the specific impact on emotional wellbeing of the financial situation within the family as this is often bound up with a wider range of social issues:

I certainly did see young people from kind of more deprived socioeconomic backgrounds and it was perhaps difficult to unpick whether benefit cuts had had an impact, there are often lots of complex social issues going on within those families. I suspect it hasn't helped because young people, if their parents are worrying about money then young people will also pick up on that start worrying as well (CAMHS practitioner, linked to Hillview Academy)

Overall, however, participants did suggest that they saw an increase in deprivation and poverty within the communities they serve, which impacted negatively upon students' wellbeing. This was therefore seen to increase the amount of students and range of problems schools were trying to support.

- ***Welfare reform and disability support***

Connected to the references to an increase in deprivation and poverty, some specific references were made to particular welfare reforms and their impact on families. The so-called 'bedroom tax' and changes to disability support funds were two areas which were raised as causing problems for families.

I had a family last week who are ... this mum had been on DLA, that's the right one isn't it? Disability Living Allowance for quite a while and she's had one of these new assessments and they said right you're fit to work and it's almost like you're fit to work off you go. And she comes into school because school's the place where she knows she's going to get some support and she's hysterical. Her rent's stopped, her housing benefit's stopped. I think when you're on DLA, I'm not 100% about this but when you're on DLA you can get a certain amount of top ups for certain things and then all of a sudden she couldn't get that and was just getting job seekers allowance. I mean she's got children but it seemed like it was like "that's it off you go and sort yourself out" and it's like people can't do that and you know actually there's a very limited amount of jobs that she could do. It was almost as if the expectation was that that would be fine or the expectation is that we don't think that you're disabled, so you can work and you're capable of doing these jobs but it's irrelevant whether these jobs are available or not. Her English isn't fantastic but they're not necessarily like "we'll support you with that", just "you need to sort your English out, you need to get yourself a job". And it does feel very much then like... school is a place of safety for a lot of parents... so they will come in school to discuss it and we spend hours of our time linking up with the right person at the job centre who can support her, whose not going to be just dismissive and making sure you know... or whether it's we link up with language classes or all of those things. It sounds awful but it's really time consuming and it seems that there are more and more of those situations (Safeguarding Lead, Hillview Academy).

Beyond the financial implications of such changes, school staff suggested that families were impacted by the uncertainty and lack of clarity around processes and procedures relating to their claims:

[The] bedroom tax caused chaos for loads of our families, you know, because they were suddenly having to pay all of this money and then actually you know ... The government was saying “you can move, you can move to a smaller property” well they can’t, there aren’t any, there is nowhere for anybody to move (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

They’ve had a letter from benefits saying that they are going to stop the free school meals. They are not working, so it’s a mistake on their part but obviously we’re not going to let the kids starve, we are going to feed them but it’s just stupid, pathetic paperwork and it’s like “get your act together these kids are on free school meals” (Head of Year, Littlewood School)

- ***Vote to Leave the European Union***

School staff described their experience of working with young people who were very anxious about the vote to leave the European Union. Whilst not directly about ‘austerity’ this was seen as relevant as being part of the broader socio-political context. One staff member talked about pupils going to see the Headteacher of their school because they had concerns about being asked to leave the country because they were European, and another described young people worrying about their future and where they would be able to work and settle down. Staff described the referendum as causing “a stir” and the outcome as resulting in “upset” and “concern”, with young people feeling “scared” and “worried”.

The impact of the EU referendum result on some of the kids who were really upset about it because they, you know, some kids felt positively about it obviously there was different people voted different ways but, some of the students are very, very scared and very worried and I think as adults we’re a bit scared and worried at the moment about some uncertain times and I think for young people who don’t really understand what’s happening I think that can have an impact on them. (Spring space co-ordinator, Hillview Academy)

- ***Funding available to schools***

School staff reflected on the way in which they perceived austerity and the current social and political climate to have impacted upon the funding available for schools, and the ways in which this has affected their work supporting pupil emotional wellbeing. One major example we saw in the data was about the need for schools to pay directly for services from their budget that had previously been provided by the Local Authority:

So they’ve decimated the service but if we wanted a nurse we could buy one, it wouldn’t increase our budget; it would have to come from somewhere else. Educational psychologist we buy in ... again, it’s not changed the headline figure but it is a service that we now buy that historically was available through the local authority. Lollipop lady/man: that’s a service that you now have to buy as a school. The things like, you know, the slashing Children’s Services budgets and the support

that's available, that's all coming down to school (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

Staff talked about the way in which they saw schools as holding a greater burden in terms of what is required, and the need for schools to 'bridge the gap' between the identified needs of the young people and the available provision. There were various implications of this scenario which participants reflected upon. For example, one school talked about the changes to school funding meaning that they had less pastoral staff to work with the greater need they had reflected upon:

We used to have a huge, huge pastoral team in school. We had a full time mental health worker, well one and a half, a full-time social worker, properly qualified etc. We had various mentors and so on and so on and they've all gone and now we're left with, you know, a few people who are experienced and doing what they can (Education and Welfare Officer, Littlewood School)

The pressures and challenges identified above were considered to have a detrimental impact on the young people's emotional wellbeing:

We try and do what we can but I think, not the school, I think that as a whole we're letting the kids down with mental health, with their emotional well-being" (Head of Year, Littlewood School)

I think there has been a change in terms of the emphasis on academic attainment rather than a holistic approach to young people and that kind of goes hand in hand with the time when I think young people's emotional needs are increasing massively and the presentation of young people with emotional needs is think is increasing drastically" (Senior CAMHS practitioner, Littlewood School)

- ***Funding available to external agencies***

One topic that dominated a large number of the interviews was access to CAMHS provision. This may have been, in part, exacerbated by each of the case study schools having had an in school service available until just prior to the interviews. As this resource had recently been removed it is likely that there was still some feeling of unease, confusion and fear about how the system would work going forward:

I was absolutely horrified when I found out [about the cut to CAMHS], and was shocked because I actually think more than ever the students are needing emotional well-being help, not taking it away, I couldn't believe it. Because she was so busy and she got on so well with the students (Teaching Assistant, Newtown School)

This service was described as having provided both timely access for young people to a counsellor with whom they were able to build a relationship, as well as expert knowledge and support for school staff. Some staff therefore expressed concern and a feeling of being unsupported in their own work, due to the absence of this service:

I was more accessible you tend to see the young people that perhaps you might class as hard to reach, so they wouldn't make it to district CAMHS because of perhaps a chaotic home life or just for practical circumstances so I would see those kinds of young people as well (CAMHS practitioner, linked to Hillview Academy)

Having [Rebecca] here, the CAMHS nurse, to just go and have a chat and say “look I’m wondering about this” has been brilliant. So it is a little bit nerve wracking that they’ve kind of gone (Head of Year, Hillview Academy)

Cuts to other services were also a common theme:

We’ve had cuts to almost every service that supports young people and all of that has a huge impact (CAMHS practitioner, Littlewood School)

Concern was expressed regarding the loss of external youth facilities and the associated youth workers that were considered to play an important role in supporting the emotional wellbeing of the young people alongside the work of schools:

There used to be loads of youth clubs round here. Loads, yeah... It’s where all the youth workers worked, there used to be youth workers and mentors ... because the funding just stopped. They cut back on all the youth workers I don’t think there are any youth workers anymore (Head of Year, Littlewood School)

In addition to having a direct impact upon young people, cuts to charities that provide mental health support to young people also means that schools have one less service to refer pupils to:

There were lots and lots of charities that were lottery funded or local council funded, you know, that you could use in the interim and they were really good you know working with families in the area. And most of those are non-existent now, they’ve lost the funding and they’ve gone (Teaching Assistant, Newtown School)

It was suggested that the perception of the loss of services may be as important as the actual lack of availability:

my perception is that the service is reduced so therefore because of that perception I don’t go out looking for the services much because I think “oh it’s not there” or because it’s not as evident or proactive because every service is so stretched, you become less aware, you become more siloed and I think everything just becomes a bit more insular (Director of Children’s and Families Services, Littlewood School)

One Safeguarding officer summed up the frustrations expressed by many with the lack of service availability and its perceived impact on the young people:

Frustrated with the lack of social workers, I’m frustrated with the lack of services out there to support people, I’m frustrated with the lack of mental health services out there for young people but also for parents and I’m frustrated with how serious a mental health problem has to become before anyone steps in. Because you think that all research tells you that the earlier you step in and the earlier you provide intervention the better the outcomes. I don’t understand why we are waiting to the point of, for some of our young people to the point of attempted suicide before we are, you know, stepping in and putting some support in. I don’t understand it, I don’t understand how... I get that we’re skint as a country but I don’t understand how that’s good forward planning you know (Safeguarding Coordinator, Hillview Academy)

Finally in relation to this theme, the pressures on external agencies were also considered by

school staff to have impacted on their ability to work in a multi-disciplinary way:

Many years ago having people working from Health and Education and children's services was just the done thing and having those shared conversations was just what happened whereas now things seem to become much more siloed and people don't often put their head above the parapet and see what else is going on out there (Director of Children's and Families Services, Littlewood School)

- ***Policy changes and educational reform***

Participants reflected on changes to education systems and educational policy, and suggested that recent changes within the context of the broader political system are having an impact upon the way in which schools support students' emotional wellbeing. For example, it was suggested that broader policy can be quite confusing and present conflicting messages to staff working in schools and the public. While the Department of Health (DoH) policies were felt to be encouraging a move towards engaging with emotional health needs of the young people, the DfE policy emphasis seemed to be increasingly narrow, focussed only on educational attainment:

You've stuff coming from the Home Office or the Health department that this is the school's responsibility but you're not getting that reflected in ... This is a priority and this is a priority and yet that priority is not necessarily measured in terms of what an Ofsted would look for, in terms of judging a school, it's not always what's looked for in terms of when DfE guidance comes out (Director of Children and Family Inclusion Services, Littlewood School)

One implication of this, which was described by participants, was that an emphasis on academic achievement increased the pressure felt by young people:

We get a lot of high achieving, middle class children who, you know, there's no financial difficulties at home that actually struggle perhaps because of aspirational things and pressures that are put on by parents (Assistant Headteacher and Pastoral lead)

That academic pressure they are finding it very difficult to cope with (Deputy Head & Pastoral Lead)

I think the expectations of young people and the expectations that young people put on themselves have increased massively (Enhanced Provision Coordinator)

This emphasis on the importance of academic work is also seen as contrasting with the discussions above which illustrate that families served by schools often see them as community hubs and come to them for advice about broader issues, such as welfare reform. Furthermore, this perceived increased emphasis on the academic remit of schools was considered by some to actually be reducing the scope of pastoral interaction with the children and increasing external referrals. Another argument presented was that the remit had remained broadly the same, but it was just being felt more keenly now as the funding changes start to bite:

The current demands nowadays on staff time you can't do that so you do have to have those signposts so people like CAMHS can come in and spend that quality time that once upon a time teachers were able to do (Assistant Head Teacher, Hillview Academy)

I think schools have always had this remit but I suppose how keenly they feel it, maybe because of pressure points now it feels heightened (Director of Children and Family Inclusion Services, Littlewood School)

It was also experienced by school staff as particularly frustrating as they reported feeling that there is a lack of recognition of this work by Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE):

As a school it pulls you into lots of different directions because we're measured, we're not really measured on those outcomes; you know we're measured on our results. So you know in an Ofsted report now you might get one line about how well we're meeting children's emotional needs, you know what I mean? When you think about the investment that goes into that, it's interesting (Assistant Head Teacher and Pastoral lead, Hillview Academy)

I'm not saying it is ignorance but it is certainly a lack of understanding and certainly the government some of those people are making decisions at the moment, I've got to say it have no understanding, real understanding of what it is like in this school (Senior CAMHS practitioner, Littlewood School)

As noted above, this situation meant that school staff reported feeling unsupported on a broader scale by the national structures within which teachers are embedded:

Externally, I don't feel supported at all, to be honest because I suppose the specialist agencies, the resourcing seems to be just depleting quite a bit (SENCo assistant, Hillview Academy)

In short, when combined with the findings detailed above, the schools we interviewed felt that they were being asked to do more to support student emotional wellbeing, with less resources and support, and for less recognition.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Recommendations

In this final chapter we pull together some of the key threads evident within the findings of this project. Through the interviews we have captured a rich picture of the current situation in the case study schools and demonstrated the complexity inherent in supporting young peoples' emotional wellbeing within educational settings. This complexity raises questions about broad ranging issues such as the philosophy underpinning education within the UK and the day-to-day implications of supporting the emotional health of pupils within schools. Our discussion of the findings here is focused around three core themes emerging from the project: the perception of a 'perfect storm' of increased need and decreased resource; the roles and responsibilities of school staff in relation to emotional wellbeing; and the significant emotional burden carried by staff in schools and their increasing 'emotional labour'. Following a brief discussion of each of these core themes, we present some implications and recommendations which arose from the work, before concluding the report.

Core theme 1: A 'perfect storm'

While it was felt by some participants that the level of need for emotional support among the school population had remained largely the same over time, there was majority perception among school staff that need has increased and is continuing to do so. This need related to both a *greater amount of young people* for whom staff felt emotional wellbeing or mental health was an issue, as well as a perception of *increased complexity of mental health needs*. Numerous pressures were referred to which, for participants, explained in part the increase in pupil need. These included increases in family poverty and deprivation; the outcome of the recent UK referendum on membership of the EU; welfare reform and changes to benefits; and pressures and changes within the education system (specifically increasing academic pressure). Alongside this increased need, staff reflected on their perception of the decreased resources with which schools were operating, which limited their ability to support this increased need: changes to school funding meaning that more services came directly from school budgets rather than the Local Authority; and cuts to external youth and community services such as CAMHS and youth clubs, which historically supported and complemented the provision from schools.

Both of these perceived trends (the increased levels of need and decreased levels of resources) were explained in part by school staff as being linked to the current social and political climate of austerity. We are unable to say whether or not there are causal links between these factors, and this was not directly assessed in our project. Nevertheless, this story does chime with academic literature and recent news stories within the UK. In addition to the vast amount of work which demonstrates the impact of poverty on wellbeing (Allen et al., 2014; WHO, 2014), recent work is starting to indicate that welfare policies and austerity measures are having a significant impact on mental health (Barr, Kinderman, & Whitehead, 2015; Winter et al., 2016). Previous research conducted within MIE also found schools suggesting that referrals to counselling services have increased since the start of the changes to the benefits system in April 2013 (Bragg et al., 2015). Alongside this, significant cuts to CAMHS services have been reported in recent years, and some recent statistics suggest that the services are on average turning away 25% of children and young people referred to them (Young Minds, 2016).

Core theme 2: *Roles and responsibilities of school staff*

In line with earlier research (Bragg et al., 2015; Kidger et al., 2009; Sharpe et al., 2016) a broad range of professionals were identified by schools as being involved in supporting the emotional wellbeing of young people. These included staff based within schools, and those whose services were 'bought in' and who were employed by external services. It also included those who were initially trained to work specifically supporting emotional wellbeing as a primary focus of their job, such as counsellors and mental health workers, alongside those who had found the focus of their job shifting over a period of time. The example described above of a teacher telling us they had started out their career as an English teacher and now feel like much of their job is social work, summarises this trend for us. Several connected issues arise from this and are worthy of consideration. One relates to the emotional labour and burden held by school staff, which we consider in the next theme contained in this discussion. There are also issues related to appropriate training for school professionals, and the boundaries of being able to engage in this work. The school professionals we spoke to talked about limited experiences of training focused on supporting emotional wellbeing, a view which resonates within in recent reviews of initial teacher education programmes (Carter, 2015), and most of the training they described focused on safeguarding children and young people. This, for us, doesn't seem to capture the broader skill set which school staff are being required to use, which encompasses things like counselling skills, mental health awareness and understanding, and risk assessment and management, alongside awareness of welfare reform and housing issues.

Additionally, our findings indicate that school professionals see that there is a mismatch between the expectations from parents, families and indeed themselves about the scope and definition of their job role, and that which is indicated by powers operating in broader social systems, such as Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE). School staff talked about supporting emotional wellbeing as being a cornerstone of their work within education, and important both for broader moral/ethical reasons (akin to discussions that can be found to the humanistic education literature (e.g. Aloni, 2002)), and in order to lay the foundations for children to learn (as echoed in literature related to school based counselling (Ryan, 2007)). Consistent with other research, staff told us about parents and young people coming to them with a range of issues, beyond simply issues related to the academic development of the young person (Bragg et al., 2015; Kidger et al., 2009). Overall there was certainly a sense of the school being a hub, not just for emotional wellbeing, but for supporting young people's development more broadly and being an important part of the local community. This reminds us of previous discussions in the UK about 'extended schools' (Raffo & Dyson, 2007). Alongside this however, school staff also reflected on their perception of the lack of support for this work from the macro systems nationally: from Government and bodies such as Ofsted, the DoH and the DfE. They reflected on the way they felt these systems did not understand them or recognise the situation in which schools are rooted within. Even within these broader systems, school staff felt they were getting conflicting messages. On the one hand, the DfE is suggesting that schools begin to do more to support emotional wellbeing, and on the other, Ofsted has reduced the emphasis on this emotional support in their assessment and inspection criteria, with just one-third of a sample of reports after September 2015 making direct reference to mental health and emotional wellbeing (Morley, 2016).

As the project developed, an additional research question emerged which centred upon the reasons that staff give for engaging in work to support the emotional wellbeing of pupils. As noted above, we documented the way in which many staff members thought that emotional wellbeing was at the heart of what they are doing in education, and that others related their work to laying the foundations for academic learning. These empirical findings echo debates about the purpose of education, and whether or not the goal of education is to produce academic results or to support holistic development and growth (e.g. Pring, 2010). Our research was not focused on this issue, and does not claim to provide any answers to this philosophical question. Nevertheless, the fact that it was present in the data as a discussion school staff were having was interesting to us. Connected to the issue of staff roles and responsibilities, and the points discussed in relation to this theme already, we can see that supporting emotional wellbeing occupies a different status of activity depending on how the broader macro system of national policies and discourse views the purpose and scope of education and schools. For example, many of our participants reflected on the lack of time for this part of their work, despite viewing it as fundamental. This is likely to be a bigger strain within a system which assesses schools almost exclusively on the academic attainment of their pupils than it would be if emotional work was afforded greater emphasis (Parameshwaran & Thomson, 2015).

Core theme 3: *'Emotional labour' and the emotional burden*

An important theme arising from the work relates to the amount of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) which a range of school professionals, with different professional backgrounds and experiences, are involved in. Given the perception of increased need and decreased resource we saw discussed, professionals working in schools described finding themselves supporting more pupils with an increased complexity of mental health or emotional wellbeing needs within school, rather than being able to refer to external services or have additional support from internal providers. This appears to be placing a significant strain and emotional burden on those working in schools. What we have seen described in this project echoes the growing area of academic work around the emotional work of school staff (Hanley, 2017; Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011). Adding to this body of work, our findings suggest that the social and political context of austerity is thought by school staff to be increasing the pressure of this emotional work in various ways.

In addition to the professional training needs we describe above, this theme in our findings raises questions about the support systems required for school staff, and the impact of this work on school professionals on a personal level. It has been suggested that teaching has a higher risk of work related stress and 'burnout' than many other professions (Johnson et al., 2005). A survey published in October 2015 found that over half of teachers were thinking about leaving the job in the next two years (National Union of Teachers & YouGov, 2015) and Government data suggests that 13% of teachers leave the profession within one year of qualifying, a statistic which rises to 30% within five years of qualification (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017). Therefore, teacher stress, and issues which may impact upon teacher retention, is an important area to examine. Our findings suggested that for our case study schools, the social and political context of austerity is thought to have a potential impact on the emotional burden placed on school professionals. Specifically, the school staff we spoke to thought that their students' mental health had deteriorated, and their need for support for the emotional wellbeing had increased. This was thought to be at least in part as a result of austerity and austerity related policies, such as welfare reform, changes

to disability support, and increased levels of deprivation. This need was perceived to increase at a time of wider budget cuts and strains to schools and broader support services. This situation appeared to be emotionally challenging for school staff. They talked about hearing distressing stories from pupils and families, having awareness of extremely challenging home situations, and in more than one of our interviews a member of staff became upset when recounting their perceptions of the impact of austerity and the social climate on the young people they work with.

In mental health professions such as applied psychology and counselling, it is common practice for professionals to engage in regular clinical supervision to support their work (e.g. Division of Counselling Psychology, 2007). This is in addition to managerial supervision which might focus more on case load and particular service issues that arise, and instead focuses upon the emotional and reflexive elements of the work. Supervision provides such professionals with a space to process, reflect on their work and their personal development. In contrast to this, the school staff we spoke did not mention any formal support systems which would give them space to do these things, and it is not common practice within education (Hanley, 2017).

Implications and recommendations

A tangled web of variables, including the impact of the dynamics of personal, school, community and political layers, are each present in the accounts that we have pulled together and, as a consequence, we do not put forward a straight forward one dimensional suggestion of a way forward. Instead we consider the potential implications of these findings for policy makers, school leadership teams and teaching staff.

Firstly however it is important to acknowledge the constraints and limitations to the recommendations we are able to offer. The project explicitly set out to look at a systemic approach to wellbeing and education when examining the perceived impacts of austerity on the way schools support emotional wellbeing. Many of the challenges described by our participants are in part due to factors outside of either their, or the schools, control. As previously argued by Lupton (2014) “The key point, of course [...] is that the problem of educational inequalities is caused by society, not by schools” (p. 922) and “Teachers on their own cannot make all the difference, although they can certainly make a difference” (p. 923). Even beyond this, many of these challenges could be described as being largely due to broader macro level forces rather than specific policies, like Government agendas such as ‘austerity’ itself. Indeed, the House of Commons recent Joint Education and Health Select Committee (2017) noted that further budget cuts on in-school provision of mental health and emotional wellbeing services has negative implications and is a false economy. Therefore one primary recommendation would be for Government to review the impact of austerity policies and broader social and political changes on young people and schools. It is important to recognise that micro (individual), meso (community) and macro (societal) structures interact with each other and therefore the impacts of change at one level may be restricted by a lack of change at other levels (Winter et al., 2016). That is to say, without a shift away from austerity, some of the issues described here will inevitably continue. Nevertheless, having outlined this caveat, we are able to offer some implications of the work and recommendations for specific policy, those occupying roles within meso level school structures, and for the individual school practitioner.

Policy

Our participants described feelings impacted in various ways by specific policies and directives from the Department for Education and the Department of Health. The picture created by policy was perceived to be contradictory and some participants felt unsupported as a result. Therefore, it is recommended that the development of future Education and Healthcare policy be mindful of a widespread concern from school staff regarding the need for emotional wellbeing support and the perceived lack of support provision. Specifically, the need to clarify the expectations of schools, and their role in this provision, should also be considered. Further, policies issued from both the Department for Education and the Department of Health should be considered together alongside Ofsted's frameworks for assessing school quality. This should enable a consistent message, which supports, rather than hinders the work of school staff in this area.

Senior Leadership

In light of the concern expressed by staff around the emotional strain and additional time pressures involved in supporting the emotional wellbeing of students and their function in role modelling positive emotional health to the young people, senior leadership should contemplate how they can best support their staff. There are several issues which might be important here. For example, senior leadership teams may be in a position to lobby Government and wider macro systems about the 'on the ground' experience of schools and school staff in the context of austerity. In addition to this the importance of the wider school culture should be considered, given the findings relating to the types of 'activities' school staff are engaged in. Finally, senior leadership should give consideration to a wider array of continuing professional development activities in this area, beyond the immediate needs for safeguarding training. Areas which appear important on the basis of this project include counselling skills, risk assessment and management and mental health awareness, as well as awareness of social and political issues such as welfare reform and housing. Further, supporting staff to undertake clinical supervision activities seems increasingly relevant given the expectation to engage in activities high in emotional labour.

Teachers

The expanding role of schools described above, may encourage teachers to fill gaps in professional mental health provision. It is recommended that staff should continue to acknowledge their limitations in offering emotional support to young people and ensure that more challenging work is referred on to appropriately qualified professionals. This is in order to both protect staff and better serve the need of young people. Given the difficulties around the shrinking pastoral scaffold noted above however, we suggest that this, alongside an acknowledgement that sometimes the difficulty may be not having somewhere to refer onwards, proves essential to good practice. In conjunction therefore, and given the emotional burden teaching staff and others are holding in supporting pupil wellbeing, it seems important that school professionals have space to process and reflect on the work they are doing and the personal impact this might have upon them. It might therefore be useful for staff to consider the use of clinical supervision activities (e.g. Hanley, 2017).

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Appendix

A: Interview Schedule

Supporting Emotional Wellbeing in Schools in the Context of Austerity: a multidisciplinary perspective

Introductory information:

Thank the participant for taking part.

Refer to the process of the interview – including referring to the Audio recording etc.

Main questions:

In what ways do you see your role as supporting the emotional wellbeing of young people in the school?

- What sorts of things do you do?
- How did this come to be part of your role?

How does your role link to other professionals supporting the emotional wellbeing of students in the school?

- Are there any other types of professionals or organisations you feel you would benefit from working with or having support from?
- Has the range of professionals/organisations you can access changed at all?

What are the positive things you take from supporting the emotional wellbeing of students?

- Personally?
- Professionally?
- Has this changed at all over the period in which you have been doing the role?

What difficulties, if any, do you experience with supporting the emotional wellbeing of students?

- Personally?
- Professionally?
- Has this changed at all over the period in which you have been doing the role?

Have you seen the need for such support for students change over recent years at all?

- Do you think you are spending more/less time? Why do you think this is?
- Have the particular types of students / problems you are providing support for changed? Why do you think this is?

What do you think the impact of the current economic and political climate has been on students' emotional wellbeing, if any?

- Are there specific policy changes or reforms which you think have made a particular difference?
- How do you think these changes are having an impact (i.e. on individual child, impact on family, impact on community)?

How well supported do you feel in your work with students, particularly in relation to emotional wellbeing?

- Where do you get support from? (internal/external to school)
- How often can you get support?
- How often do you find you access such support? Is this effective?
- Has the level of support changed at all over the period in which you've been doing the role?

Have you had any training which has helped you when supporting the emotional wellbeing of students?

- If yes, how helpful was it?
- Would there be any additional training which you think would be useful to your role?

Is there anything else you would like to add?